

Interviewee:	<u>MERMELSTEIN</u> , Rachel	Date:	April 21, 1985 ¹
Interviewer:	Susan Freedman		
Audio tapes:	1 English	Transcript:	Draft, unaudited
Restrictions:	No restrictions		1 vol. (unpaged) English

SUMMARY

Rachel Mermelstein, née Genuth, one of six children, was born October 8, 1929 in Sighet, Romania, to a religious family. She attended a *cheder* and also a public school, where Jewish students suffered antisemitic threats and beatings from non-Jewish children.

In 1939, her parents refused an offer to send Rachel and her siblings to Palestine. When Hungarian occupation of Sighet began in 1942, her father was among the 800 Jews arrested and forced into hard labor near Russia. In 1943, aided by some Hungarian and Russian partisans, he returned as one of only three survivors.

In 1944, the Sighet Ghetto enclosed Rachel's home, where her family remained for six weeks until their "resettlement". She describes their terrible 3-day transport to Auschwitz, where they were given numbered tags, rather than tattoos.

After several months of road-building work, she was transported to Christianstadt, a sub-camp of Gross-Rosen. She describes better living conditions as a worker in an ammunition factory and her sabotage while making grenades. A horrific death march to Bergen-Belsen in January, 1945 is detailed, as well as the hostility of Hungarian and Polish guards in that camp, following the flight of the Germans. Rachel was forced to drag dead and dying prisoners to open mass graves.

Rachel spent time in a Displaced Person's camp in Sweden in July 1945. She moved to the United States in 1955.²

¹Recorded at the 1985 American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors in Philadelphia, PA.

²The interview ends abruptly; these facts are listed on the interviewee's personal history sheet.

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SUBJECT HEADINGS

World War 1939 – 1945 – Personal narratives, Jewish, Romanian
World War 1939 – 1945 – Deportation from Romania
Occupation – 1940 – 1944 Hungarian
Jewish ghettos – Sighet, Romania
Auschwitz (concentration camp)
Christianstadt (concentration camp)
Bergen-Belsen (concentration camp)
Death march
Atrocities
Sabotage