

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Pranas Jurkus
April 30, 2012
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a recorded interview with Pranas Jurkus, conducted by Ina Navazelskis on April 30, 2012 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Highland Park, IL and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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PRANAS JURKUS

April 30, 2012

Question: This is a **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **Pranas Jurkus**, taking place on April 30th, 2012, in **Highland Park, Illinois**.

And thank you very much Mr. **Jurkus** for agreeing to speak with us today. I understand that you, as a young person were a witness to some aspects of the Holocaust in **Lithuania**, and we would like to talk to you about that. But before we get to those events, we'd like to find out a little bit about you. Could you tell us where you were born, when you were born, and a little bit about your family?

Answer: Yes. I was born 1927.

Q: What's the date?

A: April 15, in **Lithuania, Kretinga**. It was a little provincial town, but was **Apskritis** region town. And we felt that the town is big for us.

Q: How many people lived in **Kretinga**?

A: There – I understand that at that time was 7,000 people.

Q: Okay.

A: 7,000 people that – but they had all the offices what – what big towns had, and – you know, and – and then –

Q: Who was your father? What was his –

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A: My – my father was a carpenter, builder. He not only carpenting, but he did the – he build houses too. Wood houses. And, not only that, he made music instruments, cymbals and violin. And the one event that I remember, that he was constantly consulting with one Jewish guy, **Mortkis**(ph). **Mortkis**(ph) [indecipherable] i-in **Kretinga** was that – who used to sell ice cream, the best ice cream. And I remember that he was building one violin, and my father. And that violin was later by my sisters given to the museum in **Kretinga**.

Q: I don't understand, di – was your father making a violin for this gentleman, for **Mortka** –

A: No –

Q: No.

A: – for himself.

Q: Your father was making it for hims –

A: He just – as a – as a carpenter.

Q: Okay.

A: He was very handy, he wanted to make.

Q: Okay.

A: He decided to make. And they both com-competed – competing.

Q: Oh, so Mr. **Mortkis**(ph) also made –

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A: With – **Mortkis**(ph) was carpenter too.

Q: Ah, and they would see whose violin –

A: And – whose violin is the best sounding in all [**indecipherable**]. I remember

only that – that he was constantly, every part, comparing with that – that

Mortkis(ph). And that's what – actually there was the – the contact with the Jewish people. And I know that he was, you know, we – we constantly – and he used to get matzo. And this was, for kids, that was something unusual.

Q: Did you like it?

A: Oh, I – I like. I like very much.

Q: Yeah.

A: So – and then –

Q: I want to know more – a little bit about your family. Your father's name?

A: My – my – my father was born in **Jokubavas**. My mother was from **Kalvarija**.

Q: What was her name?

A: **Ona**.

Q: And his name?

A: His was **Pranas**.

Q: **Pranas**.

A: Yeah.

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Q: Like you.

A: Exactly.

Q: Or you like him.

A: Yes, I think that this was a – a custom.

Q: Okay.

A: To make the first son always the father's name. And then I had one older, two years older sister, **Yedviga**(ph). Then one – and two younger. Was **Adele**,

[indecipherable] Alduta(ph).

Q: And **Alduta** would be –

A: Alut – **[break]**

Q: Okay. So tell us a little – tell us a little bit about your family. Your – it sounds to me like you were the only boy in a family of all – of all girls, is that so?

A: Yes, that's true.

Q: Okay.

A: I was the only one son, and three girls.

Q: And did all of you go to school?

A: We all went to school. Wi – grammar school, is usually the first, and then high school. And when I left **Lithuania**, 1944, the – Mother died 1944, February. She was very young, she was 46.

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Q: Very young.

A: And the father left – and I left Father with three – three sisters in **Lithuania**.

Q: So that means that when you left, you left alone?

A: I left alone.

Q: You left alone.

A: I –

Q: We'll get to that part.

A: Yeah.

Q: We'll get to that part. But let's start – tell me about what kind of a person your father was. What do you remember about him?

A: My father was nine years older than my mother. He was born 1886, yeah. He was a – already a old man when he – when he married. I understand that he was drafted in a Russian army, and he was fighting in World War I, and the first days or first week, he was taken prisoner by Germans, and he spent four years in **Berlin**, in a prison camp.

Q: Oh my. Did he talk about that at home?

A: He talked little bit that. And he had a good – good – a good job, he was actually working to one German officer as his housekeeper.

Q: Your father?

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A: Yes.

Q: While he was in **Berlin**?

A: While he was in **Berlin**.

Q: Okay.

A: And when he came home, I think so then he went to trade school in **Siauliai**. He finished there his trade. He was actually graduated with [**speaks Lithuanian**]

Q: Oh, sort of like craftsman.

A: Craftsman, yeah. And then he started to work in his field. There were two brothers in **Jokubavas**. The first brother was older, and one sister. The first brother, **Yoses(ph)** got all the **utis(ph)**.

Q: The land.

A: All the farm – the land. And he was paid and he went in the world.

Q: So that meant that according to traditions of the time, the older brother continued the family farm?

A: Con-Continued the family farm.

