

Ruth Taub Feldman

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Abstract

Ruth Taub Feldman was born November 30, 1928 in Vienna, Austria as Ruth Taub and had no siblings. Her parents were from Poland and she visited when she was four at the time of her maternal mother's death. The maid cared for Ruth while her mother worked in the family grocery store. After Hitler came to power, an organization seeking 25 boys and 25 girls to take to America asked Ruth to join them and she did. Mr. and Mrs. Krauss were the leaders. The children were taken to a camp in Collegeville, Pennsylvania where they learned English and then joined foster families. Through her cousins, the Schneidmans, Ruth joined the Brooksteins who had two of their own children. Her father's two brothers came from Poland and when Ruth was in America all three were sent to Buchenwald and the father's brothers were shot in front of him. He was mistakenly let out of the concentration camp and joined Ruth's mother a year after Ruth's departure to follow her to America. First the three stayed with their cousins and then they went to Brooklyn where the father got a pushcart and sold fruits and vegetables. Later he got a grocery, fruit and vegetable business like he had in Vienna. Ruth met her future husband, Murray Feldman, when she was 16 and they married when she was 20. First they lived in Ohio where he worked as a structural engineer and later returned to Brooklyn where she had two children, Dana and Mark, and grandchildren.

Summary

00:00 Ruth Taub Feldman was born November 30, 1928 in Vienna, Austria as Ruth Taub to Janel Spiegel Taube from Warsaw, Poland and Marcus Taub from Monatrayz (?), Poland. When Ruth was four she went to Warsaw when her mother's mother died. At that time she met her aunts and uncles who lived there. She did not know her father's father but knew his mother, Sarah, who moved to Vienna and she frequently saw her. Her parents met in Poland and moved to Vienna with the grandmother and got married there. They had no relatives in Vienna. Later her father's two brothers came to Vienna as they felt there was greater opportunity for them there.

05:00 Vienna was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire but Ruth does not know if her father came from the part of Poland included in that region. She spoke German at home. She does not know if her parents spoke Yiddish. Her father was in the fruit, vegetable, grocery business. He opened a store and did well. Her mother did not work at first but later worked in the store. She had a maid at home. Ruth was sent to kindergarten and to the country in the summer. The store was at Sebastian Vert Gazer (?). They did not live

above the store but on the same street. The groceries were inside the store and the fruit and vegetable stands were outside. It was medium-sized store. They had one employee, a young Austrian named Franz. Her parents were attached to Franz and he to them. When Hitler came, Franz was unhappy as could no longer work for them and soon was drafted.

- 10:00 There was a synagogue on their street. The Nazis threw the prayer books onto the street and burned them. Austria was united with Germany. Her parents were somewhat religious. The synagogue on the street was the one that her father attended on some holidays. They were not assimilated into Austrian society. They did not keep the Sabbath. The family only observed the High Holidays and some other holidays. Ruth does not know if the store was open on the Sabbath. She was an only child. The maid took care of her. In the summer, she went with the kindergarten to the country. Her parents had religious feelings. The kindergarten might have been Jewish. She does not know the maid's nationality or name.
- 15:00 Ruth felt close to the maid and, also, to her parents. Her father was her pet. She wrote a poem as a tribute to him and it is on the wall. She also loved her mother very much. She is not a poet but felt like writing a tribute to her father. She wrote little poems from time-to-time. Sometimes she wrote about her mother. She wrote the poems when she was grown. The message of the poem is that her father was very special, unusually kind and had a smile that made you feel good. Whoever he could help, he would help. Her mother was a good person but was less close to her than to her father as she was stricter. Her father did not let her get away with murder. The only reason that she consented to come to America with the children was because she was used to being with the maid and going away with the children in the summer. She was not always with her parents. She had a close girl friend who would not go to America and was annihilated so Ruth feels lucky. People sent them affidavits. They lived in a nice apartment in Vienna with a few rooms so it was not tiny and cramped. There was a pharmacy on the corner. The synagogue was on the other side of the street.
- 20:00 Her apartment house had five floors. It was not a bustling street but was quiet with no buses or trolley. At the corner where the Pharmacy was located, was a busier street. She does not recall whether she walked to school. The neighborhood was mixed. The maid helped with the cooking. She might have had friends from school. She had a nice pediatrician, Dr. Zentner.
- 25:00 Her family celebrated holidays but does not know if the store was closed. Her mother baked a nice coffee cake. Chocolate was her pet food and still is. Her mother made her a chocolate birthday cake and good goulash. She was a good cook. Ruth does not recall visiting their store. She was busy with friends and school. She thinks she was in elementary school as she was 10 and ½ when she left for America with the children. She

