

TITLE- Lenci Farkas

I DATE- December 11, 1990

SOURCE- SFHOHP

RESTRICTIONS-

SOUND QUALITY- Poor (Sometimes inaudible)

IMAGE QUALITY- Excellent

DURATION- 1 hour, 38 minutes, 15 seconds

LANGUAGES- English

KEY SEGMENT-

PERSONAL NAME-

CORPORATE NAME-

KEY WORDS-

NOTES- The interview seems to have been conducted for the benefit of the interviewee's grandchildren. Thus, the stories related are more personal than factual.

CONTENTS- Descriptions of Auschwitz and Lencie's struggle to escape the Communist Bloc after the war was over.

Tape One

1:02:20 During her time at Auschwitz, Lenci does not remember many incidents of retribution by prisoners against other prisoners for stealing food. Sometimes there would be small fights, but there was no one to whom one could report bread theft. Lenci notes that there really was no place to hide bread, so one was better off eating what one had.

1:03:37 Lenci remembers realizing that her parents were

probably dead, but she, like others, were unable to really accept the idea. She also notes that she never really had a period of mourning. Lenci remembers having dreams where her father was at home, but she was unable to get to him.

1:04:50 Lenci notes in hindsight that not thinking about the fate of her parents helped her to survive Auschwitz.

1:05:26 Lenci and other women at Auschwitz tried to amuse themselves by singing songs or comparing pre war recipes. Talking about food was torture but it was necessary to help pass the endless hours of waiting.

1:07:55 Until October (1944?) Lenci was in the C Lager at Auschwitz. She sometimes was asked to work on sewing quilts, but there was no forced labor. During the summer there had been a selection to find female workers and some of her friends had been picked, but the Germans announced that they had enough before they got to Lenci. After October, Lenci was transferred to a new, unfinished Lager. There were no bunks, no walkways, and the floor was complete mud.

1:10:24 At the end of the summer Lenci got scarlet fever. She suffered from delirium, earaches, and collapses, but she told no one except for her sisters about her illness. despite the risk of catching the highly contagious scarlet fever, her sisters quietly nursed Lenci back to health, and none of the sisters ever got the fever. Lenci remembers that at one point while

suffering from scarlet fever, she was subjected to a selection by Dr. Mengele. She was afraid of the selection because the fever had caused her body to peel and she was sure that Dr. Mengele would notice. Lenci believes that he failed to notice because "she was meant to live."

1:12:30 Lenci never encountered any sexual abuse by Germans or others, but she does remember hearing some stories.

1:13:00 Lenci remembers that her step mother's sister-in-law had a baby and soon disappeared. She believes they were both killed.

1:14:00 Later in October, Lenci notes that she and other women from Auschwitz were transferred to another camp where the Germans needed slave labor. They traveled at first by closed train and then later by open train wagon. It was very cold. Lenci believes they were transported to a camp called Berenbaumel near Breslau. The conditions there were very similar to Auschwitz. There was little food and their meager clothes could not protect them from the cold. They were forced to take the straw from their mattresses and put it in their clothes when

they went outside to dig tank traps for the Germans. At night they had to return the straw to the mattresses in order to sleep. Lenci remembers that they sometimes joked about the way they looked.

1:18:04 The Germans and the Kapos in the camp forced the women to work, but they did not beat them. The camp was run

by wounded Wehrmacht soldiers who Lenci believes felt uncomfortable with their duties.

1:19:50 During this time Breslau was being bombed

continuously creating constant noise within the camp.

1:23:12 Shortly after New Year's day (1945?) the women began

what Lenci describes as their "death march." The Russians were approaching and it was necessary for the prisoners to be moved. They marched through Silesia and sometimes went days without being given any food. When they reached a village, the guards would lock them in a barn for days without food. Onetime when Lenci was foraging for food "like an animal," she was lucky enough to find some potatoes, but before she could bring them back to her sisters, she was attacked by other prisoners who stole her food.

1:23:12 While they were marching, the Germans were constantly

yelling at and hitting the prisoners. Lenci's sister was hurt badly by a blow to the back. If you would not walk they would shoot you. Lenci saw many dead bodies from previous marches. The only water the women had was snow that they found along the path.

1:25:00 Eventually Lenci and her sisters were able to escape from the ranks of the march. They traveled to a little village where they waited until the Russians came. 1:26:28 On February 8, 1945 Lenci says that she and her sisters achieved "early liberation." She calls it "early" because she knows that other members of her family

died after that date. The Russians were very unsympathetic to the girls plight. They were not impressed by the fact that they were in a concentration camp, and actually stated that Leningrad was a much worse place to be. The Russians allowed the girls to wash clothes for them, but it was soon clear that these women could not travel with an army unit for fear of rape. The Russian officers eventually sent the women to a civilian village where the women were with other prisoners and Germans. Here they were ordered to help tend to the cows. They were never offered any medical help until this point.

1:30:00 When Lenci's sister got Typhoid, she was forced to walk through the snow to another village to get medicine from a Russian doctor. She made this journey in either february or early march.

1:31:40 After dispensing the medicine, the Doctor asked if the girls would like to stay for a party with the officers. Lenci remembers being unable to believe how either uncomprehending or unsympathetic the Russian soldiers were.

1:34:32 On the night Lenci and her sisters escaped, they all got very sick because they ate everything they could find in the cabin which they broke into.

1:36:31 On May 8,1945, Lenci learned that the war was over. The communist party organized a convoy to take displaced peoples to Prague. Once in Prague, Lenci was told that

she could live in any house once occupied by a German.

1:39:57 At this point, Lenci was very happy to be alive, and she finally came to accept that her parents were really gone.

1:47:08 Lenci returned to visit her parent's house in her old village, but once she arrived there she found it too upsetting to stay. Furthermore, none of the neighbors offered her any help in rebuilding her life. They were afraid that she and other returning jews would demand their belongings back. Lenci remembers seeing her father's couch in a neighbor's house.

1:55:27 While Lenci was in the camps and for many years after her escape, she was haunted by terrible nightmares. Today, the nightmares are largely gone unless provoked by lengthy discussion or a particularly graphic picture of a concentration camp.

1:58:10 Lenci and her husband, who she married after the war was over, came to the United States because her husband sensed early that the Communists were discriminating against capitalists.

1:76:31 Lenci thought about going to Israel, but decided that it would be easier to go to the United States. She was exhausted and did not want to fight for her freedom anymore. She believed that Israel in 1948 would be a very demanding place to live.

1:86:45 Lenci still believes in God and follows Judaism, but she does not keep a kosher house like her sisters do. 1:88:00

Lenci has recently visited concentration camps that were located in Austria, but she is not sure if she could actually return to Auschwitz. "Why should I go back?"

1:92:35 Lenci was not happy to see the reunification of Germany. She believes they are a cruel people with unbelievable hatred. she refuses to buy anything made in Germany.

1:96:02 She will never forgive or forget what the Germans did. Lenci believes an event like the holocaust could happen again because the hatred is still there. She hopes the German people will not allow it to happen.

1:98:15 Lenci made this tape primarily so that her grandchildren would know what happened to her during the holocaust.

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