

Miriam Fridman

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Abstract

Miriam Fridman was born on December 5, 1925 in Lodz, Poland as Miriam Rachel Dutkiewicz and had a younger sister, Eva. Her father was in the dairy business with his brothers. Miriam enjoyed participating in a Zionist youth organization and collecting money for the poor. She completed seven years of public school. Miriam was upset when the Catholic children hit her after church for no reason. Her family was not religious and they spoke Yiddish and Polish. After the war started, the family was chased from their upper class apartment to a shared apartment in the ghetto in the dilapidated section of the city. Everyone had to work to obtain food. Miriam sewed, her younger sister worked in the straw room and her father was sent away to work and never returned. Soon her mother, at 38, died from starvation and Miriam was left to care for her sister who was selected for deportation and was gassed. Miriam survived by eating only a small portion of her bread each day. After 5 years, the ghetto was liquidated in 1944 and Miriam was deported to Auschwitz and was tattooed A27753. She was liberated by the Russians who shot some inmates so Miriam took a train to Italy. She loved the people there who were very helpful. In '46 or '47 she emigrated from Rome to the US. Her uncle in Israel knew people in the US who sponsored her. After she arrived, Abe Fridman her future husband who she met in Rome and had been in the Lodz Ghetto, came and they married in '49. Their son was born around '50 and is married. Miriam's husband was a foreman in a big factory and died at age 52. Recently she speaks at schools about her Holocaust experience and collected money for Haiti.

Summary

00:00 Miriam Fridman was born on December 5, 1925 in Lodz, Poland as Miriam Rachel Dutkiewicz and had a sister, Eva, who was about five years younger. Miriam's mother was Rose Goldman and her father was Nathan or "Nachum" Dutkiewicz. She knew her grandparents slightly. She does not know if her mother had any siblings but her father did and she knew them slightly. It was a large clan but she does not remember her family. They lived in the main center of town in the high class part. They lived on the third floor of a 5-story apartment house.

05:00 They had a large living room, two bedrooms, a kitchen and their windows faced the street. Their address was 34 General Skergo Street. It was a well-to-do neighborhood which had mixed residents. There were about 50 apartments in the building. Miriam belonged to an organization since she was nine as she was well-developed and should have been 13 to be a member of the Zionist Movement. Some of the children in her building belonged but she did not like them. It was called Hanoar Hatzeinani (?) and she

liked some of the members. Her father worked in his family's dairy business. The Deutch Dairy was New York stores. They had stores all over town where they sold eggs, butter, cheese, sprats and imported sardines from Norway. Her family supplied the products.

10:00 The milk was already pasteurized. Miriam visited the stores. Her father was partners with his brothers in the business that was started by their parents. Her mother did not work but took care of the home with part-time help. She finds it hard to explain her parents' personalities. Her father was not an introvert nor an extrovert. Miriam spoke more to her mother. She kept busy collecting money for charity. She went to school, did her homework and collected money for charity which she continues to this day. She did not play in the street or with dolls. She was more serious and never had dolls as she was busy with different things. She had no time for toys. Her little sister was completely different as she played with toys and was skinny while Miriam was heavy. Her mother looked different from Miriam as she was pretty with dark hair. Miriam looked more like her father's family. Her first memory is sneaking to an organization although too young for it and sold books for poor people. She explained the charity and people gave her 25 cents.

15:00 Recently she collected a lot for Haiti but the organization closed last year. Her parents knew what she did and were proud of her. She completed seven years of public school and registered for Gymnasium when war broke out. School was a 20-minute walk with other children. Times were difficult for Jews and she was disappointed because the Catholic children went to church on Sunday and were told to hit the Jewish children so she did not walk on Sunday. She came home crying and told her mother the children were hitting her although she was quiet and did not say anything. Her mother responded that their behavior was because she was Jewish. They had separate schools for Jewish children and separate for Polish children. Miriam knew the Polish children in her building and they did not hit her. She stood in line about one-half hour for bread and when it was her turn to get some, they threw her out because she was Jewish. It was a cold night.

20:00 They recognized that she looked Jewish. Lodz was the biggest industrial city of Poland. It had a Gymnasium and higher education. The seven government grades were compulsory and then you had to pay for Gymnasium. Once a week they had religion taught in public school. Her family was not religious. Her father went to Synagogue on holidays. Her parents spoke Yiddish at home and knew Polish and she knew both. She studied Polish in school. In her youth organization, they spoke Polish. There was a big backyard behind the apartment. When she was young, Miriam played with the children there but not when she was older. The community knew her from collecting money for charity. Miriam did not go to the houses of Polish people as the money was for poor people in Israel. There was a disaster in Haiti so sent money to Haiti.

