

-TITLE-BELA GOLDBERG
-I_DATE-
-SOURCE-DALLAS MEMORIAL CENTER FOR HOLOCAUST STUDIES
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1:00 My name is Bela Goldberg. I was born in Erzine (ph), Poland. I had three sisters. They all died in the Holocaust.

2:00 My father was a tailor. My mother was a homemaker. I went to school. There were no Jewish schools at that time so I was tutored for Hebrew at home. I was raised in a Jewish home. Everyone then believed in Jewishness. If it was not for Hitler, we would still be in the Old Country.

3:00 I had a good home and good parents. We couldn't afford a tutor, but we made do. There were no Jewish schools, because even before Hitler, the Poles destroyed them.

4:00 Things changed even before the Germans came, before the ghetto. My father used to create clothes and sell them from town to town. Sometimes the Polish would come in and take from my father without paying. One time I asked a German officer for help, but he just told them: "Go ahead, take it from them". This defines the relationship that the Polish and the Germans had with each other.

5:00 Soon we started to understand what it was all about. Eventually we were not allowed in stores. The Poles and Germans united against us. I did not want to return to Poland. I have such bad memories of that place and of the people.

6:00 I remember that I was home when the Germans came. We were forced into a ghetto. They took my father to Svinkabeit (ph), Germany to work. My father went because my Uncle was too weak to go. I used to work for the Germans (unpaid) in a factory. There, some of the Germans would give us bread, butter or sugar. If they did not, we would steal.

7:00 I had no idea what was going to happen. We heard knocking. We heard rumours. We heard about people getting killed and raped by the Germans. But we could not anticipate. One time I went to visit my father when he was working.

8:00 He had been sewing clothes for the Germans. Some soldiers saw me and they instructed their dogs to attack me. The dog bit my leg. But, I was so petrified that I did not notice until I got home.

9:00 There were no doctors, no antibiotics in the ghetto. My mother just tore a rag. Somehow we were able to survive like this.

10:00 I was put in another ghetto. Both my cousin and I (she also survived the war) were placed in the same bunker. We drank snow to survive. There was a Jewish man in our bunker, who was working for the Germans. He yelled at us that " we should not be afraid to wander off and collect snow. Ne were going to die anyway".

11:00 My father left me his clock. He wanted me to have something that I could sell in order to survive. I never saw him again, except in Auschwitz. My last vision of him was when he was walking towards the crematorium. I had sent bread with a friend of mine, who saw him everyday.

12:00 I saw my father through the glass of the crematorium. He looked terrible, but I recognized him by the gold bridge in his mouth. My friend confirmed my suspicions. I had seen him right before his death. I was happy about that.

13:00 My two sisters were taken to the crematorium also. My mother had been sent to Treblinka when we were in the ghetto..

14:00 I should go back to the ghetto and explain..In 1939 they took us from the synagogue to the ghetto. One day, however, they started gathering all of the Jews from the ghetto. They made us put all of our jewelry into these large cases.

15:00 My father and I and some others went into the attic to hide ourselves. My mother didn't want to go because she wanted to get some belongings. They (the Gestapo) found her and sent her to a death camp. I think it was Treblinka.

16:00 I had a sister. She was a blonde. Everyone called her a little shikze. Because she looked like an Aryan, she would escape from the ghetto and find us bread in town. She also was quite a fighter. The family that we were living with called her a Bolshevik.

17:00 In the Ghetto my sister and I both got sick with Typhus. I had such a terrible fever and I lost my hair. Once my father went out of apartment to get us ice. Ice was used in the old country to cool fevers. But, as my father went to the water pump to collect the ice, a German guard beat him up. Cruelty.

18:00 Eventually we all became ill from typhus. We had been sleeping in the same bed. We survuved somehow. We did not have doctors or sanitary things. Everything was dirty. It was a miracle that we survived.

19:00 Like my mother, we were sent to Treblinka. My cousins died there. Many times I thought that I was going to die. I was in the crematorium three times. I remember walking from Meindeshitz (ph) to Auschwitz. My father, my sister and I would hold hands in order to prevent separation.

