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Summary

Blanka Willinger was born in Sighetu, Romania to parents Adam and Rosamund (née Ziesel) Hupstein, who had five children. Blanka was the oldest and twenty years old when the war started. Adam was involved in the import-export business. Anti-semitism feeling was low in her area.

In the early years of the war, they heard rumors of the camps but found them hard to believe and felt they had no safe place to go. The Germans entered the area in April, 1944 after which they had to wear the star. The ghetto was formed after Pesach (Passover), 1944 which they entered on May 16. After three weeks, the transports began to Auschwitz under the guise that they were being sent to Hungary for work. Her mother and younger sister and brother were sent to the left side, she and the other members of her family to the right. She never again saw her mother and those siblings. She was sent to another camp where they had little to do during the day. Since they could see the fires and the Polish guards had informed (and taunted) them about the exterminations, they considered their forced idleness as 'sitting shiva'.

She was sent by train to Gastonburg (?) near Aachen to re-build a destroyed factory arriving Sept. 13. Once it was re-built, U.S. bombers destroyed it again. One bomber attack hit the barracks forcing the prisoners to flee. But, when the German soldiers killed some during the chaos, the bomber attacks were not repeated. She and her sisters were sent around October to another camp in the middle of Germany (Sonnaburg?). They heard that the Gastonburg camp was liberated by U.S. soldiers shortly after they departed. The conditions and food were better. They remained at this camp until April, 1945 when the SS troops put them on a forced march. But, after a few days, the troops simply left them overnight allowing Russian troops to liberate them on May 8.

They returned home via Budapest. Her fiancé, a cousin from her mother's side, returned from Auschwitz and they married on January 22, 1946. They had a daughter in 1947 and began to consider moving to Israel. In 1948, Romanian authorities jailed her husband as the child of capitalists for two years. On his release, they obtained a passport and left for Israel. They found the life there hard and decided to join relatives in Australia.