Q: And your father got some kind of monetary compensation?

A: Yes.

Q: And he came then came to **Kretinga**? Is that what –

A: He came to **Kretinga**.

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Q: And he set up shop there? He more or less was – started his life –

A: He was – he was working.

Q: As – his life as a carpenter.

A: Yeah, he was working. I think f – not a shop, but when he married, then he had his place where he had his tools, and he was doing as a carp – carpentry.

Q: And so he –

A: And then going to one place [indecipherable] that, wherever people needed, he was doing the job.

Q: Did he build the house that you lived in?

A: No. He build a house for some priests, not far away there, from – from – from the cloister, from the church.

Q: What were the values that your father had? Was he a religious person?

A: He was a – he was very conservative. Not too religious. He was reading that Lithuanian newspapers, more like on a – on a religious side, I remember. But – and he went to church not every Sunday, but you know, as the church rules, you have to attend before Christmas, before Easter. So he was that kind of – not [indecipherable], but he was **Katalikas**.

Q: He was a Catholic.

A: Yeah.

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Q: He was not a – he was not a very fervent Catholic –

A: Yeah.

Q: – but nevertheless.

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: Mother was a little bit different, but Mother was as a mother, not too religious.

But you know, wanted that the kids, you know, be religious. I myself, you know, I –

I – I served as a – as a altar boy, and – but I was not too religious.

Q: What kind of atmosphere do you remember from your family life?

A: Very nice.

Q: Yeah?

A: Very nice. Although we were – we were not rich. The father did not make much money, and the mother was working too; she was working in bakery. On market days she was selling baked goods, some – some – some baker. And so they – they – they – little struggle. But we, as kids, I remember that one ladies, when I met later, said, you kids, you were so nice dressed, that the best dressed kids is **Jurkus** family. Because the mother was kind of little more – more sophisticated. As a young, she was in the apar – i-in **Latvia**. She was in **Riga** and **Liepāja**, and she spoke the language.

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Q: She spoke Latvian?

A: Yes. So that kind of – but otherwise we – we were, you know – we always rented. Then the father collected already material, and good times, we – we say good times **[indecipherable]** times. That was '37, '38, '39, and suddenly the world changed, and all the material, and our land, we don't even know. The girls did not claim. There was a – there was a – was a **platte**(ph) of land one place, and they did not – they did not –

Q: We have to back up a little bit –

A: – recover. Yeah, okay.

Q: We have to back up a little bit. If you're talking about material, you know, getting on – getting more – better off financially, does this mean that your father, who didn't have any land when your old – your uncle inherited it, ended up buying some land on his – of his own?

A: He bought a land.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: That was in '38.

Q: In 1938.

A: Yeah. He wa –

Q: And how many –

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A: – actu – actually, he mortgaged.

Q: He mortgaged?

A: Yeah, the –

Q: Ah, yes.

A: – piece of land.

Q: The bank owned it.

A: He had to pay back – I don't know if he paid exactly or not, but we had our place.

Q: How li – how large?

A: Oh, just – would be one acre.

Q: So ju – to grow vegetables.

A: **[indecipherable]** American – yeah, American acre.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: That would be a – a small, two story house. And material was already stocked by – by our neighbor. And then when everything collapsed, and we don't know what happened to that.

Q: Okay. Tell me a little bit about your mother. What kind – what kind of background did she have?

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A: Mother did not had any formal education. I think that grammar school, and even her writing was little bit impaired, she – she was not – not that. She used to read a Bible or – or something like that, but –

Q: And she was born where?

A: She was born in **Skuodas** or **Kalvary(ph)**, that – that **Jamyskal(ph) varia(ph)**.

Q: So that's close to the Latvian border?

A: That – correct.

Q: And – and so, how is it that she came to be in **Riga** or **Napiya(ph)**? Those are major cities.

A: She worked.

Q: I see.

A: She worked. As a young girl, she already was – was swinging in – in bigger – bigger ci – towns.

Q: Swinging?

A: No, she was just not staying in one place, she wanted to see the world, and she was in **Leporai**, **Leporai** was a big – big – big Latvian city on the **Baltic** Sea. So –

Q: Yeah, yeah. How many si – did she have sisters and brothers in her family?

A: She had a – yes, she had a – I know she had one brother.

Q: But you do – it sounds like you don't know that family part very well.

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A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: That was too late already, they were older. My – my mother was born, I think in 1903 or something like that.

Q: So she was like 17 years younger than your father.

A: Tha – that's – no, tha – probably I am mistaken. Nine, I – I remember nine years –

Q: Younger.

A: – younger. Nine years younger.

Q: Uh-huh, yeah. Were you close to your extended relatives: aunts, uncles?

A: Actually, not too close, because that – the brother who inherited everything, married a woman which we did not communicate. She was very possessive there, what she had. She didn't like – she didn't like my father and my father. When they used to come the market day to **Kretinga** to sell their products, and parked their horses in our backyard, she didn't give us anything, not even egg, or soda. And then, they had the two sons. They had two sons, which were – the older son, my mother's age.

Q: Wow.

A: Yeah.

