

Kalfus, Shoshana
RG-50.120*0308
One Video Cassette
In Hebrew

Abstract:

Shoshana Kalfus was born in Presov, Slovakia. She was the second of five children. Shoshana's father owned a furniture store. The Kalfus family was traditional, but not Zionist. Shoshana did not experience anti-Semitism until 1941 when all Jews were forced to wear yellow stars and turn their businesses over to Slovaks. In 1939, Jews who were not Slovakian were sent to the Ukraine and killed there. This included her uncle's family. All Jewish children were expelled from school and in 1942 deportations began. Boys and girls 16 and older were sent to Auschwitz and killed. Shoshana was sick and allowed to stay for a month but then she was sent on a cattle train to the Deblin Irena ghetto, near Lublin. Shoshana was paid to do agricultural work clearing air fields. She was well treated by the Germans. However, her father was killed in the ghetto and her mother and brothers disappeared. After being liberated by the Russians, Shoshana went back to Czechoslovakia with the aid of the Joint Distribution Committee. She lived for a year with a cousin. She then joined an Aliya group and moved to Palestine. Later she joined an uncle in Tel Aviv, where she met her future husband, married and had two children.

- 1:00 Shoshana was born in 1925 in Presov, Slovakia, the second of five children. Her father owned a furniture store. Her mother spoke Hungarian, and father spoke German and Slovak. She talks about her family life. Family was traditional, and she had a strict upbringing. She experienced no anti-Semitism during her childhood. The family was not Zionist.
- 1:13 In 1941 anti-Jewish laws were enforced, and Jews had to wear a yellow star. Her father's store was handed over to a Slovak. They knew about the fate of the Polish Jews.
- 1:16 In 1939, Jews in Slovakia who did not have a Slovak citizenship were sent to the Ukraine and killed. This happened to her uncle's family. They knew about the ghettos in occupied Poland but not about mass murders.
- 1:20 In 1940, Jewish children were expelled from schools. In 1942, the deportations began. On May 16, 1942 she was sent on a transport. A month before, boys and girls age 16 and up were taken to Auschwitz and killed. They had been told that

- they were going to a work camp. She was sickly and was allowed to stay, but her sister was taken.
- 1:26 A month later, the police assembled them in a synagogue and put them on a cattle train to the Deblin Irena ghetto near Lublin. They were guarded by Polish police.
- 2:00 Shoshana thought that they were being taken to work. Describes train ride. In Poland the Germans took over. They were walked to the open ghetto and assigned by the Judenrat houses vacated by deported Jew. Polish Jews who worked were not deported. The Jewish police assigned the work.
- 2:08 Shoshana did paid agricultural work, outside of the ghetto. The Germans treated them well.
- 2:12 Polish Jews told them about Majdanek and the mass killings there, but the Slovaks did not believe them. She describes life in the ghetto and bartering for food.
- 2:22 She also worked cleaning airfields. She worked seven days a week and became less religious.
- 2:26 On October 15, the Jews were expelled from the ghetto. Describes the expulsion and the killing of 500 in the ghetto. SS Ringer saved some. Some were allowed to join work groups. The rest were sent to Majdanek. She worked outside the ghetto at the time.
- 3:00 Her father was killed in the ghetto. When she came back from work their house was empty. She does not know what happened to her mother and brothers. She remained alive because she was in a work group. In October 1942, the ghetto was liquidated.
- 3:08 She was then taken to a labor camp at the airfield. Describes life in the camp. She was sickly and was treated by a Jewish doctor. She remained there for two and a half years. The Wehrmacht was there and treated them well.
- 3:11 There were about 1,000 people in the airfield camp. The commander of the camp was German, and he appointed a Jewish supervisor. They were treated well.
- 3:15 Describes daily routing in the camp. Love life in the camp. Nearby was a camp of political prisoners.
- 3:22 There were no killings in the camp. The German soldiers helped them. They did not know what was happening in the war.

- 4:00 More about life in the camp and available medical treatment. There were about 40 children in the camp and their families. Wingard, the Jewish supervisor allowed them to stay.
- 4:03 Describes punitive actions in the camp.
- 4:05 More about German soldiers who were decent. Describes women who befriended them.
- 4:10 Talks about her loss of religious faith and her continuing nightmares and flashbacks.
- 4:14 Describes social life in the camp.
- 4:17 During an assembly in July 1944, the Germans searched them for valuables.
- 4:20 When the Russian army advanced, they were taken by train to Czestochowa, to an ammunition factory. The children in camp were killed. She was there from July to January. Describes work in the factory.
- 4:24 The commander was German, and the supervisor was Jewish. The Jewish police kept order. Describes life in the camp.
- 4:27 People who worked in an outside bakery brought them bread and told them about the advancing Russian army. The men were taken by train to Buchenwald. The women remained. When the Russians were close, the Germans escaped.
- 5:00 They were liberated by the Russians. Shoshona repeats stories about life in the camp and births in the camp.
- 5:04 After liberation, they walked to Czestochowa, slept in a school and bartered for food with the Poles. Shoshana remained there for six weeks.
- 5:07 The Russians registered them according to country of origin. She was taken by train back to her hometown, where the Joint Distribution Committee took care of her. A cousin found her and took her to Czechoslovakia, where she stayed for a year. She contacted an Aliya group and was then taken to Marseille and then to Palestine. The British sent her to Atlit for six weeks.
- 5:10 She joined an uncle in Tel Aviv, where she met her husband, got married and had two children.

- 5:13 Shoshana talks about her physical and mental condition after the war. She recuperated relatively quickly. A lawyer was able to get her restitution, which helped her to support herself.
- 5:18 Tells of nightmares she still has. She told her grandchildren, not her children about her experiences during the war. She was interviewed by Yad Vashem and gave them documents she still had.