

Interviewee:	<u>HERSKO</u> , Judith	Date:	November 9, 1987
Interviewer:	Davida Glick		
Audio tapes:	2 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
Restrictions:	None		

SUMMARY

Judith Hersko, nee Kleinberger, the second youngest of eight children, was born November 18, 1931 in Munkacs, Czechoslovakia to a religious family. She grew up in Karlsbad, where her father owned a sausage factory. She describes good relationships with gentile neighbors and customers. When the war started her family moved back to Munkacs and her father went into the Czech army. She describes some antisemitism and reveals that they had news from some labor camp escapees about what was happening in other parts of the occupied territories but that no one believed the true horrors. She also describes aid by non-Jewish friends who brought food to the ghetto and offered to hide her family.

In March 1944 she along with all the Jews of Munkacs were forced to the Munkacs Ghetto and housed in a brick factory. She describes the beating and torture of young men in the ghetto. After six weeks, they were deported to Auschwitz. Judith describes the inhumane conditions on the cattle cars and gives a very detailed description of their arrival, selection, the showers, the brutality and their shock at what was happening. She managed to stay with two sisters but was separated from her mother and other siblings. She describes their daily routine, the crowded barracks, Kapos and getting dysentery. She was helped by two aunts, who worked in "Canada," and another girl that they befriended. She and her sisters were deported to Stutthof after six weeks. She describes the conditions there. Judith tells of about how she was selected for the crematorium and how she escaped by jumping into a labor line.

She and her sisters were deported a few days later to a subcamp called Baumgarten where they were forced to do hard manual labor. She tells several vignettes about their experiences there including witnessing births and the burying of fetuses because they had no food for them and how she saved herself from drowning while SS soldiers watched and made jokes. She details her forced death march to Danzig-Praust, describing the starvation, the freezing conditions and that of 1200 girls, only 200 survived. She details brutal beatings and diseases and a few acts of kindness from an SS officer and some local townspeople. She and her sisters were liberated by the Soviets. She emigrated to Israel 1948 and subsequently to the United States in the 1977 with her husband and two children. She continues to suffer from severe arthritis and frequent nightmares due to her wartime experiences.

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SUBJECT HEADINGS

Munkacs, Poland
Munkacs Ghetto
Aid by Jews and non-Jews
Auschwitz
Stutthof
Danzig-Praust
Death March