

Salomea Gemrot



This is a picture of me. It was taken in Cracow in 2002. I needed it for my new ID, the old one had to be changed. Polish IDs must show the left ear and left cheek as you can see on this picture. I belong to the Association of Jews [TSKZ]. Last year I had an accident, I fell so unfortunately that I broke some important element in my hip and what's left is this injury and pain. So I don't walk. Since that time I have rehabilitation at home, but I don't have much hope. When I was in hospital after this happened, the doctors started considering surgery. One doctor came to see me and I asked him, 'Well, how long will the recovery take?' He said, 'Up to three years.' So I said, 'We can't do it, because there's no guarantee I'll live for 100 years.' 'Yes, you're right indeed' - he admitted. Well, after all who's got a guarantee to live so indecently long on this earth? And, unfortunately, the way it is now, I can't really go anywhere, but earlier - well, I didn't go for events to the association [TSKZ], because I'm too old for such things, but for all these meetings, sometimes I did. Ala still attends them, pays the dues and so on. Every year I get compensation from the Germans, from the Foundation Polsko-Niemieckie Pojednanie [Polish-German Reconciliation]. This

compensation arrives here in the mail. After the war, I didn't really practice. I didn't practice, although I was never Godless. Never. I always thought something was watching over me and every evening I'd pray, not in Yiddish, but in Polish, I'd always say to myself, 'Thank you God for one more day of my life.' And there, at the association, when I was signing up, there was this chairman, I don't remember his name [Mr. Winnicki]. A very nice man. He was a Jew, of course, and he kept his wartime name. And he explained it to me: 'if you're a believer, you have to accept the name you were saved with as God's will, because he gave you that name.' This name was supposed to stay, because God interfered with life and gave you that name. Well, this was a possible interpretation for believers. And he listed the members of that organization who kept their wartime names. I had several of these last names: Kloc, Tomaka and one after some priest from Lwow, I don't remember. And there in Cracow they told me that I shouldn't have allowed them to take that name away from me, because none of them [members of TSKZ] changed their names, they all kept them. And they took my name away from me by force, after the war. But I couldn't keep any of the wartime names, because I had another last name - Gemrot, my husband's name. This is fate. The way my life turned out, it's as if there was some fate for me. Something awaited me, everywhere something. My husband used to tell me that he was also unlucky. In 1939 when they were running away from the Germans, he evacuated from Tarnow with the unit where he was working. And he said that when they reached the borderlands, close to the Russians, they started bombing. They were walking in one group, all those who were running away, through fields, walking forward. And my husband broke away from this group and told his buddies not to go that way, because he didn't want to. He told them to go off the main road and take the smaller paths. They listened to him and as soon as they got off the main road, bombs were dropped there and made these huge holes. No one would have survived that. So there's something to it. I believe that. This terrorist of mine [the rehabilitation specialist who visits her two times a week] she gives me such a workout that I cannot move at all afterwards. But that's good, because the following day it's always a bit better. I remember I was always dissatisfied, because how can you be satisfied with such a fate? My husband used to say, 'Don't cry, it can always get worse.' That's what he told me. He died 20 years ago of heart failure.