

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

P.O. Box 25506, San Mateo, CA 94402

Name of interviewee: Blick, Selma

Date of interview: 1/29/1990

Summary: Selma Blick (nee Wahrhaftig) was born in Wilno, Poland on 6/29/1927. Her father, Oswald, son of Ignacy and Pepi (Katz) Wahrhaftig, owned a hotel, and her mother, Rosa (Chesno), daughter of Naum and Berta (Blumenthal) Chesno, cared for the home. She had no siblings.

At age 6 she lived in a wealthy city of about 50,000 people called Bielsko where cloth was the main manufactured product. She went to a private Jewish school. In 1937 or 1938, she reports that a Jew stabbed a Polish man in a bar and as a result Poles looted and smashed the windows of Jewish businesses. She experienced anti-Semitism in the form of shouted names and curses. In 1939 her family tried to leave Poland by going toward Russia. They settled near the Russian border in the town of Aveno where her mother's family lived. After two years the Russians nationalized the town and its businesses and expelled her family, taking their possessions. Her father moved to Shanghai, China with a plan to wait there for the rest of the family. However, in September of 1941 she and her mother were sent to the Wilno ghetto. In September of 1943 she moved to another ghetto called Rosa. After that she was put on a train with only her mother and moved to the work camp of Kaiserwald-Riga, where she worked on motor cables and switches. She and her mother were moved to Torinith, Poland to an underground "fortress." In January, 1945 they were marched 60 miles away to Bicuch(?), Poland on foot. During this journey her mother and she fled to a Polish house and hid there. In February, the advancing Russian army saved them.

After the war was over she and her mother went to Warsaw. They stayed in Colonzaya(?), Poland with a woman, and then went to a bombed out hotel. In Warsaw there was still anti-Semitism so later in 1945 she changed her name to Zophia Barazinchka to sound more Polish. She then found out that her father was still alive and had been interned by the Japanese in the Philippines. She decided to leave Poland. She joined a kibbutz, which was the only way to leave Poland. By bribing border guards and then hiding people in wagons and passing them as care packages from America, the kibbutz was able to transport its members far from Poland. After three years of debating where to go (her mother wanted to go to Israel) they received word that her father had found residence in San Francisco. They immigrated to America to join him in January 1954. Her father died at age 84, and her mother died in 1988 at age 91. She married Karl Augenblick, and they had two children, Ann and Steve, and at least two grandchildren.