-TITLE- KOHN, MANIA

-I\_DATE-

-SOURCE- ONE GENERATION AFTER/BOSTON

-RESTRICTIONS-

-SOUND\_QUALITY- POOR

-IMAGE\_QUALITY- FAIR

-DURATION-

-LANGUAGES- ENGLISH

-KEY\_SEGMENT-

-GEOGRAPHIC\_NAME-

-PERSONAL\_NAME-

-CORPORATE\_NAME-

-KEY\_WORDS-

-NOTES-

-CONTENTS-

I was born in Poland on September 10, 191 9 in a little village.

I came from a religious family, 100 kilometers from Warsaw. My

father was a tailor, my mother was a housewife, we were

comfortable. I had two sisters and a brother, My sister went to

Belgium before the war and luckily survived.

I went to a mixed school and studied business administration.

Because of anti Semitism I had to learn to be a dressmaker. We

lived in a mixed neighborhood and were friends with Gentiles

although there was a great deal of anti Semitism. When my father

went for a walk on Saturdays, he was attacked by gangs. I followed

him one day when he said he would not walk any more and beat up the

kids who attacked him.

I was 20 years old when I came to the concentration camp. In 1939

when the Germans attacked Poland, they came after the Jews. One

day we had to deliver all the jewelry, the next fur till they took

everything away.

When the Germans attacked Poland, they told the young people to run

away. We didn't know where to go and we wanted to be with our

parents. There was a lot of bombing. We went to a bunker to hide.

We went to see my brother who was married and told them to come to

the bunker. We stayed there two weeks and then went back to our

houses. We could not get any food.

The Jewish organization told us on a megaphone to come to the old

abandoned castle. When we left the castle there were Germans on

both sides with rubber sticks pushing us towards the trucks to the

ghetto. They took us to Neinstutt ghetto. My brother was working

for a restaurant for the Germans and did not have to go but he

wanted to go with the family. He took his wife and children to the

ghetto. My sister's husband worked for the Germans and did not

have to go.

We lived in the ghetto a few families in one room. There were

people there already from surrounding villages. They took people

to work.

Typhus was rampant. My mother was very sick in the ghetto. I

became a nurse and took care of my mother. My brother brought a

doctor who sold us some medicine and she recovered. When I took

her home from the hospital, I became sick with typhus. I

recovered.

In 1942 they took us to the concentration camp.. We did not know

where we were going. They took us in passenger trains. We lived

in the ghetto from 1939-42. We were in line all night for bread.

When I have to stand in line in the supermarket, I get sick to my

stomach and have to leave, it all comes back to me.

The man in charge of the ghetto would announce how many were needed

to be taken out, 1000 people needed for tomorrow for the gas

chamberg. We were among the last ones to leave. As a dressmaker

I sewed for people for food. I did not believe there would be

killings in the camps.

MANIA KOHN Page 2

Auschwitz was the first camp I went to after the ghetto. They took

us from the ghetto to the camp in trains. They stopped the train

and took out the men, my father and brother got off. They took

them to a separate train.

We travelled a few days to Auschwitz and arrived there Nov. 22.

Dr. Mengele (and she starts to curse him and become upset) was

there pointing those to the right those to the left. My niece was

holding my hand and then got lost and I never saw her again. I was

with the young people . I told them I want to go with my parents.

Mengele saw me trying to go with my parents and ordered me to go

back where he told me to go. My mother said go, maybe you will

live through the way, you will tell people what happened. My

sister had two girls and had a boy in the ghetto. When she walked

to the truck, she fell and I could hear her screaming. They were

pushing them on the truck before they were taken to the

crematorium. After all these years, I cannot carry on a normal

life, after all I lived through.

They took us to take showers. They gave us clothes like soldiers

wore, ill fitting and out of season. They took our shoes and gave

us wooden shoes. After the showers, naked, we were tattooed. The

number was my name.

We were given bowls for our watery black soup. In the soup was a

pill to stop our menstruation. I did not have my period for

several years until after freedom. They counted us like animals

when we got up in the morning and when we got back from work. We

received small pieces of bread and soup. People were dying like

flies. Every few weeks Dr. Mengele came to look us over. People

hung on wires because they didn't want to live It is hard to tell

you the whole story. I don't know how to start and how to finish.

My husband and my brother worked in the coal mines. I worked at a

job cleaning up the houses that were bombed out, knocking them down

and finishing the job. One time bricks fell on me and I broke my

ankle.

