

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Sara Shapiro
July 6, 2007
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PREFACE

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SARA SHAPIRO

July 6, 2007

Question: Could you tell me your name please, and where you're from?

Answer: My name is Sara Shapiro, and I'm from Koretz Orovno. Koretz, Ukraine.

Q: And your maiden name?

A: Goralnik.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about life in Koretz before the war, what you remember?

A: Well, I was only 10 years old when Hitler came, and n-not much, but we -- we lived in a very nice place, and I had my parents, mine -- I had three brothers, and -- and I was the only girl.

Q: Aunts and uncles?

A: Yes, many.

Q: How many would you say, up to first cousins, family?

A: It's hard to st -- to tell, because mine dad had seven, there were seven children. My mother, they were -- three survived -- not survive, but three -- three sisters and a grandmother, and also --

Q: And they were all married and had children?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: And of this large group, how many survived the war?

A: Two. My mother's sister's younger daughter, that's all.

Q: And you.

A: And me.

Q: What did your father do?

A: Well, he -- he did many things. We had a mill, a windmill, and we had land, and then we had a sugar factory in Koretz, and we used to harvest the -- the beets, sugar, and take it -- sell it to the factory, sugar factory. Sugar beets.

Q: So, did he -- he must have had non-Jewish customers, as well?

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Q: And what was the relationship between the Jews of Koretz and the non-Jews? Was it friendly, was it hostile? Anti-Semitic?

A: Yes, but they didn't show.

Q: They didn't show it. Do you remember experiencing anything in -- when you were a child, of -- of -- of some anti-Semitic behavior?

A: Yeah, yeah, when Hitler came, I went to school, and the teacher said, you are Jew, and you cannot come to school any more. And he gave me a slap in the face, and I went home and cried. That was the last -- last day o-of school.

Q: This was -- what year was this?

A: Pardon?

Q: What year was this?

A: '40 --

Q: 40 --

A: -- two. 1942.

Q: And that -- the Germans came in 1941, right?

A: Right.

Q: In the summer?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you remember when they came in?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: What was it like? You were 10 -- 10 years old, what was it like?

A: Not much, we -- we didn't know what's -- what's gonna happen, and we just be -- a lot of people were running to -- running away with the -- with the Russian back, and we didn't. We were small, and we figured we -- we didn't do nothing wrong, and we stayed.

Q: And had the Russians come in first?

A: Yes, in 1939.

Q: And do you remember what that was like? Any changes in your life?

A: No, no.

Q: You went to public school?

A: Yes.

Q: And what -- what did you speak at home?

A: Yiddish. And my parents spoke Hebrew.

Q: Were they Zionists?

A: No, no. They za -- they weren't Zionists.

Q: Were there any Zionists groups in -- in Koretz?

A: Yeah, there were, but I -- I was a child.

Q: When you came home from school having been slapped by a teacher, what -- what -- what did your parents say or do?

A: Nothing, what can they say? There is nothi -- who -- who -- who -- what -- what can they say? There is nothing they could say.

Q: So you -- you and your siblings stopped going to school at that point?

A: Yes.

Q: Was your -- your family religious?

A: Yes. We were rel-religious.

Q: You -- y-your father had a beard?

A: No, no --

Q: N -- so --

A: -- but he --

Q: -- modern re -- Orthodox.

A: Yes. We observed Shabbas and we went to shul, and mine dad was putting on

[indecipherable] and --

Q: What was a Friday night like in your house?

A: Very nice. My mother made Shabbas dinner and we all sat, and a nice Jewish home, I would say.

Q: Did you sing zemirot as well?

A: Yeah, yes, yes, but I was a child. I had older brother, he was about three and a half years older. I had a five year old brother, and a two and a half year old brother at that time.

Q: Tell me your parent's name.

A: Avrum.

Q: Yeah.

A: And my mother was Sibia.

Q: And your siblings?

A: Maisha, Sonya, and Jaina.

Q: So you had three s -- three siblings, and -- and many a-aunts and uncles, you said --

A: Yes.

Q: -- too, aunts and uncles.

A: Yes. Cousins.

