

1 INTERVIEW WITH: Lola Rotkopf
2 INTERVIEWER:
3 DATE:
4 PLACE:
5 TRANSCRIBER: Marilyn A. Kerben

6
7 Q You are?

8 A Lola Rotkopf.

9 Q And you were born?

10 A In Poland, KOA (ph), 1925.

11 Q What date?

12 A September 25.

13 Q And your home town was?

14 A Poland, KOA (ph).

15 Q KOA (ph)?

16 A KOA (ph), yes.

17 Q And was there a ghetto in KOA (ph)?

18 A No.

19 Q Did you (inaudible) in ghetto?

20 A No, we weren't--they took us out from our home and they
21 put us all together. But it wasn't exactly--because it
22 was a small town, they--they took out, in '39, right
23 away when the German came in, I think it must have been
24 September, they took out the majority of the Jews and
25 send them away to IS-BEAT-SEN-UP-SHEP-SEN, someplace

1 away. So we were with a minority, small group of
2 Jews, and after this the German put us all in one
3 place. We lived in a few STRITZ-CHAS (ph).
4 CA-PA-LUSH-NICK (ph), CA-PA-LUSH-NICK (ph).

5 Q Is what?

6 A My maiden name is CA-PA-LUSH-NICK (ph).

7 Q And how many people were in your family?

8 A We were six sisters--five sisters and one brother.
9 We were six children.

10 Q And where were you in the family?

11 A I, I had two older sisters and an older brother. And
12 my oldest sister was married. So, and my other sister
13 left to Russia, my other sister, and my brother was taken
14 to Poznan camp and I was still at home. And later on it
15 came an order that wherever--my father wasn't taken to
16 camp. So he was still home. And they said if a man is
17 home, is staying home, that we have--somebody has to go
18 from the family. I was 13, not even 14-years-old. My oldest
19 sister was supposed to go, but my oldest sister was the
20 housekeeper and she was--she was 12 years older. She had
21 more experience and everything. And she took care of
22 the house because my mother got sick after they took my
23 brother to concentration camp. So I volunteered and
24 I went in her place. And we--they took us to--on a
25 farm on RA-VENS (ph). I forgot the farm. I forgot the

1 name. It's behind (inaudible). And we were working there
2 for nine months on the farm.

3 Q Doing what?

4 A Farm work. We came on the farm. Nobody from us knew
5 about farm work. I didn't even finish public school,
6 especially Jewish girls. We were, I think, about 150
7 Jewish girls.

8 Q On this one farm?

9 A Ya, it was a big farm. It was occupied by--they had lots
10 SS men there and they had--they took the property of lots
11 of farmers, the property, and they put this--everything
12 together because Polish people were working there too.
13 So the first thing I remember--I remember they didn't
14 even show us how to dig carrots. And they gave us the
15 shovels and they told us to dig the carrots. And who
16 knew? We knew that we--to dig we have to push the shovel
17 straight in. So we cut through the carrots and the SS
18 men was standing with these things what you ride on the
19 horses, the rubber.

20 Q Ya.

21 A And they were hitting us and--until we didn't know.
22 Finally we were digging and digging until we just--we
23 figured out how to dig the carrot, that the carrot
24 shouldn't be cut, that the carrot should come out whole.

25 Q And you couldn't ask the SS men?

1 A No, everybody--the people, the man who was in charge,
2 he was a Pole, Polish. They were very big (inaudible).
3 He thought we are out of space or something. He said
4 Jews, Jewish? He never knew that Jews exist. He acted
5 this way. He asked us if we are different than other
6 girls or something, questions like this. Yes, really.
7 He thought that we are--we live different, that we eat
8 different, that our whole atmosphere. That's how he felt
9 against the Jews. And the SS men didn't care about us.
10 Only thing what they care is to kill a few. And we were
11 there for nine months and from there they send us to
12 BRATS-WA (ph).

