

Applefield, Janet Singer
RG-50.119*03
1 Audio Tape
Recorded April 13, 1983

Abstract

Janet was born Gustava Singer in June 1935, in Kraków. Unable to escape the Nowy Targ ghetto, her parents sent her away to safety just before they were sent to camps. Janet lived for a brief time with a nursemaid who was half Polish and half German. Then her father arranged for her to live with her cousin Lala Singer. After Lala was deported, Janet lived with a Polish family in Kraków, then on their farm outside the city. Janet was reunited with her father after he was liberated. Her mother did not survive. Janet and her father moved to the United States in 1947. She married and has three children.

Side A

- .5** Janet Applefield was born Gustava Singer in June 1935, in Kraków. She has warm memories of a large family. She was the first grandchild and very much loved. She remembers holidays and preparations for Shabbat. Her mother was from Wadowice; the Singer family was from Nowy Targ. Her grandfather owned a large hardware store and lived above the store. Her father and several uncles worked at the store.
- 2.8** Janet was four years old when the war began. Janet's father sent her and her mother to Wadowice to stay with her grandparents. She remembers being piled into a wagon with other relatives, part of a caravan of wagons traveling east.
- 4.6** Janet's father joined the family and they moved to Vinniki, near L'viv, for several months. Her baby sister died of diphtheria.
- 5.7** Janet remembers German soldiers, hearing planes overhead and planes being shot down. Later, her father told her that the Russians had declared that the family needed Russian passports if they wanted to remain there. People were confused; they were afraid that if they took a Russian passport, they would not be able to return home. Her uncle came with a truck and they headed back to the Nowy Targ ghetto.
- 7.1** Janet's mother's parents were taken to Russia and eventually were sent to Siberia.
- 8.6** In the ghetto, some old people and children were shot; others were sent away on trains. Janet and her parents managed to leave Nowy Targ and went to the town of Niepolomice outside Kraków where some of her mother's family lived. They made one last attempt to escape. After an hour, they were stopped by Polish police. They hid in a potato field, were beaten, and were forced to return. At that point, they decided to give Janet away to a half Polish, half German woman who was a nursemaid. The woman agreed to take Janet for a short time and the family left that night for Kraków. The next day, those in the ghetto were gathered in a

stadium, men on one side, and women on the other. Her parents never saw each other again. Janet doesn't know where her mother was sent. Her mother did not survive.

- 11.9** Janet's father went to the Kraków ghetto, then to Plaszow camp, and then to Theresienstadt.
- 12.2** Janet's father arranged for her to stay with a cousin, Dr. Oscar Singer, who had Polish papers. Dr. Singer's daughter, Lala Singer, agreed to take Janet.
- 13.5** Janet's father purchased a birth certificate of a deceased Polish girl from a priest, and Janet took her name, Christina Antoskevitch. She lived outside Kraków in Myślenice. Her cousin Lala was in her early twenties, and was cruel and abusive to Janet.
- 15.7** One day, Janet went with Lala to Kraków on German trolley cars. Lala spoke fluent German, and told Janet not to talk. Janet waited in a church for several hours but Lala didn't return. She had gone to a café which was raided by Nazis. Janet, age seven, was wandering and crying. A woman suggested she tell a soldier what had happened. She did, but the soldier kicked her away. A Polish woman who lived above the café took her home and she stayed for several weeks. Then she sent Janet to the family's farm outside Kraków.
- 18.7** Dr. Singer came to get Janet. She didn't want to go, so the Polish family kept her. She repeatedly told her cover story – that she a Polish girl from Warsaw whose family had died in a bombing.
- 21.7** After the war, her family returned her to her cousin Oscar. She was taken to the Jewish Committee in Kraków. She was ill with jaundice and went to the infirmary. A woman who had survived the concentration camp opened two homes for children from the infirmary. Janet went to one of the homes in Zakopane.
- 23.3** Janet's father was liberated and searched for her. She remembers being reunited with her father, but feeling nothing, as if she didn't know him. He weighed about 80 pounds and stayed in a sanatorium to recuperate.
- 24.4** Janet kept her Polish name because she didn't want to change names again. In 1945 or 1946, she went back to Nowy Targ with her father and they lived with other returnees in a house. There were threats from Polish people to get out. They left and went to Kraków. Several other relatives returned from Siberia. On March 25, 1947, Janet and her father came to the United States. She had lost most of her family.
- 29.0** Janet talks about how she was able to survive by adapting to any situation. She was devoid of feelings for a long time. In the early 1980's she returned to Poland, needing to see the places she remembered. She discusses her life in the United States and going to school for the first time.

Side B

- .1 – 1.8** Janet and her father had come to the United States on a visitor's visa, allowing them to stay for three months. Her father married an American woman. Janet was told to choose a name, and she chose "Janet." Her stepmother adopted her and they had a good relationship. Janet married at age nineteen and has three children.
- 2.5** Janet's stepmother discouraged her from discussing the war with her father. She regrets that they didn't talk more before he died. Her father did write memoirs before he died, but they are not detailed, as he wrote that "...it was so terrible, it's better not to talk about it."
- 4.6** Janet has openly shared her story with her children. Her oldest son is a writer and is beginning to work on his grandfather's experiences.
- [lengthy gap in tape]
- 12.8** Janet discusses her need and desire to read more about the Holocaust and to meet other survivors.