

RG-50.233.0013

Summary

Note that Ms. Brunswic referred frequently to a written testimony that she gave the USHMM.

Rose Brunswic (née Galek) was born circa 1921 in a small town near Warsaw. Her family was very well off, and she had a happy childhood. Her mother had been a hat designer but gave it up when she married her father who was ten years older. I gathered from the interview that Rose had three sisters. One had gone to Palestine before the war and two died in concentration camps. Rose's father owned a button factory which was very successful. Apparently, he was well-liked by his Polish employees and by the Polish neighbors despite that Rose characterized the Polish people as very antisemitic. The family was not religious, though they did celebrate major holidays. Rose attended school locally and even went to school on the sabbath when other Jewish children did not. After she graduated from Gymnasium she left for Warsaw. That was in 1938.

After a few months of the German occupation of Warsaw, Rose, her parents, and two of her sisters were put in the Warsaw Ghetto. They lived in one room with several other families and were constantly hungry. For a while she worked to help distribute food from the Judenrat which had been donated by the predecessor of the United Jewish Appeal. But that ended after a several months. Her parents were shot in the Ghetto, while she and her three sisters were lined up to be deported. Rose assumed that her sisters were killed in a concentrations camp, but Rose snuck out of the line and fled the ghetto. She was hidden by a friendly Pole for two weeks. She later escaped to Germany where she worked on a farm for a kind German woman. She did not admit that she was Jewish. In fact, she resolved never to acknowledge her Jewish heritage again but changed her mind after liberation. Rose bemoaned that her mother opposed her father's desire to leave Poland and go to Palestine before the war started, thus dooming the family.

After the war, Rose immigrated to the United States where she married and had one son. Despite her continued lack of religiosity, she raised her son as a Jew and celebrated the Jewish holidays at home. Her son later married a non-Jew.