

RG-50.493.0020

Margaret Guinness, Interview 23 October 1993

Tape 1:

Margaret Guinness (n. Wohl) was born the youngest of 10 children in Košice, Czechoslovakia; had a very loving childhood among a very loving family; father Theodor Wohl was a very religious man who was deeply connected to his faith, after leaving the service in 1918 at the end of WWI worked in lumber business; mother Anna Ritter was a beautiful and support mother and housemaker; 1939 their part of Czechoslovakia was given to Hungary, by law were no longer allowed to speak their language, had to attend Hungarian school, as German allies they too followed Nuremberg laws; March 1944 German occupation came overnight; Were forced to wear Jewish star, had to go to local police for to be identified and counted; Germans took most important Jewish members as hostages, including Margaret's sister Manya and her husband who owned a car garage, the hostages were never released; Margaret's sister Elizabeth (Bozhena) procured papers for herself and Margaret (age 14) and they fled for Budapest; Not much later transports began, bringing Jews from Košice to Auschwitz, two sisters, her brother-in-law, and their two children were exterminated; One brother was hung at Theresienstadt; in Budapest Margaret and her sister were arrested and held in the Gestapo prison for 4 months, but were able to hide their Jewish identities

Tape 2:

In 1944 Margaret and her sister Elizabeth (Bozhena) were sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp; the conditions were horrifying, cold, brutal; Margaret was determined to survive to ensure that she'd be able to tell the world what she saw and what they had all experienced; There were many horrifying medical experiments conducted at Ravensbrück; To survive, Margaret volunteered for all types of work, allowing her to smuggle food to her sister and her barrack; Volunteered with her sister to work at a factory in Dortmund to help build rocket bombs; Stayed there until spring of 1945; February 1945 they were sent to Bergen-Belsen; conditions were worse than those at Ravensbrück, typhoid was an epidemic, people died quickly and easily; Margaret found one of her other sisters at Bergen; for a very short time she shared a bunk with Anne Frank; Eventually became very ill with typhoid and was plagued with many feverish dreams; In April 1945 she saw the camp Commandant and the other guards being stripped of their weapons and their ranks, she thought it was a dream but the British had arrived and they were being liberated; She and her sisters were sent to a hospital where they met with Swedish delegates and decided to move to Sweden where she lived for 3 years; Six months after their liberation Elizabeth (Bozhena) died from illness; An uncle in America contacted Margaret and was able to send her papers; Came to the United States in 1949