

Summary of Oral History: Livia Szabo Krancberg

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Livia Szabo Krancberg, speaking to a high school student audience, states she is a survivor of Auschwitz, Ravensbrück and Neustadt-Glewe concentration camps; arriving in Auschwitz in May 1944 until it was closed January 19, 1945; describes her upbringing in Romania Transylvania starting in the 1920's; stating that Hitler's use of Jewish blood from camp donors for wounded German soldiers shows the falsehood of his superior race theory; quoting Mark Twain about the role of Jews in society; citing famous Jewish scientists, such as Salk, Sabin, and Einstein; citing ancient humanitarian Jewish practices; calling for greater humanity towards others; and citing the danger of twisted ideas spread by hatred.

Krancberg goes on to discuss experience with anti-Semitism starting at school in 1937; mentioning her work as a playwright; describing the May 19, 1944 closing of the ghetto in her hometown, Sighetu Romania, by the SS, the deportation by railcars to Auschwitz, and the separations on arrival, many directly to their death, including her mother; describing the operation of the gas chambers and the incineration of the corpses; the role of the Sonderkommandoes and a single survivor, Philip Miller; the role and testimony of Miklós Nyiszli, an assistant to Dr. Mengele; the execution of the parents of her husband, Sigmund, in their Polish hometown, though her husband's sister, Sally, was rescued by a German officer; describing the shower she endured upon arrival and her barrack; and mention of the experience of her sister, Rose, on a transport back to Germany.

Krancberg describes the names of her children as a lead-in to describing Mengele's treatment of prisoners; the German attempt to erase evidence of their crimes as Russian troops approached; the attempts of some to deny the proof behind the crimes; describes the documentation in the book by Jean-Claude Pressac, a former denier; the activities of the prisoners and guards on the day the camp closed in January 1945 and the 4-day forced march; and her sister's critical aid in carrying her away from the camp on her back and in other ways.

At the conclusion, Livia takes questions from the students, including the impact of eating too much food upon liberation.