

# CRESTWOOD ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

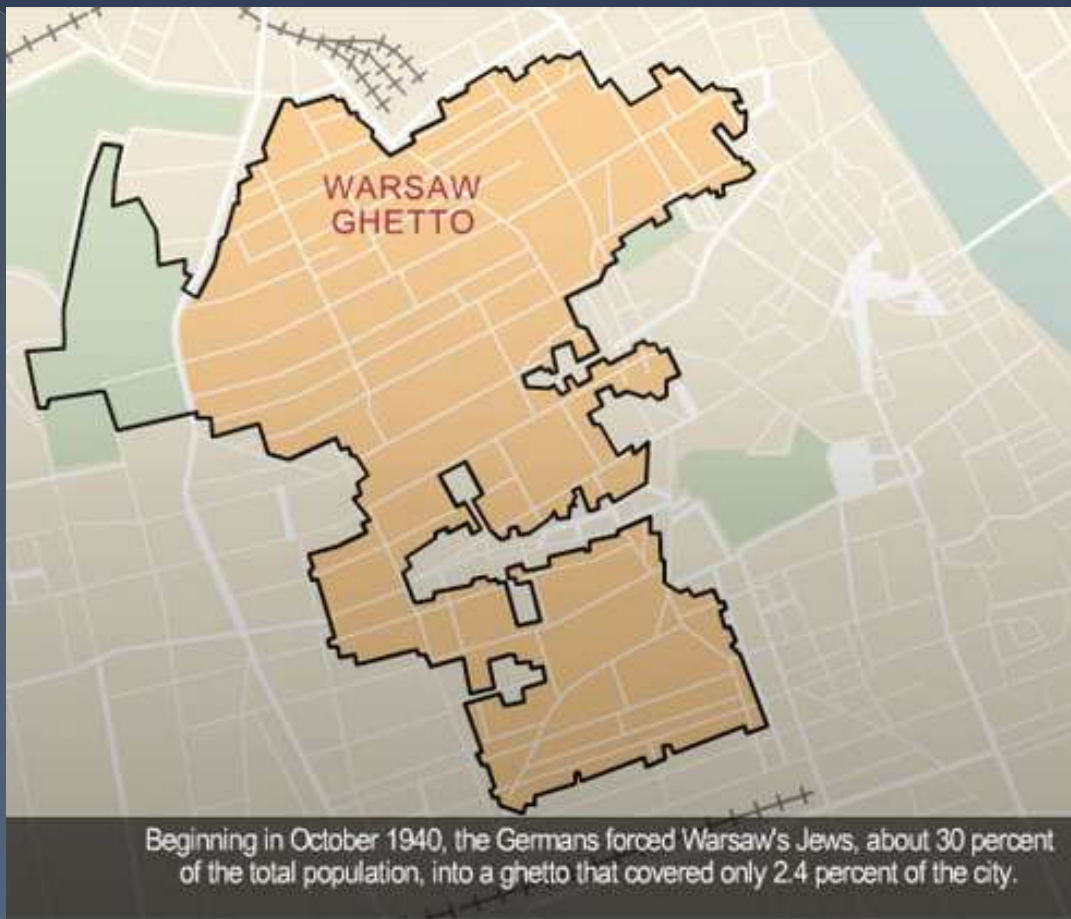
HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR  
IRENE KURTZ



BY SOHEE PYO



- Having recorded the oral history interview of Ms. Irene Kurtz, I have traced some names of the places she mentioned and the brief information about them.



- Like many other living survivors of the Holocaust, Irene Kurtz was only a young girl who long wished that the happiness with her family would last forever just like her family's frequent visit to other country during the summer.
- Yet, just coming back from a vacation, she observed the beginning of the war broke out at the age of eleven in her beautiful hometown: Warsaw in late September of 1939. Quickly, into 2.4% of the city, 30% of the total population consisting all the Jews, was ghettoized.



German soldiers parade in Pilsudski Square. Warsaw, Poland, October 4, 1939. — Wide World Photo

Decree in German and Polish issued by the Jewish Council in Warsaw, on August 25, 1942, regarding a previous announcement issued by the employment office in Warsaw on August 24, 1942. The decree requires all residents of Warsaw to obtain permission from the employment office before changing jobs.

Der Judenrat in Warschau

Warschau, den 25. August 1942.

