



Biography of Zahava Rendler

Zahava was born Golda Feuerberg in Stryi, Poland on March 30, 1941. Her family operated a successful leather goods factory before the war, which was taken away once the Germans occupied the town. A factory employee named Stachek urged the family to go into hiding. They agreed and abandoned their home to hide in an underground bunker. Zahava, and her sister, Pela, were the only children permitted to hide in the bunker along with their mother Getel, father Mendel, and twenty eight other people.

Although Zahava was very young and asleep most of the time-she was given sleeping pills to keep her from crying as to not give away the hiding place-she remembers the bunker being dark and cold. Stachek visited once or twice a week to bring them supplies and on one particular visit, he came with false identification papers so that Zahava could go into hiding outside the bunker. Through Stachek, Zahava's father was able to secure a home for her with a Polish woman in a city not far from them.

Zahava, now with the false identity of Olga Pachulchak stayed with the woman for a year and a half until it became too dangerous. Rumors circulated that German soldiers were rounding up Jewish children, so the woman placed Zahava in a nearby convent, where nuns looked after her and other Jewish children hidden there. Zahava was at the convent for two years while her parents remained in the bunker. During this time, Zahava's family remained in the bunker, but had no idea of Zahava's whereabouts and no steady source of food. Stachek had disappeared (the family believes he was captured by the Nazis), so they needed to sneak out of the bunker to scavenge for food, which was extremely dangerous.

It wasn't until the war ended in 1945, that Zahava's parents were able to leave the bunker to find her. Eventually, her parents located what convent she was residing, but when her father came to retrieve her, the nuns denied that she was there. Her father returned to the convent everyday hoping to find Zahava. Fortunately, one day Mendel met a local man on the street who was walking with a small child. Mendel showed a picture of Zahava to the little girl and she confirmed that Zahava was in the convent. Mendel bribed one of the nuns with a kielbasa sausage to find out where Zahava was. The nun led him to a fenced in play area and when Mendel saw Zahava, he jumped the fence and took Zahava with him.

After being reunited with her parents, Zahava's family learned about a secret organization that was helping displaced Jews go to Palestine illegally. In 1946, they boarded a boat, the Atzmaut, to make a new home in Palestine, but were caught by the British and sent to a displaced persons camp in Cyprus. Eventually they were allowed to settle in Haifa, Israel, where Zahava officially changed her name from Golda to Zahava, which is the Hebrew word for gold. She came to Cincinnati in 1963.