

RG-50.407.0034

Oral history interview with Rozia Krakowski

Summary

Born: 24 June 1926 in Konigsberg, Poland, a small town
1930 moved to Bengin (ph), near the German border, lived there many years **(00:43)**
Sister born in Bengin in 1928
moved back to Konigsberg, lived there until 1934 or 1935
moved back to Bengin, 2 or 3 weeks before war broke parents got an apartment in Lodz
war broke out so did not move to Lodz
non-Jewish girlfriend, good friends with neighbors
moved back to Konigsberg when war started
three sisters and one brother, happy childhood
mother was from a rabbinic people, very religious family
father was older, not religious
went to schul very often on Saturdays and for holidays
Konigsberg, many Jewish people, went to Beth Jacov Jewish school for girls after regular Polish school
Little antisemitism, once called dirty Jew and once stone thrown at her, once challah stolen from her
Good relations with non-Jews in town
Spoke Polish at home, parents spoke Yiddish, mother wrote in Yiddish
Rivka Ast, maiden name of mother, born 1900, born near Konigsberg
Father, Moshe Aaron Levkotch **(sp)(11:20)** born in Konigsberg, leather dealer, bought raw skins and tanned skins, big business
Standard of living, comfortable
Sold business, house and lost everything when father got sick, hospitalized in Chestakoff (ph) **12:43)**
Before she was born father had papers to go to Israel with mother and two children
Uncle told father how bad things were in Israel so never went
Parents mixed with non-Jewish neighbors
Extended family, uncle with five children, auntie on father's side
The organizations her father belonged to
In Bengin she was in a youth organization, starting the year before the war
Bengin was a city of about 40,000 Jewish people, went to school for Jewish girls
Before the war, refugees were coming from Germany,
World war 2 declared, gave polish soldiers bread and tea
First contact with Nazi occupation, in front of house
Jewish synagogue burned by Nazis, people were inside
Nazis cut off men's beards, had to wear yellow star, then yellow arm band
Non-Jewish Concierge no longer came to building.
Nazis collected the men, brother and sister left for Russia, sent sister parcels through Red Cross
Jewish denouncers in town were worse than Germans

German arrested father, paid money to a Jewish man, **Machengale** (ph) **(31:20)**, and released, he was arrested every two weeks and was in jail overnight, shaved his head, paid every time to get him out

School, cinema, everything closed

Non-Jewish friend arranged for her to work in factory, at just the beginning of the war

Earlier, grandmother selected in Bengin, died on the way to Auschwitz

1940: Selections announced, all had to go to Plaza, every Jew, told to dress nicely, no traveling, curfew

Jewish police: Judenrat, Mr. Marion was in charge, poorest picked first

42:27

43:00 Sneaking to buy cigarettes,

46:34 followed by German, went into wrong house so the German would not know where she lived, stopped by German

Worked in shoe factory about 9 months until factory closed, allowed outside of ghetto to work,

1941: first selection, all the population, sat all day and all night, Jewish police and Germans stood in rows made the selection, enclosed in wire fencing, her friend, Moshe Steinbeck, made a hole in fence for them to escape, many members of family transported to Auschwitz

Germans looking for her brother, Jews went to a farm **(55:42) can't understand name** Germans allowed them to farm there

1941-42 After factory closed worked in shoe factory

Germans came to door looking for brother, told them her brother not there, Germans went away, Rozi camouflaged brother and went out, brother hid

Hid in a cabin from Germans when they were looking for girls

Germans and then Jewish Police were mostly catching people

Middle of 1942, Rozia received a letter that she needed to report and go to camp, Family left home and hid in cellar behind cousin's house. C was put on their house, so they could not go back to their house

Moshe Steinbeck came and said Jewish police know where she is. On the way to surrender herself at the Jewish headquarters, because she felt she endangered her family, she met a Jewish policeman, Seidenbauch, but would not surrender to him and went on her own **(sp?**

1:05:38} last time she saw her parents, taken to Dullag **(sp? 1:07:04)**

About 1,000 Jewish girls, traveled by bus to Dullag place where they waited while determined where to be sent, there for 8 days, Steinbeck brought suitcase with her things, Germans made selection for different camps, selected to go to Marstad **name of labor camp sp? 1:11:** in Germany, transported in cattle car, had space,

1:12:06

last quarter of 1942 - Trip took hours, Bengin near the German border, when arrived saw men being beaten

thirty girls in Marstad, greeted by the Major

put in 4 rooms, 24 girls, kept own clothes, very clean and spotless, laundry

one meal a day, bread, soup, margarine, coffee, jam

Before she left home, father burned her arms so she would not look healthy in an effort to keep her from going to camp. Told to scratch it all the time, she did not let sores heal, so assigned to schneiderstopen (sp? **1:20:29**) tailor?, other girls working as potato peelers

Bella Frisch or (Hersch) (got good food from the Irish kitchen (not for the Jews, for the Germans) because she was sick, shared food with Rozia

In Marstad, twelve sick girls were selected for Auschwitz, Rozia and Bella included in group, the man who had denounced her father and a relative of father's partner was at the camp, Mr. Pottack, got her released, told her to let her arm heal, **1:24:06 (she also mentioned a Mr.**

Matigale [ph])

