

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Ida Henig (Markowicz)**  
**November 22, 1996**  
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## PREFACE

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Transcribed by Lisa Grau, National Court Reporters Association.

**IDA HENIG (MARKOWICZ)**

**NOVEMBER 22, 1996**

Question: This is an interview for the Holocaust museum. We are interviewing Mrs. Ida Henig. My name is Esther Finder, and today is November 22, 1996. This is Tape 1, Side A. Mrs. Henig, what was your name at birth?

Answer: Ida, it's a French pronunciation. It's Ida Markowicz, MARKOWICZ.

Q: When were you born?

A: November 6, 1924.

Q: And where were you born?

A: In Lodz.

Q: And where is Lodz?

A: Poland.

Q: Is that where you grew up?

A: Yes. Until I was about 15, we was going to German camp, since we lived in a better part of the city, they threw us out from the apartment.

Q: Before we get to your experiences, when the Germans came, can you tell me a little bit about what it was like to grow up in Lodz? Was it

A: Yes.

Q: Tell me about, let's say, the Jewish community.

A: It was a large Jewish community. It was a textile industry, and and for foreign too for the \_\_\_\_\_ city. There was work in Lodz, because it was an industrial city.

Q: Was it a large Jewish community in Lodz?

A: Yes, yes. Oh, oh, oh, we were all Jews. Maybe \_\_\_\_\_ were Gentiles, and maybe it's in the outskirts, but since it was a textile city, which was complete English, and, oh, and German. There were German also there. There was a large German community, because they came to I think they were invited to Poland to start the textile industry. I think so. They were, they were financially very well off. They had their own school, but they spoke German at home.

Q: What did your family do for a living?

A: My father was a textile man of experience, and we were from Poland, we were financially pretty good off. My father died, and he was very heavy insured, so my

mother received a lot of money from the insurance. And since we lived in a good part of the city, when the gentleman came, they threw us out right away.

Q: When did your father pass away?

A: In '34 I think. Because I was very young. Yes, in '34. That's the best I can tell you.

Q: And what happened? How did he die?

A: When he died, he was very heavy insured, so my mother and her sister, a lot of money. But since we lived in a good part of the city, the gentleman threw us out right away from out of our apartment.

Q: Again, can we just take a moment to find out a little bit more about life before the war. Did you have any brothers and sisters?

A: Yes, I had two brothers. We all survived the Holocaust, all three of us. One brother was serving in the military, and he was taken prisoner by the Russians. He fought on the eastern front. He fought, but they let him go somehow. And he spent since he didn't know the language, so he worked in the coal mines. But later, when he learned the language, he wasn't \_\_\_\_\_ someplace down there in Russia. Oh, he went when the Germans started, when the Germans came to Russia, he went, was it the Russian Army, different Russia, and he spent most since he didn't know Russian, so he had to work in coal mines. For foreign, we were financially well off. When my father died, he was heavy insured, so he left my mother, the sister a lot of money. So later, she bought property in Poland, an apartment house.

Q: Where did you go to school?

A: I went to Hebrew school. It was across the street where we live, started with convenient. And I finished grammar school. And later, I went to high school. And after, after the war, after, since I was liberated in Poland, somehow I when they when we were liberated, I still went to formal school, but it was there was not many, many Jews left in Poland, so, so.

Q: What did you study in school? You said you went to a Hebrew school. What subjects did you learn?

A: Oh, the regular, Hebrew. It was Polish history and the regular, regular subject. But I think I was only 12 years old when when the war started. They threw us out from our apartment. So we we had no place to live. I had the \_\_\_\_\_ down there, so first we went to the \_\_\_\_\_, but they were, it was crowded. So my mother decided, since we have property in another city, we go to the city down there, and we somehow will survive, and we get an apartment down there.

Q: Before you leave Lodz and tell me what happened after you left Lodz, while you were growing up before the war, was there any anti-Semitism in Lodz?

A: It was we didn't feel it, because it was a heavily populated Jewish city, and we the servants were all Gentile. The rest, the textile industry, was completely in Jewish hands and in German hands. I think German. When Poland was beaten, then the German came out with flags, with swastikas to greet the oncoming Germans.

