RUTH S.

Ruth was born in Šiauliai, Lithuania, on July 28, 1936. In her town, about half of the population was Jewish. Her father was a chemical engineer and her mother had a law degree. Ruth's sister, Tamara, was born in 1939. Ruth has fond childhood memories of Lithuania.

In 1941, the Germans invaded Lithuania. When the bombing began and Jews began to be rounded up, Ruth's family hid in local farm fields. Ruth's grandmother was wounded by a bomb and eventually died from her injuries. When the family returned home, they found that two German officers had settled in their house. After befriending the officers, Ruth's family was protected when Jews were initially being rounded up.

On August 25, 1941, Ruth's family was forced into the ghetto along with approximately 5,000 other people. The family survived by smuggling food into the ghetto and collecting food packages that had been thrown over the fence. During a roundup of Jewish children on November 3, 1943, Ruth and her sister, Tamara, were taken by the Gestapo and put onto a truck. Ruth's uncle pleaded with one of the guards to spare the girls, but the guard only agreed to save Ruth because she was old enough to work. All 823 children taken from the ghetto that day, including Tamara, were sent to Auschwitz.

Ruth's parents decided to hide Ruth on the farm of a Catholic family outside of the ghetto. Then eight years old, she was kept in a closet for three to four months until she learned to speak Lithuanian fluently. Her hair was then dyed blonde and she was introduced as cousin "Erika." She became a devout Catholic and began to reject her Jewish heritage. Several months later, the ghetto was liquidated and all its occupants were deported. Ruth's parents had escaped into hiding a week earlier, however, and the family was reunited when the Soviets liberated Lithuania in September 1944.

It took two to three months of visits before Ruth agreed to return home with her parents. She made them promise that she could go to church and that they would not speak Yiddish at home. Ruth began school and left Catholicism to become a Communist. In 1946, her father was arrested for being a Zionist and the family escaped to Poland where Ruth's brother was born. Her parents had planned to move to Israel but changed their minds when war broke out in 1948. Instead, Ruth's family immigrated to Canada in 1951. As an adult, Ruth married, had three children, and worked in the fields of microbiology and counselling psychology.

SEE THE TESTIMONY RECORD OF RUTH S., 1990 IN THE VHEC'S COLLECTIONS FOR RELATED HOLDINGS AND FOR INTERVIEW DETAILS.