

[illegible]

I know there was no food, but when I woke up in the night, she the stepmother was feeding Janka her daughter.

I don't know where she had the food from. I was very cold that winter. Since then I've had deformed joints in my fingers.

I was at home and I didn't work. And I was terribly afraid. I was afraid to go out on the street, everyone begged there, the sick and the dead lay on the sidewalks, and I couldn't bear it. I don't know where you took food from in the ghetto.

My father went to work somewhere, but where he worked, what he did... I don't know. And my stepmother stayed at home. Before the ghetto was sealed, Staszek sometimes came to pick me up.

It was 1942, August, the liquidation of the ghetto and the full extermination of Jews were under way, people were being shot. Staszek offered to take me out of the ghetto.

He forced his mother to help him by telling her that if she didn't help hide me, he'd go to the ghetto himself to be with me, he was her only child so she agreed to everything.

He secured some documents from a friend of his. Whether he told her it was for a Jewish girl, I don't know.

He may have told her it was for a Polish girl in hiding, because Poles faced repressions too, they were being sent for forced labor to Germany, for instance.

He gave me a genuine birth certificate for one Matylda Bednarska, a smallpox vaccination certificate, a school ID, and a form for reporting one's relocation out of Lwow.

My father saw me off to the ghetto perimeter, the wall. We dropped in on Aunt Mia to say goodbye.

Aunt talked to me like I was her husband. His photograph lay next to her, she lay on the bed and talked nonsense, gone mad. She never had any children.

My future husband, Staszek, told me later Aunt was shot in the ghetto for assaulting the Germans.

She'd mouth off when on the street, and must have obviously molested some German.

I didn't know then I'd never see my father again. He gave me very little money on saying goodbye because the stepmother had taken everything from him and he didn't work.

When giving me the few zlotys, he apologized to me for all he did, for remarrying so soon and that I had such a miserable life.

I lost touch with him but I was in touch with Staszek who found out how they were doing and related the news to me.

Some time later he told me my stepmother had jumped out of the window and killed herself in the ghetto.

I suppose her daughter must have been killed because she would have never left her daughter alone by killing herself.

My father died in the Janowski camp in 1942 or 1943.

My mother's brother, the one from Sambor, with his wife and small boy, was also killed in the ghetto. Samek, and his family too.

As for my paternal relatives, I don't really know because I didn't even know them all. Uncle Ma was in the Soviet Union, he didn't die, returned after the war.

Aunt Hela was in a camp in France and Jean was born there. Today all the relatives that I knew are dead, except my cousins Jeanie and Bianca.

Staszek's parents were teachers and ran a rural school in Kalusz. Staszek forced his mother to come near the ghetto, he took me out, by a miracle in fact, I took off the badge in the nearest gate and I went following her, not with her, because she was afraid to go with me.

We also had to swear we wouldn't be seeing each other. That was the condition on which she agreed to hide me, because she was anxious about him.

We got off at the station where the rural school was, waited until it got dark, and walked some 25 kilometers in the night to get there unnoticed. It was August, the summer break, no classes.

The school stood away from the center of the village, I didn't go out, I was locked away in a classroom and I didn't even go to the lavatory, there was a free-standing one outside, but Staszek's mother instead brought out the potties.

I can't remember how long I was there. After a couple of days she said people in the village were talking there was a Jewess hiding in the school and that I had to leave.

She was good enough, though, not to throw me out completely but again walked the 25 kilometers in the night with me to the nearest train station and took me to Staszek's uncle, the brother of Staszek's father, whose name was also Podchaniuk.

He was an old bachelor, the headmaster of a school in Stryj, a city 70 km south of Lwow, today in Ukraine.

She brought me there in the morning, four or five o'clock, and told me I'd stay there until she found some hiding place for me.

We arrive there, and we saw a drinking party, an orgy, it turned out the guy Podchaniuk had signed the Volksdeutsch list, the place was full of uniformed Germans, drinking.

When we went in and saw all that, she told him we'd just have a tea in the kitchen, and we fled from that kitchen so that they didn't see me.

She took me to Stanislawow, today Ivano-Frankivsk in Ukraine, city 70 km south-east of Lwow, where, in the suburbs, there lived Staszek's grandfather, who was in his eighties but had a nasty daughter.

My mother-in-law told him I was Staszek's friend and I was to be sent to Germany for forced labor and I was hiding.

They hid me in the barn so that the daughter didn't find me. They were liquidating the Jews in Stanislawow, it was August 1942, they were liquidating Jews everywhere.

I hear shots all the time and I heard the daughter telling her father how they were hanging Jews on trees. I overheard that because it was a plank barn, and when the daughter wasn't home, he slid the bowl with food under those planks for me.

Once, when she wasn't home, because she worked somewhere, I begged him successfully to give me a pen and a piece of paper and then to send my letter to Staszek. And Staszek came and took me away from there.

There was a rural school in Wygoda, a village today in Ukraine, where his parents' friend, not much older than me, was the headmistress and a teacher.

Staszek took me to her and she took me in as Staszek's fiancée who is hiding away from being sent to forced labor to Germany, while Staszek went to Dolina, an another village, to fix me up with a job at a sawmill.

He came back with the right paper and with it I reported to the manager.

The German asked me who I was, what I could do. I said I had completed high school before the war but had no profession. I stammered a bit, I learned German at school but I hardly remembered anything.

He said okay, you'll work at the sawmill. And so in 1943 I started working at the sawmill, Holzwerke, later renamed to Delta Flugzenhalen und Barackenbau.