

## **RG-50.031.0092**

### **Interviewees Regina Cooper, Emilia Dragunsky, and Lynn Weiss**

#### **Summary**

Interview with mother Regina Cooper b.12/23/1923 in Poland & daughter Emilia Dragunsky b.9/30/1944 & granddaughter Lynn (nee Blaustein) Weiss b. 1968; Regina's parents had clothing store, 2 sons, Regina/twin sister, youngest of 3 daughters; 3 room apt "very comfortable"; Polish school, in evening, Jewish education; observant home, grandfather (rabbi); enjoying Jewish & non-Jewish friends; fond memories growing up, experienced little anti-Semitism; studying sewing; German invasion, Jews go into hiding; ghetto "one big room with 5-6 families but could go to buy something"; forced to wear yellow star; working in field, planting; father dies, "lucky one not having to see what happened to everyone." (buried Jewish cemetery); during round-ups of ghettos, sister's (nurse) friend's father (owner of hospital) sheltered family in hospital attic; boyfriend (later husband) brought Regina/sister to bunker rented from uncle's Ukrainian friend "17 people in one room"; sister rejects Ukrainian's marriage proposal, returns to ghetto; Fall 1943 "My whole family was gone"; passed time in bunker knitting, "small piece bread a day...got along well."; 1944 liberation, emerging from bunker, "Light bothered us, couldn't walk. Russian soldiers good to us.";

**Interview with Emilia:** post-war (she had been conceived in bunker), "born sickly but fighting to live...father called me 'symbol of liberation.'"; family move to Ząbkowice Śląskie, Poland; father becomes chief economist; Emilia, not having nutrients during mother's pregnancy, a sickly child; brother's birth (1948), experiencing "lot of anti-Semitism" as only Jewish family in town; attended Breslau college "incognito as Polish girl" but in evenings, participated in Jewish groups; worked in medical research; husband of Mom's aunt (had lost all his family in Holocaust) sent ticket to Emilia to come to Israel; Emilia's PTSD as child of Holocaust survivor, reporting it exceeds mother's because mother had stable childhood (Emilia's later compounded by marrying survivor also with PTSD); prior to marriage, Emilia's arrival to Israel, learning sponsor's "well-intention to marry me to Orthodox," Emilia enters kibbutz; getting job in hospital; marriage to Morris Blaustein; immigration/US (1966); her mother's marriage in bunker; reunification with mother/youngest brother; Regina learning oldest brother had been taken to Jewish cemetery, forced to dig own grave; Emilia becomes respiratory therapist; built clothing business; father's jailing under Poland's Communists, released; mother finding US work (seamstress \$2 hr.), gratitude "country of opportunity"; experiencing Chicago for first time; daughter/son born; brother obtains PhD /molecular biology; husband dies 1993, father dies 1994, Emilia's 2nd marriage 1998 to Boris Dragunsky;

**Interview with Lynn:** first hearing of parents experiences as Holocaust survivors; with law passed in Illinois that Holocaust be taught, father came to her school and shared his experiences at Bergen-Belsen, their initial fear of liberators until chaplain softly sung Yiddish song; Lynn returning to Poland with father (he youngest of 7 siblings-only his sister & 2 brothers survived); Lynn believes Holocaust education provides backdrop, reminders to appreciate current life, "understanding who you are...appreciate others' struggles - value of life."; family photographs.