

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Rachel Bielicka Gurdus**  
**August 17, 1999**  
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## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of a taped interview with Rachel Bielcka Gurdus, conducted on August 17, 1999 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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**RACHEL BIELICKA GURDUS**  
**August 17, 1999**

Beginning Tape One

Question: I think to begin, if you could just say your name at birth.

Answer: My name at birth was Rachel Bielicka -- Bielicka. I was born in Wilna, so my parents. I was the youngest in the family, and my mother had five daughters.

Q: And when were you born?

A: 1922, December.

Q: December?

A: December 6. And my oldest sister was 18 and a half years older than me. So when I was born, after a half a year, she went to study to Warsaw. And she established there and get married there, and she lived in Warsaw. So my other sister, Riva, when I was five, she also went to Warsaw and established there and get married there, finish school, and -- but we were [indecipherable] very open. They used to come every vacation, and every holiday, as Passover, as Rosh Hashanah they used to come home for a little while, and return also to Warsaw. For vacation when the kids were born, they send the kids to us, and we used to go together to a summer place, to spend the summer together.

Q: Can you tell --

A: And my parents were businessmen who have a mill. And two little buildings at the place [indecipherable] that went to fight. We never changed the address before the war because we have there our own home and we live there. When the war start in '39 --

Q: B-Before we go there --

A: Yes?

Q: I just wanted to see if you could tell us the names of your parents?

A: The name of my mother was Minalaya, and the name of my father was Benjamin. My father was 18 years older than my mother. My mother married she was less than 18 in that time, you know? And -- but they have a good relationship, a good life. And five children were born, and that's it, and my daughter, my older sister left Warsaw when I was maybe a half a year. And, successful there.

Q: Do you know the names of your grandparents? Did they live nearby?

A: My grandparents? I never have grandparents. My grandmother died when I was six months old, seven months old. My fa -- my m -- grandfather died before my mother was married. And the parents of my father also died before he was married. So I don't remember. The name of my mother, the maiden name was Apatova, Apatova.

Q: And were your mother and father also from Wilna?

A: Wilna, yes --

Q: Okay.

A: -- yes. The family of my father has a big farm, as I know from the stories that my sister told me. Because you know, when you are 15 - 16, you don't get in what happened between your parents and the grandparents. When you are a little child you are busy with school, with children, with friends. And when I meet my sisters from Warsaw, after 18 years that they also survived the war, they told me stories about my parents, and they told me that my father's family have a big farm, and they have 13 children. And from ev -- to every child they have tutors, especially. They didn't go to school, at -- every child has a tutor. And in the family was a couple of rabbis, they were very educated because I remember my father, he knew fluently Hebrew, he knew English, he knew very well math -- mathematics. When I have some difficulty in school, he used to tell

me, and in meantime, all kind of stories, in spite that he was very busy with his business. My mother wasn't working, she helped out a little bit my father, and then she took care of the tenants there, the -- the -- her buildings. She was busy. She likes very much flowers, she has a beautiful garden of flowers that took a lot of her time, and took care of the children, who are still study, and that's what is. And --

Q: What do you remember about when you were growing up about the role that religion played in your family life?

A: My father was religious, and he was als -- always going to the synagogue, I remember, very early in the morning and then in the evenings. And it was a traditional house, and the s -- all the holidays were celebrating in the house, and that -- and sisters with their husbands came from Warsaw, and it was so nice, the Passover, and the Shavuot and the Rosh Hashanah, and the -- all the holidays. And as I remember my sisters when they grew up, they were not religious, they were socialists, most of them. And that what it is. But when I was very small my sister went to study in Warsaw. Financially they were not so good in that time in my family, and my sister was very brilliant, she was a very capable person. And all of a sudden she want to go to Warsaw when she finish high school, with also [indecipherable] like here is A's, and she find out that there was a new nursery school establish in Warsaw from the Joint from the United States. And she said she wants to go to this school. And my mother was against, she said, "You are such a capable person, why do you want to be a nurse?" She said, "I decided." She said, "You are afraid for blood, and you'll be a nurse, working?" And she said yes. And she went to school. And that time in Warsaw through the school, they took all the 14 students. The director was sent for the -- from the school from the United States. And th -- when she came to Warsaw she had all her ticket in one side. They said, it's full. They have the four student. She

said, "But I can't go home, I don't have a ti -- another ticket." And they said -- her diploma was excellent, and they looked at her, they said, "Wait. Maybe one of them will change her mind, then you'll take her place." And after two days somebody went out, and they put her in. And she finished the school, and it was next to the hospital, a Jewish hospital on Chista in Warsaw. And she finished the school, and then they send her to Paris to finish special school for teachers, for -- to the nurses school, meaning that she'll return and she'll be in the -- between the teachers, the t -

Q: The teaching staff.

A: -- in the teaching staff. And she finish the school in Paris, very excellent and return to Poland and start to be an instructor in the same school. And then the war start, and the director went to the USA for funds or something, and she -- the director of the school -- and there were dormitory in the school that the students came from all of Poland and from all over. In that time it was a Jewish nurses school. And she was very good, and the war start. And the war start, and lot of people start to come to Wilna because you remember that there were a pa -- a pact between Molotov and Hitler and they divided Poland in two, and Wilna get Russia and Warsaw start to be -- and the community was very bad, but in the very beginning, as soon as the Germans start to come to Poland -- people from Poland run away, and lots came through Wilna. She couldn't, because she was responsible for the chil -- the students, they were 17 - 18 - 19 years girls who live there. She couldn't leave them and run away. That's why she was staying in Poland, and my other sister also came to Warsaw to finish the nursery school where my sister was director, and she was a nurse. And she didn't want to leave her, so she was staying with her, so --

Q: What were their names, those two sisters?

A: One was Luba.

Q: The oldest one was Luba?

A: Luba. She was Luba Bielicka Blume. And the other was Riva Kakanovich. And the war start, and there was in the beginning, the --

Q: But before we go to the war Rachel, I just want to spend a little --

A: Yes?

Q: -- more time. Can you tell us a little bit more about your father's mill, and the business? What was a regular day like?

A: He used to wake up four in the morning, because when peasants were going from all the county to the market, they used to leave their grain and all the stuff to make kasha and flour and everything in the very morning. And the -- my father knew them all and they -- he prepared the stuff. And they used to go to the market, which was in the middle of the city. About nine, 10 o'clock, the m -- they sold their products, they returned and pick up the flour and then the kasha and whatever it was. And they used to go back to their county and during the day they have two people who helped him, and he was working in there.

Q: Were the people who were bringing their goods to be milled, were they Jews and non-Jews?

A: No, no, only non-Jews.

Q: Non-Jews?

A: Only non-Jews. They were the peasants who live in the periph -- periphery of the city, not in the middle of the city, but a little bit behind. It was Wilna, but you know, in the suburb. And that's what I remember, all the time being busy and I was in school. I was in school. My school was not far from my house, it was four or five miles, walking every day to school. And my sisters too. And then I finish sixth grade of the beginning school and start to go to gymnasium, to the first grade of gymnasium, until '39 when the Russians came, they changed the whole system

of the schools because there was 10 - 11 grades and that's all. And we were in the fourth year of gymnasium, they make us the eight -- the eighth grade from 10 - 11 year school. And we have to start to learn in Russian, because there was no Yiddish school any more. And --

Q: Can you talk a little bit about -- you mentioned how educated your father was.

A: Yeah.

Q: And your two older sisters were going off to study nursing and to become teachers.

A: My fim -- yes, but my older sister, they finish gymnasium before it.

Q: Right.

A: To the school in Warsaw, to the nursing school in Warsaw they have to come after high school.

Q: But what was -- what did your mother and father, what were their views about education and going on to study?

A: My mother was all the time for education. My father said sometimes, you know, why should you educate them so much? They'll be very educated more than you are, they will leave you and they'll went somewhere else, you'll never see. And my mother said, no, they have to be educated. And my father said, I am old, and who will take the business? They have to stay home to ta -- my mother said no, they are too intelligent to, and they want to go out.

Q: Interesting. W-Was your father trying to get one of the younger daughters to learn the business?

A: She wants some of the son-in-laws, but they were far away. My son -- my brother-in-law, the husband of Luba, was Abrasha Blume. They were dating in school, and then she went to Warsaw to study in the nursing school, and he went to berli -- to Belgium to study in the university. And they fee -- they dating during the vacation time, and when they finished school, he returned to



Warsaw and they get married. And during the Holocaust he was one of the leaders of the uprising -- of the Warsaw ghetto uprising in Warsaw. And he finish engineering, I don't remember exactly the -- and it was hard for him to get a job, even that he finish excellent. And then they said, if you finish another year in Poland, you'll surely get the job as an engineer. And he finish another year in Poland, and he still couldn't get a job in his field. He was a very nice person. And then he start to work in the Bund organization. You know what Bund is, it's socialism, that time it was very high, and the war started. And my sister was all the time in the school, and this whole hold her until the end of her life.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about the relation, the sit -- th-the position of your family in the community? Was your -- was your family involved in politics in any way? Did your father [indecipherable] the synagogue?

A: No. My father was involved in the synagogue.

Q: In the synagogue? [indecipherable]

A: All the time he was a [indecipherable] in the synagogue and -- in our area, in our area.

Q: What did that mean?

A: In our area was a synagogue and he was a member and he was some body of the oldest there. And as I remember all the time [indecipherable] synagogue, and the celebrations of the holidays and -- but the children not. The children not and he let them go their way. Yeah, he didn't presh. And I didn't know if it would help because there were other -- e-every sister of mine were very independent. I have two in Wilna, and the other two were in Warsaw.

Q: Wa -- wa -- ho-how do you explain that, that you were all such independent girls?

A: They went to school, they belonged to all kind of organizations, and when they finished, they got good jobs, and they get married, and they live in different cities, and my -- I have two other

sisters who were older than me. One was Sela, she finished a -- a professional school making heads, you know? And my other sister, Brina was four years older than me, a beautiful girl, and she finished a professional school, tailoring.

Q: Can I just clarify, making heads? Make --

A: Modistes --

Q: Wigs?

A: Sh -- how can I tell it in? Modiska is -- she makes heads, special heads. Hats.

Q: Hats, hats.

A: Hats, I'm sorry, I am sorry.

Q: I'm so -- okay, that's okay. That's okay, that's -- that's fine, that's --

A: Hats, yes.

Q: Oh, so you were the --

A: It was a profession in that time.

Q: Right. You were the -- you were the baby?

A: I was the baby, I was the very smallest from all. I told you, between me and my sister was 18 and a half years a difference.

Q: I didn't know you were the baby.

A: I was the baby.

Q: Huh. A-And can you speak some about the friends that you had, or that your family had? Did you have Jewish and non-Jewish friends?

A: Yes.

Q: Or one or the other?

A: Yes, but mostly they were Jewish as I remember, in my family. My sister from Warsaw has a lot of non-Jewish friends and my other, too, but mostly the friends were Jewish. I want to explain, as I remember the times in Poland, for Jewish people, Jewish youths, they don't have a big field where to go. When they finish school, high school, they were bright people, and they couldn't get government position. They -- it was very, very hard to get into university in that time, and they didn't have where to go after school, only in a professional school, like at a tailor, a tishler, a shoe -- shoemaker, a bookkeeper, a nurse. Poland in that time start to be under the influence of the Germans, so anti-Semitism start to grow there, more than bi -- than right after the World War I. So mostly the people -- it's very little, people who get doctors and lawyers, they're very little bit from the very rich and who have connections, of course there are, but very little. Mostly the pepple -- population wasn't so successful. That's the truth, whatever they want.

Q: Was that something that was understood and spoken about in the time?

A: Yes -- yes.

Q: Ho-How would you -- how would you talk about it?

A: They saw there were very bright people between them, and they want to get into the university. For example, I have a nephew, a -- a cousin, who was very bright, his name was Tolchinski, Boris Tolchinski, and he finish a Polish high school, a very famous po -- and he want to get a doctor -- to be a doctor, and it was impossible to get in university, in spite that his grades were excellent. And he came to my mother -- as I told you, they we have a mill, and the people will leave their grain in the morning, and the end of the month, the boss of the farm came to us to pay for the whole month that his people use our mill. And his name was Professor Zehofsky, he always -- was -- had the farm, and he was a professor in a university. And as my mother told me

about -- because I was small that when her nephew finished and he was -- wants so much to be a doctor, he went to the farm. And th -- make an appointment with this Professor Zehofsky is -- he knows her from the coming for years, for years with the account of his farm. And she ask him if he could help to put him in to the -- the -- showing him that he finish a Polish gymnasium, a Polish high school, with excellent grades. And he is sleeping thinking about being a doctor, and he help him, and he get in, and he finish medicine, yes. And he was in Poland so -- survived the war, and then he came to Canada, and worked as a doctor.

Q: A-And the professor that --

A: It was my cousin.

Q: -- your mother went to, to ask for help --

A: Professor Zehofsky. He was Polish.

Q: He was Jewish, or non-Jewish?

A: Polish.

Q: Polish.

A: He was not Jewish, he was Polish, but he was like a friend for us, after so many years, you know.

Q: You said that anti-Semitism a -- as you grew older, you were beginning to be more aware of it, what -- was this something that was talked about ever, for instance at the dinner table?

A: No, no.

Q: Or did you ever hear your parents talk about it?

A: No, no, no. For example, we have neighbors who lived in our house for as mu -- as long as I remember, and they were enough poor they work, and sometimes they didn't have the money to pay rent, and my mother was waiting for months, for months until, you know, they -- their

situation improved, and then they paid off. People who were -- normally who were like friends, specially the kids were playing together, and when we went to the ghetto, all our goods were -- we used to push to the neighbors, because we have only 15 minutes to go out from the house. And we could take very little with us. We thought the war will be maybe a couple of weeks we'll return, and we'll have better good -- better goods. But it works out different.

Q: What were the names of those neighbors?

A: Leshchevska, Kachinska, Millefsky.

Q: They were Polish.

A: They were Polish --

Q: Okay.

A: -- Polish, yes.

Q: So what you're describing is a lot of pretty relaxed interaction between non-Jews and Jews --

A: Yes, yes --

Q: -- in Wilna.

A: -- and then they were so very, very friendly between us in that time, before the war.

Q: Do yo -- and can you speak a little bit about what language was spoken at home?

A: At home I spoke Yiddish. And in the school in the beginning, I was in the -- in a Jewish Polish school. It was Jewish children, but the main language was Polish, the first four years. And then I changed to a Jewish gymnasium, after the six years. And then I was starting gymnasium until the beginning of the war, until it was destroyed.

Q: A-And then you had to speak Russian?

A: Russian I have to start to speak in 1939 when the -- when Poland was divided, and Wilna start Russian for a short time, and then they gave it to Lithuanian after two months. And it was

Lithuanian. But in the first years when it was Lithuanian, the main language was Russian, because the population was not Lithuanian, the Lithuanian was otherwise. Little by little they start to come from the counties after the war. After the war for a long time, Vilnius was Lithuanian but the main language was Russian. For a long time, and then they start to protest that they want -- when they have enough people already in Wilna, they came from all kinds of the counties, they start to talk Lithuanian, in the stores, in the banks, in that -- but before it was rush -- Russian.

Q: What were the political beliefs of your family? Were they very clear to you as a young girl, or as you got older?

A: I was mostly under the influence of my sisters, like socialists. And my parents never was in their way, but my father was religious. He was religious, and maybe he was upset a little bit that the children went out, but it was such a direction in that time in the Lithuanian.

Q: And when you say that you were under the influence of your sisters and they were socialists, what did that mean?