Q: Do you have any sort of fond, clear memories of life at -- at home, or in the city, in Koretz before the war started?

A: No, I was a -- a child, and I was the only girl in the -- in the house and I don't know, my --

Q: Did you have lots of friends?

A: Yes.

Q: All Jewish friends?

A: N-Not -- mixed.

Q: And your no -- non-Jewish friends, were they also -- were there tones of anti-Semitism in their be-behavior, or -- or didn't you experience --

A: Yes, yes, they used to say, Jew, go to Palestine.

Q: These are your friends?

A: Ye -- I don't know if you call friends or enemies. I lo -- I can't tell you what, but --

Q: So after the Germans came, how did life change? I mean, you -- you stopped going to school, but how else did --

A: Bad. Bad.

Q: How?

A: How? You couldn't go nowhere, you couldn't do nothing, and I cannot describe you how bad it was, but there was bad. You were a Jew, and you couldn't do nothing.

Q: Do you remember any violence in the streets? Seeing anyone beaten, or --

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Tell me about that.

A: Yes, if you didn't behave what they told you, they beat you.

Q: And did you see anyone get beaten, or -- or --

A: No.

Q: -- or shot, or --

A: No, not -- not that I remember. It's already over 60 years, and I was a child, so it's difficult.

Q: You said you had a -- you had grandparents as well?

A: Yes.

Q: They also lived in Koretz?

A: Yes.

Q: And how did they fare in all this?

A: Bad. Very bad, if you'll excuse me. Bad.

Q: In what sense bad?

A: Well, they -- they -- you know, you -- you were a Jew, and you couldn't do nothing. No food, nothing.

Q: So there was rationing?

A: Yes.

Q: And how did you get food?

A: How did we get food? We get a piece of bread like this a day.

Q: You had to stand in line for that?

A: Yes.

Q: So who would go to stand in line?

A: Oh, my dad, my mom. Depends.

Q: And they would bring home these small pieces of bread. Sugar, butter, meat, anything like that?

A: Forget about that. Sugar and butter and meat, forget about it. If you got a piece of -- a potato and a piece of bread you were lucky.

Q: And this began right away?

A: Pardon?

Q: This started right away?

A: Yes.

Q: What was it like in your house? Did you -- did -- was there any conversation about running away, about trying to escape?

A: No, no, not really.

Q: But was there some talk about what was going on in the --

A: Yes.

Q: And what did your parents have to say?

A: Not much, what can you say? There's nothing you can say.

Q: Had they heard of Hitler before the war?

A: Yeah.

Q: They knew what was going on?

A: Yeah, but we didn't believe it.

Q: So they talked to you about it enough to s -- to say this can't be happening.

A: Right.

Q: While you were at home, you had no schooling. We were -- you weren't a Jewish -- there wasn't a Jewish school set up?

A: Forget about that.

Q: So what did you do on a day to day?

A: Nothing. What do you do? Nothing. Stayed home, and -- and cry.

Q: How long did this last?

A: Well, they came in '41 - '42 - '43 - '43 and a half f-for the -- about three years, I would say.

Q: H-Had you heard of anyone being shot?

A: Yeah.

Q: You'd heard rumors.

A: Oh yeah, yes.

Q: Do you remember anything happening in November 1942 in Koretz?

A: No.

Q: You didn't hear word of a -- of a massacre o-of Jews outside the city?

A: No, they -- at '42, yeah, they -- they were killing. They were killing and they were -- was aktsia, I don't know how they --

Q: Aktiona.

A: Aktiona.

Q: Yeah.

A: And we were at home, and we heard a lot of noise because they were screaming, raus Jude, raus Jude, and they -- we didn't know what was going on. And they would break with their foot, they would break the door and come in with dogs, and take you to the grave.

Q: The mass grave.

A: Mass grave. And we didn't know what was going on, so my dad grabbed us, the children, and we ran upstairs in the attic. And we had a ladder, and he pulled the ladder. So if you don't have the ladder, you can't climb to the attic. And -- and they came in and they didn't see nobody, and they went out, with dogs, with -- they we -- with -- before they did this they were drunk. They --

they were drinking a day before. So they were screaming, yelling, raus Jude. And we stayed there for about three or four hours, and it calm down, and we went down and we found out what was going on. And if you survived after so many hours, they took you to the ghetto. We had a ghetto in Koretz. And -- and that's it.

