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Summary

Gerda Seifer was born in Przemyśl, Poland and was brought up in a close-knit family as an only child. Her father owned a cloth store and her mother was a traditional stay at home mom. In the summer of 1939 she overheard her parents discussing the war. Rumors spread about various Jewish families being kicked out of Germany and sent to east to Poland. September 1st, 1939, bombs fell out of the sky and the war official started. After several days of serious decision making, her father decided to travel to the Eastern front. As he packed his bags, the Germans stomped into their city within and occupied it. Gerda saw horrendous acts by the Nazis. She witnessed 12 young men facing a wall with their hands up and German guards behind them, she saw Jews being senselessly murdered constantly every single day. Afraid that this would happen to her father and uncle, she suggested that they hide. Gerda's father was able to obtain false papers and they moved to Lueve. They found an apartment and lived there for a couple months. Meanwhile, hundreds and hundreds of people were sent to Russia to help of the Eastern front. They heard horrific stories of people who were forced to go to Siberia and made to stay in cattle carts for days on end. In school Gerda was fed Russian propaganda on how society should operate Communist regime, and this bred paranoia within the community. June of 1941, everyone in town awoke to Russian soldiers retreating back East. Having no newspapers or radio, they were unaware of what was happening. They then found out that the Germans declared war on Russia and that Hitler planned to invade Moscow. Gerda and her family were told on loud speaker that they were to report to the offices to receive their ID cards and food rations; they were also given arm bands to wear. At one point, her father sent her to the countryside to live on a farm. Then the Germans announced that the Jews were only to stay in the ghetto. There was also a Jewish police force, who operated as a micro government within the ghetto. The Germans started implementing actions that gathered up large amounts of Jews and forced them to the cattle trains to be "resettled in the east". Gerda's parents sent her to hide with a lady they were paying in a cellar. After 6 weeks of total isolation, she decided to go back to the ghetto with her parents. A month later, her mother and cousin Richard were taken away by the Nazis and sent to a concentration camp. Life was getting progressively worst in the ghetto; people were being sent away every day. Afraid, Gerda's father sent her away in hiding to live with a Catholic woman. They changed Gerda's identity, the woman taught her about Catholicism, church, prayers, customs, and traditions. Her false mother was not a nice woman. She shouted at Gerda, was rude and nasty to her every opportunity she got. Finally the war ended in 1945, and the Russians came to liberate Lueve. The Catholic lady allowed Gerda to return to Przemyśl to see if there was anyone in her family who survived. She found out that her father had died in a concentration camp and that the rest of her family members who were hiding in a cemetery were all shot. In January of 1946, she arrived in Kattowitz and showed up to her friend's house. Gerda only spent 3 months with her, but later met a Rabbi who was taking orphans to England. She made her trip to Warsaw and 6 weeks later she was on a Swedish boat traveling to England. She attended to nursing school in England and was in touch with her cousin in America. He was able to get an affidavit for her to come to America. She came to America on S.S Washington. She worked at the Jewish hospital for a while, then she transferred to Mount Sinai Hospital. She met her husband, was married in 1965, and then

moved to California. She has 3 children, Elizabeth, Phillip, and Julia, and looks back at the Holocaust as being one of the most tragic events of history to date.