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Q: So they were your cousins, but more like your uncles.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: And did you get to know them very well, or not really?

A: Yes. But already in **United States**, the one, the oldest.

Q: Really?

A: I didn't know where he is. I met him in **Chicago** when I came to **Chicago**.

Q: That must have been a surprise.

A: Yeah, I didn't know in **Germany** when it was that he is out, or where he is out.

He didn't know where I am.

Q: What about his younger brother?

A: Younger brother stayed in **Lithuania**.

Q: I see.

A: Stayed in **Lithuania**, had the big – big farm and cooperated with – with that time occupant, and made pretty good, and the family rich now.

Q: When you say – okay, when you say occupant, he was part of the Soviet system, in other words?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Okay. What do you remember – do you have an earliest memory from your childhood?

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A: Yes.

Q: What would that be?

A: 1930.

Q: Okay, and how old were you then?

A: Ne – three years old

Q: Okay, and what's that memory?

A: That was very interesting, that I remember in **Lithuania** there was a custom that when the new year comes, that one dresses as a old man, and one dresses as a young man. And they came to our house that the old man is the outgoing year; and the new man, the young one, elegant, is the new year. And I remember that – the – **[break]** –name of the young man.

Q: What was his name?

A: That was **Lutikas**(ph)

Q: **Lutikas**(ph).

A: **Lutikas**(ph). First name, I – **Stefanus**(ph). **Stefanus**(ph) **Lutikas**(ph). He was known in – in **Kaunas**, I think, after that – when he returned from **Russia**, 1944

Q: That's interesting.

A: Ninete – na – na – yeah, 1944, when – when **Germany** collapsed and – and when second – second occupation by the **Soviet Union**.

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Q: Tell me a little bit about the town, about **Kretinga**. What was it like?

A: **Kretinga** for us, like I'd already mentioned, was kind of big town. We [indecipherable] it. We had a railroad station, we had the theater, we had the sk – nice school. We had the stadium.

Q: What kind of stadium?

A: Football. Soccer. And all the sports, and – and the basketball and everything. We felt that we are living in – in a big, big – sure, you know, **Kaunas** was that, you know – **Vilnius** was occupied, but **Kaunas** was the – the city which we wanted to visit, but I – I had no chance that time, not further than **cukrus fabrikas**.

Q: The sugar factory.

A: Sugar – sugar factory in **Kruziunai**, only.

Q: Mm-hm, and – and – so you didn't travel any farther than that sugar factory?

A: That time.

Q: And how far is that from **Kretinga**? How many kilometers?

A: Oh, about 200 miles.

Q: Oh, that's quite far.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: [indecipherable] **Kruziunai**.

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Q: Can you tell me, did anybody have a car in **Kretinga** in those days?

A: Yes, I remember. Only the **polnai**(ph).

Q: Only the who?

A: Only the rich ones.

Q: Ha – were there many rich ones in –

A: In **Kretinga** we had three taxis, and the one was – number three I remember, that that taxi was rented for the bapt-baptist of my younger sister. This was something.

So – and then there were – there were some – some people that they had the private **opel**(ph) cars. And then there was the **grafas**, th – th –

Q: The **grafas** is the Count.

A: The – the Count – the – of the Lithua – the **skabatches**(ph).

Q: Uh-huh, the Polish nobility.

A: Yeah, the **skabatches**(ph). He had the old – old car, and when he used to drive, we kids, we wou – used to run after. But the speed was that we were even faster than –

Q: Than the car?

A: – th-the car. And then after I – '38, he acquired a new car from **America**. That was, I think **Dodge**. Now I can – at that time I – I didn't know, but that was very stately car. And they had – in church they had their – the-the-the – their pew

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Q: Yeah, their pew, like in the pew.

A: Yeah, pew. They – they used to sit there and everything, and he never talked to – to all the **jabietchai**(ph).

Q: Was he – did –

A: To all the peasants he had no contact whatsoever.

Q: And did he consider someone like your family peasants?

A: Oh yeah, oh we couldn't even talk to – with the – with the higher people, you know.

Q: I see, so he wasn't somebody the kids would –

A: That's i – my subjective opinion. And then, when the – we were – I know – you want to go little bit further now, or –

Q: Sure, yeah, yeah, no –

A: – or stay there –

Q: – I – I want to go –

A: – with the **grafas**?

Q: – yeah, I want to find out about him.

A: Now, when –

Q: Cause it's – I'm – excuse me for interrupting for a second. It's very unusual that there would be a town in **Lithuania** that has 7,000 people, that would also have

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somebody who is truly from the old aristocracy, the Polish-Lithuanian aristocracy.

Not every town had such members.

A: Yeah, but that – that was a – considered a big one. They had the ponds, they had their – their own electricity. They had the big – and these were like **serfs**, all over.

He controlled that, and there was the palace. Now they have [**indecipherable**] and – and museum and everything.

Q: So the town had a palace? The town had a manor?

A: Yes. The **skabatches**(ph).

Q: Okay, so he had actually –

A: They never stayed in winter, they used to go to **Germany**, I assume. And when the – when the – the first occupation, Soviet occupation, he was chased out, he left, and it was occupied by Russian soldiers.

