

HVT-272

G., Etel 1922-

Etel G. Holocaust video testimony (HVT-272) interviewed by Marcia Shuster and Lissa Albert, June 18, 1997.

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

Summary: Etel was born on September 17, 1922 in Nagykamond, Hungary. Etel, her two brothers and her sister were brought up in an observant Jewish home. They kept a kosher home and followed the Sabbath and all holidays. Etel's father sold agricultural products and her mother was a homemaker. Etel attended elementary school and then high school. She remembers a happy childhood. Jews and gentiles got along very well in her home town.

Etel recalls following news of the war through radio broadcasts. The family was also aware that the situation of Jews in Poland was very bad. Everybody in her community was convinced that they were safe in Hungary. Conditions changed drastically when the Germans occupied Hungary in March 1944. Etel remembers that many new restrictions were imposed on the Jewish population. They were forced to wear the yellow star and a curfew was enforced.

The Jewish population of Nagykamond was deported to Kisber. Etel recalls that it was particularly difficult for her parents to leave the place where their ancestors once lived. Etel's brothers were by that time in Hungarian forced labour camps and remained there for the duration of the war. In Kisber, Etel was forced to work in the fields. Approximately two weeks later, the Jews were deported to Komarom. Living conditions there were very harsh. There was no food and the German guards tortured Jews.

One week after their arrival in Komarom, they were told that they would be brought to a labour camp. After a day long train ride in a cattle car, they arrived in Auschwitz, where the members of Etel's family were separated. Etel was selected for work and never saw her parents or her sister with her child again. She vividly remembers the horrible conditions in Auschwitz. There was no food and no water and she had to sleep on a floor. After two weeks in Auschwitz, Etel was transferred to Plaszow. She was forced to work in the quarry. Etel witnessed many atrocities in this camp.

When the Germans started to evacuate Plaszow at the end of August 1944, Etel was transferred back to Auschwitz. In Auschwitz, she was tattooed and suffered from hunger and thirst again. A few days later, she was transferred with a group of 500 people to a forced labour camp near Leipzig. The prisoners produced parts for air planes. Etel was kept there from September 1944 until April 1945. The conditions were very harsh, particularly during the winter. On April 13, the camp was evacuated. The 800 or so inmates were marched towards Theresienstadt. Etel remembers that they were not allowed to sleep during the first two days and they did not get any food. Etel also recalls how shocked she was to see all the destruction when they walked through Dresden. After two weeks, they arrived in Theresienstadt. Etel describes how astonished she was to see elderly people again. Many of those who arrived in Theresienstadt died during the following days, either from overeating or from typhus.

Theresienstadt was liberated by the Red Army two weeks after Etel arrived there. Etel and four of her friends journeyed back to Hungary. Etel arrived in her home town in June 1945. The local population gave her a warm welcome, and she was reunited with her brothers and her sister's husband. In March 1946, Etel married a man from a neighboring town. In 1956, they left Hungary for Canada. Etel began to work in a factory shortly after her arrival. Etel remarried two years after her husband committed suicide, leaving her with a nine-year old daughter.