

Guta Jacobson

Tape 1, Side A

(No date given)

RG-50.106*0100.01.02

Abstract

Guta Jacobson was born Guta Rogowez in Lodz, Poland on April 23, 1924 to Chaya Stein and Noah Rogowez. She was the youngest of four sisters. Her father was a textile manufacturer and her mother was a homemaker. Guta attended public school until 1 o'clock and went home and heated up her oldest sister's lunch and took it to her at work. Guta belonged to a Zionist organization, Harnoa Hatzeon (?), where she sang Hebrew songs, danced the hora and learned about Palestine. On Fridays, Guta would carry the cholent to the oven at the bakery and on Saturdays brought it home. She remembers changing the dishes and stove at home for Passover. One indication of war were the yellow bands they had to wear and the other indication was when the German officers moved into the largest house across the street. They had a food shortage and stores closed. In late '39 that they entered the Ghetto and it was closed the following year. Conditions became unbearable in the winter as there was no coal and no food. One had to go to work to obtain soup. When her older sister got too sick to go to work, Guta had to go to work to get the soup. Her sister worked in a place that made uniforms for the German Army. The family survived through smuggling and food from a cousin. In '41 all strong men were required to register to work so her father did so and went to Auschwitz. Her mother was taken in an open wagon and then taken to Auschwitz and was burned. In 1943 typhus was ranging in the Ghetto and Bella, the middle sister, had a high fever with typhus and was taken to the hospital. Guta took her out and hid her near the bridge and the next day she dressed in white and brought her sister home. The Elder of the Ghetto, Ronkofski (?), asked everyone to give up their children and some did. In August '44 Guta and her sisters were taken to Auschwitz.

This part starts out with Guta Jacobson's arrival at Auschwitz and ends with her life in the US. She is told about the gassing so realizes that her mother would die when Dr. Mengele took her away. One day the two healthier sisters went on a work brigade and most were taken to the crematorium but the two returned to the barracks. Another time all three went on a transport of 1,000 women to Bisboursa (?), a town in Germany, where they were taken to the woods and told to dig trenches for the military. After two months the camp was closed and they went on the death march for a week. Most of the women were killed, the sick sister was taken to Bergen Belsen and Guta and the third sister hid. After liberation, the sick sister returned from Sweden where she recuperated from typhus that she acquired in the camp. The two sisters took a week to get to Lodz as they walked and went by wagon. They survived by sleeping in empty houses where they found food and clothes to replace the camp clothes. They spoke Polish and dressed as peasants so were accepted as Polaks until they got to Lodz. The city was liberated and the sisters married two brothers. Guta and her husband went to Germany where they had a baby girl and in 1948 immigrated to the US. They lived in Coney Island where they opened supermarkets and had two more children..

Summary

- 00:00 Guta Jacobson was born Guta Rogowez in Lodz, Poland on April 23, 1924 to Chaya Stein and Noah Rogowez. She was the youngest of four sisters, two besides herself survived. Esther was the oldest, the next was Bella and Chava did not survive. Guta grew up in Lodz where she belonged to Harnoa Hatzeon (?) and learned about Palestine until '39. It was a nice group of youngsters. Lodz was a big and prosperous city. Her father was in textiles. Guta attended public school and lived in a beautiful, religious home. Her mother wore a wig and was observant. There were many Jews and stores. The Jews and Christians had a strange relationship. When Guta returned from the concentration camp, she went to see the Christians. She received letters from them but they did not understand. She was only 13 before the War and did not think to go to Palestine nor understood anti-Semitism.
- 05:00 She liked her teacher and carried her bags home. Her father was a textile manufacturer. Her mother was mostly a homemaker and sold some home items. Guta had school until 1 o'clock and when she came home, she had to heat up her oldest sister's lunch and take it to her at work in a textile factory. For this, her sister gave her 25 cents for the trolley but Guta walked and bought ice cream instead. Her sister was very nice. Her sister did not have a formal education. Guta was afraid of Yom Kippur. Her favorite holiday was Passover as she received new clothes and shoes. She did not stay up for the seder as it was too late. Funtime was at the organization meetings on Saturdays where she danced the hora and sang Hebrew songs which she still remembers such as "Hava Negila." During her free time she played with the Jewish and Gentile children. She did not have knowledge of the situation in Germany until summer '39 when her father came to their summer house with a horse and buggy and took them home early as Poland was expecting war.
- 10:00 Guta did not know that Jews had to leave Germany or about Kristallnacht. Her mother had experienced World War I so was afraid of war. Guta knew that Hitler did not like the Jews and was burning the synagogues but she did not think that he would come to Poland. She felt it was special when she attended synagogue with her mother. Her father was a Kohen and dressed in a white kittel which made her afraid and she is still afraid today when she sees a white kittel. She remembers preparing for Passover as she helped her mother make wine from cherries and raisins. On Fridays, Guta would carry the cholent to the oven at the bakery and on Saturdays would bring it home. She remembers changing the dishes and stove at home. Her mother placed glued stones in the oven to make it Pesach. They placed the matzos in a pillow case and there were chucks (?) of eggs which is more than a dozen. Guta was busy doing this work as her sisters were away at work. She was good in school and they wanted her to be honest.
- 15:00 Her two oldest sisters never attended school but stayed home until they went to work. Guta and one sister attended public school so they could become secretaries. Her oldest sister bought her chocolate and other things and only called her, "kind" (child) as she was the youngest. One indication of war were the yellow bands they had to wear and the other indication was when the German officers moved into the largest house, the "Salamanomy" (?) House across the street. Her mother would push her away from the window so they would not see her. The people who lived in the house were evacuated. It was the most prominent and beautiful house in Lodz. Also, they had a curfew and she could not go out to play at dawn. Then they had a food shortage and stores closed.