Im Auftrage des Arbeitsamtes – Warschau  
gibt der Judenrat folgendes bekannt:

ARBEITSAMT WARSCHAU  
Nebenamt für den Süd. Wohnbezirk

## ANORDNUNG.

„Ein Wechsel des Arbeitsplatzes darf nur mit vorheriger  
Genehmigung des Arbeitsamtes Warschau, Nebenstelle für den  
Süd. Wohnbezirk erfolgen.

„Eine Arbeitsstelle verlässt wird sofort ausgeteilt!“

Arbeitsamt Warschau  
ges. ZIEGLER, Inspektorstellenleiter

Rada Żydowska w Warszawie

Warszawa, dn. 25 sierpnia 1942.

Z polecenia Urzędu Pracy Warszawa Rada Żydowska  
podeje do wiadomości:

URZĄD PRACY WARSZAWA  
oddział dla dzielnic żydowskiej

## ZARZĄDZENIE

„Nikt nie może pracy swojej ustąpić jedynie w szczególnym uzasadnieniu  
Urzędu Pracy Warszawa, Oddział dla dzielnic żydowskiej.

Kto opuści swoją miejsce pracy, zostanie natychmiast wysiedlony!”

Urząd Pracy Warszawa  
—) ZIEGLER, Inspektorstellenleiter

Warszawa, dnia 25.08.1942.

The decree reads:

*"In conjunction with the Employment Office of Warsaw, the Jewish Council makes the following announcement:  
The Jewish Council, Warsaw, August 25, 1942.*

Decree:

***No one is allowed to change his position at work without the permission of the Employment Office. Whoever does so will lose his job and be forced to leave the city.***

*signed Ziegler, inspector of the Employment Office in Warsaw, August 24, 1942."*

(Excerpt from United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Website. )

- Although her father and she was some extend fortunate enough to have a job under, despite, the Nazi. Day-to-day living was harsh. Anyone had not been aware of German's such a sudden invasion to Poland as well as its military seizure. She had to live in the bunkers.



Polish and Jewish laborers construct a section of the wall that separated the Warsaw ghetto from the rest of the city.



A destitute youth sits on the pavement in the Warsaw ghetto surrounded by other Jews.

- Many and many and many people were indescribably suffered from the starvation and the violent suppression.

- From April 19<sup>th</sup> to May 16<sup>th</sup> in 1943, in what is called the **Warsaw Ghetto Uprising**, the first mass revolt in Nazi occupied Europe, members of Jewish underground resistance groups resisted the German attempt to liquidate the ghetto.



The bodies of Jewish policemen executed by the SS during the Warsaw ghetto uprising.



Jews captured during the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Warsaw, Poland, April 19-May 16, 1943.



