

CHANA GOLDSTEIN
BORN: LODZ, POLAND
1920

Chana Goldstein was born in 1920 in Lodz, Poland, She had a happy childhood with three older brothers and two younger sisters and a younger brother. Her father had a jewelry store and, with a partner, operated a movie house. He died when she was seven years old. Her mother had moved to Lodz from Vilna and had a grocery store and a catering business. Chana got married when she was 18 years old, and her daughter was only one month old when they had to move into the ghetto. Her husband fled to Warsaw and thus escaped some of the killings but returned a week later quite sick. In the ghetto, she worked sewing shoes by hand for the German army. In 1942, the Germans took the old people and the children, including her two year old baby, to be killed, Then she worked the night shift in a laundry, while her husband worked in a leather factory during the day. He could arrange that she joined him and then she also worked in the leather factory sewing shoes after learning to operate a sewing machine.

In 1942, her mother and other children were taken away; they all were shot. In 1944, they were moved to another part of the ghetto to concentrate the Jews. Every day, there were selection to determine who could continue working and who would be killed. Her husband was in poor health and kept hiding. At that time, they lived in a basement. Later that year, they were taken to Auschwitz by train in cattle cars. Her hair was cut off and after a shower she was taken to some barracks. Several times during the interview, she mentions the lack of food and its atrocious quality, but she was a strong person and miraculously never got sick. Her husband committed suicide. After nine days, she was transported again in cattle cars, to work in Bremen. At first, they had to clean up streets after air raids and later she had to wash floors. Until their liberation, they had no knowledge about the progress of the war.

In 1945 she and a larger group of woman had to walk to the concentration Camp Bergen-Belsen, where she was severely hurt by the rifle butt of an SS man. That was ten days before their liberation by the English and American armies. At first they had difficulties swallowing food; all got sick and many contracted typhoid fever. A doctor gave her some sleeping pills and she slept for three days.

Of her 100 relatives, she is the only survivor. In 1946, after the war, she married again someone from the camp. Her husband is a butcher and they stayed on in Germany until 1949 when they went to Israel. In 1952 her son was born but contracted polio; it was in the last year before the Salk vaccine became available. Because of him, she went to the United States in 1958 with her son and daughter who then were 9 and 5 years old. Her husband had a cousin in the United States and had gone two years earlier. Her son now lives in Toronto and her daughter is in Buffalo. Both are married and have children.

She still gets very emotional when she talks about her experience but is thankful to be alive and to have her family.