does not recall belonging to youth groups. Ruth knew that Hitler came to Germany and annexed Austria in 1938. He became a dictator in '33. Her father was taken to Buchenwald when she was in America. Before that he was taken to jail overnight while she was still in Vienna.

- 30:00 Ruth found out about Buchenwald later. When her father was taken away, her mother was forced to live in an apartment with many women. Her father might have been in Dachau for a short time. Cousins told her that he was in Buchenwald. These were the cousins who helped to find people who sent them affidavits. Ruth would see boys dressed in Nazi uniforms and swastika bands on the street. Children would call her, 'Jew' which was her only anti-Semitic experience.
- 35:00 While Ruth was still in Vienna, they had to give away the store. She was happy to leave as thought it was the best thing as would be good for her and helpful to her parents so they would not have to worry that something would happen to her. Her parents made her feel that way and told her that they would see each other soon. They said that it would not be forever and she believed them. When her parents found out about the program of sending children to America, they asked her how she felt about it. They promised they would come soon so she believed it. She was used to being with a maid rather than her parents. Gilbert Krauss (?) took the children to America. Everyone liked him and his wife as they were very kind. They called them, "Uncle Gilbert and Tante Ellen." They must have spoken German. They belonged to B'rith Shalom, a fraternal organization in Philadelphia. Louis Levin, a friend of Mr. Krauss was the Grandmaster of B'rith Shalom. He told Mr. Krauss that it would be good to go to Europe to gather 50 children and bring them to America. Mr. Krauss agreed and told his wife and she was not in favor of it but he convinced her.
- 40:00 She kept a diary and had two children. Ruth does not remember saying good-bye to her parents. She met Mr. and Mrs. Krauss in Vienna who was able to get visas for all the children. Ruth might have had her own as people sent affidavits. Ruth was interviewed and went through a medical exam and was questioned regarding her visa. She believes her parents thought of leaving Austria. Hitler wanted Austria and Germany to be free of Jews and was not killing them at first. He wanted them to leave. Ruth came here by ship but does not recall how she got to the ship. She was very nauseous on the ship and could not eat. Mr. and Mrs. Krauss were very kind and understanding.
- 45:00 They had left their two children in America with relatives. Upon arrival in America, the 50 children went from the ship to a camp in Collegetown, Pennsylvania. It was beautiful. It was built for other purposes beside them. Ruth did not know the other children. One little girl was a Jewish actress, younger than her. The youngest child was almost five. She does not recall taking any special belonging to America but she might have taken a mezuzah. They might have met as a group before they left. The 25 boys and 25 girls

traveled together. She had never been on a ship before and she might not have seen the sea before. Ruth saw the Statue of Liberty from the boat and got off and got frankfurters to eat and loved it. It was different as was served on a frankfurter roll. It was the first time she ate it on a roll as she always ate the frankfurter on a plate with bread. Ruth had a distant cousin here who found the Groupsteins (?) who sent the affidavits and took her to their home from camp. She needed a visa or affidavits to travel.