German soldiers capture Jews hiding in a bunker



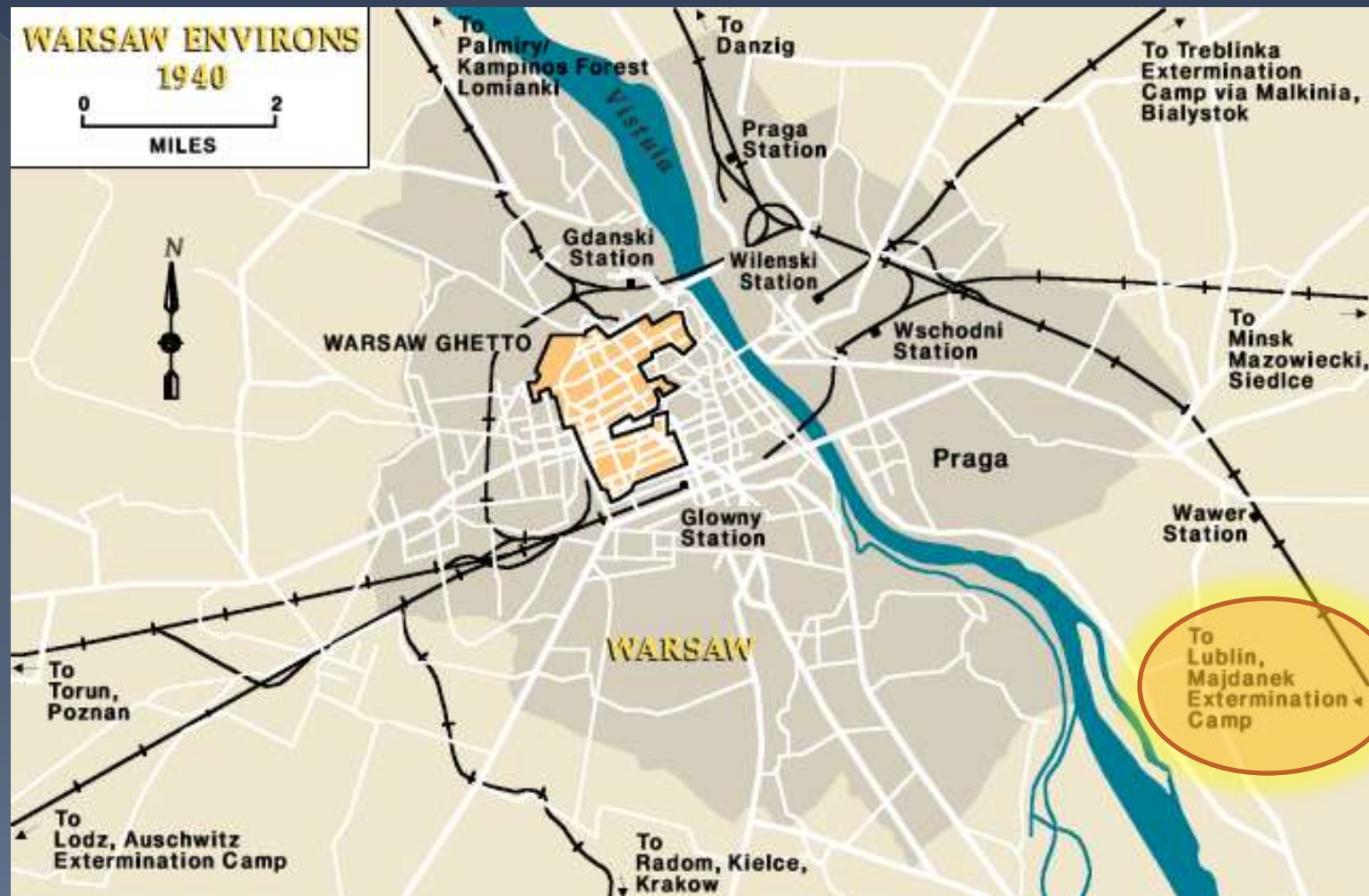
Photograph from SS General Juergen St roop's report showing the Warsaw ghet to after the German suppression of the ghetto uprising. On the right, a column of Jews is transported out of the ghetto for deportation. Warsaw, Poland, April-May, 1943.

- During the turmoil, while Irene Kurtz was hiding in the bunker, she had to come out to the street due to the fire which the Germans ignited to force people out of their hiding places.



German soldiers burn residential buildings to the ground, one by one, during the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Poland, April 19-May 16, 1943.

## Warsaw environs, 1940



- She was caught by German soldiers and sent to **Majdanek** through **Umschlagplatz** (departure point).





This square served as the departure point for Jews bound for the Treblinka death camp.

Between 5000-7000 persons were sent away from this site daily.

On the wall, 448 names from Abel to Żanna are etched as a symbol for 450,000 Jews imprisoned in the ghetto as well as the inscription: *'Over 300,000 Jews passed down this road of suffering and death from the Warsaw ghetto between 1942 to 1943'*.



