

Rena Wallach Bernstein



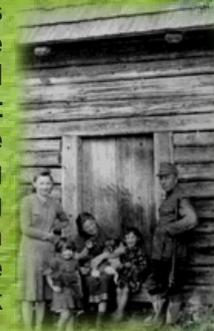
Visual History, USC
Shoah Foundation
Born April 7, 1938 in
Krakow, Poland,
Rena was four years
old when her parents
gave her to a family
to hide in the forest.

Rena wrote in her mother's book "Bitter Freedom – Memoirs of a Holocaust Survivor":

"On the day before the transfer of the Jews from Lesko to the Zaslav Concentration Camp, two unknown women came to our house and took me away. My parents stood aside as these strangers grabbed and carried me, crying and fighting, into the street. My parents stood sobbing on the doorstep as these women took me, still screaming, through the town to a dirt road that led into a dark, heavily wooded forest just beyond the town's streets. They walked all afternoon, the two women taking turns carrying me, despite all my protests."



They took her deep into the forest of Bezmiechowa to a "small, decaying hut, and lived in a tiny room with one small window". For the next two years she pined for her parents, but the forest had for her "a haunting beauty that remains" with her to this day. She imagined her parents were beyond two huge tree trunks watching and protecting her. This kept her calm and secure. She spent her days wandering through the woods, eating wild berries and lying on the ground watching the clouds, only coming back to the hut to sleep.

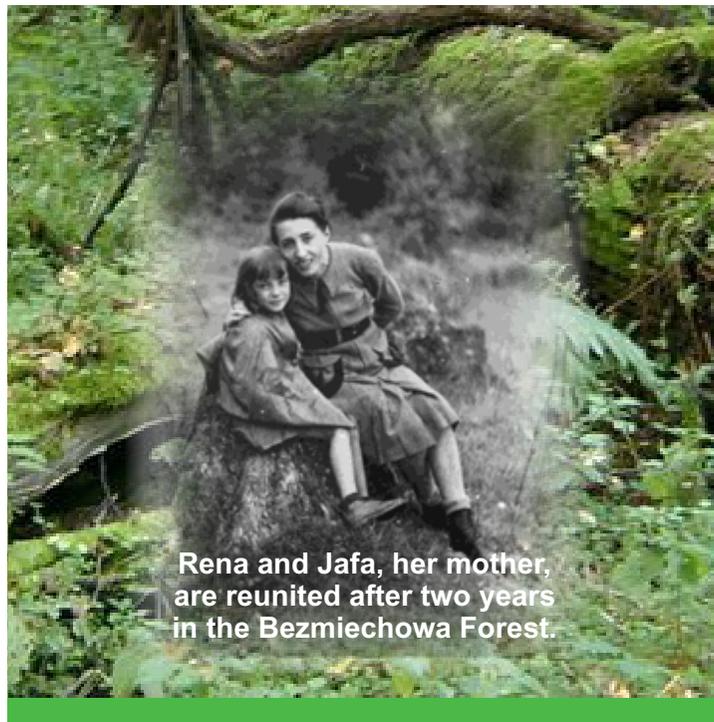


Her parents spent 2 years with Jafa's brothers hiding in a man-made cave 1.9 meters by 1.4 meters covered with wooden flooring. The Nazis used the building as a factory and the four had to be silent during the day and could only talk at night.

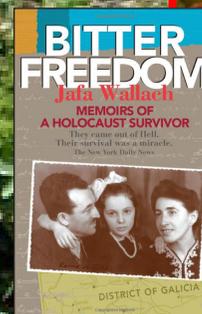


After the liberation of Lesko, Rena's parents came to the forest to be reunited with their daughter.

This Jewish community numbered about 30,000 before the war, after there were only 81 survivors. Rena was the only child survivor.



Rena and Jafa, her mother, are reunited after two years in the Bezmiechowa Forest.



*Bitter Freedom —
Memoirs of a
Holocaust Survivor*
by Jafa Wallach

