

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

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

Name of interviewee: Bender, Klara

Date of interview: 5/23/1996

Summary: Klara Bender was born in Odessa, Ukraine in 1935. She was raised by her parents, Maria Karsionosky, a factory worker, and Joseph Presemente, a machine operator. She also had a younger brother who was born in 1939. Around 1941, when she was six, the Germans began to take control of Odessa and sent the Jews to ghettos (her parents went to Dashkien, Turkestan). Her parents died in the ghetto in 1942. Klara and her brother were taken to a jail, and then moved to a children's camp in a suburb of Odessa. She remained here with many other children, surviving on little food and water, until the Germans were finally pushed out of the Ukraine. In this camp, her name was changed to Claudia.

In 1944, after the German forces began to collapse and retreat, the camp was liberated by the Russians. The Russian army helped take care of the refugees by providing food and medicine. Klara and her brother were split up; Klara went with her aunt and uncle, while her brother was picked up by a Russian family and renamed Bietly (?). She was later reunited with her brother in Odessa. She lived with her aunt and uncle in Haikuv, Ukraine. She married in 1960. She and her husband had two daughters who were born and raised in the Ukraine. In 1979 she obtained papers from Austria (?), and the family moved to the U.S. (Missouri/Kansas). Klara worked at a jewelry factory, while her husband worked as a machine operator. They made the move to America in order to put their daughters into college. To this day the family continues to celebrate their Jewish heritage and practice Judaism.