

## **Summary of Oral History: IRENE EISENABCH**

**RG#: RG-50.493.0043**

**This summary was written by a USHMM Volunteer on 03/2022**

### **Summary**

Irene Eisenbach (nee Spiro? or Szapira?) was born in Lodz, Poland in 1925. Upbringing was strictly orthodox, learned Yiddish and to read Hebrew. 4th of 5 children. Parents had machines in the house to make trousseaus for young women. Lived in a large apartment building and Irene had many friends. She was very happy. Family had a warm, observant atmosphere during weekends. Though the family went to a large synagogue they prayed in rooms which were like a shtibele. Father avoided the Polish-Russian army by self-harming his foot. Change came on September 1, 1939 with the German invasion of Poland. Irene was 13. First only curfew but after a few months people were evacuated. Many young people go into Russia, including her older brother, but he has not been heard from after 1942. The girls stayed home but parents sent her to Shilowitz [PH], a shtetl where her uncle and aunt lived after Germany annexed Lodz into the Reich. Mother came to stay but returned to Lodz because she missed the family. She was put in a ghetto and not heard from again. In 1942 she was taken to a munition's factory 10-15 miles away in Szarnisko? She was lucky because of the three factories there hers was the least toxic. Worked 10 hours a day. Little food, but a Polish man in another plant, brought her soup with vegetables in it. He is one of the few good Poles. Inmates received clothing from extermination camps. Never heard from her parents again. She stayed in the camp until January 1, 1945 when Germans evacuated. She was freed along with girlfriend on January 16, 1945. Irene met her future husband in the camp in 1944. They returned to Lodz but no family remained. Boyfriend and Irene marry. They made their way through Czechoslovakia and on to Germany in DP camp with help of Haganah. Remarks that Czechs are very helpful unlike Poles. In 1950 her younger brother found her. He goes to Palestine, her husband to New York and two years later to Iowa (Cedar Rapids) where he is able to practice dentistry. She loved it there, but in 1973 they moved to California, south of LA, for better weather. Children raised Jewish but not religious. Husband atheist, she believes very little in Jewish ritual. But her three boys end up more religious. Was the U.S. good for her? Yes, financially, emotionally good and bad.