

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Claudia Royter Liberchuk
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PREFACE

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CLAUDIA ROYTER LIBERCHUK
March 16, 2004

Q: Good morning, Claudia.

A: Good morning.

Q: It's nice to see you here.

A: Thank you so much for -- for having me.

Q: What was your name when you were born?

A: Claudia.

Q: And your last name?

A: Royter.

Q: And that's spelled?

A: R-o-y-t-e-r.

Q: And your mother's name was what?

A: My mother's name was Royter, but very possible -- in ghetto she was by the name Dukorvitch, which is her maiden name.

Q: I see.

A: I will explain later why.

Q: Okay. And you were born when?

A: I was born on July seventh, 1939.

Q: So you were just a baby when the war started?

A: Oh, yeah, almost two years.

Q: Yes?

A: Yeah, almost two years old.

Q: And where were you born?

A: I was born in Zhmerinka, but I was just born because my grandparents live in Zhmerinka, and my mother came to them to give birth of me, and she came back, but my parents lived in Vinnitsa.

Q: Vinnitsa.

A: Yeah.

Q: And what did your father do?

A: My father was working for them -- plant -- some kind of -- of -- of grain, they were collecting grain, working on it, and you n -- distributing it, something like this, what [indecipherable] actually. And my mother was working as a secretary for sh -- f -- fo -- for sh -- manager of the f -- this factory.

Q: For the same factory.

A: For the same factory, yes, she was just --

Q: Now, I know that you had a sister, but was she younger or older?

A: No, no, she -- she's younger --

Q: She's younger.

A: -- she was born in 1947, which is --

Q: I see --

A: -- after the war.

Q: -- after the war.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So you were alone with your parents?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: What happened in nine -- do you -- do you recall when you were very little, anything about the war?

A: Yes, I do remember for -- I started to remember when we were -- when we came to Zhmerinka. This was my -- before this, I don't a -- for -- I don't remember [indecipherable] but this is what -- I remember what were -- my mother told me.

Q: So what did your mother tell you between her and your --

A: Yeah, when -- when war started, my father next day went to war. And my mother with me, stayed to -- there, and she's supposed to be evacuated with everysh -- with everybody else who was working to -- on this -- in this factory. But she was very, you know, shy and polite woman. She was with me -- only with me on -- in her [indecipherable] and staying on platform on the -- of the train. And when she get into the train, they manage -- moved her out. For awhile they put in his wood, his furniture.

Q: His furniture.

A: His furniture. Train left and my mom with me stayed on -- on the platform.

Q: Alone?

A: Alone. Of course she didn't -- she didn't have where to go, she went back -- to this time, our apartment was occupied by him, a -- a guy, his name was Manzun. He was -- we -- I saw him after the war, and the -- I remember my mom, for we -- used to bring me to this place where we lived before -- before the war. He did not let us back, but he let us to occupy this cellar. It was actually not the cellar, it was a -- you know, where you -- i-it was a deep cellar where people keep potato for the winter, and like this. We stayed there, but he was afraid to feed us, to give us food, because Germans occupied the -- very soon, the -- Vinnitsa, and the -- where we lived, it was little bit like outskirts of -- of Vinnitsa, and there were sher -- vou -- where st -- where the military were stationed. But we have to eat something, and during the night my mom, this is what she thought, as I remember. She went out to the, you know, to the field to pick up at least a raw potato, or something - you know, something to eat, because he didn't give us any food. I don't know how she let my grandmother, who st -- who lived in Vinnitsa in this time -- i-in Zhmerinka, sorry, in Zhmerinka in this time, to know that she -- she did not evacuated.

Q: That she did not have?

A: Sh-She did not evacuated, that she is in Vinnitsa.

Q: Right.

A: And Germans in -- in Vinnitsa. My grandma's mother was very -- you know, the very brave woman, very brave, very strong, and very nice heart. This is -- this is my memory of hurts. Sorry.

Q: It's okay.

A: But -- and she came walking from Zhmerinka to Vinnitsa.

Q: She walked?

A: She walked, to pick us up. To this time, for our apartment with all the goods which were in the pa -- i-in the apartment, was occupied and not given -- given us back. And they were [indecipherable] and they didn't have nothing, and then to pay for, you know, for at least some other -- to bring us on horses or some. That why during the day we were hiding in the forest. And during the night we were [indecipherable]. And if --

Q: Of course, there are Germans around [indecipherable]

A: Germans around, yeah, but in these villages there were -- you know, that's -- from people who lived there, and nobody want to give us food. I remember because ma -- my mom went to -- my grandmother went to ask them to give some food for me, for bo -- for the child, nobody gave. And I was a Jewish girl, I was -- I was -- I had already bad appetite. They -- it -- it told you to give me food to feed me with, always a problem. But here I was hungry. I w -- I ask [indecipherable] and f -- they fed me -- me, and very possibly themself with raw corn in the field. It was like, you know, like July, very possible early August, I don't -- I don't remember --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- wh -- wh -- when it was, but the raw corn was there.

Q: Do you have any childhood memories of that walk?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: Nothing?

A: No, I don't.

Q: So this is what you were told?

A: Yeah, this is what I was told. And eventually we came to Zhmerinka.

Q: Right.

A: And to this time, my grandfather was taken to -- to a prison -- I think, no, to -- to prison, and my memory starts from there moment when we came to this -- into this prison with a pillow, because my grandmother brought the pillow --

Q: For your grandfather.

A: -- for -- f-for my grandfather. And this -- this guys, which happened to be Ukrainian, because I remember that my grandmother was talking to them. If they wouldn't be Romanian, [indecipherable] she wouldn't be able to talk to them. And here she was, she had the lively conversation with them. And they were beating them, my mother and my grandmother, they were beating them. And I was cry --

Q: They were beating these guards?

A: Beating. No, no, the guards were beating my --

Q: These are your --

A: -- my mother and my grandmother. And I was crying very hard, and they want me to shut down, you know, to -- to -- to --

Q: To stop it. Stop.

A: -- to stop it. And -- and I -- this was my j -- first memory, that I was crying especially to make them to throw us all away from this place, and stop beating my mother and my grandmother. This is what I remember, this is when my memory starts. But it was -- it was not ghetto yet.

Q: Right.

A: And I don't remember where we lived. This a -- I -- I don't remember where -- where we -- we -- where we lived in this time, very possible my grandmother's house, nobod -- nobody told me.

Q: And your grandfa -- di -- were they able to get the pillow?

A: Yeah. They -- I don't remember the -- I believe they took the pillow, but as my mother told me, my grandfather was killed to -- to this time.

Q: I see.

A: He -- he was killed in this place. Why, I didn't know, because did you know actually in Zhmerinka, the only two people were -- were killed is -- one was a high -- he had a high position in the -- in Zhmerinka lo -- in the -- you know, in this local government, and anoth -- the second one was my grandfather, who was actually [indecipherable] person, and he was deprived of any business when co-collectivization started in Russia. He had a -- a kind -- a small kind of business collecting feather and making pillows, that's why they had -- I still -- did you believe me, I still have a pillow with a feather which grandmother made for me.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, I keep it, it just sa -- so in my [indecipherable]. And -- but he was deprived of private business and he didn't have any other profession, and they -- their life was very difficult, but they survived to the ti -- to the time of war, and he was killed, and -- killed over there. And my next memory was --

Q: Let me ask you something.

A: Sure.

Q: When your grandmother and your mother were being beaten, when -- when they left, were they very hurt? Did they have to go and get [indecipherable]

A: This is when they came with this pillow to ta --

Q: Yes.

A: -- and these guards --

Q: Were hitting them.

A: -- were hitting them.

Q: Did they get very hurt? Do you remember, or do you know?

A: You know, I -- I just remember that I want them to stop.

Q: Stop.

A: This is what -- what I remember, that way I crying very hard to -- to make them, you know, to -- to -- to annoyed them. To make them ask to -- ask to leave, because I actually don't remember my grandfather. I don't --

Q: You don't remember him?

A: I don't remember, just -- no, I don't.

Q: So they didn't hit you, that you remember?

A: I don't feel -- I don't remember.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: I don't -- don't feel if -- I don't remember. I felt so bad for my he -- mother and grandmother.

Q: Your grandmother.

A: I remember she was holding me in her hand, and they were hitting her in -- on her shoulders, and her back, and -- and my grandmother. They were hitting them. This -- this was my first --

Q: Right.

A: -- first memory. And f -- after this -- and di -- fa -- unfortunately, my grandmother and my mother were talking very little about ghetto. Very possible it was very hard for them. I don't remember a lot of conversation at home about ghetto. But I remember some -- something or some --

Q: Incidents in the ghetto.

A: -- incidents in the gh-ghetto, which actually includes me because something to sho --

Q: So it was a few months later, after you had gone to Zhmerinka that the ghetto started, am I right?

A: No -- started, yeah, for a few -- few weeks or few months or so --

Q: Months, uh-huh.

A: I believe it's i -- in -- in short time.

Q: Right.

A: But what I remember my mother -- this is what my mother told me in awhile, that actually a lot of Jewish people started to come to Zhmerinka very possibly there was a rumor that Zhmerinka will be safe for Jewish people. And they were told to bring goods for them. Their -- you know, their goods stuff. And they actually, and I remember how my mother saved it, how ma -- how many nice thing they used to bring with them. And next my memory was that my -- there was -- a lot of people were working somewhere, and there were guards with the -- these huge whips, which were, you know, which -- which were hi --

Q: Hitting these --

A: -- hitting them, these people. And my grandmother -- and there was a -- a -- f -- for awhile already, a fence of a barbed -- barbed wire.

Q: Wire.

A: This I remember, this barbed wire.

Q: Around the ghetto?

A: I don't remember it was around or not, but I wo -- I remember this row of people, and my grandmother was holding me in her -- in her hand, and it was cold already. I remember it was -- it -- very possibly it was early -- early autumn.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Because it was cool, it was not cold, but it was cool. And it was a huge row of people, and these guards with whip. And could you imagine my grandmother, oh, it -- and behind this barbed wire there were other people -- different people. You can see -- I remember that I noticed that they are different. I noticed this, they're different. And could you imagine my grandmother threw me away, over this barbed wire, and somebody took me. And next my memory that I stay in some little house with a strange woman, who is the age of my grandmother. And she was console -- consoling me, and I was crying and wanted to go to my mother and grandmother. And she was not able to console me. I'd -- you know, I was very possible very -- I'm very stubborn child. Because I di -- I remember that I didn't want her, and she -- you know, she took me out in the -- she got this little garden, and there were still apples on the -- on the tree, and she was shaking this apple to me, gave me -- to me, and I thought to myself, I don't want your apple, I want my mother. This I remember right.

Q: You remember that, yeah.

A: Yes, I do, I remember my feeling. I didn't tell her, but I remember that I was crying, and eventually she gave me back. She gave me back. How, I don't remember, maybe under the wire f -- was -- how did she give me back I don't remember, but the next time I remember that I was with my mother and grandmother. And I will -- if -- insert something which my mother told me. It happened to be that this row of people, they dug the row. And they brought all the Jewish people who came here to Zhmerinka, and Zhmerinka's people, Jewish people, to this row which they dug out yesterday. And these who were with whips, they w -- they were Ukrainian, and they were native -- they were people who stay here. And they knew who was from Zhmerinka, and who not --

Q: Right.

A: -- who is not. And they supposed to tell who is from Zhmerinka and who is not. And actually my mother was not from Zhmerinka anyway. But some of them, who happened to be a nephew of this woman who took me to her house, told that my mother is from Zhmerinka, and this way my mother stay alive. And they killed all those people who were not from Zhmerinka, and those people who from Zhmerinka, but [indecipherable] killed down as in a grave. This was how --

Q: So your grandmother thought that you would all be shot --

A: Y-Yeah.

Q: -- and that's why thr -- she threw you over.

A: Sh -- sure -- sure. She want -- she want me to stay with this, you know, Gentiles, fr -- not -- not in the ghetto, because they were absolutely sure that they will be shot.

Q: They will be shot.

A: That -- that she -- that why she sh -- threw --

Q: Do you remember her thro --

A: No.

Q: You don't?

A: No, I don't remember, I just remember being in --

Q: Being with this --

A: -- in -- in he -- in her laps. And after, I remember being in this woman's house. But this is -- a -- but this is what my mom state, how she made it --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- because she was ready, and you know she was ready by [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah.

A: -- she was -- she was woman who for their child -- for her children, and I was only grandchild that time, she will do anything, she would. This -- this -- she was a very desperate woman, and besides she died in six -- in 1960, and they -- from -- you know, people from around -- around this place she used to live, came. It was like another demonstration. We never saw these people who came to -- to -- to the s --

Q: To the funeral?

A: -- to the funeral.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. Oh, she was -- she was --

Q: She was quite a person, huh?

A: Oh she was, she was. She -- she didn't know how to read. She -- she never learned it. She was -- she was a girl in this Jewish shtetl, but she had five from -- five grandchildren, and five was their highest grade in school. She say they [indecipherable] my five. She -- she - - she used to say I have my five. Mm-hm. It means -- okay, and next to them [indecipherable]

Q: So they're bru -- so this woman, who clearly understood the -- that you were so unhappy --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- and -- and she must have known that your mother and grandmother survived.

A: Absolutely.

Q: Right.

A: Absolutely, because they came back.

Q: Right.

A: They -- they came back. And -- absolutely she knew, very possible, and eventually I remember myself [indecipherable] the ghetto. How I get there, I don't remember.

Q: You don't know, right.

A: This is -- I don't remember.

Q: So do you remember being happier that you were with your mother and your --

A: Ye -- well, of course, yeah, I remember that eventually I have my mother and grandmother. And you know, being a girl, I was real attentive to what people who -- people -- people dressed in. In this case, I remember this yellow star sometime. From this moment I remember this yellow star sometime.

Q: Did you have a yellow star?

