**United States Holocaust Memorial MuseumPRIVATE**

**Interview with Magda Rebitser**

**August 30, 1987**

**RG-50.031\*0059PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Magda Rebitser, conducted on August 30, 1987 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

**MAGDA REBITSER**

**August 30, 1987**

0:10

Q: Where are you from and when were you born?

A: I was born March 7, 1928 in Usura (?), Czech. I had one brother and one sister, both older. I was the baby. I was spoiled growing up because of being the youngest. We lived a middle class life in a gorgeous country. My father owned a hardware store.

0:62

Q: Did your family participate in the Jewish community?

A: My father was a atheist and my mother was Jewish- very religious. I really don't remember much but I do not remember any poor Jews. We did not meet any other class of people.

1:00

Q: Did you feel any discrimination?

A: Yes, there was much antisemitism. I did have many Catholic friends at school. One day the Germans came and put us in the cattle cars. People did not know what was hitting them. My brother had a physician friend in the Hungarian Army. He tried to get him to help me to escape Budapest. I did not want to leave my parents. Father died on the way to Auschwitz of a heart attack. He had a high fever and died in hospital with dignity.

2:52

Q: Can you actually tell us about arriving at Auschwitz?

A: Very crowded cattle cars. People were all sick. It was a horrible experience. I don't know how many days we were in the cars. I saw the crematorium, smelled the burning people but never expected anything. I can't go into much more detail because I can't remember much. April 1944. I feel like I am relaying to you an experience I saw on a film a long time ago and vaguely remember what happened. I don't like to talk about the experience. Brutality was so unexpected that at the time what was actually happening never crossed our minds. The soldiers ripped our earrings of and stepped on my father's picture. They put us in barracks. They took our clothing and gave us some rags to wear. I had no shoes. There were 13-14 people per bunk. 2 Times per day there was roll call. 4:30 we were woken and we stood in the court yard for three hours. We were strongly advised to stand straight. All the beautiful girls had their long hair cut. I never remember seeing any women molested by the soldiers. The German's had no need to molest us unkempt, dirty soldiers. I used to comb all the German women's hair for an additional slice of bread. I gave it to my 13 year old cousin because she was large for her age. We were given one scoop of soup each day and one slice of bread. The heat in the summer of 1944 was parching. We sat crouched between the barracks to avoid it. One day an older girl told me that there was going to be a selection for a labor camp and that she should look her best for it. I was given wooden shoes and brought to a big white building, it looked like a crematorium. It was a factory. I worked 13 hour days. Survival here was much easier than Auschwitz. If you did work you were killed.

5:14

Q: What were your memories of liberation itself?

A: It took place April 1944. The air raids were frequent. It was obvious that the Americans were coming closer. During this time we were not able to talk to the Germans. One day the bombing stopped and I heard American voices outside and we were liberated. Most of us didn't want to go on living because we didn't.

5:65

Q: If there's something else you would like to say please do.

A: I feel like I have said a lot but have said nothing. It would require an in depth searching of myself before I could say anything with more meaning. I think I spoke too lightly about what was happening. If I went into depth I would not be able to go to work tomorrow morning. I feel very empty, extremely empty.

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