

Peabody, Halina
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One Videotape
In English

- Abstract: Halina Peabody was born in Krakow, Poland on December 12, 1932. Her parents were part of the Jewish intelligentsia. They did not speak Yiddish at home and did not have any accent when speaking Polish. When the war broke out, Halina's father was taken by the Russians to Siberia. Once the "actions" increased, Halina, her mother and her sister moved to a farm house. They purchased false papers and moved to a town outside of Krakow, where her mother worked as a maid and Halina and her sister went to school and mass. Halina and the rest of her family were saved because they "looked Polish," with blonde hair and green eyes. Her mother started to work for the German army to avoid suspicion. Towards the end of the war, Halina was hit by a grenade and had to have an operation on her hand. She does not remember the liberation because she was in the hospital. Her mother located her father in Palestine. The family immigrated to England. Halina lived there for eleven years and then moved, first to Israel, and then to the United States. She discusses the difficulties of life after the war. Halina ends by talking about her children, her husband and her mother, who died of cancer in 1956.
- 1:00:58 Halina Peabody was born in Krakow, Poland on December 12, 1932. Before the war began she lived in Zalishchyky, a town on the frontier of Romania, with her father, mother, and baby sister.
- 1:02:34 Halina remembers a beautiful life in Zalishchyky as a young child. Her parents were part of the Jewish intelligentsia. Although they did not follow Jewish religious customs very strictly, Halina's parents had many Jewish friends.
- 1:03:55 Halina does not clearly remember overt anti-Semitism prior to the war, but she did sense a tension in the town. She was afraid when she walked to kindergarten, but she never heard other Jews speaking about anti-Semitism or of their fears openly. When the war broke out in 1939, the Russians took Halina's father to Siberia as a prisoner, leaving the rest of the family behind.
- 1:04:53 Halina's mother felt that Jews did not need to be ritualistic, like the Hasidim. Her mother told Halina that if she had a choice, she would not have been Jewish because it was so painful. However, if you are Jewish, her mother felt you should be proud of it.
- 1:06:51 Halina's father's family was very religious and her only memory of a synagogue was when her father's brother took her to visit one. Because he was Jewish, her father had a hard time getting into a university. Her mother was raised in Polish secular society and was educated in Polish schools. As a result, the family did not

speaking Yiddish and had no accent in Polish. Halina states that this saved them in the end.

- 1:08:24 Halina guesses that the town had 20% Jews. The Russians kicked them out of their house when they occupied the town. Most people believed that the women and children were safe from harm during the war because they had always been excluded from wars in the past. Their only fear was not having enough food and shelter to survive.
- 1:09:15 The Germans forced the Russians out of Zalishchyky and Halina, her mother, and her sister returned to their home. For the first year the town was occupied by pro-German Yugoslavs.
- 1:10:37 Halina remembers that a year after the Yugoslavs occupied, the Germans entered the town in a big parade through the town's main street. The tension in the town rose. Halina remembers staring at a Nazi shaving a Hassidic Jew in the street. One day the Germans ordered the young men of the town to bind trees at a Polish army camp outside the town.
- 1:11:29 A young girl who was part of the group returned from the camp and told the townspeople that the Germans made the people dig their own graves and then shot them. The girl escaped because she tripped as she was running away and the Germans thought she was dead. Because of this story, Halina's mother could not understand anyone who said that they were unaware of the Holocaust.
- 1:12:30 After this, the Germans regularly ordered a certain number of Jews to the camps. The Jews called these "actions." If they did not get enough people they would sweep the streets grabbing people off the streets. The Jews were required to wear the yellow star and all Jewish homes also had the yellow star on them so the Germans could easily recognize them, but Halina and her family did not. Halina barely survived one sweep by hiding in the family's maid's house.
- 1:13:26 The Jews did not resist very much, according to Halina. They just hid or ran away. The Nazis frequently arrested people, but would free them for a ransom. In this way the Nazis obtained any money or possessions that the Jews had hidden during the confiscations. Halina said that the freed Jews looked "like death warmed over" and they were re-arrested until their family could no longer pay any ransom.
- 1:13:51 Halina said that everyone was fearful but sometimes people would help the Jews who had money or valuables.
- 1:16:00 The Germans ordered the Jews to give all their silver, gold, and other valuables to them. Halina said that they always had food, although she was not sure from where it came. She remembers that it was usually delivered. A friend of the family was in the Judenrat and he told them when the "actions" were to take place.

so that they could hide. Mother was recruited to sew for the town mayor's wife. She was glad to be useful to the Germans because it made her chances of entering the camp less likely.

- 1:17:46 After a few more “actions,” Halina's mother decided to leave the area. They moved to a farmer's house where they had stayed during the Russian occupation. Later, they lived in a Jewish house with many other families. Halina's mother felt the situation was hopeless so she tried to smuggle the children into Romania, but failed.
- 1:19:00 In the most traumatic “action,” Halina was separated from her mother and her little sister. She feared that her mother had been caught because her protectors had told her that all the Jews were rounded up in the town square. After the “action”, they were reunited. Halina's mother vowed never to separate the family again.
- 1:19:52 A friend of Halina's mother refused to let her baby be given a shot to keep it quiet during the “Action” so she was left upstairs and later captured. Halina's mother and little sister were thrown out of the farmer's house where they had been hiding in because he was afraid.
- 1:20:42 Halina's mother hid behind a bush in an open field and the Germans did not find her, although they flew airplanes over the town in search of escaping Jews. After this, Halina's mother decided to go somewhere that no one knew them and to pretend that they were Catholics.
- 1:22:35 Halina's mother purchased false papers from someone and they moved to Jaroslaw, a city outside Krakow. Halina thought that her family was very lucky because they had no boys in the family. A circumcised man or boy provided clear evidence of a Jewish family.
- 1:25:35 Mother arranged the train trip to Jaroslaw with false papers. They changed to Polish names, Eva and Alina Litinska from Eppa and Halina Littmann. On the four- day train ride a Volksdeutsch Pole (a Pole of German descent), discovered their true identity. Her mother gave the man everything they owned for a promise that he would get the Germans to shoot them immediately rather than sending the family to a camp.
- 1:27:38 At the train station, Halina's crying and her mother's pleading led the Volksdeutsch to let them go and return some of the money to them. Her mother told the man that at least their deaths would not be on his conscience.
- 1:29:07 In Jaroslaw, the family found shelter with a good Catholic woman. Halina said that a home was crucial because the Germans would send the homeless to the camps. Her mother paid their way with money and stolen food.