A: No, I did not, but --

Q: You're too young?

A: -- the story was -- the story with later -- wi-will tell you l-later. [indecipherable]

Q: So you remember seeing the Jews wearing a yellow star?

A: Yeah, yeah. And how I remember being with my mother and grandmother put in one room with other women, there were only women. There was -- and among these women, I remember them very well, because after the war my grandmother used to bring me to this place, it was a -- a Aunt Sura, Aunt Fanny, and there was a very old woman who was paralyzed. She was sitting all day long in the armchair or chair, I don't remember, but all of us lived in the same room, one room was. And this auntie -- and there was other women, and three of us, my grandmother, my mother and me. And there was -- there were no other children, if I remember. I would remember, because I di -- I grew up in -- in this place. I don't remember any other -- I remember a -- a fo -- [indecipherable] girl in different -- in different room, but not in this room. And they -- they had to work, you know, they went to -- to work, and I was staying with this paralyzed woman. They put me on this little foo -- foo -- place for children, just to not make an a -- soil in my pants, you know, and I was sitting on this pan.

Q: The toilet? On a -- on a pan?

A: The anto -- th-the -- on the pan all day long, next to this woman, because if any [indecipherable] should happen, who will watch me? I was -- so all d -- all day long I was sitting in -- and she was -- she was able to talk somehow, because I remember she was talking to me in Yiddish.

Q: In Yiddish?

A: Yeah.

Q: And did you understand that?

A: Yes, I do -- I -- I did understand and I actually foo -- you know, in my family, it was not the custom to -- in -- in the Ukraine [indecipherable] to speak Yiddish --

Q: Right.

A: -- because th-the -- you know the anti-Semite wert around. But anyway, it isn't clear, I heard somebody speaking Jewish, I understood everything. You -- did you -- it was like my grandmother was talking. Th-They all s-spoke Yiddish more than Russian.

Q: Uh-huh. So you were sitting all day --

A: All day.

Q: -- on a pan.

A: Yeah, on the pan next to --

Q: So in case you had to go to the bathroom, nobody --

A: Yeah, mm-hm, I was sitting -- this -- this was my shim.

Q: So you were a very good little girl, is that true?

A: I didn't -- I didn't think so. I didn't think so.

Q: You don't think so?

A: No. But I remember my mother was strict with me, and I remember b-because I was very bad eater, but I remember this black something, which we had to eat. My mother said it's -- it -- me -- this was -- I ask her what was it. It was -- they were working to -- in potato field, and they will peel the -- sometimes they will able to bring home peels from potato, and this what -- what she was cooking for -- for me, and for [indecipherable] I could, but very possible I ate it, that I survived eating it --

Q: You can -- right, yeah.

A: -- somehow. I don't -- there were no other food. And the -- anyway, I survived somehow. And this -- but I grew up and did -- did you know, nobody was afraid of me to -- to -- to [indecipherable]. I didn't have to sit on the -- on the s -- toilet all day long, because I -- I could take care about it. And I started to go out. And I remember the Dr. Girsh, very possible you read about him, he was the head of that -- he was from Romania, and he was -- everybody said that he was very bad, he was with a whip all day long, and this whip was very often on the back of this -- of the working people. But I remember my mom's expression, she said, "If he won't be so strict, very possible we wouldn't be alive." And this is -- this I -- I -- I remember, I remember.

Q: And did she explain what she meant?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: I didn't -- I didn't ask because actually it was in the -- the end was [indecipherable] conversation.

Q: Right.

A: And the only thing I re -- and I remember that they said that very possible when they brought this pillow to grandfather, he was not alive any more. He was no alive, but nobody said it then.

Q: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

A: Because actu -- actually this was in the Ukraine, and they can tell my mother and grandmother, but they didn't tell them. And they didn't know the date -- the exact day --

Q: The date it was done.

A: -- of -- of his death, but I remember a-around Jewish holidays, they usually lighten their candle, or the light for -- for Yahrtzeit of him. This is -- this I remember, this was after the war, already. What else of I remember of this, when I was able to get out of the h-house, because there was a -- like a -- and it was a b-barbed wire around, and I started to get familiar with o-other -- other people, and I remember there was a little -- little boy in different home, because we had to walks little bit to see them. And I consider myself a grown-up, because he was little. I used to play with him, but he died. And -- he was sick, or something happened, or maybe of starvation he died. And I remember my mom said we are going there, but he is not alive any more. He died and he is in the ground. And when we were walking, there was a lot of broken glass. And th -- th -- my memory that I thought if this glass doesn't -- doesn't hurt him. This is my memory, was -- this is what -- what I remember. It means the glass was broken --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- it means there was -- there was a fight, because it -- we were walking on the broken glass.

Q: Right.

A: This I remember.

Q: So you had -- you -- you were four years old now, right, this 1943?

A: Yeah, four -- I -- I was almost five years old --

Q: Five years old.

A: -- when -- when we were liberated.

Q: Right.

A: But during this -- this time, we were [indecipherable]

Q: [indecipherable] but you thought of yourself as a --

A: Yeah, I thought ri -- of course, because he was a -- he was in ha-hand, and I was walking myself. Of course I was --

Q: Did you understand when your mother said that he died?

A: This is what I understood, that he's not of -- but I did not understand he is not alive, and this glass doesn't cut him.

Q: Right, yes.

A: I -- I didn't -- I didn't realize this. This -- my memory that this glass very possible hurts him.

Q: Yes, right.

A: Because my mother -- mother [indecipherable] me that he's -- he's --

Q: He's in the ground.

A: -- in the ground. Yeah, this is what I remember. And I remember there was another child who died. I don't remember the -- the age, but I remember the -- this wo -- we visited this woman after the war with my grandmother, and she had -- she got marry -- she remarried, and she got a child, and my grandmother was very happy that she has a child because she lost her child --

Q: She lost her child.

A: -- child -- her child during the war. And then my memory from the ghetto, I want tell you that I remember that Dr. Girsh was very good to me. From time to time I was by myself, I don't remember ever as a ki -- children, or other people walking with me, when I was able to get out, and th-the -- fr-from this [indecipherable] I fo -- I don't remember as a chi -- children. The only thing I remember very well -- and there was a boy, maybe he was nine or 10 years old, and he was starving very much, he was -- you know, she wanted to eat, and there was no -- no food. And he escaped. He was with his mother, and what I do remember very well, that his mother was hoping that she will come back ever. And she was staying -- there was a -- as you know, a gate from the same o -- for barbed wire, on the wooden posts. And she was staying and looking through the -- through this gate, and I remember her back. Very possible she was a big woman, or very -- very possible -- she seems to me a big woman. But her wide ba -- back, I never forget. This back was, you know, you can see in her back [indecipherable] by her back how she had the pain, and the -- and she was staying when they were coming. This is al -- always, always you can see her. She was staying with her face to this gate. It was such a -- you know, to -- I remember even how I fe -- I felt about her, this pain. I didn't remember this boy, but I remember that my mom say, "Because you don't want to eat, do you see what happen?" This is -- this wo -- this I remember. And I remember when I was working, Dr. Girsh sometimes and he took me to his -- to hi -- to the place he -- he used to live, but this was in the same ghetto, bi -- if he in the same [indecipherable] from the barbed wire [indecipherable] you know, the -- the place.

Q: In the same area, yeah.

A: Yeah, in the same area. Not -- it was like, you know, next house -- ne -- next door. It's very, very close. She took me once, and I saw a woman over there, and being again a girl, she had the blouse on her, and she didn't [indecipherable] this yellow star. And I remember how she looked like. And she ha -- once she had the white blouse, another time she took me, she had the red blouse. And I remember the blouses, because being a girl [indecipherable]. I paid attention, because everybody was gray, everybody was in gray, and here were colors. And what I remember, you ma -- from time to time the Germans were coming to the -- to ghetto, and everybody was so afraid because you know, German al -- always brought the death with them. And everybody was trying to hide somewhere. Once I remember we're trying to hide in the deep cellar, and there was a ladder without -- with sa -- with missing some, you know, some this -- what is the -- with -- ladder with some missing --

Q: You -- planks?

A: Planks.

Q: The planks?

A: Yeah planks.

Q: In the cellar.

A: Mm-hm. And fer -- and I remember that there was a man's voice, I don't remember who it was because was absolutely dark. He didn't want to ask to go there because of me, because I was very little that he was afraid that I will cry, and Germans will hear -- wo- would hear us. And I remember, my memory, why he think that I will cry? I am afraid the same s -- the same way, I would not cry, but I will not express it because my mom say to me do not open my mouth, and I didn't open my mouth. And they let us in.

Q: I'm going to have to stop the tape, and continue on the next tape.

End of Tape #1

Tape #2

Q: Claudia, we were talking about you going into this --

A: A cellar.

Q: -- cellar.

A: Mm-hm, yeah. This -- that time, we really stayed in the cellar. Of course I didn't pronounce a word, and we stay alive. And we went from the cellar -- this I remember very well, it was dusk already, you know, not a dusk, it was dawn.

Q: It was dawn?

A: Dawn it was, dawn, sorry. And it was light already, almost when we went out, it means all night long we were just staying in the cellar. And few more time it was very, you know, [indecipherable] it was the brightest part of my memory when Germans used to come because it is -- it's really, you know, it's really was the most dangerous t-time. And once --

Q: You -- you understood that it was very dangerous by then?

A: Oh sure, sure. I understood. I understood that they -- if I will cry, or if I will loudly pronounce something, some gost German will hurt us, and they will kill us. This I -- I understood. Maybe I did not understand about the death, about killing, but I understood that it's very dangerous.

Q: Dangerous.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: And there were a few times when they put -- put me -- put somebody on the bed -- it was one bed in this room, everybody else was sleeping on the floor. I don't remember who was sleeping on the bed, maybe me and my mother, my mother and me, maybe. I don't remember. Maybe my grandmother because I remember all f -- always her warmth here, when she was so warm and soft. Maybe I was sleeping with my grandmother. Th -- th -- I remember her softness. And a few times they were put somebody on this bed, and when German -- I remember Germans were coming [indecipherable] you know, the -- the head with the hide, this front and the gray her -- coats, military coats, and black epaulets. This I remember, it is black on the collar, I remember very well. They're high, though we -- I was little girl.

Q: They're tall cause you're little.

- A: -- y-yeah, we're little girls, and I remember how th-they were high, and -- and fo -- somebody was on the bed, and somebody pronounced typhuses, you know, the sickness from their laces, you know, si-sickness, typhus.
- Q: Oh, typhus.
- A: Typhus.
- Q: Typhus, yes.
- A: Typhus, typhus, yeah typhus. They left im-immediate -- immediately.
- Q: They -- because they were afraid.
- A: Yeah, they -- this was -- this I remember there was a magic wart. Typhus was a magic wart. I -- I saw this magic wart, because actually there was no typhus in there -- in this -- after the war, my grandf -- grandmother was sick by typhus, but this was some kind of inside typhus, the inside infection. And once I remember they were not able to get into the cellar, because Germans came very ra-rapidly, and was very suddenly, and they put me in the barrel, and covered me with the wooden cover.
- Q: In the barrel?
- A: Barrel, mm-hm. I was little, I can fit it. This is how they hide me. And two times I remember t -- there was two times. Once, there was a strange young woman, her name was Sima. She all a of a sudden came to the -- to ours -- and she didn't speak -- to our camp, and she didn't speak Russian, she spoke Yiddish. But some strange Yiddish which I barely can understand. But the grown-up people understood her. Very possible she was -- she was escaping of some other place, from Romania, and she happened to be here. And she stayed in this room, and every time, when Germans were coming, she was the one who was put into the bed, and covered with all the sheets and everything, which was -- and they put me on the bed, because I was the smallest, one, it was not heavy for her, on the bed, and this way sh -- they were hiding her. And beso -- because of -- I don't remember her in the gray dress, it means she was not part of this camp. Maybe sh -- they would not -- not make her working, I remember, but she lived in Zhmerinka after the war.
- Q: So she was saved?
- A: She was saved, she was saved. And beside her, in awhile, there was a man who came to this -- to this camp. He was Russian soldier. Maybe he was in capture, he was ca -- he was captured, and he escaped and this way he -- he came to this camp, I don't remember, but he -- he's arrived, too, and they got married on th -- a-after the war, and we visited them, we stay in their house. His name was Kiva. I remember very well.
- Q: Kiva?

- A: Kiva. And wo -- he had in her -- in his hat, a star, a yellow star. And he gave it to me to play with. Believe me, I put it on my dress, and went very proudly, I went outside to walk as I am grown up. This I remember very well. I -- and all of a sudden there was passing -- a guy was passing me, I believe he was a German soldier. Yeah, he was a German soldier, he was passing me, he came back, he looked at this and he started to beat me with his feet.
- Q: Kick you.
- A: Kick me with his feet, I was on the floor -- on the ground, and he was kicking me. He -- he threw out this -- this star, for -- together with the -- the -- that's my clothes what's -- with what I was in, and Dr. Girsh, and Girsh came, and he liberated me, he took me and he was talking to him some way, he must have been like he was talking to him, and he took me. And after, w-when my mother came from work, she was beating me. She was punishing me for -- for why -- why did -- did it. But I didn't know that this -- this -- this is not six -- six -- there were not -- not si --
- Q: Oh, i --
- A: -- I -- I told --
- Q: -- it was a -- it was not -- the Jewish star was six stars.
- A: Yeah, it was a -- the --
- Q: It was a regular -- it's another kind of sta --
- A: -- it was a f -- a regular star, but I didn't know, I -- I didn't know how to count that.
- Q: But your mother was hitting you because --
- A: Hitting me, punishing me for -- for -- for ca -- for -- for being show off. And nobody can see me, nobody was around. But I went out with a s -- with a star on my shir -- on my dress. This is what I remember, I remember even my feeling about this.
- Q: That's the -- how did you feel when your mother hit you? Was this -- was this worse then?
- A: I was actually, you know, I was afraid of my mother there for -- f-fo -- for awhile. I was afraid, but there was my grandmother, whom I could always ge -- have, you know, to s -- escape to.
- Q: Yeah. Right.
- A: I was always afraid, she was strict with me, because the time was -- you know, I was [indecipherable] you know. The time was --

- Q: So she was afraid of losing you, yeah, yeah.
- A: Because she was a -- she was afraid of losing me, not -- not if she wanted to -- to -- even to punish me.
- Q: Right. But your grandmother was softer with you?
- A: Oh yeah, she was the -- I was her favorite, I was the ov -- oldest one, I was her favorite.
- Q: Uh-huh.
- A: She was certain -- I was favor -- a favorite of hers for-forever.
- Q: Forever.
- A: Yeah.
- Q: Yeah.
- A: Mm-hm, she was this -- she was a great woman. She was --
- Q: What was her name?
- A: Her name was Rivka.
- Q: Rivka.
- A: Yeah, and my -- my mother name was Raisel.
- Q: Raisel.
- A: Yeah. Raisel, which was -- in Russian was Raisa.
- Q: Right.
- A: But my --
- Q: Like Gorbachev's wife's name, Raisa.
- A: Yeah, yeah, absolutely the same.
- Q: Right.
- A: And my granddaughter's name is Raisel Rivka.

