



Frieda Allweiss

Frieda Allweiss was born to secular Zionist parents on May 21, 1933 in Chortkow, Poland, a small town where Jews had lived since the 1700s. She spoke Polish at home and attended a Yiddish school. In 1939 the Hitler/Stalin pact divided Poland and Russia occupied Chortkow until June 1941, when Germany broke the pact, invaded Chortkow, and began killing Jews. Frieda's craftsman father was conscripted into the Russian army, and Frieda, 8, and her mother fled, beginning a six-month odyssey trying to stay ahead of the Nazis.

Taking only what they could carry, Frieda's mother dressed her daughter in multiple layers of clothing, and the two boarded a train with other families on the run. They endured cold, hunger, fear, Nazi bombings, and overcrowded cattle cars with no sanitation facilities. Constantly on the move, they went from Kiev to a collective watermelon farm near Stalingrad. She survived scarlet fever and then typhus, which left her unconscious for several weeks.

By sheer luck, Frieda's father was reunited with his wife and daughter in 1942. Until the winter of 1946 they lived in Krasnouralsk in the Ural Mountains of the Soviet Union, where Frieda attended school. Food was in short supply, but American flour, sugar, dried eggs, and Spam helped save her family from starvation.

Of Chortkow's 10,000 Jews only 100 survived. After the war, Frieda's family (that now include a baby sister) remained in Germany until 1949. At Bergen Belsen DP Camp they lived in former Nazi barracks, and then in Bensheim, another Displaced Persons camp near Frankfurt. They settled in Detroit, Michigan, aided by HIAS and the Jewish Federation. Frieda's father found work, and she, at age 13, resumed her education and finally began a normal life.

In 1952, Frieda, 19, married a survivor who had hidden in Poland's woods during the Nazi era. A man who could fix anything, he was a mechanical draftsman and started his own car repair business.

A widow, Frieda has four children, two grandchildren, and has lived in Scottsdale since 2006. For years she was silent about her Holocaust saga but has begun to speak because she believes that those who managed to survive the Nazi era in many different ways, must tell their stories.