Q: So his house, his estate, was taken over?

A: Yes, were taken over, the – the whole thing.

Q: But let's – before we get to the war –

A: Yeah.

Q: – let's just stay in pre-war **Kretinga** a little bit.

A: Yeah, pre-war.

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Q: So you have Count, **Grafas di Skabatches**(ph), who sounds to me like probably the – the – the highest ranking, if there is a high ranking person –

A: He – He was a – he – I would say so subjectively, that he was probably – considered himself higher than **[speaks Lithuanian]** tha – that –

Q: District –

A: The region – the region director.

Q: And was the regional director like a mayor, or was he –

A: No, may – no, mayor of the city.

Q: I see.

A: But **[indecipherable]** was.

Q: So was even higher than the mayor.

A: Yes. That comprised **Polanga, Kartena** and all around, that was like a – like **Siauliai**, like **Taluciai**, so-something like that. And so that is my opinion, because –

Q: Did he have children?

A: He – he had the children. He had the – I think two sons and one – and one daughter. I cou – I could go later, you know, how we interfaced with that – with the daughter, but that was already after – after the Germans occupied us.

Q: And do you know whether or not they spoke – what language they spoke amongst themselves?

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A: Not Lithuanian. Not Lithuanian. But I thought that he knew Lithuanian, but the documents which – when **Soviet Union** took over there and – Russians took over the palace, some parts were transported to **Kretingos muziejus**, **Kretinga** museum, like music – mu – written music, and some other items, which nobody took. They were delivered to mus – museum, where we happened to live, there.

Q: Mm-hm. So, did you live in the center of town?

A: Wa – not exactly center, little bit – little bit –

Q: I see, uh-huh.

A: – further on a – on a east – east part of the town. The **Kretinga** was kind of – the square in **Kretinga**, the marketplace was square. It was west, south – west, north – west, north, east, south. And probably we go later –

Q: Mm-hm, yeah.

A: – because I have mentioned in my – in my article, how the city consisted.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Yeah.

Q: Were – was it such that within **Kretinga** – ah, I know what I wanted to ask you. What was the main economic basis for life in **Kretinga**? You mentioned that the Count had an estate and that people worked there. Did – did that estate produce anything?

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A: They produced for the – for – for the Duke, for the **grafas**, and they were very independent. He sold the goods, and whoever worked there, they had no land, no nothing, just work.

Q: Well, what kind of goods were produced?

A: Crop. Vegetables –

Q: Agricultural [indecipherable]

A: Agriculture.

Q: Okay. So the estate was self-sustaining?

A: Self-sustaining. E-Exactly the same like the Catholic church.

Q: Also self-sus –

A: It was a big Catholic church, it was a cloister, it was a seminary. They were independent, too. They – actually they – you could say now that were three entities. There was the ci – the town, the church and the **grafas**.

Q: I see. Well, that's unusual. Not every town would have so many – you know, would have –

A: Probably not.

Q: Yeah. And the town itself, what was the economic basis for the town? They – what did the town –

A: There – there were some factories.

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Q: Uh-huh, what kind?

A: Were factories like carpentry, ki – producing furniture. Bricks. The brick factory was a big one. And then agriculture. All around the town there were that – farmers, who lived in a – in a town, but had the land all around.

Q: Well tell me then now – let's go to another aspect of life; and that would be the different groups and nationalities. We already mentioned a little bit that the – the Count, or the Duke was high nobility and the family did not speak Lithuanian. How would you describe the nationalities that lived in the town, was there more than one?

A: Yes.

Q: And –

A: There were –

Q: – tell me wa – about those.

A: – that – the – the first wa – the Lithuanians –

Q: Okay.

A: – that I already mentioned, the **grafas**. There was out of – they did not participate in any events with us.

Q: Okay.

A: With Lithuanians. Then the second was Jewish.

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Q: Okay.

A: Was a big, big community.

Q: Okay.

A: With two churches.

Q: Two synagogues.

A: Two synagogues. School. Grammar school, and stores. And drugstore, or two drugstores, at one time. And the part was, their part was west, and south.

Q: That's where most of the Jewish community lived?

A: Yes. All told they – they were – all were with stores, all manufacturing stores, and competing with – you know, with the Lithuanian stores. Now, that was a Jewish. The second was Lutheran Protestants. They had their church on the west side – on the east side of – of that – of the one square.

Q: Were there many Lutherans in town?

A: Many.

Q: Why?

A: Many, and we called them **Prussay**(ph).

Q: What is tha – what – how would you translate that?

A: Lutherans.

Q: But **Prussay**(ph) would probably mean Prussian, right?

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A: Prussian, but this – we-were called in **Lithuania**, even that, who was a Lutheran Evangelical. It was **Prussas**(ph).

Q: So that meant – does that meant he was a Lithuanian?

A: He was Lithuanian.

Q: I see.

A: They all Lithuanian.

Q: I see.

A: And there was that Pastor **Giliginas**(ph) was very patriotic Lithuanian. And they were a big, big community. Big. And in school, the kids – kids went to school, they did not – we mixed very much with – with – with them in the grammar school, and – in the grammar school we had no – yeah, some Jewish kids.