A: They believed in working people. They belong to organizations, I wer -- and the school was also a little bit in the left direction. And they believed in Russia, in the Soviet Union, because we didn't have any information what's doing there. But the propaganda was so high. The people saw th -- especially for the Jewish people, they look and study, they'll be able to study, they'll be free, they will -- for example, I'll tell you a story. I was in my school, as I told you, it also was with a left direction, and when Russia gave Vilnius up to the Lithuanian, they came with their propaganda to the schools, and ask the children if they want to study and have their freedom, they can go to Russia, to Byelorussia, to Ukraine. And they can study free, and they can became teachers and engineers and what, and they'll have their freedom. A lot -- and who wants? We can

make lists, and tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, they can leave. And lots of the older classes of the children, they scribed themselves in the lists. And they are going to Byelorussia to work, to -- to study, to the schools, and they -- and they left very warm and nice families. And left during the week to Russia. And weg -- they came there -- of course they came into the schools, to the university, one -- get the teacher th -- and they -- but they saw the hard life of there. They saw that the reality is different. And they didn't have a way back. They couldn't go back to their parent. And you know, children, they tried, that -- but they left their parents, their homes, and it was a lot of them. And one of them was a sister of a good friend of mine. And they went after, and they start to study, of course they were hungry, they didn't have what to wear, they have -- and they were homesick. And after a couple of months, or a half a year, they came again with lists. Who wants to go to see their parents, to the -- of course lots of people said they want. And the sister of my friend also [indecipherable] she want to go to Wilna, back to see the parent. And they instead to send -- and after awhile, instead to send them back to Wilna, they send them to Siberia. A lot of them. And this girl, her name was -- now she [indecipherable] after the -- after the war she get married. And she went there, and she was working very hard, and she was in the forest to cut the trees, and they gave her a little warm jacket, and some big shoes, and the [indecipherable] worked very, very hard, and we didn't have any information. One thing was good, the whole family was killed, and she was alive. And she worked very hard, and in -- it was the -- the patriation from the -- the Polish citizens after the war. I think it was in '47 - '48 that they can return to Poland to get their Polish citizenship. She describe herself [indecipherable] return to Poland and then she went to -- to [indecipherable] or somewhere, and finally she came to the United States. When I came to the United States in '76, I met her, and she told me all the stories. Her family was killed, and she was working the place I am working now, and she

recognize me as the friend of her sister. And she said, "You know what, I have a job for you. If you will be accepted," she said, "I am working for the Jewish labor committee in New York, and I am getting married" -- he -- a second time her husband also died young. "And I'll introduce you, because they need a Jewish secretary." My English was very poor in that time. And she bought me in, and only one person spoke Yiddish, the other spoke English, was a broken English. She introduced me to the executive director, it was a [indecipherable] in that time. And he said, okay, if you will take a course of English, if you would take a course of -- of typing. If you would take this and this, come after three months, and she's working o -- for three months you're working, and we'll -- she'll show you the work, and then we'll come and we'll see. I did everything he said, I took a course of English, I took a course of typing. My Yiddish was -- it was very good years ago, but for the 30 years I was in Russia, I forget also. But I try to remember, and I worked very much the job because I was 52, and I still don't want to be a bargain on my children. I want a little bit my own life. And she's show me a lot, the girl. And after three months I came. Of course my English was very poor, and my typing a letter that I supposed to type now in five minutes, I type in that period of time for an hour. But the Yiddish was okay. He said we'll take you to try, three months, and I was trying, but it still was very hard. And the most horrible thing was for me to take the telephones. I mixed up the names, I -- he dictate me an letter, my boss, and I tried to write everything like he said. And when I came for his signature he crossed out one, two, three, four. I said, "Why are you crossing out? I typed everything you said." He said, "And I said I didn't say, but you are a secretary, you have to make the letter -- letter right." Later on, when he gave me a letter, I get friends with some of the other secretaries, who are English secretaries, Linda, please check, make the correction. She made the corrections, I [indecipherable]. Anyway, it was three months and they still didn't -- we'll take



another three months. I was nervous, will I stay at the job? And the Yiddish start to be a little bit less, and nobody knows the Yiddish, only English. Only one person. Finally they -- I think that get -- they get used to my personality, and they accepted me. And during the years I learned, and they gave me things that I don't need too much, the language like traking -- taking track of the membership, or of the federation stuff, who was -- and they picked up, and meantime I learned, and I am there for 23 years. Still working, in spite when I came was 18 people at the staff, and now is seven, I am still within the seven, not knowing so well the language. But I doing other things that are enough important and the [indecipherable] were occupied.

Q: Let me take you back --

A: Yes.

Q: -- still sort of before the war.

A: Sorry for digressing.

Q: No, no, that's fine, it -- it helps to understand --

A: Yes.

Q: -- where you went. Did -- did you -- did you and your family consider yourself Polish?

A: Jewish.

Q: Jewish.

A: Jewish.

Q: Could you describe what that meant, so what -- what about a nationality?

A: Before the war, we were Jewish. [indecipherable] religion. We were Jewish, and we have Jewish schools, and we have Jewish synagogues, and we have [indecipherable] in that time in Poland. Other were very assimilated, like people before the World War -- World War I, it was Russia, as you know. It was changed in the politics in the country [indecipherable] in spite being

in one city. And the -- for example, my mother spoke a lot of Russian. The parents of my friend Solamid, they came from Leningrad originally. And the -- at home they speak only Russian. And the -- then it came Poland, and a lot of people spoke Polish. They were assimilated, and Polish was the main language of their home. But in my home they spoke Yiddish.

Q: S-So you're describing it almost a -- a kind of insular quality that at some point th-the city was Russian, then it was Polish, but you and your family were -- were simply always Jewish?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about the years leading up to when Poland was divided, and -- was it something that you were expecting a -- you know --

A: When the war start in '39?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: It was --

Q: So maybe '37 - '38.

A: In '37 - '38 was a very big anti-Semitism in pole -- in Wilna in Poland. They were under the influence of Germans. For example, ev -- next to the Jewish stores -- there were a lot of Jewish stores, usually stayed the students -- the Polish students, they were calling [indecipherable] don't buy in Jewish stores. They didn't let in Polish people to get into the Jewish stores. In the university, some Jewish people were in the university, and the students [indecipherable] said the Polish people have to sit on their right side in the room, and the Jewish on the left have to sit. The Jewish people never sit on the left, they were staying, listen the lectures, and make the notes, staying.

Q: Standing?

A: Standing, yes.

Q: Oh, as a form of protest?

A: And -- as a form of protest. And sometimes they start to beat up people when they see in the -  
- the -- '97 - '98, it's a very bi -- it was a very big fluence from Germany.

Q: '37 and '38?

A: And -- yes, yes.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And then in '39, Poland was divided, and Wilna start to be Russian, and wars -- and Warsaw is Poland. And there were no [indecipherable] and the -- a letter was going from there for months, three or four months. And then when the start -- the war start for us, because my sister was in Warsaw, and I remember my mother was always try -- est -- crying, and people from Warsaw run away the first days, and as I said, my sister couldn't because she was in charge of that school. And people from Warsaw who run away, lived in our house because every family who was able took a couple of the -- of the people who run away [indecipherable] how they call here -- like the people who run from Bosnia now, or from --

Q: Refugees?

A: Refugees. Every family who could took a couple of refugees in their homes. In my home were refugees from Warsaw who knows my sister, and my sister was in Warsaw. We [indecipherable] once in three, four months, we got the letter. We send the package, they got it after four months, in the beginning. Other people were not killed, then they was -- it was a ghetto. And school where my sister works was on the territory of the ghetto, so the nursing school was still going on, and the Jewish people from the ghetto in Warsaw, the young girls have studied. Even the nurses from the school were taken out of the ghetto for work to the hospital,

even to the German hospital. And -- but -- but from -- for us, for the family it was war, because my mother was always -- all the time crying about her sisters in Warsaw and their grandchildre --

Q: For --

A: -- about her daughters and the grandchildren, in spite -- in the -- '39, in the beginning, before the war start, they were all in Wilna, at our summer house, and when their vacation finished they went -- the sister with the brother-in-laws went to Warsaw, and the children was ver -- left with us. It was two children from my one sister, and one boy from the other sister. And with the last train we send them back with the women to Warsaw, thinking that the safest place would be Warsaw because the propaganda was very high in that time, that Poland is very strong, and she does -- she is not afraid for everybody. S -- so that capital, the Germans will not come. And all of a sudden, it changed. And the ghetto was smaller, smaller, but people were not killed in that time. We know there was hunger, then there was -- there is no clothes, it was [indecipherable], and there were ne -- not enough place for them, but they're alive. And when the war start, the Germans came to Wilna, after the war start with Russia, we thought, okay, it will be like in Warsaw. Some people run away, some couldn't. My family didn't run away, I don't know why, but some run away and had to return because Russia didn't allow it in the beginning, to go in. They thought that we are spies, or what. They still don't -- and you know -- but we said okay, we'll survive the war, like in Warsaw. In Warsaw they started killing later -- later on. As it start to be in all the countries.

Q: Was there ever any discussion in your family of sending people out? I mean far away, like to another country?

A: We couldn't. We couldn't. First of all it was a lot of money, and it has to be relatives. You are thinking e -- before the war, yes?

Q: Yes, before, mm-hm.

A: But you know, it was -- it was complicated, especially from Wilna. Life was not bad there, and some people went to the United States, but very little.

Q: Wh-When do you remember first hearing about Nazism? Was this before the war? Before --

A: Before the war, before the war.

Q: C-Can you remember that?

A: Before the war, when Hitler came to the power, after years, of course we have stories about anti-Semitism there, about -- even, I think, Kristallnacht [indecipherable]. We were ver -- very afraid if the Nazis will come, if Germany will come here. And as soon as they hear that the war start, a lot of people run away to Russia. Luta's family run away to rush -- and they went until Minsk, and they didn't allow them to go through the -- through the border. And they returned when the Germans were there, they returned little by little back to their homes, because they couldn't go through, and then they went through the whole ghetto, and --

Q: Let me -- did you ever hear Hitler on the radio? Do you remember hearing him on the radio?

A: Hitler?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: No, no, I could -- I -- I don't remember what we know. A lot was going on in the -- Germany. And we saw the situation in Poland like they start to be like Nazis. Not everybody, but especially between the students, and --

Q: How do you explain that, that young people did it at first? Students standing outside of shops, that -- that sounds so unusual.

A: Yes, yes, yes, yes. Not the socialist, but they have to choose between the Russia and Germany, and they like better the ru -- German. They didn't expect what will happen, you know? Then, when they lost the war right away, the situation changed.

Q: Was there ever any discussion in your family as the war drew closer, or began, of -- of hiding people, perhaps even further out in -- in the countryside, or --

A: But the Polish people were very afraid. They were very scared, because there were several situations that they show -- they hang th-this Pole for hiding a Jew, or -- and they show it on the market openly, the people saw it --

Q: In Wilna?

A: -- and they were afraid, yeah. They were afraid. And then, when the people went to the ghetto, most of the people didn't believe that it will be for long. They said a couple weeks and the war will be ended. And all their goods they put to the Polish people, and then they didn't want to give it -- it back. So they were happy, others thought, oh, they were nice people, too. And I think if we would burn everything what we have, that the people would be nicer to us. Secondly, I'll tell you, when the Russians came, the Jews were happy. I'll to -- I told you, they thought they'll have finally their freedom. They'll can study, they'll can be like the -- all the people, like it was in the very beginning, in spite that the -- the situation was hard to leave, that they were poorer or whatever. But they had a little bit their freedom in the very fa -- beginning. And -- and the Poles saw how they were happy with that. And the reality was different. After two or three years the politics changed there. Maybe that was the reason. But there were nice people also. I have in our mill, when we went into the ghetto, for seven months or for a year, I worked on a farm five miles from our home, early before the war. And we have a person who were working in our mill. He was a -- a bachelor and -- and he saw me once that I am going with a

[indecipherable] on the middle of the street with another 200 people to the farm. For an hour, for an hour and a half we march until we came to work, to nine o'clock. This person saw me once and all of a sudden I see that he is going with a package behind our -- our group, and he is going for five miles, until they -- they find a situation and they start to go to the end to talk to him. He was afraid, but he gave me the package, bread with a bottle of milk, and disappeared. Every day until I worked there, this person, a Polish boy who worked for us for a couple of years, did it. I would never expect that this person can be moved. It too --

Q: What was his name?

A: Hi-His name was Mironchik, but I don't know the last name. I meet him after the war, he was still the same bachelor living wa -- in one of the rooms in our house, poor, of course. I came, I supported him, and then he came to me in the end, maybe a five years because I left, he said, I want to get the -- to get a pension and I can't get a pension because I don't have enough years, but I worked for your father for a lot of years, maybe for 10 years, but I don't have anything from them. Maybe you can come and tell. And I came and tell. I didn't want to tell that we were capitalists, that we have a store because [indecipherable] it was not rich, we were very low middle class because I have a lot of -- you know. But I went and he said, he worked for your father, your father had -- I said, yes, my father in that time was sick and he couldn't work by himself, and he took this person for -- and I remember him very well. I want very much him to get the pension. And -- and I can guarantee that he work for the 10 years, and -- and he believed me, and he got the pension. I was happy that I can -- of course I gave him money, I gave what to wear after the war when my situation was better. But, that I could do by him this thing, because he was really a simple person, but he was -- he had a heart. Can you imagine that in the ghetto he brought in a half a loaf of bread with a bottle of milk? Maybe it saved the life during the hunger.

It was not so easy to get in with it to the ghetto, but somehow I hide it in -- between my pants, somehow came, if I could. If I saw that some Germans had -- staying to the entrance -- to the entrance of the ghetto, we can go around on the middle of the [indecipherable] for hours until we saw that it's cleared up and we can get in to put in the little thing that we have, we worked on a garden, they gave us a little bit carrots and potatoes and -- to put in somehow hide it. And we can do it only if nobody works with -- only was a Jewish policeman at the entrance of the ghetto. So I s -- we saw there were Polish -- Polish, were lot of people. Luta will also tell you a story about the people who worked in her house for -- for many years, and how they helped.

Q: Okay, let's stop now.

A: We are a little --

End of Tape One

Beginning Tape Two

Q: Before we begin s-speaking about the changes in the ghetto, can you tell us about your friend, who you call Luta, that's her nickname, but tell us her name, and then tell us how you first met her.

A: Luta's name was Sulamit Shrey -- Shreyber. I was in one school with her brother Josef. Her brother was a class higher than me. We were the same age, but he was a class before. In 1939 we were at the summer house in a place called Nemencheny, and there, the place we were, were three houses. In one lived Luta's family, in one was -- in the second was the family of my brother-in-law from Warsaw, and the third house was ours. And in that time, as I told you, the children and the grandchildren of my mother and her children from Warsaw came and also stay with us at the hou -- summer house.



Q: Luba?

A: Luba and Riva, but when -- with their husband. Well -- but when their vacation finished and they have to return to Warsaw, the children were staying with us. And we were very friendly with the family of Shreyber, with Luta's family. And her father was the director of a technical school, and my sister, being in the last year in high school, also took courses in the technical. So her father knew very well my sister and my brother-in-law. And we were young people, and they were very friendly with her brother. And she was a little girl in that time. She is five years younger than me, was a very beautiful girl and we all like her, but I was friends with her brother, with Josef. And then the war start, and with the last train we send the children to Warsaw to their parent, because my mo-mother believed the children has to be with their parent, and that Warsaw was the safest place in Poland. And then the war starts, and everybody went to their own place, and as there were the pact between Molotov and -- and Hitler and Poland was divide, Wilna start to be Russia, Lithuanian, and Warsaw was cut off. And then we start a normal life. We were going back to school in '39, and sa -- we very happy with us, as each other, I start to date her brother, and we meet every evening in -- in school. And he was coming to our house, and I was going to their house, instead what we would live in different corners of the city. And '99 was a very happy year, and before 1940, until '41 when the war started in Russia and Germany.

Q: When Wilna was divided, when Wilna became part of Russia, what were the changes that you experienced? Can you talk a little bit about that, in the city?