Q: So they came back for you?

A: No, no, they didn't. They didn't came back, but we heard rumors that -- that si -- they si -- they killed so many people, and that was a -- a -- a forest, and there -- there had graves, they dug the graves and they killed. They brought them with the horse and wo -- buggies, and they shoot you there, they kill you.

Q: And how did you get to the ghetto? I mean, ya -- did someone say --

A: Ha -- well --

Q: -- go to the ghetto?

A: It wasn't big, the Koretz was not a big city. And they said whoever survived must go to the ghetto.

Q: So was it a -- was it barbed wire around the --

A: No.

Q: -- around the ghetto?

A: No, free. It was -- it was left there maybe 200 - 300 people, that's all. I can't remember, but it was not -- not many people survived.

Q: And how many Jews th -- do you think there were in Koretz before?

A: I would say maybe 3000 - 4000 families, approximately.

Q: Families?

A: Yeah. I'm not sure because I was a child and I was not interested to know.

Q: And there were, you said, two or 300 left --

A: Maybe.

Q: -- after the aktion. What was it like in the ghetto?

A: Bad. Very bad. We had to go to work, and food was bad. Un -- undescrivable.

Q: What was the food like?

A: Oh please, you got a piece of bread, and a -- a little soup, and that was -- that was it.

Q: So you were now what, 12 years old?

A: Si -- 11, I believe, yeah.

Q: And what kind of work did they put you to?

A: Cleaning the streets, cleaning toilets, cleaning everything that you can do.

Q: What do you remember seeing in -- in the ghetto, in the streets of the ghetto? Any -- any memories from there?

A: I don't remember, really, but it was bad.

Q: How was your father reacting to all this?

A: Very bad.

Q: How so?

A: Sad, bad.

Q: And your mother?

A: Also.

Q: Same.

A: My mother was how -- very sad, and she would s -- fast twice week and sit and pray at home.

Q: A-And formal religious services, I assume, stopped?

A: Oh, please.

Q: So your mother would pray at home?

A: Yes.

Q: And your siblings?

A: They were little. One was five, and one was three and a -- two and a half.

Q: So, starvation was a very serious issue, is -- is -- is that correct? Food and water?

A: Correct.

Q: And what --

A: Excuse me.

Q: -- what kinds of -- what kind of work did your parents do they sent them out to -- to do labor, forced labor?

A: Yeah.

Q: What kind of work?

A: Clean streets, clean toilets, clean -- wash clothes for them.

Q: So that -- we're already into fall and winter of th --

A: Yes.

Q: 1942. Was there a Judenrat? Was there a Jewish council?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you remember them?

A: I don't remember them, how can I remember? I was a child, but I remember we had a Judenrat.

Q: Do you remember what their responsibility was?

A: Their responsibility?

Q: Yeah.

A: They -- they picked one guy, and they told him that we gonna save you, you are gonna be saved. And you go to the ghetto, and bring us money, gold, clothes, whatever. Every day he came to the ghetto and he said that we should bring that to -- to him.

Q: A Jew? This is a --

A: Yes.

Q: -- the head of the -- the head of the Judenrat?

A: Yes.

Q: Earlier I showed you a picture of five men, was one of those men a -- a member of the Jewish council, do you think?

A: No. No, no. I met Moishe Smollo after -- after the war. We were in -- in -- in Germany, we were in a DP camp, and we -- he was in Russia, and he -- y-you know, he was from Koretz, and we -- my husband and -- we met him.

Q: You and -- and your family escaped the ghetto, is that correct?

A: Escaped?

Q: Escaped the ghetto?