Q: Some.

A: Yeah, some. **[break]**

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And in high school, I remember, I was not in high school there; there were more – more high school children.

Q: But did most Jewish kids go to the Jewish schools?

A: To the Jewish school.

Q: Okay.

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A: And they advance more that like a high school level, I think they went to **Klaipeda** or someplace else where there was a – where there was a high school.

Q: Okay, so the Jewish community didn't have a Jewish high school?

A: No.

Q: Okay, it had a grammar school.

A: The grammar school they had.

Q: Do you know about how many Jews lived in **Kretinga**?

A: I don't know.

Q: Okay.

A: Lots.

Q: Would you say a thousand –

A: Oh yeah.

Q: – of the 7,000 people?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: I would say.

Q: Would you say two?

A: Not only in **Kretinga**, they lived all around, too.

Q: Uh-huh, in the villages.

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A: Yeah, in villages.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah.

Q: And – and aside from stores and manufacturing, was there any other kind of work, and other kind of economic basis for the Jewish community?

A: Yes, agriculture.

Q: Uh-huh, also farmers?

A: They had beautiful – beautiful yards full of tomatoes and strawberries, and pickles. Not – not pickles, but cucumbers.

Q: Mm-hm. How did you – it sounds the –

A: And then a – I cannot forget, slaughterhouse. That's for – for – for animals.

Q: A kosher slaughterhouse?

A: Ra – kosher, yeah. There was a – newly built. Was very attractive there. I have been, I have seen and – and we used to buy meat from there. It was not far away from the – the – our place where we bought the land. It was outside **Kretinga**, probably three kilometers.

Q: Would you say that – that people were on a first name basis in **Kretinga**, that most people knew each other?

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A: Yes, and no. I thi – we had newcomers. Let's say that when I started that – to – just to interface little bit with – with – with some people – when **Klaipeda** was taken over by **Hitler**, 1939, many people came, new people came. New people came in high school, and new people came in – in town. That was the mixture already.

Q: But that would have been in '39?

A: '39.

Q: Before the [indecipherable]?

A: '39, tha-tha-that still was that Lithuanian government, **Smetona**.

Q: Okay, but before 1939?

A: Before 1939 that – yes, there were some comers from – from villages. From villa – around villages, young people. They were – started become more sophisticated, they don't want to work at – at the farm any more, they come to town. And town, like I say, there was some – some kind of industry, anyway. Or there was a – how do you call a **verpykla**?

Q: **Verpykla**, a – a – a place where there's a – where cloth is made?

A: Where they process – where they process the wool.

Q: Yeah, okay, a wool processing plant.

A: Wool processing. It was a big one.

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Q: Okay.

A: A big one.

Q: Okay. Who owned it?

A: I don't know.

Q: Okay.

A: Could be Jewish too.

Q: Okay.

A: Could be Jewish. Like a – oh, there was a mill. There was a mill, big mill, where they grind the ca – th-the-the – all kind of things. And there was a **lentpjūvē**. There was – how do you call it?

Q: Oh, a lumber mill.

A: Lumber mill. And run by motors and by water. The water – waterfall was. And there was – and that – his name was **Miller**. I don't know it was just a – just a **Miller** because of the mill, or it was – I-I know that was a Jewish –

Q: Uh-huh, **Miller** is –

A: It was a Jewish.

Q: Yeah, yeah, it's a Jewish name.

A: Yeah, yeah.

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Q: Can you tell me, was – were there many Germans who lived in town, or not many?

A: Yes. They more associated the real Germans with the Lutherans, because their religion, the songs, the everything is German, yeah. But that that would be a real German, like another group I will mention now was the Russian. These tsar Russians, very intelligent people. It was a group of, I would say about probably 50. The families.

Q: That means –

A: But they –

Q: – people who escaped from –

A: – they spoke – they spoke Lithuanian.

Q: – sar – the – the – I'm sorry to interrupt. If I understand, these would have been people who didn't like the **Bolshevik** revolution, from **Russia**?

A: They came much earlier, yes, yes.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Remnants from – from whatever was that time, you know. So –

Q: So there would have been more people who would have supported the tsar?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

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A: And they had their church too.

Q: I see.

A: I don't remember where their church were. They had their cemetery. There was a Lutheran cemetery on the east side of – of – of the town, and part was the **Proahslav**.

Q: So the – the Russian Orthodox.

A: The Russian Orthodox, yeah.

Q: I see. And there was a Catholic cemetery?

A: Oh, Catholic cemetery too.

Q: Okay. And was there a Jewish cemetery?

A: Oh yeah. **Zyd(ph) Kapas(ph)**.

Q: Okay.

A: Very famous, very beautiful. On a edge of – of – of a **krantas**.

Q: On the shore.

A: On the shore and the – down is the **Okmanic(ph)**, the river, yeah. Beautiful, beautiful cemetery, and, you know, we – we come to that.

Q: Yes.

A: We come to that. Outside – outside – far outside the city.