- 20:00 The Jewish butcher shop closed and Guta's mother would not eat non-kosher meat. In 1940 they had to go into the ghetto but not the Christians in their house. The Christians had freedom and separated themselves from the Jews in the house. Downstairs from their apartment was a drugstore and the Germans removed everything from it. They needed sugar, flour and potatoes but were not permitted into the stores. Her friends in the backyard would stand away from her as if they did not know her and her parents gave no explanation. Her oldest sister got married before Hitler came and left Lodz and had a baby boy and the two were taken away. Her father wanted to leave for Russia with Bella but her mother would not let him take any of the children so he did not leave. Guta's mother did not believe that worse things would happen. They went to live in the sister's apartment in the Ghetto. They took few belongings.
- 25:00 It was late '39 that they entered the Ghetto and it was closed the following year. The building manager notified Guta's family that they must leave. Her mother sewed gold in belts and they took the heavy shawls that her father made along with pillows, down spreads, covers and pictures. When the Ghetto closed, German soldiers surrounded the Ghetto and no one could go in or out. Inside the Ghetto, they built a bypass so trolleys and horse and buggys could go underneath. The people could walk over the bridge. Food was rationed. Guta was considered the strong one so she would stand in line for food. There was no fence around the Ghetto, just soldiers. Inside the Ghetto was a cemetery. There was smuggling in and out. There were Ghetto police and Ghetto money.
- 30:00 Conditions became unbearable in the winter as there was no coal and no food. One had to go to work to obtain soup. When her older sister got too sick to go to work, Guta had to go to work to get the soup. Her sister worked in a place that made uniforms for the German Army. In 1942 everyone was ordered out of their apartments. Her mother did not permit them to stay in bed when they were cold and hungry. She ordered them to wash themselves with the snow and take a walk. Her mother smuggled flour and sugar and Guta stole potatoes from the fire station where food was collected.
- .35:00 The Elder of the Ghetto, Ronkofski (?), asked everyone to give up their children. He was a philanthropist and had organized an orphanage before the War. He told the people in the Ghetto to report their children's names and ages. Guta cried as she could not understand how a parent could give up their children. Her mother no longer wore a wig and ate horse meat as was told that G-d would forgive her. Parents brought their children and gave them away.
- 40:00 **Tape 1, Side B.** In late '42 the Germans asked the oldest sister to bring her gold and jewelry and she did so and was let go while Guta and her mother looked out the window. At Passover '41 all strong men were required to register to work so the father did so and went to Auschwitz. Her mother was taken in an open wagon which was bombed near the hospital and a nurse hid her but then she was taken to Auschwitz and was burned. She was in a barracks for two weeks when Mengele took her.
- 45:00 In 1943 typhus was ranging in the Ghetto and Bella, the middle sister, had a high fever with typhus which is very contagious. She was taken to the hospital and when it got dark, Guta took her out and walked as far as the bridge where she was hidden. Guta went home and dressed in white like a nurse so the soldiers would not touch her and she brought her sister home. She had no knowledge of what was happening outside the Ghetto except that Jews from small towns

were brought into the Ghetto. In '41 and '42 people walked around the Ghetto hungry and in a daze. In the winter, their feet were swollen and they sat in front of their houses, waiting to die. They were taken from the street to the cemetery. .

