

Looking for Valah Konovskah, who helped my mother to survive during the holocaust

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Introduction

My name is Yuval Garini; I was born in Israel where I live ever since. My mother, Ziva Garini, was a survivor of the holocaust. My mother passed away in 2012 at an advanced age. Together with my father and brother, we lived happily in Israel.

Few years ago, I interviewed my mother regarding her survival during the holocaust, and I learned that while she was in the Auschwitz death camp, she was able to survive there mainly thanks to the help of **Valah Konovskah**, a Polish brave woman that lived at the same village as my mother did.

I am looking for Valah, or her family, simply in order to thank her, or her family, and make her story known to other. It is thanks to such gestures and behavior that makes our lives worthy.

I bring here the story of my mother that relates to Valah, the way it was translated from Hebrew.

Background on my mother

My mother, Ziva Garini was born in Poland in the village of **Rawa Mazowiecka** in November 4th 1923. Her parents, Yaacov Aharon and Miriam Gitel Yanowski were also born in Poland. The family was Jewish. There were 6 children, my mother was at the middle. Before the Second World War started, they lived happy life and were Polish patriots, together with their being Jewish.

As soon as the war started, there conditions were worsen from day to day. Her father was murdered for no reason 2 days after the Germans came, simply because he was one of the leaders of the small Jewish community in the village. They were then forced to move to a Ghetto that was declared in the village where her mother soon dyed from a disease because of the terrible conditions that were there.

My mother, 16 years at the time, had to live on her own in impossible conditions, and history shows that somehow she was clever, as well as lucky enough. She decided to run to the Warsaw Ghetto were she had some other family. She did that, and was able to survive until the last day of the Ghetto, when the Nazi forces started to burn the whole place. She survived by jumping from a burning building and was captured.

She was taken to the Meidanek concentration and death camp, and from there to Auschwitz. She survived this as well until the Russians arrived close to the camp. Then, she was taken in a death walk for few days, and by trains back to Germany were she was forced to work in ammunition factories. Somehow, she survived this as well, until she was released through a bargain where she was exchanged together with a group of other Jews that were brought to Sweden. She lived there for few years and learned nursery. In 1949 she came to Israel where she met my father and they

got married and lived in Haifa since then. My father passed away in 1992 and my mother in 2012. Both my brother and me have now our own wonderful families, and we had the pleasure and honor to be the children of our mother that was a happy woman, smart and optimistic, helping each person around her.

Survival through Auschwitz

When we arrived, we suddenly saw a Polish woman (Gentile) that we knew from **Rawa Mazowiecka**, and my sister, who knew her name, called her - **Yalah Konovshah**. She turned around immediately and asked who was it? Who knows her? She was also surprised, because that was a transport from **Warsaw**, and she was from **Rawa Mazowiecka**, so she did not expect to know anyone. When she heard that they were girls from the **Yanowska** family, she recognized them right away; she knew them and their parents. She had arrived at **Auschwitz** as a political prisoner from **Rawa** - she belonged to the underground and there was a meeting once and someone informed on her and her husband and they were both caught. In Auschwitz she lived in better conditions and worked at the office with relatively easy conditions. She also had a number tattooed on her hand, but without the triangle.

She kept a close relationship with us. She said - you have nothing to fear from, as long as I live - so will you. Don't worry, except that now you have to go to the quarantine for 3 weeks and there is nothing that I can do over there, but I can do afterwards. They went to the quarantine with **Zehava** (sister), aunt **Esther** and another female friend. At quarantine they worked in Sisyphean jobs. As soon as we left the quarantine, **Yalah** came to the Block Supervisor, gave her our numbers and took us to transfer to "Canada". That was a relatively preferred area of Jews who worked in various jobs. We worked in folding cloths, and they themselves wore grey prisoners clothing. They would find valuables in the cloths that they had to submit to the supervisors.

During that period, at one point I became ill with Scarlatina. I decided to go to isolation, because I didn't want to infect everybody. I told that to the block supervisor, and she begged me not to go, because she was afraid that they will close her block. But she said no way and went to the hospital for 3 weeks. There, also, she was lucky because of **Vala**. When **Vala** found out that she was at the hospital, she immediately went there, spoke to the block supervisor and told her - as much as your eyes are important to you, so will she (Mother) be important to you and you will protect her. Because of that, she gave mother a bunk on the third level, and that saved mother's life, because every day **Mengele** entered the block every day to take patients for experiments. There was some kind of an agreement that in the top bunks were only gentiles, and he would not touch them, only the Jews that slept in the lower bunks. The block supervisor at the hospital told mother - when **Mengele** gets in, pretend to sleep, don't move your head or hand until he goes out. That took place for 3 weeks.

Further information

Except from the paragraph above, that is taken from a video-cassette of a record of my mother, I also heard from her the following information:

She did not know how old Valah was, but she thought she was around 20-24. She thought that she came from a well-educated family, and maybe she was a student. She respected her as an intelligent and very nice person.

She mentioned that Valah never asked anything from there. She did not know what happened to her at the end of the camp and the war, and when she was forced to leave the camp she did not see her.

The whole story of my mother is written, but it does not relate so much to this.

I will be very glad to get help for allocating Valah who was an angle for my mother, or anyone else from the family.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Yuval Garini'.

Yuval Garini

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