

## Oral History: Ester Braitberg, February 26, 1997

Ester Braitberg, born April 2, 1928 in Lodz, Poland, to Bessa née Kliman\* and Moisha Levkovitch,\* describes: her sisters, Eva and Hanna, and brother, Isaac, almost all of whom perished in the Holocaust; a very happy home; her father, who died of pleurisy in the Lodz ghetto; her younger sister, who also died in the ghetto, age nine; her brother who went to Germany to work and disappeared; her older sister, who married and went to Russia in 1939 and survived but was not seen again in person until 1967 (died in the U.S. in 1972); a large, very close extended family; her father's large carpet factory; being economically well off; attending an entirely Jewish state school; pervasive anti-Semitism; her home being absorbed into the ghetto; maintaining a sense of optimism in the ghetto until they were transported to Auschwitz [00:55:20]; being on the last transport in the liquidation of the ghetto; arriving by train in Auschwitz on August 23, 1944 and going through selection; being separated from her mother and never seeing her again; staying only four or five days in Auschwitz before being among 500 people from Lodz sent to Bremen, while a second group of 300 was sent to Hamburg [01:02:00]; in Bremen, being assigned to work clearing rubble from U.S. bombings; conditions in the Bremen camp, where she was supervised by a cruel Romanian woman; being shoeless in freezing conditions; being supervised by SS women, most of whom were brutal and a few occasionally kind; in March (1945) being sent on foot among about 600 people to Bergen-Belsen [01:20:00]; seeing and being forced to deal with corpses all around in Belsen; being joyous when the British liberated Belsen but several people becoming sometimes fatally ill from eating too much, too fast; going to the Feldafing DP camp [near Munich/Dachau]; trying to find surviving relatives and discovering only a couple of cousins and an uncle; meeting a man from Feldafing and marrying him in Belgium, where she remained for five years; immigrating to Australia; having a daughter in 1954 and a son in 1957; having a good life in Australia; having discussed her experiences in detail with her children. [Shows family photos and identifies relatives at 01:30:00.]

\*As heard.