

# Dora Edelbaum Testimony Transcript

I am Dora Edelbaum.

Interviewer: Where were you born and how long did you live in Pabianice? Is that where you were born?

All my life.

Interviewer: Went to school there?

Jewish school. I went to private school and when the German's came there were no more schools.

Interviewer: Did you go to a girls' school?

I went to a girls' school.

Interviewer: How many people were in your school?

I don't know, twenty, more or less were in school, but when the Germans came, they cut off schooling.

Interviewer: Tell us about your family.

I come a family from five - two brothers and two sisters.

Interviewer: Older, younger brothers and sisters?

They were older than I am maybe three years older each one of them.

Interviewer: Each one of your brothers? You were the youngest.

No, I was before the youngest. I was the fourth child. Three boys. I was the first girl.

Interviewer: Can you tell us a little bit about your family? What your father's occupation was?

My father was a tailor and he had a tailor shop in Pabianice and my mother was a housewife. And when I was young, maybe I was twelve years old when the war broke out or thirteen. When the Germans came in they cut down rations, what they give you coupons on. It was enough not to live, not to die, you know, just get by. And they sent the ration, the bread and the food, and everything going to the Russians and you will stand in line at six in the morning and stay till four o'clock and the bread and the meat is out.

Interviewer: And you said that your family and another family lived together in Pabianice?

Right. Yeah, they gathered us together, two families together. Because like I said they said they want to keep everybody on the same surrounding. If they want surround, they can, they know where we live you know. But when the Germans came in, and my father was a tailor, and he couldn't be a tailor anymore because he had to work in like a girdle factory. And my father took me in to have a social security card, because when you have a social security card, you were able to work. My mother didn't have it, my father wanted her not to work, to stay home and take care of the family. So I was working and one of my brothers two of my brothers were working and I was working. And the people who did not have a social security card, they had numbers alphabet and numbers on their hand from Pabianice. Because when they said everybody should get it at the Swope, Swope Park. I'm not sure, I think it was maybe round three o'clock until midnight, they was sorting out people sending them in trucks: invalids, wheelchair people, you know they were putting on those trucks. And, and they put them I would say all together to [unclear]. Then from living with two families in a room in Poland, then we were sent to a Lodz ghetto from Pabianice.

Interviewer: And both families went to Lodz ghetto from the Pabianice Ghetto?

Yes, and I never see them again anymore. Everybody was always scattered around and scattered around. When I came from Poland, I went to school and after that they didn't want any. They cut down all the colleges and schools, you know.

Interviewer: So you didn't go to school in the Lodz ghetto?

No.

Interviewer: So you went to work there instead?

Yes, I work in I can't remember exactly six months to a year. After, I lost my mother and my family in Pabianice. So my father very ill and he was in bed laying, couldn't turn his head like a baby. And I would come in, when they left our streets, you know the Germans. So somebody uncovered the wood on the cellar and I went out and I went in the room to feed my father. I raised the wood. I used to run home with a piece of wood. I had to chop wood and I didn't have no matches. I had to stay outside till somebody go by that had a cigarette or matches then I run to the house. So, usually it was that the environment, you didn't have nothing to eat, they give you rations but there was nothing to eat. At that time they took away my mother and my sister and I survived with my brother and my father, from beginning and he survived too, but he passed away in 1942. So when they took out [unclear] who died on the wagon, they would not carry just one person. They would just load it up like cats and dogs. A lot of people fell down from was too high.

When I went to cemetery, they showed where my father was laying. Where is place was. They was not graves. They was like a bakery, you know those wooden shovels, shoveling stuff. Like this. My father was laying in a sheet and there were five people this way and five people that way were buried (indicates horizontally and vertically) And I wanted to have I wanted to make a little plaque to know where my father is laying. You couldn't make no connection with nobody to make you a plaque. So I put some rocks and wood on it but never made it though.

So we were sent to Auschwitz from Lodz ghetto. And the wagon was going all night carrying people up in those trucks, with anyone to carry. You know [unclear] on the outside. This was inside, you know with a little tiny window. I don't remember how many people they packed in there like sardines. We only had in the morning, a cup of coffee. You had a big container, you know, from milk, milk containers years ago? And whoever could, got a cup of coffee. But they gave everybody, maybe a loaf of bread, and like Crisco or some kind of baking grease. And they gave everybody this – we had grease can everybody. And a lot of people died from it, because their stomach was not used to it. They couldn't take it, you know. And when I was sitting close to the window and we had some kind of pot, that everybody who had to go to the bathroom, went there on it, and then they throw it out to the window and I passed out. I was sitting just where the window was. And I just passed out on it.

