

## **RG-50.031.0172**

### **Summary**

**Part 1:** Barbara Steiner, co-founder Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center, was born April 6, 1925 to Orthodox Jewish parents, two older brothers, older brother leaves home 1940, presumed killed in the Holocaust; father's business taken by Nazis, brother beaten & remains traumatized so Barbara begins teaching children to make few cents; father (a scholar) dies from starvation; Barbara's pain having to deny her starving brother a sandwich because she was being paid to bring it to another, brother dies; Barbara recounts horrific rumors about Treblinka; at 16, friend denies Barbara shelter because she has lice; fleeing Nazis into a basement filled with feathers that obscure and save her; enters Warsaw Ghetto; uprising begins mid-1942, they build bunkers; 5/19/1943 first day of Passover, the imprisoned blow up two tanks at broom factory entrance, Germans demand surrender, promising peaceful transfer but prisoners resist; Barbara survives ghetto's burning, 5/6/1943, transfer out of broom factory to selections "a tremendous amount killed," reports Barbara; 2 day/2 night train cattle car transport, crammed in with no water/ food/toilet, little air-when cars open, half are dead; miles of forced walk to Majdanek death camp, ordered to undress, showered, naked in front of SS holding whips, Barbara later learns showers were next to gas chambers; forced labor carrying "piece of soil with grass," acc to Barbara, if it fell apart, beaten to death; a girl attempts escape, captured; SS to set an example, force prisoners to watch girl's hours-long hanging; every day at Majdanek were selections, the sick taken first, Barbara closes interview with "If there is a hell, it doesn't look as bad as Majdanek"; transfer to 1943 forced labor ammunition factory; 1945 liberation;

**Part 2:** Barbara shares stories of her immediate & extended family, their education; at only 14 yrs. old, war breaks out; family's chaos endured, including Warsaw Ghetto but father still has devotion to education "What is in your mind, they cannot" (take from you), Barbara recalls; starvation in Warsaw Ghetto, Barbara catches typhus, parents catch it from her, orphaned at age 14; 1941 deportations of Jews out of Warsaw, a town-crier "thought to be crazy" going around Warsaw "screaming" (acc to Barbara) about killings in camps, "No one believed that the most educated, cultured country of Germany were capable of murder"; further recollections on Warsaw's Jews taken to Treblinka; memories of the imprisoned in ghetto organizing because they "wanted history to know they fought, that they didn't go like sheep," acc to Barbara; 6-7 months at Majdanek 6-7 death camp; transfer to Skarzysko-Kamienna concentration camp, transfer to Tschenstochau concentration camp; 1/16/1945 liberation; marries in Poland Arnold Steiner 1/20/45; son born 1948, 1950 couple's Israel immigration; 1942 US immigration, attends bookkeeping school, learns English; settles in Skoakie, Ill. At tape 54:00 until end, Barbara discusses co-founding and formation of the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center; discussion on other IHMEC co-founders, its earliest leaders/staff; Barbara ends by referring to IHMEC as "my proudest achievement, besides my children."