

RG-50.154.0003

Oral history interview with Lilly Baron

Summary

Lilly Baron, born in 1910 in Prague, Czech Republic, describes her experience of surviving captivity in German concentration camps during WWII. Her parents had died before she was 6 years old. She had a sister, 2 years older. They two sisters were adopted by her aunt, her mother's sister, and her husband. The aunt died one month before the actual adoption. So her husband ended up being their adoptive father. He was in the wholesale metal business, he was very wealthy, and treated the girls extremely well, So their youth was very pleasant. They finished high school, her sister went to the stepfather's business and Lilly stayed at home. Lilly married to her first husband in 1939. Along with his two brothers, he owned a necktie factory. He was also a very good amateur photographer.

On October 30, 1941, they were captured by the SS and sent to the Theresienstadt work camp, about four hours outside Prague. Theresienstadt was a small town of 4,000 people, but it ballooned to about 70,000 with the captive Jews. The conditions (sanitation, food, sleeping facilities, etc) were extremely tough, and a lot of older and sick people died. Later, it became a little better, but still very difficult. Lilly and her husband, along with her sister, her husband and two children were all together in the camp. As long as they stayed there and were working there was no imminent risk. On a regular basis there were groups of people who were sent by train to Birkenau/Auschwitz. At the end of 1944, Lilly's husband was sent to Auschwitz, and after a week she followed. Originally, they thought it would be better there, but quickly realized that "one month in Theresienstadt is like one day in Auschwitz". In Auschwitz, they were separated, and did not see each other again. After the war, she learned that he had not survived. Her sister and her family stayed in Theresienstadt for the whole time and survived. "Birkenau, was a camp next to Auschwitz, mostly for gas chambers. In Auschwitz were political prisoners and gentiles who didn't go to the gas chambers, Birkenau was a Jewish camp where everybody eventually ended up in the gas chambers".

By the end of 1944, the Russians were very near the camp. One day, the Germans ordered everybody to get ready in five minutes to get out and start walking. About 30 girls, who were sick with typhus and could not walk, were shot on the spot. The only food was snow. Lilly decided she had to escape; she had nothing to lose; "if they shoot me, it's better than this". So one morning, she stayed in the barn where she slept at night. The others left, and she and a friend stayed behind. She was liberated by the Russians (Mongols). She stayed with the Russians until the end of April, 1945, and then was sent to Prague. By the end of May things had returned back to order in Prague

When she returned, she learned that her first husband had died. She married to her second husband, another holocaust survivor, in 1946. They both worked in a Chemical factory, where he was elected as a workers delegate there, In 1947, a friend of his in London invited him to join his company. They stayed in London for 3 years, and then he was transferred to Montreal, Canada with the same company, and they moved there. Finally, they ended up in the United States.