

RG-50.120*0041

Freiman, Anushka

Tape 1 of 2

- 1.00 She was born Anya Schmidt in 1918 in Fenibesh, Lithuania. She came from a large family and had nine siblings (two older brothers migrated to South Africa to escape conscription into the Polish army). She had many relatives. Describes her father as a very pious and giving man, promoting and practicing charity, volunteering for good deeds and contributing to the needy. Mother died in 1929 of long-term illness. Describes active Jewish life, the Jewish and Hebrew schools she attended, holiday celebrations at home and the Jewish community, which was self-sufficient and caring about its members.
- 1.23 Describes early incidents of long-term Lithuanian anti-Semitism and how they dealt with it. She moved to Kovno where her sister lived. She married a cellist named Misha Shenkar who had escaped to Kovno from the Germans in February 1940. They had a daughter who was born in November. The Russians were there and, initially, it was all right until they started deporting to Siberia. She hid with her father, but he did not survive. One of her brothers fled to join the partisans, gave them everything, but (as she heard later in Bergen Belsen) they shot him. The family dispersed. She was not able to bury any of them.
- 1.41 She witnessed the burning of the hospital in 1942 (Kovno ghetto). Her sister perished there. She (Anya) had been there the previous day for an abortion (it was illegal to be pregnant). She left soon after the procedure because of the humiliating treatment.
- 1.47 After the Russians escaped, the Lithuanians entered houses, butchered people, and burned them. One victim wrote, "take revenge" in blood on the wall. She saved her daughter by hiding her with a janitor who took all of their property. Her niece was killed.
- 1.54 Entered the ghetto on August 4th. Many family members were living together in Slobodka (poor suburb which became part of the ghetto). German started with assurances to Lithuanians and demands from the Jews. They worked for their bread. The first 500 volunteers were killed. Lithuanians helped locate hiding Jews and were rewarded with their city apartments. There were tragic stories of hiding and suffocating babies. Describes moving into the ghetto apartments, moving, stealing and exchanging furniture.
- 2.18 October 1942, "Aktzia" – describes the leaflet, the gathering and selection of 10,000 out of 30,000 Jews (including her sister and child and an uncle). They were killed.
- 2.31 Describes their tiny living area with others in the smaller ghetto (Vejejudukville?) Describes how they "furnished" their place. Her husband refused to serve in the Jewish police with all of the other musicians, and became

- withdrawn. Her daughter was very hungry. Describes how they prepared and stretched the food; relationships with others around food; and how they worked for “richer” residents who managed to barter their things while working in the town for better food. She got half a loaf of bread for a half-day’s work.
- 3.00 She wanted to leave the ghetto to work in the labor camps, as they were rumored to have better conditions and food. She started preparations and lovingly made a special coat to keep her daughter warm. The lists asked for “volunteers.” On October 26, 1943, they assembled in the square, she with her pillow, her husband with his cello, and her daughter in her coat. All were pushed into trucks. She hit her crying daughter to hush her, but she was dragged away to be loaded on the trains. She was also separated from her husband. Thus, she lost both of them. Traveled for three days in a cattle car with stench and heat, agonizing about how she had hit her daughter.
- 3.29 First camp was Valvara??? In Estonia. Describes arrival, humiliating delousing and other procedures. Desire to find daughter and thinking of captors as “animals” kept her alive. She was alone but befriended a young Vilna woman, Tamara. She was pursued by a lesbian German guard who was eventually thrown out. Volunteered to care for a typhoid sick young Vilnian man. They fell in love until a jealous German commander sent him away. At least this helped some when she found her daughter’s coat - she had apparently been sent to the gas chambers. She was then sent to Goldfinch??? from where ??? 200 children were sent to Auschwitz. Describes Germans’ cruelty. Her husband came but was then sent elsewhere so as not to be in the same camp. In Estonian camps, they worked hard in the forests (women, too). Moved to Ochsenzoll (in the Hamburg area) where they worked cleaning toilets full of diarrhea.

Tape 2 of 2

- 4.07 Describes life in Ochsenzoll working in a munitions factory. She was a supervisor checking the dimensions of bullets. It was terrible, but at least she got warm soup. It was a difficult walk from the camp to the factory. There were also Italians and Russians in the camp, but they had no contact with one another. Tells about the German inspector who “saved her soul” while ostensibly yelling at them, he once signaled where she could find food. She slept with two wrinkled potatoes in her mouth so that she could give them to a sick woman the next day. Apparently, she helped others with her believing spirit. She also describes a Passover Seder she conducted in that camp, improvising food. She has kept her friendship with Tamara to this day. March 1945, she heard the German situation worsened. Hamburg was bombed. Camp prisoners were moved to Stuthoff (closer to Germany?) Other Jews were herded in the opposite direction.
- 4.34 In April 1945, she was sent to Bergen Belsen. Describes the heaps of stinking bodies and utter exhaustion. Liberated on April 15th, when the British came. People died of overeating. She became a translator. Describes the establishment of central committee and card catalogue to search for survivors. Discovered the

fate of her siblings. She worked for British (PCLU?) Lived in the village, but returned weekends to “home” camp. Found out husband died of typhoid in Dauchau. All others perished (describes the effects of Ben-Gurion’s visit to the camp, the Jewish Brigade). Not allowed to go to Palestine, she felt abandoned and alone (Tamara left for Sweden). Started to write her recollections and nightmares.

- 5.08 With the help of a British colonel and an English soldier relative, she arrived in London where she worked at a newspaper and started absorbing music and other cultural treats. She also started talking about her experiences.
- 5.20 She was reunited with her brothers in Johannesburg, but found they wanted her to forget while she wanted to tell all. She taught in Jewish schools and learned Hebrew and Jewish culture. Met her future husband there and slowly won over his daughter.
- 5.51 In 1966-67, the family moved to Israel. She continues her public speaking and educating, especially to non-Jews (about the Holocaust). She is active in Yad-Vashem and its international committee. She considers it her dead daughter’s legacy to fight the denial of the Holocaust everywhere.