A: No, no. We were in ghetto. Next to our ghetto we had a building with Russian prisoners, and they were wounded. And we had a doctor, Dr. Wollash. I h -- I don't remember what I did yesterday, but I remember his name, and he was a doctor and he used to go every d -- every day and take care of them, whoever was needed and wounded. And he was going to their -- to the -- to their building and one day he comes in and -- and one day he comes in there, and a Russian prisoner says, doc, I gotta tell you a secret, but don't you dare tell -- tell that I told you. And he says, well, what's that secret? He says they're digging graves in Cusack and in a day or two they're gonna have liquidation for the ghetto. So he came to the ghetto and he says, in Jewish,

kinderloch, run, because so and so and whatever. So my parents heard that and they -- they had a Ukraine family that they had no children, and they said -- my parents gave them money, gold, and whatever, jewelry, and they promised that they gonna save me and my older brother. And my mother and dad said that we should go there. And I said, no, I'm not going. If they going to kill you, I'm not going. I'm staying here. And well, when my mother said something like that, I ignored her, but when the da -- when my dad said something, it meant business. And she started to pack for me that we are leaving. And I says, if I go, I am not taking nothing, and I'm not going. And they said, no, we made arrangements, and you and your brother are gonna go there, and she's gonna save us. And well, I said, I guess we have to go. And it got dark, it got maybe eight o'clock, nine o'clock, I'm not sure, and we ran out from the ghetto. The ghetto was not wired, you can go. And we heard shooting. Somebody was shooting, and we hid under a bush. And then there was a -- I remember, was a -- like a -- not a -- pond, or what, and you had to cross that in order to run away, and we jumped over there, and I was 10 years old, 11 years old, I didn't know how to swim, and my brother pulled me out by my hair, and we -- he was a -- a man, a boy, and he stronger than I am, he knew how to swim, and he saved me. And we ran over that water, or whatever, I di -- I can't tell you what it was. And we were hiding under that bush. And we went, we ran. It took us more than an hour, two hours to get to that -- to those people. And we came and it was already 10 o'clock. We knocked in the door, and we said, we came to you, and we didn't say nothing, killing or whatever. And she said, oh my God, oh my God. And she said - - we said, we like to stay here for a day or two. And she says, oh, okay, then you can go in the barn and hi -- and sleep there. And we did. And in the morning she came, and she says, I heard that they killed already, everybody in Koretz. It's -- everybody's killed. And -- and we started to cry, and we knew that that's it, they killed our parents and the two brothers. And every morning

she would come in and tell us that we must leave because they gonna find out that she is hiding Jews, then they gonna kill her. And that was every morning. And she would bring us a piece of bread and a glass of milk. And anyway, I told my brother, I'm leaving. I can't stay here. And he says, well, there's nothing we can do. And I wa -- in the morning, I got up, and I says, I'm going. Because she would come in and she said we must leave. And I said good-bye and I walk out from that barn, and I didn't know where to go, because we were border with Russia, and that was Russia til 1939, and we were Ukraine Poland. And I -- I says, what do I do? Where do I go? And I went the other way, where Ukraine. And I walked and walked, and where I'm going, I don't know. I walked for a couple hours, and I saw two men working on field. And I walked over, and I told them, my name is Manya, and I'm from a village, and I have no mother. My mother died, and my dad remarried, and I have a stepmother and she doesn't want me, and I'm looking for to be a maid. Maybe you know who needs a maid. And he says to me, aren't you Jewish? And I says no, I'm not. And he says, well, if you wait an hour or so til I finish my work, I think my neighbor may hire you. I said okay. Didn't eat nothing, nervous, scared, don't know what's gonna happen. And he went into the house and he wrote the address, and made a little map for me. And he says, go there, he is my neighbor, he might hire you. And I did follow the map. Where I'm going I don't know, but finally I did find th-there, the neighbor. And it was kind of dark. I came in, I knock on the door, and I show him the na -- the piece of paper, and he says to me, aren't you Jewish? And I said, no, I'm not. And she says, well, what can you do? What do you want to get paid? I said, a piece of bread. And she said, what can you do? And I says, try me. And she says, okay. And I stayed there. Every day, are you Jewish, are you -- your mother was Jewish? I said no, not at all. And I worked very hard. Very, very hard to please, and I didn't

know from one day to the other day if I'll survive. And -- and that's about all. I stayed there til the Russian liberated us.