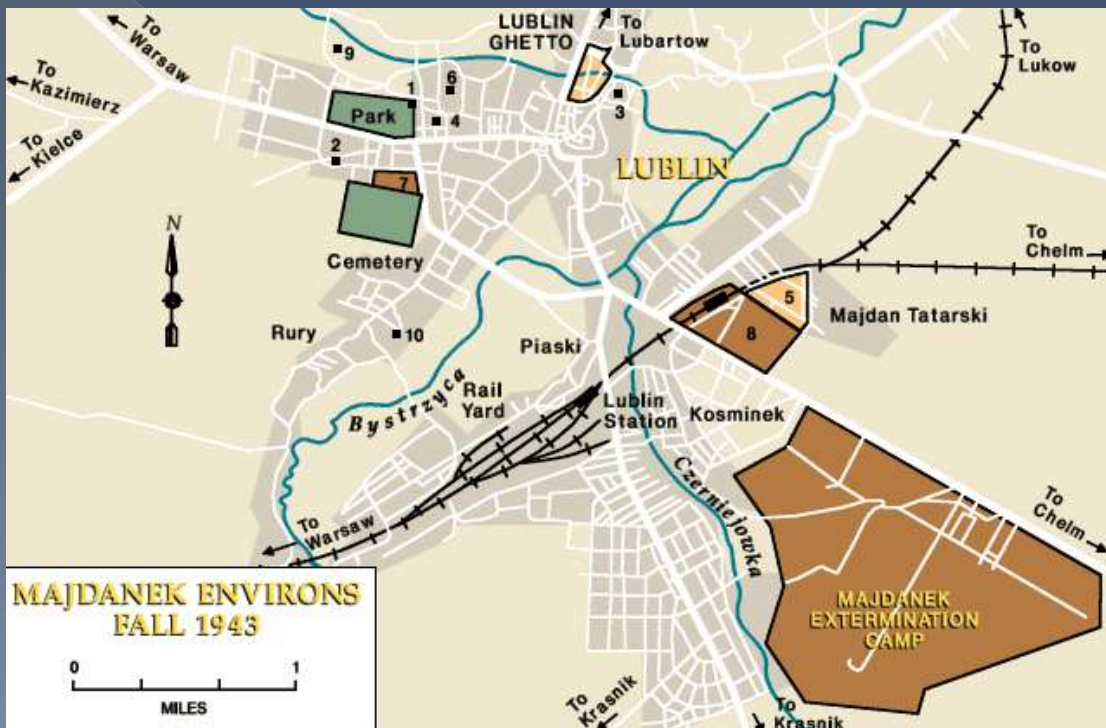
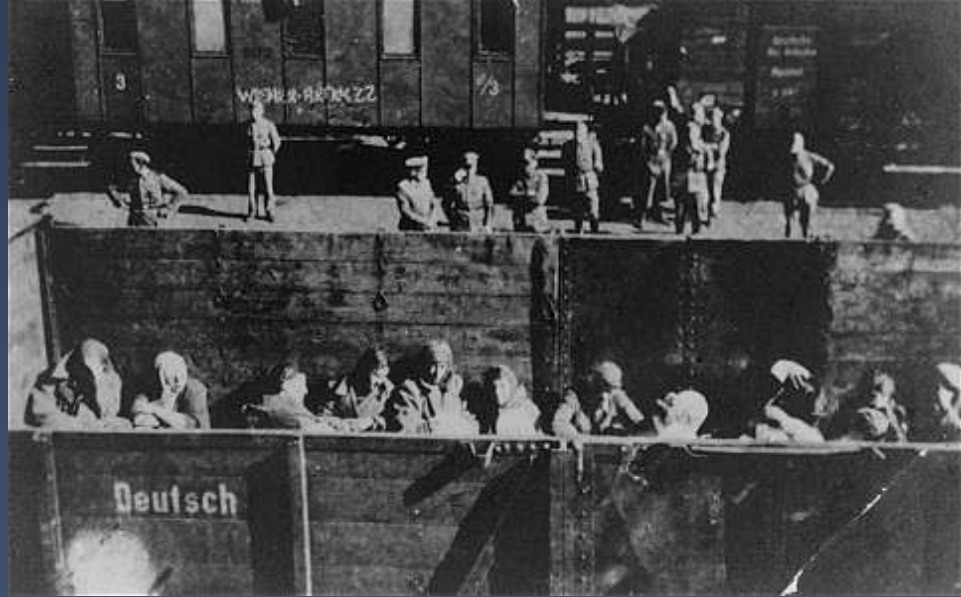
Jews who have been rounded-up in the Warsaw ghetto are seated on the ground in the Umschlagplatz awaiting deportation.

- Some 56,000 Jews, according to S troop's report, were killed or captured during the ghetto revolt. Among the rest of survived people, 7,000 were deported to their immediate death in Treblinka. Another 22,000 were sent to **Majdanek**.

# Umschlagplatz

# Deportation of Jewish Women from the Warsaw Ghetto. Poland, 1942-1943.

- She was deported from Umschlagplatz
- to Majdanek concentration camp by packed cattle cars, and she heard the news of her father's death in Lublin.



Lublin/Majdanek Concentration Camp: Conditions



Lublin/Majdanek Concentration Camp: Conditions — Photograph: A Soviet Soldier Walks through a Mound of Victims' Shoes Piled outside a Warehouse in Majdanek Soon after the Liberation.

