

Goldbaum, Chaia
RG-50.120*0339
Two Videocassettes
In Hebrew

Abstract: Chaia Goldbaum was born in 1933 in Krasnik, Poland. She was the third of five children and came from a middle class family. When the war broke out, Chaia's family initially hid in their cellar. Chaia's family was discovered, but Chaia was saved from going to the ghettos at that time thanks to a former gentile nanny that helped find her gentile homes in which to hide. However, Chaia eventually was caught and moved around a couple camps, ending up in Majdanek. Her uncles were in the same camp and helped protect her. She was on a transfer from Majdanek to Auschwitz when she was liberated by the Russians. Only one of her uncles survived. They returned to Krasnik for a short time, but eventually moved around Europe. She made Aliyah to Palestine, lived on a kibbutz and joined the Israeli Army. She remarks on the misunderstandings between those in Israel who experienced the Holocaust first hand and those that did not.

1 :00 Chaia Goldbaum was born in 1933 in Krasnik, Poland, a small, mostly Jewish town in the middle of gentile villages. Her father owned a shoe store. She was the third of five children. Chaia was raised by her father's second wife. Her own mother had died during childbirth (but Chaia was not told about it until much later). She describes a good childhood in an Orthodox, well-off home, with many relatives. She talks especially about her grandmother who owned several textile stores in the town square. Most of Chaia's recollections are after the war broke out. Chaia recalls the indifference/hostility by the local population that she encountered on a visit to her childhood town years after the war had ended, when she found the old cemetery tombstones obliterated. This was not typical of other gentile/Jewish post-war recollections that she shared.

1:20 Chaia recalls the outbreak of the war as when the bombardments started and her family had to escape and hide in the cellar. The restrictions against the Jews started. For Chaia it was represented in the fact that a beloved gentile maid (who had nursed her in infancy) had to be fired. She describes the first Aktion: her grandparents, uncles and brother were taken away and it was a huge mess and confusion, without any preparation.

2:00 Chaia talks about returning from hiding during the first Aktion. She describes increased crowding in the ghetto, the hoarding of food and attempts to hide valuables—gold and Judaica items—underground. Her father was shaken up. They used valuables to bribe the Gestapo, via the Judenrat (i.e. Pesach Kavve), in an attempt to ease conditions. Chaia describes what she and the other Jews knew—within the limits of a child's memory—about the Warsaw Ghetto and other places.

- 2: 17 Chaia talks about the second Aktion. That time they hid at home rather than go out. Her father, brother and uncle went to work at a glassworks labor camp. Chaia describes how one family left a baby behind so its crying wouldn't endanger those in hiding. She describes Germans gathering people in synagogues, presumably to 'get immunizations' from doctors or the Red Cross. Chaia postulates that from there, they were probably loaded onto trains and transported to extermination camps. She begged her grandmother to remain in their hiding place—so both women stayed behind.
- 3:00 After Chaia left home, she was taken to stay with various gentile village families - each for a short period. Usually, she was taken to the homes by her former maid, named Chella. She would stay in one place until she was threatened, escaped or placed in the prison near Krasnik again. Frequently, Chella got her out by getting her drunk. Chaia describes various places and encounters that she experienced, some with SS commandants like Astave (?). During the very cold winter, she escaped or was let go through the aid of Pesach Kavve, Adler, and money deals. The money had possibly been left for her by her father. Chaia describes the carpentry division of the camp where her uncles and brother were, for part of the time. Her uncle gave a lot of encouragement. They were located at Camp Budzyn.
- 3:13 Chaia gives a description of multitudes of villagers coming with carts to load stuff from Jewish homes, after the inhabitants were taken away during the actions or were still in hiding. Chaia was more afraid of the Poles than of the Germans.
- 4:00 Chaia continues to describe Camp Budzyn the “most terrible camp” with minimal food. Her uncle arranged for her to work in the kitchen. She was told later how her brother and father died in the camp.
- 4:11 Chaia was moved to camp "K.L." (?) It was a somewhat better camp. Children even got milk. Her uncles (who were in the men's section) continued to help and protect her. They would not let her be sent to Majdanek alone (all children were sent there). Children had numbers only on beds or clothes, not on arms. Chaia describes the camp as being very large. She talks about the daily routines, food, etc. She compares the camps—Budzyn was the worse because people died of starvation all the time. She explains what the children and women did. She felt miserably alone. She saw terrible situations of abandoned and killed children. The Jewish block commander already knew Auschwitz and Majdanek were extermination camps.
- 5:00 She was transferred to Majdanek. Chaia describes the previous two camps and the move to Majdanek by truck from the Lublin train station. Majdanek was a huge camp. Chaia's uncles and brother moved too. Upon arrival, she showered and received new clothes. She talks about the

different kinds of prisoners. She worked in the laundry with clothes of those who were being exterminated; she could change her clothes daily. She describes contacts with her uncles. Subsequently, she worked outdoors in berry fields. There were German families nearby. Chaia heard bombardments and sensed restlessness. The year was 1944.

5:29 Chaia describes leaving Majdanek There was great confusion. She heard rumors that 500 Poles had been burned. She was preparing to walk with the masses to Auschwitz but her uncle arranged for her to take a bus ride with other children and sick adults.

6:00 Chaia talks about the departure from Majdanek and the Russian take over. She describes moving between a halting bus and finding shelter. Some Germans escaped. She witnessed an SS guard shooting a Wehrmacht soldier who refused to shoot the Jews. She was liberated by Russian soldiers and went to Lublin. The Red Cross provided food.

6:06 Chaia talks about the children's houses in Lublin and the schooling she received there. She moved around children's houses and schools in Lublin. They provided food that caused stomach pain. Doctors, the house director and teachers took care of the children. More children were added to her original group of eight; not all were Jewish (some came from cloisters and the surrounding woods). Chaia recalls anti-Semitic comments by a teacher and attacks by others. The anti-Semitism made schooling and learning even more difficult.

6: 13 Chaia moved to the Polish-German border, where conditions were better. An uncle came and told her about the shooting of her other uncle and brother. He took her to Krasnik for a brief visit to dig up the family valuables, but decided against it because the local people were hostile. She describes her malnourished state and that she suffered mostly from loneliness. She left with her uncle.

7:00 She left Poland with her uncle in a rented truck. He used vodka as a bribe when necessary. They traveled to Prague, East Berlin, West Berlin and then onto Bergen-Belsen. She describes places they stayed at and people they met. She had an encounter with a Jewish Brigade from Palestine and she planned to immigrate there.

7:25 Chaia immigrated to Palestine. She describes the difficult and crowded boat trip to Palestine. (Her uncle stayed in Europe and later moved to the United States). Upon her arrival, she stayed five days in an Atlit camp and then arrived at the Kibbutz Beit Hashita

8:00 During Chaia's first years in Palestine, she experienced many difficulties and misunderstandings while adjusting to the new life. The locals had a remarkable lack of insight into newcomers' different backgrounds and Holocaust experiences. Some political representatives belittled the 'refugees.' A few teachers and families were the exception.

Eventually, Chaia joined another kibbutz where she felt better.

8:20

Following her years in the kibbutz, Chaia enlisted in the army and delighted in the establishment of the State of Israel. She considers the belittling attitudes prevailing then towards Holocaust survivors - as well as the ignorance about them –as her worst experience during those years.