

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum  
Oral History Volunteer Collection  
Survivor/USHMM Volunteer Project

Summary of Interview with  
KRISTINE BELFOURE  
RG-50.106\*0138

Date of interview: February 2, 2001

Interviewer: Gail Schwartz

*Note: This summary follows the order in which the interviewee relates her story and thus does not necessarily present the interviewee's experiences in chronological order.*

**Tape 1 of 5/Side A**

Kristine Belfoure (née Ewa Kristyna Szewczyk-Vetlani) was born on October 1, 1924 in Krakow, Poland, to Adam Vetlani and Anna Wojcik. Kristine was raised in an observant Roman Catholic home by her mother and step-father. Most of Kristine's childhood friends were orthodox Jewish.

**Tape 1 of 5/Side B**

When the war broke out, Kristine took private German lessons. She taught Catholic prayers to an elderly, Jewish lady who was hidden in her home. Kristine exchanged goods and delivered messages in the ghetto. After the gymnasium was closed, she attended German trade schools. Since she was good at languages, she was forced to attend a German Department of Labor school to learn German.

**Tape 2 of 5/Side A**

In January 1942, at 18 years old, Kristine was arrested on the street, since she was a student and did not have working papers. She was taken to a work camp in Nordhausen, Germany, where she worked in a chewing tobacco factory. She met Austrian Jews and learned that Jews existed outside of Poland. Three months later she was sent to Schmidt & Kranz ammunition factory, a labor sub-camp of Nordhausen/Harz, Germany.

**Tape 2 of 5/Side B**

Most people at this labor camp did metal work, but since Kristine spoke German she had some special privileges. Once Kristine was caught delivering messages to a British POW and was beaten unconscious. She was later sent to a labor detail at the Rathsfeld firm, where she worked for the Rathsfeld family as a kitchen aide. She remained there until liberation.

**Tape 3 of 5/Side A**

Kristine recalls seeing Hitler in Krakow after the defeat of Poland and hearing about the attempt on his life in 1944. She discusses the Rathsfeld family. She describes her liberation by American troops.

**Tape 3 of 5/Side B**

Kristine translated in a field hospital in Nordhausen. She was in displaced persons camps in Dora, Heilbronn and Darmstadt. Sponsored by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA), Kristine went to university in Frankfurt, Germany, and studied romance languages. In June 1950, the Catholic Relief Services arranged for Kristine to come to the United States. Aboard the ship, she met the sailor whom she would later marry. She arrived in Boston and worked as a cook for a family in Wellesley, whom she also lived with for a year.

**Tape 4 of 5/Side A**

Kristine attended Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, at night, while working during the day as a translator at a consulate. In 1953 she married a sailor, whom she had met years prior on the ship to the United States, and moved to Maryland. They separated when their son was four years old. Kristine obtained her masters degree in French at Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont.

**Tape 4 of 5/Side B**

Kristine was recruited to teach languages in Baltimore County. She also made many Jewish friends and attended Shabbat services and holiday dinners with them. After teaching for 25 years, she worked for the Red Cross as a translator, helping write forms to make it easier for survivors to contact family members. She also translates documents at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Kristine does not feel like a “survivor” and has guilt for not doing more.

**Tape 5 of 5/Side A**

Kristine discusses emotions from working at the Museum and the three books she wrote. She attends church out of tradition, but is less religious.

**Tape 5 of 5/Side B**

Kristine discusses how the Holocaust has formed her thinking. She believes that in general all people are the same but are shaped by their cultures. She feels both Polish and American.