

AGJHS

JUDITH MANDEL NOVAK
April 13, 1983

Pre-war Family:

Maiden name was Kohn. Mother's maiden name was Elias. Born in Samushua Transylvania, Hungary. Five generations of her family had been born there. Grandfather was a Rabbi. Was very close to two sisters.

War;

Picked up May 3rd by local people who were good friends of Father. Acted like they didn't know them but let them take blankets with them and some belongings. She was seventeen. Father was a Kohan and very religious. She was naive but came through war unhurt. Father told them that they were permitted to do anything to save a life: break shabbat, eat non-kosher food, etc. Thirty-one people of her family went in a wagon to Auchwitz. Arrived there May 27, 1944. Saved bread en route to camp. Disembarkment went so fast. Father tried to keep family calm. Sister had two children ages 1 and 3.. Knew that families were separated. She went to the right with two sisters ages fourteen and sixteen.

Concentration Camp:

She was in Auchwitz for five months. Constantly smelled ovens but never knew that they were burning people. She wouldn't listen to what people said. Much later in 1946 was in Aunt's house and smelled same smell - burning meat. Realization stuck. Felt situation wouldn't last forever. Was oldest and felt she had to protect two younger sisters. Spoke to Mengele - tall, blond, good-looking, monocle. Face wasn't cruel. "He looked like an angel." He told her she'd see her mother in three days. She had been very close to her mother. She cried often but friend told her if she continued she'd go crazy. In camp she received different clothes. Sent to block 28. Beds were clear wood with five people on each side packed like sardines. There were one thousand girls, ages 15 to 35 in each block. They were sent on death march of 2000 miles from January 1 to April 23, 1945. They were given nothing to eat. Sisters helped each other. Littlest one was so tired that she died. Two remaining sisters pulled her along after them but eventually had to leave her body. Soldiers grabbed second sister and put her in wagon. Shot everyone in the wagon. Sister was buried by her friend. Finally she was put in a wagon because she couldn't walk. Expected to be shot. Arrived in Czechoslovakia where citizens started throwing bread and cakes into the wagon from their windows. Someone gave her hot soup and warm milk.

(Side 2)

Judith Mandel Novack (cont.)

Liberation:

Americans freed her in Walleren, Czechoslovakia and sent her to a hospital where a Yiddish doctor took care of her. She had to be careful of what she ate. Still continued to hide food. She prayed for all of America. She decided to return home. Jewish kitchens were established to feed returning people. She found her Grandmother (on Father's side) and an Uncle who survived. When she returned to Budapest she became Kosher once again - saw it as a way of redeeming her humanity. Her brother had been in a work camp and he also survived.

Immigration:

Uncle sent telegram for her to come to America. Brother went to Israel. (She sings a song in Hungarian which the sisters composed while in Auschwitz). Arrived in N.Y. in 1947.

Conclusion:

Her number was 71,330. Sisters were 31 and 32. Never had number on arm. Hatred is dangerous. Didn't want to be crippled by hating people. Didn't raise her child to hate Germans but prefers not to have anything to do with Germans. She is happy to be alive. She has two children and seven grandchildren. If she dies tomorrow she feels she has accomplished a lot in raising her family.