

## **RG-50.568.0071**

### **Summary**

Janina Greenwood (née Kortz), born December 4, 1927 in Lodz, Poland. Only child of Helen and Avraham Kortz. Mother a compulsive student and father who worked in the family factory. He was a diabetic who had a leg amputated when she was a child. Mother, who died in 1937, had 6 siblings and father had 13. Not religious and mother "anti-religion." Polish and German spoken at home. Janina had difficulty at school (gymnasium) because she was Jewish. She lived in a Jewish commercial district but had no Jewish education and now says she cannot bless Shabbos candles. When the war began, her father thought the Poles would win. When standing in line for bread, anyone speaking Yiddish was thrown out of line. Eventually the family went into the ghetto where there were signs "Jews and Dogs forbidden." Her father hid jewels, gold etc. in hollow part of crutch. She ended up sewing epaulettes on uniforms while in the ghetto. She says the intelligentsia of Lodz vanished over time. There were on and off deportations and she notes that a Jewish woman who assisted now lives in Australia. Jewish police tracked down deportees who were hiding. During this time, her father died (September 6, 1942) at age 46, leaving her alone. She paid the undertaker with a loaf of bread. She escaped deportation while ill when a friend used lipstick to make her cheeks look healthy. She spent approximately three years in the ghetto and "just survived." Eventually, she was sent to Auschwitz/Birkenau circa September 1944 when people were told the Russians were coming. Given salt pork on the train trip but no water until she drank from puddles when she arrived at the camp. She was not tattooed but was shaved. She was separated to go to work while others were liquidated. Had to bathe in a trough, share a bowl of soup with 5 others and often had to parade naked while the guards laughed. She survived by not dwelling on events. She did see a woman commit suicide by running into the electric fence. The Kapos/guards were Czech and they treated the inmates badly. Eventually sent to Bergen Belsen for approximately 3 months and then on to a nearby work camp where she worked with 400 other women in an attached metal factory. There, they lived in barracks with bunks and washrooms. At this point she felt "not human anymore, "working 12-hour shifts. Her supervisor was a "humane fellow" who, when ordered to march the women out of the camp and shoot them, did not do so. Americans came April 16, 1945 and prisoner left camp and looted nearby stores of food. SS men ran away. Some women wanted to return to Poland, but she did not. She and a friend went to a hotel to recuperate. She met a male friend from Lodz, Indyk Viden, who took her and her friend to Sachsen in the Russian Zone and then back to Hof/Rechau near the Czech border where she rented a room and ended up meeting her husband who had been in Dachau and Buchenwald. Some Jews were smuggled out of the area to Palestine. She married in 1947 and her husband took over a shop. They stayed four years.

Eventually, they were offered an opportunity to go to Australia on a contract, but because they were both Jews it was denied. Her husband used a Polish name, Griboski, instead of his real name, Grinbaum, they were allowed in. They did not live in a Jewish area as she was uncomfortable doing so. They had two daughters, Helen and Michelle and changed the surname to Greenwood. Her husband worked in a metal shop and later became a builder. They were divorced in 1982. She remarried and is now a widow. Helen was divorced and is married to a non-Jew, while Michelle married an old-line Jewish man. She has three grandchildren. She

does not discuss her experiences and rarely attends synagogue. She does wonder why God allowed the Holocaust to happen.