

Oral history interview with Harriet Schulman

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Harriet Schulman (born Hinda Leikach in Lutsk, Ukraine on July 10, 1938 ) discusses: having a large extended family, speaking only Yiddish, her father Moishe who transported wheat from a flour mill and being liked by non-Jews who later helped the family to hide, her mother Etta and her sister Shulamit (later Shirley) who was 2 years younger, moving to nearby Perespa, in 1941 Germans knocking on their door yelling "Raus", going to a ghetto, men being taken to dig ditches, her father and other men killing the German guard, her father arranging for her and her mother and sister to go out of the ghetto by wagon covered by straw, living in the attic of a farmhouse, joined by father's sisters Etta and Rivka, German soldiers courting Tanya, the beautiful 19 year old daughter of the farmer, Tanya's grandmother reporting that Jews were being hidden in the farmhouse, German soldiers coming to the house, Etta stuffing a pillow in Harriet's mouth to stop her crying, Germans stopping on the stairs right before the attic, Tanya then saying the family could not stay any longer, Moishe taking Shulamit to a poor Polish Catholic family who baptized her and raised her from 1941-1945 as a Catholic and her sleeping on a bench, Harriet and her mother hiding in different places, sleeping sometimes outside in bundles of hay, going without food many times, her father wrapping towels around her feet to be her shoes, being frightened by soldiers in uniform who shoved her around, her grandmother being dragged outside and who then pushed a clothes hanger in a soldier's face and being shot by him, being taken to a barn with her parents 5 months before the end of the war and hearing a Hungarian soldier saying he wanted to kill Jews, going into the forest with the soldier and 2 German guards, father being ordered to dig a ditch, put his boots in it and cover it up with branches, the Hungarian then firing 3 shots in the air, telling the family to leave immediately and that the war is almost over, his giving Etta some fabric so she could become a seamstress, the family hiding with another family, father going to get Shulamit who did not want to go with him and the Polish family not wanting to give her back, Moishe returning 2 weeks later with vodka, getting the farmer drunk and taking Shulamit away who kept saying she was not Jewish, family going into Poland, her father opening up a bakery with a 17 year old young man who lost his family until her father came down with typhus and became delirious, meeting David Ben Gurion who came to arrange for Jewish children to go to Palestine, going to a DP camp near Stuttgart, Germany, learning Hebrew, getting CARE packages from the US, sister hospitalized for 3 months for ill health, in March 1949 sailing on a luxury liner, getting violently seasick, landing in Boston, being greeted by relatives and going to Baltimore, father unable to get a job not knowing English, being supported by a cousin who bought him a grocery store, Harriet graduating from a public high school where she had been the only Jewish student, never talking about her childhood, getting married in 1958, having 2 sons, attending college for one year, then working as a bookkeeper in her husband's store, being robbed there at gunpoint which painfully brought back her wartime experiences, from then on seeing a psychiatrist and is still on medication for the past 50 years, not telling her children about her experience and trying not to think about it, feeling she does not have much in common with non-survivors, used to being afraid to say she was Jewish but not anymore, receives reparations, not wanting to go to Poland or Ukraine, being very frightened when an EL AL plane unexpectedly stopped in Germany on the way to

Israel and passengers had to disembark, not wanting to watch TV, feeling it is too painful to go to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum and feeling the world has not learned the lessons of the Holocaust.