Q: Can you tell me about the German invasion? What were your first sights when the Germans came? What did you see?

A: Well, we were thrown out from the apartment very, very soon. And the men couldn't go out on the streets, because they were taken to force slave. \_\_\_\_\_, right away, they didn't have really work, so they make them sweep the street and all this, the whole dirty work. And so we didn't live long, because they threw us out from the apartment.

Q: Who threw you out?

A: German, the Germans. They came in, came in, look over, since it was in a better part of the city. I think this was the acting Germans, what was left in the city. There was [Coughing]. Excuse me. There was grandfather clock, and it was my mother took it out for cleaning, and the German came and saw that the inside is taken off, he got angry, and he kicked my brother down the stairs. I wasn't home at that time. I think I was still going to school. This was very early in the war.

Q: So you said that very early on, after the German invasion, you were kicked out of your apartment.

A: Yes.

Q: And then you went to another town, and you went to

A: I think to, we had the aunt, that my mother's sister [coughing]. I think we rented a place, just a room, in another Jewish home. We lived very crowded. And later, they they took over my aunt, the sister of my mother, they took over the business.

It was so so we lived together in one room. My mother had property in Czystochowa, so she thought that she will get an apartment there that we could live like human being. It took us a long time until we got there. Well, when we traveled, we traveled by bus. When the bus couldn't make the hill, they said you [N]rouse, and we had to push the bus up the hill. It took us a long maybe a half a year, maybe more, until we came to that CzystochowaA:

Q: How did you manage to get food and shelter along the way?

A: Whatever we had, we sold for my mother sold for food. We didn't eat very well. We had bread and potatoes. I don't think we ate any meat or anything like this.

Q: Was your family religiously observant? Did you keep kosher? And was it difficult to get food?

A: Yes.

Q: Was it difficult to get food along the way?

A: No, not maybe.

Q: Did you need to get kosher food along the way? Was that a problem for you?

A: Maybe there was a little bit kosher food, because this was forbidden by the German, so, and it was very expensive. We lived mostly on bread and potatoes.

Q: When you did finally arrive at the town, where did you go to live?

A: We live in the grandfather mother's, mother of my brothers, and they are first one. We lived very crowded, because some others were with us. Uncle was also kicked out, and he also came to live there. Oh, I think we we lived about 12 people in a tworoom, twobedroom apartment.

Q: How long were you in the town in Czestochowa?

A: I think for 1942, when when...

Q: Was there a ghetto in this town? Was there a ghetto in Czestochowa?

A: I didn't hear you.

Q: Was there a ghetto?

A: Oh, yeah. Oh, yes, yes, yes.

Q: Can you tell me what the conditions were in the ghetto? Was it a closedin ghetto? Was there a wall or fence around the ghetto?

A: No, but not at first. But later on, they started deportation, they force out, out of the worse part of the city, all the parts of the city. And we had a grandfather clock, and inside was taken to repair, so this was missing. This was before the war, when they saw that. They kicked my brother down the steps, the step. It took us half a year, I think, to get to CzestochowA: In Czestochowa was my grandmother's apartment, and we live down there very crowded, because some others were, I think, my brother, my uncle, I remember, was also kicked out from his place. He lived in Tarnowska WolA:

Q: You were telling me a moment ago about conditions in the ghetto, and I wanted to know, were you guarded when you were in the ghetto, and who were the guards?

A: The guards?

Q: Were you was the ghetto guarded in Czestochowa?

A: Oh, yes, yes. The guards were Ukrainian, and they were whatever, whatever they felt like, they were shooting at the people.

Q: Did you have any identification on your clothing indicating that you were Jewish?

A: Yes, yes, the Star of David. Well, first started with band, and later, it was a Star of David in front, and then in the back.

Q: But at first it was the armband? You showed me but they can't see that on the tape.

A: Yes.

Q: How did the conditions change? I assume they got worse for the Jews. How were these changes unfolding during this time?

A: What's happening here. There was nothing to eat. Only we lived mostly on bread and potatoes, and this was luxury.

Q: Did you work while you were in the ghetto?

A: Not at 17. I was only 14 years old, \_\_\_\_\_++. I work, I work for the nuns.