A: Yes. First of all, they took out the property of the rich people. And then everybody start to work, to find something -- work. The ch -- they make changes in the school system, as I told you, this was gymnasium, and al -- they make 10 - 11 classes, and that's it. Everybody -- everything start to be in Russian, Russian -- Russian was the main language, with a little bit Yiddish,

because it was hard to go through. There was no anti-Semitism, there was -- the people were very nice there, one who came in the beginning, but you saw that they were -- they didn't know the -- the life that we have before in Poland. The soldiers, everybody who came from Russia, they empty out right away all the stores. In the beginning, the owners of the store was happy because before business wasn't going so well. And then, all of a sudden people start to buy -- buy everything. They bought nightgowns and went to the [indecipherable] in them, and th-the -- the wives of the soldiers, of the officers who came to Wilna. And -- but then they saw that okay, they're buying everything, but they don't have where to buy new stuff, to hold the business. So they were a little bit scary. And then, after awhile, they start to pick up the rich people, send to Siberia. And they organized the youth to help them, the [indecipherable] and there were a lot of Jewish people also involved with the [indecipherable] that they didn't know, they believed them. And they were very upset. They took them to homes, and told the people to pack -- pack bag, they're going on -- on the tracks to the trains and they're going somewhere to rau -- to -- to Siberia, to Russia, and -- and people were upset, why, what? But finally it was good for them because the one they took out, they survive the war, and the one who stayed got killed, mostly. Most of them were killed by the Germans. But in -- the time being, it was horrible. People who were not rich, they had a little store maybe, they suffered for surviving with the little store, all of a sudden they get the [indecipherable] they get -- rich people they have to go out, Capitalists they have to go out of the city. And they send them far away, deep in Russia, and it was very sad.

Q: Wh-Wha -- was your family afraid that you would be labeled rich afterwards?

A: Yes, yes. But they didn't touch us. We were not enough rich to -- we have the mill, we have the house, but we were -- you know, have a lot of loans to pay, so we have problems. And all of -

- all of the family start to work -- to work, you know, hard. My sisters, and -- and I was study in school.

Q: But you continued to go to school?

A: Yes, until the war started between Russia and Germany when they cut off the schools and everything. And I was dating Josef all this time, we were very good friends, and the families were friends.

Q: Tell us a little bit about him.

A: He was a brilliant student. She was a very good person, he was intelligent and an aristocrat. I was very in love with [indecipherable]. And we were study in school, were meeting in school, and after school he used to take me home. And then in the evening we meet aga -- again, we never have enough of each other. And we were good friends, and when we came into the ghetto, or to the ghetto later -- the first year was quiet, and then I was working in a farm. Before I worked in Judenrat, do something, and they want to go out from the ghetto, it's very hard for to stay all the time. And I went to work for a farm and he went to work, to Gestapo. On the ho -- on the yard of Gestapo, doing all kind of cleaning something -- he was very capable, so he did for them in the -- in their workshop something, in the -- I don't know what. And it start to build up in the ghetto, Wilna partisan organization.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Before it was organized, it took a little time in the ghetto, and then the youth people of all organizations, Zionist, and Bundist and communist, who belongs to the youth organization [indecipherable] young people, and religious, and they get together and they start to think how to fight, what to do. Not to go like -- they saw the people disappear, disappeared from the ghetto, and before the ghetto and they didn't return. And they start to think about organize something in

the ghetto, and whoever works outside the ghetto, wherever they have a situation to bring in some weapons, to -- to have something, in case. And he worked in the [indecipherable] of the Gestapo, and somehow he had the possibility to take from them something. And he -- it was very dangerous I remember, until I saw him again coming from work, from out the ghetto, knowing that he is carrying something. I was very, very scared. And [indecipherable] organization.

Q: Mm-hm. [indecipherable] to the -- to the ghetto, can -- can you tell us -- it was established in the fall of '41, correct?

A: Yes, the fall '41, or the begi -- yes, on the beginning of '42.

Q: So the months before that, what was going on? Let's say the spring and the summer before, how were things changing?

A: I will start with the beginning order --

Q: Okay.

A: -- of the ge -- how it come to the ghetto before. After a -- as soon as the Germans came into Wilna, they surround themselves with the [indecipherable] of the population. And what do I mean? The thieves, the bandits, the -- the one in the -- in every yard has a -- a cleaning person or were -- who were different, some were good and some were bad. But it was the bad people they surround. Because how they knew who is a Jew, and who not. I for example was blonde, and the blue eyes in the beginning and who could tell? If the person who saw me or knew me, that was just [indecipherable]. After a week they start to catch men on the street. Men -- they ever saw a man, and they said he is Jewish, they caught him to a party, and put a party of 150 people, and they disappeared. And they said to take with them a towel and a piece of soap. Later on I'll tell you, I find out after the war for what it was. And people start disap -- the men start disappearing. Or they ring in an apartment, if a man opened the door, he may be in slippers, he may be without

a shirt. They gave him a [indecipherable] they came over with three or five people to a door, and get him out -- out to the street, and they disappeared. Before that, a week after the Germans came in -- five days after they came in, they find out who are the leader -- the Jewish leaders of the si - - because what did the population -- what do they know, the whole population? They are living their normal life and that's it. But there were leaders who had big positions, who had -- can say a word to government about their people, who can stand up from the -- the first thing they came, they picked up 60 famous people and they shot them right away. Was several people of my friends. So there were nobody to tell the world what -- wh-what happened to the Jews, get th-the famous people who -- like famous doctors or famous lawyers, or famous politicians. And there were a lot because this was a big Jewish community. Wilna, who had in that time 400 -- 250 population, 74 of the population were Jewish. It means a third of the population are Jewish people.

Q: H-How did you hear about that, the leaders?

A: I knew it, I knew it. Right away people knew.

Q: You did?

A: Of course. It was a Dr. Ragovski, and Ailitch and Kaplan Gablanksi, it was famous people in the [indecipherable] who always stand up for the Jewish people and have connections with the government. There were even people who were in the same. And they disappeared, they were shot. So the population get with less people, and le -- and without leaders. Then, after three weeks, it was a rumor that in the Jewish center of the city, there was a Jewish center, a small streets, with big buildings in a yard, maybe with four buildings, not the rich people, were Jewish peop -- it the Jewish center. Most of the Jewish people were living there, all the -- the cleaning people were not the Jewish [indecipherable]. And all of a sudden it was a rumor that in that area

a German was shot. And in one night they came in and they cleaned up everybody from the area. It was about six, 7,000 people. And they made it so fast, right from the bat on the street. They could be in the nightgowns, it was out sleeper [indecipherable]. A lot of people came from the bandit, from the soldier, Lithuanian, Germans were, and they throw it out the middle of the street, and when all the area was empty up, they went out and they took them to Ponary. Ponary was a beautiful forest behind Wilna, and they shot them. After a week, they established a ghetto. They were going from all areas of the city, it was five boroughs, and going from home to home. Put them everybody on the street, and they were driven to the ghetto. For example, into our house, my father, before that, was taken -- we called them the harponi. They caught, they harped mans, and he was taken to such a party with the men, and he was an old man, he was in the -- in that time 67 years old. But my mother, she was very energetic, she was going after them and asking, and -- let him go back, let him go back, he's an old man, what do you want to -- and finally they let him go back. After that, it was establish a camp -- a five miles after our area where we lived, for turf, work with the turf, you know what's turf? Turf is earth, and they worked it up. And then it was like to heat the ovens like coal, like --

Q: Limestone?

A: Stuff for heating up, it was coal, coal --

Q: Okay, okay.

A: -- [indecipherable] in English also. And it was establish such a camp, so -- and my father and my brother-in-law was taken to this camp, the -- it was behind [indecipherable] it was called Rasha. And they were working a lot of people at that, three, 400 people were working on the camp in the Rasha. So when -- when we were driven to the ghetto, my father and my brother-in-law wasn't there. But it was as I remember, my sister lived -- has an apartment in our yard, in the

other building, with a little child of two years. And in our home I was with my mother with another sister. And it was about three o'clock at night, and all of a sudden we heard that somebody is knocking in the door. And seven, eight people; one soldier, one German, one Lithuanian, some other people, first -- first we have you in 50 minutes you have to go, take whatever you have -- can took in your hand, and go out to the street. We -- the only thing was we did in the 50 minutes, that the best things were put to our neighbors. And my sister took the child, she took the wagon of the child, she put in the wagon whatever and the child and we put some -- it was September, it was hot. We even didn't think about the winter, and we took whatever we had, other things we hide and then some were in the basement, some were [indecipherable] and we went out to the street.

Q: Let me just stop you there. From the time they knocked on the door, can you des -- describe even in more detail who did what, was your mother in charge, who ran next to the neighbor, what did you give them?

A: My mother and my sister would give us our line and our dresses, our winter coats out, whatever we can took from the closet [indecipherable] and to the -- especially to [indecipherable] she wi -- she was living there for 20 years. So then they went -- so we came into the ghetto.

Q: So how did you get there, did you walk?

A: We walk. We walked in the middle of the street, the whole part until the end of the street, it was a long street. And they were go -- when I came in, lots of people were staying with the -- their packages, with the children, with the -- waiting until everybody will go out. And then when they empty out all the houses, nobody can be leaved -- left in the house, there were too many. And we went to the ghetto. And from different boroughs in the same day, they bring the people to the ghetto. And we came in, we find -- me and my mother and my sister and my little nephew,

my second sister, we came to a yard who my school was. And we find a corner in a little room, because it was lots, lots of people. And th -- in a room who was one person or a -- maybe 20 - 25 people, everybody has a little corner, a little middle to -- to sit down. And after awhile it starts then -- it starts to organize stores, little -- for people to give that -- to have some cards that we can have some bread, some butter. It was organized before, potatoes they give us [indecipherable] can be, somehow to survive. And they start to organize groups to go out for work on some places where the soldiers are, on gardens, on some plants, on some -- somewhere to work and people went out -- some were working inside the ghetto from the very beginning. After maybe three weeks in the ghetto, it was Yom Kippur or maybe after a month. All of a sudden were rumors in ghetto, that this night the Germans will ke -- come for people. And they make all kinds of lists, and the lists were done in my area where I lived and my sister has a friend who were a Jewish policeman in the ghetto, and he s -- and somehow she find out that I were in the lists. So she said, what should I do? She said, I will cross her out. But better that she will not stay at home, because they were ta -- they will take people from this area in ta -- in case they didn't have enough, they can take from the one who are close [indecipherable]. And I went to my boyfriend, to meet Luta. She lived in Shtrashona too -- Shtrashona, I don't remember exactly the number, but it was a yard and four big buildings. And in every building, in every apartment, who normally lived a family of three or five, lived 40. in one part. And the Germans came in the middle of the night, it was Yom Kippur, it was raining, it was cold, it was terrible conditions, people were sleeping, everything was going on in the middle of the night. And they didn't go to the area they promised, they didn't look at a list, they came to one street, where my boyfriend and I was hiding and they surrounded two big buildings. In every yard was four big buildings. And they picked up the people and they took them everybo -- I remember they came to my -- to our



apartment and Luta's father said, should we take some food, so -- some thing, some food. You want you can take, you don't want you can take, you can take a piece of bread, was strange. And they took us out to the main street of the ghetto, Rudnitska. And Luta, she was all the time out of the ghetto, but this time she came to the ghetto for awhile. She was 13 years old in that time. And we came to Rudnitska, a lot of people were staying already, driven out from the house, and we were staying in the party, and Luta start, she was -- they f -- and the father said, "You young, you will be taken to work, I don't know about us, but" -- she said, "No, we're -- all will be killed. They are taking us to kill there." And she start -- and her mother was scared from her shouting up. And the mother knew perfect German. And in charge of the whole -- of the whole German, the people who took care of the whole party was in black -- in a black suit with a swastika [indecipherable] head with the -- with the --

Q: Hat?

A: -- all kind of the signs. And she went to him and she says, my husband is an engineer, and my husband lives in the Judenrat, let him out, where are you taking us? And he pushed us away. She went a second time to him, let us go, my husband is an engineer, my husband works for the Judenrat, my husband did this and my husband [indecipherable]. Let us go home. He pushed us again. She went five times, and the Lithuanian soldier came and gave her a push and she fall down and then she came back to us and she said, is nothing I can do, or they don't listen to me, what should we do? And we were staying upset, prepared to go with all the [indecipherable]. All of a sudden, the German in the black, who was in charge of the whole a -- goes through the older group of the people, said, "Where is the frau from Judenrat?" [indecipherable]. "Who is the woman from the Judenrat?" One person came, he said, "No it's not you." Then another person, no it's not you. And we were staying not thinking about anything, and he came, "You," to her

mother. "Take your family and stay next to me." We took our family, and some other people came like they are the family, and we were staying next to him, and the Lithuanian soldier don't want us to stay next to him, and they pushed us again. And -- and we tried to stay next to him, and they pu -- then th -- he said to them, "Let them -- let them stay, don't touch them. And he go after me and he went unti -- we went with him until the end of the whole group of people. And we saw that he was counting, one, two, three, four, 900 -- 900 -- 998, and he give a short mark with the hand, go forward with the whole group surround by all the [indecipherable]. And to us he said, "You can go home, you are saved." It was maybe five o'clock in the morning, 5:30, it was dark, it was raining, we were wet. And all the soldiers are looking, how come your -- you understand, the Germans are a very accurate. If they have to take 998 people, they'll never take 999. They'll take 998 like they were told. And it was a little bit more, and maybe the mother came to his mind that she was bothering him, bothering him, said ah, anyway, some people has to be left, let the woman with the family be left. Somehow it came to his mind. No explanation. I am sure, instead of us went somebody else, because he needed the amount of the people. So we - - and another maybe 10 were left over. They have more as they need. And we came back -- we didn't go back right away, we went to our basement, we were trembling all, and we were downs -- and it was raining very much, we went to the first basement and hide, and everybody was looking at us. And we came back to our place we lived. The light were on, all the apartment were empty from the two yards, from the eight big buildings, w-we are the only one who return from it. And when we came back in the morning I saw my family, my mother and my sister, with the child of her hand, crying. That they know -- they knew that I went there to sleep over, and they knew that people from there were sent to the -- they all were sent to Ponar and Vershat. And after the war when I go -- went to Ponar, I saw the place there was -- they were shot, and they fen --

find out who they were because after the war people take out this and they saw this or this skeletons, and that. Why, when they picked up the mans on the st -- the man on the street, and the man from the houses, why did they tell them to take a towel and soap? When they bore them to Ponary, to the forest where they killed them, they made a big hole, and put a disk over the hole. And the people -- the man were a little bit far away. One after the other, and they have to binch their eyes. And one by one they put them to this hole, through -- when they came to the disk, they shot them, and they fall to their hole. In one side or the other where they shot until the end, or half alive. Nobody came from there back, you know [indecipherable]. But this -- this way they told them to take a towel and a piece of soap, not to under -- the piece of soap not understand and the towel to be in their eyes, not to see the last moment of their death. You have one, I told you that an accident. I could be [indecipherable] what come to his mind, to save this woman with her family, I don't know.

Q: At that point what did -- how did people understand what was happening?

A: They didn't --

Q: Did you understand that -- that -- that you were taken --

A: They didn't know, they said they are taken to a camp for work. They are -- were lying terrible, people -- later on people understood, and I'll tell you a little bit later about it. Otherwise it finished. In that time, my mother was hiding somewhere, and they didn't find her. No, in this time they di -- she didn't hide, because they picked up the two buildings and this area where my mother was, they didn't -- they didn't touch anybody from there. But after awhile was another -- another story. It went another two months quiet, people were working, people were eating, the young people were laughing, you know it -- you -- you -- young people, they want to live. There were secret schools where the young people were educated. About Luta's father she'll tell he --

you by herself, how he organized a school for students, for people to -- to learn something.