Q: Oh.

A: My -- my -- my grandf -- my son found -- you know, my f -- my son combined both these names.

Q: Your mother and your grandmother's name, that's lovely.

A: [indecipherable], uh-huh. This is [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: Very touching. And believe me I didn't ask him for this. This -- this what -- he didn't know my grandmother because she died before he was born, but he loved his grandmother, which is my mother, the same way -- way I used to love my --

Q: Yes.

A: -- my grandmother.

Q: Yes.

A: You -- you know this. This was in -- they were very close to each other, they were talking, and I believe he -- he became an Orthodox because of my mom's -- my mom's stories about before the war, how it was in shtetl, and how she always was listen, he -- he used to come to from school, having his lunch with her. She always prepared for him the best -- the best in warm and fresh. They were talking and she was telling him stories about the -- before the -- when she was young.

Q: Right, right.

A: How it was when she was young. Okay, well, we were talking about ghetto. What else do I remember about ghetto? I remember -- actually, I remem -- the -- the most part of -- I remember when Germans used to come, and how dangerous it was. And we were -- I don't remember how we were hiding the kid -- Kiva. I don't remember, but he survived. This in -- this I know very well. How -- where he was, maybe he lived with us. For awhile he used to live with us in the same room. And after maybe he was staying in cellar for [indecipherable] because a man could not supo -- survive th-there, only women.

Q: Really?

A: Men -- men who can work, okay, no, he could not survive because that's -- if they were Jewish, forget about, he could not survive. Or they were at war, or they were killed. If not Jewish, they were [indecipherable] traitors. Traitors, po -- polizei they called it. So what for ge --

Q: So the ghetto was primarily women?

- A: Women, women and children, primary. Maybe there were some old men, because one of those men who told don't bring her to the cellar because she will cry -- she will cry.
- Q: He was a man.
- A: This -- he was a man -- man, I remember his voice. But I don't remember how he looked like, because I don't remember men. And I actually don't remember if -- men in the shule, when my mom used to bring me, only women. And -- and this -- and Kiva, and this is the only one, and Dr. Girsh. And actually -- and for me, men -- men were a densh.
- Q: Men were dangerous.
- A: Yeah, for me they -- mi -- my -- my memory of men was danger, you know. They ca -- they can bring death, that you cou -- you have to be afraid of that. But Dr. Girsh, who was -- I'd -- I was not afraid of him, of Dr. Girsh, I was not afraid of.
- Q: No, cause he was very nice to you.
- A: He -- he -- to me he was nice, but my mom said that he was [indecipherable] he was very strict, and he was beating with a whip, Jewish people. But my mom said that to be -- for him to be strict, this is how he showed the Germans, you know, how to sur --
- Q: Yes. Right.
- A: -- this way for he -- he saved us. Actually everybody -- everybody who could survive, who -- who didn't die from starvation, or from k-kind of sickness a- are [indecipherable] everybody survived actually Zhmerinka ghetto, is actually -- y -- you know?
- Q: How did other people treat y -- since there were very few children --
- A: Mm-hm.
- Q: Did they treat you well, or were some people angry that you were alive, and their children were not?
- A: No, no.
- Q: No.
- A: No, I don't remember anybody being angry with me, of these people. I don't remember. Everybody was very nice to me.
- Q: Uh-huh.

- A: Everybody. But I remember very few of them. Even the -- these two women whose children died, I don't remember during the war, them. I do -- I don't remember them. They di -- they didn't live with -- in the same room with us.
- Q: Right.
- A: A-And I don't think --
- Q: And that's where you spent most of your time.
- A: Sure, only here, on-only here. Because I do remember this barbed wire. I remember wha -
- it was very close. This actually was the -- the same place. The -- it looked like I -- I would go out from the door --
- Q: And it would be there.
- A: -- and it would be there. This I remember. And once I remember -- maybe not -- vu -- vu -- like my mom used to complain that I was a very bad eater, and this was a vu -- very big -- big problem with me. I remember once I went out and smell dragged me to -- and happened to be -- could you mention -- I remember this very -- the smell very well. It was a cheese which two Germans in the commert truck were sitting and eating from plastic boxes. It was like soft cheese, you know, so soft cheese, and they were eating like -- like this. And this smell of cheese was dragging me so hard. I was going there and I was staying and looking at them. But when they turned they faced me, I got scared, and I ran off.
- Q: And you ran away.
- A: Yeah. And this smell I brought with me after the war. I remember my aunt who [indecipherable] in the wild, she brought me to the restaurant, and she ordered the cheese, and I could not stop eating it. You know, this smell of cheese -- smell of cheese that the -- was, you know -- I didn't -- I didn't realize what is it, because I don't remember the taste of cheese as the -- o -- of cheese, but --
- Q: But you remember the smell.
- A: -- after -- after the smell, and after the war, it -- the smell brought me this memory. And after I remember that it was a big [indecipherable], it was, you know, less something happened, and did you know, everybody was so excited, and Dr. Girsh wanted to take my mother and me somewhere. And my mother didn't want to go. And they put my mother -- the how they will -- they put her like Sima into the bed, this one bed, put o -- o -- over sh -- her, all that clothes and the sheets, and put me on. And there was a soldier who came for my mother. And my grandmother was talking to him. And I didn't understand when my gran -- grandmother learned it to -- to speak Romanian, or German. It happened to be Ukrainian. She was a traitor, she was a polizei. But my mother was talking to him and I did not understand Ukrainian -- Russian -- I understood Ukrainian -- Russian --

Q: Russian.

A: -- and -- and Yiddish, but n --

Q: But not Ukrainian.

A: -- not Ukrainian. And when sh-she was speaking with the -- the [indecipherable] I hear -- I told her sh-she speaks Romanian. And it happened to be that Germans were coming. They were -- you know, they were go -- going, the Russian army was running them away. And everybody say that they on -- on their way they will kill us.

Q: The Germans when they leave will kill you.

A: Yeah. And that why Dr. Girsh wanted to take -- very possible my mother was one of the youngest one. I didn't know why -- I didn't know why. Ma -- he wanted to take my mother and me with him to Romania somewhere. He was writing -- he was writing because he -- he didn't belong to -- actually to -- to Germans, and he didn't belong to Russian. He -- he was not -- you know, he didn't belong to anybody. And he wanted to -- to take us, and my mother didn't want to go. I didn't know for which reason absolutely, you know, it was not nice talk about it, because I remember that -- maybe -- maybe my father was jealous about this, I didn't -- I don't remember, but it was not -- not mentioned at home.

Q: Mm.

A: In our -- in our home, about this, but I remember this [indecipherable]. And next time I remember that you can go out from this barbed wire. You -- you can go out. And we went out, and it was early spring. The weather was like -- like today. Really, it was like today, it was cold, it was raining.

Q: Raining.

A: It was very bad. And we went to this Soloviyva -- to this Aunt Soloviyva house, because my grandmother and her, they were neighbors. They were in good con -- relationship. And happened to be that rest of the Jew, who actually lived there, didn't have place to go, and they went to the same house. And the house was packed, nobody can sit. The house was very little. Now, when -- when I remember, that was really very, very small village house. She was baker, so she lived over there by herself. But again, because she was my grandmother's friend, I was privileged. I was put on them -- you know, this fireplace they have like in -- in the village, where they used to bake bread, cook in the same, and if -- there was like a p -- piece like they can sleep when -- in wintertime, when [indecipherable] was cold, they were sleeping over there. She put me there, but there was no air to breathe. It was that the house was packed, and nobody allowed to open the window or door, because everybody was afraid that -- th -- th -- of this noise, the German will -- will do -- would hear us and kill us. And she put me on this -- and to -- to make me

breathe she was -- sh-she was pu -- she put a paper and sugar on fire, and this way she told she will clean up some air for me. I didn't know this was -- this was the way -- this I remember, the sugar and the -- and -- and the paper, and I was licking the sugar. I was licking the sugar. I was -- it was '44. This was 1944.

Q: Now this woman is the same woman --

A: Who --

Q: -- who took you in --

A: -- did -- yeah --

Q: -- when your grandmother threw you over?

A: -- yeah, this -- this was the same woman. This was Aunt Solo --

Q: So it's solo --

A: Soloviyva.

Q: Soloviyva.

A: Soloviyva.

Q: Soloviyva.

A: Aunt Soloviyva. This wa -- her last name I don't remart -- remember her first name. And --

Q: Okay, so you're in this house.

A: In this house, and all of a sudden I hear this Aunt Soloviyva came in -- in, and she said, I saw him, I saw him, such a young, with a -- a fi -- on her no -- his nose, how this --

Q: Freckles?

A: -- freck -- freckles on his nose. He's so young, he -- very -- very possible he's only 16 years old. It happened to be Russian soldier. And so she's -- the first Russian soldier. And this breeze in there -- in this house, I heard like everybody like -- like, you know, let out the air. I -- this I remember very -- very well, like in the same time, everybody in the same time. Like -- like -- sigh like this. This I remember very well. And after this, people gi -- started to get out from the house, but we stay in the same house. We didn't go f -- we didn't have where to go. And it was very possible a morning, but the weather was like today, it was little of rain, and very, very uncomfortable outside. And was three of us, my mother was holding me in her -- her hand, my grandmother, and one plaid which we had

from I don't -- from my grandmother's house with us. And this plaid was covered in -- they covered from --

Q: It's a blanket?

A: Blanket.

Q: A blanket?

A: Yeah. But it's huge like a -- like a [indecipherable] blanket, they were able to cover themselves. And we were walking, or staying, I don't remember, and we see -- we see a man come -- approaching us on the ca -- this -- one -- his leg is, you know [indecipherable] on the crutch.

Q: On the crutch?

A: Yeah. And two crutches under his arm.

Q: Right.

A: And he was dressed differently. His -- his coat is different, not like Romanian or Germans, it's different. This I remember. And I hear he say -- he calls "Raichka," which is -- which is name of my mother, it's like, you know, like nickname for --

Q: Yeah, Raichka, yeah.

A: -- my mother's, yeah. And my grandma -- her -- mother said, "Moshe." And I know that Moshe, this is my father. I said, "Daddy." And my mother hit me, "Don't call every man your daddy." She didn't recognize him, but he -- it was my father.

Q: And she didn't recognize?

A: She didn't recognize him, and he actually didn't recognize us, he did -- he recognizes this blanket. We were five -- five -- my mother was -- she didn't look, she was so thin, and so -- so -- and my grandmother [indecipherable]. Of course he could not recognize me, because two years, you know, it's a difference here --

Q: Right.

A: -- is big. Very poor -- possible, and I was covered with this blanket, because weather was horrible. Was very cold. This I -- I remember, it was very uncomfortable. And next time I remember everybody was sitting in the same room -- in the same room for a -- ghetto for a -- it was in the same room, they came back to the same room because we did -- we didn't have where to stay. My -- my grandmother's -- the house where she used to live was destroyed. My mother didn't live there. We came back to the same room, and everybody else collected to the -- the same room, and my father was talking -- telling to

everybody and holding me in his lap. It happened to be sh -- that he was participating in this Stalingrad [indecipherable] and he was wounded. And he was discharged from army, after one year being in the -- in the -- the hospital, he was discharged from army, but not having where to go, he joined his army because he was this ne -- radio technician for -- in the tank. And for this case he was sitting in the tank, he di -- he didn't have to -- to walk.

Q: Right.

A: And this -- this way he was -- his army he came to tra -- Zhmerinka, and I think this is most significant th-thing, story.

Q: Story that he liberated you.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes.

A: How he -- he li -- he actually liberated us. And being discharged from army, he stayed with us. Beside, the war still there.

Q: Right.

A: And because of this railroad junction in Zhmerinka, the battle was very hard. But my father stayed here, and you know, now as a young man, there was not so -- so many young men alive for -- a-around. He used to work for sugar plant. His -- his occupation was sugar planting, and the [indecipherable] was sugar -- sugar plant, if it -- you know, Vinnitsa, it was sugar -- sugar area, actually.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And th -- a lot of people f -- worked for su -- for different sugar plants in -- in the Vinnitsa area. He started to f -- reconstruct -- reconstruct a chu -- sugar plant in Brailov, which is seven -- seven kilometers from Zhmerinka. This way, when we lived in Brailov, my mom used to st -- show to me the doors where the Jewish people used to live, and who came to this -- to Zhmerinka ghetto and were killed. And my mother and my grandmother were digging them down.

Q: They were bringing them?

A: Digging -- digging the deep --

Q: Digging the grave?

A: -- the -- the graves.

Q: And she told you that after the war?