Polish paper stamp depicting Death in SS uniform pouring Zyklon B over the Majdanek concentration camp, issued on 29th April 1946 and valid until 1st July 1946. 218,000 stamps were printed. Designed by J Wilczyk, photoengraved by the Cracow People's Press, Perforation 10 3/4.



- In the Majdanek concentration camp, Irene Kurtz underwent the harsh treatment from the German managers. She ate one small loaf of bread a day and every living condition was suppressed and cruel. For instance, she would not be able to go to washroom freely or sometimes had to sleep outside of the barracks in the winter.



Although Majdanek concentration camp is known for one of the highest death camps in Europe, she was sent to another place, Skarzysko ammunition factory in Skarzysko-Kamienn.

- The treatment was little better than the Majdanek camp. Day-to-day work in the ammunition factory was seemingly meaningless, such as, carrying one stone to another.
- In 1945, the camp was liberated by the Soviet Union soldiers. Irene Kurtz decided to work for the Soviet hospitals where they offered warm meals and place to sleep. Although she barely knew any Russian, she increasingly became close with occupied nurses and soldiers that one head nurse once wished to adopt her as her daughter if Irene could not find her family members after the war.



The ammunition was made by "P. W.U. Panswowa Fabryka Amunicji" in Skarzysko Kamienne.



The Jewish district in Skarzysko-Kamienna



# STATE OF ISRAEL IS BORN

The first independent Jewish State in 19 centuries was born in Tel Aviv as the British Mandate over Palestine came to an end at midnight on Friday, and it was immediately subjected to the test of fire. As "Medinat Yisrael" (State of Israel) was proclaimed, the battle for Jerusalem adjourned with most of the city falling to the Jews. At the

same time, President Truman announced that the United States would accord recognition to the new State. A few hours later, Palestine was invaded by Moslem armies from the south, east and north, and Tel Aviv was raided from the air. On Friday the United Nations Special Assembly adjourned after adopting a resolution to appoint a med-

iator but without taking any action on the Partition Resolution of November 29.

Yesterday the battle for the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road was still under way, and two Arab villages were taken. In the north, Acre town was captured, and the Jewish Army consolidated its positions in Western Galilee.

## Most Crowded Hours in Palestine's History

Between Thursday night and this morning Palestine went through what by all standards must be among the most crowded hours in its history.

For the Jewish population there was the anguish over the fate of the few hundred Hagdushim men and women in the Kfar Haimah bloc of settlements near Hebron. This territory, to a fully equipped superior foreign force, was immediately in need of a victory was a foregone conclusion. What would not be known, with no contingencies, since Thursday morning, was whether and to what extent the Red Cross and the Y. M. C. A. would accept civilian conditions for prisoners and wounded, and proper respect for the dead. Doubts on some of these questions have now been raised.

On Friday afternoon, from Tel Aviv, came the expected announcement of the Jewish State, and its official naming as both, "Medinat Yisrael"—State of Israel, with the meaning in of the first Council of Government. The proclamation of the State was made at midnight, coinciding with the setting from Haifa of Britain's last High Commissioner. Within the hour, President Truman announced in Washington that the Government of the United States had decided to give its formal recognition to the Jewish State, with

## JEWIS TAKE OVER SECURITY ZONES

The battle for Jerusalem, which began when the Jordan Army withdrew on Friday morning, continued all day Friday and yesterday. The struggle of small-armed fire and explosions of mortar shells were still being heard in the westerly part of the town. The battle entered its third day.

Delayed efforts on Friday evening and again on Saturday by the U.S. Train Commission, in being about a "train fire" were brought to naught when the Arab representatives failed to agree within the specified time limit.

On Friday morning, Jewish forces entered the Hattin Compound and some of its remaining buildings impounded from Jews last year. This operation was almost completed, but beyond the westerly edge of Beit G. Arabs engaged the Jews in Jaffa Road. The Arabs were forced back and the Davidge Bank area was taken.

In other parts of the city fighting raged on. Jews overtook the Arab army and the Arab army was routed. The Arab army was routed.

## Egyptian Air Force Spitfires Bomb Tel Aviv; One Shot Down

The Tel Aviv Broadcasting Station, reported that 2 Spitfires yesterday afternoon bombarded Tel Aviv in the previous evening, and a Spitfire was shot down. The plane also took prisoners.

