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Summary

Miriam Gershwin, born in 1923 in Klaipeda, Lithuania, describes her family members; her father Nathan Lichtenstein, mother Fayge Bengis, older brother Mordechai, extended family members with many generations of rabbis on both sides; her father's work as a director of a textile factory, the expulsion of Jewish children from German schools in Memel after Kristallnacht; leaving Memel for Siauliai, Lithuania with her mother and brother; the arrival of German troops in Memel in March 1939; her father joining the family in Siauliai, Lithuania and their subsequent move to Panevėžys, Lithuania; her brother developing pleurisy after the high holidays and his stay in a sanatorium; the family's move to Kovno (Kaunas); the Russian occupation of Lithuania in June 1940; her father's new job in charge of the nationalized textile manufacturers; Miriam studying English, bookkeeping, and typing with a private teacher; Miriam working in a position at her father's textile warehouse; the German invasion and occupation of Kovno in June 1941; moving into the Kovno ghetto with her immediate and extended family; the closing of the ghetto in August 1941; Miriam's job outside the ghetto working as a maid for the German Commandant of the ghetto; Miriam's role in carrying letters that arrived from the Vilna ghetto to Kovno ghetto residents; Miriam's marriage to Naum Gershwin; her husband's job in the labor department in the ghetto, her job in the "dutch shtaten" [described as a big factory where Germans took their laundry and they made things for the Germans]; describes selections and deportations from the ghetto and saving her aunt from a deportation; the deportation of her mother and her husband's family to forced labor in Estonia in October 1943 (and her mother's subsequent death at Kaiserwald); Miriam's pregnancy and decision to have an abortion; the liquidation of the Kovno ghetto in June 1944; evacuation on a cattle car to Germany with her husband and father in advance of the Russian forces (while her brother stayed in the ghetto and perished there); being separated from her husband and put on a train to the Stutthof concentration camp, where she stayed for two weeks; being sent with a group of about five hundred other women to dig trenches for the Germans, first in Torun; leaving for Lubicz in October [Tape 1, around timestamp 00:46:42] or November 1944; receiving orders on January 18-19, 1945 that her group had to evacuate and return to Stutthof; walking in the cold and sleeping the forests for two nights; liberation by the Russian forces on January 22, 1945; walking with her group to a city that was known as a popular spa and ski resort; staying in the hospital to recuperate; starting home and staying temporarily at a facility run by the Jewish community in Lublin, Poland; the end of the WWII in May; learning that her husband and father were still alive and living at Landsberg, near Munich; travelling to Germany and arriving in Berlin in July 1945; learning that her husband and father had been told that she was dead; arriving in Munich on August 12, 1945; reuniting with her husband and father; living in Munich while Miriam worked for the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee; the birth of her son; immigrating with her husband and father to the U.S. in 1949; settling in Springfield, NJ; Naum's job in at Barton's (kosher chocolate) and then at The United Restitution Organization; birth of their daughter in Springfield; death of father in 1963.