

DORA IWLER

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE



Dora Iwler (born Dora Zuer), daughter of Juda and Sima, was born on July 1, 1923, in Chodorów, Poland (now Khodoriv, Ukraine).

Dora had two brothers,

Moshe and Yitchak, and one sister, Miriam. Dora grew up in an Orthodox home; the family kept kosher and attended synagogue regularly. Dora's father was self-employed, and the older children helped him run his store. As a child, Dora went to Catholic school, and she then attended business school.

In September 1939, in accordance with the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union invaded and divided Poland. Chodorów was occupied by Soviet forces, and Dora and her family lived under Soviet occupation for two years. Life changed during Soviet occupation—the family store was confiscated—but the family remained together. In June 1941, Nazi Germany broke the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and invaded the Soviet Union. As soon as the Nazis occupied Chodorów, they started immediately killing people on the street. Jews were forced to wear a white armband with a Jewish Star of David, and a ghetto was established.

The Nazis sent Dora to work for a Ukrainian family. She worked in the family's garden and house, and she lived there. Dora was in contact with her family, and she was aware of the roundups taking place in Chodorów. One day, Dora was told that she had to go back to town; all of the Jews were being rounded up. Dora went back to town and was taken to the train station. While there, a Nazi who knew the Ukrainian family recognized Dora. He pulled her out of the crowd and placed her in a barn overnight. The next morning, Dora went back to the Ukrainian family. The family wanted to help Dora, and they planned to send her

to Lwów. However, when Dora got to Lwów, she was recognized by someone who knew the family, and she was arrested by the Nazis.

Dora was sent to Lemberg-Janowskastrasse, a forced labor and transit camp in Lwów. Dora was there from the winter of 1942 until June 1942, when she was able to escape. While imprisoned, Dora worked in the kitchen, cleaned the barracks and pantry, and did farm work. Working in the fields enabled Dora to escape; she hid in a field overnight and ran away the next morning. Dora pretended to be a Christian and got a job helping an elderly couple in Lwów. The couple worked as janitors, and Dora helped them. One day, while working outside, Dora was recognized by some of her old schoolmates. The Nazis arrested Dora and took her to prison, where she remained for a week. She was then taken back to Lemberg-Janowskastrasse, where she remained until July 1944, when she was sent on a death march. Dora and a friend escaped the death march and were helped and hidden by Poles until January 1, 1945, when the Soviet army liberated them.

Dora was the only member from her immediate family who survived the Holocaust. After the war, she met and married Israel Iwler. Their daughter, Jeanne, was born in Italy, while the family was waiting to immigrate to the United States; their son Jerome was born in Pittsburgh. The Iwlers settled in Pittsburgh, where they had family. Dora and Israel ran a tailor and dry cleaning store. They had three grandchildren. This interview took place on December 15, 1996, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.