

-TITLE- BEATRICE SIMKOVICK
-I_DATE- 3/30/88
-SOURCE- ONE GENERATION AFTER\ BOSTON
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY- POOR
-IMAGE_QUALITY- FAIR
-DURATION-
-LANGUAGES-
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-

City in Czechoslovakia - _____
Household before war - 4 children. 1938 Hungary took over Czech.
Father a Czech soldier. Father taken and work in camp. She was
about 13 yrs old. Mother didn't talk about situation. In 1941
father disappeared, mother made living. Beatrice went to school.
When Hungarians came in Jewish children were not permitted to
attend school, had curfews, wore yellow star went on till 1944.
Since they couldn't work or be in business mother went to Budapest,
bought leather goods and sold them. Jewish families were put in
Ghettos - a big factory. Everyday called out homes and they were
sent away. No apartments - carried blankets, pillows, belongings;
hair was shaved off - no water to keep clean. Bldg. had roof, no
sides, all open. People from all around area. When name was called,
mother and her only ones to carry possessions, smaller siblings.
Walked from factory to station. Mother fell down from carrying
possessions - Hungarian soldier beat her. Mother thought they were
being taken someplace to live - so carried pillows and blankets -
but put into cattle cars. Traveled for about 4 days - couldn't
leave car to go to toilet. Could see out little windows of car and
saw Kraków; so they knew they were in Poland. Eventually taken to
Auschwitz. People waiting as they get out of cars. Separated men
from women, and then women from children by Mengele. Holding
sister's hand - called back by Mengele. Asked how old she was. When
told she was 17, he said she could work. No idea what he meant.
Separated from mother and people. Didn't know what happened to her
family until much later. Took their clothing, stood naked. Were
sprayed. Brother died in '43 at home. Played a lot of soccer - had
operation, suffered and died in 1943.

Cattle cars - only ate what you had - no water. Four days
traveling! Before Ghetto did experience some anti-Semitism. When
Hungarians arrived had to go to Hungarian school for short while.
Teacher anti-Semitic. Afraid of neighbors - children called us
names, mostly from her age group.

Religious family? - Traditional - Kept kosher. Father very modern
but well educated in Judaism. When things became known about what
was going on.

Were there other options? Don't believe so - no men around - mother had 4 children and a sister. When first knowledge of war going on - only thing they knew was they were not permitted in school - tried to find something to do - tried to get job but had to be back by 5 P.M. - wore star - you were different.

Ghetto : Long barracks without sides - all on ground - everyone had area just to sleep - There you stayed until you were called to go to cars. No water, no food, everyone had their own. No facilities to cook. People shared. Sister's friend, a little boy was given to Christian family who was given ___ parents home if they kept their son when orders came for Jews to leave Christian family sent little boy away.(?) He came to them and stayed with them. Don't know what happened to them. Stayed about 4 or 5 weeks. Worked in beauty shop.

To Auschwitz - same answers about transport. Describing it. Also about separation.

Told they were going to work at camps - didn't think - knew they were separated but didn't know what was going to happen. As she looks back some people had idea as to what was going to happen and committed suicide - a few doctors with them committed suicide with their families.

Was with all young people. Never saw mother again. When I looked back she was crying and that was last time I saw her. Went through baths, sprayed, handed stripped clothes, gloves with holes in them. She was in last transport. Saw crematoriums. When smoke came out - were locked in barracks, couldn't go out. In each barrack there were about 1,000 people. They learned quickly. Talked about someone who had the equivalent of an apartment in front of barracks. If they made too much noise, she yelled at them and treated not to give them coffee next day which is all they received, plus portions of bread.

Daily routine! Learned not to volunteer. If you were a teacher and volunteered, you were told to clean latrines. The Jewish girls who took care of the barracks were called "Block Hats" because they wore black ___. She ended up in lager 17. Each morning got up at 5 am, and were counted by an SS guard. There were some people who wanted to be in other barracks - would break away from theirs and go to others. Therefore some barracks had more than others and they were all supposed to be the same. One day one was missing. They had to kneel for hours. People were very weak, falling apart, those who collapsed were taken away. Learned to stay away from relatives - if you resembled one another, one was taken away.

She was not with younger sisters - they went with mother. Did have cousin and they wanted to be together but because roll call was by name - separated. Wanted to be with cousin - when she went she couldn't go out - new transports were coming and there was smoke from crematorium. Which meant they couldn't be out. When she returned to the barracks - Block Hat from Slovakia asked her why she was coming in and hit her (showed how). Didn't care - was happy to be back - didn't want to be with strange people. Later cousin selected for some other place - don't know where. Described inside of barracks - Talked about walking naked in front of someone for selection. Had someone from her town whose sister, age 16, was chosen as a messenger. Only 2 or 3 girls doing that. Guards came in and said if there were any 16 year olds or younger, they take good care of them - just tell them. Learned not to volunteer. Selection went on for months and months. Showed number on arm and explained number. Worked at Buchenwald. Cut up all the clothes taken from transports. Others did weaving. Had to produce so much each day. If you didn't do enough, you were punished. Punished by kneeling and holding 2 bricks.

