

RG-50.031.0103

Summary

Renee Friedman (nee Schwartz), Rzeszow (near Krakow) Poland b. 9/1/1932 to prosperous family (construction); older sister (Leah) & 2 older brothers (Marvin, Sam); happy earliest memories of family, holidays; public school ed, rabbi trained children in home after-school; extended family scattered around US soliciting Renee's family-obtained immigration papers but after hearing of difficulties finding work in States, sold papers; on Renee's bday 9/1/37, memories running from bombings, 3 wks German occupation; Jews ordered across river to Russian-occupied Poland; father (spoke German) with horse & buggy assisted elderly, one assaulted by German; Renee forced to sign register in Russia (under German rule), given option to "become Communist" or return home; mother suffered from blisters in throat, choking, imprisoned doctor assisted; (summer 1940) crammed on cattle trains, many suffocated in 6wk transport to Siberia (received little bread, water); those who had opted to return home "ended up in concentration camps"; father's infection; family placed in barracks in Siberia (in woods); parents/older brother/sister slave labor, cutting down trees to make gum from sap; many died from TB, infected mosquito bites; father grew potatoes; able to attend school; older brother & friend getting lost in woods, nearly freezing to death (friend's foot amputated); school's Communist indoctrination (wearing red tie/uniform, singing about Stalin), told no one else in world would assist them; brother Sam jailed for seeking work in another place because they were "giving more bread," his forced labor in ammunition plant, released after falling severely ill "barely walking"; family slept in one room in barracks, but had little stove, lived on potato soup (barracks had a well), able to make latkes; (1944) after 4 yrs., sent to a place 100km from Novosibirsk in Siberia called Tsuan [PH]; (post-war) her sister's trauma in family's efforts fleeing to safety; fled to Stettin, Poland, where they were still killing Jews; sister & boyfriend got into trouble & they were shot, father having to dig grave for his daughter; fled to Berlin American zone; 1947-1949 lived in Ulm, Germany; family in US brought parents, Renee, & brother Marvin (brother Sam stayed in Poland-married); excitement seeing Statue of Liberty, extended family.