Young people they have what to do. And it was so -- everything secretly because th-the Germans didn't want people to -- to learn, to study, to -- they want only to work, whatever they could, not to -- and the Jewish people want to study, they want to learn. They want to like literature and the -- them -- organize the [indecipherable]. Th -- they di -- they want to live. But about her father, you're a -- she will tell you hers-herself. There was another -- another action. We call it action when there were rumors that the Germans are coming for people. All of a sudden they find out that people who are working have to have pink certificates. And the pink certificates were given at the work where the people -- at the working place where the people worked. Like my boyfriend worked in Gestapo, he got such a schein. They were -- called it a schein, a pink schein. Some people from the ghetto who worked in the ghetto in Judenrat have so -- pink schein. And these pink scheins were [indecipherable]. And the person with a pink schein can des-describe to him a wife and children before 16. My boyfriend jo -- Josef has such a schein, and he want to describe me as his wife. But we lived together with -- with his cousin, a woman who was more than 30. And then his father ask him, you know what, Rochola is so young, she can go with my daughter of 16, but Dina is old, and she can't go with my [indecipherable]. Can't you describe Dina as your wife? And I will describe Rochola as my daughter, because he also has a pink schein from the Judenrat.

Q: Rochola was your nickname?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: In Yiddish they called me Rochola.

Q: Rochola, okay.

A: Yeah. And then [indecipherable] 17, I was still Rochola, lot of people called me until now Rochola. My other sister was described to another person as -- as his wife and my other sister also find a guy who describe her as her wife.

Q: So people were essentially sort of listing friends or relatives as their wives and children?

A: Y-Yeah -- not -- not that.

Q: To keep them safe?

A: You know, some people has -- had pink schein and they didn't have anybody, they were bachelors, or what. So if they know each other, they describe them as a wife, and went out with them as a wife. My mother didn't have such a -- and she -- she didn't have a hiding place, and she was still in the ghetto. And my sister was with her all the time looking, something for her. And she left her of five minutes, she has to go to somebody, ask if they have for her a hiding place. And my mother saw that she is -- my sister will not leave her alone, and she was [indecipherable] what should she do. And she has in her pocket a couple of da -- of rubles, of money. She said, I have to meet her in five minutes, but I'll try to go to the exit. Maybe somehow I will go out [indecipherable]. And she went to the exit -- no, I'll tell you about -- later how she went out. My sister returned to the place where my mother has to meet her, my mother didn't return. She come to there, where is my mo -- I can't find the mother. And she was crying and I was crying and we're looking for my mother, my mother disappeared. We went to the working place, and to the places where they put us. They put us to the other ghetto, before it was two ghettos, from one side of the street and from the other, and all of a sudden they liquidated one ghetto. And they put them to the Ponary. And in that ghetto they liquidated the [indecipherable] and the people from the ghetto out, somewhere out to the places where they're working and some were to the second ghetto wa -- what was empty out, for the couple of days.

And I was wer -- crying. My mother wi -- I didn't know where she is, she was killed, she was shot, or -- all the three day -- three days we were in the other place. My friend Josef was working for the Gestapo -- the Gestapo [indecipherable] yeah, doing all kind of -- of hard work. And he has a Polish woman who worked in their house for 40 years. And she used to come to him where he worked, every day. And he went out -- we were in the second ghetto, and he went out for the w-work every day. And he knew how I was crying and he told Vera, the woman, what happened to my mother, and the -- and they don't know where she is, and Rochola is crying all the time. She said, "You know what, I'll go to the place where she was living before the war, maybe somehow she went out of here." She went to the place when -- where I lived, and she find a letter from my mother, that she gave some money to the policeman and he let her out. She took out her stars, and she went out the place to the camp my father and my brother-in-law was all -- almost working at the [indecipherable]. And she went by our house where we lived before, and she -- she saw that we will be concerned, and she left a letter that she's safe and she went to my father. And this woman, Vera, risk of her life, and she went there -- she went -- and next day she brought my boyfriend Josef the letter from my mother, and he brought it in the second ghetto, and telling that my mama is alive and she is together with my father on to -- in the [indecipherable]. We returned after awhile to the ghetto to find that lots of, lots of people were taken out. They said that they take that -- took them to work. They said that they -- they are alive. But somehow thoughts came in that people who are alive, they may be surround with the -- with the worst enemies, but somehow one of the thousands, thousands of people can find a connection and send something to the relatives, a sign that they are alive. If such signs doesn't come from anybody, it means that they are not alive. But people, they don't believe in this, they'll believe in life. They said, maybe, maybe they are working like we, they are somewhere, they are surround

by the soldiers, they can't send anything. And they -- you know, they think that they are killed, but in the underground they said that they are still alive and they can't believe that people can kill people. For what? We were in the ghetto another year, and it was all kind of feelings, feelings. A couple of people worked for a plant somewhere. All of a sudden we heard they didn't return from work. They took them out to the yard and shot them, couple of hundred people. A couple of hundred people worked somewhere in Bilavarka around Wilna, also in turf, and they disappeared, they didn't return home after work to the ghetto, they were killed. They said they send them to another camp, but no, they were killed. One time it were maybe a -- of -- over two years, or a year and three quarters living in the ghetto, there were rumors that all the people from the -- from the shtetla -- from the towns that surround Wilna were bringing to the Wilna ghetto. And from the Wilna ghetto they are going to Kovno, it was a city in Lithuanian, to build a big plant, a big factory. And people came from the -- you know, from the little towns around Wilna and they looked good, and they were -- were good dressed yet, and they came with all families, with the old and with the sick and with the little children. They were about four and a half thousand people, and they all came to the ghetto. And they made a lot of friends they were study in the school, because our gymnasium was the only one in Poland with the Yiddish language, who had right for coming in after finishing to go to the university. So from all Poland, people used to come to our school. And some of these people from the shtetla were in school, I knew them and they looked well, because you know, in the little shtetla they are [indecipherable] air is good, and th -- and they were for a week in the ghetto, and -- and they were [indecipherable] and we saw that, and after a week they said that the trains are ready and they are going to Kovno to the -- to view the factory. And everybody was going by themselves without things. They are going to build a plant. They went to the wagons [indecipherable] with their kids and older people and

the -- and the sick and all kind, and when they all get in, they thought that the wagons were [indecipherable] they were closed with not to get out. They said why are they bombing the -- the trains? The wagons that we ge -- we are going by ourself. We are told to go and we are going, why should we be closed? And they were chec -- they were watching, and a lot of people, young people, they know the area. They know how to go to Kovno. And -- and they thought all of a sudden they are going to the forest from Ponar. So it was clear of them that they were not going to by -- but they were -- are going to shot them. Then they broke the windows of the going train, and they start to jump through the windows, whoever could, all over the forest. As soon as the Germans and the Nazi they saw it, they start to shot. And the whole forest was shot with dead people. Very little could run out and survive, very little. Mostly they were shot. And the whole forest were with the dead, shot people. So tomorrow they came to the ghetto and they told the story, the German. And they asks Gens, Gens was in charge of the ghetto, to give him men to clean up the forest. They were afraid to show the other people what they did. So they want the people and they guaranteed Gens. And Gens -- you know who Gens was, yeah, had a big power. So the German. And he guarantee that the people --

Q: Jacob Gens.

A: What?

Q: Jacob Gens.

A: Yeah, Jacob Gens. And they guaranteed that the people who did the work of cleaning up the forest will return, that they will not be shot. But [indecipherable] these people were the [indecipherable] who were taken to clean up the [indecipherable]. He came back. He promi -- that what he promised, he did, the people came back. They were all -- they find a lot of friends. They told them to pick up of the dead people the teeth, the golden teeth, the jewelry, the --



whatever they can. If they have good shoes, the shoes, da, da, da. It was terrible, and put into them [indecipherable] dead [indecipherable] half dead [indecipherable] you know. And it was 4000 people, and to put them to the holes, to put with the -- all kinds of stuff to burn. And when the people came back, some were crazy, they couldn't [indecipherable] and they told the real story. And that's what the story is, we find out what is Ponary, and where all the people were gone. When I came back from the concentration camp, the first thing I went to was [indecipherable] to the Ponary, and I find out all the places where was the this, the -- the man who were, the beginning of the war taken from the city, and this people, and the other people, and from [indecipherable] night where we were inside. And the children all of a sudden they picked up all the children until 16 years, and they put them in big trucks, and the kids didn't know, they even were singing on the trucks, they are taking them to a camp for a couple of months. And they took them to Ponary and they sho -- shot them. It helped me out of a -- to save Luta one time. I'll tol -- tell you another story when we got to the camp. And that was the story and in the end, and -- and the FPO organization to which I belong to the ef -- I came to the FPO much later than my boyfriend. It was very cyclically and they were afraid, they were afraid not only for the Germans, they were afraid for the Jewish population because the Jewish population were against -- if you fight, they will kill all the ghetto. Otherwise, some will survive. And everybody was thinking, if somebody will be -- will survive, it will be me. Not another, but me. They were thinking with the -- you know, people don't believe in death, as I told you.

Q: Rachel, when you heard about the -- the -- the people from shtetls who were killed in the forest, was that one of the first times that it -- you really began to realize what was going on?

A: Lots of people, yes.

Q: C-Can you talk a bit about that, I mean, do you remember what you were thinking, or how it dawned on you?

A: It was very terrible. When his cousin -- her cousin came, I had told her the story, and the -- all my friends who I meet two days ago, were shot on such a -- and you know, it was very terrible, but what can we do? What can we -- the [indecipherable] we -- we didn't have a place to hide, nobody would take us. Where should we go? And there lo -- then, all of a sudden, and the [indecipherable] organization, a couple of hundreds people, we prepared some lamps with -- with stuff who can -- who can shut out, you know, in case when the Germans look and we'll throw whatever we have in the hands and we'll fight. It was very hard to get connections with the people from the forest. We were alone. And until we get a connection to take out some people in the forest. It took a lot of time. A lot, a lot of time. And finally people saw that this is nonsense, to fight against the German where we don't have any weapons. When we don't have military people to rule us. And we're thinking about the forest [indecipherable] but how? And all of a sudden, it was maybe a month before the liquidation of the Wilna ghetto, yes, and we in the partisan organization of the ghetto, every night some people were sleeping in the apartments whose window go out -- outside the ghetto, little, little pieces, and they have watch. If they saw that soldiers are surrounding the ghetto, they have to come to their leaders and say the parole Lisaroft. Lisaroft was the parole of [indecipherable]. I was --

Q: That would be the head?

A: Yes, yes --

Q: Lisaroft?

A: Lisaroft.

Q: Okay.

A: [indecipherable]. And they find out that tomorrow they are coming for people. And they said, okay, took whatever you have and go on some places that was chosen, that we'll fight from the places. And you wait until it will be the -- it will tell you somehow, start when the ta -- when the Germans will come, and the -- and the Lithuanian. The morning they came over the places and said you have to go, and me [indecipherable], and my boyfriend Josef. [indecipherable] this will be your place when you start to take over [indecipherable] the lamps with the -- with the stuff that arouse how -- how you -- can I say?

Q: Oh, is this a Molotov cocktail?

A: Yes, a cocktail.

Q: Something that you throw?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And you throw and -- and we were staying waiting. I was next to Josef. All of a sudden the Germans and the Lithuanian and the group of -- of 12 or 15 people, together with one of our leaders, came to the yard and they said, don't fight [indecipherable] in Russia -- in Yiddish [indecipherable]. Don't fight. Whatever you have, put -- they are taking you to Estonia for work. And we decided not to fight.

Q: You decided not to fight?

A: Not to -- we didn't have -- they didn't tell us. We can't do it by ourself.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: We're waited for --

Q: You waited for the order.

A: -- for the order of the -- above --

Q: The resistance leaders.

A: -- of our leaders in the resistance and one of them came and said, don't. You are --

Q: Oh, one of the resistance leaders came and said don't?

A: One of the resistance -- they decided in the last minute not to fight --

Q: Oh.

A: -- but the population was so angry that before of -- that several hundred of you, how many were we, 400, the whole ghetto will be shot. And our leader was [indecipherable] up,

Wittenberg, the -- the main leader of the FPO. And we didn't have a choice, put it down, and --

Q: Can you wait to --

A: -- we all went to the middle of the --

Q: Please stop for a second now. We're just going to change tapes.

End of Tape Two

### Beginning Tape Three

Q: So -- so let's pick up with that story. You're describing a night where some people in the resistance movement were going to have an action, you were going to rebel.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And you were all ready, and you were waiting for the order.

A: Yes, and we didn't have the order.

Q: Let's pick up there, you didn't have the order.

A: The order. And all of a sudden, my boyfriend Josef said why, why can't you fight?

[indecipherable] them whatever we have. We will -- we'll die, we'll die, but we'll do something.

But without an order you can't do, we were told do -- do -- don't do anything without an order.

And the order come because they decided all of a sudden to go out to the forest, not to fight in there. But it was too late. Until they find the connections, until they decide that the -- until the story for it -- for itself.

Q: Do you think -- did you agree with your boyfriend that -- with Josef, do you think you should have fought?

A: Yes, yes, yes. I wouldn't be alive, but you know. I don't know, I do -- I really don't know.

From the other side, they would kill us in -- in a second and then what use? What use, they would kill us, kill the others people, and what use? Their decision will -- was already made.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: They liquidate the Jewish people in the ge -- in the Wilna ghetto. And we have rumors from Warsaw what's doing there, and my brother-in-law was one of the leaders of the -- of the resistant of Warsaw ghetto. And they heard -- being in the ghetto they were killed. They didn't know exactly how and what. After -- after the war I find out that my sister is still alive.

Q: At this point, where is your mother, and do you have any contact with her?

A: She was still in Rasha at the turf.

Q: Okay.

A: But the last month they brought there from the turf in the ghetto. In the last month she was in the ghetto. But I was still with Josef's family, that was -- I'll tell you soon.

Q: And can you talk a little bit more about how you be -- at least became part of the resistance group? Did -- did you have any meetings, were they secret meetings, how did they train you?

A: Ye-Yeah -- yeah, I'll tell you, I will tell you. I came late to the resistance. [indecipherable] end -- we were meeting, five of us, five girls has one leader from the [indecipherable]. And they were -- told us what to do, what we can do. I can't do too much because I was inside of the ghetto. I couldn't bring weapons. But one of our friend, he was a chemist, he was almost of the fifth grade of university [indecipherable] and the tel -- taught how to make the cocktail for --

Q: He was a chemist?

A: -- and we're hi -- yeah -- and we're hiding and trying to do and once a week before, we also want to resist -- a week? Two days before. And we were gathered in a building of strashunatur. And in the last minute we heard that the Germans are going to destroy this building. And this was an order fast to go out from the building. And one on our -- -- on our friends has a cocktail lamp in his hand, and he running from the [indecipherable] then he fall down and he was killed with his own lamp in his hand. And then we were -- he was a boyfriend of my close friend. And we went to look him for the -- no, it was in the same day that we were on [indecipherable] resistant. And we find out -- we find him in the morgue and -- house that he is dead, and we recognize his jacket, he was covered. And then, when everybody went out, they destroy the building, a big building. Somehow they find out --

Q: Who -- who destroyed the building? The Germans?

A: The Germans, yeah. But the people went out, he was the only one killed by himself because he fall down with the face on his cocktail lamp, and he was killed, a young, nice boy. And here where we were up in the -- were the -- one of our leaders came, telling us not to fight. They said throw out whatever you have in the hand on the side, we -- that we did, and go to the middle of the yard. We went to the middle of the yard, and they separate the women from the boys. And we want to go w-with them, and they didn't allow it, and they took the boys and they took them to a place, and later on they went to Estonia, and with this group went Josef my friend, and I came back without him. And you could see that's the end of the ghetto. And after that they organized all kinds of group, promising Gens -- Jacob Gens, that they are going to Estonia for work. What they did, they send the people to Estonia and they work. The -- Josef was in Estonia, also maybe for a year and worked. Then the -- the -- the -- the last day of the war, when they saw that the war is lost, they shot them all and killed. Only a couple was hiding, maybe eight, nine people, and they survived. And they shot them all, and they didn't have enough time to burn them, and when the Soviet army came, they find the people in the -- and the one who survived saw everybody. And there was her father, and because when they liquidated the ghetto --

Q: Luta's father, and Josef.

