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Oral History: Sabina Jakubowicz, September 18, 1996

Sabina Jakubowicz, born June 6, 1923 in Radomsko, Poland, describes: a happy Hasidic family life and a very happy childhood as the youngest of seven children (two brothers and four sisters); her mother dying of TB when Sabina was nine years old; living in a mixed community of Jews and gentiles who got along well but still experiencing much anti-Semitism; speaking Yiddish in the home; experiencing “bloody Monday,” when the Nazis beat up Jews and also non-Jews; fleeing on December 26, 1939 with several extended family members to an aunt’s home in Czestochowa; being aware of events in Germany but never believing things could get as bad as they did; not being surprised that the Poles would collaborate with the Germans; being in the Czestochowa ghetto from about 1940 until 1942, when the Germans began liquidating it and sending Jews to Treblinka; some Jews with useful skills, including Sabina, being segregated in a smaller ghetto; not being hungry while in “the big ghetto” (where they were still in their homes) because her aunt was rich, but when in the “small ghetto,” where she worked in a munitions factory, there was hunger; being one of five girls forced to live in a single room; there being about 60,000 Jews in the big ghetto before the liquidation, and about 5,000 in the small ghetto; the children being taken from the ghetto; being sent to the synagogue, where Jews were being held in deplorable conditions, but being rescued by a Jewish policeman; on several occasions witnessing the most brutal executions, including of young children; her worst moment, when, during liberation by the Russians, she realized her entire family was dead—almost all sent to Treblinka—and she had no idea where to go; desperately wanting a sister to cry with; not wanting to grieve with friends “because then I will have no friends”; mourning her beautiful, loving family life; being treated well by one German overseer who happened to be an American; liberation on January 17, 1945 by the Russians, who treated the captives very well; traveling to Germany by rail, where she and her husband remained from 1946 until 1949 [Note: Jakubowicz refers throughout, interchangeably, to a husband and future husband, a man who was married to her cousin until the cousin and their children were killed.]; moving to Holland, and living there until 1953; never believing she would survive the Holocaust; gradually becoming strictly religious, particularly after surviving a near-fatal illness; suffering two miscarriages while in Holland and regretting that she has never been able to have a child; trying unsuccessfully to find surviving family members; emigrating to Australia.