20:00 My father bribed a man to lead us to safety, but he deserted us midway. We were left in the rain, huddled underneath a tree. We could not cry because we were afraid that the Germans would hear us.

21:00 We wandered to a friend's home, but they would not let us in. We were so shocked and hurt. Our own home was cold and deserted. We had no firewood to keep warm. My father became sick. His knees became so bad that we were forced to find a doctor.

22:00 We found a sort of a "healer" to come look at my father. He took crushed flowers and wrapped it around my father's knee. This healer specialized with old medicines. My father got better, too. Eventually, however, we were forced to return to the ghetto. We could not survive.

23:00 We remained in the ghetto for only a short time. They soon transported us to Treblinka. We were shipped there by train. It took one day and one night to get there. The walls of the train were wet from our breath. After one night at the camp I was separated from my sisters (because they were younger than me)

24:00 I could not sleep because I was worried about them. I remember walking out of the barracks and seeing a Polish woman. I asked her if she knew where my sisters were. She said: "Yes. You see that fire way out there? Your two sisters are over there. Children don't survive".

25:00 My sisters were ages ten and eight. I was twelve. In the morning, I gathered information from those prisoners, who had been in Treblinka a long time. They told me that the Germans dig a huge hole, throw the children in it, douse them with gasoline, and set them on fire.

26:00 I felt like there was no way out. People who tried to escape were hanged. We were forced to see their bodies. I had a blonde girlfriend (from the ghetto) that I once recognized at Auschwitz.

27:00 I knew that she was a Jew, but she was with the political prisoners at Auschwitz. Political prisoners were treated better than the Jews. They were distinguishable by the red SS number on their forearms. The ink they used for the Jews was blue.

28:00 She told me that she had tried to disguise herself as an Aryan. She had been waitressing in a restaurant and the manager had become smitten by her. Another waitress there, however, became jealous and reported her--saying that she was a Jew. She denied it and was, thus, imprisoned as a political prisoner.

28:00 We became close friends. I worked with her sorting through the clothes that arrived in the camps. We had to search the inner-seams for hidden valuables. Sometimes, we would exchange the diamonds or gold that we found, for bread or sugar that the civilians brought.

29:00 This was in Auschwitz. Eventually she had the opportunity to work in a German factory in town. I encouraged her to go. I said to her, " Get out of here, the further the way the better". I didn't see her until after I was liberated.

30:00 That is a good story. I was on a train one day--traveling. As I got off the platform, I heard a woman screaming my name. I did not know who it could be. My entire family was dead. Who on this earth knew my name? Then I recognized her.

31:00 She had seen me through the glass on the train. We held each other. We were crying. She took me home with her. She was married. She gave me a home, held me. She was so kind to me.

32:00 Interviewer asks Bela to talk a little more about her experiences in the camp. I was in the crematorium three times. There was a long road to it. Sometimes they would bring us down the road and then just turn us around. Just to be cruel. The third time, however, I was meant to die.

33:00 I was standing inside the walls of the crematorium. I was already naked, looking for the gas, but it never came. The crematorium had broken down.

34:00 I soon became afraid to stay in the barracks. Doctors would come in and clear out the sick. If you had a white tongue, you were sent to the crematorium. If you had a red one, you were sent to work.

35:00 My cousin was responsible for saving my life. She took beatings because she tried to protect me.

36:00 I was in Auschwitz a long time. I was there until the end. I remember hearing the airplanes. We heard rumours about the Germans losing the war. But, everytime the Germans heard that the Americans were approaching, they would send us further and further away.

37:00 They sent me to Czechoslovakia. I think it was to Wizevath (ph). There, I worked the night shift. One night I broke into the cellar of the factory, where there was food.

38:00 I took a wooden rod and put a nail on it. That is what I used to break into it. When the officials found out, however, they interrogated everyone for hours in one room. Everybody was quiet. No one wanted to tell on me. Finally, they let everyone go.

39:00 I was in Czechoslovakia at the time of our liberation. I was there approximately one year. Maybe one or two weeks before we were freed, we heard that the Soviets were approaching. The Germans began packing their stuff. They didn't tell us anything. They did not take us to work, either.