A: -- and yes, and Josef. And my father and my -- because they -- when they liquidated the ghetto, yeah -- and that was three weeks before the liquidation from ghetto. Then nobody went out for work, and then some partisans group went out to -- partisan. Maybe a couple of hundred people, yeah. And how did they get out? Jacob Gens was sure that some people, with his connections, with his power with the Germans, he will survive a-at least a couple of thousand people from the ghetto. And he could -- his wife was Lithuanian, his daughter was Lithuanian.

They would hide him very, very fast, together with himself. But he believed very strongly that some people with his -- and in the end, you know the end of him? In the end when the people from the ghetto were -- were taken to the place from where they were taken to Estonia. You know where Estonia is that. From there, I even get a letter from Josef. Yes, somehow it -- he send out that. And Gens came there, maybe the -- to -- to see the people. And all the famous bosses of the ghetto, like Weiss, like Himmler, and -- from the Germans, who were very close, good friends with Jacob, and they listened to him, and -- also came. And Gens came. And then they want to shot th -- him. And one said I can't. Weiss said can't. Himmler said, I can't shot him. And he said, give me the weapon, I'll sign -- shot myself. Then came a stranger who knows him very well, and shot him too, and Gens disappeared. But Gens, Gens was a Lithuanian general during the war. When the communists came, they were looking for him, they want to arrest him. I know very well a woman who were a communist, her name was Hannah Borofska. And Hannah Borofska knows very well Gens. It was before the ghetto, it was th-the -- the Russians came over, and the -- and he came to her, asking her, telling her the story, that the Germans -- that the Russians want to arrest him, and can she help him, to hide him, and she did. And she was a communist, one of the leaders of the partisan organizations. And somehow, she has a connection to him, and whatever she ask him something, he did for her. And he know a [indecipherable]. If you wou -- wi -- he would be enough wise, he would help, little by little to go out, people in the night to the forest. Thousands of people could -- could, even the time when they got the connection. He let them go out, the last couple of week, the last months before so closed door from the ghetto. And ha -- how did they go out, you know, from -- the last group to the partisans, you know? A friend of mine, his name was Kapinski, and he was -- it was



described in somewhere -- he was a [indecipherable]. Before the war, he worked with the canalizations from all the -- so he knows the road, through the canalization.

Q: The tunnels?

A: The tunnels.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: From the whole city. When the whole group of 200 people, 220, went through, he was going through the -- you know, on the street, how so th-th-the round people -- the round places where the people are going to repair the canalization?

Q: The sewer holes.

A: The sewer hole. He went down, and after him the people, and he went with a pump to clean up the water, and people went after him until the [indecipherable] of the city. And when the people went through, he push -- he let the water go again. So little by little they went out. And then they divided in two and three and they have the plan how to go to the forest, and they went to the forest to find a connection with the partisans. Mi --

Q: I want to go back to -- to Jacob Gens --

A: Yes?

Q: -- because he's -- he's an interesting figure --

A: A very interesting figure --

Q: -- as you said, he -- he --

A: -- a very interesting figure.

Q: What -- what did people think about the choice that he made? After all, he was Jewish and he was the head of the Jewish police. So he was the head of the Jewish police in the ghetto.

A: Yeah.

Q: When people talked about him --

A: What did they think --

Q: -- did they respect him, or did they -- did they -- were they angry with him?

A: They afraid of him, but --

Q: Afraid?

A: -- he -- for example -- because he helped to organize all the cleanings from the ghetto from one side, but he didn't have a choice, I think. Otherwise we were -- otherwise he was killed right away and they picked up another one. I'll tell you a story. My sister -- and my family was in Rasha for turf, but they went out in September when the -- it was very hot. And the winter came, and they didn't have a coat, they didn't have anything to wear. So my sister picked up -- said, I'll go to my neighbors, and I will pick up some clothes. And she went, and she picked up -- they gave her something and she came back. Next time, a week later, they didn't have what to eat, so sh -- they -- they sold something of the clothes she bought, and she went to buy something -- the peasants, and she went to buy a chicken or something, and other people saw her, and so the Gestapo -- she was arrested, she was arrested and bring to the prison. And my other sister came to the ghetto somehow, hiding, asking what to do. And we went to the Hannah Borofska. And Hannah Borofska went to Gens asking hi -- her -- because she was a good friend of ours, to pick up my sister some, and he did and she was re -- they let her go out, you know, for awhile. Then it was the liquidation of ghetto, before the liquidation of get -- of the ghetto, they bought every -- all the people from all the [indecipherable] worked with the turf, and the other places to the ghetto, and they liquidated. When -- and we ha -- and us, me and Luta, they didn't took with us through the canalization. And they said it is a big group and we can't go so many people in one time because we will all [indecipherable]. You are not similar Jews, as Jews, and they gave us --

Q: You are not what?

A: Similar as jew -- you can go like Poles, you think al --

Q: Oh, oh, you don't look like Jews.

A: -- we are not look like Jews.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And you can take out your stars, and you have the direction how to go to the forest, and you come by yourself. We were five of us.

Q: They said you were on your own.

A: On our own. But we ge -- they gave us the direction how to go. And the last night, when they gather -- when most the older people were out from the ghetto, we still were looking for a place to go out, yes, and they s -- they told us attic who were connected with the na -- attic of the Aryan side, and in that attic was a hole with a door, go out through the hole to the attic on the other side, and somehow you will divide it in two, and you will go to the forest by your -- yourself. We were looking the whole night for the attic. A whole night five of -- I was, and Luta and other three girls. Five or six of us.

Q: You were in a building just trying to find this secret door inside?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah, in at -- the attic. And it was dark and the attic was very big, and finally we find the -- and one of our girls was very brave and she said, I am running the first -- first, and she runs through the hole, and we heard -- heard [indecipherable] somebody was there, they catched up the hole, and this girl was catched. We don't know what happened to her, we never saw her again. And we start to run back [indecipherable]. And we were trying to go out, we couldn't. So we came back from all the attics to the ghetto street, they were empty. The Ukrainian soldiers were liquidated the Wilna ghetto, and we were trying to find another exit and we couldn't and we

don't know where we are. We are alone, five girls, and don't know what to see. And then somehow somebody goes through, and this is the last of the police, Aryan -- the yard of the Judenrat. So we went to the Judenrat and we [indecipherable] there, and with the last group we went to Rosa where they -- where all the people from the ghetto was there. It was a rainy night and a rainy day and they were sitting on a big place on Rosa, and in the dis, and when we c -- in the dirt, and as soon as we came to the -- to the place, right on the corner I saw my family. My mother and my two sisters with the little child of three years. And my mother saw me, why are you here? And you are here, why did you come? And I was crying and she was crying, I said, where is -- and she told me right there, the men were separate right away, my father and my brother-in-law. I said, and -- and -- and sh -- Luta's father. And I said, "And where is Luta's mother with her aunt? Why are you not -- not together?" And she said, "Luta's mother and the aunt are sitting down the hill, a little bit below, not far." I said, "Luta, come, we'll go to find your mom, and you'll bring here, we'll be all together." And we went to find Luta's mom. And we find them, and all of a sudden was an order to go out everybody, and everybody stand up, and we were going, but the people who were in the first place, next to the exit, they were already throw out, and my mother with my sister, with the other sister, with the little three years old child, and they threw them out right away to the left. And we were going through the [indecipherable] so the children were left alone without mothers, and -- and we were going, and Luta's mother and the aunt was before, and when we came to the exit they pushed them right away to the left, the mother and aunt, and me and Luta [indecipherable] to the right. We came, there were maybe 800 -- 1800 dollars -- people, or 2000 people, young until 20. No children, nobody. A group on the right side. And the one who were on the left side were taken to Treblinka, Majdanek. And we were taken to Riga to Kaiserwald. Luta will tell you the [indecipherable] about her mother, and

that was the last. Another story I forgot to tell you, when only I came to Rosa, to the place where all the people from the liquidation of the ghetto were taken, I saw a little farther a big, tall building. And from the roof of the building were three [indecipherable] like they are going to hang somebody. Three. We said, what's this? And all of a sudden, three people from the partisan organization of Wilna, the three I was quarreling with them, why are not taking you with us, and he said we are a group people, we are full of weapons, and we can go with a group people. It was a friend of mine, Asia Bik, Janka Kaplan, and Abrashak Voynich, he was a leader of the Bund. And all of a sudden I saw that they went on the [indecipherable] and the [indecipherable] around their head and they were hanged. And the mother of Asia Bik was around, we start to hide in her, not to see. The same day of the liquidation of the ghetto. And all the years I was in the concentration camp, I was thinking, what happened to our old group. Were they all kitched? Why are these kitched, what happened to the other, I didn't know. When I came back to Wilna after the -- the liberation, I find out that these three people with the weapons, get lost. Instead to go to the left, they went to the right, and they meet a group of Lithuanian and German soldiers and they were looking at them, that they start to shot, and it was a fight and they were kitched and bought on the face of the whole population of the ghetto, they were hanged. This I found out when I returned in 1945 from the concentration camp. And the other people, who went the right way, they survived, mostly survived. A couple were killed during the -- being in the Holocaust, from all kinds of people. And the -- the other people survived then.

Q: I-I-In talking to your mother or Josef or your father, ha-ha-had you ever prepared for a day like that, I mean, had you made p-plans, or said good-bye?

A: No, we didn't [indecipherable]. I will tell you. Luta's father has connections and they have a house where the ladies who worked in their house for 40 years were still living. They were out

but the Polish women, they -- and the engineer came to him and asked the permission to build up a hiding place in their apartment. And he came to his son, telling him about it. As -- the -- his son, Josef, said, no, you have to fight the Germans. In that time we were full of, you know, excitement, we'll find and we'll fight, we'll do this, we'll do this, we'll -- we'll [indecipherable] young people, they always believe in something. And he said, not -- I am not going. We have to fight the Germans. We'll go hide, and the other people won't. And the father said, to save my old life -- old life, my son don't want. And he said to the person no. The worst thing was that people don't -- didn't believe in death. They thought maybe the people are in -- in camps, maybe they are working, maybe we'll survive, maybe we'll -- we'll [indecipherable]. Because they were lying. They said that -- but this little Luta? She was small and [indecipherable] they are killing us, they are killing us. Nobody will survive, nobody will survive.

Q: Did you believe her?

A: I also don't believe. After -- after especially Josef was taken, I didn't believe that we will survive. The Germans [indecipherable] won the war with the Jews [indecipherable] survive how many survive. In the camps also was situations when somehow we survived that we could be shot. But this is later on, maybe [indecipherable] how about that?

Q: Just a few questions about the ghetto. You had described that there were two. Was there a name or a number of one of the ghettos that you were formerly in?

A: One was a big ghetto from once -- one side of Jerma street, and the other was a smaller ghetto from the other side of Jerma street. It was a [indecipherable]. It was the Jewish center, as I told you, who was empty up in the beginning before the ghetto started. And in their houses they put in the people from the whole city. And the other ghetto was existed -- existed for not long, maybe a half a year. In the other ghetto was the big synagogue y -- as a city, very famous, who

was built 600 years ago, and there was the Wilna [indecipherable] was started there in the -- lot of years ago. And a big writer, Haim Grada describe in his books about this big synagogue, it was like a city. And a lot of people lived there who were destroyed and th-their place, and they -- as the Germans want to o -- every other month or couple of week, liquidated a lot of people, so it was the easiest way, they said okay, this ghetto is liquidated, why the Jews have to have two ghettos, it's enough one ghetto. But what should we do with these people? They put them, everybody in the wagons and they put them to Ponar and shot them.

Q: Towards the end of the time in the ghetto, h-how is your health? I mean --

A: My --

Q: -- presumably you're not eating very well, but how -- how -- what is your state of health, physical health?

A: My health was good, and a lot of them helped me that they went out from the ghetto to work for a farm. We worked very hard, but we were at the -- at the [indecipherable] all the time, and at the fresh air, and after that we have vegetables. And we have carrots, and we have beets, and we have this and this, and I told you that the -- the worker of my house bought us every day a little bit bread and milk. Mostly I bought it back to the ghetto, but a little piece I took. So sometimes I was afraid to come to the ghetto on the face of everybody who was very pale and very -- I, personally, looked good. But mostly the people were very, very, very pale, or very upset, and ver -- didn't know what to do, get [indecipherable] get -- get lost, you know, a lot of people were left alone because a mother or a brother or a father went to work and they were caught up and they were taken away. They thought that's to a camp, but as we find out later they were shot right away, and kids were -- be left without the -- without parents and s -- parents without kids and husbands without wives. I have -- I had a friend, he was in school together with my sister Luba,

and he worked for the Judenrat. And one time he and an artist from [indecipherable] and somebody else, three of them, get the permission to go out for awhile from the ghetto, outside the ghetto. And they bought something -- some vegetables, a little piece of bread, and wa -- they went to the ghetto back and the -- at the entrance was Morra, the fuehrer of the ghetto, a German. And he saw that they have a package with them, and they were arrested, and people were ask Gens to do something, his wife, to took them out from the prison, but when he came it was too las -- too late. They took them right away to Ponar and they shot -- shot them. And the wife with the little children were staying in the ghetto, lost and didn't know what to do, and finally they went to Estonia with a group, and they were killed, too.

Q: You talk about people being lost, or people without mothers. Towards the end Josef had been taken, you were separated from your mother, what was your mental state?

A: I was crying, I didn't know what to do. And after awhile, you know, when you were -- were left alone, you don't care about yourself, really. What will happen will happen, you're alone. Otherwise you are [indecipherable] from this person, from that person, you get along. What will happen, will happen. And when I was left with Luta, I was yo -- always cared about Luta and she about me. And we were afraid that something can happen, so we tried our best to go through, and we didn't have a choice. You know, people, when they are healthy, they can kill themself. It was not too many suicide in that time. I was wondering -- it was a little bit, but not much, not many. Other people will -- said, my God [indecipherable] why are we living, what for? I'll commit suicide. But not too many commit suicide, not in the camps, or -- I know a couple of -- I think that Luta's mother commit suicide in the -- on her way in the -- in the train where they were taking from the left to Treblinka.

Q: S-So -- so what are you suggesting, that maybe people were too much --



A: I don't know how --

Q: -- in shock to even do anything about it?

A: I don't know how to explain it, I really don't. Maybe the will to live is very strong. I don't know, but people were left for themselves. Every person was for themselves in that time.

Q: Will you tell a story about what Luta's tut -- again it's towards the end and it's becoming clear that you and Luta will be together, and Luta's father gave you some advice about being together. Can you tell that story?

A: She -- she -- no, no, she -- where we in the ghetto have to go out to the forest, we were dressed like normal people, made up our hair nice, and have nice pocketbook and were prepared to go out like Polacks, and maybe we will -- can reach the forest. And before we came to say good-bye to her father and mother. And the father looked at her and he said -- Luta was in that time 15. And he said, "Luta, you are a child, you are left alone." I said, "She's not alone, she's with me." And he said, "You are also a child." I was 20 in that time -- 19 and a half [inaudible]. And he said, you are also a child. But Luthishka, don't run without Rochola. Without me. And stayed all the time on all our life together, then she get married, I get married, and we still were friends and our husbands were friends. And the whole life was -- I was very upset when I left Wilna and she was staying. But I hoped that she'll come. I write her all the time to come, and her daughter was here. I was sure that -- but it took a lot of time until she came.

Q: Let's take you back to right that night, or perhaps it's the morning after of the liquidation, and again you are with Luta.

A: Yeah. We were sta --

Q: And you're trying to reach --

A: The forest.

Q: -- her mother -- well, you pick up, you pick up.

A: You know, when we were taken to the place where all Jews were -- were already for the night from the ghetto, we were five of us, five. Before we were six and one girl we were with -- when she were caught.

Q: Through the attic.

A: And we were going and together with us was another girl from our friends. Her name was Raia -- Rasha. And we went through the place she used to live before the -- before the ghetto. And all of a sudden she said, "Girls, I am running." And she disappeared from the party. She saw that next to her were -- the Germans were not around or something, she saw her place where she lived, and she jumped into the yard where she lived. She thought that all of us will go after her, but we couldn't. The Germans was right here. I met her after the war, and she still good friends with Luta, she went out and she came to the yard she was living, and she came into a apartment. And the -- pull open the door, and she closed before her eyes [indecipherable] go away. And she went out to the attic, and there was a little window in the attic, and she looked through the window until the whole group will go by. The group was still going to the place they gathered all the people, and she looked --

Q: Marching by?