Q: While you were in the ghetto, you worked for the nuns?

A: Yes. We had to walk maybe one way more than an hour. And the nuns gave food to the men. Food to us, bread and potatoes, that's the best.

Q: You said they gave food to the men. Did they not give food to women?

A: To the men, yes, yes, they gave food to the men. They didn't give any food to the women.

Q: So you worked for the nuns, and they didn't feed you? They didn't give you any food?

A: No. The food came from the ghetto, which was at first a piece of bread and potatoes. That's about all.

Q: Where did you work for the nuns; do you know? Did the place have a name?

A: Oh, yes. This is this was in Czestochowa, was the black Madonna, it was, so this was the monastery down there. We work for the monastery. They gave food to the men, but they didn't give food to the woman.

Q: What kind of work did you do for the nuns?

A: Oh, we clean after the \_\_\_\_\_. It was forced labor. The nun gave some food to the men, but they didn't give to the woman.

Q: How long did you work for the nuns?

A: Oh, until '42, I think.

Q: Was it weeks or months?

A: Maybe few months. Maybe a half a year.

Q: And then what happened to you?

A: Later, when it started deportation, so in a way, we were lucky, because we were still staying in the same city.

Q: How did the deportations begin? Do you remember when the deportations began?

A: Yes.

Q: Did they have selections?

A: Yes, I remember January 16.

Q: What year?

A: This is '34. No, '42. In '42.

Q: And what were the selections like? Can you describe one of these operations for me?

A: Yes. They did a few everyday until Ukrainian was searching if the if people were not in hiding. Since we were thrown out from our apartment, we didn't have any first, we want to live with my aunt, but she was thrown out, too. So my mother thought she had property in another city, in Czestochowa, so we only went to Czestochowa It took us about a half year to get there.

Q: But in the ghetto, in Czestochowa, you said that there were deportations. Did you have any idea where these people were being sent?

A: Not in the beginning, but there was a man, men were escaped, and he told the stories, and we said that he's crazy.

Q: What did he tell you?

A: That they tell you to undress, and to take a shower, and sit in water and gas.

Q: Did you try to run away or to hide or to somehow escape?



A: No, no. The only thing no, no. Since I looked Jewish, we looked Jewish, we had no chance.

Q: So they started deporting Jews from your town. You said at the beginning of your time at Czestochowa you did not work, but later you worked for the nuns. Did you continue to work for the nuns the whole time that you were in Czestochowa, or did you have any other jobs?

A: No. I worked in a factory. Yes, I worked in a factory cleaning the shells, what they collected from the front.

Q: I'm sorry. I didn't understand. You were cleaning what?

A: Shells.

Q: Shells?

A: Shells, what they collected from the front. They were metal some \_\_\_\_\_++ working for them, too. We worked 12hours a day on two shifts. The nuns gave the food to the men, but they didn't give any food to the woman.

Q: How long did you stay in the ghetto altogether? When did you finally leave the ghetto in Czestochowa?

A: I think it was, I think, in '42. That's the first I can remember life. And later, they I worked in Hassack, also was in the same city, Czestochowa, cleaning shells, what was collected from the front.

Q: With the deportations, was it one quick action, or did it come over a period of time?

A: Well, they had to get the wagon, and they need to convert from the \_\_\_\_\_++, so if they had enough wagons, the deportation continue.

Q: So the Jews from that area went to Treblinka?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you at that time know about Treblinka as a destination?

A: A man escaped, and he came to the town and said the story, so we said that he's crazy.

Q: So you didn't believe him?

A: We didn't believe him.

Q: So where did you think that these people were going?

A: We thought that they are going to work someplace in Germany.

Q: Now, you were not selected to go on those transports.

A: No.

Q: What happened to you?

A: We were we were in hiding, I mean in the ghetto, in the cellar. Oh, and we lived in we were 12 people, we lived in the apartment.

Q: How did you decide to go into hiding?

A: We have no choice. I mean, you know, they came to the house and said you [ ] Nrouse, and that's it.

Q: Did you plan a hiding place; a strategy; something?

A: No. See, we looked Jewish, and we had no money at that time already, we were thrown out, so we just had no choice.

