

ROSENBAUM, Hella
RG-50.120*0380
In Hebrew
Three tapes

Abstract

Hella Rosenbaum was born in August 1926 in Yadimov (Adamow), Poland. When she was four years old, her parents and their six children moved to Warsaw, where they experienced anti-Semitism before the war. When war began, her secular and religious schooling stopped, and she never completed her education. Her father was arrested often for Communist activities.

The family was forced into the ghetto in 1941. But her father sent his wife and Hella's five siblings back to their village, where eventually they died. She and her father remained in Warsaw, and a gentile neighbor protected them from the Germans. Hella describes life in the ghetto, including smuggling food into the ghetto and selling it, seeing children's corpses in the streets, and the resistance.

She says that well-to-do people were forced to give money to buy weapons. Her father, who was in the Communist underground, was one of the enforcers. The Poles smuggled weapons through tunnels. When word of the death camps reached the ghetto, her father and others began building bunkers. Her father built the bunker where he, Hella, and more than 40 others hid. She describes life in the bunker. They were discovered eventually and taken to the Umschlagplatz (collection point), then by train to Lublin. From there, they were marched to Majdanek.

She describes brutal punishments, including being beaten by Brigitta, a capo who beat people to death. After the war, Hella testified against her and against the Angel of Death (whom Hella terms Cogut, not Mengele). She was transported to Birkenau, and describes Mengele's activities, suicides, sex between SS men and Jewish women, Jewish holidays, and her work moving stones from one place to another. At the end of 1944, they were marched two weeks to a train that took them to Ravensbruck. After two weeks, they were taken to Neustadt-Glewe camp where they suffered severe hunger. When the Germans fled, Hella and others left the camp and eventually went to Lodz, where she met and married another Holocaust survivor. They traveled to Germany, where they stayed in Bad Reichenhall from 1946 until they emigrated to Israel in 1949.

They had six children. She did not tell them about all her Holocaust experiences because she did not want to burden them.

Tape I

- 1:00 Hella Rosenbaum was born in August 1926 in Yadimov (Adamow), Poland. She was one of six children. The family moved to Warsaw when she was four years old. Her father had a carpentry shop. She describes school, social activities, and other aspects of life in Warsaw.
- 1:08 She speaks about extended family and friends, her religious life at home, and early experiences of anti-Semitism.
- 1:17 Her father was arrested often for Communist activities. He and his wife disagreed about his activities.
- 1:25 Hella attended a Jewish after-school program, Beit Jacob, until the Germans entered Poland and closed the program. She was in Warsaw when war started, and never finished school.
- 1:31 In 1941, her family formally entered the ghetto. But her father sent her mother and her five siblings back to their village, where they died. Her father and Hella remained in Warsaw.
- 2:00 A gentile neighbor protected them from the Germans. Hella describes life in the ghetto, the lack of food, corpses of children on the streets. She sings songs from the ghetto.
- 2:09 She was taught at home in the ghetto. She and other children smuggled food into the ghetto and sold it.
- 2:34 Her father defied an order to go to the assembly place, and told her to hide at home. But she went to the furniture factory where he worked, and he returned there.
- 3:00 She talks about her father's difficult personality. They received a letter from her mother, asking him to save her and their children in the village.
- 3:10 Her father was in the Communist underground. He and 43 others hid in a bunker. They were discovered and taken by train to the Umschlagplatz.
- 3:15 While in the ghetto, she was hospitalized for treatment of typhoid fever, and recuperated. She describes the hospital.

- 3:19 She describes an incident with the Jewish Police, who collaborated with the Germans.
- 3:25 Hella describes the resistance in the ghetto. The well-to-do people were forced to give money to buy weapons. Her father was one of the enforcers. The Poles brought weapons through tunnels. When news of the death camps reached the ghetto, her father and others began building bunkers.
- 4:00 She describes building bunkers. Her father built their bunker, which held 43 people. She describes life there.
- 4:17 Their bunker was discovered, and they were taken to the Umschlagplatz, and then taken by train to Lublin. From there, they were marched to Majdanek.
- 4:20 She describes the arrival, selection, and showers at Majdanek. Men and women were separated, but occasionally she met her father. She registered for a transport to Auschwitz.
- 4:28 She describes the hard work and brutal punishments in Majdanek. She was beaten by Brigitta, a capo who beat people to death. Hella testified against her and against Cogut, the Angel of Death, after the war.

