

HOLOCAUST INTERVIEW SLATE #1349-025 RENEE KOLENDER, INTERVIEWER META MILLER 9-26-91  
BEGAN 11:47 AM

NOTETAKER - SHARI NAMIN

MRS KOLENDER ASKED AFTER INTERVIEW TO ADD THAT SHE WAS BORN RENIA FUCHS.

BORN IN POLAND-KOJANTZA, 1922 NEAR WARSAW. LIFE BEFORE WAR-GOOD CHILDHOOD, 2 BROTHERS. SHE WAS OLDEST GRANDCHILD AND VERY SPOILED. HER FATHER WAS A CPA WHO WORKED IN A BANK. SCHOOL WAS 6 DAYS A WEEK. SHE HAD TO MAKE UP WORK BECAUSE SHE DIDN'T ATTEND ON SHABBAT.

2 MINUTES WAR BROKE OUT-ENDED EVERYTHING; HAD TO LEAVE HOUSE AND LIVE WITH GRANDPARENTS.

5 MINUTES SEPT 1, 1939 ON HER BIRTHDAY, WAR BROKE OUT. DIDN'T THINK THINGS WOULD BE SO BAD. THOUGHT GERMAN JEWS WHO TOLD ABOUT THEIR LIFE HAD EXAGGERATED, DIDN'T KNOW WHY NAZIS WOULD CARE ABOUT POLISH JEWS; SS CAME TO JEWISH COMMUNITY AND ASKED RANSOM, TOOK YOUNG MEN TO WORK FOR LABOR, NEXT TOOK YOUNG WOMEN. LIVED IN CLOSED IN GHETTO IN KERENSLO WHERE JEWS FROM SMALLER TOWNS WERE BROUGHT. YOUNG PEOPLE WERE ARRESTED FOR "SPIES." FATHER HEARD HE WAS TO BE ARRESTED. SHE AND FATHER WENT TO WARSAW AND LIVED WITH AUNT. AUNT TOLD TO LOOK FOR PLACE IN WARSAW GHETTO-HAD 3 WEEKS TO MOVE. WHEN THEY CAME BACK HOME AFTER LOOKING FOR A NEW PLACE, THEY WERE LOCKED OUT OF HOME AND HAD ONLY CLOTHING ON BACKS. WHEN THEY HEARD THE WARSAW GHETTO WOULD BE SEALED, THEY WENT BACK TO LIVE WITH FAMILY UNTIL 1941.

9 MINUTES SHE SERVED ON C COMMITTEE TO HELP POORER FAMILIES FEED CHILDREN "DROP OF MILK." THEY MIXED FORMULAS. CHILDREN ATE FROM TRASH.

10 MINUTES IN THE FALL THEY WOULD BUY FOOD FOR YEAR, SO BROUGHT FOOD WITH THEM TO THE GHETTO. TO GET MORE, THEY SOLD JEWELRY TO POLISH PEOPLE

11 MINUTES NAZIS TOOK FAMILY TO CAMP WHERE SHE HAD WORKED IN 1939. LEFT 5 YEAR OLD BROTHER WITH POLISH FAMILY FOR A PIECE OF SILVER A DAY. MEN AND WOMEN WORKED SEPARATELY. ONE DAY MEN TAKEN AWAY.

12 MINUTES SHE WENT TO SCARFESKA, AN AMMUNITION FACTORY. MADE MUNITIONS, MOTHER CLEANED BARRACKS. LITTLE BROTHER STAYED WITH THEM. STAYED UNTIL 1943 WHEN RUSSIANS PUSHED HARD. TRANSFERED TO FACTORY AT TROSTAHOLA-STAYED UNTIL JAN 1945.

14 MINUTES LIFE IN CAMP HAD TO LOOK PRESENTABLE, IF YOU LOOKED BAD, YOU WOULD BE GONE. HEARD GUNS KILLING BEHIND BARRACKS. IF YOU LOOKED TOO GOOD GERMANS WOULD TAKE YOU

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(PROBABLY MEANT RAPE) THEN YOU WOULD BE KILLED SO AS NOT TO MIX THE RACES. MADE THINGS OUT OF GLOVES FROM WORK. USED CRAYON FOR LIPSTICK.