- A: After the war, she showed me the places, the doors of this Jew -- for Jewish tri -- houses, which of course were occupied by -- by Gentiles. The people took over these houses right away.
- Q: Right. So these were the people that had come to --
- A: To Zhmerinka --
- Q: -- Zhmerinka --
- A: -- and they were killed.
- Q: -- and -- and they were killed because they would not li -- were not from there.
- A: Because they were not Zhmerinka. They were not from Zhmerinka.
- Q: I see. And your mother and grandmother --
- A: Yeah.
- Q: -- were digging the graves --
- A: Digging them.
- Q: -- for these people before they were shot?
- A: For these people, yeah. And when they were shot, they were digging di -- you know, they were put in the ground.
- Q: So they saw them being shot?
- A: Sure. This is when my grandmother thre -- threw --
- Q: Threw you over.
- A: -- threw me out beca -- over --
- Q: Right.
- A: -- because she -- she saw that they will b-b-be killed either.
- Q: Right.
- A: Nobody knew who will survive for after this. This is --

Q: But let me -- let me ask you something about the ghetto for a moment.

A: Sure.

Q: Did you have bad dreams, do you remember, as a child, being frightened in your dreams and having nightmares?

A: Of the ghetto, yes. But -- for a long time. But you know, I was actually very happy child, I did -- I remember clearly I was ha-happy child, and very, very independent, because I was by myself actually. And I remember a-after the war there were each -- children were dying. This I remember after the war, survived children were dying.

Q: Dying.

A: And I was with [indecipherable]. I have a friend, his name was Slava. He was the same age. I was playing with him, and he was dying of tuberculosis.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And I remember even once his mother came to me and ask me to sit down next to him, and she had to ca -- to bring some medication, but there was nobody to take care about him, his father was killed at war, and there was only her ho -- and if -- she put such a dish with kerosene, you know -- you know about this kerosene?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And she said if he will start to cough, you have to bring and give him to smell it, and he was --

Q: So it will --

A: Yeah. When I was sitting in -- and this -- you know, dish with kerosene, but he didn't cough when I was -- and he died ne-next day.

Q: Oh.

A: There were ch-children -- children from -- from ghetto who -- who even survived, they were dying. And there was not -- you see, I -- I was -- I was a bad eater, I was [indecipherable] and -- and very healthy, my mom said.

Q: But you were healthy.

A: I was very healthy. I -- I hear [indecipherable] did you know that -- I remember I had -- I -- I was sick during the -- during the war few times. But it was like there's nobody to care about me, and nobody gave me some medication, and you know, I [indecipherable]

Q: And you were okay?

A: Yeah, and I was okay. I was -- I was a happy child. But I had, of course my -- all my memories were of -- were about this. I was afraid about different things -- different things, I wa -- I was afraid of big storms. I don't know why, but very afr -- I was afraid about -- because they were gray, and German's coats were gray. I remember this was absolutely the color of German's coat. This is gray stones. This -- this, I remember.

Q: Hm. We have to stop the tape.

A: The -- okay.

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

- Q: Claudia, we ended you were saying -- I was asking you if there were things that were frightening you, and you said the gray stones.
- A: Gray stones, yeah, this I do -- oh, and I remember, for -- this bombing which -- which occurred when -- of -- I told you, yeah, about this bombing, which was terrible, when we stayed in somebody's house. Did I tell you this story, of --
- Q: No.
- A: No.
- Q: When you were --
- A: Okay.
- Q: Right.
- A: When we were liberated --
- Q: Right.
- A: -- there was no Germans, no Germans, no Romanian in Zhmerinka, my father started to work in Brailov for the sugar plant, he started to restore it. He didn't have place for us to stay with them -- with him, that why we still stayed in Zhmerinka, somebody rented us a room. And one evening, very possible it was Friday night, or Saturday night, and I don't remember. When a f -- there was artillery sound, and for us it was so common, like now if a plane is f -- f-flying, this noise is what -- so common. But for some reason I say to my mom, "Bombing started." My masa -- my mom said, "Go to sleep. No -- no bombing, we hear it every day." But it really was the worse bombing I ever saw. And we were sitting under the window -- window with my mother put pillows in the window, and bullets were sho -- were -- were sh -- ti -- you know, catching in the feather.
- Q: And moving around --
- A: No -- moving around --
- Q: Yeah.
- A: -- th-this I remember very well, and some bullets which still hitting the windows, were f -
- right in -- into the wall for -- across -- across the room. And I remember this -- this whistle of the -- o-of these bullets, very well.
- Q: Of the bullets?

A: This I remember very well. And this was all long -- a-all lo -- of all night long. And it felt like this night never end. But it ended, started to, you know, it start down, and when we went out, this room which we stayed in was absolutely destroyed, was no roof, was just pieces of wall. And --

Q: But none of you were hurt?

A: No, none of -- oh, no. The -- and when they came out, there were other people coming out, but there was no roof on the building. No -- there were just broken walls around. And we were walking, and everybody was walking around, it was like for somebody -- for something. Oh, and what I do remember, that my grandmother found her velvet skirt, and she made a dress for me, by hand, because it was only dress -- and the only thing which I very anxious that my dress won't be lost. Because I -- it was night, and I was without dress, I was put to sleep, and the only wa -- my -- my hear from -- my concern was about this dress. And my mom was punishing me, stop talking about your dress. But this dress survived, because I remember it after --

Q: It did survive?

A: -- it's -- the dress survived. It was -- it -- it did survive. Unfortunately I don't have a picture with this dress. My mom made it for me by hand.

Q: Yes. Your mom or your grandma?

A: Grandmom, grandmom, grandma.

Q: And what color was it, do you remem --

A: It was black, it was black.

Q: It was black?

A: She had the black skirt, it was black. And next day -- of course my father knew about this bombing, he came right away, on horses, and with carriage. And he took us and this carriage to Brailov, and we started to live in Brailov. And if somebody told that this actually was a club, it was a not place to live. But we lived in this -- we stayed in this club, because there was nothing, no other. And this is where my -- it was in Brailov. And this is where my -- when my mother was walking with me, and showing me the doors of the -- of houses which used to belong to Jewish people who were killed in Zhmerinka, because they didn't belong to Zhmerinka.

Q: Right.

A: They were killed in Zhmerinka and for my mother and grandmother were covered -- were digging the holes for them, and covering them --

Q: After they were killed.

A: -- after they were killed.

Q: Yeah.

A: And she -- she would show the -- I -- I remember even now these doors. I believe if somebody will show me the door right now, I will -- I will recognize it.

Q: Yes.

A: The door in the house, I remember it was ve -- very vivid to me. And we started to live by the [indecipherable] ov-ov -- over there, and bombing was every night. Every night was bo -- bo -- with the bombing, and I knew that the-they put me to sleep, and we will get up and get out of the cur -- building, bec-because we were afraid to stay in the house, our house will be destroyed, and we'll bi -- we will be colla -- covered with this, you know, with -- with the stones. That's why we went out and we stay near the river. I don't remember it -- or it was a lake, or river, but how I see it is w -- w -- i -- i-it was very wide. And bombs were into the river, and this water was splashing. This I remember very fu -- very vivid dur -- during the night, but you can see because there was a very positi -- there was -- they were sh -- lights like flying, you know, lights, and after this bomb exploding into the river, or next -- next to me. I heard this -- of the -- I remember this very, very good, and I remember that we were eating the fish which was deaf after the bombing, and was floating on the surface. This -- this fish was -- we eating. And --

Q: Is this the first time that you ate fish?

A: Yeah. Of course it --

Q: Did you --

A: -- I -- at least of what I remember, might a -- very possible before the war I had the fish, I don't remember. But --

Q: Did you like it?

A: No.

Q: You didn't li --

A: No, I didn't like it. And after i -- wh -- when there's sid -- real meal -- we had real -- I never ate fish, be-before I started to cook myself, fish, I hate it because it was tasteless, you know?

Q: [indecipherable]

A: And [indecipherable] once. I even once had the --

Q: That's right.

A: -- ca-caught the bone in my lung -- gland, and doctor suppose -- my -- my father was bringing me to the doctor, they put it out, because it was very -- well, for a very long it hurt me a lot. I don't re -- la -- I don't like -- I didn't like it.

Q: You didn't like it.

A: No. And beside this -- oh, and I -- I got sick, and my sickness was, you know, lack of vitamin. I was covered with wound. All my joint in here, I was covered wi-with -- it was too painful to move my mouth, I remember it here because -- and doctors say this lack of vitamin. And they gave me, for vitamin, they gave me carrot juice.

Q: Carrot --

A: Somebody -- yeah, somebody from village was bringing carrot, my grandmother was grating it under some kind -- it was not even grater, I believe it's some kind of tool. And squeezing it, and this was my shi -- oh -- oh God, of juice. But the cup which she gave me had a flower, but it didn't have a handle, handle was broken. But because of this flower I was -- I -- I was agreed to drink the juice, because this flower [indecipherable]

Q: Because there was a picture of a flower.

A: A flower. This was the first cup, which I remember in ma -- in my life has a flower.

Q: And you liked that?

A: That's why I like it, that why -- an-and it was yellow, had the thick, thick ceramic, I remember very well. And -- and -- well, but without handle. The handle was broken, and they were always afraid that they will si -- you know, the [indecipherable]

Q: You will hurt yourself, yes?

A: I'll hurt myself with bro -- broken handle. And what -- what we ate, we ate gray noodles.

Q: Gray noodles? Everything is gray.

A: Yeah, that -- gray, it was gray. And I didn't want to eat that. And if now I sh -- know why it's gray, because of Germans, who stayed in Brailov, when they were leaving, they her -- they here -- put on fire them -- f -- warehouses with food which they had. And everything burned out, but there were leftovers of flour. And flour was mixed with the -- with the ashes. And --

Q: So it came out gray?

A: Yeah, that way, and this is where the flour which my grandmother and my mother used to make -- make noodles of, this was ou -- and I didn't want it, because they were very gray, and I was punished for this, that I didn't want it. Of course, you know, at -- this a -- this my memories, and I don't -- I didn't have any toys, of course.

Q: No toys, right.

A: Of course, no toys, of course. The first toy which I had was a little white doll with all black, which my father brought from some kind of assignment to Vinnitsa, which was liberated from Germans already [indecipherable] still was, but it was far west from Vinnitsa already, and he had an assignment to -- to m -- Vinnitsa, and I remember when he came, he mentioned to my mother some names, and my mother was amazed that they st -- they still alive. And th -- they stayed in Vinnitsa, and when we moved in -- in 1946, we -- we moved from Brailov to Vinnitsa, because my father had another assignment for -- for work. And we visited some people who my parents knew fr-from befor -- before the war. This is a -- but, it's still a war. And my aunt, who was -- and all my uncles, my father for -- for was from the fami -- family only broth -- brothers, only boys were -- were in the family, and I don't remember if I mentioned to you that my grandparents from my father's side were still in Yaltshkov, and they were burned alive in the barn. They -- and somebody told my parents. My grandfather was very old. He remarried. He was widowed and he remarried my grandmother, who was the same age which is hi-his eldest son, who actually emigrated to Argentina. But nobody was able to keep in touch with him, and you know, we don't know -- but somebody told me that his name -- his last name was Royter, like mine, that there were fum -- f -- women's dress stores name of Royter, somebody told me. I have to find out but I still don't [indecipherable] is not, you know. I don't know -- know even how to start -- how to start to him, to them who --

Q: Who --

A: -- why -- why I'm -- why I'm interested. Now, okay, they were at war, both his brothers were at war, one of them was killed, and rest were -- were -- came -- came from war. So some was [indecipherable] returned. My mother had only one sister, who was at war, too. And she was evacuated with her hospital which she was working for. She was like nurse's aide. And she was ni -- she was educated like -- like some kind of languages. She used to teach Russian literature in school. She was educated and a -- in this -- in this field. But at war, nobody need -- needs lit -- literature [indecipherable] understand. She was a -- a nurse's aide. She was the one who was -- who was running after the wounded soldiers, and bringing them the [indecipherable] and relocating them to the hospital. A very brave woman, and when she got the -- she got pregnant, she was evacuated with her hospital to Uzbekistan. And -- and this Uzbekistan now. And somehow, during this time we stayed in Brailov, we -- we found out that she is alive. My grandmother, you understand? You understand what -- what happened. We were crying again, it was such a happiness. And once my grandmother gave me, it was the very possible Friday night, it was summer, because I was dressed very light, was very warm. She gave me a bath, and she was -- she -- we were staying outside this -- this room [indecipherable] steps, and we staying here at

-- I was sitting on the step, and she was feeding me with those gray noodles. And voo -- telling me the stories just to make me eat. And the story was about her daughter. And all - all of a sudden we see near the fence, three absolutely black faces. Absolutely black, I never saw such black people ever in my life, the -- even after. And was her daughter, my aunt, with her new hu -- with her husband and her boy whom she -- whom she gave birth to in 19 -- in the summer of 1942. He was born in ni -- 1942. He was three -- three years younger than me. And it happened to be that they arrived in the machine room of the train, and -- where the coal was. That's why they were so black. They were [indecipherable] when -- when they came in with silver, sil -- the war still was there, and we were hiding sealed near the wall and [indecipherable] and I remember this boy was sleeping on somebody's -- I was not sleeping because I was afraid of this bombing, and he -- he was sleeping, he was sleeping like no -- nothing happened. And this was -- and we mo -- moved to another apartment which in -- which I was given a corner, and my toys were sh -- matchboxes, which I was cover -- covering with pieces of material, old material, and this was my furniture, I was moving it around, and from one of the assignment to vin -- to Vinnitsa, my father brought me my first book. It -- it's was a fairy tale about a frog -- a fr-frog which turned to the princess eventually. It was very nice book, I remember. It -- and it was actually falling apart, but I was keeping it together. It was tearing -- falling apart, the pages were falling apart, and my f -- if -- I was fascinated with this book, and I was putting it together, and I remember by pictures for the -- the -- you know, the sequence of the pages only by -- by pictures, because I -- I was not able to read.