13 Q What's that?

14 A Germany it was the HOCK-EN-SELT-SER (ph). In Poland they
15 had the SEE-LAN-KEY. People came for treatments there,
16 sick people, to the KO-LO-SIS, I think, or something.
17 But we weren't working there. We were working to pick--
18 to (inaudible). Poland was very much destroyed from the
19 German bombarding, so they--they picked us that we should
20 clean up the cities, pick up the--

21 Q Rubble?

22 A The rubble and everything. When we were finished with
23 the rubble, they sent us to work on canalizations where
24 men were working.

25 Q What on?

1 A Canalization, digging canalization. We had to dig with--
2 break first the cement and then shovel out all the dirt
3 and they were putting in pipes.

4 Q Okay.

5 A For sewer or--

6 Q Sewer?

7 A Or water or--I think it was sewer mostly. And it was a
8 terrible camp, you know, BRATS-WA (ph), because they
9 were starving us there. We got very little food. We
10 never saw butter or anything. If we saw a potato we were
11 lucky. So the main thing how we survived, we went out
12 begging. We were working in town. They took us to the
13 town and we went out begging by the people for a potato
14 or a piece of bread or something. And if SS man caught
15 us, either we got 25 lashes. If not, they took us--there
16 was a CAH-NAW-LOG (ph). What is it? Punishing camp.
17 It was--you know, BRATS-WA (ph) was famous. It was the
18 worst camp, I think, in the whole--

19 Q What's the name of it?

20 A CAH-NAW-LOG (ph). But punishing camp, it was there. And
21 there they hanged the people. If they find you that you
22 weren't at the work or that you were walking around in
23 town, they took lots of people there for hanging.

24 Q Did you see people hanging?

25 A Yes, ya. And another thing what the SS men did that we--

1 in BRATS-WA (ph) we worked in town. We lived out of town
2 five miles or six miles, I don't remember exactly. But if
3 they want to have--have a picnic with us, they meet--met
4 us behind the city, the town.

5 Q Who is they?

6 A The SS men with the dogs, with the German Shepherds. And
7 they let the German Shepherds (crying) jump us.

8 Q They sicced the dogs on you?

9 A Ya. I have--

10 Q Scars?

11 A Ya, I have a few scars. They ripped everything from us.

12 Q To this day you're afraid of dogs?

13 A Ya, I'm afraid of dogs. It was a terrible camp. It
14 was terrible.

15 Q And who were you with?

16 A Nobody.

17 Q Your friends?

18 A Ya, I was with friends.

19 SAMUEL ROTKOPF: She was the youngest.

20 Q Of the friends?

21 A Ya. They all were--they weren't happy but they thought
22 that they would have to work for me because I was very
23 young still.

24 Q Oh, they had to pull your load in a way because you were
25 too little?

1 A No, they--I worked. I don't know. I worked, but--

2 Q And how many dogs?

3 A They had--sometimes they had five dogs, sometimes ten
4 dogs.

5 Q Oh, my God.

6 A And another thing what they did in the camp. This was
7 a terrible camp. (Crying.) Somebody, always somebody--
8 like we were starving there and we had to have some food.
9 When they found somebody what organized some food, bread
10 or carrots, when they were beating you, they were beating
11 you mostly on the face and around the neck. And next day
12 we were completely black in the face. You couldn't see
13 the eyes or nothing and they didn't let us go out for work
14 to the town that the people--that the Polish people should
15 see how beaten up we were. So, they came always with--we
16 didn't know where they were taking the people. The
17 people--we were afraid to stay in camp because we knew
18 that the people who were staying in camp, they disappeared.

19 Q Right.

20 A So we always, even after beating, we put on makeup and
21 everything that when the guy was looking at us that he
22 shouldn't see that we are black, that we should go to
23 work because we were afraid. They came with trucks.
24 SS men came with trucks. Because some of my friends
25 when they got sick or they got beaten, right away the

1 next day we didn't see them. They disappeared and we
2 never saw. We didn't know at this time there was an
3 Auschwitz but they took them probably to Auschwitz to
4 the crematoriums.

