

Mary Berg (10.10.1924–04.2013)

the author of “The Diary of Mary Berg: Growing up in the Warsaw Ghetto”



She was born as Miriam Wattenberg in Łódź. Her father, Szaja, was an antiquarian and art dealer whose collection included paintings by Poussin, Delacroix, and Matejko. Her mother, Lena, née Zol, who was born in New York and held American citizenship, was a fashion designer. At the outbreak of World War II, the Wattenberg family fled to Warsaw, where they eventually moved at the end of December after receiving a letter from the American consul. Mary Berg settled in the Warsaw ghetto, first at Sienna 41 St., then from December 1941 at Chłodna 10 St. in the so-called small ghetto. She worked in self-help organizations, attended graphic design and architecture courses, and was a member of a theater group called the Łódź Artistic Team (ŁZA).

Shortly before the Great Action, the Wattenbergs – like other Jews who were citizens of the United States or Great Britain – were interned in Pawiak Prison. On January 18, 1943, they were transported to the Vittel camp in western France, and in March 1944

were among the German prisoners interned by the Allies. The family was transported to neutral Lisbon, from where they reached New York on 14 June 1944 aboard the Swedish liner MS "Gripsholm". Mary Berg married William Pentin and settled in York, Pennsylvania, where she died in April 2013.

During the period from October 10, 1939 to March 5, 1944, Mary Berg kept a diary describing life in occupied Warsaw, which was published in April 1945 by L. B. Fischer in New York. It was the first English-language publication to report on a stay in the Warsaw Ghetto. To this day, it remains a unique source of knowledge about the history of the ghetto and the fate of its inhabitants, as seen through the eyes of a teenager.

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