1:26:35

Shifted to barracks, 24 Polish, Jewish girls

Prisoners of war there too

Another girl for pregnant by Kapo, had abortion but bleeding, sent to Auschwitz; another girl had relations with a German, she received privileges, could work in office, lived with sister, as much food as wanted, taken to Marstad town for abortion

Marstad a transit camp, each week 500 men came in and 500 selected to go to Auschwitz

No Kapos for the women, men had Kapos, conditions for men terrible, dying of starvation, took men to work every day building roads

1942 still getting letters and parcels from home, mother hid money in scrubbing brush,

A camp official came from Auschwitz, she had to go before him because she had gotten caught when giving a letter she had gotten from home to another prisoner from home

Camp official would slap people or beat men, he then sent her back

She was told by friend from home that everyone at home had been sent to camps

1943 Marstad camp dissolved and had to go to center of camp, transported by train to

(1:39:51) Purchsvalda (ph) farther in Germany, as well as other camps

Sent to live in a castle, bunks, dining room, a few hundred women, worked in munitions factory

Three groups of women each with a Kapo, worked 6 days a week,

Then moved again because there were now 1,300 women, still working in munitions factory

German selections, naked, given numbers there, few selected and sent away because not healthy

(1:46:00) Kapos in women's camp were not bad, German Kapos were bad, could go to bathroom only three times a day, had bathroom coupons

(1:47:00) good German **mastic (ph), Mr. Fuldee (ph)**

Roll call every morning at 5:00 and in the evening. Morning roll call by woman called **Veinstein**

(sp? 1:48:11) German, late twenties

2 women from Marstad escaped and they survived

(1:48:50)

Men in Pettisfald **(sp? 1:50:52}**

Then in **Pettisfald** worked on machine making screws, told screws were for bicycles

One job was to go into kitchen and bring food to fellow prisoners, she was in charge of cleaning of barracks

(1:55:12) Mrs. Perovska, an older woman prisoner, Rozia did not want her to do the work Needed one star on front and one on back of clothes

(1:56:43) 1944 - transport of Hungarian girls, 100 girls, 50 had shaved heads, all had striped clothes, told no more Auschwitz **(1:59:00)**

3 months before liberation they knew factory could be blown up at any time by Russians
Rozia learned that screws were for ammunition not bicycles

(2:00:00)

Then she started sabotaging screws and made them too loose, her meister told her the screws were not right, he threw her screws in a pond, then she broke needles, one day three Germans in white coats came to watch, Germans took her back to camp, excluded her from everything, she knew that trains were not going to Auschwitz, she was told she was going to Auschwitz for three months, then Russians came and liberation

Not celebrating holidays, no calendar

(2:10:30) They noticed movements of Germans, only women guards, girls called her, her cousin came and told them they were liberated, told them to open the gate and that they were free, opened the gate, saw Russians coming, needed to hide from Russians, former Jewish prisoners had guns, did not know where she was going

Russians shot one girl **(2:12:43)** they were afraid of Russians, the girls always walked in a group

(2:13:21)

Food organization after liberation by the women prisoners, stayed about a week, then went back to Poland

Traveled on top of trains, trucks, whatever they could get to Poland, scared to meet Russians, took several days to get to **Sustevitz (sp? 2:14:33)** stayed overnight and then went to Bengin another friend from Katowitz,

traveled to Bengin by train, concierge of her old home gave her the name of Peltz girls who had lived on her block

She found Peltz girls but they knew nothing

She went to the Jewish Committee, no family names on list

found her brother, Barrack **(sp? 2:19:43)** he was blind and sick, he had been liberated earlier went back to concierge who gave her a room, Jewish committee gave her beds, concierge gave them household goods

stayed in Bengin about two weeks, left with about a group of 6 friends traveling, no place in particular

2:23:29

Needed to get away from Russians, Russian threatened to shoot her brother

Continued traveling in trains, busses, bribed Russians

Brother worked for Polish police **(2:25:12)**

Went to several places in Hungary **(2:25:40)** just wandering

Arrived at Gratz, **(2:26:18)** already organized by Jewish committee, stayed a few days

Then went to **Lignitz** and received shelter and food

Going to a place in **Turkey** and being taken to prison for crossing the border illegally

Brother told to work cleaning chimneys

Commandant gave her the name of a Jewish girl who came to visit her, girl gave them names in case they can escape from prison

Liberated from prison, **Naghout (sp? 2:36:22)** a little town

1945 second half of year - Continued traveling, then went to **(2:38:41)** run by Jewish committee

Met husband in **Fairfel (sp? 2:38:36)**

brother caught smuggling, put in prison for another year,

twenty weddings a day, conducted by rabbi

husband had been in Auschwitz and Treblinka, husband went to Israel, Rozia went to Paris with her brother

November 29, 1948 arrived in Paris

January 4, 1949 Then finally went to Israel and married husband

Went to Australia in 1960, with husband and children

Brother was in Australia, it was terrible in Australia

1950 sister had gone back to Poland from Russia, sister went to Israel in 1956

Photos

Family, 1930

Rozia, in Bengin

Little sister

Rozia beginning of war

Brother Barrack

In Bengin, girlfriends

Jewish kibbutz, outside of Bengin

Rozia with her husband and children

Rozi and husband in Australia

Picture in Paris of Rozia

Picture of her children

Wedding picture

Daughter

Rozia and husband

Daughter and her children

Son and his children

More pictures of grandchildren