- 25:00 Going to organization meetings made her more aware of world events taught by the leaders. Once Hitler came to power, the meetings stopped and they took away parents. Her father died from hunger. Hitler was in power from '33 to '39 in Germany but she does not recall talking about it at her organization or at home. The radio and the newspaper did not warn them what was waiting for them. The war started and everyone in the apartment had to move to the ghetto. There were sirens telling you to go to the bunkers. Soon the Germans were marching in the street and singing German songs. There was nothing her parents could do as there was no place to run. They had to leave her father's business. They were chased to the ghetto in the dilapidated part of the city and their nice part was for the Germans. Three or four families were placed in one room. It happened soon after the war started. Warsaw and Lodz were the biggest ghettos. There were three families in two little rooms. They had to go downstairs for running water and outside for the toilet. They had indoor plumbing and electricity in their own apartment. In the ghetto they had electricity.
- 30:00 Everyone had to work for bread. They sent her father away to work and he did not return. Her mother died from starvation at 38. She said, "My dear child, I hope one day you will have enough bread to satisfy your hunger." She thought her mother was old at 38. Miriam sewed hooks in the collar of coats for the Germans which were heavy. All the children worked. Her sister worked in a straw room where she made shoes. Her mother died early. They had to finish a certain amount of items as they counted them at the end of the day. The Jews did the counting. Konkovsky (?) was the leader of the ghetto and he had orphan children.
- 35:00 He was an older gentleman with white hair and rode in a carriage with horses which took him all over. The Germans chose him. The people were hungry and starving and did not talk well of anyone. Another family was put in her apartment when her parents died. Her sister made things from straw. Her mother lay on the floor and people picked her up. After the war, Miriam went to the cemetery and saw her mother's name in the Jewish cemetery out of the city. It was a horror. Her mother would wash Miriam's long hair and it froze to the wall and she could not get up until her mother cut off her hair. The hair remained stuck to the wall until summer. The Germans were policing the ghetto. From the beginning, she shared the room with another family.
- 40:00 After he mother died, Miriam took care of her sister who was a skinny, frightened child. Miriam was well-developed. There was a selection in the ghetto and some the Germans took away. Her sister was selected and ran back to her and she told her to go to school while Miriam goes to work. Miriam was alone in the ghetto until '44. Everything was severe as it was so cold as she did not have much clothes or anything to warm up the apartment. They got soup in the factory and one-quarter of a bread to last the week. Most of the people ate the bread in a day and died from hunger. She divided the pieces to last longer. She was hungry, cold and frightened. The Board of Education sent her to

Tallahassee to speak and she hopes it never happens again. She does not know when her sister was taken; does not know the year.

- 45:00 Miriam lived in the same room for five years. It was one flight up in a brick small building. It was not far from work. The factory was a former large hospital in the city. That is where she worked. She was alone and did not get close to anyone. After the war, she met a family who told her that her uncle was alive and led the survivors in Germany. She was liberated in Italy who were the best people in the world. Her ghetto was liquidated in 1944 and she went to Auschwitz and given the tattoo, A27753. There she had to remove her clothes and was frozen and got a small shirt and put into the barracks.
- 50:00 It had three levels of bunks and she got the top one with an opening to the sky where the wind blew so she was cold and hungry. Miriam did not work in Auschwitz. She made face masks for the army against gas but does not recall where she did that. She was tall so was placed on the top bunk with four or five others. It was crowded so if one turned, they all turned. They kept warm being close together. In April '45 they were liberated by the Russians who had nothing to eat so the prisoners had nothing to eat. Whoever went to the pump for water got killed by the Russians. She felt safe on the train for Milan.
- 55:00 She snuck on with a girl friend from Lodz to get away from the Russians. In Milan, they found the Italians were the best people. They rode a regular passenger train. They had no clothes. She came with a boyfriend who she met who took her to meet his parents. He was a Prisoner of War fighting against Mussolini but was not in Auschwitz. Her camp was located near the Italian POW camp. She was supposed to marry him but did not and ran away and sneaked on a train to Rome with a girlfriend. They found an organization that helped survivors. They were given a place in a hospital to stay, the operating room. It was a Jewish organization that helped them. Now she is 89. She learned Italian. The Italian was so nice but they did not understand each other so he took her to the address she was given.
- 60:00 The Polish people were not nice and were told to hit Jews on Sunday after church. She stood in line for bread and when she was next, they pulled her out. She loves the Italians more than any other nationality. Miriam remained there 1 and ½ years and got a visa for America. In '46 or '47 she went from Rome to the US. She was careful to tell the Italian girl how much she likes her as might think her a phony. She feels like she could kiss all the Italians but she is careful so she won't be misunderstood. She has no family so clings to those who understand her. Her uncle is in Israel and she is his only living relative. He wanted her to come and adopt her but life was hard in Israel so he said not to come.
- 65:00 He knew well-to-do people in the US who brought her to the US. Her husband, Abe Fridman, died. He had been in the Lodz Ghetto but they met in Rome and did not come

to the US together. She came first and then he came and they married in '49. Her son is 64 as was born around '50 in New York. Her husband had a good trade as he was a foreman in a big factory. He died at age 52. Her son is fine and married and a good businessman. She once returned to Italy on her way to Israel. Her son was born in the Bronx. She never returned to Lodz. She loved Italy and the people. Miriam feels she was born in the wrong time in the wrong place. She went through torture and her mother died of starvation when Miriam was young and left with her sister who was gassed. You must watch out for anti-Semitism and what people do to others for no good reason, just for their nationality. Through the years, Miriam spoke at different schools and said to watch out and not listen to others.

70:00 During the night, she wakes up and wonders where she is. She tries to help others. She tells teachers and students not to hurt others. She tells them the dangers of anti-Semitism. If you cut her hand, blood will run and it will hurt her the same as anyone else. She never hurt another person, only if someone did something wrong. She lost her whole family. It is important for young people to know what happened to her for no reason, just for her religion. (She shows the tattoo on her arm.) She was given this number in Auschwitz as she stood in line.

74:00