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Oral history interview with Eva Anderman

Summary

Eva Anderman, born in 1911 in Krakow, Poland, describes her experience of surviving captivity by Germans during WWII. Her family was comprised by her parents and two younger brothers. Her father had a dry-goods store, and she and her mother worked there. Her brothers became watchmakers. Her father died before the concentration camps from a stroke, her mother died in a concentration camp. She and her two brothers survived and came to the USA. Eva got married to her first husband, a Dentist, in 1931, and had a wonderful life until about 1939, when anti-Semitism became very intense in Poland. At the time, they had a 4.5 years old daughter, Felicia, who was very fragile. Eva and her husband did not have a means of transportation and did not think their little girl could survive the ordeal of escaping Krakow, So, they decided that the husband alone would leave. He had no specific plans where to go, but he headed, towards the Lemberg area, close to Russian territory, in the south-eastern part of Poland. He eventually died there from typhoid.

The family was not very religious but observed Jewish Holidays, and both her brothers had Bar Mitzvahs. There was always anti-Semitism in Poland, manifested by attacks on young Jewish men, specially in schools and universities. Starting in 1937, the situation became progressively worst. In 1939 Krakow was invaded by the Germans and in 1940 they asked all the Jews to go to a walled-in Ghetto, from where they were not allowed to leave. Eva's family had one room for 5 adults. "Ghetto was hell", sanitation was terrible, and food hard to find. They stayed there for two years.

In 1941, the Germans decided to set up a place outside the Ghetto for Jews with a profession. It was a very nice building on a nice street. They wanted to show they were good to Jews. Eva had learned to make corsets, so she registered as a corsetry maker. There, she met a young woman who offered to keep her young daughter, when her situation became unbearable. Next day, the Germans liquidated the Ghetto, i.e. sent all Jews to Płaszów, a new concentration camp in a suburb of Krakow. Jewish policemen were helping them, Eva escaped and took her little girl to the young woman. The child stayed there until 1945 (she was 12 years old), when Eva came back from captivity.

She was captured and thrown to jail, but not for long. The Germans evacuated everybody, about 250 people, and marched them to a place with an open pit. They started asking people what their profession was. They selected about 60, and while this group was walking away, they heard shooting the rest. They took the 60 to a factory that repaired army uniforms. Eva worked there as a machine operator. Somehow her brothers and mother ended up there too. Her brothers worked as watchmakers and her mother as a maid to a German commander. They stayed there from the end of 1941

until 1944. The workers did not have to fear too much, but the old and the young were eliminated right away. Her brother got malaria but survived. In 1944, she got sick with an open wound on her leg. People who stayed in the hospital for more than three days were subject to be executed. But a Jewish doctor, who knew her husband, saved her by changing the dates on her chart.

At the Camp, Eva met two young girls who became very close to her, her "war sisters". They stayed together until liberation. After the war, one ended up in Brazil and the other in Argentina. At the middle/end of 1944, Eva was separated from her mother and brothers. They were all sent to different locations. Eva was sent to Auschwitz. During the day, she was going to Milo Sachsen, near Dresden, to work in a small factory making war parts. At night she was back at the barracks to sleep. When the Germans were defeated, closed the factory and transported about 100 women by train to Theresienstadt, Czechoslovakia, The Russian liberated them from there. They were very nice to them.

The camp was put in quarantine because of typhoid epidemic, but Eva and her two war sisters walked out and started walking, not knowing where to. At night, they saw what looked like a small restaurant. They stopped, asked for help and were treated very well by the owners. After a couple of days, they took a freight train to Katowice, an hour from Krakow. Then a passenger train to Krakow. She went and found her daughter in fine condition, but it took her about 6 months to be able to take her back. She learned that her husband had died in Techeron from an epidemic in a hospital he worked. Her mother had also died in Treblinka, but her two brothers survived and were in a small village near Hamburg.

Aided by the Jewish Agency, she joined her brothers in Hamburg, where they stayed for some time. Then they moved to Stuttgart and to Bremerhaven, from where they all sailed to New York in 1946. After few months in New York, they moved to Detroit, where she married her second husband Mr. Anderman.