

Interviewee: ETKOWICZ, Tess  
Interviewer: Patricia Rich

Date: May 22, 2008

Audio tapes: 2 English  
Audio Record #: GC00118  
Restrictions: None

Transcript: 1 vol. (unpaged) English  
Libr. Catlg. #: D 810.J4 G7 #196

## SUMMARY

Tess Etkowicz, nee Erman, was born in Lublin, Poland on September 19, 1924, the youngest of 6 children from a well-to-do family. The family lived in Lodz, Poland from in 1927-28. Before the war her father was a sales representative in textiles. She describes pre-war Poland including her education, synagogue life, and antisemitism and her fright (at 15) at the German invasion (1939) when she worried about family members in Warsaw. She witnessed cruelty by German soldiers and describes how Polish teens came to their apartment and took artwork and her piano.

Her family then fled to Warsaw (where they rented an apartment) until the area became part of the ghetto. Both she and one sister passed as Polish (since they were blond and spoke fluent Polish) and were thus able to smuggle extra food into the Warsaw Ghetto. In 1942, Tess and her sister fled the ghetto, and hid in the county. Tess soon decided to go back and smuggle her parents out.

She describes conditions in the Lublin Ghetto: deportation of men, illness, and describes the horrible conditions in the hospital which she witnessed when she contracted typhus. She describes in detail how she smuggled her parents out of the ghetto passing as Poles (wearing shawls, scarfs and caps) and on a train to the small village where she had stayed before. She shares two encounters of aid from non-Jewish Poles.

Tess describes their brazen travels, hiding in the woods, and hiding with sympathetic farmers. Finally, her parents tired of their travels fled to Radomsko with a group of other elderly people, and were later deported to Treblinka. One sister and her four year old daughter were also deported from the Lublin Ghetto to Treblinka. Tess had gone to Warsaw and was passing as a Aryan. She volunteered in a hospital during the Polish uprising against the Nazis in Warsaw. She was sent to a farm because of her injuries and was liberated by the Russians.

After the war she reunited with a sister and a brother in Lodz by chance encounters. They went by train to Paris to meet up with another brother. Tess, two sisters and two brothers survived the war. Tess met her husband, Phil, in Paris. He had been a soldier in the French Fighting Army (FFA) with DeGaulle. They were married in Paris and emigrated to the United States on January 13, 1950.

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### SUBJECT HEADINGS

Forces Francaises Libres (FFL) Free French Forces

Holocaust Jewish (1939-1945) Poland

Jewish Ghettos - Lublin

Jewish Ghettos - Treblinka

Jewish Ghettos - Warsaw

Lodz, Poland

Radomsko - town and district nr Lodz;

    Nova Radomsk-Russian,

    Radomsk- Yiddish

Volkdeutsche - Poles of German descent

United States - immigration -- History -- 20<sup>th</sup> c.

World War 1939-45 Personal Narratives

World War 1939-45 Jewish resistance

Aid by Non-Jews

Hiding

Survival Skills