5 Q Where did you get the makeup?

6 A What?

7 Q You said you put on makeup. Where did you get the
8 makeup?

9 A Anything. We got from--not bricks, bricks we have. We
10 have bricks and we got from--we smashed the bricks and
11 we put on--the face is red instead of black and the
12 hands red instead of black and that they shouldn't see.

13 Q And I don't understand how you could recover from a dog
14 bite. I mean, did it not get infected?

15 A I got infected. I got a very big infection, infection
16 that I could put in my whole fist in it but I put on--
17 somebody in the kitchen, she liked me, and she gave me
18 always raw potatoes to put on. And I don't know, through
19 a miracle it healed.

20 Q Raw potato?

21 A Raw potatoes.

22 Q There must have been some acid in the potatoes.

23 A Ya, and that's how it healed. I never had any medication
24 for it. We didn't have any medication.

25 Q To sic, to sic dogs on young girls, I can't imagine

1 what kind of mentality would do that.

2 A They were barbarian. They--for instance, when they took

3 us out from BRATS-WA (ph), so they put us--a bunch of

4 SS men, maybe 50 or somebody came, and they put us

5 on the ground with the guns and everything just for fun.

6 They didn't have to do it. They could have took us to

7 the CAH-NAW-LOG (ph), the punishing camp where we all got

8 together. Instead of this, they let us lay on the ground

9 for a few hours. Then they brought us to the camp,

10 everybody from all the camps. You know, BRATS-WA (ph) had

11 lots of camps. We were in GRA-NOY-NA (ph) camp and

12 there were lots of other camps. So some people, men,

13 escaped. So they brought in a cage, I don't know, maybe

14 10 by 10. And there were three lions in the cage. And

15 the people who were caught, they put them in the cage with

16 the lions and we had to watch them. (Crying.)

17 (End of Interview.)

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1 INTERVIEW WITH: Samuel Rotkopf

2 INTERVIEWER:

3 DATE:

4 PLACE:

5 TRANSCRIBER: Marilyn A. Kerben

6

7 Q Your name?

8 A My name is Samuel Rotkopf. I am born in LA-BRON-YITS,
9 Poland.

10 Q What year?

11 A In 1914.

12 Q What date?

13 A May 24, 1914. And the war broke up, I was in the
14 Polish army. And when I was together in the army, we
15 know that we lost the war. A general took us in the
16 woods. We dig a hole and we pour all the ammunition in
17 the hole and we swore that we will never will tell to the
18 Germans where the ammunition is hide. And he gave us
19 several uniforms and to go home. Okay, I came home to my
20 town, LA-BRON-YITS (ph) a day before Yom Kippur.

21 Q What year?

22 A In 1939. And when I saw what's going on in home, they
23 took people--people to work and they killed the--going
24 around and pushing and beating people. (Inaudible)
25 Yom Kippur. Kippur, the SHOW-ER (ph) already confiscated

1 for a horse stable. And we prayed in simple homes. One
2 time, it was about 2:00, my family, I--I used to--I was
3 a family with ten children. We were ten children and I
4 was before the last. And when--it happened when I came
5 back from the army and I saw what's going on. So the
6 SHOW-ER (ph) confiscated for a horse stable and we were
7 praying in private homes. Yom Kippur, between 12 and
8 1:00, I went out with a friend of mine. Five minutes
9 before, a search came in and took out my two friends and
10 they gave them shovels and they have to dig holes and they
11 bury them alive. When I saw this, though, my inside,
12 everything were turned around. And I was waiting with--
13 the evening after first, after first and I talked after
14 the first (inaudible) went home and (inaudible) and we
15 start eating a little. In the meantime we made--we
16 stopped eating and we were just like that, dirt.

17 I have to tell you story. (Crying.) I have to tell
18 you story. I hided ammunition and I want to die. We are
19 hero, not we are fly.

