

RG-50.091.0128

Summary

Hannah Rath Trabit (née Leschetzky) born 1922 Halberstadt, Germany; 1933, moved to Hanover with widowed mother to live with grandfather (Lithuanian, cantor), mother doing domestic work and housing borders for a living; RECALLS: being barred from school by race laws; attending "Jewish school" (orphanage) in Hamburg to learn domestic arts; 1937, working at children's camp of Jewish resort near Hamburg; Nov. 1938, returning to Hanover after Kristallnacht to exodus of Jewish males (one uncle to England, two to Palestine, the fourth with grandfather to Holland (perished there), and her brother, 17, to great-uncle in Utica, NY; she and mother being unable to obtain sponsorship to the U.S. until too late; being 17 when war broke, living with mother in Hanover, both working at (gentile) knitting store; being rounded up and relocated to crowded quarters; Dec. 1941, being among 1,003 Hanover Jews transported to Riga, Latvia; being met in Riga by SS with vicious dogs, abandoning belongings, taking up residence in ghetto just emptied of 36,000 Latvian Jews shot in the Bikernieki Forest; working in woman's commando sewing/cleaning, shoveling snow, performing made-up but exhausting labors; surviving through bartering/smuggling (aided by Latvian Jews); 1943, being sent without mother from ghetto to Riga concentration camp, detailed to the Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft AG (AEG) to repair cable; Aug. 1944, Russians approaching, being ferried by boat to Stutthof extermination camp (near Danzig), briefly seeing mother (who later died there); AGE requesting female work squad provided previously, and being relocated with squad to new AGE factory in Turun (Thorn), Poland; Jan. 1945, Russians coming, being marched from Turun [destination unspecified], she weak from typhoid and dragged on sled; SS fleeing at gunshots; marchers escaping to Polish homes; recovering in hospital; working in Polish officers' homes after liberation; April 1945, maneuvering through partitioned Germany and returning to ruined Hanover; with JDC aid, renting a room, joining survivor lists; contacting brother; establishing residency in American zone (Frankfurt) needed to emigrate; with JDC/HIAS aid, sailing to NY on troop ship "Marine Perch," living with brother, dressmaking, corresponding with/later marrying fellow Marine Perch passenger (Buchenwald survivor from Dresden); moving to Cleveland for husband's job with liberator's family's business (Alan Bruder, Bruder's Dairy); raising two daughters; managing a dental office, participating in survivors' Gates of Hope Synagogue (now, Mayfield Hillcrest Synagogue); being widowed in 1971; remarrying 1977.