

Summary of Oral History: Herta Ryber

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This summary was written by a USHMM Volunteer

Summary

Herta Ryber nee Wimmara (ova) (?), born on January 7, 1927 in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia (now Slovakia), discusses her family, including her parents and four siblings (Raile (s), Fritzie (s), Cornel(b), and Yoachim – her twin)[Herta's brothers and her sister Ralie died at the end of the war. Fritzie married Ralie's husband later]; loving family. Father owned a textile business. Herta's father didn't think anything bad would happen. From 1939 to 1942, normal life in Bratislava. 1942 trouble began. 1943 father's business taken away. Older siblings went to Budapest, she and twin stayed with their parents. Herta illegally went to Budapest in 1943. Came back to Bratislava in August 1944; Lived in a ghetto; Yom Kippur – 9/44 – 2AM – Gestapo and Slovaks came and took them away; Two days later sorted out by Judenrat; sent to Arbeit Slaga – Sered – working camp. Put on cattle wagons. Stayed in Sered - one room with lots of people; Remained 7 to 10 days, given food; Taken on cattle wagons for days – came to Auschwitz. Mother sent to gas chambers; father also. Mengele pushed Herta away from the gas chamber. She was in Auschwitz for several months; Called up for Appell. Saw Kapo - Litzie Millrod – Herta knew and was told she was going to gas chambers; She recalls actually being in the “shower” but they ran out of Zyklon B gas; Litzie helped Herta get to the Freibach Saxon (?) ammunition factory. German POW, foreman at factory, gave her food; 1/6/45 given a newspaper; learned what was happening, but not hopeful; Herded like animals. Then in a cattle car for 2 days; stopped in Pilsen. She thought she was going to Flossenburg, but instead was sent to Mauthausen. Stayed for about four weeks. Terrible conditions – had stomach typhoid.

Liberated on 5/5 by Americans. A Polish doctor thought Herta would die so she was not treated. She crawled into a Red Cross ambulance. Had no ID band with diagnosis but an American doctor (Jewish) helped her – weighed 28 kgs when liberated. She said she was going back to Bratislava; arrived via ship on May 21; Not allowed off because the boat was quarantined but ran off the ship anyway. Found her sister, Fritzie, after three days. Her future husband (Paul Ryber), then a friend of Cornel's, helped her. “He brought her back to humanity”; Married on 12/45; Lived in Paul's old house; gave the bottom floor restaurant to a person who had taken over the house; They lived upstairs. Settled in Bratislava but on 8/1946 on Partisan Day, many got drunk and came to “kill the Jews”; Herta said she would not stay in Bratislava so moved to Australia because Paul had a cousin there and could get a permit; Paul left a sister in Bratislava and one in Israel (who left in 1939). Fritzie also moved to Australia.