Q: Had you seen a book before?

A: No.

Q: That's the first time you actually saw a book --

A: Yeah, saw a book.

Q: -- not only had it for yourself.

A: Yeah, yeah, this was first book in my life, which is --

Q: So di -- had you seen any toys when you were in the ghetto?

A: No.

Q: You had never seen a toy, either, nothing.

A: No, absolutely no. I didn't even know of -- of existing of the toys. That's a -- do you remember I told you that when Aunt Soloviyva was shaking the apple for me from the tree, in the beginning when my -- my grandmother threw foo -- threw me away -- threw me over for -- to her. I thought that this is a toy, this apple on the tree.

Q: You thought it was a toy.

A: This i -- this was the only thing, that she was shaking the toy to make me quiet [indecipherable] because I was crying.

Q: Yeah.

A: No, I no -- never saw a toy before this doll -- this -- with -- with one leg. I never saw a toy in my li -- in my life. Maybe I saw it before the war, but I don't remember it.

Q: Right, right.

A: It was a --

Q: Do you think you were -- you were bored in the ghetto? I mean, you had -- no one was teaching you anything.

A: Bored? Absolutely, yes. I do remember wha -- that why I was walking around like, and my mother was very afraid of me. When I learned how to -- you know, take care about myself, I was able to get out of this room.

Q: Right.

A: And I was walking around this, around I was walking just by myself, I don't remem --

Q: Cause there's nothing to do.

A: Yeah, I -- I don't remember anybody even talking to me. To -- two times I remember once when Dr. Girsh me -- took me once, twice to his -- to his room, this one I remember his girlfriend. And once when he took me when -- when I was beaten by -- by the German soldier, he took me to his room, and he even gave me something sweet, something little and sweet, this I remember. But I was beaten very hard, and this sweetness didn't -- and could you remember, I was afraid when my mother will know about this --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- she will punish me. I will -- I think -- I was thinking only about all my -- what will be when my mother will know that I was beaten by soldier, that means I went out, from which I was -- very possible I was not allowed, but anyway, I we -- I went out, and I was walking --

Q: Right.

A: -- walking in -- and yes, and I do remember -- I do remember I told you about the cellars which we were hiding in?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Very possible they were ki -- kind of open, because I remember the holes, like a door open, and the hole, and you go down, you -- very possible my mother was afraid that I will --

Q: Go down.

A: -- I will fell --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- fell down. Mm-hm. And maybe m-m -- into this hole. But I don't remember anybody wi -- t-talking to me, telling me the fra -- the tales, no.

Q: Nothing.

A: No, this -- I don't remember. People were not, you know, it was not -- not a time to --

Q: Absolutely.

A: -- to -- for -- for this kind of ti -- you know, ki -- kind -- nobody entertain me, nobody was -- oh yeah, I remember one very, very interesting story. There was a crazy man, he was playing the violin in this ghetto. He was walki -- oh, I remember this just -- just now I remember it. And once, German came, and Dr. Girsh made me dance under his playing, just entertain Germans. I remember, and I even remember how I danced. Now I reminded, yeah, I remember. And my mother told me that she has to be -- me -- teach me how to dance in case of they will come, next time I have to initiate it. I had -- very possible -- according to what my grandmother told me, after the war I was youngest one, I was the little one who survived this. Very possible that why all these women who we met after the war were crying around me, because I was the -- the -- the --

Q: The only one.

A: -- the smallest one --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- who survived that --

Q: Right.

A: -- ghetto, because other chi-children were dying, and I -- I was -- I survived. This -- oh, do you see, I di -- I almost forgot about this --

Q: It's interesting.

A: -- and he was -- you know, he was alive after the war, and my father was taking care about him, he was giving him some money, but he -- he was killed by train, I remember, because he was crazy, he wa -- he didn't understand what is going on, and he was walking with this violin, oh. He was in -- I was walking around. This is --

Q: Walking, right.

A: He was not able to work, it was useless to -- to -- to -- and I remember everybody was afraid of him to hide in the cellars because he could play violin --

Q: He would play, right.

A: -- and the German will find -- find us. This -- I remember him. This was the -- this is what -- the thing which still, I remember. And I remember when their -- when the victory was.

Q: Yeah?

A: This -- yeah, this I remember very well, because we -- we were robbed this night.

Q: You were robbed?

A: Yeah, and I didn't remember what the -- what kinds of [indecipherable] we were robbed of. I don't remember, because I didn't remember having anything. But I remember it was early morning, and our aunt stayed with us, and her -- her husband was -- he was -- he suffered of his wound very well, and he was v-v-very hot. Hi-his wound was -- it was -- it was -- it looked very bad, it was very inf -- infected, and he was in the hospital in this -- this particular day he was in the hospital. And my mother -- they ma -- my mother come to me, it was early morning, and she was crying. And she said, "Victory, and we are alive, but ah, we were robbed." We had little ducks in the wa -- in the -- the pond next to the house. Very possible my mom tried to -- to make something, you know, to -- to make -- well, it was a village, it was a river next to, we had little ducks.

Q: Ducks?

A: Du -- y -- an -- yes, and I loved them a lot, and we were robbed. Somebody too -- too

Q: Took the ducks.

A: Took the ducks. And she said to me, "But don't worry about, we alive, and it's a victory, don't worry about the ducks." And after this we came to a -- a place, and there was -- you know, was like a [indecipherable] built up fr -- wooden [indecipherable] and my father, who was actually, he was head of this plant, that -- he was one man, who was [indecipherable] who came, who [indecipherable] and I remember his speech, and he was

talking like -- if you ever heard Stalin, was talking during the war, dear brothers and sisters he was -- he was telling this, and I was thinking, now, they're not his brothers and sisters, this is only one sister, which -- which is my mother's sister --

Q: Right.

A: -- staying next to us. But anyway, everybody was crying.

Q: And he was speaking?

A: Yeah, he was speaking. And after the war when they -- w-we lived in different places, and of -- after the war when there [indecipherable] after the war my grandmother used to bring me to Zhmerinka for Jewish holidays. She was still observant. And my uncle, my aunt's husband, was working for kind of mill, because they had flour, nobody had what to eat, and they had flour. But in that time, for them to have flour, it was very dangerous because he would be -- he would be kicked out, even put into prison because he was not given this flour. It means he has to bring this flour, nobody has to know. But my grandmother was such a brave woman, and such a nice, good -- she -- she was making bread, putting it under her coat, and bringing to people who are starving. That why so many people came for -- for her funeral, because she saved a lot of people from -- from starvation. And -- and she was bringing it to Zhmerinka for these Jewish holidays, and everybody was crying. When they saw me, they were crying.

Q: Right.

A: And Sima and Kiva got married. They built a house, which was very rare, but he was given a place, and she -- they were -- they built a house, they had two girls, which I consider myself much older than they are, they were born after the war. And they -- they were -- always stayed in their house. And do you remember I told you one of the woman who lost a child? Her name was Flom -- her last name -- last name was Flom. This I remember very well. She remarried, she had a boy. But they became just a little bit estranged from other people, but my grandmother didn't believe that she is estranged, and I remember we came to them, and my grandmother stayed for they pray that they got this -- or got us -- they had -- insert us [indecipherable] to dinner, or to -- I don't remember what time of day it was. And they were very nice to us, and you have to keep up with us. This was my grandmother, she's supposed to keep -- keeping peace everybody. And everybody was very crying, seeing me, just everybody was crying, so had the -- this -- the -- Aunt Sura, and Aunt Fanny, and the family came back, and Aunt Sura had two boys, and one of them happened to be -- he was much older than me, but he was not at war, it seems to me, but I don't remember him during the war. He didn't stay with us in same room. Very possible he was in some kind of hiding. I remember him a-a-after the war, but he was -- his name was Gersh, like my husband.

Q: Gersh?

A: Like my husband's name, Gersh -- Greesha -- ge -- in Russian calls Greesha.

Q: Greesha.

A: Yeah, I remember him after the war, I do remember him. And -- and this a story I remember, when the service was in somebody's house, somebody led the ser -- Jewish service for Jewish houses, and everybody was crying very hard because of -- everyone voo -- voo -- lost family during the war. And foo -- foo -- you know what, even before I came to -- to United States, I thought that Jewish holidays, this is for crying. You have to cry duri -- during the Jewish, this very la -- very sad --

Q: Right.

A: -- event. And when I saw on f -- Ocean Parkway was a synagogue when I came here. And people were dressed up for very -- we came to synagogue because of the holiday, and everyo -- everyone was dressed up, and were so happy, I didn't understand. And I was -- already I was in -- almost '50, I was in '48 or '49, and during this ti -- is the -- even to this time, I didn't know because in Russia nobody celebrate Jewish holidays. Beside ask who -- we were baking matzoh, and eating

A: matzoh during the holiday. And I liked it. That was very, very nice, my of -- my mom made gefilte fish, if she could find the fish, if she -- she could buy the fish she made it f -- gefilte fish, and foon -- if this horseradish my grandmother would doing --

Q: Really?

A: -- herself, yeah and [indecipherable]

Q: So did your grandmother live with you after the war?

A: She -- she lived -- she lived with my aunt --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- but we're -- it was very close.

Q: Close.

A: It was like 20 kilometers from each other. That's why from -- for all the holidays were celebrated together.

Q: Right.

A: We were always in -- okay, I have to run to the --

Q: All right, we'll -- we'll take a break.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

End of Tape #3

Tape #4

- Q: Did your mother change after the war? Di -- or did she still frighten you a little bit?
- A: She did frighten me.
- Q: She did frighten you?
- A: For a -- for a long time, for a very long time she frightened me, and the life after the war was so difficult, that for her to be sad on unsta -- satisfied, was am -- you know, for me it was a real t -- a real thing, because life after the war was terrible.
- Q: Oh.
- A: I remember we were thrown out from the apartment in November when my sister was born, because of somebody from denun -- denoted on my father who had -- had --
- Q: Denounced your father?
- A: Denounced my father, who had a high position, somebody wanted this position. And every apartment belonged to the plant --
- Q: Right.
- A: -- which my father worked to. And when they kicked out him from job, they kicked out from -- from -- from apartment, and my mother was staying in the sa -- with the same coat, with same blanket. It was November, and weath-weather was like this, was rainy, and we didn't have where to live, and w -- we lived -- we moved in with my aunt, who occupied it with her family, to this time three children.
- Q: [indecipherable]
- A: Her -- her -- her -- her husband, her -- herself, three children and my grandmother in one room.
- Q: Yeah.
- A: And we moved in, and they sta -- stayed in some so obscure village, this was nothing, just horses, it is a -- I remember. And these horses were brought u -- brought me to school, like four kilometers from this place. Sometimes when the horses could not go because of snow, I was walking this -- this distance, in high boots. And the village was -- because we lived -- before we lived in Vinnitsa, and I had city clothes. And we ca -- when we came to village, we could not change, there were no money for change. And the boys were beating me up because of the short dresses. I remember I was afraid of the -- I was afraid of everything, I was afraid of those boys, I -- I was afraid to se -- to te -- tell my mother that I was beaten, because my mother was -- had trouble all by herself, with this little kid

in her hand, with my sister, and no place to live, my father jobless. And you know what it means Russia when you kicked out from one place? Everybody knows about that, it is -- because you have so-called working passport, it's written i -- eventually my father f -- managed to fi -- find a job another village. Soon we moved to this village. There was a guy -- in this village a plant, was very nice plant, was very nice place, there were a lot of Jewish kids which I mingled with. And all of a sudden, there was a gra -- it was 1951. There was a guy by name Swigun, I remember him very well. He was ki -- he came as a assistant of director of this plant. Nobody need, the plant wasn't not such big, nobody need assistant, but he was assigned it's assistant. All Jew were kicked out of this plant during the next week. And these people were staying out of the apartments like we used to stay, and my father found out before. He went to Vinnitsa, and he found another job, and we moved out, we were not kicked out. This time we were not kicked out. But the old people, I remember my friend, her name was Claudia, too. She was my girlfriend. Her -- her grandmother was paralyzed, and they were dragging her out, there was no -- no -- out on the street. This I remem -- it was after the war. I was afraid of everything. There was [indecipherable] there were -- th-there was --

Q: It was a very difficult time.

A: -- difficult life.

Q: Yeah.

A: It was -- it was horrible life after the war.

Q: And you were conscious of being Jewish, it was very clear that you were Jewish?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes.

A: This -- you know, I am proud now. I was very conscious to be Jewish, and I never -- you know, never hiding this. Besides, I always fe -- I felt that I am Jewish. Only place where was good for me, it was this -- this -- before this Swigun came, because there were -- I -- other Jewish boys and girls, only -- only -- but it was very -- for very short time.

Q: And then it was difficult for you to identify as Jewish yes?

A: Yeah, yeah, it was very difficult. It was der -- very difficult, for one reason. I was taken by my very far aunt to Leningrad.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I was like from -- from -- from fifth grade to eighth grade I stayed in Leningrad. This was the worst -- worst time in my life, because there I was identified as a Jew, and nobody wanted to speak. I didn't have friends. Absolutely I didn't have friends, I will -- I was by

myself. I remember very well always listening to the rad -- to the radio. I knew all operas for -- which were translated by -- by radio, by heart. Because I didn't ha -- only school and home.

Q: And home.

A: And my aunt, she was lonely woman, and she was deaf, and she was -- she was not very nice. I believe now she was -- she had this -- some kind of mental sickness. Not if I was afraid with her, but I was aggravated with her. She was t -- she was telling me bad stories about my grandmother, which I didn't believe, of course I didn't believe, my grandmother was entire world for me. And she was telling me bad -- bad stories about her, I didn't like her, and I e-eventually one summer, and during the break, I didn't go back to Leningrad, I stayed in the village. And -- but to this time, before of my father has a but -- had the position in -- on the plant, being I was one Jewish, and another Jewish was my sister. And I had a friend who was half Jewish, her father was Jewish. And for him it was very difficult to get a job. His mo -- her mother was working, and her father was taking care about household, because he could not --

Q: Because he couldn't get a job.

