

## Halina Kramarz Bochen Herman "Glimpses"

Born in April 1939 on #8 Jasna str. , Warsaw. During the war my mother and I were on false papers, and my name was: Halinka Bochen. Everybody always called me "Dzidzia". Mother, Pola Wajnberg (Bochen) Kramarz, travelled from Starachowice to give birth to her child in the capital city. Father, Jakob Kramarz, studied medicine at the Sorbonne in Paris, then returned to set up medical office in Starachowice around 1936. 1939-till around 1941: Starachowice: I have vague memories of the house where we lived, I think my father's medical office was downstairs, and we lived upstairs. I remember people waiting to see my father in the waiting room downstairs, and black and white pictures hung on the walls above the stairs which led to our living quarters. I remember the antiseptic smell of my father's office (probably used to sterilize instruments).

Some information about Starachowice and my Father, Dr. Jakob (Janek) Kramarz. I spoke to Maciej Frankiewicz in Starachowice, who lives there and knows a great deal. He said he has heard the name of Dr. Kramarz, and will investigate if anyone who knew him or was treated by him is still alive. He will also check out my Father's medical office address: Ul. Pilsudskiego #27. Wierzbnik and Starachowice are 2 parts of the same town, Wierzbnik is the older section and has not changed much, Starachowice is the newer part and has blossomed. Some background on Starachowice: even before the war it had factories for large equipment but did not employ Jews. All Jewish men had to register for labor by 1941, ghetto was liquidated in 1942, and all able men were sent to a slave labor camp which served a Nazi Ammunitions factory. There were 3 slave labor camps: Majowka, Strelnica, Tartak. My father was in Majowka in the capacity of a physician. In July 1944 there was a liquidation of the camps and everyone was sent to Auschwitz. My father perished on that transport train to Auschwitz. The factory still is operational and at one point manufactured large trucks (STAR). The man who looks after the Wierzbnik-Starachowice cemetery and also the displays in the Starachowice cultural museum is a painter and paints Jewish scenes. His name is : Maciej Frankiewicz Slaska Street 2/2, Starachowice 27200, Tel: 011-48-274-8358. He also gave me a number 517-30-2530, and said you can call him when you come. He says many people from US, Canada, Israel visit him. I think he may look after the Jewish cemetery. Nice guy and tries to be very helpful, he is an artist, and supposedly paints a lot of Jewish scenes. I gave him your name and told him you would contact him.

Around 1942, winter: my Mother and I hiding high up in the attic of a house in Zakopane. She tells me I have to be very quiet, and we play a game "who can be the most quiet". Far below I see the brilliant white of the snow, and against it, like ants, German soldiers with rifles going from door to door.

Around 1942-1945: I am living in a small village near Krakow, Czernichów, a farming community. I was with one family who did not take good care of me, now I live with another family, a woman, with her adult (maybe in her teens) daughter. I remember mostly the daughter, Marysia. We live in a small house with earthen floors. My bed is in the kitchen living room combination. There is a little garden with flowers and some vegetables. Outside are fields with crops. I remember going to help to pick cabbages, I feel I am doing grown up work, but get very tired, and fall asleep in the shade of a large cabbage on the cool ground. Someone brings the crop pickers, including me some buttermilk and potatoes for lunch. There are wide open fields everywhere, and sometimes horses run wild. I am scared of horses, because I saw a horse rear on its hind legs and hit a girl in her face with its hooves, there was blood all over. When I see a horse running, I run very fast and try to lie down in a depression in the ground so he would just jump over me.

I walk around the village pretty much on my own. When I have a thorn in my foot, since I usually don't have any shoes, I go from house to house, and ask if they can help me. I am small for my age, older kids like to catch me and throw me around, they know it makes me feel queasy and that I hate it. Sometimes I try to hide behind some outhouses, but they usually find me. When they throw me high up in the air, I feel like I am falling into a precipice on the way down, with a sickening feeling in my stomach. I often walk around in a little yellow nightgown, probably one of the few pieces of clothing I have. I do have a nice dress that my mother has brought me, but that is reserved for Sundays for going to church. I remember one time it had been raining, and since there were no paved roads, everything had turned to mud. Marysia tells me not to get dirty. As soon as I step outside in the mud, I slip and fall, and my yellow nightgown gets all muddy. Marysia did not like that, it meant extra work for her, so I get a good beating, and as I am crying from the pain and humiliation, she picks me up, and says "the yellow nightgown looks nice against the red skin on your legs and behind". I always resented her after that.