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Q: Okay. Let's talk a little bit about the social life of children, you know. Who were your best friends in **Kretinga**?

A: The first, when – when you are little, you have your neighbors, so I had the neighbors where we grew up and went to school, all the – all the neighborhood – we were little bit further out from the school, so we had to walk about good half an hour to – to school, grammar school. And then when you walk, you – you meet them, you talk. There were – I know that on – on that street where we lived, **Klonalai**(ph), there were so many Lutherans, so that we used to go with the Lutherans to school, and associate, and – and then, school activities, like every place else, already from grammar school, there were groups of theater, choir and all of the things. And the kindergarten, I didn't attend any kindergarten. It wasn't –

Q: What were your interests when you were a child?

A: Just to play. Just to play, go and spend time someplace in the woods, and make all kind of tricks, and nothing special. And then, you know, to play soccer. When the – basketball came very late to **Lithuania**. I remember basketball, so we – basketball – oh, ice skating. Ice skating was that – that – that was – and then skiing. Although we had little hills, not hills, but just, you know, the river, so – skiing, winter skiing.

Q: So where would you ice skate? Would you ice skate on the ri –

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A: Ice skate? I – I roll – in that.

Q: Yeah, but tell me.

A: That – ice skate on the pond.

Q: On the pond near the –

A: On the pond of the [indecipherable], o-of the cloister.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: The church's.

Q: Okay.

A: That was prominent.

Q: Okay.

A: Or, when we lived before, someplace else, wherever there is ice.

Q: Okay, we – but so there was a –

A: **Žvirgždas** there was – was – was a place that –

Q: **Žvirgždas** would be sort of like where there'd be a – a gravel or something.

A: Whe-Where they – where they took gravel out and left a big hole in a – almost in the middle of the town.

Q: And it would fill with water.

A: And so we called this [indecipherable] gravel.

Q: Yeah.

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A: And so they stopped the graveling there, but it was very low, and water used to gather there and froze in winter so that their – they are – started my career as a – as – I was a good – good ski – good skier and good – good ice skater. My f – my father – the first ice skates we – you know, was wood, with a – with a –

Q: Wow, I can't imagine skating on wooden skates.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: You were the only boy in the family.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you have a special place? I mean, were you – were – were your sisters sometimes upset that you might get special treatment?

A: We had – we always played soldiers.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Always soldiers. We had – actually, we had even a gangs. You know, neighborhood gangs. Not – not gangs, but group of people who gathered and had arguments with someone else, and there were fights once in awhile, wi – with the slingshots, with – with the sticks, or something like that. But I – I have not done any – any big damage. I remember when I – when I beat some kids, you know, and the – the lady comes with the kids, and he has a nose bloody, and you know, and comes to my mother and say, look what he did. You know, I had to apologize, and I – I

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was not sorry, actually, because you know, he was tha – the one who started. And th-the – the fights usually starts after the soccer game, after neighborhood soccer game. What was the ball? Made out of rags.

Q: Really? Not a real ball.

A: Not a real ball. We were kind of – kind of poorish, poorish, the whole neighborhood.

Q: Who were your best friends after that, after the neighborhood? Do you have any that you remember?

A: That – yeah, there was one where we grew up, was **Jobakus(ph)**. The – grew up and there were some other ones. In high school I had many friends.

Q: Were most of your friends Lithuanian? Or all of them?

A: Lithuanians.

Q: Okay.

A: Lithuanians.

Q: So, did you associate with the Jewish kids in any way?

A: Yes. I, little bit, I associated. The Jewish school, grammar school, had a Ping-Pong table. And that – th-the – the administrator, o-or the **sargas [indecipherable]** the English –

Q: The guard, or sort – sort of like the –

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A: Yeah, the custodian.

Q: Right.

A: The custodian was one Lithuanian family, and there was a boy there who played the Ping-Pong. So that I loved the Ping – Ping-Pong. When I saw – I used to go there, and he used to play already with the advanced Jewish – Jewish kid, the Ping-Pong. This was the only – this was the –

Q: So did you go – you got to know some of these kids?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay, were they boys your age, or older?

A: No, ol – little bit older.

Q: A little bit older.

A: Little bit older.

Q: Okay.

A: And then we knew them. **[break]** We knew by – by looking at them – sometimes we met –

Q: Would you know by name? People by name?

A: No. I don't even know the name that which I describe.

Q: Of the ping – of the person who was good at Ping-Pong?

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A: Yeah, the one **Benjamin** that we used to laugh at him, he was a joker, in my – in my article. And then the –

Q: You a – no, no, no, we can't talk –

A: No.

Q: Let's –

A: Okay.

Q: If you talk about the article, you have to tell the story.

A: No. Okay.

Q: Because on the tape we don't know the story.

A: Okay, okay. No, no.

Q: So the Ping-Pong person, you don't remember by name?

A: No, no.

Q: Okay.

A: No.

Q: So your relations weren't so close that you would have constant contact that you – aside from Mr. **Montkas**(ph), did you know any other people by name in the c – in the town?

