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Summary

Gloria (Gitl) Rubin was born on May 3, 1928 in the small town Nasielsk in Poland. Of the 4,000 people in the town 3,000 were Jews. Of these 3,000 only 80 would survive. She was one of seven children. She discusses her mother and father and growing up in a very close-knit, religious family. Her father, Yitzhak, had two sisters nearby with six children combined. Her mother, Frieda had one sister with two children. Her grandparents, who her family visited on shabbat, also lived nearby. No one besides Ms. Rubin survived the war. Two of her father's brothers and two of her mother's brothers had left Poland for the United States before the war. All girls in her town went to the public school, and she went to religious school in the afternoon. Boys went to Jewish school. Relations between Jews and Polish gentiles was mixed. On the one hand, she and other Jewish children had to sit on the back bench in school, but gentiles came to her father's mill regularly and Rubin's mother served them tea. There did not seem to be overt hostility.

Ms. Rubin was in the fifth grade when the war broke out. She and her family split up for awhile at the beginning of the occupation. For awhile she and her younger brother went to a Christian family to stay and then to a small ghetto near her hometown. Her father, mother and their other children end up in the Warsaw Ghetto. Ms. Rubin and her younger brother later joined them there. At first, she was able to go out of the ghetto for food, but she was then beaten by Polish police and then the ghetto was closed. In the ghetto, she and her family were ravaged by hunger and disease. Eventually, she escaped the Warsaw ghetto but ended up in a smaller ghetto again with her younger brother. By late 1942 her parents and siblings had either died in the ghetto or were deported and exterminated, her mother and a sister to Majdanek. She was deported to Auschwitz on November 2, 1942. At first, she worked on roads moving rocks. She could see and smell the gas chambers from her barracks. Later, she got an "easier" job sorting clothes and valuables in the gas chamber. There she found her father's and one of her brother's clothes. Soon after, the lack of food, illness, and the loss of her family made her want to give up, but she remembered her mother telling her not to give up. Still, she was selected for the gas chambers, but was rescued by an SS woman who took her to a barrack where she was to clean. There, in late 1944, she met a Czech Jew, Alice, who was to be her rescuer for the rest of the war. Alice gave her bread and encouraged Ms. Rubin's will to survive. As the Russians came closer, she was taken on a death march to Ravensbrück. Conditions were terrible, but Alice continued to look after her. When the camp was liberated by Russians, who gave them bread, Alice continued to guide Ms. Rubin. Alice took Rubin to Czechoslovakia to Alice's brother and sister-in-law's house. Alice's brother had been murdered, and her brother's wife was not friendly, but Alice insisted that Ms. Rubin be allowed to convalesce there and to get medical help. Alice also helped her go to an ORT school and to get in touch with an uncle the United States. At the ORT school, Ms. Rubin met her future husband who played soccer. She was able to immigrate to the States and he came ten months later. They soon married and settled in California. Because of malnutrition and disease, she was unable to have

children, so they adopted two children. Ms. Rubin remained traumatized by her experiences during the war. She cried throughout the interview and expressed continuing fear and nightmares. Nevertheless, she thought it essential for future generations to hear her story.