When some men came in to repair - one man was Italian Jew who was opera singer. He sang for guards so women wouldn't be punished. Men and women did not see each other. SS-women and SS men did selections. Remembered the Jewish Black Hats - if they didn't like the way they behaved - wouldn't give them coffee - spilled it on floor. They were hardened up. Couldn't eat what they gave them - sometimes gave away what she had. Also learned not to look sick - would look for beads to put in mouth during inspection so as not to look sick.

No medical help. If sick either got volunteer or hid.(?) Couldn't shower - once in a while taken to baths (about once a month). Afraid to go because didn't know if they were really going there - had to pass crematoriums. Already knew about it. Once while being sprayed - sprayed into eyes and couldn't see for days. Outdoor toilets. Never changed clothes. We were bald. Had a lot of diarrhea. Inmates attitude toward each other - from different areas - fought, argued. Lucky for those who spoke Jewish. Although mother spoke Yiddish, she answered in Czech or Hungarian has learned to speak Yiddish in camp. Good because you understood Germans more. Jewish people from Rumania as well as other countries were different. Some stole bread if you tried to hide it. No focus - really had nothing to fight about. Maybe a group of 15 had one dish. And they had to share so if some took more soup than others, when they got soup, there would be fights. That's why you wanted to be with friends. Was not with group who looked after each other. She was alone. After Russians came in '44_____

More questions re camp. Any resistance?
Heard that crew in crematorium tried to blow it up but don't know how true this is. I think it did happen some time in '44. The crew was changed because they couldn't take it for long periods.

Any spiritual resistance? When they felt a Jewish holiday was due

they did get together. There was a girl with a good voice who sang religious songs. Couldn't do anything. No political or cultural activity. Only communication - rumors. One of her townspeople who had lived a block away from there became an aide to a Block Hat. She told them they couldn't go out because a Czech transport had come in. My aunt and 2 cousins were on it. Aide came in to tell her, because aide knew her.

By morning when I tried to see them, they were gone they were all gassed. Maybe because there were too many people and gas chambers were ready.

Anything you attributed to your survival?

I think because at home I was sickly and didn't eat much - Felt that people who loved to eat had it much harder. Luck.

What kept you alive? The will to be alive and hoped that father might be alive. Thought she would find him when she got home.

Father - soldier for Czechs. Sold fruit before army. Liberation - when Russians arrived - tried to get rid of crematoriums - she helped. In November or October heard Russians were coming. Sent to take apart crematorium. When walked in looked like showers - Then you saw the ovens. Germans tried to erase as much as they could. So when Russians came they wouldn't see anything.

Was selected to go to Germany but no transportation for work. In the meantime there were piles of stones. They moved stones from one place to another. Very cold and thinly dressed. Finally around Jan. 8Th. were picked-up - took us to _____.

There she worked in factory. Did welding. Heard some of what was going on outside. SS-woman guards all around. Trying to be nice. Must have felt they were losing war. Tried to be nice and be on good side. Worked there until freed - Starving there also. When freed couldn't take baths, no food. I was sickly at home but not there. A lot of girls had typhus - when we came from Auschwitz. A friend I shared a barrack with had typhus, but I didn't get it. Maybe because as a child I had diphtheria (?). Friend was put in hospital. She recovered. Some did not.

When we left Auschwitz - we were the last 1,000 there. While waiting, were sent from one barrack to other to clean up. No more sent to crematorium. While cleaning barracks, taking apart bunks, something slipped and Dr. Mengele came over and said "Should have sent you a long time ago where you belong." Did you know who he was? I knew he was Dr. Mengele. Germans took her out of Auschwitz into Germany. When liberated by Russians - the Russians didn't come into camp. After 3 days they knew they were free - afraid to go out - didn't go to work - afraid SS were out there. Finally, someone came and told them they were free.

