‑TITLE‑ RUTH HALBREICH

‑I\_DATE‑

‑SOURCE‑ UCLA HOLOCAUST DOCUMENTATION ARCHIVES

‑RESTRICTIONS‑

‑SOUND\_QUALITY‑ EXCELLENT

‑IMAGE\_QUALITY‑ EXCELLENT

‑DURATION‑

‑LANGUAGES‑

‑KEY\_SEGMENT‑

‑GEOGRAPHIC\_NAME‑

‑PERSONAL\_NAME‑

‑CORPORATE\_NAME‑

‑KEY\_WORDS‑

‑NOTES‑

‑CONTENTS‑

1:01:26 Ny name is Ruth Halbreich and I was born in Warsaw

Poland, where I stayed until 1944. In 1939 the war started

and that summer my family and I were up at our summer

cottage. My father came to get the family and took us back to

Warsaw. Then we stayed there for two days in a basement

because of an air raid.

1:02:10 On a truck the family started towards Russia and 1/3

of the Jews also left. My mother was scared of the Germans.

There are three girls and one boy in the family and all of

them are alive.

1:03:25 The family settled in Russia in part of Poland, where

the Russians occupied. There were schools for children and my

father worked in the paper business.

1:04:05 Father decided to go back to Warsaw to look on things

at home. He and friend went back. My home had been destroyed,

but my father's factory was ok. Able to cross the border one

at a time through the snow.

1:05:10 The farmers knew how to get people over the border in

spite of the snow. I was one of the first to go to Warsaw. My

mother was sent by the Russians to Siberia.

1:06:00 I stayed at my aunt's house with some of my siblings.

The Germans began building a wall and this started the Warsaw

ghetto in 1940, where we settled. My father able to sell

merchandise on the black market to get food.

1:07:05 We were not hungry in the ghetto. Also, there was no

school, but everyone was studying and the teachers would come

to my house to teach us. There were dance and drama classes

also. There was a curfew after 9:00pm. Because of the long

nights there was time to study, sing, and dance.

1:08:13 In June 1942 the German trucks stormed into ghetto

and caught people and took them out. We found out later that

the people were gassed immediately.

1:09:05 Family built a hiding place. Germans came in every

day and looked for people. Made a hiding place in the wall.

1:10:05 You knew when the Germans came into the ghetto

because of the screams by people. Then you would go into the

hiding place. People would call people in yiddish and begged

them to come out to work... There were 40 people in the small

room that served as their hiding place. People in warsaw

ghetto basically worked in a factory making brushes for the

Germans.

Supposedly you were needed if you had a factory button on,

but when the Germans came in they would take anyone. Ny

sister got sick and the doctor said that she needed to live

in the country and get out of the ghetto. She got sicker

every day and the only way to get out of the ghetto was on a

truck taking out merchandise from the factories.

1:12:02 To get out you had to go by a gate with a check

point. Her sister was on a truck and father gave her id

papers saying that she was Catholic.

1:13:05 Before the ghetto, my father arranged for his

business to be taken over by a Christian customer, and he

taught this man the business. The customer wanted to help my

father out. I got letters from mom up until the Russian war.

1:14:05 Mom had good chance of surviving. Customer loved

children and helped them out a lot.

1:15:20 The customer was a devout catholic and spent he days

in the orphanage helping out. This orphanage was very self‑

supporting. My sister went to the convent and liked it there

and my father was relieved.

1:16:40 My sister, Helen, was 16 yrs. old and at this age

children would be sent out to jobs in the area. My sister was

put in charge of the nursery and was improving daily. Times

worse and worse daily in the Ghetto for me but I didn't want

to leave my father.

1:18:00 In 1943, when I was 17, I left the Ghetto out the

same way as my sister. I was in charge of children a little

bit older than my sister's group.

1:19:00 Story of 12 yr. old girl who got out after her father

had been shot in the street by the Germans. She went to the

convent as well. Stayed in convent until the spring of 1944.

1:20:00 Since we were without ID's, the sisters made us leave

after they found out that the Gestapo was looking for Jewish

children in convents. We went to the house of the man who

took over my father's business, but his wife was scared, so

he turned to a friend and he said that he would let them

staying an extra room for American gold coins.

1:21:10 We stayed in one room until Fall 1944, the Polish

uprising. In September I saw out of the window barricades

everywhere.

1:22:05 I was told that the Germans had left the area, but

then they dropped bombs on the area and leveled the town. I

felt free and walked around. You could only walk in one

direction in the town because of the barricades and the road

ended by the trains and we found out that we were going to be

used as slave laborers. I had no where to go and had no ID.

1:23:20 By train we went into Germany and into a camp where

we were later segregated for work. There were 15,000

prisoners there. I met a man there who was sympathetic for us

and he brought food for us at night. He came one time and

gave them advice that in the morning people will be called

out of the barracks to go to an underground munitions

factory. He advised us that we should stay in the barracks.

