

HVT-156

G., Sylvia 1923-1997

Sylvia G. Holocaust video testimony (HVT-156) interviewed by Dr. David Lissak and Steven Cohen, February 29, 1996.

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

Summary: Sylvia was born on June 19, 1923 in Czernowitz, Romania. She was an only child. Her father died when she was twelve years old. Sylvia spoke German with her mother and Yiddish with her grandmother. Sylvia attended synagogue and remembered having a good and happy life.

After the Russian occupation began in 1940, the Jews in Czernowitz were subjected to harsh conditions. Sylvia remembers pogroms, starvation and living without heating. At this time, Sylvia was seventeen years old and had already met her future husband. The Russians remained in Czernowitz until it was re-occupied by the Romanian Army.

In 1941, the Romanians ordered Czernowitz's Jews into a ghetto. Sylvia entered the ghetto with her mother, grandmother, and uncle. She recalls feeling upset since she was separated from her boyfriend for some time. Before the Jews were deported from the ghetto, Sylvia's boyfriend found her and suggested that their families travel together. Both families were placed on a train with other Jews who were being deported. During the journey, they were ordered off the train and forced to march. Carriages were available for the elderly and infirmed. Sylvia remembers it as being very cold. She feared her grandmother would not survive. It took the group one month to reach the camp called Jampol. Before entering the camp, Sylvia's and her boyfriend's families were separated because Jampol housed only specialists. Sylvia's future father-in-law made fur hats, so he was permitted to stay in the camp. However, he did not want to take Sylvia's family into the camp with his family. Sylvia's boyfriend urged her to stay with him, but she refused to leave her mother. Only after her mother told her to stay with her boyfriend did she comply. Sylvia never saw her mother again. Sylvia married her boyfriend in Jampol, but they were separated often. Her husband was beaten by a camp captain for marrying without his permission. In Jampol, the prisoners were forced to work. They ate roots and drank spring water. The camp's population consisted mainly of Ukrainian Jews. In 1944, when the Russian Army approached from the East, the Romanians retreated and they wanted to take the prisoners with them. Sylvia and her husband joined his family in hiding because they felt that if they left with the Romanians, they would die.

After the Soviet Army liberated Jampol, the Jews were allowed to return home. Sylvia and her husband went back to Czernowitz. The Jews were permitted to travel by train, but when the Russians required trains for the war effort, the Jews were forced off the trains and made to find their own way home. In Czernowitz, the Jews were required to work. Sylvia stopped working when she became pregnant. Sylvia and her husband lived with some Russians in a villa that belonged to her husband's parents. While in Czernowitz, Sylvia and her husband had their first child. The Russians gave Sylvia and her husband the opportunity to leave Czernowitz so they went to Bucharest. After a stay in Bucharest, Sylvia and her husband once more obtained permission to leave. They travelled to Vienna and then to France. Sylvia's husband found a job playing soccer. While in France their second child was born. When Sylvia's husband was replaced on the soccer team, they moved to Colombia. Her husband joined a Colombian soccer team and they had a third child.

In 1964, Sylvia and her family emigrated to Canada and settled in Montreal. Her in-laws already lived in Montreal. One year later, Sylvia's husband was killed in a car accident. In

Montreal, Sylvia worked for a Zionist group. She was also employed in a lawyer's office and she worked for someone who had known her husband in Bessarabia. Today, Sylvia's family consists of three children and two grandchildren.