Q: So you said you went into hiding. And I was just

A: Deportation, we hid in a cellar.

Q: Who was with you?

A: At that time, oh, the whole family. I think there was 13 people identified, because they threw out my uncle came from \_\_\_\_\_, and we were 13 people in the cellar.

Q: Did you

A: No place to stand at all. When when I came out from the cellar, I couldn't walk.

Q: Did you participate in any way in preparing the cellar for your hiding place?

A: No. This was so sudden, we didn't believe it when that man escaped, and he told the story, we said that he's crazy.

Q: My question is how you came to make the decision to go into the cellar; and did you make any preparations in the cellar, or did anybody

A: No.

Q: in your family make

A: No, no, we just when the deportation start, we had no choice, and there was a cellar, so we went to the cellar.

Q: How did you stay hidden? They didn't find you in the cellar? Did they come looking for you?

A: They went looking, but somehow we survived in the cellar.

Q: How long were you in the cellar?

A: Oh, maybe three weeks, maybe four weeks.

Q: How did you get food?

A: We didn't have much food. When I came out of the cellar, I couldn't walk, the feet. All the one to bucket, and

Q: That was the sanitation, was the bucket?

A: That was, that's all it was.

Q: Did you know what was going on outside of the cellar?

A: A man escaped and came to tell the story, and we said that he's crazy.

Q: No. When you were in the cellar, when you were in hiding, did you have any idea what was going on above ground, above you, what was happening to the other Jews, or what was happening to the Germans above you? Did you know what was happening at all?

A: When we were in the cellar, we had no communication, but since since we run out of food, so we had to do something about it. It was so at night, we went out, look for food in the ghetto.

Q: Were there any Jews left above ground?

A: Not in the ghetto, but they clean out after.

Q: Let's pause now, and I have to flip the tape. This is Tape 1, Side B. We're interviewing Mrs. Ida Henig, and you were telling me about the conditions in hiding when you were cellar, so that when you ran out of food, you had to come up from the cellar and start looking for food. And I had asked you if there were any Jews left above ground in the ghetto, and you had told me that

A: There were some, some that working down there to clean up after, after the Jews. And I can tell you, since the Jewish police cooperated with the Germans.

Q: How?

A: They were moved, they were Jews which were finded out, where other Jews were hiding.

Q: Were you reported by the Jewish police? Were you reported, you know to

A: No, no, no.

Q: When you came up for food, when you came up from the cellar for food, did you go back down into the cellar?

A: Yes. We had to go back to cellar. We just grabbed some food, what was left from the deported Jews, and we went to the cellar. We lived mostly on bread and potatoes.

Q: How long were you in the cellar?

A: I think six weeks. Six. And my brother looked out, looked out to the hall, down the wall, and he saw, saw that, that they are calling all the Jews going to work. So little by little, we went out, too. So we joined the group, and went to work.

Q: And what work did you do? What work did you do?

A: Oh, clean the street, and we work for the nuns.

Q: Again, a second time?

A: Yes. Not a second time. The nuns gave the food to the men, but they didn't give food to the woman. Well, after they liberated the ghetto, we they liberate us from the city, and there was a cossack \_\_\_\_++ they brought back the shells from the front, and we did that.

Q: Were you liberated in the same town, in Czestochowa? Were you liberated in Czestochowa?

A: I didn't hear you. My hearing is not so good.

Q: Were you liberated in Czestochowa?

A: Yes, yes, on January 16.

Q: What year?

A: '45, the year, I believe.

Q: And who liberated you? Who liberated you?

A: The Russian.

Q: Where were you when the Russians came in? Where were you when the Russians came in?

A: In the cellar. My brother looked out through the hole in the cellar. We had to have some air, and he saw the Russian soldiers. So he told us, and little by little, we came out from the cellars.

Q: How were you treated by the Russians? How were you treated by the Russians?

A: Well, they could say they roughed us, and others were indifferent. My brother was roughed some of the time by the Russians. They had a gun, so.

Q: What did you do after you were liberated by the Russians? What did you do in Czestochowa? Now that the Russians are there and the Germans are gone, what did you do in terms of work? How did you live and get food?

