

RENÉE FIRESTONE



Born: April 13, 1924 (Užhorod, Czechoslovakia)

Interview Date: November and December 2015

Renée Firestone (née Weinfeld) was born on April 13, 1924 in Užhorod, Czechoslovakia to Mauritius and Julia Weinfeld. One of three children, she grew up in a Jewish but non-religious home. Under Hungarian occupation, her family experienced antisemitic discrimination and violence. Her father lost his business, her brother was imprisoned in a forced labor camp, and Renée was forced to leave school and join a segregated, Jewish-only athletic organization. In 1944, after a period of internment in the Užhorod ghetto, Renée and her family were deported to the Auschwitz camp complex. Upon arrival, Renée was separated from her parents, but managed to remain with her younger sister, Klara. Renée's mother and sister were both murdered at Auschwitz. Renée was imprisoned for 13 months before she was sent on a forced death march to Liebau concentration camp in Germany. She was liberated in Liebau by the Soviet Army in May 1945, reunited with her brother in Prague, and found her father in Theresienstadt. He was very ill with tuberculosis and died soon after. Renée immigrated to the United States in 1948 with her husband, Holocaust survivor Bernard Firestone, and their infant daughter. She arrived in Allentown, PA and eventually settled in Los Angeles, CA. Renée worked as a fashion designer for decades and did not speak about her experiences during the Holocaust. She decided to start sharing her testimony after a Jewish cemetery and synagogue in the area were vandalized with swastikas. This interview took place in November/December 2015 in Los Angeles, CA.