

Interviewee:	<u>OTELSBERG</u> , Vera	Date:	November 6, 1989
Interviewer:	Edith Millman		
Audio tapes:	2 German, 3 English trans.	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
Restrictions:	None	Libr. Catlg, #:	D 810 J4 G7 no. 102
		Translated:	German to Eng. (orally) ¹
		Translated by:	Edith Millman

SUMMARY

Vera Otelsberg, nee Neuman, a Warsaw Ghetto survivor, was born to a wealthy family in 1924 in Bielitz (Bielsko-Biala), Poland. Her father was an industrialist who owned several factories and a mill. Her mother died when she was a young child and she was brought up by a nanny. The family was not religious, attended synagogue only on High Holidays. Shortly before the outbreak of World War II, she escaped to Warsaw with her older sister, her husband and child and nanny. Her sister with family were able to buy visas to South America and left in 1940 while Vera stayed in the Warsaw with her nanny and brother-in-law's parents.

Vera explains how they were forced into the ghetto and gives a detailed description about how she was able to get money through a relative on the Aryan side of Warsaw and describes the scarcity of food, illness, forced labor and dangers of living in the Warsaw Ghetto including a time when they had to hide from German soldiers in an attic. She describes the long hours working at the Toebbens Factory, sometimes days at a time, without being allowed home. She describes several instances of help from Poles and Germans. Mr. Wagenfeld brought money into the ghetto to Vera when her relative could not get in and also arranged to help her escape from the ghetto in the summer of 1942. A non-Jewish acquaintance of hers got her an *Arbeitskarte*, a work card, testifying that she worked in his office. She describes in detail living on the outside on false papers, working as a maid in a German household and later, in a village, listening to the radio illegally and translating the reports into Polish for an underground paper. She also describes how her friend Steffi was assisted by a German soldier to escape the ghetto and how family friends secured false papers for her, as well as other evidence regarding the workings of procuring false papers and how one lived as a non-Jew on the outside of the Warsaw Ghetto.

Vera describes life in Sochaczew before and during the retreat of the Germans and the killing of German soldiers by the advancing Russians. When Bielitz was liberated, she returned home with help from Russian Jewish officers. Her father had perished in Lemberg, her nanny in a death camp. Eventually Vera married, had a daughter and in 1957 moved to Monte Video, Uruguay.

¹This interview was conducted in German and later orally translated by the interviewer, Edith Millman. The transcription is based on the English tapes only.

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SUBJECT HEADINGS

Holocaust survivors.
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Poland--Personal narratives.
Identification cards--Forgeries--Poland.
Jewish ghettos--Poland--Warsaw.
Jewish women in the Holocaust.
Jews--Persecutions--Poland.
Passing (Identity)--Poland.
World War, 1939-1945--Conscript labor--Poland.
World War, 1939-1945--Underground literature--Poland.
World War, 1939-1945--Underground movements--Poland.
Women--Personal narratives.

Bielsko-Biala (Poland)
Montevideo (Uruguay)
Poland--History--Occupation, 1939-1945.
Sochaczew (Poland)
Uruguay--Emigration and immigration.
Warsaw (Poland)