

RG-50.091.0133

Summary

Miriam Wexberg (née Gross) is married to Philip Wexberg, an electrician and also a survivor, with a son and daughter. At the time of the interview, she was a homemaker living in Cleveland, having worked earlier as a bookkeeper.

Miriam was born in 1928 in Lviv, Poland (now Ukraine). Her father owned a store selling notions (i.e. sundries), her mother was a homemaker; they lived in the same building as her grandparents. Miriam had one sister six years older. Yiddish and Polish were spoken in the home. She witnessed and experienced frequent antisemitism abuse in her school and town. Her family was familiar with German violence from the experiences of her father's three sisters in Vienna. She describes the abuse that increased when the Germans invaded, in which the Ukrainians joined. Her uncle was taken away at night and never returned. Her grandparents left for their hometown hoping it would be small enough to escape German oppression; they were never seen again.

They had to surrender their apartment to a *Volksdeutsche* and live in a courtyard shed. Their neighbor, Mrs. Schneider, allowed them to hide in a cellar during the day. When they were discovered and marched away, her mother convinced Miriam to shed her armband and run. At dusk, Miriam returned to her building where the janitor's wife informed her that her parents had been sent away. Her sister, who due to an Aryan appearance, could "hide in the open" returned that night. After a few weeks, they arranged travel to Warsaw where they posed as non-Jews outside the ghetto; she used the name Maria Gurcenska (?). She was able to find refuge in a gentile home as a servant to Mrs. Yanchevska (?), but had to remain distant from her sister.

Miriam relates a story of a child from the ghetto whom Yanchevska shelters for a while before passing her off to a *Volksdeutsche* for safety. She describes the hardships she experienced as a servant and her care of Yanchevska's mother in Otwock. She witnessed the burning of the ghetto from the apartment balcony. When the Germans destroyed Warsaw during the uprising, Miriam was in Otwock where she was remained until the war ended. Miriam was able to locate her sister in Łódź, whom she joined at the home of Mr. Hoffman; he married her sister in 1945, becoming her brother-in-law.

Her sister registered Miriam in school, still under her false name due to lingering anti-Semitism. With the advent of local pogroms, they all went to a DP camp in Vienna. Her brother-in-law registered Miriam for a US visa and she departed to America in December, 1946 from Bremen. She was under the care of the Jewish Children's Bureau. Miriam was sent to Ellis Island for health screening, but then sent on to Cleveland where she was placed in a foster home of Al Horowitz, who had liberated a camp while in the service. Her adjustment to US life and schools was difficult but she was aided by a class at John Hay High School and some caring teachers. She met her husband at the JCC and married in 1950. She closes with reflections on her Holocaust experience and her love for the US.