In the first raid, four planes attacked from a height of 200 feet. Two dropped bombs, while the others strafed the city. Little damage was reported, but the second attack two hours later, the target in the north of the city was bombed, and an Air Force plane was shot down. The plane was damaged, but the pilot was rescued.

Two Spitfires in the night also bombarded Tel Aviv, but the radio report was that the plane was shot down.

## U.S. RECOGNIZES JEWISH STATE

WASHINGTON, Sunday.—Ten minutes after the termination of the British Mandate on Friday, the White House issued a formal statement by President Truman that the U.S. Government intended to recognize the Provisional Jewish Government as the de facto authority representing the Jewish State.

The U.S. is also considering lifting the arms embargo but it is not known whether as Palestine only or the entire Middle East, and the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Jewish Provisional Government.

The White House press secretary, Mr. Charles Egan, said in a memorandum today that reaction as far as the recognition had been overwhelmingly favorable. He said this step had been discussed with Mr. Marshall and Mr. Lovett before action was taken, and it had their complete support.

Mr. Egan said that the President had doubted several days ago in great American recognition

## Proclamation by Head Of Government

The creation of "Medinat Yisrael", the State of Israel, was proclaimed at midnight on Friday by Mr. David Ben Gurion, until then Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive and now head of the State's Provisional Council of Government.

The first act of the Council of Government, as announced by its head, was to submit to the Legislature of the State a bill for the establishment of the Provisional Jewish Government, particularly the Constitution and Statute relating to immigration and land matters.

In the declaration of independence, Mr. Ben Gurion called on the Arabs of Palestine to restore peace, seeking to restore peace and full representation to all Palestinian groups of the State.

Mr. Ben Gurion praised the declaration with a review of the historic connection of the Jewish people with the Land of Israel, and of their efforts to return, which culminated throughout the generations in their desperate, and the State's independence, and the State's independence.

The National Declaration of 1917, confirmed by the League of Nations, had given explicit international recognition to the Jewish people.



David Ben-Gurion, Prime Minister

## 2 Columns Cross Southern Border

By WALTER COLLIER  
P.M. Correspondent  
CABLE: Belgrade — A. ...

## Etzion Settlers Taken P.O.W.

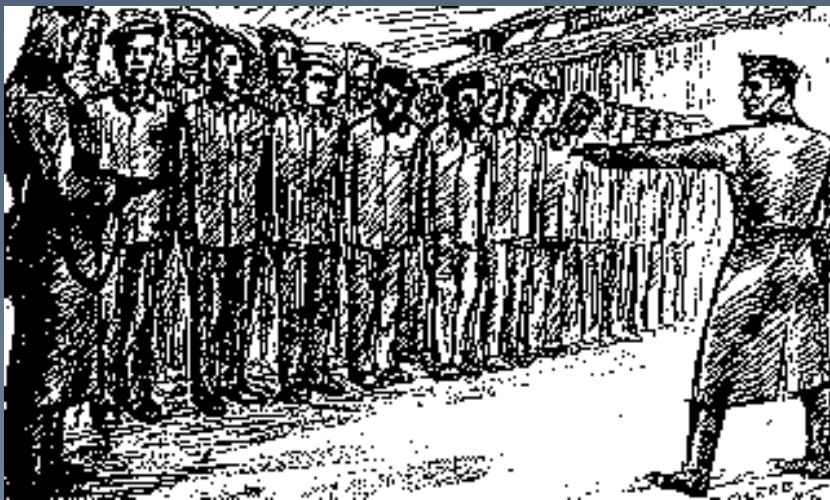
Fighting in the Etzion Bloc has continued throughout Friday, after Etzion Block

## Special Assembly Adjourns

FLEETING MEASURES, the United Nations Special Assembly called four weeks ago to discuss the U.S. proposal

