

## RG-50.031.0122

### Summary

**Ida (nee Paluch) Kersz** born 5/3/1939 twin brother Adam, sister Gita (9 yrs. older), parents (mother Esther); Sosnowiec ghetto, in a selection line, Ida's mother flees, Ida & siblings witness her suicide jumping from high floor; 3 yr. old Ida/siblings rescued by aunt (of mother's 13 siblings, only 4 survive), father had volunteered for Polish Army; (Christmas Eve) aunt passes Ida across barbed wire to Polish Christian man (later called "Polish father") he & pregnant wife Josephine (later called "Polish mother") take in Ida as "someone's out-of-wedlock child"; Ida baptized, name change; Polish father shot, outed for underground work; impoverished, Ida & Polish mother move in with father-in-law (alcoholic) who abuses Ida & Polish mother - they flee & to survive, they sell cigarettes, vodka on train where they witness several killings by Nazis; a memory later surfaces for Ida (1995) triggered while walking past a train station, remembers witnessing a massacre; another painful memory that later surfaces is where Ida & Polish mother had been taken to Gestapo, but released; liberation-cheerful memory of Russian tanks entering town; Polish mother solicits apartment from Jewish Committee & received under condition Ida is brought back to Jewish faith; at time, Ida held anti-Semitic beliefs learned from neighbors, e.g. "Jews have horns, kidnap Polish children to make matzo"; Polish mother brings Ida to Temple where Ida flees believing Polish mother has betrayed her, Ida's story spreads in town; bio father returns from Russia, learns of wife's suicide; through Jewish Committee, a Dr. Goldberg reunites Ida with father who thought he was dead; now living with alcoholic grandfather (Polish mother, also now an alcoholic, no where to be found), Ida is fearful of bio father-he's proves his identity by showing photograph of her mother; alcoholic grandfather demands/receives large reward from bio father for having sustained Ida's life; screaming & spewing anti-Semitism, Ida's father has to force Ida to leave with him-he takes Ida to Jewish orphanage (Zabrze) where she finds happiness with other Jewish orphans; Ida's father (now remarried) returns, takes Ida to Breslau where she enters Jewish school; step-mother, whose children had been killed by Hitler, angrily raises Ida because Ida had survived Holocaust; alcoholic Polish grandfather shows up at Ida's school, Ida happily reunites with Polish mother on Spring/Summer vacations (with bio father's approval); father/step-mother/Ida immigrate to Haifa; still unable to get along with father/step-mother, Ida (now 18) moves in with bio uncle's family; Ida marries, has daughter (1959), learns Hebrew, moves to Netanya; 1963 US immigration, learns English; 1976 while supporting her Polish mother financially, Ida brings her to US for visit; with help of Christian Godmother, Ida is able to get Polish mother recognized as a rescuer; Polish mother passes away in 1989 (her daughter also an alcoholic, dies 5 yrs. later); work/jobs found in US; divorce; remarriage to survivor (Samuel Kersz); Ida's introduction to Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois (HMFII), volunteer work, fundraising, assisting "Hidden Children" 1991 conference ("expected only 200, 2000 showed up!"), leads to reunification with lost twin brother Adam (1995) who had been raised Christian, married Christian, raised children Christian; Adam visits Ida in US for 3 mo., decides he can't return to Poland/family, stays in US, his marriage/divorce, eventually Adam's Polish children begin speaking to him; discussion re: HMFII early politics/key figures; Ida's volunteer work sharing her Holocaust story with children ("hundreds of times"); Ida never found her older sister; further

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stories on development of HMFJ; photographs of Ida's family in Poland & in US, photograph of Polish boxer Mark Weinberg, photographs of early HMFJ supporters.