

Oral history interview with Ida Hampel

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Summary

Ida Hampel (née Scheuer)

Born: Tarnów, Poland, December 1914

Mother born in Bochnia, Poland

Father born in Tarnów, Poland

Parents: Nathan and Hannah Scheuer (née Wolf)

Four sisters and one brother

sibling birth order: Hella, Ida, Dora, Branca, Henry, Blanca

Father was an exporter of bed feather business very large, machinery bought in Germany to clean feathers exported to America, all over Europe; there were 25 non-Jewish employees

Happy family, very comfortable

Went to normal Polish school and business college

Tarnów had 60,000 people

Antisemitism in school, aware of it during school years; had Jewish friends

Religious education, went for short time to for Jewish education

Brother studied for Bar Mitzvah

Spoke Polish but parents spoke to each other in Yiddish

Father member of synagogue and religious

Ida went to synagogue on Yom Kippur

Kosher home

Family was modern Orthodox,

During 1930s knew what was happening, but did not happen to her so did not believe it would happen to them. Could have gone to America because of business connections

Did not do much when Czechoslovakia was invaded

Worked for a Jewish employer in an office

Life in 1930s: interesting life, going out, fun; had holidays and went every year to a wonderful place

September 3, 1939 war began

September 10, 1939 England entered war, they were glad

Men had great fear, decided to move further, mother decided not to leave home

Mother stayed with Ida and Branca; Hella and her family went with father to part of Poland occupied by Russia but then came back home. Biggest thing was fear and apprehension.

Saw notice on wall that Germans allowed people to go to Switzerland

First encounter with Germans was when they came to Tarnów in September, but they did not come to their place. Could see hatred in German soldier's eyes. Had to wear band. Tried to cover band up when she went out. Always scared.

She went to father's factory, not occupied and saw list of father's contacts

Wrote to Carl G. Busch (father's business contact) of her father address: strasse 8, Berne Switzerland. Non-Jewish, Told him she had a fiancé in Australia. He contacted fiancé in Australia. He wrote to tell her she had a permit to go to Australia. Had to go to German consulate in Krakow. Went by train (1 ½ hours from Tarnów to Krakow) needed special permission. She could speak German, told to come back in a week to get her passport. Went back in the week and got passport.

1939. no ghetto in Tarnów and no persecutions

Italian visa was needed, needed to go Katowice which was considered in German Reich

By train to Katowice going to Italian consulate. Italian consulate would not give visa without a paid ticket to Australia. Needed original permit for Australian passport. Wrote to Busch in Switzerland that she needed original permit and paid ticket to Melbourne. In a week received note from tourist bureau that they had original permit and ticket to Australia on March 22, 1940 on the Roomolo. Then got visa. Went home.

Allowed to travel

Still nothing happening in Tarnów, rationing, fear

Traveled from Tarnów to Krakow and then Vienna by train, still wearing band, had no money

Stayed in Vienna one night and then by overnight by train to Genoa, Italy.

Met a Jewish man on the train, Adligo (sp) Levy he spoke German told him she had left her money in Switzerland. She called Carl Busch. Next thing she has plenty of money which Busch wired.

Then by ship. Only Jews were a Swiss couple. Near Australia heard that Italy was entering war.

Got off boat in Adelaide, Australia and took train to Melbourne.

May 10, 1940, arrived in Melbourne, married May 25, 1940

Wanted to send parcels to Poland, but Australia would not send packages since they claimed packages would not go to intended people since Germans would intercept

Ida went to post office official to explain that would not allow packages from Switzerland but that Germans are not interested in packages from Australia, but there was a chance it would get through to people

Heard only from Carl Busch in Switzerland

Branca survived concentration camp and when liberated went to Carl Busch, in Switzerland; she lived with Busch for three months until received papers for Australia

Knew father was in Siberia, met with Australian minister in Moscow, Bill Slater, when he returned to Australia, gave her little hope

Australia took over Polish business affairs for a few days in 1942; In 1942 Ida received permits for her people to leave Siberia, father, brother and sister, left Siberia on way to Australia

Went via India, and then Australia

Mother and other sister, Blanca, stayed in Poland; sister, Branca, was in Auschwitz, but survived; mother told Blanca that if she has a chance to go out, she got out but later she was taken to Auschwitz

Mother and Blanca were killed in Auschwitz

Branca's permit to Australia was lost, Ida went to Slater who contacted Jack Beasley, an Australian minister in London who arranged for Branca to go to Australia

Branca suffered, had feelings of guilt

Ida's story, married to a man for 14 years, he had heart attack in 1952 and died in 1955;

Ida's two daughters, who are now married and have children

Ida never returned to Poland

Poles without hesitation were helping Germans, Poles showed Germans the Jews

Husband was a chocolate whiskey cake manufacturer, she took over business and made cakes

Thoughts about her life: Felt very lucky, went through tensions, but always able to cope, always tense; Loves Australia very much; Time helps, believes in God

Branca shared her tragedy,

Survived because of fate, met husband coincidentally, met in 1937 in Krakow. Went to see a friend and met husband.

Children not affected because she never told them, affected by death of father

Message to viewers of this video: Believe in yourself, and you get on, positive thinking is an important part of life, fight for your options.

Photo 1938 of family: Hella and her husband, Blanca, Dora and Henry; taken in Krachinco, on holiday

Photo taken in Poland Nathan Scheure, died 1953 came from Siberia

Photo of mother Hanna Scheuer killed in 1942 in Auschwitz

Photo of older sister Branca's child, shot in Poland while with Branca in 1942

Photo of husband's father, Sigmund Hampel, died before the war in Poland

Photo Ida and husband

Photo of older daughter, Helen

Photo of younger daughter, Barbara

Photo, 1947, Branca, daughter Helen, and Ida

Photo Barbara at three months

Photo Barbara and Michael at their wedding

Photo Helen (on right) Barbara

Photo Michael (son in law) Georgia (granddaughter) Barbara (daughter) and Benjamin (grandson)

Photo John (Helen's husband) Michael, a cousin, Ida, Helen, Barbara, ____, ____, Georgia (granddaughter)

Photo Benjamin and Georgia children of Barbara