

## HEDY KRASNOBROD

Using false identification papers, Hedy Krasnobrod survived the war by working in a Catholic hospital near Brussels.

*“The most remarkable, courageous, selfless people risked their own lives and safety, and that of their families to save our lives. That my parents and I survived, that we were reunited, was a gift of destiny.”*

Hedy Krasnobrod (née Springer) was born in Vienna, Austria in 1921. Her parents both had been born in Vienna. Hedy lived in a predominately Jewish neighborhood. Her childhood was peaceful and protected, centered around school, family and friends.

When Germany annexed Austria in 1938, schools were immediately closed to Jewish students. Jewish-owned businesses were confiscated, and Jewish professionals could no longer practice. The family’s life became a nightmare.

Hedy’s father was able to secure visas to Belgium, and they left that September. Hedy began nursing school, but Brussels was an occupied city. The Jewish Community office was forced to submit lists of all Jews residing in Belgium.

Hedy worked occasionally as an assistant to a Jewish podiatrist, but she was in constant danger. Her employer sent her to a sympathetic Belgian surgeon who hospitalized her. Hedy agreed to an operation to have her healthy appendix removed which secured her another two weeks of safety.

Hedy’s mother was determined to save her daughter despite endangering her own life and safety. After many false starts, she was referred to Denise Ponteville de Launois, who accompanied her to the nearby hospital owned and run by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart. Hedy was hired as a nurse’s aide on condition that she acquired false identification papers provided by the Underground. From then on, Hedy was “Helene Spirlet.” Wearing a veil, Hedy attended daily religious services, but the nuns were very respectful of her Jewish religion, and she was never approached to convert. She remained at the hospital for two-and-a-half years in constant fear of being recognized, denounced and endangering others at the hospital.

After the liberation of Brussels, Hedy found work as a trainee in medical technology. In 1952, she obtained her degree and married a medical photographer. They immigrated to the US eventually settling in San Francisco working and raising a family.

During the war, Hedy’s parents were hidden by the manager of the apartment building where they had lived. They survived but the members of their large, close-knit extended family perished. Denyse-Marie Ponteville de Launois, who helped Hedy, was honored as a Righteous Gentile by Yad Vashem.