

ANNA POST
BORN: POLAND

This tape presents a lecture by Anna Post to Genesee-Wyoming schools. Her introduction is missing on the tape. She states that it is too late for herself and fellow survivors but it is not too late for the children.

When the war started she was 16 years old and in Junior High school. She did not believe what would happen and thought that Poland merely would be occupied. She had a happy childhood as the youngest of three sisters and three brothers. After 1940 they had to live ten persons in a room, food was scarce and they had to wear a star, but things soon got worse. People were taken away to unknown destinations and she could not believe that she would never see them again. One day, some had to report for forced labor at 7 A.M. and when they returned in the afternoon, nobody in the city was left, and she never saw her parents again.

One day she went out and was found by two Polish men who hid her on a pile of straw but it soon became too dangerous and she went on to Krakow where she obtained forged papers. After two months she was arrested by the Gestapo, beaten all over and then taken to Auschwitz, a two-day trip in an overcrowded cattle car. She shows photographs with inmates in their striped uniform and of her tattoo. Purpose of the camp was to make people lose their self esteem and give up all hope for survival.

They had to get up at 4:30 A.M. Counting of the prisoners started at 5 A.M. and they had to stand barefoot, sometimes for three hours, until everyone was accounted for. In the barracks there were three tiers of boards and they had to sleep ten on each board so that if one moved all the others also had to move. She shows the cap that she wore in the camp. Once she got sick like many others. There was no hospital, only Dr. Mengele in one of the barracks. She had high fever for two weeks.

They believed that no one in the free world knew. Once, a friend escaped and they hoped she could get out some information but one month later she was caught, brought back to the camp and hanged in the presence of the others. She still remembers the smell in the air from blood and burning of people. An electrified barbed wire run around the camp and they kept each other from touching it.

There was only a little bread and soup and they had to stand in line for hours to get it. Dreaming about meals and singing kept them going. In September 1944 people from the Warsaw ghetto uprising arrived and told about their experiences. There was also an uprising of the people who worked at the crematoria in Birkenau but none survived. She remembers Dr. Mengele who had some taken to a special block and they only heard people crying for water.

In January 1945 the camp was evacuated and they were marched away. They had to sleep in barracks or on the snow and those who could not keep up were shot. After six days they reached the German border and were taken by cattle cars to Ravensburg where many spent ten days in a tent. She was assigned to work in a munitions factory and saved by a friend from the kitchen. In May 1945 they were liberated but many more died by eating too much. In the town, the people pretended not to have known anything. In spite of their feelings, they did no harm to anyone because the Germans had been unable to take away their humanity. They could not believe that they were free and it was an unbelievable experience to embrace a tree.

She went back to Poland by horse and buggy but was afraid of the Russians and traveled only by night. In her hometown and subsequently in Krakow, she could not find anybody. She asks what would you have done in a situation where you are completely alone? She still has nightmares and always will remember.

In a following brief question and answer period, she talks about her forged papers, that she obtained a high school diploma and went on to the University where she did not mind being some years older than the other students. She got married and had a son and a daughter. They tried to leave but could not obtain a passport until after Stalin died. She also mentions that the German camp was even worse than Auschwitz because there was even less food.