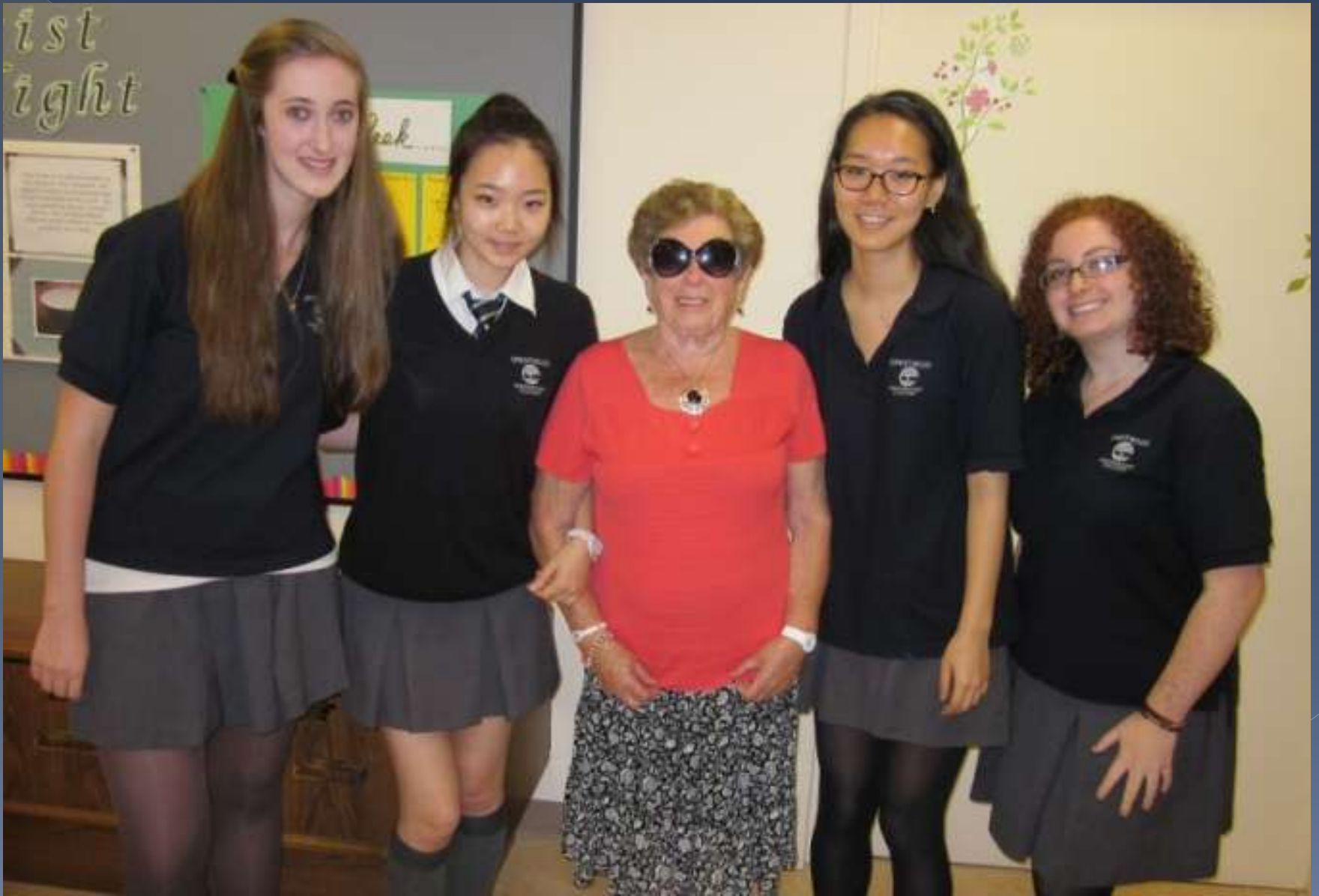
Irene Kurtz spent her time in German Displaced Person's camp, where they offer temporary place to stay. Irene met her current husband expectedly and decided to move to Israel right after her marriage with him. Israel was officially born in the 1948 after the war. Then, having lived in Israel peacefully, because of her second son's health, her family made another decision to move to Canada.

- Interviewing a person and finishing Oral History Project always leaves me a feeling of indefinable uneasiness. For some one else, everything around me, my family and friend, Crestwood, and even my self-identity may have been something one person in the different world or in Korea or in Canada deserves the most to have. This uneasiness and regret of my past evolve around the fact that I have not appreciated what I have gotten without putting any effort to obtain such leisure. And Irene Kurtz's experience and her advice about being thankful of the present moment truly evoked my actualization of looking around and the past.



- Each story and reflection of one person's experience can never be the same though it is about the same event. Variable perspectives and knowledge I learn through a number of oral history projects have forged me to grow a person who will look at historiography both objectively and consciously.





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## Main Sources

- ◉ <http://www.holocaust-history.org/>
- ◉ <http://www.ushmm.org/>
- ◉ Detailed sources for each photos are under “notes”

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