

...hiding was not a game...



RUTH LEISER

For the 6-year-old Ruth, “hiding” was not a game, but a matter of life and death.

In Poland, where she was born, her father had been a farmer. When the Nazis came in 1941, her father was able to use his contacts with local peasants to hide the family: Ruth, her younger brother Jack and their parents, Nathan and Bertha.

The family survived because of the courage of a number of peasant families, who hid them, or gave them food when her father was forced to beg.

For 3 years, the Katz family moved constantly, evading Nazi capture. In the freezing cold of European winter, the family spent weeks in an open potato storage hole in the ground, where Ruth remembers not being able to either stand up or lie down, while snow fell. In 1943, their friends, Sylvester and Zuzanna Mikolyun, hid them for 6 months in a hole under their oven. The family had to slide in, huddling closely together, so that they could fit into the tiny space.

In July 1944, they were liberated by Russian soldiers and in 1951, came to Australia. Ruth, still only 16, had to find a job immediately, becoming an adult without ever having been a child. Yet, she always remains thankful to be alive and grateful to the peasants whose courage to care made it possible.

*Courage to care*