

Name: Nesse Galperin

Date of Birth: March 28, 1928

Place of Birth: Siauliai, Lithuania

Nesse was born to a Jewish family in large Lithuanian city of Siauliai, not far from Eastern Prussia. Her parents owned a dairy. There was a vibrant Jewish community in Siauliai, with many synagogues, newspapers and clubs. The Jews called the city Shavli. After 1933 swastikas appeared occasionally on walls, and on headstones in cemeteries Jewish cemeteries.

1933-1939: I attend a Jewish school. Many of the Jews in Siauliai are religious but my family is not. I'm brought up in a loving family that stresses the values of community and caring. After the Nazis invade Poland in 1939, we hear from relatives there that the Jews are being treated horribly and we can't believe it; how can your neighbors not stand up and help you?

1940-1944: I'm 12 when the Russians invade Lithuania in June 1940. A year later on Saturday, June 26 the Nazis occupy our city. Jewish citizens bribe the Gestapo to make ghettos rather than deport us immediately-- they set up two ghettos. Three years later, as the Russians advance, we're deported 250 miles to the Stutthof camp on the Baltic coast to dig trenches to stop Russian tanks. One work detail I sort a huge pile of shoes prisoners tell me belonged to dead inmates. Are these the shoes of people I've known?

While burying corpses near a labor camp in eastern Prussia, Nesse was liberated by the Soviet army on March 10, 1945. She lived near Munich till emigrating to the U.S. in 1950.

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