20 Q Yes.

21 A My father's answer were, you got two brothers what finished
22 the army and you. And go out, take a few revisionists--
23 while--I am from the house from revisionists organization.

24 Q What's revisionist?

25 A Menachim Begin's organization, BAY-TAR (ph). And I

1 went out. We organized a group of 15 people between
2 my--we were three brothers and 12 strangers. We went
3 in the woods. We went out to the place where we dumped
4 the ammunition. We took out the ammunition and we were
5 underground. My finger killed more Germans what I got
6 hair on my head. I took advantage on all what I could,
7 always (inaudible).

8 Q So, you were in the underground?

9 A I was in the underground. All of a sudden I was in a
10 German uniform in the street by accident. O-CRINE (ph)
11 German came to ask me something. But my expression in
12 German he know that I'm not German and he right away took
13 out--took away my gun and he took me to SS. He took me
14 Gestapo, Gestapo Office. Just my luck, were--it were
15 only one Gestapo and he was not hurry. He got a date
16 and he took me in police car in camp. I came in camp.
17 All my landsmen were in this camp in Poznan. And every-
18 body said, Sam, what happened? I--I all of a sudden in a
19 German uniform and I tell them the story.

20 Q How did you get into a German uniform?

21 A In the woods where I took out the arms and shoot a few
22 Germans and we put on the uniforms. And all of a
23 sudden in this moment somebody died in this camp. And the
24 YULD-NER-DE-STER, he was a friend of our, from our town,
25 and he said, Sam, I got good news for you. You just

1 died and your name is now YACK-A-BOW-VICH (ph). Okay, he
2 gave me different clothes and he putted my German uniform
3 with the man what died and he put it in the book that
4 Rotkopf got a heart attack, a heart attack and he drop
5 dead. But this was--in the morning came a full truck
6 with Gestapo and want to find--take out the Rotkopf.
7 And the YULD-NER-DE-STER (ph) said, we don't have a
8 Rotkopf here. He said, yes, I brought him yesterday
9 in a German uniform. Oh, he said, the YULD-NER-DE-
10 STER (ph) said, yes, this guy, he dropped dead yesterday.
11 And they left. The--and they were very--he was very
12 scared, the YULD-NER-DE-STER, the commander from the
13 Jewish camp. And he sent me to another camp. He was
14 afraid somebody will tell German about me or something
15 and he sent me to another camp. And another camp I find
16 my brother. And he told me that the Germans took us in the
17 camp and the parents we don't know nothing about it. And
18 then we're going on, my oldest brother were--the Gestapo
19 took him out. He was too old already. He was gray hair.
20 So I went over to the commander's, the Jewish Commander's,
21 and I ask him, I beg him, if my brother goes, let me go
22 together with him. He said, child, I don't know where
23 we're going. He said, I cannot take you--take on my
24 conscience to send you out. My experience that they're
25 not going to be alive. He said, only way you can go,

1 you go to the FOLKS-DEUTSCH (ph) and I used to work for
2 the FOLKS-DEUTSCH (ph), for the commander. And I went
3 in to him and I beg him and I said, let me go with my
4 brother. I know--if we're going to die, everybody going
5 to die. Make someone related. And he was a little bit
6 feeling. He said, if you want to go, you know, they're
7 going in the himmel CA-LO-NA (ph). You understand what
8 the himmel CA-LO-NA is?

9 Q Skies.

10 A You go in the skies.

11 Q Yes.

12 A And I said, what's difference. Sooner or later we're
13 going. And he went in in the kitchen. He brought me a
14 whole kielbasa. He gave me. He said, go, God will bless
15 you if you will sacrifice for your older brother. And he
16 gave me a whole can of soup. Good. I took it fine. In
17 the morning Gestapo came and they saw where I got a kiel-
18 basa. He gave me right away--hit me. He say, where you
19 got the kielbasa? I said, the OBER-SHOP (ph) here, he
20 gave me. He called him Hans. Why you gave him the
21 kielbasa? He said, he was a good worker. And so he said,
22 why you send him away? He said, he doesn't want--he wants
23 to go with his brother, so I let him go. And instead we
24 go to--they took us in a camp, in TRAN-SIS-TOR (ph) camp,
25 one in Poznan in the camp or REMO (ph) and they got a

1 full transport of people instead we go to Auschwitz to
2 send us to the larger ghetto.