Q: When you went to the first house --

A: Excuse me.

Q: -- where your -- your parents had sent you, did you know the woman at that -- at that house?

A: Yes.

Q: So she was a friend of your parents, is that --

A: I don't know if you call a friend. I don't know what you gonna call it, if it's a friend.

Q: And did you see your brother again after that?

A: No, no. After I -- the Russian liberated us, I went back and I thought that mine brother is still alive, still there. She told me they caught him, and they turned him into the police, and they got two kilo salt for him. If you catch a Jew alive, that's -- you get for him. No, she told me that. She was --

Q: Was she -- she surprised to see you when you came back?

A: Yes, she was. And I -- I cried, and that's all I did. And I went back, because where am -- what am I gonna do? I didn't had no -- no profession, no -- no -- no family, nobody. I went back and I came back and stayed another two months, and then I went to Koretz, back.

Q: You stayed for two months with this woman?

A: Where -- where I stayed, where I stayed, yeah.

Q: And so she put you --

End of Tape One

Beginning Tape Two

A: -- in the forest.

Q: And what happened when you saw -- when you met them? Did you --

A: I didn't know them, they didn't know me.

Q: So you didn't join the group. You stayed.

A: I met mine cousin. I have a cousin, she's in Brazil.

Q: The other survivor.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. And the woman who took you in finally, when you went off on your own, I mean what -- what made you think of that story? Had you been thinking about it before? Did you make it up on the spot?

A: On the spot. Yeah.

Q: It's quick thinking.

A: Yes, I gave him my -- I was -- my name was Manya Romanchuk. I took a name from a friend of mine that I went to school.

Q: So, it was a real name?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: But that's what happened.

Q: And what was it like to -- to be living in this -- in this house? They -- they obviously suspected you were Jewish.

A: They did. They suspected, but they -- they have a five year old child and a three year old child and they needed a maid.

Q: So you took care of the children.

A: And a lot of, you know, more things to work, in a farm. It wasn't easy.

Q: And what were you thinking about, at night for example, when you went to sleep?

A: Crying. That's all you can do.

Q: Did you --

A: No -- no life. Every day get up, clean, wash, do o-on the farm.

Q: And did you suspect that your -- your family was -- was dead?

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah, I knew that -- and when the Russian came, I didn't -- I didn't expect it, I thought it's a miracle. It's an -- it's a dream.

Q: The liberation. When you went back to Koretz, were you looking for people?

A: Yes.

Q: But you found no one.

A: No.

Q: Did you ever have any conversations with the woman who was your rescuer?

A: Yes, I did, but sh -- they were not too -- they were not happy, because I -- I don't know, they kind of cold, I would say. The -- they didn't ask me if I need help or anything, not -- none.

Q: Did they go to church?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did they take you?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: What did you do in church?

A: Well, I did what they did, same thing.

Q: Did you make any other friends while you were there?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: And no one knew you were Jewish.

A: No.

Q: Did you get any news of the war, the way the war was -- was going, that the Russians were -- were coming?

A: No, not really, but he had the brother, mine boss. And he had the brother and he had a man that he worked for him. He was from near Kiev, from a village, and he was ki -- friendly with me because I told him I was from Russia. And one day he says, Manya, I want to tell you a secret. I says, okay, what's the secret? The Russian are in Kiev, and they'll be here in two weeks. And I looked at him, and I says, it's -- it's -- it's not -- it's not gonna happen. And sure enough -- I says, how do you know? He says, well, we have a radio, and my boss and I, we go in there, in the barn, and we turn the radio, and we know where the front is. And the Russians will be here. And sure enough, in one week, 10 days, they came. They were liberate -- they liberated us.

Q: Did you ever have any encounters with Germans?

A: Did I what?

Q: Did you ever have any encounters with -- with Germans, SS men?

A: No. No, I was a child, what can I ha -- no.

Q: And yo -- the family that put you up, were they -- do you think they were afraid of being caught?

A: Not that I know.

