

Questions to Consider When Viewing Video

1. Where was Betty Gurfein Berliner born? How old was she when the Nazis invaded?
2. What were some of the major restrictions forced upon Betty and the other Jews by the Nazis?
3. Why was Betty, unlike some other Jewish girls, unable to pass as a non-Jew?
4. How did some of the ordinary soldiers treat the Jews?
5. What happened to her family after her father was taken away?
6. Describe Betty's experiences during the deportation from the ghetto.
7. How did one of her sisters help to save her life?
8. How was she hidden during this time?
9. Why did a poor woman agree to save Betty and her nephew? How did they manage to survive there?
10. How was Betty liberated and by whom?
11. What steps did it take for Betty to come to America?

Holocaust Survivor Betty Gurfein Berliner

Filmed on May 2, 2006



*"For three summers
I didn't see the sun."*

- Betty Berliner

Face to Face
A Holocaust Education Program at
Congregation Shaarey Tikvah
Beachwood, Ohio

Betty Gurfein Berliner was born in Pruchnik, Poland, in 1924. Betty was about to start high school when the war broke out. All Jews were forced to wear the Yellow Star, and there were many restrictive laws.

In 1941, Betty's family was living in a small town about 20 miles from the Russian border, and German soldiers were building barracks in preparation for the planned invasion of Russia. Betty recalls that some of these soldiers were friendly to the Jews.

Early one morning, Nazi officers took Betty's father away. Betty ran after them and found her father and his captors at the jail in a nearby city. When Betty's father saw her, he motioned for her to go away. Betty returned home and never saw her father again.

On August 29, 1942, at about 2:00 a.m., there was a knock on the door. The Nazis ordered Betty's family to come immediately. Betty tried to run away, but she was ordered onto the truck with her mother, one of her sisters, and two cousins. Betty's sister told Betty to be ready to jump at the earliest opportunity. When the truck stopped briefly, Betty's sister pushed her off the truck.

Betty hid in a ditch until the coast was clear. Avoiding the roads, she walked all day to another sister's house in a nearby village. When Betty arrived, she found that the family was getting ready to hide. Her brother-in-law found a temporary hiding place for Betty, where she stayed for about two weeks. She changed hiding places frequently.

In January, 1943, Betty and one of her sisters found a hiding place in the attic of a farmhouse. They hid there with another sister's 4-year-old son, whose parents had already been murdered by the Nazis. It was difficult to keep the child quiet in these cramped quarters, especially when everybody was hungry. One time Betty persuaded a friend to bring them one onion. Her nephew still remembers this onion as a special treat, as it was the only fresh food he was able to eat for several years.

On August 29, 1944, the Russian Army invaded Poland. Betty and her family were liberated, but they were still afraid to leave the farmhouse. Eventually, Betty's sister worked up the courage to go to town and get news of what was happening. On this outing, she met another Jewish family, who took them all in and made them comfortable.

After six months, they moved to Krakow, Poland, and then to Breslau (Wroclaw) in Russian-occupied Germany, where Betty was married and lived with her husband and nephew until the end of 1946. Betty and a group of survivors were helped by representatives from Israel to escape to Czechoslovakia, then to Austria, and finally to a Displaced Persons (DP) camp in Germany, where Betty's first child was born.

The family came to the United States in 1950.