3 Q What was that?

4 A A larger ghetto, large.

5 Q Okay.

6 A And they send me to a ghetto, so I--going from the train--
7 on the train to the ghetto, somebody recognize me and
8 said, Sam, your other brother is here. So he went to the
9 brother. The brother came over and he told me that our
10 nephew is here and he works by YACK-A-BOW-VICH (ph), the
11 biggest, the biggest man in the ghetto. I say, YACK-A-
12 BOW-VICH (ph), my name is now YACK-A-BOW-VICH (ph). I
13 change my name to YACK-A-BOW-VICH (ph). So I told him,
14 please find out who's the YACK-A-BOW-VICH (ph). Tell me
15 the father's name, the mother's name, the uncles and
16 everybody and there my nephew brought me the whole MICK-
17 E-LOW (ph) and I wrote a letter to the YACK-A-BOW-VICH (ph).
18 My best cousin, you are big MAR-KER (ph) in the ghetto.
19 Please save me. And he came over and he called me in the
20 office and he said--and I ask, can I start with kissing
21 him. I just pretending. And I ask him what Uncle Victor
22 doing, what--and Sara and the whole relatives and this way
23 he said, I didn't know that I got LA-BRON-YITS (ph) family.
24 And so he took me out right away with my brother and he
25 gave me two good jobs in the kitchen. I was in the

1 kitchen giving out the food for people. So I was in
2 excellent shape. And a couple weeks later I was a
3 different man. Okay, and he believed that I am his
4 cousin. And since then I lived in the ghetto six months.
5 After came an order that all the people came back from
6 Poznan camp, they call them (inaudible). In the night
7 came police and they knocked on the door and I opened.
8 And they said, we're looking for Samuel SHEER (ph)
9 Rotkopf. I said, my name is SCHMEAL (ph) SHEER (ph).
10 Right away--my other--the older brother survived and I
11 went in YACK-A-BOW-VICH (ph), that my cousin, my pretend
12 cousin. He told me when (inaudible) the German will come
13 to camp, make a selection, that he will take me out, just
14 I should give him impression that I'm healthy and a good
15 worker. Okay, like when he came he started, where's the
16 YACK-A-BOW-VICH (ph). I went out of line and he asked
17 me I am good working. I said yes. And this way he took
18 me out. He took me out between 5, 6,000 people. They
19 took out 17 people, a high class, not high class.

20 Q Good workers.

21 A No, not good workers, just, how you say?

22 Q For favors?

23 A For favors.

24 Q Yes.

25 A But he did 17 people. And the 17 people I was. And they

1 took us in arrest, in a jail. We have to go 14 rooms,
2 from one room to the other, just for, for--stop it.
3 Scare, just for scare. I start screaming, I lied, I'm
4 sick and I cannot be in this jail. The policeman want to
5 help his brother survive so he took me out from the camp
6 and he took his brother in. And I was very happy
7 between the people. Well, nobody know it. In the night-
8 time they make--the stop trucks came in and we were loaded
9 on the trucks. And we were to--went to Auschwitz. My
10 brothers (inaudible). I am--I am--I am survived. They
11 came over in the morning to take me home and I was gone.
12 There they were sitting shivah. You know what shivah is?

13 Q Ya, aha.

14 A They were sitting shivah. They were same (inaudible)
15 after me. And when I came to Auschwitz, Mengele made the
16 right and left.