Q: Was th -- the woman before was afraid of being caught, she said --

A: Yeah, she says, if they gonna find out that she's saving the j -- Jews, they gonna kill her.

Q: You think that was right?

A: I-I don't think so, but who know -- you know, sh -- who knows that -- if -- what -- what's right and what's wrong, who knows?

Q: Do you remember where you were when the Russians came, when the liberation came?

A: Home.

Q: And -- and did you see them come in?

A: Yeah.

Q: They marched in?

A: Yeah. Well, they marched in, no -- no fighting, nothing. They came in.

Q: So what did you do?

A: Not much. What can I do? I'm a child.

Q: Did you go out to greet them?

A: No. No.

Q: Were you frightened? Were you frightened?

A: No, no, not at all.

Q: The rest of the time, when you were in hiding, were you -- were you frightened then?

A: Yes. Every day, yes. Can I have some water?

Q: Sure, sure.

A: Yeah.

Q: But you didn't talk to anyone about this. Course, there was nobody to talk to, right?

A: No, no, there's nobody to talk to.

Q: Even the -- even the friends you made, you couldn't tell them.

A: No. No way, I wouldn't be here.

Q: Because they would get salt.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So the Russians came in, and then what happened?

A: Well, the Russian came in and they were fine. They didn't kill you because you were Jewish.

If you deserve it, or you did something wrong, then they send you to Siberia. But they didn't kill you because you were Jewish.

Q: So what did you do first?

A: What did I do?

Q: The ru -- the Russians are there --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- now, so that -- what -- what did you --

A: I was in school. I was a child.

Q: You went back to school?

A: The -- the Russian didn't kill you, th -- you -- when the Russian came, you can go to school, you can do anything you want.

Q: But you stayed at the same house? You were still --

A: Yes.

Q: -- with the same family?

A: Yes. When Hitler came, there was no school.

Q: So you went back to school. Were there any other Jewish children in this -- in the school?

A: Yes.

Q: So there were others who survived?

A: No. No. Only mine cousin, and she was in ghetto in -- also, and she ran away to the forest and then she went to a -- a -- a house and she told them she was not Jewish and she stayed there.

There was a lady, and she saw her and she says, well, they took my husband to the war -- to -- in the -- to the war and I'm alone, and she kept her company.

Q: Did you register with some organization? Did you register to tell them who you were, and where you were from?

A: No.

Q: So you -- so, on your own you went back to Koretz after --

A: Yes.

Q: And what did you find in Koretz?

A: Mine cousin. And other people that I never knew them before.

Q: Did you have a place to stay?

A: If you call a place.

Q: Well, it wasn't your -- your previous house?

A: No, no, everything was destroyed, everything.

Q: Was it an orphanage? Was it an orphanage?

A: No, no, it was a family that they were in the -- i-in the forest, a husband and wife, and they survived in a bunker, and they came to Koretz.

Q: And how long were you in Koretz?

A: Wait, '45 -- for -- two years, I believe, something like that. Maybe a year and a half. I can't remember exactly.

Q: And you lived with your cousin?

A: Yeah.

Q: Went to school?

A: No, no school. No school.

Q: So what did you do?

A: Pretty bad.

Q: Did you work?

A: A little. Not much.

Q: And how did you get food, and --

A: They would give you a -- a rationing, the -- the government, and you go in a place where -- I don't know how to say in English, where they were cooking for people that worked, and if everyth -- anything was left over, you could have.

Q: And w -- and -- and how many -- how many Jews do you think there were that came back to Koretz?

A: You can count them on the finger. Maybe 20. Maybe. I c -- I can't remember because I didn't check, you know, I -- it wasn't important for me.

Q: And did you check on what happened to your family?

A: Yeah.

Q: And -- and what did you discover?

A: Well, my parents were killed.

Q: In the ghetto.

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: And my brother, also, so that's the story, that's the -- that's it.

Q: And the rest of your family, also killed in Koretz?

A: Yes.

Q: And at what point did you decide to -- to leave?

A: Well, what else do you gonna do? How much longer can you stay there? You couldn't go out from Koretz because if you do, they still kill you.

Q: The Poles? U-Ukrainians?