I was sent from large ghetto to Auschwitz. They would say, “You take off all your clothes, you're going to take a shower.” So you have to be naked, you know. They took all the clothes away from you. And those clothes were clothes from the people who died. There were big fishnets sterilized. They cut my hair and sterilized my head and deep down to my nose. And I passed out, you know. Horrible.

Interviewer: How long were you in Auschwitz?

I was in Auschwitz for two weeks, because they needed 500 people to go to work and I was chosen with other girls to go.

Interviewer: And where did you go them?

We were working in town for Frankfurt am Main we were working.

Interviewer: How did you get from Auschwitz to Frankfurt am Main?

This is when I was liberated. From Lodz ghetto we sent to Auschwitz.

Interviewer: And how did you go there?

We went with those cattles, with those trains. You know, we were supposed to arrive at a certain time they would say. For three days we were going from forth and back to back and forth, because they were bombing with planes. They couldn't get into the place to unload us. So after three days, they sent us to Auschwitz.

Interviewer: And you said you were there for a few days and they sent you to...

They needed 500 girls so I was among those 500.

Interviewer: Where did they send those 500 girls?

We used work in our I'd say in the city. We used to make blocks you know steps. We used to carry sand and gravel and water and stuff and we had to make ourselves the paste to make steps. So when we had the whole grind what we have, we put it in wooden boxes cement and then we had to pound it to settle down.

Interviewer: So you were making streets in the city? And there were about 500 girls working in this particular camp?

Yes, we were all spreaded out. And they took another 500. I was in Bremerhaven, and Frankfurt am Main and Salzwedel, I don't know where it was, not far away from our camp. Salzwedel.

Interviewer: These were different camps you went to at different times?

Different camps, yes.

Interviewer: And they were all work camps?

Right.

Interviewer: And you took a train to?

To go, yes and when we got off the train and I don't remember how many miles we had to walk. I was a shoemaker. I was a beautician. What else? I did laundry – I did a piece, I did one dress, one slip, there was not that much, underwear. Some girls didn't want to do it. Like the girls in the kitchen. They worked in the kitchen. You know when you work in the kitchen, you don't go hungry. So I washed their dress and they gave me some soup for it. I cut hair. We had short hair you cut like a zero – crewcuts. When their hair grow back a little bit, somebody found a scissors. And I said, "Well, give it to me and I'll see and I trimmed their hairs." And I did it for a slice of bread. I was a shoemaker too. And the warden found, when we were walking, a mold from shoemaker, iron that you put a shoe on. So I was asking everybody to find pieces, whatever, we had wooden shoes. I was asking everybody to find a piece of leather to bring it to the camp, I can fix shoes and I don't know where I got the nails. I have no idea. And I was fixing here (on a shoe) and you cut out and I got a knife, a shoemaker's knife and I cut it around and it was a very good knife and it looked very good. I don't know where I got the nails.

Interviewer: Where were you when you got liberated?

Bergen Belsen. (Shows a picture of the camp with three girls) This is the camp Bergen-Belsen.

Interviewer: I see there are three people there.

Yes, with two friends.

Interviewer: And you're the person on what the left of the picture? Right there.

Yeah. I didn't have what to wear so I cut down a piece of blankets to wrap around.

Interviewer: How old were you then?

I was about 14.

Interviewer: And I noticed, of course you notice immediately, the barbed wire and you were on the inside of the camp.

This camp we came to die. We were liberated by the British.

Interviewer: When you came to the United States after the war, where did you come into the United tell us a little bit about the process by which you came into this country.

After the liberation, we came to the DP camps from Frankfurt am Main – from those barracks. They were not camps, but we lived in barracks. We had to register, you register and then some months later they give out orders and we were kind of like, we don't know where we going. We were on a list. Each country were asked to take in children, we'll go first. So they called and then I went first to Germany and my other friend went too.

Interviewer: And you came to New York?

We came to New York.

Interviewer: How did you get from New York to Kansas City?

Because my husband had a sister and he wanted to go where his sister was. And this is a picture when I was at three months when I came to states.

Interviewer: And you're on the left and on the right is?

My husband.

Interviewer: And where did you meet him?

I met him after the liberation. Like I say we were going from city to city. They had lists where you could see, you would know if somebody was alive. I went with a girlfriend. She had a boyfriend. She was a little bit older than I was. She was like a mother to me. So we went, we

took a train and we went to another city to see on the list - she was looking for her boyfriend too. She couldn't find her boyfriend. And when we came to that city, she had a friend in Frankfurt, that she lived in Feldafing. A friend of hers lived in Feldafing. So we went to Feldafing and we stayed with a lady. She had a son and a daughter and a husband all were alive. And my husband came in one night with a girlfriend to that boy. So the second night he came without a girlfriend. (laughs/smiles)

Source: Dora Edelbaum video testimony - <https://mchekc.org/portfolio-posts/edelbaumdora/>