17 Q Ya.

18 A And I was put in the right.

19 Q Doctor Mengele, right?

20 A Dr. Mengele, right. And this way I survived. And the
21 tricks what I--when in Auschwitz when they make me the
22 number, when they make the the number, the number is
23 1, 4 is 5, and 5 is 10, 5 is 15 and 3 is 18. And when I
24 got the number 18, I was so happy. And I said, I
25 positively I will survive and I will see the Germans will

1 surrender and we Jews will be in the high society and
2 will be--will be to see the day the Jewish Nation will
3 arise.

4 Q Why 18?

5 A Eighteen is Jewish, the Jewish lucky number, HI (ph),
6 to live.

7 Q HI (ph)?

8 A To life. Eighteen.

9 Q L'chaim, right?

10 A HI (ph), right. HI (ph) in the Jewish is 18. Okay,
11 for this reason I was always in the, in the idea that I
12 would survive. Being in Auschwitz in--I did lots of--
13 lots of tricks. For instance, in my block for a cantor,
14 when the cantor was singing, every Sunday another block
15 made a celebration. And everybody, the cook and the chef
16 and the cook in the kitchen and the magazine and everybody
17 were together. And I always push me to the front. And
18 when I heard the chef from the kitchen said to the other
19 guys that he from BAR-SHOW (ph) and he got a big butcher
20 shop and the Jews came to eat, to eat kielbasa, I was
21 right away--run away. And in the morning, Monday morning,
22 when they were catching people to go for food, I was with
23 them. And we were carrying a big, big, big barrel of
24 food, you know, and when people could not--could not carry
25 it so much, so they killed them right on the spot. The

1 (inaudible). For this reason everybody was hiding. And
2 this day I was running after them. When the chef from
3 the kitchen gave out the food, I look at him and I say,
4 listen, are you from BAR-SHOW (ph)? He said yes, and--

5 Q Do you have a big butcher shop?

6 A That's right. And he took me in his arms and he stopped
7 giving out the food. He said to the other guy, to the
8 other guy from the kitchen, give out, to the other guy and
9 I have to go with this guy. And he took me all around to
10 all his friends. Tell them who I am. Tell them what kind
11 of big business I have. And I tell them. I made him big.
12 And this way I was right away in the kitchen cutting from
13 the potato peeling, and I got in charge 15, 20 people.
14 And (inaudible), now, you eat and drink whatever you
15 want as long as I am here in charge.

16 Q You're an actor.

17 A I'm an actor, that's right. And this went on a couple
18 months. Always in the night Mengele came over to make
19 the selection. And they took me out on a truck to the
20 coal mines, the YA-VOYSH-NO (ph). YA-VOYSH-NO (ph) I
21 came out from the--on the truck for my--where a guy what
22 I know him. And, okay, and I know it--I was on the--out--
23 commander--we every day they brought back a couple dead.
24 I said, this is not for me. I saw the AR-BITES-
25 KNEES (ph). They are men what is in charge of the labor

1 and I go--I went over to him and I said, listen, my whole
2 life I want to be in the coal mines. Give me a job in
3 the coal mines. He said, how long you will be work in the
4 coal mines? Two or three days, you'll be dead. I said,
5 don't worry. And I told him, if I going in the coal
6 mines I will repay you with lots of good things. I'll
7 bring you whiskey from the coal mines. When he said--
8 when he know that I talking with him business, he said, he
9 wrote down my number. And in the morning he readed my
10 number and I went to the coal mine. I went in the coal
11 mine. I got connection with Polacks and I say, listen,
12 bring me tomorrow a bottle whiskey, I give you my shirt.
13 I took off my shirt. I went to the camp without shirt
14 and I gave him the shirt. Tomorrow morning he brought me
15 a bottle whiskey. I gave it to the--to the guy what
16 gave me the work, the job. And when he saw that I'm a
17 businessman, he start giving me lots of shirts and
18 other things to--

19 Q To trade?

20 A To trade. And so I got alive.

21 Q You had an organization.

22 A An organization, right. And now what more do you want
23 to know?

24 (End of Interview.)

25