- 50:00 They did not help in obtaining papers. All the children's families had obtained the necessary papers. Harry and Leah Groupstein had a soda factory, "Society Club" beverages. They were comfortable and lived in Newark and came to visit her at camp. They wanted to know how she felt about coming to their house. They did not adopt her but just cared for her temporarily. They had a boy who was three or four years younger and a daughter who was six or seven years older than her. Both children have passed away as they were not lucky. It was sad as they died young. She loved living together with them. Joey teased her by saying, "Heil Hitler" but they got along well and were very close. The camp was very nice. They had sports and English lessons so she does not speak with an accent now. Ruth had to study English and learn to speak it. At the camp, they found homes for the children. The camp had a nice building with a large living room and President Roosevelt's picture over the fireplace. To the right was the boy's dormitory and to the left, the girl's dormitory. They lived and had activities in the same building.
- 55:00 It was not rough style living. She shared a room with another girl. The room was nicely decorated. The camp was in a town. The camp had a pool. Ruth did not have contact with the children afterwards as the children moved to different states. She did not see them cry on the boat or on the trip. They enjoyed camp life. She wrote to her parents while at camp and received mail from them, perhaps at camp or at the Groupsteins before her father went to the concentration camp. Ruth was still in Vienna when her father was taken to jail once or twice and her mother had to live in an apartment with a lot of women after her father was taken to a concentration camp.
- 60:00 Ruth thinks that people might have come to take her father to Buchenwald. He must have been there for some months before coming to America a year after her arrival. Her mother ran around to get him out of camp. She met a German official who was sympathetic. Ruth always felt that he had a hand in her father's release from camp. Her mother was prepared to go to America as soon as her father got out of camp. Her parents' ship docked in Italy where they read the newspapers that said that 28 men were released from Buchenwald in error. Now Ruth realizes that it was a lie that her parents would see her soon but it came true and they had a nice life here. She feels it was a mistake to tell her that her father was in Buchenwald. Her cousins had no children and did not know how to handle certain things but they did good. The Groupsteins were not relatives and learned about Ruth from her cousins. Her father had cousins in Vienna.

- 65:00 Ruth feels that she must have been unhappy to learn that her father was in Buchenwald. She does not recall how soon after she learned that he was released. She thinks there was a pool at camp. Ruth does not recall if they had outings or activities at camp. It did not feel like school. She liked learning English. She does not recall the food being bad. It was summer as she arrived in America in June 1939. By the end of August, all the children were placed and she left camp before school started. The Groupsteins brought her to Newark to their one or two-family house. They were well-to-do. It was not an unusually large house. She does not think that she had her own bedroom. Joey was younger and might have shared his bedroom with her. Ruthie was older and got a private room. They were two Ruthies: the sister was "Big Ruthie" and she was, "Little Ruthie." She does not remember a backyard or the school but had no problems at school.
- 70:00 The Groupsteins were special as not everyone would want to send papers to strangers, temporarily adopt a child, treat it as their own and were very kind people. Ruth does not recall talking to them about Austria or that her parents were coming over. Perhaps she learned they were coming from the Schneidmans, her distant cousins. Ruth feels she probably met her parents when they arrived in New York. She lived with the Groupsteins just over a year. When her parents arrived, they stayed with the Schneidmans temporarily and then her father got a pushcart.
- 75:00 He sold fruits and vegetables. The three of them probably lived in a small place near where he worked. Her parents learned English as she refused to speak anything but English. In Austria, her parents thought of going to America and started studying English. Ruth wanted her parents to learn English and felt not speaking German would be the best way. They picked up English quickly. Ruth does not recall if her parents spoke with an accent. She thinks they spoke German if they did not want her to know something. Her father did not look good upon arrival as he lost a lot of weight but he recovered.
- 80:00 They had a nice life here. Her Aunt Leah must have gotten her clothes. She thinks her mother babysat before she went to work with Ruth's father. He had his pushcart just a short time. He got a grocery, fruit and vegetable store in Brooklyn. Their relatives in Poland were all exterminated. They were taken to a concentration camp. Her father's mother came to Austria and had a little apartment. Her mother bought Ruth ham as she was thin and thought it would help her gain weight. Her grandma took Ruth for a walk and they saw a non-Jewish store where the grandma showed her a picture of a pig and told her she would look like that if she ate ham but continued to do so. She ate bacon later but no longer likes it and does not eat ham. Her father could not bring over his mother as she had no papers or affidavits. She believes her grandma was killed by the Germans. Her father was with his two brothers in Buchenwald and saw the brothers shot right in front of him.

