

HVT-72

A., Helen 1921-

Helen A. Holocaust video testimony (HVT-72) interviewed by Musia Schwartz and Dr. David Lissak, March 29, 1995.

4 copies: 1 SVHS first camera; 1 SVHS second camera; 2 VHS copies.

Summary: Helen was born on August 18, 1921 in Biczycie Niemiecke, Poland. In her town, which was mostly inhabited by Volksdeutsche, there were approximately 15 Jewish families. Helen's family spoke Yiddish at home, and Polish and German in public. Her parents raised five children, three daughters and two sons, in an orthodox Jewish home. The family operated a kosher dairy farm. Helen attended cheder. Her parents died before the Holocaust.

In 1939, Helen was imprisoned by the Nazis but was released after two weeks. Shortly after, she was sent to the Nowy Sacz ghetto where she lived with her siblings until July 1941 when an Austrian Wehrmacht soldier told Helen's brother to leave the ghetto as soon as possible. Helen escaped into a nearby forest with her brother and sister. After three days, they went to a neighbour who took them to a female relative who hid Helen and her siblings in a bunker. This woman, who was Polish and Christian, had two little children and expected Helen to convert to Christianity after the war. After six months, Helen's sister died and was buried in the forest. Later, Helen and her brother were informed that their other brother was still alive. He came to them in very bad condition, but only stayed for a short while before joining the partisans. In the summer of 1944, Helen and her brother joined him in the forest, but returned to the bunker for the winter.

After the Russian Army liberated Poland, Helen and her brother returned to their home, which they found occupied by Polish people. They refused to leave and did not permit Helen to stay. Helen and her brother moved to Nowy Sacz and rented an apartment before locating an aunt in Budapest. Helen was married shortly after her arrival in Budapest. She and her husband had two children, both of whom attended a Jewish school in Budapest.

After the failure of the Hungarian uprising in 1956, Helen's family left Hungary and arrived in Montreal in 1957. Their son attended a yeshiva and their daughter went to Jewish school. Helen's husband bought a grocery store which catered to the Hungarian community. In 1962, one of Helen's brothers and his family moved to Canada, as well. Her other brother moved to Israel and, later, to Australia. Helen's husband died in 1988. Helen still corresponds with the son of the woman who hid them. She sends him parcels and he tends to Helen's sister's grave.