- 50:00 Guta did not want to die as she wanted Hitler to be destroyed. In the Spring or Summer she went to the cemetery and picked greens like spinach which her mother cooked and they ate it. Guta took her child to the forest and showed her how they survived. Jews maintained order in the Ghetto. They could see the Germans watching them in the distance. They were afraid to come into the Ghetto because of the typhus. Sometimes there would be a "Spira" (?) whereby no one was permitted in the street or they would be killed. The Germans came and the people had to go downstairs while the Germans went upstairs to the apartments. No one could go out after 8 PM. After the children were taken, the parents walked around hoping they would get something to eat.
- 55:00 Guta thought everyone would be killed. She did not know about concentration camps. When the wagons returned from Auschwitz, they found notes warning them they would be burned if they went there yet some did not believe it. The Elder's brother-in-law, Leo, formed a kitchen in the Ghetto where people could work. He made a sketch of the Ghetto in miniature.
- 60:00 The sketch can be closed like a violin. It showed all the shops, houses, streets, police and cemetery. While making the sketch, Leo got bread and said he was not finished so did not hand it to the Elder, Ronkofski (?). Before going to Auschwitz, Leo left the sketch in his house with a sign, " Whoever finds it, it is very valuable, give it to the authorities." It was saved and given to the Holocaust Museum.
- 65:00 The Jews were given bread before being deported to Auschwitz. Guta hid in the attic but soon everything was empty. The people were taken from the shops and went on the trains. After the War, they found out that 500 people were left. In August '44 they were taken to Auschwitz. The Jewish police took gold, clothes and watches. Guta's family had relatives in the Warsaw Ghetto but did not know about events there. A Polish soldier fell in love with a religious relative who smuggled food to the family. Guta was in the Ghetto from '40 to '44.
- 70:00 In the shop where the sisters worked, Guta was one of three girls chosen to check the garments for sabotage and place their initials on them. Her mother was afraid of what would happen. Guta did not let a garment go through if it was sabotaged.

Guta Jacobson

Tape 2, Side A

(No date given)

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Abstract

This part starts out with Guta Jacobson's arrival at Auschwitz and ends with her life in the US. She is told about the gassing so realizes that her mother would die when Dr. Mengele took her away. One day the two healthier sisters went on a work brigade and most were taken to the crematorium but the two returned to the barracks. Another time all three went on a transport of 1,000 women to Bisboursa (?), a town in Germany, where they were taken to the woods and told to dig trenches for the military. After

two months the camp was closed and they went on the death march for a week. Most of the women were killed, the sick sister was taken to Bergen Belsen and Guta and the third sister hid. After liberation, the sick sister returned from Sweden where she recuperated from typhus that she acquired in the camp. The two sisters took a week to get to Lodz as they walked and went by wagon. They survived by sleeping in empty houses where they found food and clothes to replace the camp clothes. They spoke Polish and dressed as peasants so were accepted as Polaks until they got to Lodz. The city was liberated and the sisters married two brothers. Guta and her husband went to Germany where they had a baby girl and in 1948 immigrated to the US. They lived in Coney Island where they opened supermarkets and had two more children..

