

-TITLE- JANINA KUKULSKA
-I_DATE- FEBRUARY 17 1988
-SOURCE- CHRISTIAN RESCUERS PROJECT
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY- FAIR
-IMAGE_QUALITY- GOOD
-DURATION-
-LANGUAGES-
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-

Janina's father at one point hid 150 Jews in a building in Vilna. He was eventually killed in a concentration camp. Janina herself was only seven in 1939 and often cites her youth as the reason she cannot remember much about her father's heroics. Not until she was a full-grown woman did she begin to learn the full story from a certain Mrs. Feldman (NYC?), a Jew who survived the war years due to Janina's father's compassion. Janina herself remembers little, lacks flamboyance, and, with the exception of a few anecdotes; one about her brother, who was short, managing to slip away from a Nazi pistol pressed against his head when the soldier turned around for a second, and another about taking a Jewish friend of hers, Zelig, to church and Zelig later taking her to synagogue, offers little in the way of insightful or interesting commentary. Over the course of watching this tape, I kept hoping that Janina's father were still alive to tell his tale or that Mrs. Feldman could add more details.

1:00 - beginning of the story - born in Vilna, five siblings. 150 - her father was the manager of a big building. 175 - she was born in 1932, seven years old when the Nazis arrived in Poland. 200 - when the War started, there were a lot of Jews in the building who were friends of the family.

2:25 - Jews entered the ghetto, later people started fleeing from the ghetto.

2:58 - Jews left the building to go to the ghetto, Janina's mother would bake things for the Jews and her father would carry food into the ghetto.

3:00 - they lived in the building right next to the ghetto

3:10 - some Jews were their neighbors, their friends.

3:25 - as she explains, you do things for friends.

3:40-3:50 - people started leaving the ghetto and her father hid a large number of people.

3:75 - 150 people hid in the attic.

3:90 - someone informed the Germans about the hideout (pressured to or on own accord?) and the Nazis took the Jews. She mentions how her father would be taken away for a spell by the Nazis, only to return and to continue to try to save the lives of Jews. Eventually he was killed in a concentration camp.

4:80 - she describes how the Germans came to the hideout with their big dogs.

5:25 - parents did (do) not tell the children what they were (are) doing.

6:00 - she did not know the whole story until later.

6:20 - Janina's mother did not even know the whole story herself, the father kept much of the information to himself.

6:45 - one guy betrayed the group when he went outside to buy food and the Germans caught him.

7:10 - the story truly became known to Janina through Mrs. Feldman.

7:60 - she did not fully realize, as a young girl of seven when the War began, "who we help, why we help."

8:00 - twelve-year old brother took off to avoid working in a German manufacturing plant.

9:40 - Mrs. Feldman survived the War and she would return, etc. Later she went to the United States. Janina herself came to the United States in 1962.

10:40 - During the War, her older sister was taken to the country to avoid working for the Germans (She mentions often in this tape how the Germans were constantly in search of young labor, teenagers were not safe from abduction in cinemas, in the streets, it was dangerous to be even a young non-Jew in Vilna during wartime.

10:60 - her father became a well-known figure in Vilna.

11:10 - while there may have been others who hid Jews in Vilna, Janina knows only of her father who hid Jews like that in the building.

11:60 - tells an anecdote about her brother who was almost killed by the Germans. He was eleven years old at the time, the Germans tried to pressure him into revealing the whereabouts of the Jews, he would not tell and as a short boy managed to scamper away unseen by the Nazis.

12:20 - "I was afraid all the time," she recalls, fearful of the Germans always poking around at nighttime, banging on doors.

12:75 - thinks what her father did was "the most beautiful" thing.

13:30 - the father was about 42 or 43 when he died. Janina's mother remains in Poland, having left Vilna which was annexed into the Soviet Union in 1945. Her mother wanted to remain in Poland while one of Janina's sisters remained in the same building.

14:00 - just she and her sister came to the United States.

14:40 - she works as a building manager as well.

14:60 - there was a ceremony commemorating her father's exploits.

14:80 - describes how her childhood was filled with a lot of fear and scares.

15:10 - her mother is an afraid person, lots of problems.

15:50 - being Polish after the War - proud of her father, a great deal of talk about her father as a good man, communicating with the tenants.

16:20 - father taking food into the ghetto, he had friends in the country who could help him obtain more food.

16:80 - since the building was right near the ghetto it was easy for people to venture there and to hide.

17:20 - she remembers Germans shooting several Jews off the top of the building.

17:40 - one time as a young girl during the War, she returned home and was not let into the building by the Germans. She recalls people trying to run away and how (according to Mrs. Feldman?) a beautiful, pale girl was gunned down.

17:90 - wonder why the Germans did this? - Crazy.

18:20 - the children should know what the Germans did.

18:50 - cannot understand that.

18:65 - her sister is a nurse.

18:90 - children understanding this time - could someone who did not go through it understand it? 'Very hard,' people see the movies but they still cannot understand.

19:40 - six survivors, she knew Mrs. Feldman though she does not remember during the War however.

19:70 - Mrs. Feldman never married, never had children. (Mrs.?)

19:90 - she talks about it, tells stories.

20:10 - the Jews were hidden at least six months.

20:20 - she does not remember all the details.

20:50 - reiterates the notion that the Germans sought out teenagers as workers.

20:80 - her father was friends with these Jews and felt sorry for them.

21:30 - when she was little, all the children played together regardless of religion or ethnic background, it made no difference.

21:60 - she recounts a nice tale about how she took a Jewish friend of hers, Zelig, to Church, she told him to "do what I do." Then Zelig took Janina to synagogue, he told her to "do what I do."

22:00 - they wanted to see how other people prayed.

22:20 - she is religious, praying helps her feel better.

22:50 - Janina stayed in Poland until 1962, did people change? People wanted to forget, she went to a different area, now part of Poland.

23:00 - she remembers seeing, after the War, a few of the Jews she knew prior to the War.

23:68 - hard to talk about these years? - yes, because she cannot believe how it happened.

24:20 - movie about a Jewish man being hanged.

24:46 - Shoah, the German uniform scares her to death.

24:50 - Germans banging on doors at night, looking for young girls.

24:90 - she went to the country with her mother after her father was taken.

25:00 - from 1945 -1962, she went to school for a bit, then went to work to help her mother.

25:25 - her sister invited her to the United States, she is glad she came, 'the most beautiful country in the world,' she mumbles a tad.

25:85 - a small girl when she lost her father - she never felt angry about it, he was very brave and did a beautiful thing.

26:35 - friendships between Jews and non-Jews often stopped during the occupation out of fear, people would face death for helping Jews.

26:85 - mother not brave like the father, she never realized the danger, she could imagine the danger in giving food to people, she

was scared.

27:55 - wishes it will never happen again, suggests that there are many war criminals in hiding, talks about how old Ukrainian men will sit in the parks of New York and brag about how many people they killed.

28:25 - take them to justice. Tape ends by focusing on a creased photo of the family.
.END.