

ANYA BRODMAN
RG-50.154.0007. (REC. 1988 Sarasota)

Anya was born in 1918 in Vilna, where her father had a factory that made stockings. She had one sister and 2 brothers. She did not go to religious school but graduated the gymnasium and had gone to 3 1/2 years of medical school when the Germans invaded in 1938 and she was not allowed to continue. She and her family were moved to the ghetto, and the Germans took all of the furnishings from their beautiful apartment. She talks about doing a variety of heavy work. She drank coffee with worms in it and ate a horse's head.

In 1942 she was taken to Kaiserwald in Riga by cattle car. For many days they travelled without food or sanitary facilities. Some people killed themselves. They passed the place where Pilsuciski (sp) was killed. She ran away in 1943 after 1 1/2 years. In another place she met a man Edmund who befriended her. He hired her to clean the head man's apartment. She received 25 lashes when it was discovered she was bringing extra food to a sick woman.

She spoke about having a baby, Lena, who she left in front of a church and a judge and his wife picked up the child and cared for her for 2 1/2 years. She was able to go see the child several times. In Vilna she helped dig trenches to bury the Jews that the Germans shot. She said there were signs in Vilna that said there would be no punishments for killing either a dog or a Jew.

At some point Anya hid in the house of the judge and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Rutkauskas. They hid her under a mattress when the Gestapo came to the house. In Riga she worked for the Germans as a putzfrau, someone who cleaned and washed. At one point she worked in a lab where the doctor wanted to go out with her, but she told him she was married. Still she had to escape from him. After several months the Rutkauskas were taken away, but her daughter was taken by the Germans and put in an orphanage to keep her safe because she was very beautiful. After the war ended she searched many orphanages until he finally found her daughter.

She moved to Lodz and then Berlin and then went by boat to the US in 1946. On the ship she met the man who would be her husband. They had to leave each other upon arrival because they were going to relatives in different cities, but amazingly, they met again by accident and got married.