A: Ukraine, Ukraine.

Q: So you had heard of pogroms and --

A: Yes.

Q: -- and murders of Jews after the war?

A: Yes.

Q: Well, how did you go about leaving? Did you just go by yourself?

A: No, no. I -- there was a -- a man. I was not -- they wouldn't let me go because I wasn't old enough to leave, so I had to have a -- a gu -- a guide? Not a guide, how would you say in English?

Q: A sponsor?

A: Yes. And he sa -- he took me on his passport.

Q: And who was this person?

A: A man from Koretz.

Q: Who was leaving?

A: Yeah.

Q: And he -- and he --

A: I told him to do me a favor, and he did.

Q: You knew him from before?

A: No.

Q: So at this point you're 16 - 17?

A: About 15 -- no, close to 16, I believe.

Q: And where did you go?

A: We went to Poland, and -- and yeah, we went to Poland [indecipherable], I don't know if you can -- if you know the name or what, [indecipherable], it's a -- it's a -- a s -- a -- a city.

Q: Near -- near?

A: Near -- I can't remember exactly, but --

Q: Okay, so you went to Poland.

A: Yes.

Q: And how long were you there?

A: Not long. We went to -- went to a kibbutz.

Q: Hashomir Hatzair? Was that what --

A: I don't -- yeah, I believe so. Yeah, we went to a kibbutz.

Q: So you were planning to go to Palestine?

A: Yes.

Q: And then what?

A: Then I -- I met my husband in Koretz. His sister survived in the partisan, and he knew a -- he knew my parents, and I knew his parents, and he ca -- he was in Siberia, in Russia, and he came to see his sister, and we met. And my husband said he would like to marry me. And I says, I'm not getting married, I'm too young. And he took his sister and sister-in-law and went to Poland, also. And we met in [indecipherable] and then we got married there.

Q: Th -- and did he follow you, is that you think what happened?

A: I guess. I don't know if I followed him, or he followed me. He went f-first, with his sister and sister-in-law and I came maybe a month later.

Q: So you're married now, that --

A: Yeah.

Q: And he didn't want to go to Palestine?

A: He didn't want to --

Q: Go to Palestine.

A: -- no. He -- he -- he didn't say he didn't want to go to Palestine, he just -- you don't -- what -- what you want, and what you can, it's two different stories. He had a sister that she got married before the war, and she went to Israel, and she's now still in Israel, in Tel Aviv.

Q: Well, how did you wind up in Germany?

A: Ah, well, when you are in kibbutz, from the kibbutz, they take you to Germany, in a DP camp. They [indecipherable] or I don't know, they -- they paid for you and they al -- brought you to the camp, DP camp. Displaced person.

Q: Where was that?

A: Was [indecipherable], near Stuttgart. Between Munich and Stuttgart.

Q: And what was life like there?

A: Not very well. We were in the -- in the camp also, but you can -- it's not like we were in a ghetto. Nobody killed you. We get -- we got rationing, you know, food, every two weeks, and it wasn't great, but at least you could survive. And then my husband had the uncle in Detroit, and he found out that we survived, and he sent papers for us. And m-my husband's sister went to Israel, to her sister. And we went to -- we -- my son was born, my oldest son. I was 16 when I got married, 17 when my oldest son was born. And we came to -- in '49 we came to Detroit.

Q: What was it like in the DP camp, did you work? Did you --

A: No, my husband worked. I couldn't work, I had a chi -- a child.

Q: A child. So what was a day like in --

A: Um, not -- not as -- like we were in ghetto, you know. It was -- nobody ki -- will kill you, nobody beat you. Nobody, you know, you -- you were in the ge -- in DP camp, and you were like anybody else.

Q: You made friends there?

A: Yes.

Q: All Jewish friends?

A: Yes.

Q: H-Have you kept in touch with any of them?

A: Yeah, yeah, I have in Israel a friend. I have in Winnipeg a friend that also survived, from Koretz. And in Edmonton, I have a friend.

Q: But you came straight to Detroit? That must have been quite a culture shock for you.

A: Yes.

Q: How did you react to that? You had -- you had one child at the time?