A: -- yeah, like the people marching by. And it went dark, and nobody was around. She went again to the neighbor, and she looked out, she didn't let her go in, but she gave her a little thing to cover her head, and she gave her some food. And she explained to her the way how she can go to the forest. And she went to the forest and she reached the forest, and she reached the partisans, and she was -- her sister was already in the partisans and she was older, until the end of the war with the partisan. And we meet her when Luta, on her way to the United States, in Italy she came

specially to see her, and then she was in New York, and I saw her and she told me that she -- the story with the Polack that one of them give her to -- what to eat then show her the way to go to the partisans. So she has the -- the way, like they gave us everybody, the directions how to go to the partisans, everyone from us has it. And she went to the partisans there, she reached them and she survived the war in the partisans. And we went to the concentration camp [indecipherable]

Q: You -- you mentioned in that case a -- a Polish person who helped somewhat, but -- but generally did -- could you rely on Polish people to help you?

A: On some, but very little, very little. Some were afraid. Some were -- but I were -- like I told you that my sister went to a family and she want to pick up something to eat, and a son [indecipherable] went out through the other door and bring the Gestapo and she was arrested. And it was all around, all around. And some people throughout th-the -- the -- the kids, and some Polish people pick them up and they -- and they'll grow them like Poles, like Lithuanian.

Q: H-How did you know though, who to trust?

A: It was very hard. It was very hard. Some -- sometimes [indecipherable] and sometime [indecipherable]. I know a family, no -- were -- we're connected with them through the marriage, and they lived in Lithuanian, and his wife was very energet -- his mother was very energetic and she saved a lot of kids, giving them to the Lithuanian family. And one of them was her little daughter, she was about two or three years. And the little daughter, the Lithuanian family who she knows, took her as a daughter, and the family survived the war. Survived the war, and when the war finished they went to look the Lithuanian people, where their daughter were. Their sister, the daughter left, and they couldn't find it. As soon as the -- they didn't have any children, as soon as the German lost the war, they moved and took the girl, and they look for her maybe 20 years, and they still not [indecipherable] I was connected through a marriage with them, with the

brother of the girl. They were looking for her for 20 years, and she was lost. A -- there is a [indecipherable] I don't know if you leed -- he was left in the Lithuanian family when he was two. And he grew up as a Lithuanian person. And when he was 19, in the family was an old woman, an old grandmother, and she was dying, and she was on her heart that she has to tell the boy who he is, his roots. And she told him that he is Jewish, and that his parents left him when he was two years old, and the parents perished from the Holocaust, and that's it, but he was Lithuanian through and through. She was a engineer and he was a writer, and he was very touched with the story he heard. And after he heard the story, he wrote a book. In Yiddish is the [indecipherable]. The Internal Check. You know the checks, the play?

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: The internal checks, it means the -- forever, forever, yeah, the checks. And what was in that story, that a Jewish guy is playing checks with a German. And he have to -- he have to or -- he have to lose, and if he will win, he can be shot. He didn't want to lose to give hi -- the satisfaction the German to win, and he can't win because he could be shot. This is the story of the book. And as soon as he feel that he is going to win, he took something back and he [indecipherable] in losing. And during his playing with the German, all kind of histories from the ghetto, from the camps were his mind, and he describe it in his -- after he find out -- he was also a sensitive boy -- he start to look for his roots. He didn't find anybody from the family, but finally he married a -- a Jewish girl and he left for Israel. I think that he left Israel too, he's somewhere in the -- in German or -- Canada [indecipherable]. His name was Marris. All kind of stories happened. And I'll tell you, thousands of thousands of Jewish children survived and they are in [indecipherable] family, they don't know that they are Jewish. They grew up as Lithuanian, as Poles, th-the whole family perish, and they get --

Q: Let -- let's pick up the story of -- of -- of where we ended it a bit ago, you were actually telling about the liquidation of the ghetto. And at this point a group -- the whole -- all the people from the ghetto are gathered in a field?

A: In a field, in --

Q: An-And you called it Rosha?

A: It's -- it was -- Rosha is the place. It was a cemetery, an old cemetery. I remember it was very rainy, and people were sitting in the -- in that -- in -- in the water, in the dirts, upset, and you know, not believing in survival. And then everything was so fast and with such a -- with such a noise, with such a rush, and sch-schnell, schnella, schnella, schnella. People couldn't think. Like animals. They were -- they were pushed to the wagons, th-they were the place to stay.

Q: And where was Luta at this point?

A: With me.

Q: Were you holding hands?

A: We were together.

Q: You were together.

A: Yeah. Next to each other.

Q: When the movement started, did you try to get back to your mother?

A: I couldn't find her, I know where she was, and she was already gone, and sent to the left. She and my two sisters and the little child, with the nice blonde hair.

Q: Did you know what that meant at that point, to be sent to the left?

A: We imagine that they are going to the -- they'll be shot. Very fa --

Q: You did imagine that?

A: Yes. And they were right away sent to Majdanek, I think, and there they were sent to the gas chambers. And I want to tell you, if we -- me and Luta wouldn't go to look for her mother, what it took, five, 10 minutes, we would stay with my parents and we will -- would send also to the left. But were -- in the begin -- in the beginning, all the people were sent to the left, especially when there was a little child. I remember one person, she has two little children, she was young, had her little children and she has a package on her shoulder with some blankets, or some clothes. And she heard right away that with little children, people were sent away. So she empty up her bag, and she left only a little blanket, and both of her children, three years and two years, she put into the -- to the bag, put up her shoulders like it's clothes, and she went through to the left. The orientati -- other people were -- th-the will to life was so strong that other people left their children. There was somebody -- one person left a kid by herself, she -- she want to live. And she knew that she'll take the child she'll be killed together with her. And I can't say that she did wrong. I was thinking if my sister would leave the child, maybe she would be alive. But you know, it's -- it's a terrible situation. You can't say that she did wrong, that she's a bad person the way she did that, because in that moment, she get like crazy. It was a very terrible thing.

Q: What did it sound like? Do you remember sounds?

A: People like -- like that people, that -- that they didn't know what to do it -- first of all, the noise and the Germans with the schnella, schnella, schnella, schnella, schnella, you couldn't orient what's doing, what's going on. You couldn't think. And there all of a sudden you see you -- you are staying with a group of young, beautiful girls, healthy. When you are 18, when you are 19, when you are 17, as much as you go through, you are still young. And we saw that maybe we are going temporary to a camp to work, and we were sure that one of -- on the left side will be shot, because they were sick, they were old, they were little children. We were crying, we were --

don't have the right to cry. The Germans would go through and see somebody crying, go to the left.

Q: A-And so, when you went to the right, where did you go? On-onto a train, or trucks?

A: Yeah, we went -- the separation was ready, they put us to truck, very crowded trucks, and they -- they -- we didn't know where we are going. [indecipherable] was very crowded. We were going for two days, not eating and not drinking and we didn't have a bathroom, we didn't have -- the conditions were terrible. And all of a sudden, we came when the -- the middle of the night to a place, it was such a beautiful forest, and they opened the doors, and the illumination was so strong, so many lamps, so ra -- and full of soldiers and who will -- and they start to throw out us from the wagons who were [indecipherable] people. Maybe hundreds was in one wagon that we -- all of us were about 2000 girls from Wilna. And they said, first of all, everything you have in the hand, on the side. We have in our bags, we put in some money, some -- I remember my sister make a double -- a double -- there can put some money, some jewelry, so put it everything [indecipherable] and we were s -- like we are. And they put that to the -- to some barracks on [indecipherable] I don't know, well, hundreds -- hundreds of people already were there. And all of a sudden we heard that after we were there a couple weeks, a couple of days, I -- I don't [indecipherable] all of a sudden we have to -- we have to go through a bus, to have disinfection, we are all dirty. And we heard that they are shaving us the hair, they are taking out our clothes, they give us other clothes and they left us [indecipherable]. And we were waiting when we will have to go to the bus, we didn't know that some buses were gassed in that time not, and it was in case of [indecipherable]. And Luta, my friend has hair until here, blonde, big, how they call of it --

Q: Curls?

A: Not curls, but you know they are together.

Q: Braids?

A: Braids, yeah.

Q: Braids.

A: And they really were so upset that the Germans will have the satisfaction to cut it, so I find somewhere a scissor and I cut her hair until here, for myself. I didn't want to give the satisfaction the Germans to do it. And then we heard that the only thing what wed -- what is left is that people -- is their soap. And we had a little soap. And my friend Mira, who was with us in the five who has to go out -- the four of us, because one run away, has a little piece of gold. Her mother gave her, she had. And I said, "Mira, give me the little gold, I'll melt it a little bit of soap. I'll put it in." And we wash it, and you will -- let's see that you have something, maybe we'll need it. The five of us maybe will buy a little bit of bread for it. She said okay, it's -- it's -- it's a deal. And I gave it, and I gave it and I said, hold it. She was in class together with me. And then they put us to the baths [indecipherable]. First of all were full of soldiers, young German soldiers, and they shave whatever hair they saw in the women. They shaved us all the -- without hair. And all the what is in the body, they did it. They shaved Luta, and they gave us other clothes who were big, they gave a small dress who are small, they gave a long dress, without underwear, it was -- we went out from the bath, we didn't recognize each other how we look. And all of a sudden I asked the girl, Mira, where is your soap? She said, "Oh I forgot on the table." [indecipherable]. And then they put us to the camp behind Riga, was a schlasenhof, the place where [indecipherable]. We looked -- I can't describe it, how we looked. Some were laughing, some were crying, some were s -- you know, you didn't know what to do. Well, we came to the -- the



first night, and we changed between other -- each other the clothes. Who has the big clothes, give to a bigger si -- person has a small, ha -- somehow we make ourself to be similar of people.

Q: Okay.

End of Tape Three

Beginning Tape Four

Q: Where we were was that you were describing that after you had been given these clothes, they didn't fit, you switched around again.

A: That's [indecipherable]

Q: And you were getting ready -- you were describing sort of the state --

A: Yeah, so --

Q: -- of the girls at this point, the young women.

A: -- to look like -- look like people, not like [indecipherable] we couldn't survive otherwise. We were very cooperating with -- with each other and helping each other, whoever we were, if we knew each other or not.

Q: Did anybody become a kind of a leader, an informal leader?

A: They choose somebody. We have on every table in the -- in the camp, 23 people, who in the morning they gave us a piece of bread with a little bit tea before we went to work. And then we went to work, we worked the whole day, and in the evening we came, sometimes after work, every time we were counting, before we went to work, and after we came, we were counting we -- the same amount people came back. And then when we came back we were staying in line because there was a kitchen and we have little -- little bowls to pick up the soup, and we were going with the soup upstairs and there were on the table, on every table were 23 peoples, and there were an older people on every table from one of us, who divided the pieces of bread. And the pieces of bread you have to have for the whole day. And Luta was always very hungry, and she said, give me, I'll eat the bread right away. And I didn't give her. She was angry at me because she was young, she want to eat. And I gave her half a piece, I said, the half a piece will be for lunch. Otherwise we will not survive. And she listened to me. And sometimes we came

from where -- yes, when we came to the concentration camp in Riga, in Strassenhof, they divide the people, some people were going every morning to a factory -- it was out in I -- I have -- can I make a little break? I [indecipherable] I remember everything, sometimes I mix it up, but I make myself an [indecipherable] notes. And the names of the -- yeah, we were sent to a textile factory, Yugalas manufactory to work. And we worked about 12 hours a day in the morning. And after 12 hours we returned. We returned and when we came back they count us again and sometimes we were punished. You were not going so well, some were out of the lines, and for that you have to march for an hour and an hour a half on the yard where the -- where the camp was for punishment. Next time your -- you didn't sing so well, because we have to go singing, we were on the middle of the road, and we have to sing --

Q: Singing?

A: -- sing the German songs that they've taught us. Va -- show that we are strong. And if we didn't sing so nice, we were punished, we have to walk for another hour and a half before we'll have our dinner. And then we came back. So we worked in the Yugalas manufactory for all the time. Some people were sent to another factory where -- where they did silk.

Q: What were you making, Rachel?

A: We were making the linen, like the thick linen.

Q: Linen?

A: Linen.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yes. And in the morning we go over there, in the evening we came back. One story I must to sell -- to s -- tell you. As there were all from Wilna, mostly the people knew each other. And once, girl who were starting in school with me, came to another girl, a friend of me, and said to

her, Leia -- Leia was her na-name, do you want to go to the earlier -- because the people from the silk factory used to go a half an hour early home, and our group went a half an hour later. Do you want to change with me, I'll go with your group, and you go with my group, because th-they che -- only they need the account. So she said, why not, I am tired, I want to come to a little bit earlier to have a rest, and she went. When our group went back, she didn't show up, Lola, the person who ask her to go home.

Q: Leia?

A: Leia was the one who she ask to go instead of her --

Q: Oh, okay, all right.

A: -- with the first group. And she's supposed to go with the second group, and she didn't show up. So our group came and when they count, was one person less. Which means that one disappeared. And they s -- tried to find out how could it be. They were count, the first group came, everybody came who disappeared from the other group. It was not too hard to find out, then they find out that one person from this group came before with the other group. Anyway, they find out that the girl Leia came instead of Lola. And Lola has a mother also there. And they said, why did you come instead of her? They find out that this Lola is disappeared. Anyway, they took her out and together with the mother of Lola, and they took her out somewhere we don't know, we never saw her again. I heard that they put her to the -- to prove the main roads, because sometimes the m -- the roads around Riga, there were main -- mines around, so they took people to go on the roads until they fall on a mine and they were killed on the mine. You understand, yeah?

Q: They used her as a [indecipherable]

A: They [indecipherable]. And her mother was killed right away because after awhile they bought the clothes back to the -- what happened, this girl Lola decide with another two men, they find somehow a hiding place, and they want to hide there. And not to find it out right away because they have to go out, they have to -- somehow they arranged with somebody, I don't know hi -- how, the girl survived. She asked the girl to go instead of her so the Germans will not find out that somebody was mix -- missed. So the girl was killed instead of her. She hide then, and she was hidden for a long time, maybe a couple of months, a half a year, until their food finished and they were very hungry and one of the guys went out somehow to find something to eat, and he was kotched, and th -- caught, and the whole group, the three of them were caught. But they didn't kill them, they send them to Stutthof and they made [indecipherable] Stutthof and this -- this girl survived the war. I met her, her name was Lola Gittelson. Maybe she is still alive in Leningrad until now. But the other girl who came -- so even to run away, even to hide then, it was very hard. Even if they find out the connection.

Q: A-As you're describing it, there -- there are not a lot of choices.

A: No. She's -- she's --

Q: And yet, you're making daily choices that in some way keep you alive.

A: Yes, yeah.

Q: Well ha -- what were the things that you felt that you were doing that were keeping you alive?

A: Even when she would come to me, ask me --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: -- I don't know if I would leave Luta. But -- but if you would be alone, she would ask me, will I -- will you go before me, I will go with your group and you go with my group, I would go.

I wouldn't think about that something is wrong. I -- she didn't tell me that she want to hide, that she disappear. And I wouldn't think about. So the girl didn't think about it too. But she did it.

Q: Well I guess one thing I was -- I'm -- I was also asking is that how -- how were the small ways -- what were the smaller things that you did on a day to day basis in the camp that kept you going?

A: First of all, I try to keep myself clean. In the bathroom -- in the -- to make a shower. We never had hot water, it was hard to wash yourself. As bad as it was, I would every day to take a shower. A shower to wash myself, to [inaudible] my body. Secondly, I was together with Luta, it help -- we were together, we were -- then I thought a lot of my boyfriend. I thought he was taking to a camp, I am taking on a camp, maybe he'll survive, maybe I'll meet him, so it hold me to survive, to -- to -- to -- to -- to eat. Even that -- that the soup is terrible without taste, I ate it, even I could. And again, I was with Luta. I was caring with her, she was a little girl, still she was a small child. Her [indecipherable] she was a strong -- a strong [indecipherable] we were together. Sometimes she was taking care of me, sometimes I was taking care of her.