Tape 2

- 5:00 Hella describes the barracks at Majdanek. The children in one of the barracks were taken away in trucks and gassed. She talks about friends she made, and the food.
- 5:06 They were taken in regular trains to Auschwitz. When the Russians advanced, everyone who had remained in Majdanek were killed.
- 5:11 She describes the arrival in Birkenau, the clothes they received and the showers. Her work group carried stones from one place to another.
- 5:17 Hella was in Block 2. Block 25 was for sick inmates, and everyone there was killed eventually. So she said nothing whenever she was ill.
- 5:24 She was assigned to work in “Canada”. She found a package containing money, and used the money to bribe an official to assign her friends to work in “Canada”.
- 5:29 She describes Mengele’s activities in the camp.
- 6:00 She speaks more about work in “Canada”.
- 6:08 She talks about the Hungarian gypsy camp. They were all gassed. Music was played while people were gassed. She discusses the mood of despair, and suicides in the camp.

- 6:21 In 1944, a transport of Hungarian Jews arrived.
- 6:22 She describes an affair between an SS man and a beautiful Jewish girl, and how he helped her.
- 6:27 She describes selections.
- 6:28 She talks more about sexual relations between SS men and Jewish women.
- 6:30 She discusses Jewish holidays in the camp.
- 7:00 She describes the effect of being interviewed. She sings songs from the ghetto. She talks about Arthur Rubinstein, whom she calls the madman of the ghetto.
- 7:10 She saw dead children on the ghetto streets.
- 7:13 She took care of a urinary infection and a middle ear infection without going to the block for sick inmates.
- 7:20 At the end of 1944, rumors circulated about liquidation of the camp. The rumors sparked fear and infighting.
- 7:26 She describes the exit from Birkenau, a two-week march to a train that took them to Ravensbruck.
- 7:32 She talks about the arrival and accommodations at Ravensbruck. They did not work there.
- 8:00 She spent two weeks in Ravensbruck. The relationship with Polish inmates was all right, she says.
- 8:17 After two weeks, they were taken by train to a forest and marched to camp Neustadt-Glewe near Mecklenburg, Germany. There was severe hunger in the camp. She worked in the fields, and was able to keep some vegetables. Others worked at an underground weapons factory. They heard bombardments.
- 8:30 She talks again about Birkenau, where groups arrived from Holland, Italy, Greece, and Hungary. Relationships between the groups were not good.
- 9:00 When the bombardments increased, the Germans escaped. People left the camp and went to nearby villages to get food.
- 9:12 She describes entering a German's house and cooking food that was there. They moved from place to place, afraid of being raped by Russian soldiers.
- 9:23 She tried to get back to Poland, but was told that nothing was left there. She stayed in Soldin (now Mysliborz, Poland), Russian Jewish soldiers helped them.

9:27 She arrived in Lodz. A father of a friend took them to his apartment, where she met and fell in love with a fellow Holocaust survivor.

9:31 They married, and she became pregnant. Her husband's family in London sent them money.

Tape III

10:00 She describes her marriage in Lodz. She was 19 and he was 32 years old. She knew about the pogrom in Keltz (Kielce), and refused to stay in Poland. They traveled to Germany, and paid with the money from his family. She delivered the baby in a Munich hospital. They stayed in Bad Reichenhall, Germany from 1946 until they left for Israel, where they arrived in 1949.

10:17 They had six children eventually. She talks about them and her grandchildren. Her husband died of Parkinson's Disease. She did not tell her children about all her Holocaust experiences because she did not want to burden them.