A: He could not get a job. And my father would not be able to get -- give him a job, besides he g -- he got the position. It was -- you know, there was a choice, or you working, or you giving the job to -- to another Jew, and you will both be kicked out of the plant. It was very difficult time, horrible time, we were -- we -- I -- I remember my mom, who's -- she was -- she was very skilled cook. She was making potato soup, and some kind of stuffed potato skin for the second course. And there wa -- there was only meal. And eventually we got a cow, and my mom, who was actually a city girl -- a shtetl girl, she didn't know - she was taking care about this cow, and we had the milk. And I remember people are coming with glasses to our house, asking for a glass of milk.

Q: Ah, you had a cow.

A: A cow, yeah.

Q: And people wanted milk, cause they didn't get it.

A: Ki -- ki -- they didn't get that.

Q: Now, everyone is suffering, whether they're Jewish or not Jewish because the --

A: Again.

Q: -- the economic and physical situation is terrible.

A: Su -- sure.

Q: But as a Jew, you were --

A: As a Jew, I was -- I was, you know, I was outskir -- outs --

Q: Outside -- out -- out of --

A: Outside, in Leningrad especially.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: In Leningrad, it -- it was terrible. Now, when people from Russia talking about Leningrad like a beautiful town --

Q: Not for you.

A: I -- I will say they hated -- I hate people in Leningr -- and beside my sister used to live in Leningrad, because she diyako -- she made it to a b -- a boy who was student in Leningrad, and they used to visit her. And I tried to see beauty around, it was difficult for me. You know, I saw these people, and these people who had a gray faces, believe me, this -- they had a -- I don't know from lack of vitamins, they had gray faces, very severe look. And this -- this what I remember about Leningrad, I didn't like it. And when Stalin died, I was crying like everybody else, I was a girl, you know, everybody was crying, and I thought that di -- you know, the end the world. Everybody was crying. And I came to school crying, and this girls was staying like this, "Are you crying? Because you Jew killed Stalin." Because there was a story with Jewish doctors --

Q: That it was Jewish doctors, right, in '56, yes.

A: -- i -- i -- if you remember, yeah. And here again, I was -- I was suffering like everybody else, they outside me. They kick me out of this. You know, and being a -- a girl, being a actually kid, to be not in this --

Q: Not accepted, it's very difficult.

A: -- accepted, was very difficult.

Q: Was -- was there any discussion about the murder of Jews, or was it just fash --

A: Yeah, sure. I knew that actually ghetto was only for Jews.

Q: Right.

A: They killed -- the people who were killed, only Jews, and Ukrainians who stayed, they were shu -- they were okay, they were alive.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah, I knew about --

Q: So you knew, but did they teach that in school, or did y --

A: No.

Q: You knew this, they di -- never taught that.

A: No. Even the word ghetto never mentioned, even when I got the job, already not first of my job. I had to put e-every -- every time when you go to -- to new job, you have to make autobi -- biography, put on the paper. And you have to cover the full time for during the war. And I wrote on occupied territory. I di -- I would not able -- I didn't even know that ghetto is -- has two t. I didn't know because I never wrote, I never read word ghetto, never. Never mentioned it. A-And I wrote that I was in occupied territory. And my supervisor, who so -- who wanted to give me a job, he was a Jewish -- old Jewish man, he said, "It's so bad that you were on occupied territory." I thought, if you would count, I was two -- from two to four years old, what -- what's such a does -- what did, you know, what actually can -- what harm to the Soviet Union I can make in this -- in this age? And the -- when I told the story to my friend, just treat it like a joke, he -- they -- one of my friend made a -- a [indecipherable] poetry, I lived in Russia, about me being a spy in -- a spy in two years --

Q: It was in occupied territory.

A: -- yeah, in two -- when I was two years old, being a spy. And this is -- this no -- ne -- never [indecipherable] never mentioned. That why I told you that I -- now I read the book because I wanted to read something about ghetto. When I lived in lu -- in Russia -- in Soviet Union, was no mention.

Q: Nothing --

A: No, nothing. And actually when we left, e-everybody said, "You should have some documents that you were in ghetto." There was no place to have -- to obtain these documents from --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- for -- that we were in ghetto. No place. And we got a few -- two women who all knew, or were in ghetto, I don't remember. And they signed a paper which -- which we notarized. And we brought this paper, and my mother, because we -- we -- we want something to -- to -- for my mother, for -- my mother was the one who was suffering the most here. I was a child, you know. My memories and s -- she actually does -- it is her and my grandmother's y-you know, also --

Q: [indecipherable] yeah.

A: -- also honors that I survived, actually. This is -- this is for them. And when we brought this paper to some organization here -- she brought, with my husband, because I was at work already, and my husband was the one who was taking care with her -- he was working, too, but they were very close, my parents and my husband were very close, we've never had any problems with this -- in this -- the was th -- he was considered the son i-in the family. And when she came to some organization, there were Russian who working in this organization, not Jewish, Russian. I don't know how -- va -- which way they ki -- they used to ki -- to come here, and they said, "Where did today -- obtain this paper, on Brighton Beach?" And my mom [indecipherable] her face, she -- she said, "I don't want to have you with this any more. I don't want this any more." She turned her face, and very soon she died f-for -- not able to -- she -- she was killed by car, th-that was sudden.

Q: Your mother -- here?

A: Here. She was in -- you know, she went to English --- English ca -- English classes, she was very anxious to get the English language, to -- to speak English.

Q: Right.

A: She was after se -- she was 75, but she wanted to speak e -- English was -- she was so accurate with her homework, and teacher loved her so much.

Q: Mm.

A: Yeah, because I was talking the teacher, and she -- she was not able talk.

Q: Right.

A: Teacher was Jewish, she spoke Yiddish, some little bit.

Q: Right, right.

A: And this how they --

Q: So y-you met your husband in 1963, am I correct, something like that?

A: Yeah. Sure.

Q: But when you are starting to date --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- and you're going to university, are there many people who were from Jewish families who admit they're Jewish, or are most people hiding the fact that they're Jewish?

A: I will tell you something. When I have to go to school -- we lived in village. When we came with my mother, we came to Kiev because I wanted to -- I wanted to study in the same school which my father did for [indecipherable] like this family. And I came to Kiev, and in fren -- y -- this was not the si -- subways train outsti -- outside train. I saw Jewish faces, I decided that I want to live here, because I was so afraid about -- o-of big cities after Leningrad, being outcasted so much, that when I saw here Jewish faces, and Kiev was a f -- the fa -- city of the -- a lot of Jewish people lived because still before the revolution, and everybody who survived bu -- came back to Kiev and in Kiev somehow you can -- it was difficult anyway, being Jewish [indecipherable] was very difficult. But anyways, better than Leningrad, for example. And for -- I stay in Kiev, and I don't know for which reason, but my memory, I was befriending only Jewish boys and girls. I -- for some reason -- by the way my sister didn't -- did not, she married a Gentile, she married that Russian, I was -- very -- very possible because I suffered from an -- anti-Semitism all my life, being o-only one in school, and being one in school in Leningrad, and being so outcasted, that I want to be among my -- among my own.

Q: But you were clear that people looked Jewish, to you?

A: Looked Jewish, when they looked Jewish to me.

Q: Were you correct most of the time?

A: Most of the time, yes.

Q: Yes?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: Hm.

A: Most of the time I was Jewish -- I was correct. And I stayed -- I rented the c -- it -- it cal - - it call a corner, it means a bed. And my lane -- landlady was Jewish, and I was very anxious to bring everybody whom I meet, and whom I befriend to -- for -- for her to see them, because she has to know whom I am with, because you know, that she -- very possible she's -- you know, t-the -- I want to -- her to know that I -- that everything is okay.

Q: Right.

A: And this way I use [indecipherable] Jews, and I thought that if they are Jewish, they are okay. I don't know, I was like a [indecipherable] running to the [indecipherable]

Q: [indecipherable]

A: -- boys and girls --

Q: Right.

A: -- but anyway, I thought if they are Jewish, and they have family Jewish, it means that they okay, they brou -- they brought up properly, that mean they'd -- are not --- and they - - and besides, everybody went -- try to go to ha -- to college, or is in the college, which means, you know, it means that, you n -- they're certain level --

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: -- of, you know, the education, makes people -- first of all, they very occupied that -- with -- with lessons, and with -- and they didn't have time for -- for bets -- the -- for -- for betting. And very soon time of Khrushchev came, Stalin died. There was this open letter, so called. Y-You know, when they open letter was read, i -- I was still in high school. I believed every word right away. I didn't know about it. But in my home sometimes, my father mentioned something. But believe me, I was very much against this because I want to be like everybody else, I want to mingle with -- with -- and my father was so against government, against the -- you know, he didn't show it -- beside that cu -- beside -- behind the door of our apartment. But --

Q: You mean ou -- you mean -- oh, you mean outside the door.

A: Outside the door.

Q: But inside, he did.

A: But inside, sometimes he mentioned it.

Q: So, did you consider yourself a Communist in some way?

A: You know, pioneer.

Q: Pioneer, okay.

A: But no Communist.

Q: Yeah.

A: When it came time to be even in Komsomol, even in young Communist party, I was tre -- cynical all right --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- de -- about all this hi -- all this. And when Khrushchev came, and all my friends and me, we started to read the literature, which was -- which was prohibited in Stalin's time.

Q: Right.

A: And of course from that time I was -- you know, I didn't believe exists a -- a civil government forever -- fo -- fo -- from -- from this particular time. This -- I've -- when -- when I was growing up, I was already re -- ready to go.

Q: You were ready to go.

A: Yes.

Q: So, can you explain to people what it meant to be a refusnik?

A: Again, I was [indecipherable] a refusnik. Because first of all we get the job, because of us trying very hard. My husband had very bad job. He had to change the job to be a refusnik, and he was -- like my father refused to ta -- tell me look at this, what she made of that -- of this guy, he was a man, a mensch [indecipherable] and now he be -- he became a frightened man because he -- he used to bring his is d -- you know, these gloves, this -- you know, the fa -- because he, who very -- very often he -- he had to, you know, to load the truck and unload the truck. And it was really very difficult. Besides, we were -- because of my husband had to change a job, his salary was half of the salary here he used to have. And because of everybody's salary was from -- just fr-from salary to salary, we suffered a lot. And only because of again, my mother was a very -- you know, fu -- very frugal cook, this is how you can survive. We did -- didn't -- we never had any savings on us, ne-never had. And at work I never talk to anybody about America, about my intention to leave. Everybody knew because they had to take paper, and they supposed to, you know, condemn me in voice. The -- the lot of people who just supported me, but they suppose -- what they supposed to. And I remember even this old man who is -- who fa -- who didn't want me to write that I was on occupied territory, he was the one who supposed to condemn me. And he didn't know how to do it. He said, "Look at this, I work fo -- with you for such a long time. I never knew that you wanted," he didn't know what to -- v -- what -- what else bad to s -- to tell. He didn't know. I was like everybody else, I was coming to work, I was a consciousness at work, I was doing -- I love my work always. And you know, I was brought up as -- you know, I have -- if I come -- if they gave me work, I have to --

Q: Do it.

A: -- I -- I have to do it.

Q: Yeah.

A: And -- and actually it was -- actually it was difficult to complain about me. And I wanted to tell one story, because this story was significant enough. When there was, you know, the -- su-supposed to be meetings to condemn me, to tell bad thing about me, that -- to -- that I am a traitor, I want to leave my country, my cuze -- you know, my Fatherland -- Fatherland for some kind of America, a-and supposed to be like this. And somebody

supposed to represent me. There was this foo -- of general -- retired general who was a head of personnel department, who was very nice, because he was -- he -- he -- he grew up among Jewish boys and girls who help hi -- him before the war, be -- became a man sh -- and they decided -- in my division, they decided that head of division would not go because they will re -- ij -- j -- remind him of all the mistakes we made. You know, he -- head of department, e-everybody. So he decide -- decided that his assistant will go, that's me. And his assis -- assistant was Jewish. He was very nice, very handsome man. Handsome and to -- could -- you know, everybody in the -- in this -- in my cu -- company was talking about h-how nice, and how handsome he is. He is now here. His name is Weiss. I --I would like to have his -- his name, because I never forget what he had done for me. And he was s -- s -- charming, and he was the one, if there was some problem, he was sent to -- to -- to sol -- to solve this problem because he was very charming, everybody was -- you know, was -- was charmed by him, was the -- because he was the -- he -- he was the one. And he f -- everybody, they decided that he will represent me. Like when we came, there was a committee. There was a -- a chief engineer, who was -- he wa -- who was a Schwarz, he was a anti-Semite. I didn't know before, because I -- you know, on my position, then his position, we were very far from each other. I didn't know. There was this Barbara, which I told you, who -- who was assistant of this h-head of personnel department, who was a cou -- who was undercover KGB, everybody knew that s-she is undercover to KGB, but what can we do? And a lot of other people, among them are Jewish people, too. Was a secretary [indecipherable] of party secretary, who was anti-Semite number one. But he was drunk, I remember where f -- my friends who was working, they said, "Oh, you know, we had to make a picture of him, how sometimes he will -- he is coming from work, he could not walk, he went to -- to -- to the train [indecipherable] and this pi -- picture will -- will make him tell about you the bad thing." But then nobody made this picture, and -- and there was few other people. And to keep me at work, which I ask them to keep me at work, do not fire me because I knew that we will be refusniks, and we have to survive somehow. This, you know, assistant is Yuri Wizer, this what I thought, he who represents me, said about me good things. And he signed up the punishment for him. And now everybody said, "How can you tell about a traitor, about the person who want to leave he -- her Fatherland, good things? She's the worst person we can di -- how can you?" And everybody forgot about me.

