

## Summary of Oral History: Margaret Blatman

**RG#:** RG-90.159.0002

**This Summary was written by a USHMM Volunteer on [05/2022]**

### Part 1 of 3

Margaret Blatman, describes: being the youngest of three children in a loving family [Note: no date of birth or place beyond Poland given; later remarks suggest birth about 1925]; her family owning a successful hardware store; her mother being the center of family and business life; descending from a religious family but her mother becoming lenient in observance during the war; the children attending private school; being a good student; her father's name, Shaya (sp) and her mother's, Gitla(sp); having spotty memories of her extended family and never knowing her grandparents;

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Her family using a fictitious name when the war broke out; moving briefly to the countryside but returning to the city [location not specified but believed to be Warsaw by context], believing it would be safer there; this was expected based on prewar events; her parents considering moving to Palestine but delaying for too long; not being affected personally by conditions of beatings and forced labor because she was a young girl; being forced into the "big" Ghetto, where they had some freedom and outdoor space; moving to the "little" ghetto and living with her parents in one room; assisting her sister in childbirth; being sent to work in a weapons factory; trying to save her sister's baby but both of them and Margaret taken to a "building to be shot"; having a stoic and fatalistic attitude toward her impending death; a friend intervening and Margaret returning with the baby to work at the weapons factory; being housed in a camp adjacent to the factory; selections occurring in the camp; her parents being taken to Treblinka (her father in 1941, her mother in 1943); her camp being dissolved and being taken on a forced march to Tomashek\* during which several people were shot; the conditions being "terrible" in Tomashek; picking up lice; being taken by boxcar to Auschwitz along with her sister, brother-in-law, and their baby; knowing they were going to a concentration camp as soon as they were put on the train but not knowing which one; then quickly realizing the destination was Auschwitz and concluding that "this was the beginning of the end"; the train being packed; arriving at Auschwitz and "knowing" they were going to the gas chambers because they had heard rumors about the death camps; going through selection, with the men being taken to a work camp; a friend taking the baby to protect her, both of whom perished; Margaret and her sister remaining alive; Margaret for a long time repressing memories of being there.

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Margaret's memories being vague until awakened by a movie; having a vague memory of being tattooed, stripped, and sent to showers, not knowing if that meant being gassed; she and her sister being spared because they appeared to be fit for work; having to "lead the life of a camp"; having little food; a camp orchestra playing as she went about her chores; being assigned to Birkenau A; going through roll call; being constantly hungry and her sister, a resourceful and organized person, helping her to survive; her memories of daily activities being repressed; recalling a female block warden who was a Hungarian Jew; after about six months, a selection of 100 people, including herself and her sister; the group being taken to barracks in the Sudetenland; working at a Siemens factory producing aviation parts; being there from January 1945 until being liberated by the Russians in May; being extremely hungry; going to Pilsen after hearing that the Americans were there; finding out that her sister's husband had survived; her sister being hospitalized near Munich and Margaret moving there; being trained as a medical technician; attending a reunion of survivors in Stuttgart; moving to the U.S. in 1949; hearing that her sister had died in an accident in Israel, age 28; not wanting to visit Poland to avoid disturbing her memories of an idyllic childhood.