A: I cannot remember. My – my mother worked in a bakery by one, but what was the name? What was the name, you know? I know one that – that **Lazeras**(ph), who

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had a beautiful city farming, with tomatoes, strawberries, I – I repeat and everything. It was so – everything was so beautiful. **Lazeras(ph)**, he was.

Lazeras(ph), **Mortkas(ph)** **Lazeras(ph)**. And I used to talk with them, I used to talk. They used to ask us to – to do something, or – or – or – or help little bit, you know, the kids –

Q: Sure.

A: – bring that – bring that, the goods or so. And then there was one Jewish guy who had the horse, and used to sell spoons and some other wares, and I don't remember now a name. Was very good – very good acquaintance with my family. Used to come always and talk. Was just a – the kids probably did not associate so much with the Jewish kids. And that is a reason which I would like to tell, just very shortly.

Q: Sure.

A: Because the Catholic church is very much at fault.

Q: How would you say, how do you explain this?

A: When the priest for religion lesson comes in, and by – on occasion tells the Catholics they all will go to heaven, the Lutherans to purgatory, the Jews to hell. Priest.

Q: You heard this?

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A: Oh yeah. And – and that kind of ingrain in me, and I used to laugh as a kid, already.

Q: Laugh at what? At what he said?

A: That – that – that – that's kind of – that kind of statement –

Q: Okay.

A: – that one can give in a class, in a high school. So –

Q: And take it seriously himself.

A: Yeah. But you know, they believe so.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, that religion, and their religion contributed lots, lots, lots. And even now, the same.

Q: At home, did anybody ever talk about the Jews, or the Lutherans, or the **Provaslavs**(ph), the Russian, or the **[indecipherable]**?

A: Between us, w-we – probably just small talk. Could be that we – Mother mentioned that she – she has to go there to – to that, and work, or – or – or on a market day, there are Lithuanian herring barrel. There is the Jewish barrel, there is some other barrel. You know, whose barrel is better, or something like that, th-the **[indecipherable]** or the herring.

Q: Mm-hm, right.

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A: So But otherwise, no. But with the father, about the violin, about the instruments, and how he used to tell what **Mortkas**(ph) is telling. A – **Mortkas**(ph) was probably more educated, and he used to give hints to my father. I know that one time, he wa – already ending that, he had to take the head off of that, and make another head.

Q: For the violin.

A: Wi – yeah, only because **Mortkas**(ph) found out.

Q: So their – okay, so in other words, did they have a friendly competition, or did they have –

A: Friendly, friendly, friendly.

Q: Okay.

A: Because he worked always by Jewish people, as a carpenter he worked, he – he –

Q: So he – oh – so he had more dealings?

A: He had more dealings. He was constant dealings.

Q: I see.

A: Only that – that – and he liked little bit to take one – 100 –

Q: A hundred grams.

A: Hundred gram or something like that, he used to go to tavern. And I – I remember that my – my mother was always angry that he stopped sometimes.

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Jewish people I have not seen drunk. So that – we knew that. And so – but the Lithuanians used to [indecipherable] to drink. And we, the kids, we – we didn't had much. Playing, I know that my friends used to play there, because they lived together. There was a Jewish family living – couple Jewish families on – on the **Kestucio gatvės**.

Q: Mm-hm, **Kestucio** Street.

A: **Kestucio** Street. And there were [indecipherable] and – and some other ones. They – they used – they lived in the same backyard. And then I remember there was **Petrauskas**(ph). They had their meat – meat store.

Q: A butcher shop?

A: Butche – butche – bu-butcher shop. And they lived together with Jewish family. And then was – used to be laba – very interesting that Jews used to call us, the kids, to slaughter their chickens, because they couldn't do that themselves. So they say, hey, come on and make that. And I know –

Q: Have you slaughtered a chicken?

A: I have not, but my friends there, they did. They did.

Q: Oh, I can't imagine it.

A: And you know, but I was not – that was f – for – kids were – naturally, you – you – you want to experience so many things that – that you don't take that – that as

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– as – as cruel or so. And then – and th-that was the same – the same backyard, with **Petrauskas(ph)**. And **Petrauskas(ph)** were Lutheran. Lutheran communicated much better with – with – with the Jewish than the Catholics. So I –

Q: Why would you say – why would that be?

A: The religion.

Q: You think, yeah?

A: Religion. Religion is the – you see, I'm [indecipherable] **Katalikas** and I – from the beginning I – I – very early I recognized that the religion is very detrimental to our relationship with every – everyone else.

Q: How sad.

A: Yeah.

Q: How very sad.

A: Because that is – that – that's – that – you cannot associate. My first wife was Lutheran, my daughters are Lutheran, and my cousin said, I cannot be **cuma(ph)**, I cannot be godfather. He went to priest and asked, the priest said no way. Can you imagine? But that was later, now, in the **United States** –

Q: Yeah.

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A: – but – but this was – this is – which I – you know, I'm – I – I could tell bishop or – or a priest, right in his face. I had lot of with – with the priests to do, and I was a chauffeur in **Germany** with one priest, and – and –

Q: So – but back in **Kretinga**, you were an altar boy and you already were hearing things that sounded bi –

A: Altar boy I was until '37 - '38.