16 1/2 MINUTES MOTHER CLEANED BARRACKS AND GOT EXTRA PLATE OF SOUP WHICH SHE SAVED FOR HER. BROTHER SERVED AS MESSENGER IN BARRACKS. DOESN'T KNOW HOW BROTHER WAS ALLOWED TO LIVE WITH THEM AND SURVIVE.

18 MINUTES FATHER AND BROTHER CHOSEN AT RANDOM TO BE MACHINE GUNNED.

19 1/2 MINUTES LIBERATION WAS VERY SAD. BOMBS FROM US FALLING. GERMANS OPENED UP HOSPITALS (PRESUMES SHE MEANT CAMPS TOO) DRESSED HER BROTHER UP AS A GIRL. JEWISH POLICE OF CAMPS SAID IN GERMAN TO GET OUT, BUT IN POLISH TO STAY. SHE STAYED IN BARRACKS. WHEN IT BECAME QUIET, THE JEWISH POLICE CAME IN WITH GUNS AND TOLD THEM THE GERMANS WERE GONE. IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THEY WALKED ON THE GROUNDS WHEN THEY WERE NOT IN FORMATION. GERMANS HAD RUN. POLISH MILITIA CAME THE NEXT DAY AND TOLD THEM TO LEAVE. THEY HAD NO WHERE TO GO. THEY WENT TO SOME EMPTY HOUSE AND STAYED FOR 2 DAYS. IT WAS BOMBED WHILE THEY WERE THERE. WENT TO HOME AND STAYED 2 WEEKS TO SEE IF PARENTS SURVIVED. WENT HOME ON CATTLE CAR-VERY COLD.

24 1/2 SHE ASKED "WHY DID WE SURVIVE?" SHE MOVED INTO PARENTS HOUSE IN 1 ROOM TO STAY WARM. SHE WENT TO ANOTHER HOUSE AND GOT BOARDS OFF IT TO HAVE HEAT. A FEW WEEKS LATER, POLISH PEOPLE STARTED KILLING JEWS. 2 SISTERS WHO WERE FRIENDS FROM THE CAMP WERE KILLED. UJA GAVE THEM FOOD. THEY HAD NO CLOTHES. PEOPLE SHARED WHAT THEY HAD. WENT TO LITZENHOD THEN WITH A FRIEND TO LODTZ. RUSSIAN ZONE--THE RUSSIANS PUT PEOPLE TO WORK. THINGS WERE AS BAD AS CAMP SO THEY HITCHIKED TO STRUTEGAT GERMANY IN THE AMERICAN ZONE. A MAN SAID HE WOULD TAKE A LETTER TO FRANCE AND HE WOULD MAIL IT TO HER. SHE WROTE HER UNCLE IN CHARLESTON AND ARRIVED IN 1947.

28 1/2 MINUTES BROTHER BECAME BAR MITZVAH. LIVED WITH AUNT AND UNCLE. LATER GOT AN APARTMENT. SHE WORKED IN A MUSIC STORE AFTER 8 MONTHS. WORKED UNTIL 1953 WHEN SHE MARRIED. SHE MET HER HUSBAND, ALSO A SURVIVOR IN CHARLESTON.

29:45 MINUTES HAS 3 CHILDREN--ALL PROFESSIONALS. 2 GRANDCHILDREN--LOVE OF HER LIFE. SAID "LIFE SEEMS TO STRAIGHTEN SELF OUT."

30 MINUTES IT WAS HARD TO ADJUST TO CHARLESTON. PEOPLE WHO LEFT EUROPE AFTER WWI DIDN'T KNOW LIFE HAD CHANGED THERE.

32 MINUTES KEEPS IN TOUCH WITH PEOPLE FROM HER HOMETOWN. ORGANIZATION MEETS ONCE A YEAR

35 1/2 WHEN SHE THINKS ABOUT HER EXPERIENCE, ITS LIKE A DREAM LIKE IT NEVER HAPPENED. TOLD MOTHER SHE DIDN'T BRING HER UP TOUGH ENOUGH. MOTHER RESPONDED THAT THEY COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN WHAT WAS TO HAPPEN. MOTHER KEPT HER MORALE UP. RENEE DIDN'T WANT TO LIVE. PEOPLE CHANGED--HUNGER AND DEHUMANIZATION

37 1/2 MINUTES THE GERMANS MADE YOU LIKE YOU WERE WORTH NOTHING. SHE SAID SHE WAS LUCKY BECAUSE SHE HAD AN EDUCATION. GOT A JOB THAT REQUIRED PRECISION IN THE MUNITIONS PLANT. COULDN'T WORK MORE THAN 8 HOURS A DAY.

