

Beatrice Berger RG-50.091.0054

Beatrice Berger (nee Simon) (b 1923) is from **Slotvina, Czechoslovakia** (now Nyzhnie Solotvyno, Ukraine). In March 1939, they were occupied by the Hungarians. She ran her parent's fashion textile store on Saturdays because of the Jewish Law of Restriction. In April 1944, the Hungarians created a ghetto for her town's 500 Jewish families (total population approximately 4-5,000). Her home was within the ghetto. Hundreds of Jews from smaller towns were brought into the ghetto.

On the second day of Passover, April 9, orders came for transport. There were two transports; her family left on the first one. They marched to the train station and to the cattle cars where they had one bucket of water and one bucket for a toilet. They thought they would be resettled; they had no idea about concentration camps. They were sent to **Auschwitz** where most of her family was killed, including: her 60-year-old mother; a married sister, her husband, an 18-year-old nephew and a 16-year-old niece; a 17-year-old brother; a 19-year-old sister, Rose. She was 21 at this time. She, her sister, and her brother-in-law survived.

They arrived at **Auschwitz** in the middle of the night. She and her sister were there until August in the C lager, the work camp. She was born with a dislocated hip that was operated on, but she had a small limp. She says that her friends protected her so that her disability would not be noticed. She saw a Nazi, a young, beautiful German woman, Ilsa (who was in the Nuremberg trial) kick a pregnant woman to death. (The interviewer suggests that this was Ilsa Koch.) In August 1944 her labor group of approximately 1,700 Jewish girls was sent to a labor camp in **Frankfurt am Main, Germany**, to camouflage the Frankfurt airfield working for OTs, an engineering corps. In October 1944, when the Allies were closing in, they were marched to a labor camp in a textile factory in **Tzilorhof** (sp), Silesia. She was there until February 1945 when they were marched to the **Ravensbruck** concentration camp. In March or April, they were marched into Czechoslovakia, the Sudetenland, to an electronics factory in **Jablonec**. On May 8, they were supposed to go on another march, which she didn't think she'd survive. This was Liberation Day. They marched in one direction and German troops in the other way. An hour out of camp, the SS women took off their uniforms and were in dresses. The Nazis left them in the middle of a highway. They continued walking. An hour later they reached a small Czech village where they were greeted kindly.

The entire time she was in the camps she was with her sister (she calls her Isen or Izy in Europe). After the war they met up with her brother-in-law, Saul Vegh, who was like a father to her. When they went back to their hometown after liberation, they saw that everything had been taken. They were there for six weeks, but when they saw that the Russians were coming, they went to **Budapest** and then **Prague**. Her sister came to the States in 1947 after getting married and going to a DP camp in **Germany**. In 1948, she and Saul reached As (Asch). She wanted to get her Czech citizenship back before coming to the US. In March 1948, she got her exit visa; she and Saul sailed to America on a ship that left **Gothenburg, Sweden**, arriving in **New York** on March 21, 1948.

She lives in **University Heights**, a Cleveland suburb. Her husband, Jack Berger, is also a survivor; he lost his wife and three children in the Holocaust. Five women from her hometown went through the camps together and live in **Cleveland**, including her, her sister (Rose Mayo), Celia Simon and her niece Edith Simon, and Marsha Deutsch.