

HVT-98

V., Vera 1928-

Vera V. Holocaust video testimony (HVT-98) interviewed by Stanley Asher and Anna Kaufer, July 28, 1995.

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

Summary: Vera was born on November 11, 1928 in Szekszard, Hungary. She was the oldest of three daughters. Their parents raised them in a Jewish home. The family moved to Dombovar where they lived in a tightly-knit Jewish community composed mainly of middle-class professionals and merchants. Vera attended private Jewish school. At home, the family spoke Hungarian. Vera's mother died of cancer in 1939 and eight months later, her father remarried.

Antisemitism was very pronounced in Dombovar. Vera was attacked while standing in line for food and Jews were commonly beaten in the street. Her father was sent to a labour camp. In 1944, Vera and her family were forced into the Dombovar ghetto. Many people committed suicide. In early June 1944, the ghetto was liquidated and Vera along with members of her family and other Jews from the ghetto were deported to Kaposvar.

Vera arrived in Auschwitz in July 1944 after travelling three days and nights in a cattle car. Upon arrival, Vera was instructed to leave her belongings on the train. She went through a selection and was separated from her grandmother and her sisters. She showered, had her head shaved, and was assigned to a barracks in Birkenau and her sisters were sent to Lager C. The Kapos were Polish women. Once, Vera was beaten until she lost consciousness for saving a bread ration. She endured constant roll-calls and selections.

On August 9, 1944, Vera was selected to work in the region of Thuringia, Germany. One thousand women were transported to Fürstenhagen. They worked together with POWs in a large munitions factory. Roll-calls continued in order to deter escape. Vera was assigned to work in the smelter.

In April 1945, as the Allies approached, the prisoners were moved by truck and train to Tekla, near Leipzig. When the bombings reached that region, the women were marched to a camp in Schönau. On the death march, they ate grass and slept in the mud. Vera carried her stepmother on her back because her leg was injured. One woman was shot for stealing a potato and the other women were forced to bury her alive. The Nazis burned the camp in Schönau and killed all the sick prisoners. The survivors were marched to Wurzen.

The American Army arrived in Wurzen in May 1945. The soldiers gave the survivors chocolate. There was looting for food and clothing, and people became ill from overeating. The Jews were put on trains and Vera returned to Hungary. In Budapest, Vera found an aunt who informed her that her father was living in Dombovar. She returned home and lived with a cousin for a short while. She moved to Budapest and worked as a secretary and was married in 1952. Vera and her husband had a son. They arrived in Montreal in 1956. Vera's father and stepmother emigrated to the United States.

Most of Vera's family was murdered during the Holocaust. Her grandmother and two sisters were killed in Auschwitz. Overall, sixty relatives lost their lives. Vera's father passed away in 1981 and her stepmother died nine years later. Vera and her husband have one son and three grandchildren. She feels her survival was a lucky coincidence.