

RG-50.120*25

Bruner, Irene

Tape 1 of 3

- 1.01 Born in Krakow in 1923. Her family name was Rothberg. Father was from a simpler and more religious background. She had more contact with her mother's family, which was more middle class and assimilated. She spent much time on grandparents' villa in the country with relatives and visitors. She remembers the nature around the estate and children's happy play times to this day. Educated in Polish school and at home, including French, German, and music. Family women went to Paris for culture and to Vienna for music. Status conscious and "bourgeoisie" values. She resisted Hebrew school mostly for social reasons.
- 1.46 Describes 1937-39 period in Poland as temporary blooming of economic prosperity with illusion of stability and rumors of Germans' activities dismissed as "due to their economic problems." Surprised when Germans' entered Krakow. Most men including father left for Lvov, preferred the Russians. Describes daily life becoming gradually worse. "Blue" Police cooperating with Germans. Sold furniture. There was cooperation among neighbors. Attended nursing course, which provided her with documents and helped a lot later. Describes the difficult times for mother. Describes "anthropological tests" of skull measurements. Describes schooling with wonderful teachers.
- 2.41 Winter of 1940 was difficult. Joined uncle in Borek, village where estate was. Gives an update on sisters and father. Describes talented and courageous aunt, who helped relatives and others and did not yield to Germans, spent difficult 1941 and 1942 there.
- 3.28 Were ordered to return (Krakow ghetto). Shocked by the crowded conditions. Describes sharing apartments with various families. Involved with assorted jobs to keep from starving. Describes social life of young people in the ghetto, music and literature – escape perhaps were naïve. Brush factory closed in spring 1942, went to work in munitions factory, always accompanied by Ukrainian or German guards.

Tape 2 of 3

- 4.03 Germans' entered at night and took people who had no documents. Describes life in ghetto bartering for food. At Wehrmacht project (munitions) some relatively decent Germans.
- 4.16 Mother was taken because lacked documents. She searched and found her at collection place for transport, but "like a good girl" abided by her mother's request to leave and returned. Heard about the BBC report that "Germans took Jews from Krakow to death" (July 1942). She saw no more of her mother.
- 4.28 Nurse's documents "saved her life." Describes various jobs. Update on family members; father died in Lvov.

- 4.43 Camp Plaszow – February 1943, were marched to Plaszow through snow and mud. Describes terrible living conditions, the “smuggled” children, prisoners’ Appell, hanging, dehumanizing. Sister and brother-in-law escaped, and she did not dare. Remained alone. Food stealing and bartering. Goetz, the camp commander, had a marble villa built (“Neue Gelenter”). Talks about executions.
- 5.36 Describes her work in the carton factory. How they were rounded up and moved to the Polenlager, camp within the camp. November 1943, locked up in empty barracks, expected execution, terrible panic.
- 6.06 Describes freight train travel to camp near Skarzysko, three barracks (she in Werke A). Worked initially in kitchen for Ukrainian police, difficult job but enabled food. Describes some helpful (Kokosh, Germans). Describes local Jews as plain, Yiddish speaking, like “the mob of Les Miserable.” Distant from relatively better dressed Plaszow and Krakow prisoners. Describes their fights around potato pots, looking for women (“Kusinkas”) being whipped by Germans like dogs. Partisans in nearby woods attacked and lead to their punishments. Saw women from Maidanek with damaged bodies and ready victims for prostitution.
- 6.48 Was moved to factory job as desirable kitchen job was “sold” through bribes to others. All transactions were done by Jews. Describes work in munitions factory as applying varnish to bullets. She was a good worker. Exchanged literary comments with Germans.

Tape 3 of 3

- 6.57 Describes tragic events in barracks: mother strangles newborn and a doctor poisons his entire family. Story of Bella, retarded girl who gave them food, then disappeared (killed by mother’s boyfriend?) Describes the relationships between men and women.
- 7.24 Describes process of applying varnish against rust, using dangerous chemicals, and her refusal to disregard precautions as ordered which caused her punishments, difficulties and wounds, but also support. Describes developing events toward the end of 1944.
- 7.47 The last camp was Czestochowa. Describes how mothers who hid youngsters were gassed. They were loaded onto open train cars with German guards. Discusses experiences, her medical conditions, her cousin, Mariassa. Describes stops en route to Czestochowa and local Poles’ attitudes. Improved conditions upon arrival. Was in that camp until January 1945, but recalls little perhaps because it was the last camp. Had assorted jobs. There were some decent Germans. Better attitude among Jews. Did not know what happened to Jews though knew about Auschwitz since 1941. In December 1944, people were still loaded on trains for execution. Talks about Mariassa’s husband’s return.

- 8.33 Liberation – the inmates pushed to get out of the camp when they heard the fighting sounds of the front and it turned out there were no more guards. Escaped in the direction of approaching Russians with German help. She met and teamed with Krakow people, but was initially afraid to go there although it had been liberated. Their small group was well received. Polish militia asked passersby's to take them in and she was most welcome by a poor young couple that gave her their bed - one of the best receptions. There were many problems to face later, but those were unrelated to the Holocaust.