

PETRONELA GIERCZYŃSKA

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My most important wartime experience

When we woke up one morning in 1944, we listened and looked around in surprise, for an unusual day came – a fire in Wisznice, the roar of cars and tanks, and so much shooting that our ears were ringing. We looked at the road and saw the Germans running away and setting fire to buildings, and the farmers fleeing to the forest with all their belongings. I looked out of the window: the house of one neighbor was already on fire, and they were going to the other neighbor. I said to mom: “Mom, let’s take everything outside, and tell Alfons, Józef and Michał to take the horses and cows to the forest, because the Germans are already around.”

Everyone went to the forest, only mom and I stayed at home. In the [Tyniec?] forest there was a battle, and mom said to me: “You know what, let’s dig a hiding place.” I replied, “Okay.” We started digging. When we finished, we saw Germans digging trenches under our cherry tree, and bullets began flying over our heads – one, two, three. We hid in the trench, shaking with fear. Then the bullets stopped whizzing. When I came out, the Germans were gone, and the Soviets were walking around, all cheerful, happy and smiling because they had defeated the Germans.