A: I really don't know what to tell you. We have some money left. I mean, there wasn't much. There was some gold coins, what my brother had. So we sold it little by little. And yes, I had some, some money left too, what my brother gave. So we sold we didn't live very well, but we were not hungry. We lived mostly on bread and potatoes.

Q: Did you stay at home when the war was over? When the Germans were finally defeated, did you stay in Poland after the war?

A: Not too long.

Q: Where did you go?

A: To Germany.

Q: Why?

A: Because description was great, and there was not many Jews left. It was very depressing to be I was going to go to Israel. There was and since I spoke Hebrew, so I was and there was none down there, I think people knew Hebrew, so I was teaching Hebrew. And I left Poland to go to Israel, but I got stuck in Germany, so I went to school in Germany.

Q: What did you study in Germany?

A: Pharmacy.

Q: Pharmacy?

A: Uhhuh.

Q: How long did you stay in Germany?

A: Oh, several years. It took me about three years to get the degree in pharmacy. And after that, I thought I go to Israel, since we the English let us go forward you know, I don't remember too good. So I got stuck in Germany, and I went to school there. And later, I just I decided to go to Israel, and I got stuck in a refugee camp.

Q: Which refugee camp?

A: Oh, I don't know. It had a name.

Q: Can you tell me, is that around the time that you met your husband?

A: I met my husband in BergenBelsen. That was in Germany.

Q: How did you get to be in BergenBelsen?

A: I had a cousin down there. Since I was fairly young, I think I was 18 or 20, whatever it was, and I didn't have much money, so, and I had a cousin in BergenBelsen, so I went to work in BergenBelsen, and that's where I met my husband.

Q: When did you come to the United States?

A: Oh, my husband would know better. I think in the '50s.

Q: In the '50s. Was it a difficult transition to come to the United States? How were you treated by the Americans when you came?

A: Oh, we were in \_\_\_\_\_, they were in DP camps universal \_\_\_\_\_+. We got food.

Q: When you came to the United States, were you were you welcomed by the your American neighbors?

A: Yes. We came to Wooster, Massachusetts, yes. The woman came, brought us food.

Q: They made you welcome? Did you have a family? Did you have any children?

A: At that time, no. We have one son. He was born in the United States.

Q: And your son's name?

A: Harold.

Q: Did you work in this country?

A: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I was working until until I was born.

Q: What kind of work did you do?

A: Oh, God. Different, different I was working. I think, did you ask me in the United States? Since I didn't know the language, I worked in a shoe factory. I think so. I'm not sure.

Q: Is there anything you would like to add? Anything else that you want to tell me that you didn't already mention in your story so far?

A: No, not that I can think of.

Q: I want to

A: In Wooster, in Wooster, Massachusetts, I worked in a shoe factory, because I didn't know the language.

Q: You mentioned that you had two brothers, and they survived?

A: Yes, I had one brother in Russia. He was in Polish military. He was taken prisoner, and.

Q: Was the other brother with you?

A: And the other brother was with me.

Q: You didn't mention your mother.

A: No. My mother was sent to Treblinka.

Q: When was she sent?

A: In '42.

Q: Did you ever try to find any other friends or relatives after the war that might have survived?

A: Yes, yes, yes, of course. I had some cousins that survived.

Q: Did you ever go back to your hometown?

A: I think, I think my husband, I think we went, yes, yes. Since we also went to Treblinka, I think yes, I think we went twice in Poland.

Q: Was this immediately after the war, or was it very much later?

A: No, a little later, you know, to travel, you need you needed money, and so we had to work first to get it. And since since my mother had property, and my husband wanted to go to Treblinka, he was in seven concentration camp, and he wanted to go there.

Q: Was that where his relatives were killed? Did he was he did he lose relatives in Treblinka?

A: Oh, yes. His family was completely wiped out. He had a younger brother and a sister. He didn't have a father. His father died when he was young, and a mother. Yes, he wanted to go.

Q: Is there anything you would like to add before we conclude the interview?

A: No. That's about all.

Q: I want to thank you very much for doing the interview with me. I know it was not easy.

A: You're very welcome.

## Conclusion of Interview