

HOLOCAUST ARCHIVE PROJECT

Name of Interviewee	SALLY RETTMAN		
Name of Interviewer	Michael Weiss	Date	8/1/84
Name of Abstractor	Judy Levendula	Date	12/30/87

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Sally Rettman was 16 years old when the Nazis invaded her home town of Bedzin in Poland, in 1939.

Her father, who was in the textile business, died suddenly in 1942. The following year, her mother was taken to Auschwitz and killed.

From 1939 to 1943, Sally worked and lived in first one ghetto, then another. Then she was moved to Greenberg, a labor camp, until 1944.

Sally married Yakov (Jack) Rettman in 1943 and lived in a ghetto with him and his family. When they both lived and worked in Greenberg, the labor camp, they were not allowed to see or talk to each other.

By the time the work camp was evacuated, and they had marched to the Czech border at the end of 1944, they had dwindled from 1,500 girls to 120. Sally, her two remaining sisters, and two friends escaped the transport that was moving from Greenberg. They were housed and taken care of by a Mrs. Schmidt living in Langesdorf. At the end of that time, American soldiers came to liberate them.

Finally, Sally found her husband back in Bedzin. After almost five years in Hungary, then Germany, they came to New York in 1949.

ABSTRACT

VIDEO 1 OF 2

CURRENT LIFE

Sally Rettman is 61 years old, and lives on Faversham Road in University Heights, Ohio. She is married to Jack Rettman, also a survivor, whom she met during the war. They have a daughter Leah, 37, and a daughter Shirley, 32. Both are married and living in the Cleveland area. Sally and Jack have five grandchildren.

EARLY LIFE

Sally was born in 1923 in Bedzin, Poland, a town close to the German border. The town population was about 80,000 - 80% of them Jews.

BEGINNING OF NAZI INVASION

In September 1939, the Germans invaded Bedzin. Family had to evacuate their home because it was near a bridge that had to be demolished. They left, then returned to the home, but in a few months were shipped to a ghetto in Bedzin. Even at this time, in 1939, at age 16, Sally was aware of Hitler and what was going on. Parents expressed concern to each other about Hitler.

ANTI-SEMITISM

December 1938, the Poles were boycotting Jewish merchants. Family had gentile maid and janitor living in the home. Maid's name was Manya. They lost track of her.

GHETTO

September 1939, all Jews had to go to certain section of town. Lived in one large room with her family: nine adults, one child. All the young people had to sew uniforms for Germans.

DEATH OF PARENTS

1943, mother at age 48, taken to Auschwitz. 1942, father died suddenly. She does not know of what. Grandmother also died around that time.

JEWISH GEMEINDE

Group of Jewish intellectuals; intermediaries for ghetto people and Germans.

FORCED TO ANOTHER GHETTO

1943, all were forced to move from ghetto in Bedzin to another ghetto at the outskirts of the city. Still worked in the same place but now were escorted by German police. Brother-in-law survived, but not his wife, Sally's sister, or their three-year-old child.

SALLY MARRIES IN THE GHETTO

In 1943, when Sally was not quite 20, she married Yakov. They lived in the ghetto with his family.

MOTHER'S SISTER IS SENT TO AUSCHWITZ

Sally heard about this, knew Auschwitz meant death.

SALLY'S SISTER IS SENT TO GREENBERG LABOR CAMP

The sister who now lives in Chicago was taken to a labor camp before the ghetto experience. Each family had to sacrifice someone to go to the labor camp. She was taken because she was the only one home when the police came to the house. Sister was sent to Greenberg, near Breslau. She was 14.

FINAL SOLUTION

People were taken out of the city as part of the Final Solution. Three of the family survived. Brother-in-law survived Birkenau. One sister died with her baby, another sister died with her mother.

GREENBERG WORK CAMP

Factory of 1,500 girls. Became a concentration camp. Yakov there but not allowed to see or talk to each other. Men shipped to a men's camp from Greenberg, and she heard nothing of him until the liberation.

VIDEO 2 OF 2

LIFE IN GREENBERG

She was assigned to textile factory. Husband put in different barrack and worked as locksmith. Was with 60-80 girls in one barrack. Sparse clothing and food. Many girls died. Sally was very ill. Protected by the Russian female doctor in camp.

EVACUATION OF GREENBERG

Late 1944, 1,500 girls were marched from Greenberg to Oranienburg, 60 miles from Berlin. Russians were close. Of 1,500, only 120 girls survived to this point.

SALLY, TWO SISTERS AND TWO FRIENDS ESCAPE

They ran away from the group and came to the house of a Mrs. Schmidt in Langesdorf. They stayed there three weeks until the Americans liberated them April 12, 1945.

SALLY IS REUNITED WITH HER HUSBAND AND THEY COME TO US

Found husband in Bedzin. Went to Budapest for nine months, then Germany where they were reunited with her sister. 1949 came to New York with daughter Leah.