Summary

- 00:00 This part starts out with Guta Jacobson's arrival at Auschwitz. She immediately thinks it is a crazy house as the people are sitting motionless with shaven heads and little clothes. She was told that she must go to attendance every morning, that she would be hungry and that she would be gassed so she presumed that she would be killed. Guta was greeted by a young girl wearing a long jacket who told her to obey and use the bathroom outside. She cried but was happy to be with her mother. Inside the barracks was a long platform with a chimney. There was a young girl running around it. The prisoners had to go out at dawn when it was cold and their feet stuck in the mud. They had to stand up a long time when someone was missing. Sometimes they had to wait two hours. She saw Dr. Mengele every morning so she can still recognize him in her sleep. He was very good-looking, wore a uniform, carried a stick and had a dog. He took away her mother after two or three weeks.
- 05:00 Guta knew her mother would be gassed as on her second day at Auschwitz, she found out about gassing. Some people were taken away and others taken to work. They needed 200 women to work so she and her sister went and left the sick sister in the barracks. They stood outside the crematorium where they needed 100 and four including Guta returned to the barracks. A German told them "Run away from here." From two barracks, they made one barracks. They placed many nice girls in the crematorium. She was afraid to talk to the Hungarian girls. She sat behind the barracks and prayed that G-d would give her strength. One day they needed 1,000 women to go to work. There were both civilians and Germans. All three sisters went on the transport. They took her oldest sister who was sick from the time they were in the Ghetto.
- 10:00 . They left Auschwitz the same way that they came in. The barracks was made of wood and had two chimneys. They slept on the floor and it was very cold as it was winter. She saw Germans watching them. Guta heard rumors that the Germans were losing in Stalingrad. Polish people worked in the town of Auschwitz which was near the camp. Guta witnessed beatings and hangings. A girl friend from Lodz was in the camp. Her father was a baker and she had beautiful clothes. She went under the wires to commit suicide and got killed. Guta presumed that she did it because she came from luxury. Yom Kippur was the day before her mother was taken away. There was a big garbage can outside the barracks where you could get as much soup as you wanted on Yom Kippur, a fast day. People's stomachs were not used to so much to eat. The next day, many people were taken away.

- 15:00 Guta and her sisters went on the transport to Bisboursa (?), a town in Germany, where they were taken to the woods and told to dig trenches for the military. There were 1,000 women shoveling dirt in the water. Auschwitz was almost empty as people were killed or left on transport. It was winter. There were 1,000 women with her and 1,000 went elsewhere. There were women from many countries including Poland and Czechoslovakia. They were given clothes and food and walked from the barracks to the woods in the morning. Along the way, German citizens would give them bread, cigarettes and potatoes. They left for Bergen-Belsen. In the 2nd camp, women SS watched them. They made flowers for the German girls with white things that had green inside. The Germans gave them lipstick to make the flower.
- 20:00 . The Wermacht watched them. They washed themselves in the snow and were asked, "What are you doing.?" They did it every day to keep warm. Trees were cut in the woods so when tanks came, they should go into the water. Her life was saved by working. Guta broke some teeth. At Christmas, the Wermacht called her into their office and asked her who threw things and she replied that she did not know and was let go. It was better than Auschwitz as she got food to eat. Some girls worked in the kitchen. None of the SS knew how to type so they used a Czech woman who knew how to type in German. She was nice to her sister and brought them leftovers. Guta knew the mushrooms in Polish woods as she could tell which were poisonous and which were good. She would pick the good ones on Sunday for their eggs. Later Guta taught her daughter how to survive. Mushrooms were the biggest delicacy that she had in five years. When she was little, before they moved back to Lodz, they lived in a small town, Kosintee (?) outside of Lodz, where her father worked.
- 25:00 They lived in the second camp for two months, until November or December, when it closed in 1945. They had a little room which had been the hospital in the camp. The Czech girl was nice looking and visited her. When they left the camp, the infirmary was not touched. Two soldiers from the Wermacht were left and the rest went with them. As the Russians were approaching, one girl was carried out and no one got killed. The Germans went with the prisoners on the march out of the camp. One night they stopped at an empty town and took a girl and her sister and those in the back and killed them in the woods. There were no longer 1,000 prisoners on the march. Then they stopped in a town and found potatoes and carrots and made a fire to cook them. Nearby was a deep lake where 1,000 girls were killed. Guta and her sisters hid in the woods so were not killed.
- 30:00 Her sister was found and beaten and taken to Bergen-Belsen. The two sisters went to a hunting shed where they hid for 48 hours until everyone left. They searched for the 3rd sister and found an empty house that had been evacuated as the Russians were coming. They slept in the beds and enjoyed the abundant food. They left the house dressed as peasants so people would think they were working Polaks, not Jews. They spoke Polish and tried to milk a bull. A Polish guy spoke in German, "What are you doing? This is a bull." He said they were near Lodz and they said they were Polish. They were afraid of him and went into the woods. Two days later, they saw Russian officers who were Jewish and took them in a horse and wagon and then put them on a trolley car to return to Poland.
- .35:00 This was February and in May Lodz was liberated. It took them a long time to get to Lodz where they were liberated. Her sister was not killed in Bergen-Belsen. A German soldier they knew