My mother works in Krakow, and comes from time to time to visit me by boat, as a river flows through the village. She always brings food which she hopes I will get to eat, but most of the time a few cakes are baked with the butter and flour, and there is not much left for me. My dream is to someday after the war, to be able to eat a delicious roll with butter. But most of all my mother manages to bring me a few books, especially one about a guardian angel (I still have the book). I just love to "read", and often sit on the church steps, holding my book upside down and pretend I am "reading". I do not really miss my mother. I just accept things the way they are, because I have no point of reference in my young life, that things can be different, that you can have someone to

look after you, someone you can confide in. Sometimes the villagers look at me and say "poor child, she is all alone", this especially happens when I watch a mother play with her child, but I really do not know what they mean.

Once a German soldier comes into the village. He is very nice, thinks that I am a cute kid, and picks me up. He has a cigarette in his hand, and without meaning to do so, his cigarette touches my arm. Even though I feel the burn, I do not say a word, as I feel it might be dangerous. I am very religious and go to church regularly, and sing all the hymns. I really enjoy the services and sing "Sluchaj Boze tak cie blaga lud, sluchaj Boze zrob dla nas cud", and others. I have no idea that I am not a Catholic, and when my mother comes to visit I tell her all the stories about Jews that I have heard from villagers, how they sway from side to side when they pray, how their earlocks sway, how they say "oy vey", and probably many more much worse things.

I am very sick with typhoid fever, my temperature is so high that I am delirious. My mother brings a physician from Krakow, and that is when I say to him "you smell like my daddy" remembering the antiseptic smells in my father's office, and almost give us away, as my mother is supposed to be an unmarried woman. My mother says to him that I am delirious and do not know what I am saying, he happens to be very kind, pats her on the shoulder, tells her it is ok, and does not charge her for the visit

Later, when I lived in Czernichow, I almost gave my mother and myself away by saying to the doctor who came to see me when I had typhoid fever, "you smell like my daddy", even though on my mother's Aryan papers she was supposed to be an unmarried woman. I have seen pictures of myself with my mother in still relatively good times, I am about 1 year old, and we are on a farm, both smiling next to a horse.

1945 My mother brings me to Cracow towards the end of the war. There is still bombing going on, and in the evening we block off the windows so the lights would not be visible from the air. As she puts me to bed at night, she dresses me warmly in case we have to go down to the basement shelter. I am 5 or 6 years old. I am little, but I feel big, beyond my years. At night, as she puts me to bed, my Mother says to me almost pleading "will everything be alright, Dzidziu?, and I mustering all the wisdom of a 5 year old pat her on the back and tell her "everything will be fine, Mamusiu". I know that there is a war going on, and that bombs may be dropped and we may have to go to the shelter at night, but I do not feel afraid. Only later on in the middle of the night, when the sirens arouse me from a deep sleep, and I see windows shatter and hear the planes overhead then I feel afraid..."

1945-47. As the war ends, I come to live permanently in Krakow with my mother. I am quite a religious Catholic, and faithfully go to church on Sundays, as well as collect

money in front of the church in the Polish national costumes. My kindergarten school year is spent in a convent where I am taught by nuns. At the age of 7 I very proudly have my first communion in church. I am very concerned if I think I have committed a sin, such as look at my body in an "impure manner", and quickly go to confession to tell the priest about it, so he could absolve me.

1949. I do not find out that I am Jewish till my Mother tells me that we are leaving for this place called France, and that I am not going to church on Sunday because I am Jewish. I am very shocked, and tell her it is not possible, because she is not Jewish. She responds that she is too. Then I try to tell her that probably her own mother was not Jewish, to which she says that she was as well. I also tell her that I have nothing personally against Jews, but I just don't want to be one.