1:24:45 We did stay inside. The next day they called us out

and sent us to do domestic work in a restaurant where we had

good conditions.

1:26:00 We would get the coal to heat up the restaurant from

across the street. This work was ok for me to do, but not for

the 12 yr old girl. I talked to those in charge of us and

they let the girl do whatever she wanted to do.

1:27:15 Little girl was happy and they were very close. Her

hair was long, brown, and kinky, this scared me because it

would give her Jewish identity away. So, I would buy her some

bleach for her hair.

1:28:10 The bleach burned her hair and made her suffer, but

her hair was blond. I worked in the kitchen until April of

1945. Next day bomb raids in the city. Everyone was moved to

another city and the planes did the same there. I came out of

the shelter one day and heard english being spoken and I

introduced myself to a Jewish American soldier.

1:30:00 The soldier asked me about me family and he let me

stay where the soldiers were. He got out a prayer book, but I

couldn't read the Hebrew or speak Jewish.

1:31:05 I was in shock and he took care of us. We

communicated in English and slowly the Jewish came back. And

then he took us to a camp "Dora".

1:32:02 The camp was for displaced persons after the war. We

went to the Polish section. (During the war it was a

concentration camp where underground they were making

bombers) There was a hospital there and I wanted to work

there.

1:33:11 I segregated papers for them. I saw a group of people

come up to the hospital, among them was my husband to be. He

was helping to prepare for the Nuremberg trials.

1:34:10 He invited me to a barrack to a get together. I was

still ambivalent about being Jewish.

1:35:10 He told me about a train going to France. And we went

on to Paris and got a room in a house for displaced persons.

1:36:15 I got a job with a Polish family, helping them sew.

The arrangement was good. I wrote a letter to the girl's aunt

in Palestine and told her about their situation. The aunt

wrote back that the little girl must come to Palestine.

1:37:10 The little girl could have been smuggled in and was

taken to Palestine, although it was a difficult trip for her.

The parting was sad.

1:39:10 In 1948 she was taken into the Israeli army and

fought in the war of Independence. My mother was there.

When I was in Paris I wrote the Jewish community in Warsaw.

1:40:00 My sister was working at this office. I got a letter

from her and we corresponded a lot. I then got married and

moved to Germany.

1:41:10 I then found out that my mother was out of Russia. My

mother was not allowed to go back to Warsaw because of the

living conditions. But she did one day go there to look

through the lists of people to find relatives.

1:42:05 My mother was reunited with my sister. I have a

picture from 1941 of my sister and I and we had sent it to my

mother when she was in Siberia and she still had it when they

were reunited.

1:43:10 I heard of Truman's quota of displaced persons to

come to the US and we took advantage of this and came to

America in the summer of 1946. My mother stayed in Poland

until 1947. My mother and some of her children went to Israel

and made their home there.

1:45:00 My mother came to US a few times; her heart was very

much with America because some of her family would come to US

every so often before war time.

1:46:20 My mother's family, in the early 20's, moved to

America, but she was married and stayed on in Poland.

1:47:33 Her family was doing very well in Poland and the

children were able to go to private schools.

1:48:05 In 1939 my mother wanted to go to the world's fair in

the US, this would have been the first time in 20‑22 years

that she would have been able to see her mother, then the war

broke out. When my mother came to the US after the war she

met a lot of the family.

1:49:20 A great reunion in the US with the family.

1:50:00 The uprising was in April 1943, I left in January and

my father had left the Ghetto in the trucks carrying

merchandise. I met him in his office. He gave me a

handkerchief of his to remember him by.

1:51:20 My father's biggest wish was to be able to save his

children, and he was able to do this.

1:52:00 My father went back into the Ghetto to save the

little girl's mother and no one really knows what might have

happened to him. He was killed somehow. The little girl's

mother was sent to Treblinka.

1:53:15 My father died in 1943. We could see the flames from

the ghetto in the convent and we were very sad.

1:54:15 We told the mother superior that we were Jewish and

that we were scared for our father in the ghetto. The mother

superior said that she wished she could have known this

before, perhaps she could have let our father be a night

watchman. Our father gave us a lot of money in gold coins we

gave it to the mother superior to hide for us.

1:55:00 After the war the sisters gave the money back to my

sister. They wrote to me. The sisters never betrayed us. The

customer who had taken care of us earlier was a kind man and

truly wanted to help us in any way possible.

1:56:10 After the war when my mother came back and knew that

he had the money, he was no where to be found. The man

respected and loved my father.

1:57:20 My only wish is that my father had never left Russia.

We would have had a chance to survive as a family.

1:58:01 I wish that we had never gone back to Warsaw and

would have kept my father. I am thankful that my mother

survived. My mother had a tree that lived as long as she did.

1:59:08 In the last two years of my mother's life I went to

Israel 4 or 5 times to take care of my her.

.END.