Czech artisans came to tell them, took them to a government building, to decide what to do with them. Saw the Russians one night in building and they came in drunk and they raped a girl. Everybody was frightened to stay another night. Next day all dispersed. Found German houses left. Went into houses to find whatever they could. Left valuable things. Took them and gave to Czechs to trade in for rations. Afraid to stay in building. Stayed 3 more nights, 6 girls, with Czech family - begged us to stay with them, we could marry their sons, work in the fields - it was country. Decided to get what we could out of German houses, get what we could for them to pay for our way home. If the Americans freed you, you would get everything you needed but they were on their own - scared to go to Russians. Took 3 weeks to go home. Walked, met others doing the same. Got home 5th of June. Went to their apartment, nothing there. Decided to travel - heard there were Jewish organizations that would help them. Main places in Budapest and Bucharest. Had free rides. Went to Bucharest by trains. Everything slow - tracks bombed - no schedules, stayed there 3 weeks. Signed up to go to Israel. Wasn't legal to go to Palestine and for some reason she thinks you would have to be married with a boy (was unsure).

Only reason she didn't go was her girlfriend, she couldn't find someone. She had one - a neighbors boy. Decided to go back home. Maybe her father returned. Maybe her father returned. First went to Budapest. Stayed about 3 weeks looking for relatives but with no results.

Had refugee offices where you could inquire. Went back home - found cousins who had married. Girls married even older men who returned from work camps for fear there would be no men around. She got married 3 months later to a man she knew before.

Got married in October. Opened a restaurant with his cousin. Wedding was in restaurant. There was gypsy music. People dancing. A Russian soldier walked in - started to dance with one of the employees, at midnight, when everything was over the girl started to scream for help. The Russian tried to rape her - they were usually drunk. My husband tried to help her - he went out - the Russian went away.

Ten minutes later the Russian soldier returned with other Russian soldiers after her husband. My husband jumped out of the window and I didn't see him until five o'clock in the morning. The soldiers ran after her husband - In the middle of the city was a river - they wanted to throw him in but he talked him out of it - offered salamis and other things from restaurant - they took it - everything went to the police. Open borders for refugees. This incident made them decide to leave country. Husband hired someone to take them over mountains. One day at train station husband recognized soldier who tried to rape the girl.

Soldier was convicted and given 8 years. Husband felt sorry for soldier because soldier said he was Yiddish - had a Yiddishe mamma. Her husband brought him food. Many stories about Russians. They felt as long as they freed the people, they were entitled to many things. They were scared of the Russian soldiers - Some were nice, others bad. Found no other relatives after war (other than 2 cousins). Husband found some family. (3 sisters, two brothers). Husband was youngest.

Went to Czechoslovakia then to Germany. Stayed there till '49. Tried to go to Israel. Had first daughter in Germany, when she was around 2 1/2 came to this country around '49.

Feeling re experiences - you don't trust people. Hard to tell.

What kept you going? Father - thinking about him. Sure if he was alive he would have come back.

Religious after war? Same as before - children to day school - Kept kosher but not strict. Kept ____ ? Brought different dishes when she could afford it.

Feelings about being Jewish? Everyone should be what he wants to be - no one should be forced.

Have you talked to anyone re your experiences after war? No.

When did you start to talk about it? To children and grandchildren.

Son always interested.

What was motivation in having first child?

Wanted a family.

Any values to children? Good values. Brought up with certain values - try to pass on to your children. As a result son became a Rabbi. Try to make importance in being Jewish.

What was reception from non-Jews after the war?

When I returned to my home town, neighbors and people I knew seemed afraid of you. Husband had a home when he returned to it, the people living there were so mean they wouldn't let him in - they were afraid they would lose the house. The only reason I went to my house (we were renters - my husband's family owned their house) was to see if any family returned. I saw our carpeting but I didn't care about it.

Didn't share experiences with anyone. Felt that people don't want to hear. Some people.

Did belong to a survivors organization for a while. Joined because people had some experience. Doesn't mean you like everyone because they had similar experience but you do feel a kinship, like family. Did get ___? a few hundred dollars at the beginning but German insurance man had them sign something and they didn't get more, even tho more was given. He must have had them sign something. When they tried to get more later, were told the case could not be opened.

What language did you speak at home? Hungarian. Didn't know Yiddish well. Spoke Hungarian to children.

What did you tell your children when they ere interested - What did you communicate to them? I instilled in them not to trust people. America? People don't realize how lucky they are. It's not perfect but it's good.

Another Holocaust? Can happen. Depends on who is leader. People follow. If something goes wrong in country - they always find someone to blame.

How did the Holocaust affect the course of your life? I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for the Holocaust. My husband had an address of a relative who sent affidavit and papers. Family went to America. Because I was 8 mos pregnant, they wouldn't let me leave in '46. Took another 2 1/2 years before we could go.

Brother here in America got someone to sign that we wouldn't ask anything from government.

Come three HAAS. Was in Israel service. If I had family there, would go. Someday my son end up there. Husband has big family in Israel.

Just hope nothing ever happens to have another Holocaust.

How did you feel about answering these questions?

Thought I would be a lot calmer.
.END.→