

VERA HOENIG
RG-50.228.0007 (rec. Ft Wayne 1991)

Vera Hoenig nee Herzog was born in Vienna in 1925. She was raised by her grandmother because her parents were divorced; her Jewish father lived in Italy and her Christian mother was remarried and lived in Budapest. When she was 10 she moved to live with her father in Italy. She went to boarding school in Verona and then to Zagreb. When the Germans started bombing Belgrade her father took her and her grandmother to Vukova. Her father then fled as the restrictive rules started. When she was 17 she was sent to a camp in Osijek, Croatia, where they all slept on the floor. Her grandmother died there. Because she was half Christian she was eventually returned to Vukova where she stayed with relatives of her father who had been saved from deportation because their son was a doctor.

In 1942 she went to live with her mother in Budapest and in Spring of 1943 was taken with other Jews to a camp in an old dye factory which Vera said wasn't too unpleasant. Then after 2 months she was sent to a camp in an old brick factory where they slept on bricks and had to wait hours to use the latrine. The camp was evacuated because of the spread of typhus. Vera went to Sharvan at the border with Austria. She was questioned as to her knowledge of Christian prayers and translated between the Hungarians and Germans. The Hungarian would let the Germans move her and she was sent back to Budapest where she was taken to a children's home under the auspices of the Swedish consulate on the outskirts of the city. At the end of 1944 her aunt told her to leave that place and move back with her mother because the home was being liquidated. She hid in the house of her mother and stepfather. At this time the Jews, including her aunt and uncle were sent to the ghetto where the men were made to look for explosives.

Budapest was liberated by the Russians. Vera said everyone was afraid of them as well. There was little food, it was cold, and the Russian soldiers were always hunting young women. Vera decided she wanted to join her father who was now in the US. There were many difficulties in getting a visa and passport. After many disappointment she went to live with relatives in Italy and stayed there for 2 years. She was initially very ill but finally recovered and was well by the time she went to the US in 1952. She met her future husband in New York and they then moved to Fort Wayne. She has one adopted daughter, and she feels very lucky to be in America.