

**Summary of Oral History: Oral history interview with Edith Adlam**

**RG#: RG-50.031.0052**

**This Summary was written by a USHMM Volunteer on 03/2022**

**Estera "Edith" (nee Margolis) Adlam** b. 9/11/1917 Russia – co-founder Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie

Earliest years in Lodz, Poland - went to Paris 2/9/1939 Sorbonne studied economics at Alliance Francaise, had received Bachelor's in Krakow (business academy); discussion on life in pre-war Lodz, Zionist all-girl private school that produced a lot of theater; father owned factory; Edith endured anti-Semitism in Krakow; departs for France and discusses enjoyable pre-war life in Paris; parents and sister Roza visit Edith in Paris for Roza's ear operation in Bordeaux, parents return home, sister remains; Aug 1939 France's borders close preventing Edith and sister's evacuation home, Edith has her final conversation with father Max who along with Edith's mother Mania were eventually killed at Majdanek; Nov 1939 Edith acquires jobs - typist in Bordeaux plane factory, teaching French, and serves as companion to wealthy woman; June 1940 many Bordeaux citizens want to leave, most to US; sharing room with French lady who is concerned about Jews being seen coming to their apt; two Jewish men in Polish uniforms give advance warning that Germans would enter Bordeaux; Edith and sister flee to Biarritz then to a small town near Avignon, Edith works the fields, sister works as seamstress, were paid in food; Edith and sister forced to register in Marseilles; learning parents had been in Lodz ghetto, arrested because Germans wanted father's factory, then escaped to Warsaw but forced into ghetto; Edith's trip to Marseilles, witnessing Germans grabbing Jews off the street; Edith goes through appendix operation; Aug 25 or 26, 1942 order issued to take all Jews, sister goes into hiding with French farmers, Edith returns to hospital; later hiding in Perpignan room that six shared; had given money to man to assist passage from Spain to Portugal to US but instead arrested by French Gendarme, Edith and sister ponder what their parents would think of their well-educated daughters sharing cell with prostitutes; with other Jews, led through streets, having to sleep on hay bales; while transported on buses to Camp Rivesaltes, Edith endures food poisoning, driver refuses to stop; in Camp de Gurs, Edith forced to compile deportation lists, attempted to thwart by begging camp leader; having to eat beans full of worms, grateful for the protein; Edith reports that some German Jews were hostile towards them but others kind, art lessons obtained from another prisoner, sometimes there would be singing; sisters liberated from Gurs April 1943; return to previous apt, with war not yet over, landlord had built extra exit door where sisters could escape into the woods or French woman that sheltered sisters only at night; working as English tutor; June 1944, US troops land (St. Tropez), sisters obtain bicycles, travel to Bollène Aug 1944; jubilation seeing American GI's, people were coming out of hiding, sister kisses GI; sisters evacuate to Marseille Oct 1944, obtain jobs in same office, work 7 days a week; sister marries GI Aug 1945; sisters' challenges obtaining papers to US; 3/1946, Edith enters US, move to Chicago, various jobs until 1964 joining international banking until retirement; Feb 1952 marriage until his passing 1970, no children; sisters' mother had 4 sisters/4 brothers and instilled closeness as a family so Edith credits her survival to the love of her sister; final thoughts on enduring abuse of the Holocaust.