Q: How did she take care of you?

A: I [indecipherable] we were together. And I were with the other two girls with whom we were -- we wanted to run away. And we were young. We were still young, and we can survive the portion they give us to eat. And somehow we survived on our way.

Q: Did you sleep in the same -- did you sleep next to each other?

A: Four ap -- yeah, four across. Four people across. Friends. There, when we came to our room, we were alone. The Germans were some very -- we were go -- go out from our yi -- you know, went to work or what, and were -- we were still working. We didn't have anything from them,

but we were going to work, we had a little bit fresh air on our way, by foot. And then we worked. For ourself, but not -- not -- the mind was a little bit busy.

Q: W-Was there a danger with so many girls and then German guards that -- that some girls might be raped?

A: No, but there were some that they were girlfriends of the -- of the people who looked after them somehow, I don't know, I don't know.

Q: So some of the girls from Wilna might --

A: Very little were --

Q: -- become friendly with a guard or --

A: Yeah, there were some, very little. Two, three. [inaudible]

Q: How did the other girls view that?

A: What can they do? They said it dangerous, but you know, it happened, it happened. This was all about Strassenhof and some girls came pregnant from the ghetto in the beginning, they had the husbands. The husbands were taken off, and one wa -- friend of mine came there, she was in the six months pregnant. They were three of them from the girls who came to Riga. And then they took them to Kaiserwald back, and promised to bring them back. And they make them abortions and they came back. Was how they -- they destroyed the pregnancy.

Q: The -- the -- the woman who had a six month old baby?

A: Yes, they made the -- it's not an abortion, it's a like taking birth, and then they came back to the Strassenhof and they were working. They survive the war, too. A lot of the people who were sent to Riga, to Strassenhof, on the left, a lot of them -- I'll tell you another story. When we came to Kaiserwald, before we went to Stutthof, they make -- the Germans make lists of the people they who they sent to Strassenhof. They wrote the name and the last name, where they were

born, their age and -- I was staying with Luta, she was 15 years old and I was 19. And somehow when the [indecipherable] when they made the list, I was thinking that there were an action in the ghetto where they took the children until 16 years, and they took them away for a camp, but they so -- shot them. And Luta was 15. I said, Luta, we're describing us the same age. What will happen to you will happen to me. We'll make us both 18. I am 18 and you are 18, and we are sisters-in-law. She said why do you want what -- makes o-old? I said, Luta, this is the way I want, and we're making. And she was 18 and I was 18. After a ye -- not a year, after maybe eight months, all of a sudden they took the whole party from the rooms to the yard and they start to count us. And they count us, I don't remember how many people. And all of a sudden they called up people before 18 and after 20 -- after 22. If Solanis -- Luta was written her real name, that she's fo -- 15, in that time she was 16, she was taken out for death. They took them out, and people were very upset. From the room they knocked in the windows, that I am not 20, and I -- you know that -- and they were took aga -- somewhere, and next day all their clothes were brought back to the -- they were all shot. If Luta would describe her real age, she would have been shot. Nothing helped. You couldn't ask because different people, different soldiers came to pick up this action. And about, I would say two or 300 people were taken away and shot. After a couple of months they took us to Germany, to Stutthof.

Q: How long were you in the camp in Riga?

A: In Strassenhof I think we were two weeks about, if I remember. In Riga we maybe in 11 months. I have wrote here how long we were in Riga. Strassenhof from October '43, prin -- til August '44. In August '44 all of a sudden, they came and they said -- because the Russian army came next with -- they took us from Riga to Stutthof, to Germany, when in Wilna already were the Russians, were liberated. The -- Wilna was al -- already liberated, and I remember the



German boss came to us, to our big group and said girls, you are my Jews. In case when the Russians come, I put on your clothes and I am a Jew. [indecipherable] he was caught in the end and he was shot from these people.

Q: Were there ever any Germans that you came across whether in the ghetto or in the camps that -- that -- somebody who helped you perhaps?

A: Not me, not me, but there were. Very little there were. I had, when I -- as soon as the Germans came -- as soon as the Germans came, it was in '41, I worked at the German place where the soldiers were. And I was working in the yard, you know, the cazarnes where the soldiers were during the day and during the night, and they need help to clean the yard, to clean the walls, and they took girls from -- before it was the actions of the pink scheins, he know -- he knew about that, that something wrong can happen. And he was so bad th -- a young guy in the brown clothes with the swastika, and he didn't even allowed us to talk to each other, we were five girls. And all of a sudden he came to me and he said, "Look, do you have a pink schein? Because something will go on in the ghetto." I said yes. And I was -- I was afraid, why is he asking? He's such a bad person. And I came and I told the other girls what he told to me, what -- what he told me, and they said, oh, we don't have anything. We are afraid to go to ghetto. What - - ask him, maybe they -- he can do something for us. We have neighbors on -- in Zarinyitz, on such and such street. I said I am afraid. He said, go, ask, we don't have a choice because we don't have a place to hide, we don't have a ra -- a pink schein. And I came to him and I told him. You know what he said? I am okay, but my friends, two girls, they lived somewhere there behind the bridge, and they don't have anything. And he said, "Tell them as soon as they can," in German he said, "let them go to the street, let them take off their -- their signs -- their stars, and let them go over the bridge, I will catch them." Somehow we went with the -- with the group,

and they find the [indecipherable] that they took out the stuff, and they went to the pavement, and they went through the bridge -- [indecipherable] blonde girl. And they were going, all of a sudden this guy went through the bridge and took the boys -- girls under the hand, and they said, go wherever you [indecipherable] and I'll go with you. And they came to the street, and he said go and ask if the people will take you, and I will wait for 15 - 20 minutes. If they want to take you, you'll stay. Otherwise you will return and I will took you to the ghetto. And can you imagine that the -- that the neighbors let her stay, and he was waiting, waiting. We never saw him again, she never saw it again. What it was, I can't explain. He was so bad to us if we were talking to each other. Maybe he was 19 years old. She was with the -- with the stick, he was hurting us, we were afraid for him. In that moment he saved the girl. She perished another time because there were lot, lot of time, but it happened, a German boy.

Q: During those 11 months that you were there and you were working, just what was your general state, what was your frame of mind?

A: We hoped that someday we'll be liberated. We knew the war is going to be -- to the end. Somehow you know -- we were working with Lithuanian people, Lithuanian were guarding us. Not Lithuanian, but Latvian people. It was Riga.

Q: And they were telling you things?

A: Sometime. Very little. That the war is going -- th-that the Germans will lose the war.

Q: At this point did you know anything about your mother or your father?

A: I hoped that maybe, maybe, but I had little -- little hope for the people who were s -- were sent to the left, because it was a lot of children, a lot of old people, a lot of sick people. Mothers went because of their children, they didn't want to leave them alone. But still a little hope was maybe. And they return after the war to Lithuania, to Wilna because I hoped that somebody of

the family will stay alive, and we said to each other, wherever the war will finish, wherever you be, you return to Wilna, and it's here we'll meet. This way, we returned to Wilna and then we didn't have a place to go back and you know, start to build up their own life how it was.

Q: Did you pray at all when you were in the camp?

A: No, I wasn't religious.

Q: Were you -- wa -- anything that brought you solace?

A: I thought if God would exist, it wouldn't happen. And if it happened [indecipherable] righteous, it means that there is not God in the world. Maybe I was wrong, but you know.

Q: Can you tell us about th-the switch, a -- I guess it -- you were saying it was August of '44, and --

A: Yes.

Q: -- what was going on, and you were moved to a new -- a new camp.

A: August '44, we were working, we came for wor -- from work, and they saw it, they came to our room and said, be ready, tomorrow we are going by boat to another camp. We didn't know where, we didn't know what. And we were ready, and we went to Gdansk, Gdansk and they put it to a big boat on the bottom. Very crowded. They put up all the [indecipherable]. And we were going with the ocean -- with the Baltic Ocean. And we were hungry, we didn't have what to eat, it's so crowded. And I never saw an ocean. And I saw Luta, somehow let us go to the top to see the ocean. I want to see an ocean. I don't remember how, but we went to the top and we saw the ocean. And we came back to our place, and we came to Stutthof.

Q: What was the ocean like?

A: Baltic Ocean.

Q: But can you describe seeing it for the first time?

A: You know it's big. [indecipherable] of water, we saw only water, water without a beach, without a land, from all the [indecipherable] you know? Interesting [indecipherable] came back, and it was so crowded, it was so dirty, it was so [indecipherable] and dark, and people were -- we didn't know where we are going, to what and to when. And then they brought us to the Stutthof, that terrible camp. And we saw the people like death were going around here and there, and -- and again sounds that -- and the -- and they was shouting, and ri -- people were -- they lost their mind, they -- they -- how can you survive it, fr-from the noise, from the -- I remember they bought her to her room, and a crying woman was the [indecipherable] it means the oldest of the - - of the rooms we were, it's a big room, and they make there the per -- a peu. It means -- it means they want the count.

Q: A roll call. A roll -- oh count, the roll call.

A: Yeah. And we were staying to five -- five people here, next to them another five, next to them another five, next to them another five until the end of the big hall. And all of a sudden they said, sit down where you stand. And one were sitting in the feet of the other. One with another, five of us. And there were a little empty room, and another group five [indecipherable] they said, sit down. And here how they live. And they gave us a little bowl, and said this is for your food. This is if you want urinate. This is what -- this what you have. You couldn't wash it, you couldn't change it.

Q: You couldn't wash it?

A: Or you couldn't change it, there was nothing. That's all they did. And we were oy -- and Luta start to say here we'll die, we'll die from the -- the -- the -- Rochola, Rochola, she said, will we die, will we survive? I said, yes, we'll survive from the war.

Q: Did you believe that?

A: I told her to give her a little bit hope. I didn't believe it. [inaudible] hope. And then, after awhile and we didn't work, that was the worst. But still there was a washroom with cold water, and seldom were of all the people were going to the washroom to wash themselves. They didn't have energy. They didn't have the -- they were not strong any more. And we went out only from the room for awhile. It was soon winter, we saw big mountains of dead, dead naked bodies around the corner of the [inaudible]. We returned. I tried to take a shower every day, as bad as it was, as cold the water as was.

Q: Did Luta --

A: And I took Luta also as -- and she was afraid that it's the end. And we lived there maybe for a month or six weeks. It was very terrible, very dirty. And all of a sudden we heard that people were taken to work on farms, somehow. Some people were afraid, but we saw one group went. They picked up some people. And we said to each other, Luta to me and I to her, let's go, let's try. And somehow we went out to the group, and we were picked up to go to work to there, because the German people, the men, they were all taken to the army, to the front, to -- t-t-to fight. And all the women were left with the big farms, and the winter was coming, and they have to pick up the -- th-the beets and the carrots and the potatoes, and the --

Q: The harvest.

A: -- they didn't have. So [indecipherable] people get some people from the camp. And they got as five of us, and we went. This may be also changed a little bit our life and helped to survive. We worked very, very hard. We came to a place, and the women were -- was very, very bad. But there was a housekeeping woman, and she cooked for us once a day. In the morning we wake up, we went to the field to -- that's right, the field, yeah?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: To work. It was very hard to pick up from the earth th-th-th-the -- the carrots and the beets, and the -- and the beets for the -- for the calfs, you know, the white one. And -- with the hand, we didn't have it -- and she, th-th-th-th-th-the -- the wife of the Nazi was after us, urrr. And they brought Ukrainian people also, the one who were caught from -- I don't know, from the army or from what. And they were shouting of the -- with the worst things on the woman --- on the woman, the boss. And she came to us, can you tell me what they said? And they said terrible words, I said, we don't know Ukrainian, how can we know what they said, we don't know. And they were angry, you know, they were not so afraid like me, they were not so tired. And we were there maybe for four months. So we were on the fresh air. They said that the --

Q: So you spent the night there? You lived there?

A: Yeah, they gave us a --

Q: Oh.

A: -- little room for five people, and once a day they -- th-the housekeeper make the best for the food, that we were not hungry. And on the fresh air and from time to time we can catch a -- a carrot to eat, a -- and we were a little bit strong, yeah. And maybe it saved our lives, but -- later on. But they also, one of our people, of the girls, they -- she want to go to the bathroom, and it was far away the yard, and it was a little bit too dark, and she went to the bathroom on the yard, and all of a sudden, you know who sent a dog to her, and the dog went after her and bite her in the foot, and she start to shout and cry very much. From that time I was afraid for a dog for a long, long time. And then she came to us and we tried to make a disinfection and to help her. Such things happen. And still, when the four or five months finished, the winter came, and they se -- they send us back to Stutthof. And this was really a terrible time. But being there in the room by ourself, we wash ourself, we hold ourselves clean, we wasn't so hungry. But when we

came he -- back, and they put us back to Stutthof again, one in each other, where people were dying terrible, it was dysentery, it was typhus, it was all kind of sickness. And we went to sleep and we wake up in the middle of the night, Luta waked up first, and we were terrible surround with lice. Big, I ma -- the lice were this big. And there were not a -- and Luta start to cry, sta -- Rochola this is our end, this we'll not survive and we don't know how to clean up for -- from it. And we were here a couple of nights, and they sit at -- the girls who came with us start to cry, water, water. We didn't have the water. After an hour, one is dead. Again another, water, water, she has the same condition as me, she was also working for the -- but she came out and maybe the typhus caught her very badly during a night or two. And people were running and they were picked up right away and they disappeared. We were five, we were 10 around, we were eight, we are seven, we are [indecipherable]. This is -- we're sure that the end, we'll die from the si -- from the sickness for -- during the day where we went to stay for raba -- we're out, they counted. Sometimes they count in the room, and sometimes we went out outside. You see there were less and less and less, and we saw girls we were so strong and nice and happy at the -- at the farm. All of a sudden they go, and th-th-they have diarrhea and we see the wagon came and put it on the wagon -- wagon and took them to the [indecipherable] and home because there was such a place where they took the sick people and they -- of course they shot them right away. For a little while we were there, and all of a sudden me and Luta find out that they need people to clean potatoes for the -- for the camp. Come, she said, come. And I was so upset, I didn't have any more energy. But I said we have to go some, we have to do something. We went out and somehow they pick us out a -- pick us up to the place where we are cleaning the potatoes for the camp. And a group of people, all of a sudden -- the worst were the women Nazis. They came, they were so bad. The men also was bad, but -- but not so terrible as the women. And I was

wondering, how can a women, a women be so bad, but they were. We were cleaning the potatoes, a group of maybe 150, or maybe hundred, I don't remember how all. All of a sudden somebody came, the Germans, and threw the potatoes, wherever it fall, it fall. To your head, to our face, or -- who caught it, caught it. One time was such a story. A little girl, she came not far, they bought her from Hungary -- Hungary. [indecipherable]. And she came, and she also came to the potato [indecipherable] but she was -- she was looking well, she was a healthy -- she was not so long in the camps as we. And she was -- and all of a sudden a German, drunk German came, look very good, and they were around, going around, drunk. And all of a sudden he came to the girl, and he start to talk to her, and she get [indecipherable] sudden, she was afraid. And all of a sudden he gave her a pick and put her on her -- on her knees. Sit -- he sits where she was, and put her on her knees. And she did so, you know, frightened. And he start to talk to her, and all of a sudden such a n -- Nazi woman came in. And she saw it and she gave her a slap and she start to beat her up. Whore, she start to talk to her, with all the terrible w-words, and she put her away. What she do -- did with her, I don't know, she killed her, she [indecipherable]. And he was laughing.

Q: So at this point you're peeling potatoes in Stutthof. What -- what --

A: After that.

Q: -- what comes after that, yes.