A: Yeah, one child. Well, it was -- it wasn't great. No language, no money, nothing. But God helped us.

Q: It wasn't the ghetto.

A: It wasn't the ghetto.

Q: Let me ask you a different kind of question. Have you -- you -- you said you hadn't done an interview before, have you -- have you told anyone else about your experiences during the war? Your children, for example, they --

A: Yes, yes, and my oldest son is very active in the Holocaust in -- museum, in Washington, I don't know if you know that. And yeah, we told -- I told mine kids, and everybody says to me, I

should record it. And I says, no, it's very painful. I didn't want to, at all. But mine son a -- tol -- asked me, so I am doing for him.

Q: Do you think it's important that you do this?

A: Yes, yes, but it's not easy. It's very painful.

Q: Are there certain things that remind you of that time, during the day and night, that come into your mind?

A: At night, m-mo-more. Excuse me.

Q: Like what?

A: Dreams, screaming.

Q: Still have dream -- so that's -- the screaming reminds you of it -- the time in the -- in the ghetto [indecipherable]

A: Yeah. It's even more than I'm telling you.

Q: How much -- more how?

A: Well, um, it's -- it's not pleasant to -- to have your parents killed, and brother.

Q: So you still hear those voices?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: Anything else that reminds you of -- of those ti -- or -- or even of times before the war, when you were --

A: Pardon?

Q: -- e-even a -- anything that reminds you of times before the war, when you --

A: No, before the war I was a child, and lived in a nice home, [indecipherable] nice family. And my mother, my father, I was the only girl. And my father work and came home, and we had a normal life, like anybody else.

Q: Do you have grandchildren?

A: Yeah.

Q: And have you -- have you talked to them about this?

A: Yes.

Q: So they know about it.

A: They know. But they're kids, and they were born in here, in America, and they go to school, and they -- they're children.

Q: What are their names?

A: Michael, David, Lisa and Spencer.

Q: And your s -- your sons?

A: My son is Mickey, Stevie, Eddie.

Q: Three s -- three sons?

A: Yeah.

Q: Would you do this again? Would you talk with -- to people about this again?

A: To be honest with you, no.

Q: Too hard.

A: Too hard. No. It's not a pleasant subject. People ask me, how do you survive and blah, blah, blah, and this. Some people that I am close, I'll tell them, but otherwise, no.

Q: What do you think about the museum in Washington?

A: I think very much. I think a lot.

Q: And all the attention that -- that the Holocaust is getting in th -- in movies, and books these days, what do you think about -- about that?

A: I think it's very nice. I think it's, for people that didn't go through, they should learn. They should.

Q: Did you see, "Schindler's List"?

A: Yes. I didn't want to go, but my middle son asked us to go, so my husband and I in -- we -- we went, and I said, that's it. I'm not going any more.

Q: So you haven't seen any of the others?

A: No. I'm not interested. I went to -- to the Holocaust the first time, and I saw it, and I st-start to cry, and --

Q: In Washington you mean?

A: Yeah, and I says, that's it. That's it.

Q: Have you been to the one in [indecipherable]

A: Honestly, you -- no. To be honest with you, no, no. He -- he's -- the -- the rabbi is not my cup of tea. Let him be well.

Q: I agree. So what do you think made your son get so involved in the museum in Washington?

A: Well, because he knows that my husband and I went through.

Q: Went through it.

A: And he's doing this for us. He's a very good son, and he's a nice human being, not only because he's my son, but we appreciate.

Q: Is there anything you want to add to this?

A: Not really. I don't know.

Q: Something you might want one of your grandchildren to hear, if --

A: Yeah, I would. I love them dearly and that's all we have. And my children, and that's about all.

Q: Thank you.

A: Thank you.

Q: Oh, they'll -- they'll get copies, so --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- they'll send it -- they'll send you a copy, so you can --

A: I don't know if I did it good, or I did it bad.

Q: You were fine, you were great.

A: You know, I -- I don't -- now, you forget things.

Q: You're fine.

A: It's not so -- what time is it?

End of Tape Two

Conclusion of Interview