- 1:31:29 Halina pretended to be Catholic and attended a Catholic school twice a week. Her family attended church regularly. Her mother worked as a cleaning lady and learned to steal from her employers as everyone was expected to do during the war.
- 1:33:13 Halina remembers a time when all the children called her little sister a Jew because of her curly hair, which was associated with Jews. Halina's mother shaved her sister's hair in hopes of removing the curls which could give them away to the Nazis.
- 1:33:53 Halina says that the whole family, particularly she, looked Polish with blond hair and green eyes. One day a teacher accused Halina of not saying hello to her when passing by. Although it was dangerous, Halina did not apologize because the teacher was lying.
- 1:35:51 Mother worked for the German army to divert suspicion. She was required to apply for an Ausweis, an identification card, which meant a background check. The family was terrified that they would be discovered but the papers came through.
- 1:37:08 Halina became adjusted to life during the war so that it almost became normal. She and the other children would steal food from the carts of farmers who were delivering food to the Nazis. One of these children told how he had worked for the Nazis removing gold teeth from the bodies of dead Jews. Halina heard almost no news about the war during that time.
- 1:40:11 After most of the Jews had been deported, the Nazis began raiding Polish homes to find unemployed people to send to Germany for work. Once Halina's house was raided and only their family was not taken because of her mother's Ausweis. The next day the Nazis returned the Poles that they had taken to their homes.
- 1:41:24 Halina's mother was treated by a Nazi doctor, but another Nazi doctor gave her the wrong medicine for Halina's sister. Because of fear of suspicion, Halina's mother applied for a job in Germany but was refused because Halina's sister was too young.
- 1:42:24 Halina remembers waking up one day to a quiet town. A grenade landed in their house and mutilated Halina's left hand. Her mother, little sister, and she walked to the hospital and found out that the Germans had left.
- 1:44:03 Halina's hand was saved from amputation by nuns who set her hand on fire to remove the infection. Her mother had a mastectomy to remove a tumor.
- 1:44:58 Halina's mother sent letters to Palestine and found their father.

- 1:46:34 Halina does not remember much of the liberation because she was hospitalized. She remembers wanting to tell everyone she was Jewish but her mother would not let her because the Poles had started a pogrom and had killed some of the Jews that survived. The son of the neighbor told Halina's mother that he wished the Nazis had finished the job.
- 1:47:48 Halina's mother moved the family to New Krakow, where they found lodging with a woman. The woman asked them if they were Polish and they had to pretend that they were in order to get shelter.
- 1:49:45 Halina's father sent his cousin who arranged for them to leave the country. They traveled with a group of Jews and stopped outside Szczecin. At night Halina believes that the Polish militia knocked on the door. They were told not to let them in because they would rape and rob them. Halina said they screamed for two hours until they left.
- 1:51:13 The militia checked on them to see if things were okay and Halina says that the Jews recognized their voices. They took a train to the Polish border and had to bribe the Polish guard and the Russian guard on the German side to get into Germany. Their destination was Berlin, but at first they were denied tickets because they were Jews.
- 1:52:50 In Berlin they had to prove they were Jews. An acquaintance from Krakow vouched for Halina, her sister, and her mother because they could not prove that they were Jewish.
- 1:52:50 Halina's family, including her father, lived in England after the war. She had difficulty adjusting to her father after the independence she developed during the war.
- 1:54:45 Mother died of cancer in 1956.
- 1:56:31 Halina lived in England until a year after her mother died, and then moved to Israel for eleven years.
- 1:58:21 Halina came to America with her husband in 1968. She misses Israel because it gave her back her Jewishness. She is grateful to England because it accepted them when they were stateless.
- 1:60:24 Halina's little sister believed that she was Catholic and was taught to hate the Jews. When she was told she was Jewish, she didn't believe it and had to be persuaded that it was not inferior to be a Jew. Today she is a staunch upholder of her Jewish faith.
- 1:61:56 Halina's father was freed from Siberia with the rest of the prisoners when the Yalta Agreement was signed.

- 1:63:45 Halina became a secretary despite her crippled hand and became an outstanding table tennis player.
- 1:65:26 Halina's mother was never truly happy after the war. Halina believes that the war exhausted all her strength.
- 1:66:26 Halina brought her sister to Israel. She worked on a kibbutz for year.
- 1:68:52 Halina's first child had Down's Syndrome.
- 1:69:50 Halina's second child is a college graduate and sports producer.
- 1:70:41 Halina is amazed by the strength that her mother showed during the war. She believes that her mother had given her the strength to endure the trials with which she was faced.
- 1:72:31 Halina shows pictures of her mother, her sister, and herself at Jaroslaw. A second picture shows her mother at the German army camp. Another picture shows Halina and her sister in Jaroslaw.
- 1:73:43 Another picture shows Halina and her sister with a cat at Christmas time. The final picture is a picture of Halina on the day of her Holy Communion. Halina says that she will use this picture for the cover of her book, if she writes one.