

**ROCHELLE GELMAN**  
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Rochelle Gelman was born in 1925 in eastern Poland in the town of Hoszcza. Her father was one of seven brothers and one sister. One brother lived in Israel. Rochelle's father owned a mill, and her mother was a dentist. She grew up in a neighboring town where she had a happy childhood. The rest of her greater family stayed in the village where she was born. She went to a private school through most of high school where there was very little antisemitism, because it was a Jewish school. She did remember one non-Jewish teacher as being anti-Semitic. Rochelle was very wary of non-Jews since her mother told her about pogroms. Rochelle also remembered not going out on Christian holidays. It also became increasingly difficult for Jews to attend Polish high schools and universities. She had one sibling, an older brother who was very athletic. She frequently challenged him in sports. Rochelle spoke several languages since she lived among Ukrainians, Poles, and Russians. She also learned English in school. The family was semi-observant, her mother more so than her father. While she knew non-Jewish friends from ballet, she had no non-Jewish friends.

In September 1939 everything changed. Her town in eastern Poland fell under Russian control in the Stalin-Ribbentrop Pact. Under the communist regime in Russia her father lost his mill, and the family was forced to move into a poor apartment building that held two other families. Her mother was forced to stand in line for hours. In June 1941 the Nazis took over. Rochelle's brother decided to go into Russia and tried to convince his sister to go with him, but she wanted to stay with her mother. She, her mother, and father, who had returned from a Russian labor camp, stayed in a cellar for five days until the shelling stopped.

When they came out they expected the Russians had overcome the Nazis. But that was not the case. Instead, the Nazis forced march the Jews from the town, separated men and women, and later shot the men. The women were marched back to town and were separated into two lines. Her mother was among many who were killed. Rochelle and her cousin and aunt were saved.

What follows is the long, interesting story of how Rochelle survived the next three years. She was very resourceful hiding out, telling false tales about who she was, and depending on helpful, sympathetic Poles, Ukrainians, and Russians, who were mostly farmers. They provided food and occasionally shelter. During the last year or so she hid out with her future husband's (Irving Gelman) family. In December, 1944 the Russian finally liberated eastern Poland and Rochelle was rescued, though life was still very hard. In May, 1945 the war ended and she, Irving and family were taken by the Haganah to a DP camp in Germany. She was treated well there. Finally, in April 1947 she was able to immigrate to the U.S. with the help of relatives.