

Summary of Oral History: Florence Tabrys

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Florence Tabrys was born in Szydlowiece, Poland on May 8, 1925 as Faiga Schwarzfink. She had two older brothers including Jona Chul, born in 1921, and one younger brother and three younger sisters. They lived in a house with no indoor plumbing with their parents and grandparents. They were very religious, spoke Yiddish, and were a poor but happy family. Her father was a shoemaker. Florence attended public school and Hebrew School and had many friends and relatives to visit. A tutor taught Polish to her and her sister. Her brothers influenced her to join the Bund. In the summer, they visited the grandparents' orchards. When the Germans occupied the shtetl (small town) in '39, they had a curfew, could only walk on certain streets and her father could no longer sell shoes at markets in other towns. He was taken to a work camp for six weeks and returned. In '42 everyone reported to a square and were separated. Her parents and grandfather returned home with the youngest children and were later sent to Treblinka. The older brothers were in one group and she and her younger sister in another group. They walked to Skarszisko where they had 12 hour shifts making ammunition. They only had soup and a slice of bread to eat and slept without a blanket. After two years she and her sister were sent to Czestochowa and in '44 to Bergen Belsen for two months. In each camp, prisoners were shot and selections were made. The Poles who worked on a daily basis gave them information on what was happening. Florence washed her hair with coffee so did not have it cut off for lice. Turkline was one of the worst camps. Florence was liberated in Dachau on April 30, 1945 by the Americans. First she was placed in Hitler's Jugen's barracks and then in Feldenfinj where she met her husband. Florence and her sister were orphans so her sister was accepted in Canada as an orphan. She later moved to Chicago when she married and Florence lived in New York. Florence's husband wanted to go to Israel, but Florence remembered the letters from her uncle who had escaped to America from World War I and wanted to join him so they did