

Interview with BRANA STRENGER

198?

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Tape 1 – Side A

In March 1944, after Pesach, last day, notification: pack one package and some food and report to the synagogue. She kept jewels. Did not believe what people talked about.

Went back to town, nothing found. For a week, no food. Took away in wagon, to Ghetto. Told what would happen. Somebody wanted to help her. There was a hole in his garden.

Was told young people would survive, but not her parents. To Auschwitz. Had two nieces with her and they had no water. Mengele was there. Gave all children to old people. Was on her right side by Mengele, as was her sister. A piece of bread was thrown to them. They picked it up, and it looked like a brick so they threw it back. Was told she would be sorry. During the first night, one girl screamed and went out of her mind.

“You became like another person.” Was confused. Selected to work. One girl took things from others, and she checked and tried to fix things. Was put last in line. Did not like where she was told to go, and they ran, she went to one where some relatives stayed. Another day, fixed a broken bathroom, that would help some twelve girls.

Selected for transport out from Auschwitz. To showers, more clothes, shoes, to train. Sat waiting 8-9 hours. Where they would go, was bombed, and so were returned to Auschwitz. Had to give back clothes.

Expected to be sent to crematorium, but word came that the bombing did not hit the factory. Dressed up again and back to train. There were one hundred to each wagon. She told other people how to behave and was beaten up. How to do “bathroom” duties. Came to munitions factory, and were taken to civilian Germans. Was selected to be in charge of a group, and could select help.

Called young under sixteen, to help “duties” clean. Then older generations to do other things, cleaning. Made lists of “sick” not to work on Jewish holidays.

Fasted two days a week, distributed food and after that fed herself. Same portions for all. Managed not to serve food on Yom Kippur. It was not the worst camp!

Some girls sewed dresses. Pocketbooks, also. Notified one girl was having a baby, during the night. What to do? Supervisor was a midwife. The baby was born and then another one had a baby. The hid the two babies.

Missed a girl, one morning. In a daze, stay on your bed,, where she stayed a few months. Fed her.

Bombing – told to go to bunker. Did not want to go, too tired. Germans checked, all went. To another camp.

Tape 1 – Side B

Many times girls were late to work because of counts. However, supervisor indicated that Brana's count was enough.

Kids were found, and a girl hidden as well. Mothers were asked if they wanted to go with their children or not. They went and never came back. She lost all hope after this.

Tells a story about a woman who couldn't make her bed correctly. Brana told the supervisor the way the woman looks, so does her bed! Seems a joke, supervisor liked it and it was the end of checking beds.

It was four weeks before the Americans came. Story of a man, who was a prisoner of war, multi-lingual, and was used as a translator. He convinced them that girls should not go outside to work in the snow. If they did, they could not work in the factory. One girl died. She starved to death.

April 1945 – Americans were 30 km. away. They were to be evacuated to another camp. Wanted to escape. Were put in wagons. One behind theirs, was for men. They were shot.

Chaotic situation (name of city not clear). Americans got in. Gave food, things, etc. Went for a walk. Met an American. Did not want anything, only to know if some of her family survived. Of course, not known.

She worked in the kitchen and had a German prisoner of war working for her. Lots of food. She felt very mixed up.

Heard Timmerman, frightened, things are starting again.

There for a few weeks. Went to Hamburg, was put in a hotel.

German storekeepers hid all they had. Wanted a passport to go to Switzerland. They came one day too late. The border was closed.

Stayed in Bregen? (France). No news of her family. Put in charge of kitchen. Went home (from city to city). Went to Budapest. Were given money, went to restaurant. Next day, money was devalued; had nothing left.

Went home. It was occupied. Got very little for it when it was sold. Found very little jewelry. Children returned from Auschwitz were killed in town.

Talks about experiences of her husband. Put in claims, she in Germany. Bad dreams continue.