

RG-50.407.0236

Oral History: Elizabeth Jablonski, January 29 and February 12, 2002

Part I

Elizabeth Jablonski, born in Warsaw, Poland in October 1916, describes: having two brothers, Alec and Misha; her parents, who operated a small clothing factory; attending a Jewish private school; teachers being mostly communists; her family having a comfortable economic position; her family having socialist leanings but not belonging to a particular organization, though her younger brother joined Betar; her older brother having a Germanic appearance; a “beautiful” childhood; being accepted to study law at university but her enrollment being prevented by the war; her flat being bombed during the outbreak of war in 1939; her fiancé being killed early in the war; Polish antisemitism; fleeing east and settling in Ukraine in an area occupied by Germans; obtaining false papers; fleeing to Kiev and then to Poltava; on the way to Poltava, meeting a German who tried to save as many Jews as possible by providing false papers and work; finding an attic in which to hide; over twenty people hiding in a space designed for six; escaping after being warned that the Germans were searching houses for Jews; reaching Ostrog [PH], meeting up with some Ukrainian girls, and obtaining a German *ausweis* (identity card); arriving in Poltava, where a German military unit was stationed; being befriended and protected by a Ukrainian woman as the Germans left and the Red Army arrived; working for the Red Army as an accountant; hoping to return to Poland; joining a Soviet-sponsored Polish army unit; flying to Lublin; observing vast urban destruction; being seconded to the Polish Foreign Ministry in Warsaw; on August 6 [presumably 1945], accompanying the chargé-designate assigned to reopen the Polish legation in Egypt; stopping in London for four weeks; arriving in Egypt and working at the Polish legation; trying to locate her family; discovering that her parents survived and were in Warsaw; returning to Warsaw after two and a half years in Cairo; discovering that there was a large Jewish presence in the Foreign Ministry, which became a contentious political issue; meeting her future husband in 1949; in 1957, becoming second secretary at the Polish embassy in Paris.

Part II

Now married (her husband a Buchenwald survivor), pressured by her husband’s family to immigrate to Australia, but instead returning to Warsaw in 1958; immigrating to Australia in 1961; moving to Melbourne; in 1967, traveling to Germany to testify in a trial of a German, who was convicted and sentenced to five years imprisonment (note: there are some hiccups in the tape at this point); [responding to a question] being involved in the Jewish community in Australia; often discussing the Holocaust with her friends; recounts the death of her younger brother in the Warsaw ghetto and the wounding of her older brother, who then went east to Siberia; at a time she was depressed, being convinced that Jews may be destroyed but were obligated to make Hitler’s job more difficult and for some to survive to bear witness; feeling an obligation to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive, including the five million non-Jews (Roma, homosexuals, etc.) who were murdered. Shows various photos.