

Summary of Oral History: Gail Jablon

RG#: RG-50.477.1211

This summary was written by a USHMM Volunteer on 03/2022

(March 20, 1985)

SUMMARY

Gail Jablon was Gusta Chapnik when she was born April 8, 1922 in Białoleka, Poland, a small town near Lublin and was raised in Warsaw. She was one of four sisters and had a younger brother. The family was somewhat observant as they attended services on Saturday. Her father died a year before the war. Gail left school after the sixth grade, went to night school and then went to work. When the war started she was engaged and worked as a governess for a rich family with two children. She lost her job during the occupation and sold goods on the street. She had to wear the Jewish star and lived in the Ghetto. After two years, she returned to Białoleka with her fiancé and she obtained a job in a restaurant. Gail hid in a neighbor's attic when all the Jews, including her remaining family, were taken into trucks and gassed. She ran to a nearby city and was placed in a room with about 40 people in their Ghetto. Gail had some experience so obtained a position as a nurse caring for a typhus patient. Soon she was deported to Majdanek. She escaped from the transport to Treblinka and was taken to Birkenau where she recovered from typhus. They had daily roll call early in the morning outside in the cold and her job was to move rocks to and fro. Soon she was helped to obtain a position in an ammunition factory where she worked with German criminals and had the opportunity to trade for bread. She recalls being on a Death March from Birkenau when they thought the Russians were getting close. There she survived many selections for the gas chamber but was transferred to Ravensbruck which seemed worse. Soon she was taken to Camp Betzoff (?) near a German airport where she became the commander for 25 Russian prisoners. She was punished when she told her team to rest. There she was liberated by the Russians and indicated she was Belgian as she did not want to be returned to Poland. The Russians had permitted her to live in a German house but when she went to the American side of the Elba, she lived in a field. Gail took a train to Belgium where she obtained an apartment with a friend. She decided to immigrate to America to get away from the area of the war. In 1959 she returned to Poland with her 11-year-old son to see old neighbors and any survivors and found it very sad. She has sent some packages to the neighbors and they send her mushrooms. When she was about 18, a fortune teller told her that horrible things including hunger will happen to her, that instead of marrying her current boyfriend, she will marry someone far away and that she will have one child. It all came true. Gail is 62 and she and her husband planned to retire when she turns 65 and travel. Her husband has been ill for five years and now is dying.