

HVT-9

F., Agnes 1927-

Agnes F. Holocaust video testimony (HVT-9) interviewed by Stanley Asher and Helaine Kliger, May 12, 1994.

3 copies: 1 SVHS first camera ; 1 SVHS second camera; 1 VHS copy.

Summary: Agnes was born on May 5, 1927 in Baja, Hungary. An only child, she was raised in a secular middle-class family. Of her relatives, only her grandmother was religious. Her father was a journalist and editor of a daily newspaper. In 1941, he lost his job because he was Jewish. He then went to work in the textile industry.

According to Agnes, Hungarian Jews were not aware of Nazi atrocities due to news blackouts and it was not until April 1945 that she learned about the existence of death camps. Hungarian Jews were surprised when the German Army invaded their country on March 19, 1944. Shortly after, they were forced to wear a yellow star, evacuate their homes and move into a ghetto set up in the Jewish part of town. Men were forced to work in labour camps during the day.

After spending two months in the ghetto, Agnes and her parents were sent on a train bound for Auschwitz, but the train tracks were bombed and the train was re-routed to Austria. Agnes and her parents were sent to Strasshof concentration camp, near Vienna. In Strasshof, a selection took place and those who were considered unable to work were sent to Auschwitz while the others remained in Strasshof for a few days and were then transferred to different locations for forced labour. Agnes and her family were sent to Feldsberg where they lived and worked with Italian POWs on a large estate which belonged to the Liechtenstein family from Vaduz. The prisoners worked in the fields around the castle, picking vegetables and tending livestock. The living conditions on the estate were very poor. The Red Cross came periodically and aided the Italian prisoners of war.

Agnes remained on this estate until the beginning of April 1945, when her entire family was transferred back to Strasshof. On April 9, all of the German and Ukrainian guards abandoned the camp, and Strasshof was liberated the next day by a lone Russian soldier carrying a rifle. The Russian Army followed and instructed the Jews to leave the camp as the Russians prepared for their attack on Vienna. The Russian soldiers stole food from the Jews and women were constantly at risk of being raped.

After liberation, Agnes and her family took a train to Bratislava where they received repatriation papers. The family arrived in Budapest on May 1, 1945. Agnes and her family moved back to Baja before her father could be transferred to a Russian labour camp by the Red Army.

In Baja, Agnes married a twenty year old man during a time that she called, "the epidemic of marriage". They had two children. In 1956, they left for Austria to escape the ever prevalent antisemitism in Hungary. After staying in Austria for a year and a half, Agnes, her husband, and their children emigrated to Canada.