

RAE FREISINGER PHOENIX

1. I was born in Lithuania in a small town. My father died when I was a baby, I had two sisters, Eda and Sheila. My mother owned a shoe store . She gave us a good Jewish education.

1. I wanted to stop my education and go to Palestine. I went to visit my aunt in a nearby town and went to designer school there. I lived there a few years.

1. Then I went to Kovna and go a job there. I met my husband there. In 1939 the Russiand came to Kovna. My mother and sister joined me in Kovna, we took an apartment. In 1941 I married. My sister also married then.

1. In 1941 we went to the opera, the Germans took over. We hid in a basement overnight. We decided to run away to the Russian border. The Germans blocked the border with parachutes.

1. We went back home to Kovna. We passed Slabotka, a big Orthodox Jewish Yeshiva. They had cut off the heads of three rabbis and put their heads in the windows. We were given the yellow star and were not allowed to walk on the sidewalk, only on the street.

1. They put us in a ghetto. They put us in line and walked us to work in a line. They beat the people who did not obey. Every few weeks they rounded us up in the ghetto, to the right, to the left, death or life and they killed many.

1. My husband dug a hole for us to hide. The bed was above the hole. We survived until 1944. We slept underground with four families. It was very quiet, one man peeked out to see what was going on and the Nazis caught us and picked us up. They put us in line to take us to the train.

1. The Nazis took my mother because she was 59 years old. They pushed us into the cattle car and it took 2 days to get to Poland. It was awful. When we arrived in Studthoff there were high piles of shoes and clothes.

1. We were so frightened. They took away all the men. They took the women inside, ordered us to take off our clothes. Each woman was examined to see if she had any gold hidden. They took us to another room with bunk beds. If they didn't like what we did they beat us.

1. Again they told us to take our clothes off. Three SS men, one side the cremetoria, others put your clothes on and sent us to work. They brought us to a big field.

1. Every morning there was a whislt, line up, took a count. Another whistle, line up to get water, another whistle line up for coffe and a slice of bread which was all the food for the day.

1. The Nazis and we were the only people. We dug bunkers for the soldiers. On the way to work, people would drop dead. Where did I get the energy to do the work? I wanted to live.

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1. We worked for the Wehrmacht. One time I went to the latrine and rested and a soldier saw me with his binocular and three me on a pile of stones.
1. The Russian Army was coming. They took us on a march. Whoever cannot work, go on a car. All on the car were killed. They brought us to a big farm, to a barn and kept us there for a few days. They were going to kill us but the Russian Army arrived and saved us.
1. The Nazis ran away. The Russians helped us, they told us to take food from the Germans on the farm. Some ate so much, they died. The Russians asked us where we wanted to go.
1. We wanted to go home. They took us to Lodz, they brought us to the station to wait for a train. Some Jewish Russian soldiers told us they would take us to forced labor camp. Go to the city. There will be a Jewish Committee who will help you.
1. We went to the town, to the Committee. They gave us bread, we slept on the floor. In the morning, I was free. I found a market. I met a lady whose husband was on the Committee. I made clothes for her and her friends. She found me an apartment for myself and my sister.
1. The lady told me my husband was alive in Berlin. He was an interpreter. There were no trains, no buses. I left my sister in Lodz. I went to the station where the soldiers' trains go. I jumped between the two cars and traveled to Berlin that way. I found my husband. It took a few days.
1. We cried when we found each other. We went back to Lodz. UNRRA helped us. We came to Austria. Roosevelt did not allow anyone in the US. Truman opened the doors and we came to America. I came to NY through UNRRA.
1. I had some Landsleit in Chicago. They were very good to us. They got us an apartment. My husband started working, I had a son and we were very happy in Chicago. We had a clothing store, I did the alterations. My son who has a PHd. married a wonderful Jewish woman, they have 2 beautiful children.
1. Five years ago my husband died. No, I am not tattooed, number was on our clothes. My sister survived, her husband was killed. She died at 38 due to heart illness incurred in the camps. My son lives in San Francisco. He teaches in the university, his wife is a physical therapist.
1. I was freed March 10, 1945. I came to the US in 1949. My husband was working for the Jewish Family Service with UNRRA. In the DP camps we were happy because we had a future and we were free and we knew it was temporary.
1. In the ghetto my husband hid jewels in a hole. The Nazis had dogs searching .

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1. They blew the whistle to get us in line to march to work. On the way I saw some carrots and potatoes in the field. I ran from the line to grab them. The Nazis used leather straps to hit. I have blisters on my body. I took the pain for the food.

1. Work consisted of digging. When I was liberated by the Russians I was skin and bones, a skeleton. The Russians came with us to the German farm and we took food, we didnt ask. Many got sick and died from eating too much.

1. Some Russian soldiers raped women. We left the farm and they took us to Lodz in their trucks. The Russians treated us well. My husband was freed by the Americans in Berlin. My husband grabbed some potatoes from a field and the Germans stood him between two gates all night as punishment.

1. When I was in the ghetto I was newly married and found I was pregnant. If you went to a hospital, you didnt come out alive. I had an abortion by the Jewish doctor , without medication or instruments. It was bad..

1. At the beginning of the Ghetto, they asked for 500 young men to come forward for a special job. I told my husband not to go, they will kill you. They killed the cream of the young men at the very beginning.

1. First they told me to dig a hole, walk on a board above it, were shot and fell into the hole. My sisters husband dug a hole and escaped . A Lithuanian reported him and the Germans killed him.

1. They had an Action for the children. They surrounded the ghetto and picked the children out. Took them in buses with music playing very loud. They took the blood from the children for the German soldiers.

1. All in the Kovna ghetto were taken to concentration camps. They bombed the ghetto.

1. I have one cousin who survived and is living in Israel. I have another cousin who ran away to Palestine very early and survived.

1. I hope the future generation will learn from what happened to us and that they will have a better life.