

ILONA STEIN  
RG-50.154.0026 (recorded 1987, Sarasota)

Ilona was born in 1925 in a small town in Ukraine. She was not born Jewish but became so after she married her Jewish American husband post liberation. Ilona's mother died when she was 4 and her father had many children from several marriages, so she was given to her childless uncle in Sanuck. Her father died in 1938.

When the Germans occupied her area, she was 11 or 12. The Germans raped viciously in front of her aunt and uncle, and then shot them both. Ilona was put on a cattle car and sent to Krakow. People along the tracks threw them bits of bread. In Krakow she worked in a factory and was often beaten for not being fast enough. She was then sent to Regensburg where she was shaved, deloused, and put to work in the kitchen for 2 1/2 years. She was responsible for cooking some of the soup and claims that human parts were put into the soup to be eaten by prisoners. Once she was caught eating a raw potato; she was given 25 lashes and made to stand in water for 3 days. She was nearly gassed at one point.

As the war was ending, Ilona was marched for 10 days with about 450 other women, but then they were marched back to Regensburg. Then about 1500 prisoners were marched out again, but she rolled away from the line and hid until she was liberated by the Russians. She spent 6 months in a Russian camp where there was more to eat. She worked translating for the Russian army. She eventually went to Berlin and the American sector. There she met her husband, a captain in the American army and a dentist. They were never able to have children due to the damage she sustained in the rape.