They made a sled and some of the girls had to drag the sled back to

the barrack. They took me to a hospital and because they said I

was a good worker, I was able to go to the hospital. My friend who

was also hurt was taken to the crematorium. When I came out of

the hospital, I stayed in the barracks for a few days. The girls

dragged me to work so that I would not be taken to the crematorium.

I worked on the clothes of those who had been taken to the

crematorium. I found my nieces' clothes, my mother's clothes. I

recognized them because I had sewn these clothes. I removed the

gold and jewelry.

They took us from Auschwitz on a death march at the end of the war.

We did not know where we were going. They took us to Ravensbruck

. Every day many gave up and were shot. We slept in a barn. My

feet were swollen.

We hid in the barn and stayed behind. We hid in the hay and the

Germans used a pitchfork but couldn't find us.

We started marching, we did not know where we were going. German

soldiers were following us. I told him we lost our transport. Two

hours later German police arrived and took us to the transport we

were originally in. They took us to Ravensbruck . Thousands of

people in a barrack.

SS German woman asked who wants to go to work. I came forward.

TAPE 2

They needed people to work in the barracks to help out the women

who were taking care of the people who were there for political

reasons. What the Germans did to them. They took out the muscles

from the women' legs for German soldiers. I met some of these

people later on being treated in hospitals. I could not take it.

I saw an SS woman from Auschwitz and she recognized me. She told

me she was from Bergen Belsen camp and I asked her to take me with

her. The girls went with me to Bergen Belsen. I was in

Ravensbruck a few months. We stood with our feet apart, naked

while men shaved our public hair (for lice). In Bergen Belsen I

cleaned offices for the Germans. They would throw a piece of bread

to us like to a dog.

They asked us how we would like to go with them when they leave. We

agreed. One day we came into work and we did not see any Germans.

They had disappeared. They ran away. A boy ran into our barn and

same you are free. We thought it was a joke. He dragged me out.

I saw soldiers, English soldiers. I was happy to be free but

worried. I ran to the bunk and cried. Where will I go now. After

the war the mens' camp sent lists of survivors and women' camps

sent also lists of survivors and they were sent to several camps

To go back to 1943, there was another selection by Dr. Mengele in

Auschwitz. When I came closer to Dr. Mengele, I ran out of the

line and asked my sister to stay with me. She went back to her

friends. I never saw her again. She kept shouting Mania you have

to be strong to live through this, and tell the people what

happened to us.

A man saw my brother's name on the list from Buchenwald. How will

I get to Buchenwald. There was a rabbi there and I went to see

him. He was in English uniform and he asked me in Yiddish what can

I do for you. My brother is alive, I want to go to Buchenwald. He

made some calls and got a jeep for me and took me to Buchenwald.

All of a sudden I got my period. When I came to Buchenwald, I was

the only woman. I told them I have a brother in Block 36, tell him

I am here. My husband was my brother's friend. We hugged each

other but we couldn't talk. I slept in the barrack next to my

brother, Afterwards they took an apartment. He was with my father

a short time and then they took him away. What I told you is a

drop in the bucket, just a little bit.

I stayed in Germany until 1947 when my daughter was born. We lived

in a soldier's barrack in Lansburg. We were left in a bad shape

mentally and physically. Many times I thought I would die. It was

a miracle we survived. The second generation will do our

work.

In 1949 I came to the U.S. I was registered for Israel but my

papers came through first for America. My brother waited and went

to Israel. When we came to the U.S. the Jewish philanthropy

brought us to Boston . We had no money. They gave us a room with

somebody in Dorchester. She was a Russian woman, a lovely woman.

We became close friends with the family. We had a room with

kitchen privileges. My husband was a furrier but couldn't get a

job because the union wouldn't accept him. The Jewish philanthropy

gave us $25 a week and paid for the room. Eventually the union

agreed to take him in . I have a lot of survivor friends here and

in Philadelphia. I found an apartment and had another baby. We

gave our children good educations. I have my children and a

grandson, I tell them what happened. I am not religious. I believe

in God However what happened in the Holocaust did change my belief

in God a little. I belong to a temple. You have got to believe in

something.

I would like to tell you young people to be strong and remember to

carry on because we old people are getting less and less and you

have to carry on. If it was not for the war we would not have

Israel. They didn't like us then and they don't like us now.

Everything is in your hands to carry on.

My mother's name was Hadassh, my father, Bernard. My two nieces

were killed in Auschwitz, my brother's first wife was killed and my

sister and my parents. My daughter is named after my mother, my

son after my father and my husbands father.

She shows pictures of her family and her husband's family

.END.