A: After that, they put it to another place, us, the people who peel the -- in another room, who were from wood making such beds, one after the other, so everyone has his own place to sleep. They gave us better to eat, and we have much better conditions. And after that, after awhile, they start to evacuate the camp of Stutthof. It was January. We didn't have any clothes, we didn't have any shoes.



Q: You didn't have shoes?

A: Yeah, they were rip, the -- you know, was so many years we wearing the same shoes. And people were evacuated. And other people want to go out, they want to be evacuated, too. And I said to Luta, Luta, I am not going now. The -- it's very cold, the weather is terrible. We can get frozen on the middle of the -- we were evacuate through the forest, it's around, around forest. And I said it's very dangerous to go. Let's wait a little bit. She said, no, better to go, I said no, I am not going in the end of January. It's very cold, and we'll stay a little bit longer, and we stayed.

Q: Alone?

A: No, other people. They took a group, as much as they can take on a -- on a train, and no, not on train, by foot. They evacuate there by foot, through the forest. A little bit farther, because the -- the front. They -- they're losing the war, and it came nearer and nearer to the place we were. But in the beginning of mar -- March, or in the ever end of the February, when the sun was a little bit shining, we decided to go. And they evacuated us and brought us to a little camp. And in the little camp, the manager from the camp, the German was the one who was the chief in Strassenhoffer, we were in Riga, the same person, and he recognized us. We were there almost for a year, for 11 month. And he start to shout, my Juden, my Juden. Give them the plac -- the best place. And they gave us a room where we were sitting. They gave us from time to time what to eat. We didn't work, we only sit there. And in that time my feet start to be sl -- swollen and Luta will start to cry because that we'll have -- we have dysentery, and we -- you'll have typhus, you have -- you -- you are dying, you [indecipherable]. I said, don't cry, I will not die, it will go away. And we were there sitting for maybe a week, or what. And then they said -- one evening they came and they with big balls with water, something inside. And they said, you have to take

off all your clothes. Leave only very little thing to cover the self, and the blanket. And you have to put in to make an [indecipherable] it means a disinfection to get rid of lice or something. And there were robes over us, and then you'll dry it on these rocks there. The clothes. I was in -- I didn't have a choice, we did it, and we were covered with blankets, and everyone something on them, that's all. They were all women. Then we dry it out and we put over us. It was in the morning [indecipherable] in the morning. About two o'clock at night they said you have to put on your clothes, and we are evacuating the camp. But everything was wet. But we didn't have a choice. We put on the wet o -- clothes, and we surround us with the blankets. And it was a terrible night, it was snowing, it's mar -- it was March, the ninth of March. It was snowing, it was cold, and Luta says I can't, I can't go. And I look, she was burning. I said Luthishka, come, the end is soon, the end is -- we will not survive, we will not survive. And we were going through the forest the whole night, frozen and exhausted and -- and it start to be a little bit light at six o'clock, five -- seven o'clock in the morning. No, it was six, 6:30. And there was a little lake, and we were very thirsty, we want to drink, and we went to the lake, they allowed us to go to the lake, and we were drinking right from the lake the water, and we were going again, again, until maybe seven, 6:30, and all of a sudden we stopped, and we saw a big barn in the front of us. A stall. You know what it is. Where there is the food for the -- for the calfs. A stall.

Q: A barn, mm-hm.

A: A barn. And we were in the end of the group, and the soldiers were [indecipherable] fast, go faster, faster, schnell, schnell, schnell. But the people from before didn't move, and we don't know what to do, and we were exhausted, we were weak. And they said farther, farther, farther. And we couldn't understand, but finally we get in. What happened, in this barn, this stall was full of people who went [indecipherable] before, and were living there, and lot of them were with

frozen legs and backs, it was crowded, and they don't want to move, they don't have what to move, and the new people stepped on their stomachs, on their -- on their feet, on their -- and it took a lot of time until we settled on each other. And we couldn't fall asleep, maybe somehow we fall asleep we didn't feel it, and in the morning, usually about nine, 10 o'clock, they used to bring us some food. They, not we, we were new. And they saw that nobody bought us anything. Then they opened the yard -- they could burn us, I don't know why they didn't, cause nobody's around. No sign of kitchen, no sign of food, no sign of -- o-o-of their soup what they bring. And there were some brave people and it's -- was far away, the place was called fino. I remember we went through the part and we saw in the little houses it was light, it was nice and we want to go in to see how it's life. And we were [indecipherable]. And these brave three women went to see what's doing. And it's was far away from the road. They went, it was an hour they got back, maybe two, two and a half hour. They came back surround with -- with -- with all kind of clothes, and you know? And they said, we are free. Nobody's around. I -- we went maybe for a mile, two, and nobody's around. All that we see, vacance, with food, with clothes left alone and nobody's there. Then the whole barn, who -- all that could, took their blankets that their clothes were still wet, without hair, and you can't imagine what it was, and we went all together to the road we went, a mile, two miles. And all of a sudden we saw the sound of tanks, the sound of -- o-of -- of cars, the sound -- and the people like they were going, they went right away to that -- to the tanks where the -- the -- they are going, and they didn't look at anything, they went in the -- to the road, and they stopped the whole -- the whole procession of the -- of the military. And I was stand up for awhile, and I said, my God, do I look like all the people? And Luta said me -- is very bad. I have a terrible headache. And she was burning like she -- I don't know how high up temperature went. I am hungry, I want to lay down. And I was stopped for awhile and I look to

the crowd at the people. I thought, yes, maybe we were liberated, but it's too late. We are all crazy. We are not normal people. Sorry. Other people went to the wagon, they find food and start to eat, and they got diarrhea and they were dead right away, after the liberation. And I didn't look at th-this, any [indecipherable] anything of that because it aren't interesting, I want a place for Luta to [indecipherable]. And we went to -- to a soldier, an officer, and we ask him, can you put us into a house with my sister very sick? And he said come with us, and another 10 people come with us. I remember this, Luta remembered it a little bit different, but I see it like it was. And we came to a little German house, and an old person, maybe for 90 was along -- around, and the officer, the Russian officer came, "Open your house and let the people in. What did you do from people? Look what you do -- did to people." He opened the house, and we went in to a little house, clean, nice, the table was served. I think that the Germans served it for breakfast and they had to run right away. With the beautiful beds, with the nice blankets. Like the country, you know, home. And first of all I put her to the bed, she was burning. And then soldiers came in and a lot of people here and there and this was our liberation. Like a little [indecipherable] first of all we went to have a shower.

End of Tape Four

Beginning Tape Five

Q: Di -- so you were aware that you were being liberated?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah. That what I told you.

Q: Yes.

A: I said that it's too late, because the people how they looked, how they behaved, how we were thrown ourself to the tanks, and to the -- not thinking that there is a possibility they couldn't stop right away. But, you know.

Q: And how did the Russians treat you ap -- ther -- I've heard some stories that some of the Russian troops were always respectful.

A: I'll tell -- I'll tell you. They're different people, and different Russians, like different people all over.

Q: So did you stay at the -- at the house and take care of Luta?

A: No. There were more people, she has a good bed, and -- and all of a sudden they came, that the ho -- the hospital that is the same town is a hospital and there are lots of sick soldiers, and refugees and there no people to take care of them. And who only could, were go to work there. After a week I went to work, to the hospital for a couple of hours, and I was taking care of Luta, and she was in bed, she was still feeling bad, she was still, but sh-she has a bed. She was in bed, she was -- but she didn't have any medicine, we didn't have anything. And I hoped that she'll be better and better and better. She'll get a little better and then [indecipherable]. And after three weeks or a month, the soldiers came and they said that this earth where we are now, has to be given away to Poland or to German or to ru -- and who wants to return to his homeland, from

where they came, they have to go to the trains, and they'll go back to Lithuania, to Russia. And as we decided with our family, that we'll meet after the war in Wilna, we tried to go to Wilna. Other people were older than we, they were -- were more -- they thinking a better way. They want to go to the other side, not to return to Russia. They know what -- knew what Russia was and I didn't know it. I had a good time there in Russia being a kid. So we decide to go to Wilna, maybe we'll meet somebody from our friends. And we went through Poland, but I heard that all my family perished during the resistance in Warsaw ghetto. And I was mistaken, only my brother-in-law perished. My sister survive, but I didn't know that. So we went to the wagons to go to Lithuania. When we came to the border [indecipherable] soldiers came in and said, who doesn't have any documents have to go out. We were very tired, Luta was sick, and we were going together with the Russian soldiers, with Russian officers. And they said, you know what girls? There in the back are some bags with -- with -- with corn, with some bread -- go behind them. Don't go out. Where we'll go again to a center that -- for the people [indecipherable] you will come to Wilna, to your city, you'll find some friends, and you'll get your documents. And we listened to that, and we went and we're hiding. And we didn't go out to the border, to the centers where -- were gathered the people without document. And we came to Kovno [indecipherable] we came to Kovno, we went out. And there were Jewish people, they saw us, because they were liberated at -- almost a year ago. 10 years -- 10 months ago. And they saw, oh you came from the camp, from the camp where -- and I remember that some people were working in a bath house, a place where people came to wash themselves. And they put us there, and they gave us a room there, and they brought us food, and we wash ourselves. We were cleaner because we were in the German house, so we wash ourselves, we were cleaner because we were in the German house, so we wash ourselves and we changed our clothes, and so we were not so dirty, we almost have a little bit view

as -- as people. But still they hair didn't grow up, for sha -- such a short -- and there we were for maybe a week, and we want to go back to Wilna. We came [indecipherable] rest a little bit whe - - and somebody -- somebody from Wilna came, and they gave us a report and they told us about the Shreyber family that they died, and the -- Josef is not alive, my family is not alive. I had a cousin who was alive, but he left already for the United States. And so you go to Wilna.

[indecipherable] we came to -- we wanted to go from Kovno to Wilna, what is an hour and a half by train, they didn't let us. Where is -- are your documents? We said we don't have documents. Then go back to the border where is the center of the people who doesn't have document. I said, we will not go. And a couple of days we go into the train and they put us out. We were in and they put us out and they take us to the police and the police said, how did you survive? Did you work with the Germans? And I said, my God, I thought that everybody will be happy that some people survive after so many sufferi -- suffering. And then what should we do, how can we come to Wilna, that it's so close that we can't ha -- here we don't know anybody, there we'll find some -- some people who came from the partisans, or who were hiding, we'll find them. And then we came to the machinist from the train and we ask him bring us to Wilna. We are coming to the train and we are throw out again, we are coming again. Is -- the only thing what we can do for you, sit down in the front where the machinery is, not inside, and this way he'll [indecipherable] so we didn't have a choice, me and Luta, and Luta was se-sent in the front, and we came to Wilna. We went out for the -- from the train. We didn't recognize each other, we were from the coal -- from the -- we were da -- dark, w-with all the stuff, with all the dust. And we came to Ponarski Street where Luta used to live, but she -- everybody stranger. We came to a yard, and they came to the f -- second floor. We saw that this was a Jewish family, and we knocked in to the door. And they opened the door, and knocked it back. They saw the people, they get afraid.

Knocked at the seven -- a second time. I said, please, you don't want to let us in, bring us some water and a little soap to wash our faces. We came at the train on the top and we get dirty. We want to clean up ourselves to come to the center of the city. So they took out the bowl of water with the little piece -- so they were not -- they were afraid, they were the Jewish people, but they were not fr -- they didn't understand the situation. They had the normal life maybe for a year. And maybe they came from Russia, from evacuation. Anyway, they give us the water, and we wash ourselves and we wiped out, and -- a little bit. And we went to the center of the -- li -- Luta came to her yard where she lived, everything was wiped out, her house, and she didn't find anybody from people she knew. And we went to the center, and there was a librar -- a Jewish library and some offices. And some people came out and they recognized us. And th -- oh [indecipherable] some people take us to their house and we were afraid to come in, we were still so dirty, we -- we didn't have anything, we didn't have money and we didn't know the language because Russian we don't know, we learned a little bit. See, Luta knew, but not me. And she was very sick, she was very sick. And somebody took us to their house, and it was clean, it was nice, it was white, and we didn't know where to sit down. You know, we were still dirty. And then a friend of mine who li-lived over [indecipherable] has an apartment, three of them, one -- and they said, oh we'll clean up a little room for you, and you'll come, you'll live with us. And they cleaned up a little room of ours, she gave me a dress, and Luta a dress, we change a little bit. And then I heard a brother of my brother-in-law from my second sister, oh -- he find out that we came, and he took us to his apartment. He took us into his apartment, but Luta was feeling very, very bad. And they find out -- a doctor, not [indecipherable] they came to him and they ask him to look at her and he said she has to go to the hospital. And she went into the hospital, she was for three months in the hospital, and they didn't know what's wrong with her. And finally they



find out that she has an open cover tuberculosis on her -- and she was maybe for a year in a tute -  
- institute. She was 17 at the time. And then, one of her friends, her husband came from the  
army, and th -- we were on the summer house [indecipherable] with him, or the friend from the  
family. He was a couple of years older than he, and he fall in love with her, and he was taking  
care of her very -- I -- very much, even when she was very, very sick. And she was with the  
tuberculose over a year. Everybody was liberated, I was working, trying to support her. And her -  
- the women who worked with her, who hold her during the ghetto for some times, Vera, also  
find out that she came, and she helped her. The father's stories, she will tell her -- you. And you  
want to see some photographs --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: -- now. So we are in time? What I left --

Q: Who is in this picture here, Rachel?

A: This is my mother and my father and my oldest sister, and a little brother who died when he  
was seven.

Q: And would you know about what date this is?

A: It's an old picture, it may be 60 [indecipherable]

Q: Who do we have here?

A: Yeah. This picture was taken in 1938 in our flower garden at our yard. This is my mother, my  
father and my sister Sela, and sister Brina, and me, the youngest. And I was the only one  
survived from the family. All of them were killed.

Q: And this shot, Rachel?

A: Yeah. This is a picture of my school, taken in 1938, or '37. Very little of these kids survived, very little of the teachers survived. And this was taken in my school on [indecipherable] six.

Later on, on the same yard, was the Judenright -- the Judenrat of the ghetto.

Q: Let's see the building. Okay. Okay, go ahead?

A: Yes, the building has about four stores, yes? And during the time of the ghetto, in this school were located lots of people who came in in the ghetto, and in every room were 25 - 30 people. I lived here too, ya -- I have a corner with my family, I have a corner of one of the rooms. For a short time. This is my sister Sela, who was taken at the liquidation of the Wilna ghetto, on left, and she was taken to Majdanek where she was gassed in the gas [indecipherable].

Q: And who is this?

A: This is me and my aunt, who came in that time from Canada to visit us.

Q: In what year? In what year?

A: In 1938. Before the war. This is my si --

Q: I'm sorry, go ahead.

A: Yeah, this is my sister Riva, with her son Gregory, and my nephew Alexander, before the war. It's -- must be 1939, or ni -- 1939. They surv -- all of them survived the war. They were on Polish documents like Polacks.

Q: And who is this?

A: This is my sister, Luba Bielicka Blume, who was director of the nursing school in Warsaw on [indecipherable] 17. And she was the wife of Abrasha Blume, was a -- who was one of the leaders of the uprising of Warsaw ghetto.

Q: Okay, what's this?

A: This is my sister Luba Bielicka Blume, where she got her medal, Florence Nightingale after -- after the war in about 1969.

Q: And who is this?

A: This is a photograph, when I meet my sister with her family after 18 years of separations, and this old woman is Mrs. Borkovska, who saved the life during the Holocaust from my nephew Gregory, my sister Riva's son, and she hold him during a couple of years during the German occupation, and he survived the war, and he lives in Princeton. It was a family. Her nieces saved the life of my sister Luba's son Alexander, who is in the picture. And in that time he was five, six, seven years. And ha -- another -- another -- another niece of her family saved the life for a half a year from the daughter of Luba, Aviva Blume, who is now in Israel. Was a very nice family. And after the war, my sister Luba take her to her house where she lived the end of her life, and she died in the age of 92, and was very good taken care of her. And here we all are together when I came to Warsaw in 1959 for the first time to meet my family.

End of Tape Five

Conclusion of Interview