begged them to hide him. They told him to throw away his gun and uniform and they would not tell anyone as he was Wermacht, not SS. He saved them by taking them away from the Russian regiment and they found themselves with Polaks. Guta still had her hair so she did not look so bad. The sisters had to throw away their clothes from camp so they were almost naked. They stole clothes and slept in empty homes. **Tape 2, Side B.** On the death march, those that got sick, some with swollen legs, were shot in the woods. That's why they ran away. They had cooked potatoes to eat. They were concerned to find their sister. Guta wants to thank the Jewish soldier who took them away from the forest and they met Polish workers. It took them a week to get to Lodz by walking or riding in a wagon.

- 40:00 They were on the death march for a week. When they got to Lodz, they returned home and were recognized and got a letter from her sister. Guta walked to her home in the Ghetto but could not walk up the steps so did not obtain the photo of her parents inside. She cannot forgive herself but she was frightened and had no place to go. She met her husband and married him in two weeks. The sisters found the Jewish community in Lodz where names were listed. Her sister met an acquaintance who told them to live in a Polish apartment but they did not as Polish people were living there and they left the Ghetto. They planned to go to Palestine. Everyone was looking for relatives. They had received a letter from their father when he left the Ghetto for Oberhausen which said that he was hungry and they should send him crackers and food. He also said that he had a hard job building railroads.
- 45:00 They learned that their father died there as people had seen him. The best reunion was when her sister came from Sweden. She had typhus in Bergen-Belsen as the bread and soup were poisoned. The American soldiers found her and shipped her to Overhole (?), Sweden where she recovered. They had thought she had been thrown into the lake so were happy to see her. She met a few Jews, one was her husband who had taken her out of Auschwitz. The Ghetto was empty. There were people who worked and cleaned the Ghetto. Guta has her brother-in-law's exhibit. The Germans did not have time to kill 500 people left in the Ghetto. Guta's sister met Guta's husband's middle brother and married him and Guta lived with them. The two sisters both married Jacobsons. After two weeks, Guta and the brother were married by a friend, though without a ring. (Guta is crying here.)
- 50:00 Her grandfather did not want to go to Auschwitz so was shot while wearing his tallis. His father was a Rabbi. All the Jews in Lodz saw the Kashinitzi (?) Rabbi. Guta's oldest daughter is Ita Shinefeld. (Very low here.) They wanted to go to Palestine but went to Bravslack (?), Germany where her daughter was born on April 23, Guta's birthday. Her mother's sister still lives in Palestine as she went there after World War I. Leo went to Palestine and told her not to go as the situation was bad so she registered for Aliyah to America.
- 55:00 They came to the United States in 1948. It is a coincidence that her son, Steve's birthday is the same as his son's and her son Neal's adopted son's birthday is the same date as his. Neal graduated the university Phi Beta Kappa and is Vice President of a World Company. When the family came to the US, they settled in Coney Island. Her husband did not want to work as a tailor although that was his occupation so he went to her uncle and asked for help. He did not know English but opened a supermarket on Benson Avenue and another one on Cropsey Avenue. He had his first heart attack at age 49 and died in 1979 from his third heart attack.

- 60:00 Upon arrival, the JOINT helped them out by placing them in the Marcy Hotel in Brooklyn for a short time. The Orthodox people helped them and spoke Yiddish to them. They were warm to them as they had a baby in their arms. Guta did not talk about her experiences until now. Her daughter is a school teacher in Long Island. After Guta's husband died, she went to Israel and found some cousins. She also met some cousins at the Holocaust Museum's First Gathering. Her children knew about World War II and did not ask her questions as they did not want to hurt her.
- 65:00 At breakfast, her daughter knew Guta was hungry and told her to eat everything. Guta decided to give testimony as her son asked her so his children would know her story. She hopes a holocaust never happens in future generations. It is a lesson for the whole world. We should never lose Israel because if it had existed at the time of the Holocaust, people would have been saved.
- 67:00