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Summary

Rosa Tankus (née Pajkin), born in Oslo, Norway in 1923, discusses her paternal grandfather Pajkin who owned a factory in Odessa that made uniforms for the Cossacks; only her father and uncle moving to Oslo; her maternal grandfather Alexander Shuster moving to Oslo from Lithuania, with his three daughters, intending (but failing) to return to get his wife and son, because of WWI; never talking about that grandmother; her parents meeting in Oslo and getting married in 1922; her brother Ivar being born in 1926 and her sister Ella in 1927; her father selling fruit and chocolate in a kiosk on wheels outside their house, 6 pm-11 pm; being painfully shy as a girl; having two best friends who were not Jewish; the friends borrowing books at the library and having a book club; her parents having mainly Jewish friends; having her first boyfriend when she was 18, Asbjorn Torsby, a Jewish boy originally from Trondheim; planning to get engaged on New Year's Eve, 1942; trying to get Asbjorn to escape with her to Sweden, but Asbjorn not wanting to leave his family; Asbjorn and his family of 30 eventually being sent to Auschwitz where they were murdered; before, right after Anschluss, thinking it could never happen in Norway; at 4 am on April 9, 1940, being woken by a thunder and going down on the street in their night gowns to see the sky full of German airplanes; five Jewish families living in the same apartment building; German soldiers taking over her school and having to move to another school; one of her teachers greeting the students at the gate, dressed in a Nazi uniform, and realizing he was a Nazi all along; being very dark and easily identifiable as a Jew; on June 2, 1941, witnessing her father being arrested at home early in the morning, by Norwegian Nazis; her father being sent to the Grini concentration camp outside Oslo; being allowed to bring her father five sandwiches and preparing them with a lot of butter and cheese, only to have German soldiers take them for themselves, and being so angry; her father returning after three weeks, saying it had been fine, but then seeing welts on his back from being whipped; her mother collapsing and realizing she had to be the "mother" in the family; afterwards wondering why her parents didn't try to escape at that point; Ivar and Ella being all quiet, in a state of shock; on October 25-26, all men over 15 being picked up, including her father and Ivar who was 16; learning they were sent to Bergs internment camp for a month and on to Auschwitz, on the boat Donau and then by train for three days without food; believing her father and Ivar had been gassed right away; 34 out of 770 Jews from Norway surviving Auschwitz; on November 26, all other Jews in Oslo being arrested; the night before, being at home with seven other women; a woman from the resistance knocking on their door at 11.30 pm, saying all Jews will be picked up in 5 hours; the search lights circling and air raid sirens blaring; going to the neighbor's to call their house doctor, a wonderful man, a German who had been in Norway since he was a child; calling a taxi and taking her mother to the hospital; waiting outside in the taxi cab for 1.5 hours because they could not drive while air sirens; going to a Jewish friend's house at 2.30 to warn them, finding all of them dressed, waiting for the Germans and refusing to leave; only two out of the five children surviving the war; all along being afraid the taxi driver would understand what she was doing; at her arrival home, the taxi driver not letting her pay, asking her to promise one thing, "that you escape to Sweden tonight", saying he was one of the 500 taxi drivers ordered to help the Nazis pick up Jews in the morning; her sister having stayed home, had packed their silver cutlery, two silver

candlesticks, silver napkin rings; dressing in ski clothing since it was -28 C outside; at 3 am, not knowing where else to go, going to the family of two friends who lived five minutes away; the family not wanting to let them in, but going in anyway; the father only believing all Jews were being picked up after talking to a police friend; at 9.30 am going to the toy store where their cousin used to work and the employees yelling to them to leave, because the Nazis were taking over the store in two hours; telling the toy store employees they didn't know where to go; one of the employees suggesting they call the woman who warned them the night before; calling the woman from the resistance from the toy store; the woman arriving and bundling her up with gauze to cover her dark hair; picking up her sister at their friend's place; the family not wanting to let Ella leave, but Ella running to the taxi without her coat; going to the resistance woman's aunt and her mother who hid them for a week; the resistance woman belonging to the Communist movement; on Dec 1, being picked up by an man who used the code name Arnessen and being taken to a bomb shelter where 14 Jews already waited for them; the group getting on the back of a truck with the Nazi emblem and flags on and being covered with a tarp; being stopped several times by German soldiers asking if they had seen any Judeschwein, Jewish pigs, but the driver getting them through; not thinking anymore, feeling like in no-man's-land; staying in a barn; their escape route being cut off by German troops being transferred from Finland; the group of 16 staying for several days in a house close to the road, where they could not cook and without heating or bathrooms; hiding her money in her boots and avoiding paying for her escape; two men in Norwegian Nazi uniform stopping by and having to hide in a closet under the stairs, with 16 people on top of each other; walking towards Sweden without guides; meeting a man who said they were going the wrong way and were walking along the border instead of towards it; arriving at the lake Romsjon, spreading out when crossing as they had been told by the resistance, to avoid being shot or captured all at once; seeing something white move and one of the refugees, Mr. Blott, screaming "now we are finished"; the people in white shouting "welcome to Sweden"; a Swedish policeman and his wife taking her and her sister in for a night; going by train to Gothenburg, Sweden; being a stenographer but having to work as a maid since she didn't speak Swedish; getting a job in a clothing factory; her colleagues getting her flowers and her boss an extra month's salary (NOK 200) the day Norway was liberated; returning to Oslo, finding their apartment plundered and boarded up by the Nazi who had stayed there; picking up her mother at the hospital; her mother never recovering mentally and staying in a psychiatric institution until her death in 1963; working for the Oslo police department as a stenographer; being picked to work on the Nazi leader Quisling's wife Maria Quisling's interrogation; an interrogated Nazi saying "I didn't think there were any Jews left" when he saw her and her boss trying to strange him; marrying a Jewish man from Gothenburg, Sweden; her son becoming mentally ill and committing suicide at the age of 43; never being able to talk about what happened to her with Swedish Jews who had not experienced an occupation; her husband and children just leaving the room once when she tried to tell them; never going to see a therapist och psykiatrist.