

# ITKA ZYGMUNTOWICZ

## BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE



Itka Zygmuntowicz, the eldest of three siblings, was born on April 15, 1926, in Ciechanow, Poland, to Eljo and Simo Frajman. She had a brother, Srulek, and a sister, Zysl.

Two years after the German invasion of Poland, Itka and her family were deported to the Nowe Miasto ghetto, and in 1942, they were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Upon arrival at the extermination camp, Itka was separated from her family and never saw her parents or siblings again. At the camp, she was assigned to sort the clothing from arriving transports and prepare it for shipment to Germany. As an act of resistance, Itka purposely damaged the clothing whenever she could.

With the Soviet forces rapidly approaching, on January 18, 1945, Itka and other prisoners were forced on a death march to the Ravensbruck concentration camp in Germany. She was then transferred to the Malchow concentration camp where she was liberated on Passover, April 26, 1945, by the Swedish Red Cross who sent her to a hospital in Lund, Sweden to recover. Itka was later moved to a refugee center and from there, together with friends Bina and Regina, she went to work in a children's hospital in a small Swedish village. Later, Itka moved to the city of Boras, where she found work in a dress shop. Shortly thereafter, she and her friends were reunited.

On June 24, 1946, Itka attended a party where she met her future husband, Rachmil Zygmuntowicz. The romance blossomed quickly, and they were engaged and married within three weeks in a double wedding ceremony with her best friend, Bina, and her fiancée, Mendel.

Itka and Rachmil immigrated to the United States on February 15, 1953, and settled in Pennsylvania with their two sons, Erland and Jerry. Their sons Samuel and Michael were born in Philadelphia. At the time of her interview in 1996, Itka had three grandchildren.

Itka often speaks about her Holocaust experience at churches, synagogues, and schools, sharing her message of respect for all people. She is also involved in Jewish community activities and charity work in Philadelphia.



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