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Green, Hanna  
One Video Cassette

**Abstract:** Hanna Green was a nineteen year old Polish woman and newly married at the beginning of the war. She and her husband escaped to the Russian zone in 1939 and they were sent to a Siberian labor camp. She had two children there. After the war she, her husband and children went back to Poland and then on to Germany in order to reach the American occupied zone. They got passports to America and eventually settled in America. Her survival is largely a result of her own initiative and strength. On her own, she retrieved family photographs and effects from an area controlled by the Nazis and later was instrumental in crossing the German/Russian border

00:27 In Kalisz, I had a happy home; strict but happy. We had a curfew, 10:00 pm, 11:00 pm in the summer. I didn't notice much anti-Semitism. We were in the grocery business. We mostly had Jewish customers and I spoke Polish perfectly and when I went someplace they didn't notice I was Jewish, because I didn't have an accent. Daily life was breakfast, going to school, doing chores. We didn't have too much freedom but when I went out I was very happy.

01:52 In 1939 we believed that Poland would resist the Germans. My husband and I had been married a month. I listened to the radio and it said Poland would resist the Germans. My husband wanted to go to Lodz; he didn't believe the Germans would come that far, so we went there. It was very hard; we couldn't go out. I didn't say good bye, to anyone. I took the train and I went back to Kalisz. The train was crowded.

03:31 I wanted to take my pictures and clothes and things. Then I went back to Lodz. After six o'clock the Jews couldn't do work. After a few weeks we started running again. My husband said "let's go farther." We didn't believe the Germans could conquer all of Poland. My brother-in-law spoke very good German so he took off his star and got in line to buy tickets. We went to Warsaw and the Germans were there with their dogs. They said "All Juden get out and to the right, gentiles to the left." The German dogs were jumping on us, so unexpectedly. They took away the men separate and I thought for sure they would kill my husband. But they united us back. We made it out to the German/Russian border and we stayed there for a day and night.

06:20 I told my husband "let us sneak out through the woods." I sneaked out through the woods and they didn't do anything to me. But I went back to my husband and his brother. We stayed there two weeks. The Russian officers came and gave us three choices, to stay here, to go back home, or go to Russia. We wanted to go home. So the Russians took us in the middle of the night. I asked where we were going and they said "You want to see your mother; we take you to your mother." So they put us in trucks and then in a train with bars.

- 08:12 We were in there for a long time and couldn't go anywhere. Then they took us to Volchitsko, it was in Siberia. We had to work. It was in the woods. It was 20 below zero and we didn't have anything, no clothes. We had to go to work in what we had. Which was little more than rags.
- 09:22 We had to go to the woods and cut down big trees by hand. The trees were bigger than both my arms around. We had to work until it got dark. Then they give us a little piece of bread and black soup. The bread had to last us until the next day. We were very hungry but I was young and strong. I could survive until the war was ended in 1945. When the war was over they wanted us to stay, take some land and work there. But we didn't want to. We heard through the radio that the war was over. We ran to the nearest city, it was far away. I ran there with my husband and little baby. When we arrived in the city we got in a little boat. It was so tragic in the boat. We went to a city and I got sick.
- 10:22 *Q: What were the living conditions like in the labor camps in Siberia?*
- We had to live on a few grams of bread, we had to work hard. When I wanted to talk to my husband we had to whisper. There were spies everywhere. While in the camp we had two children.
- 10:46 *Q: Were there only Jews in the labor camp?*
- There were a few gentiles too.
- 11:07 *Q: What happened after the war ended?*
- A: We went back to Poland in 1946. I didn't want to go back but we went and I heard the Russian soldiers said that the Germans killed all the Jews. I told my husband, "let us stay in Russia." My husband wanted to go back so we went back, however, no one was alive. There were newspapers up with people's names who had survived. The town I returned to was Stojeszyn.
- 12:05 We went back to Russia. The conditions were very bad so we wanted to go to the American zone. We had to smuggle back into Poland and Germany. We got to eastern Germany. The conditions in Germany were so bad we had to stay in a place where there were a thousand people in a room; I suffered a lot more after the war than during the war. The Americans wanted to know the whole history. They questioned us and wanted to know if we were communists. We had to go through health procedures and questioning. They didn't trust us. The Jewish people had a very hard time.
- 13:41 In Siberia I wrote a letter and got one postcard from a sister. They saw the handwriting and cried that I'd survived. They didn't write much just that they were feeling sorry for me. The card was sent from Warsaw in 1941.

- 15:32 After I arrived in the Displaced Person's camp my son was sick. They treated us badly so we went to the American Zone. We were stopped first in Berlin. They placed us in the Displaced Person's camp **Schlaffenzeuger** were the conditions were just as bad. They gave us very little room. Then they transferred us to Munich. That was terrible. There was a gentile writing: "Jews should be killed."
- 16:50 We got passports to go to Israel but one of my father's relatives was in America so we got passports to America. We came to Washington, DC where my husband got a job. His pay was a dollar an hour; we were so happy we danced because he could support us. The American government sponsored us. They paid my cousin back the \$300 for sponsoring us.
- 18:12 I feel sorry for the Russian Jews. We had four children. It was a hard life there. My husband was sick, he had heart trouble; but we survived. In Poland they laughed if you didn't speak perfect Polish, they would know you were Jewish. Our education in Poland helped a little bit in the United States. We went to an Americanization school. In Poland I was okay because 7th grade was like college there. Here you feel dumb, everybody would laugh and point like you were deaf and dumb.
- [Long segment showing family pictures]
- 21:50** My heart is broken and bleeding and never will stop. This should never happen. They killed six million Jews for no reason, and I loved them all.

Transcription by Doug Steele, C'93  
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