

HVT-152

G., Bouena 1913-1997

Bouena G. Holocaust video testimony (HVT-152) interviewed by Gerry Singer, February 13, 1996.

2 copies: 1 SVHS first camera; 1 VHS copy.

Summary: Bouena was born on November 18, 1918 in Salonika, Greece. Her parents raised six children in an observant Jewish home. The family lived in Salonika's Jewish quarter. Bouena's father owned a flour mill and her mother worked at home. In 1925, Bouena's father passed away. Bouena does not remember experiencing antisemitism as a child. She associated with Jews and non-Jews. At school, she learned Greek, French, and Hebrew.

Persecution of Jews began immediately after Germany occupied Salonika in April 1941. By then, Bouena was working as a volunteer for the Red Cross. She made powdered milk and delivered it to schools. Because of her Red Cross pass, Bouena could move freely through the city. She remembers living in constant fear.

With the help of friends, Bouena managed to obtain a forged Italian passport and travel to Athens. In Athens, she met two Jewish boys who took her to a police station where she received proper identification papers. Together, Bouena and the two Jewish boys left Athens by boat and journeyed to a nearby town. Bouena worked for the resistance movement as a courier. While with the partisans, she saved a British soldier. She also helped 17 children to escape to Turkey by boat after the person who was supposed to rescue them was arrested. Once in Turkey, she found families who would take care of the children. On another occasion, Bouena was arrested and brought to the police headquarters by some collaborators. There, she was beaten severely, and eventually released.

Bouena and her friends returned to Athens. From there they went to Turkey and then to Syria. For some time the three of them lived in a camp in Syria. In 1944, they travelled to Palestine. Bouena volunteered to work with a rescue team. She eventually returned to Athens and worked with UNRRA helping to feed refugees.

Bouena met her future husband in one of the refugee camps and they were married in 1945. The following year, Bouena and her husband returned to Salonika. They travelled to Palestine and then moved to New York for six months. In 1947, Bouena and her husband settled in Montreal. In 1949, they had a son and later a daughter, who died. Bouena's husband worked as a teacher and she worked in a factory before opening a Hebrew summer camp. Only two of Bouena's sisters survived the Holocaust. The rest of her family was deported to Poland and murdered.

Bouena passed away on July 23, 1997.⁷

⁷ Bouena's date of death is listed in her file. This is a date of death from the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.