Q: And started --

A: -- for the moment, and started with him. And it was like for two hours. I will tell you, I was so tense. I didn't know how will I come tomorrow to work and look in his eyes, if he will still here after everything they told about him, and this Barbara, who happened to be -- you know, she -- of course she liked him, but he was -- he was very respectable man, that was far for her. She was -- she was the one who was -- her -- her language was the most -- the most -- the most powerful against him. And after two hours, we walked out in silent. We didn't talk to each other. Everybody came. He went to his office, he had the private office, and I came to my -- and -- to my room where I work, and nobody from co-workers ask me how it -- everybody saw. And was so silent, nobody was talking, everybody understood that there's something to -- something terrible happened. And I didn't know if they will keep him at work. I -- I didn't think about myself already

because I felt so bad about him being so brave to -- to -- to represent me. Well they made an -- in the end of their working day, he came to my he -- to the room, looks at every -- every group, every [indecipherable] had the room, separate room. He came to my [indecipherable] room, and he ask everybody to leave, just me to -- to stay. And he approach me, he said, "Claudia, don't worry. Nothing happened. If you would need more m-my help, I will go." I never forget. It is so -- sorry -- and believe me, because of this anti-Semitism, I was -- I didn't tell anybody this. I wanted everybody know how brave he is, but I could not tell, because he made such a -- you know, tha -- such a -- and I didn't tell about this to anybody before I found out that he is here.

Q: Really?

A: When I found out about this, he got -- he is older than me, and he came later, and it was very difficult for him -- him to got a job. And this is -- okay, and he -- and I got an offer from a guy who knew me before, a young guy, he became vice-president of the company. And he insisted on me to get a job for -- in his company. But I had my job, and I didn't feel like leave my boss. Y-You -- we have very good relationship, it's very small company actually, and I didn't feel like, and I decided I will try to offer to Yuri this job. I will tell Yuri that there is a job. And I call him, and I told him that -- I -- I found his telephone number. I told -- I called him and I told him, do you remember this story? I never forget it, and only now I want everybody to know. And everybody who used to work with us, and who is here, and I t -- I telling the story everybody. Because I never for-forget. You -- you should know who he was. He was, you know, like a symbol of -- of -- of engineering mind, and being so handsome, and you know, it becau -- even that he was a Jewish didn't -- you know, it didn't bother -- bother everybody be -- because he was so respectable. And he had the -- you know, he had -- had guts, like American say, to -- to stand next to me, and to protect me. This is -- this was -- but he did not get the job, it was difficult for him with language ver-very much. And he was, you know, he was retired already, he -- he was 65, he said, you know, "I got my social security, and I -- I am happy with that. My son is okay, I -- he -- thank you so much."

Q: Right.

A: And we were talking for a long time. He told me about company, how it's a ta -- ta -- how it became. It actually fell apart when I left. Not because of me of course, it's Soviet Union who fell apart, and nobody had money to -- to support such a -- such a big cor -- cor -- company, which designed paper, which needs for of -- they need it for propa -- for propaganda, paper for the -- the -- after -- after weapon, it was next --

Q: Next thing, right.

A: -- next very important production in Russia, this was -- this --

Q: That's quite a story.

A: This was a story, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Mm-hm. Okay, maybe --

End of Tape #4

Tape #5

- Q: Claudia, how would you define a refusnik?
- A: A refusnik actually, what does it mean? It means when you apply to leave the country. You apply to special organization -- organization for special permission, which actually belonged to KGB. It is -- it is a division --
- Q: A division? Uh-huh.
- A: Yeah, it's division of KGB. They put you on the list. They -- they do not -- they denied your application, they would not let you to go, but they put you on the list of people who want to leave -- who want to leave their Fatherland.
- Q: So they refuse, and you become a refusnik?
- A: Sure, sure.
- Q: So that's -- that's where it comes from?
- A: Yeah, they refuse it, and we became refusniks.
- Q: Refusniks.
- A: Yeah. And being on this special list, you have a special treatment, according to it. It means that actually -- well better -- you better do not apply for another job, for different job, because not only -- you know, if -- or very possible, people who give you the job don't know about that you're a refusnik, and you don't offer it, you don't talk on it to them. But in while, their in-information will come to the personnel department, every company had the personnel department, and every personnel department had somebody from KGB. And eventually this information will come.
- Q: Mm-hm.
- A: And not only you who will suffer for -- but the people who want you to hi -- who want you to work for them, will suffer from the -- fro -- from this. They can't have food, different co -- different co -- diffi -- difficulties at work, with -- especially with different party organization which were very powerful.
- Q: Mm.
- A: In the -- in government they didn't do anything technically, but government the people, and through condition and position and salary, especially salary. And everything was under their control, and they -- when they find out that you are refusnik. If a -- besides, just have -- talking with Grigory, we were under control of this -- of -- of local police -- police -- the, you know, f -- and we had our local policeman coming to check on us every

month. It means that he was checking if there are group of people gathering together, and maybe were talking about something. Th -- maybe we read some books which we not supposed to read. They control this too. Or paper, or su -- maybe -- by the way, my sister was here like eight years before they let us to go. And f -- wh-when you -- there [indecipherable] the stamp of this guy who censored the [indecipherable] his woo -- his number was K9. And when there were sh -- not -- no -- to foo -- from time to time we didn't have letters from -- from them, and w-worried a lot. And my husband used to say to my mom, who of course worried about -- about her daughter most-- mos -- more than us, she said K9 now on vacation. Him -- and that why we li -- we don't have this --

Q: [inaudible]

A: -- that you tell them from the state. That why you have to be very careful when you talk on the phone, what you talking about. And there were -- some got -- not with us, but there were sha -- a few times when they come to refusnik's apartment, to the place where the people who were refusniks live, and blame them in having drugs. How -- they put some kind of like baking soda on the refrigerator. Don't -- for -- you know, the -- the powder, white powder. And they say that this a drug. They put themself. They are searching, they put this themself. [indecipherable] got it was not with us. And we actually were careful with -- no, we had -- we had our friends -- our friends did not -- our -- oh, by the way, sometimes even friends tried to avoid you, but we were lucky enough. Our friends who were not going to leave Russia because of the job, both -- you know, old parents, who could not wor -- who don't want to go, they could not leave them --

Q: Right.

A: -- by themself.

Q: Yeah.

A: Different da -- da -- different conditions. They did not avoid us, they still keep in touch with -- kept in touch with us, but we tried to not put them into danger. We never talked to them on the phone about our shu -- not -- w-we really talk about our ti -- our ch -- i-intention to leave, and they knew about, and this was our main goal in the life, everything was -- you know, everything was in while. Before we leave. You know, it was like w -- we lived like in temporary condition.

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: It is not in -- you know it's -- it's now, but we will, we -- anyway we will leave.

Q: You were waiting for the future, uh-huh.

A: Yeah, we will leave, we will waiting for -- from -- and to -- to leave. And this is -- this is -- was our life. Of course we cou -- could not change a job, we could not move, we're -- oh, about moving from town to town, when Chernobyl happened, our son lived -- was in

Moscow as a student. And actually before Chernobyl he could get an assignment too after the college, because in Russia was -- in [indecipherable] was the rule, you finish the college, and you work according to your assignment. You don't look for who -- for -- for your job, you have to work two, three years where they send you. And after you can -- you can be free.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And it was possible that he can come back to Kiev, it -- it was possible because he was a [indecipherable] student, he had -- he had the privilege of his hi-high -- high marks in -- in college. He had some kind of privilege to choose the place. But when Chernobyl happened, we didn't want to -- him to come back to Kiev, because Kiev became dangerous city to live, especially nobody wants to -- for their children, to live th -- this -- and we started to think maybe we will move some -- somewhere close to him, you know, change -- we had the -- not the bad co-op apartment which my parents helped us to buy, and they lived with us, and this was our actually ti -- we left this apartment. We left because of there was, you know, we were allowed to bring in United State, 150 dollars, which is -- which was equivalent to 3,000 dollars -- or 300 dollars in Russian -- in Russian money. And our apartment that time was six and a half thousand dollars, which is, you know, anyway this money -- we g -- we got some money we left to -- from my mother-in-law a little bit, little bit to my sister's mother-in-law, little bit, but you know, this is actually nothing. I actually can buy this ga -- dress for this. This is -- this is the only thing we ca -- could d -- could do. And in this -- this is 150 dollars, which we were allowed to take -- take with us. And what -- and --

Q: Did you move from Kiev?

A: No, and we were trying to move, and we actually found an apartment not far from Moscow, it was not in Moscow, it is one of -- one of the small towns around Moscow. But was such thing we could not move, because of prescription to this particular place. But this is not only refusniks, this was in -- in Russia there was a rule, you prescribed to this apartment. And you could not move.

Q: [indecipherable] you can't move, yeah.

A: And you could not move.

Q: Right, okay.

A: Not only to another city, to another -- to -- to another apartment. To -- to -- you have to have permission, government permission to move from this apartment to -- government permission to -- for to move from one apartment on. And this is of course we could not -- we -- we could not move, it just -- we just found it, but it didn't go -- go fast, no paper were -- were from -- allowed. And actually this is -- this is what [indecipherable] and wh-what -- w-we were under -- under control --

Q: Right.

A: -- were under [indecipherable] you know, we were under the hoot.

Q: Were most of the people who were refusniks Jews?

A: Sure.

Q: Or not?

A: Sure.

Q: Yes? Yes?

A: Sure. First of all, why? Because -- because of the situation, the [indecipherable] sit -- situation, there aren't -- anti-Semitism was government politics. It was permissible to not take people to the college. By the way, I h -- I was a [indecipherable] enough student, and for to get to the college, you have to -- to get exams, you know, exams, tests, tests.

Q: Yes, tests, right.

A: Tests was very hard, harder than the -- than tests in school, like five, six times, believe me. Very -- very often there was a -- they questioned you, something which is absolutely out of the school program, just to make you -- and my husband, he will tell you, he -- he - - he went through, just to make you do not answer it. And there was a score, 25 it was the biggest one, 24, was permissible, I had 23, and I could not get to the co -- to the college, but with same mark my landlady, who I hired the corner from, she helped me to go to another school not so prestigious, li -- like I want to, and was really not very famous, but that's it, I went to this school and I graduated that -- that school, which didn't give me the profession I wanted, absolutely.

Q: What did you want to study?

A: I wanted to be a technology engineer for sugar plant. I wanted to [indecipherable]

Q: Oh, to work with your father's company --

A: Yeah, and I knew this technology because I went to -- when I was in school I was working part time, and my hus -- and my father had difficulties, I told you, in -- at work, and sometimes I just went to work just to earn some money for -- for -- and I was -- during the time I was in school at night, I was working at the -- at the plant, because plant when it works, it works actu -- actually only few months a year, it produces sugar from -- it works 24 hours. That's why I was able to work at night, and I love this -- I like this [indecipherable] production. I knew everything about that, and I loved it, and I wanted to -- but it was impossible actually, the -- I actually don't know anybody of my age, Jewish, to be in this school, during this time.

Q: Uh-huh, during that time.

A: Yeah, and that why he -- why by the way n -- a lot of Jews [indecipherable] from Kiev went to different obscure towns in Russia, where they didn't even saw Jewish -- Jews before. And they didn't pay attention to it. And they got -- they studied there, not only because they were [indecipherable] refusing thing, they were Jewish.

Q: Right. And what -- what did you study?

A: I was -- I was at the chanot -- sillicut ceramic, different kind of ceramic, which for [indecipherable] fro -- for dishes, glasses --

Q: So is that struc -- is that what they call structural engineering?

A: No, no --

Q: No.

A: -- it was not the structural, it was a technology engineer. But when I decided to le -- and assess -- assess this technology in the -- technology engineer for -- for this ceramic, I was working on this military plan, which my profession was okay for this, it was s -- compliant with this. But I decided to leave, I wanted to leave. And I left this military p-plant, where to go? There was only design companies, very bad pla -- factories, very, very old fa -- old military productions, this is -- was, and my neighbor ca - say to me, you know, in structural depart -- department, we'll always need people. And I was an engineer here on -- on the plant, and I went as a technician, actually as a drafter -- draft -- draftsman for -- for -- to -- in structural department. And very soon, because you know, I had the background, I had the -- from I had the college background, I -- to -- very soon I understood what -- what we're doing. And the group of people moved it -- it's before we were refusniks.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: It is -- was before -- before we applied, because my husband still could not find a job, he was still working on -- and you could not apply, because nobody will take documents from us, because he is working on such a secret plant. Besides, he didn't -- being a Jewish, he didn't have the -- the -- a level of secrecy he -- he would -- the -- really he -- he's supposed to have on his position, a foo -- over there, he -- he's supposed to have, but they didn't give it to him because he was Jewish. And from a group of young people my age went to little company who -- which were de -- designing brick -- like production, there was brick ovens, you know, this big -- how will you call it, where they [indecipherable] the brick?

Q: Ovens?

A: Ovens --

Q: O-Ovens, but this is when -- when you do something from ceramic and you put it on fire, how are you calling that?

Q: Oh, right, you --

A: Oh, it's a -- a special name, I he --

Q: No, I know what you mean, you --

A: Yeah? You --

Q: -- when -- when you -- a kiln.

A: Kiln, kiln, kiln.