- 85:00 She does not recall if she felt strange at school but she had no problems. Ruth does not recall having conversations with her parents about the European situation. Her father told her that his mother was annihilated. Ruth does not know if the grandma was at a concentration camp as her father had no details. Her parents talked little of concentration camps or about her mother living with a group of women but thought it was the German official who helped him get out of Buchenwald.
- 90:00 Her father probably followed the news of the war. She thinks they might have had a radio in Brooklyn and might have had both Yiddish and English newspapers at home. Ruth has an autograph book from April 14, 1939 which has a note and a painting by Emile Farhas (?), her parent's friend who Ruth and her parents visited. Emile writes in German and Ruth translates the note that he gives her good wishes. She does not know what happened to the painter and his wife. Ruth does not believe that her parents had many friends. Her father was too tired and weak after work to be with friends. His health suffered after Buchenwald. He was weak but was the same person. Her parent's friends from Austria, the Berdashrs (?), might have settled in Brooklyn.
- 95:00 The family usually did not have company. Her parents appreciated being in America. They were not the type of people who had to have everything. They thanked G-d for having been saved. They did not become more religious. As a teenager, Ruth was satisfied in school. She was happy and did not have a favorite subject. She might have wanted to be a teacher. After high school, Ruth wanted to get married and have a family, a nice one like Dana and her son, Mark and it happened. She around 16 when she met her husband. He was a friend of a girl friend's boyfriend.
- 100:00 Her husband was Murray Feldman and she did not meet him at school. He was born in the US and was a little older than her. He was from Brooklyn and had one brother and two sisters. They married when she was 20. He was a structural engineer. They first lived with her parents. When he graduated from college, he got a job as a structural designer in Allentown, Pennsylvania. They moved there and Mark was born there. She had two children; Dana is the daughter. They were always in touch with the Groupsteins and the Krauses. They got a letter or two from the Krauses. They were not in touch with Louis Levin. She liked Allentown.
- 105:00 Then they moved to Spring Gardens, Brooklyn where Dana was born and moved to Mill Basin in Brooklyn when she was a teenager. Ruth's husband continued working as an engineer. Her parents remained in the same place in Brooklyn and visited her in Mill Basin. Her father bought a grocery store. Neither she nor her parents ever returned to Austria. They never saw the Krauses again. She saw the Groupsteins about three or four times a year.

110:00 Ruth did not hear about the reunion. She probably spoke to her children about living in Austria about when Hitler came and how they came to the US. Dana's daughter, Ashley, is interested in the Holocaust and they spoke of it. She could not put the book about the 50 children down although she knew about the events. She never met the author. He is the Krauses' grandson through marriage. She never saw the 50 children again since they left the camp. She wants everyone to be aware. It is not a closed issue. Ruth believes there are many Jews not aware of all of this. Children in their teens should be aware of history whether they are Jewish or not. Ruth believes it is her genes rather than her history which influenced her. She appreciates what the Museum does as it is helpful.

115:00 Ruth shows the Shtembruk (?) Autograph Book with messages from loved ones wishing her a good life and asking to be remembered. She received the book before coming here. People signed the book. Her father wrote in German, "You should bloom on your parent's souls to grow well and successful and angels from G-d should lead your life's train for remembering your paper, 26 June 1938." Her mother wrote, "My dear good child, be honest and do not ask for too much. Then many people will be envious of you. From your always loving mother, May 21, 1939." "Three angels should keep you company on your trip and they are called, Love, Luck and Satisfaction, from your loving friend, Hilda Strout, August 14, 1939."

120:00 Hilda did not want to go with the children to America. At camp in Collegeville, Pennsylvania, everyday Ruth thought about Tante Elizabeth "to know you is to love you." Mrs. Krause accompanied the children from Europe to the camp. Ruth shows a black and white newspaper clipping of her in the back of a group of children in London and she is wearing a rose polka dot coat with a maroon velvet collar. Then she shows another newspaper clipping of the children at the camp in Collegeville, Pennsylvania.

125:00 Ruth shows her passport from the German Empire with the Swastika. She shows the page of her photo in the passport when she was 10 and one-half. The passport indicates she is a student, the color of her eyes and hair and that she is stateless.

126:00