

RG-50.407.0063

Oral History: Fela Goldbaum, July 1996

Summary

Fela Goldbaum, born in Pabianice, near Lodz, Poland, on April 3, 1915 to Hava* and Shalom Volkovich.* Goldbaum discusses growing up in a close, religious, but not overly strict, family; living mainly among Jews; speaking “Jewish” in the home and Polish outside; becoming a seamstress; anti-Semitism among the local population; attempting unsuccessfully to emigrate to Palestine; being aware of Hitler’s anti-Jewish policies; her first contacts with the Germans following the invasion of Poland; attempting, unsuccessfully, to prevent the arrest of her brother; establishment of a ghetto in Pabianice and being forced to wear the yellow star; Jews establishing a Judenrat to deal with the Germans; arresting men and sending them to camps to do, she presumes, manual labor; working as a seamstress, while other women were forced to be “concubines”; having a special permit to leave the ghetto to work and being given special rations; being forced to sew Nazi flags; closing the Ghetto in 1942; being rounded up by the Gestapo and marched to a field, where everyone was forced to spend the night; separation of young from old and being sent to Litzmannstadt Ghetto in Lodz; others being sent to Chelmno; continuing to work in a workshop in Litzmannstadt; marrying in order to get more time off under Judenrat policies; hiding from Germans in 1944; being sent to Auschwitz in cattle cars with no food or water “in conditions worse than animals”; seeing smoke coming from the chimneys; going through the selection; standing naked, having her hair cut; standing in the open for three days; being separated from her two sisters, Hana and Pearl (they survived); being sent to Mittelstein* to work and describing the daily routine; being taken on a forced march as the Russians approached; being freed by the Russians and returning to the camp barracks (for shelter); developing dysentery; going from village to village scrounging for food; marrying an acquaintance from Pabianice; returning to Pabianice; deciding to flee Poland and return to Germany (Landsberg/DP Camp*); giving birth to a son, Joseph [later having two daughters, Rachel and Eva]; emigrating in 1948 to newly-declared Israel; becoming ill and returning to Germany for treatment; moving to Australia, where she resided for 40 years.

*Indicates transliteration as heard.