Q: Kiln

A: Sure, thank you so much. And the -- they were designing this, but this was a structural department because it's supposed to be special foundation for this kiln, and the -- e- everything. And they took me, and th-th-th-this company had the oof -- and from this compa -- working here part time, I went to structural colle -- to -- to college, and became a structural engineer.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: This is when I was working as a -- as a structural -- and after one of this guys whom I left here -- actually, in this company when -- when we moved all together, it was a [indecipherable] there were Jew -- a group of Jew who were working there, and they were making -- because this was something for collective farms. And this collecti -- collective farms, it had some kind of pra -- like manufort them, and they can pay their own money for this crowns, for the -- and this cr -- this way, this company [indecipherable] company was making money, and the Jewish people were making some money too. Forget it -- they were hunting. Everybody was kicked out. Everybody -- everybody who had the position, he -- and th-they were th -- replaced by -- by this member of party, that member of party, and -- and these Jewish boys who were structural engineers before, who took me with them, they left br -- just do -- just -- they were afraid that that were -- will be kicked out.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Beside, they were not head of departments, they started from the head of departments and they m -- they were different thi -- a project -- project managers -- you know, project managers were one thing, and there foo -- foo -- and the people who were negotiating it, and who were making the money. And these people, a lot of them were Jewish, and they

were n -- doing very well for -- and company was doing very well [indecipherable] they were Jewish, of course they were kicked out, and -- and this -- my co-workers, my friends actually, they were afraid that they will be kicked out, but I was on such a low position that to foo -- nobody -- nobody was paying attention to me, and I was able to finish the s - - the school over there. Soon as I finished one of that's my friend, they could not let me to stay there, he was afraid of me. He found me the job on this company which was designing paper [indecipherable]. And working on this paper [indecipherable] and this company, I shill applied -- not -- not soon enough like in five, six years. Ev-eventually I stayed with this company for 15 years.

Q: 15 years?

A: 15 years I was working for them, and this is -- was sort again, it was like I was so -- was likely to be surrounded with nice people --

Q: Right, yeah.

A: -- here. But really it is -- as a matter of fact, they did not fire me when I here -- besides I went for the -- that I told you the -- how I had to get a signature from party -- party secretary, and how she -- she didn't want to -- to give it to me for three weeks, and I could not apply without -- without his signature. Nobody -- nobody will take the paper from me. And I shil -- I toola -- I shiz, you know, I told him that I will call to committee of people rights, which did not exist.

Q: Human rights, right, yeah.

A: Human rights, which did not exist, but he didn't know. He was more -- more drunk than - - than sober. That way he actually didn't know what is going on, but it sounds -- you know, the committee of human rights sounds -- and I told him, okay, you don't sign, I -- from your office, I'm calling to this, and I took receiver from his phone [indecipherable] right away. And this way -- this way I was able to -- to --

Q: To apply.

A: To apply, yeah.

Q: Right.

A: Mm-hm. It is because he didn't wanted that to -- this, you know, this is not working people, this is not my comp -- my company, these people, but they were [indecipherable]

Q: And you were able to leave in 1988?

A: 1988 --

Q: So -- to the -- to the United States.

A: -- yeah, but we applied -- we applied, it was --

Q: 12 years before, yeah.

A: 12 years before, 12 years before. The -- we started to consider it --

Q: Even earlier.

A: Oh yeah, well th -- much earlier, I told you actually it was like in two years after six -- six day wars. In two, three years. We started to really think about because I was given to it, and I found other people, my -- you know, people whom I knew from ma -- my youth, from -- from -- you know, when I -- when I was younger, when we were, for instance -- you know, men go together, we went to movies together, we went to the [indecipherable] and some companies like young people, and I met them. A lot of them started to think that there's -- that, you know, we have to leave. And there was at that [indecipherable] time, there was such a thing, they were f -- reunited families, reunited families, and everybody started to m -- for each, you know, to invent --

Q: Yes.

A: -- an aunt -- aunt from ki -- ki -- aunt who they didn't see from 1913, and they say they will lee -- they were born in 1930's, late 30's, and they were -- they were allowed to leave their parents, and go to see this aunt, who -- who didn't exist --

Q: Who didn't exist.

A: -- who didn't exist. And -- but every permission was given -- to leave Russia was given to -- only to leave for -- to -- to Israel. Every permission, and -- and you obey this permission, and a lot of [indecipherable] left -- left Russia with -- you know, being over there, we made a joke of it, but we knew there were, you know people like Ukrainian National -- Nationalists, they called, you know they were shur -- they were shu -- refus -- they were imprisoned even for fighting for independent Ukraine.

Q: Right.

A: And they will let out from -- from prison --

Q: So a lot of people were --

A: -- and from s -- from country by permission to go to Israel. Only -- only one for --

Q: Only --

A: -- only one permission was given in -- i-in Russia to go to Israel, but you know, people --

Q: Was -- was your permission to go to Israel [indecipherable]

A: My permissi -- sure, they did -- they would not --

Q: Cause that's all they did, right?

A: -- the -- yeah, it was not [indecipherable] another permission, but the way yo-you know, when we applied, our son was in our application, of course.

Q: Right.

A: M-My mother -- but when we got permission, our son was in Moscow, and in Moscow they did not let him go, because they s -- they say that we don't fill an appli -- application for him. And to take him from college, and bring him back to Kiev, and show that -- it was very dangerous, because they can draft him to the army right away. If he is not in college, we -- he not supposed to be free. And that way we were afraid to do it, and we -- we were trying to -- and this time, it was Gorbachev's time, there was -- th-there was a book -- Israelian book, Exhibition in Moscow. Of course these young Jewish boys went around to the [indecipherable] for this -- this exhibition and they became friendly with some young people from Israel, and one of this flo -- one of them send my son to -- invitation. And by this invitation, he left. They --

Q: And he was able to go.

A: And he -- yeah, he got [indecipherable]

Q: Do you think that you would have wanted to leave if there hadn't been so much anti-Semitism? Was that a big -- at least --

A: I will tell you, it -- it is difficult to me to say it -- to say --

Q: Yeah, right.

A: -- because I grown up in this si -- in anti-Semitism --

Q: Yes, yes.

A: -- but you know, I grown up in this environmental, that why -- and I wanted to leave, and believe me, I could not -- s-some people th -- say now that these synagogues in Kiev -- and I could not go --

Q: You couldn't go.

A: -- and feel that this is jail.

Q: Right.

- A: I believe this is synagogue which is a distort is actually a picture. You know, this is a show off. I don't believe in reality --
- Q: [indecipherable] right
- A: -- in -- in real -- I don't believe that they're -- they are not anti-Semitic -- anti-Semites any more. I c -- I could not imagine was, at least.
- Q: Right. Wh-When you think back over your being this little girl in this ghetto --
- A: Mm-hm.
- Q: -- and then the Fascists come, is -- do you think that they're -- that it ha -- has had a great affect on your life afterwards, or -- or because you were so little did it not have as much an effect as it did on your grandmother and your mother?
- A: I believe so. I believe so, that th -- th -- it did not make such an effect on me as on my mother, o-on my gr -- on my grandmother, you know? I accept her the way she was. I -- because of my mother was not a happy person, and I believe this is because this -- the way she told me her life before the war, she had a lot of friends, and they had a -- they had very happy life. They -- they were not rich, of cour -- they were -- they -- you know, they were -- but they were happy. And the way she -- she was al -- she was adv -- she had the beautiful voice, and my -- my father was a fiddler. And they had am-amateur Jewish theater in Yaltoushkof. And she was -- by the way, this picture which sh -- I showed to you? This is the group which will [indecipherable] in this amateur theater. And wed -- and they had the festival for amateur theaters, and nobody led [indecipherable] you know, who -- who I am talking about? This is the most famous of Jewish rush -- Jewish actor, who was -- he played ca -- King Lear, and he made the Jewish theater in -- in Russia, which he was killed in Jewish -- it was dismissed at the -- a lot of -- a lot of people were imprisoned for -- because -- because th-they were Jew, only because of this. And he choose her, she -- because she was very Jewish looking and she had a beautiful voice. And he choose -- choose her, and he offers her a work in Moscow, and she was a lit -- in shtetl, and my -- my father to -- wanted -- they were not married that time, and my father want to marry her, and he didn't allot her to go, and she didn't go -- she was not -- she was not decisive, you know, she was not by herself.
- Q: Yeah.
- A: And -- but w-what she told -- and the story what she told my -- my son, why he became so [indecipherable] were Jewish life in the -- and the story which she told me about how they lived before the war, they were happy. But I remember her not -- not --
- Q: As a --

A: -- a very happy person. From time to time she was -- she was [indecipherable] she was singing, by the way on this of -- she was singing one lullaby song, which I never heard, but on tribute dinner, somebody sung -- sung this song, it was [indecipherable] I started to cry. First time. And I call my sister, and I ask her, "Do you remember this song?" And she said yes, and it --

Q: Can you sing that song [indecipherable]

A: I -- I don't have a voice, and -- (Here Claudia Liberchuk sings a few lines of a Jewish song her mother used to sing.) Sorry. Sorry.

Q: It's okay.

A: I don't have voice. She -- she had a great voice and -- and what is -- somebody [indecipherable] this -- this is first time besides from my mom I heard this.

Q: Well, I want to thank you for -- for talking with us.

A: I thank you for -- for listening to me.

Q: It was a pleasure to be with you.

A: Thank you.

Q: Thank you.

A: [indecipherable] pleasure to be here.

End of Tape #5

Tape #6

Q: Claudia, what is this picture here, at the top?

A: And this is my famous grandmother. This is -- do you see how nice face she has, how -- how smart her -- her eyes are? She was very nice woman.

Q: And say her name again.

A: Rivka -- Rivka Duchovich her name. That way I think that she, of course, and my mother was under the name of Duchovich in Zhmerinka because in this case she was admitted as being Zhmerinka -- from Zhmerinka. Because under the name of Royter, she was in Vinnitsa.

Q: Right.

A: And to -- to be -- to be alive -- to stay alive, she supposed to be from Zhmerinka. I'm not su -- I don't know for sure, but I think that she was on -- but by the name o -- by -- by the maiden name --

Q: The maiden name.

A: -- which is Duchovich.

Q: And who is this?

A: This is my grandfather -- this is my grandmother's husband, who was killed in beginning of the war, which I told in my story. I never s -- I don't remember him, cause I saw him, but I didn't remember him. He was killed the -- his name was Isaac Duchovich.

Q: And what about this picture?

A: This is my parents, which it was done before they were married. They met, and this is the group of -- they was in group with -- of people whom they were in this amateur theater. And if -- this picture was done in Yaltoushkof.

Q: And this is?

A: This is my mother, and this is my father.

Q: And who is this?

A: This is me in the middle, in center, after the war. It is -- you know, I really -- after this story with dancing for German soldiers, I really loved to dance, and the only person who can teach me how to dance was my mother. And fo -- th-this is what I was -- I sh -- I was -- foo -- good enough dancer that why -- they made me in the middle, I was representing

a spring because it was a May Day. And these girls around me were flowers -- different la -- flowers. And I was a spring.

Q: And this picture?

A: This is picture of my family. This is my mother, my father, f -- this is my sister and me --

Q: This is?

A: This is sister, and this is me. And this picture was done when I was in college. And f -- my parents came, and my sister came to visit me in Kiev from the village they used to live, and we made this picture for -- as a memory of that day.

Q: And this one?

A: This is my mother and me, approximately the same time, f -- picture before was done, it was when I was in college, and -- and picture was done in Kiev when my mom came to visit me.

Q: About what year do you think that was?

A: I believe it was like 1958 - '59, like this.

Q: Right. And who is this good looking group?

A: This picture was done the next day after our wedding.

Q: Of --

A: My husband and me, this is my husband.

Q: What's his name?

A: Grigory.

Q: Yes. And this is you?

A: This is me. This is my parents, my mother and my father. This is my hu -- my husband's sister, this is my sister. And this is my husband's parents, this is his mother and his father.

Q: And what are his parent's names?

A: Liberchuk -- Celia Liberchuk and Labe Liberchuk, which was in Russian Leonid, because Labid was too Jewish for -- for -- for sure, to be in -- in Russia.

Q: And -- and Grigory's sister?

A: Yeah, her -- her name was Rivka, actually --

Q: Rivka too?

A: -- but she was Rema because Rivka again was too Jewish. I don't know why I was called for -- by such a Russian name, Claudia. Really, what I had -- I was named in honor of some relative which names was Hava Golda. And my grandmother sa-said -- told me that my Jewish name is Hava Golda, and my grandkids know that my name is Hava Golda.

Q: And this picture?

A: This picture was done in 1979, my -- when my sister, who applied little bit before me for permission, got the permission, because in Leningrad the station was little bit easier than Kiev, and Ukraine, the -- in the Ukraine at all. This picture were made because they were leaving, and this was the picture of my parents, my father, my mother, my sister, me, my husband, my -- my son, hi -- my sister's son --

Q: What's -- what's your son's name?

A: F -- it's Herc now. It's Herc, Alexander. Alexand -- Russian was Alexander --

Q: Right.

A: -- but he -- he was called Isaac, actually, in honor of my granda -- this is Roma, who was -- Roma my nephew, my sister who was -- his name Roma was because our grandmother was Rivka, to -- f-for first letter, and this is my sister's husband.

Q: And what's his name?

A: His name is Yuri Sineakof. They live now in upstate New York.

Q: And who's this?

A: This is my mother, here in United States. This picture was done before she died in 1980. It was like -- sorry, in 1990, she died 1990, it was a l -- in -- in 80 -- 1988 - '89, like this, it was -- this picture was done. I believe this is when she went to trip to UN -- to united -- to -- to United Nations she went with --

Q: To the UN?

A: To UN, yeah, to -- to UN she -- she went with the trip to -- and she went and she was collecting every penny, she want to go to Israel, to -- to see -- to see Israel, but unfortunately was not --

Q: [indecipherable] the interview you said how she died.

A: She was killed by a car.

Q: Right.

A: And she died in -- in half an hour. She got hit by a car -- by a truck. That was very -- she was very lively woman, you know, she was -- it was very -- it was February, and it was very good weather. And if weather was good, she was walking. And she walked from school, she went to school to learn -- to study English.

Q: English.

End of Tape #6

Conclusion of Interview