

# HANNA SUKIENNIK



Szyman Rydelnik owned a small factory that made clothes for miners in the Polish country town of Zagorze, Poland. When not preoccupied with raising their six children, his wife, Rachel Rydelnik, traveled to the city to buy goods for business. The Rydelniks lived comfortably in Zagorze until economic circumstances forced the mines to close in 1935 and the family moved to Będzin.

Hanna, their fourth child, attended Catholic grade school in Zagorze, where she remembers bringing flowers to the altar. In Będzin, Hanna tutored children to help her parents pay her tuition to a Jewish *gymnasium*, a secondary school. Sometimes she had a little money left over for recreation.

“Wintertime we went skating or skiing,” she recalls. “Summertime we played ball or in the meadow. And we walked a lot.”

Hanna learned Yiddish and Hebrew at *cheder*, Hebrew school, which she began at age 5. She also belonged to *Hatzofe*, a Zionist youth organization. During vacations and after high school graduation, Hanna worked as a bookkeeper, typist, and collector for a tire and asphalt business.

She was in her first year of *lyceum*, post-secondary school, in 1939, when the war broke out and her career aspirations ended. Seeing the Będzin synagogue on fire confirmed Hanna’s worst fears. Soon after, she was forced to wear the yellow Star of David and walk on only one side of the street. Then it was the ghetto and, after that, five concentration camps.

Hanna saw a mother suffocate her own baby to prevent the people she was hiding with from being discovered by the Nazis. She survived a death march and escaped into the forest.

After being liberated by the Russians in February 1945, Hanna had to hide from rapists. Her strength, she says, came from work.

Hanna met her husband, Isadore Goodman, in Munich, Germany, in 1946. She wore a blue dress at their wedding in a Reform synagogue. A year later, Louisa was born. Hanna and Isadore arrived in St. Joseph, Missouri, in 1949. Unable to find work, they moved to Kansas City, where Stan was born and Isadore eventually opened a tailor and furrier business. He died in 1974. Hanna was acquainted with Ben Sukiennik from the Kansas City Holocaust survivors group known as the New Americans Club. She and Ben were married in 1977.

Stan was a toddler when Hanna got a job in a fabric store, where she worked for 16 years. After Isadore died, his employees persuaded Hanna to run the tailor shop. She still works there from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day, except on *Shabbat*, when she goes to synagogue. Hanna also spends much of her time with her children and three grandchildren.

Hanna did not talk about her war experiences until Louisa and Stan were grown. Even today, she says, there are some people who don’t want to know.



Portrait by David Sosland

Excerpt from *From the Heart: Life Before and After the Holocaust ~ A Mosaic of Memories*

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