40:00 Trucks, carrying Russian soldiers, arrived and told us that we were to be liberated. We were afraid to leave the gate. People began appearing and they gave us food.

41:00 A lot of people died because they overate...especially the Hungarians. We didn't think about what we were eating. It never occurred to us that fatty foods could be fatal.

42:00 The Czech government gave us food stamps to survive. The Russian soldiers were good to us. They could not rape us, because we were protected by a Jewish-Russian officer.

43:00 From there, I went to Paris. I heard that I had some cousins there. I eventually got married and had children.

44:00 Everything about the Holocaust was bad. You could expect nothing good from either the Poles or the Germans. Ten years ago, I had a Polish couple visit me. I was asked to help them out because I spoke the language. I did help them, but in my heart I hated them. I am the type of

45:00 person who believes that you must help someone if they ask for it. That is why I helped them. These were second generation Poles. I still couldn't help hating them.

46:00 I did speak to the wife of this couple. She told me that it wasn't her generation's fault. But Poles have always been bad to the Jewish people. After the war, even after we suffered, they raped us, beat us, stole from the little we had.

47:00 I was in the liberation camps for approximately two months. The government no longer wanted to support us. They had been very good to us. They had given us food, clothes a housing. They gave us jobs, too. Some people, didn't want to work. I, on the other hand, knew how to sew. I ended up making raincoats.

48:00 We would see the Jewish-Russian soldiers a lot. We gave the soldiers some civilian clothes, and this is how they escaped from the Russian army. I am actually still in contact with one of these soldiers. He is in Israel now. Another one is in Canada, but I have not seen him.

49:00 I returned to Germany and looked for survivors in my family. I heard that I had cousins alive in Paris.

58:00 My cousin was transported to Bergen-Belsen about the same

time that I was sent to Czechoslovakia. After liberation, she found her brother in Paris. I went there also.

1:00:00 There was this Hungarian man, who helped people get to various countries. At that time, you needed passports--which we did not have. He was basically a smuggler. When I was traveling with him, however, we got caught. The Germans put us in prison. They took everything we were carrying...our photographs! After 3-5 months, I don't exactly remember, they let us go.

1:07:52 I met my husband in Paris...around 1947. Paris was also devastated from the war. They had their troubles too.

1:10:00 I was shocked to be surrounded by people. I felt a little guilty for surviving. I couldn't cry. I cry more now. I didn't have the strength to cry then. It's like a dream now.

1:16:00 I was angry that I survived and I lost my family. I had a hard time when I had my first son. I had difficulty raising him. The doctor told me that I had to come to terms with my past. Many survivors have a hard time coming to terms with themselves.

1:23:00 I was in Paris from 1947-1959. In 1959 I went to the United States. I look at the Holocaust now as if it were a dream and a miracle. The people who survived were spared by a miracle. Nothing good happened..all bad.

1:25:00 I got married and had two children. We had to start out alive. When you are younger you do not have any obligations. I gave [my children] all that I had in me.

1:27:00 I have terrible dreams at night. I make my husband go downstairs and make sure there are no Germans there. I wake up nights in a pool of sweat.

1:29:00 The Holocaust made me appreciate what I have. People have families here, people who help you out. I don't have that advantage. It wasn't easy for me. I had no one to help me.

1:30:00 My husband was in the Russian army, liberating people. He had been shot in the leg. He still cannot bend it. It is two inches shorter than his other leg. He was given an award by Stalin.

1:32:00 I had very little patience when I was raising my children. I wanted to give them the best things possible, but I didn't have the money. I came to the United States for them. I just did not have patience. Now, however, we are improving our communication between our selves.

1:34:00 We have an understanding now. I do recognize that their bodies have missed a certain amount of support, which I could not give them at the time. We understand each other now and we look towards the future, not the past.

1:35:00 This generation should learn about the Holocaust. Jews suffered in W.W. I too. We survived then. We survive now. We WILL survive again. At night, I have a lot of memories.

1:36:54 I cannot forget them. The way I am, I am thankful that I am alright.

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