

Interviewee: SILVER, Hanna Bornowski  
Interviewer: Natalie Packel  
No. of audiotapes: 2 English  
Transcript: 1 v. (unpaged)

Date: April 25, 1995  
Photographs  
No restrictions

## SUMMARY

Hanna Silver, née Bornowski, was born in Berlin Germany February 14, 1910. She lived and worked in Berlin, with her mother, during the Nazi period, World War II, and the allied occupation. This interview was done in conjunction with a series of photographs from Mrs. Silver's personal collection, which she explains. These pictures show how areas of Berlin, including her apartment house, were devastated during an air raid on February 3, 1945, and also include pictures of both dead and surviving members of her family. Her mother died during an air raid and was buried in a mass grave, location unknown.

She vividly describes life in Berlin during and after World War II, deprived of the bare necessities of life. She explains in detail how she was able to live and work in Berlin during World War II without posing as an Aryan, due to her determination, some luck, and help and protection from her neighbors and other non-Jews. She relates how a German policeman helped her to get an Identification Card not stamped with a "J". She describes the effect of air raids on the general population, the total devastation in Berlin and how she and other survivors tried to cope during days and nights spent in air raid shelters, completely cut off from the outside world. She cites heinous acts committed by Germans against their own people near the end of the war. Mrs. Silver describes how she felt after the final air raid, and still managed to go on, after her mother was gone, her home was gone, and everything she owned was gone.

She relates in great detail what life was like in Berlin under joint occupation by allied forces, the behaviour of Russian troops, including an interesting vignette of why the people in her building were not molested by the Russians. Hanna was in the American sector, spoke English, worked for the Red Cross as a photographer and also had her own shop. She married an American officer she met during this time.

Mrs. Silver closes by reciting the names and fates of relatives who were killed or survived. She discusses why she was able to cope and how her experiences in Berlin affected her outlook on life and how she tried to pay back America through her volunteer work.

Note: Copies of the above mentioned photographs are included with the transcript. Verification of how her mother died can be found on pages 122 and 123, in The Berliners: Their Saga and Their City by Walter Henry Nelson. David McKay Co., Inc. N.Y. 1969. A photocopy of these pages is in the collection of Holocaust Oral History Archives, together with the following items:

- An audiotape of Hanna Silver speaking to students in their classroom-1978.
- An audio taped interview of Hanna Silver, done in 1983 by Ellen Rofman, for a research paper pertaining to Righteous Christians helping Jews.
- Personal photographs of postwar Berlin after the Allied bombing, taken by Hanna Silver
- An audiotape of a broadcast by KYW radio station pertaining to an exhibit of needlework created by Hanna Silver.
- Post war memoir written by Hanna Silver at an unspecified time.

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#### SUBJECT HEADINGS

World War, 1939 - 1945 -- Personal narratives, Jewish  
World War, 1939 - 1945 --Civilian population, German  
Military occupation - Berlin, Germany  
Aid by non-Jews  
Survival skills