38:45 HER JOB KEPT HER ALIVE. YOU HAD TO SAVE YOUR COFFEE TO CLEAN HAIR. IT WAS CUT OFF IF NOT CLEAN. HAD TO BE AT ROLL CALL. IF 1 PERSON WAS MISSING, YOU MIGHT HAVE TO STAND IN SNOW FOR HOURS UNTIL FOUND.

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40 MINUTES FOOD-- WARM COFFEE, SOUP, DRY TURNIPS COOKED IN WATER. SLICE OF BREAD. MAYBE ONCE A WEEK MARGARINE. SOUP TWICE A DAY, BREAD ONCE.

42:20 MINUTES "WHEN IT COMES TO SURVIVAL THERE ARE NO RULES." SURVIVAL IS AN INSTINCT IN PEOPLE. THERE IS NO LINE THEY WOULDN'T CROSS TO SURVIVE SUCH AS STEALING FOOD. ALL LOVE WENT OUT OF PEOPLE WHEN THEY ARE HUNGRY AND COLD. SHE DIDN'T THINK SHE WOULD LIVE THROUGH ORDEAL.

44:20 GERMAN GUARDS WHO OVERSAW AT WORK SOMETIMES BROUGHT LITTLE SANDWICHES. WATCHED TO SEE IF THEY SHARED. WOMAN AND HUSBAND SUPERVISORS BEAT PEOPLE. SHE WAS BEATEN, BUT DIDN'T CRY THEN. LIVED WITH GREAT DEAL OF FEAR. ONLY HAPPY TIMES IN CAMP WAS WHEN THEY WENT TO THE SHELTER WHEN THE CAMP WAS BEING BOMBED

46:42 MINUTES THE BATHROOM WAS LONG BUILDING WITH 40-50 HOLES IN FLOOR. COULDN'T GO AT NIGHT. SHOWERED ONCE A MONTH IN COLD WATER.

47:31 SHE HAD TYPHOID FEVER-- WORKED WHOLE TIME WITH HIGH FEVER. WOULDN'T GO TO HOSPITAL. SHE WENT TO THE HOSPITAL ONCE, BUT HER MOTHER GOT HER OUT BEFORE THE GERMANS CAME

48:30 HER MOTHER GOT SICK AND NEEDED AN OPERATION. WENT TO HOSPITAL ON LAST YOM KIPPUR IN CAMP AND DIED. THEY LET HER GO WITH BODY TO BURIAL IN MASS GRAVE.

49:30 LOT OF PEOPLE LOST FAITH WHEN THEY CAME OUT OF CAMP.

50:15 ASKED WHY DID THEY TAKE THE RELIGIOUS AND THE CHILDREN TO DIE FIRST. "WHAT DID I DO?" WENT TO CEMETARY AND COUNTED STEPS TO GRAVES. WENT BACK AND TRIED TO FIND THE GRAVE WHEN SHE WENT BACK 3 YEARS AGO.

52:09 3 YEARS AGO WENT BACK TO AUSCHWITZ, BERKANOL, WOULDN'T GO INTO CAMP. WENT TO CEMETARY. POLES DIDN'T WANT THEM TO. THEY HAD TO GIVE UP THEIR PASSPORTS TO GO TO WHERE CEMETARY WAS. HER HOUSE HAD BEEN TORN DOWN. CHANGED THE #S OF THE HOUSES IN THE GHETTO.

54:08 HOPE IT SHOULD NEVER EVER HAPPEN AGAIN. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO DESCRIBE. SHE DOESN'T BELIEVE IT HAPPENED HERSELF. VERY MAD A REVISIONIST.

SUBMITTED BY SHARI NAMAN, GREENVILLE, S.C.