Q: So you were 10 - 11, something like that.

A: Yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Altar boy. Because everybody was, my best friend was, they were very religious you know, to go in a – in a – in a evening mass – evening service, which I didn't want to go, and father did not – or mother did not push me.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So –

Q: Aside from what the priest had said when you were already in high school, about the Catholics going to heaven and the Lutherans purgatory and the Jews to hell, did you ever hear any kind of statements about the Jews that you remember from childhood? Any kind of sort of clichés or – or sayings, or things like that?

A: No.

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Q: No.

A: No, that – you know, tha-that – before – be – in my – in my young days, I used to go to the – I was in a – in Jewish **scaula**(ph).

Q: A school, uh-huh.

A: Yeah – n-n-not the school.

Q: A shul?

A: In th – sh-sh-sh-shul.

Q: Shul, mm-hm.

A: W-We -- **scaula**(ph), no, **scola**(ph), we – we said. Jewish church.

Q: Uh-huh, okay.

A: Yeah, in the old one. And I – I ri – I went there. I wanted to see how they pray, how they open their – their – their – their – their bible, or whatever. And that I had –

Q: What did you see? Tell us about it.

A: I have written it.

Q: I know, but tell us about it now in words.

A: Was very interesting. I was al – always curious. I had nothing – nothing – nothing thas – I wanted to go. And I went there and I had to have a hat, because in Jewish al – you cannot go with the hat. So I –

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Q: You mean the yarmulke?

A: Yeah, yeah, ye – not yarmulke, but any – anyone.

Q: Okay.

A: Di – you had to cover. And when I – and in Catholic church you have to take off.

And sometimes I used to forget and go up to – up to the altar with the hat. And it was – I was so ashamed, you know, I used to not – even dream nights, wha-what I did. This was a sin.

Q: To wear the hat –

A: Everything was a sin. Yeah. And that – and I remember that – that – that's how they pray and I was very impressed, and –

Q: Did people let you in? Nobody said anything, that you were there?

A: No, I – I don't think I was al-alone, I was with someone. And some – some other boy, or some man was. No, they – they invited, they invited that. There was the relationship with the Jews, was little bit odd, but was a friendly. Was a friendly to – we let them – because the Jews themselves, they wanted to be separated. I would not say they wanted to integrate. There was a like a s-state in a state. They had their own. And the government, or th-the mayor, let them do what they want. They could expand, they could build, they could – they could have. They had all the licenses for

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stores, for everything, for – for like a – a – what is that shop, you know, where –
where you do the – the iron – iron work **[indecipherable]**

Q: Oh, a smith?

A: Smith –

Q: A blacksmith?

A: – yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: My **[indecipherable]**. I – I cannot English.

Q: It's okay, it's okay. It's not that easy, I know, when we used explain it –

A: Because I never spoke that language. When we talk about international –
[break] – when you speak about international banking, would be different.

Q: I know, I know, I know.

A: The little – I had to even look up how **kalkès**, the – the –

Q: Lime.

A: Lime.

Q: Yeah.

A: Lime or building compound.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, I had to look up. I – I – I – I – I didn't know, yeah.

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Q: I know. It's not – it's unusual.

A: Anyway, anyway, let's continue.

Q: Yeah, all right.

A: So my – my childhood in **Kretinga** was – was good. I had very good memories, so that somehow I – and when I wrote here the ar – the article, I – I – I remember so good that u-unbelievable. Now, I remember. But then, the names fade away after, you know, I'm 85 years old, and that I still kick – my friends, they cannot see, they cannot – they cannot walk, they cannot do anything now. And when I call, I say, do you remember? No, I don't remember anything.

Q: Yeah. It happens. It happens.

A: Yeah.

Q: I wouldn't be surprised if the skiing and the skating and the playing football helps now.

A: Yeah, e-everybody was a – a – you know, like we call it, s-sport-minded.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: That was the only – we didn't had inside any – any sport. Just gym little bit, in the new school. And this was already build '38 - '39.

Q: Did you have a movie house?

A: Yes.

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Q: Okay. And so you saw some movies from the 30's?

A: I saw some movies, and at one time I was – was **kino**-mechanic, and I was running the movies.

Q: Well, that's a nice job.

A: I could – I could tell there too, is very interesting events.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: Let's – let's talk about language a bit. It sounds to me that although your mother, you say, was not highly educated, but she probably spoke more than one language if she had been to **Latvia**.

A: She spoke Russian, German, limited. And Latvian.

Q: As well as Lithuanian.

A: Oh, Lithuanian, yeah. Lithuanian **Zemaitiskai**.

Q: Oh. Sure, in – in her dialect, yeah.

A: I-In – in accent. In dialect in.

Q: And your father?

A: My father, Russian, perfect. German, and Lithuanian.

Q: And what about –

A: Polish probably, I – I –

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Q: Yeah, we – that's one thing I forgot to ask. I didn't think there'd be many Poles in your town, but were there any?

A: There were Poles.

Q: There were Poles?

A: Oh, I forgot to mention, yeah. There were Poles. Polish families.

Q: Many?

A: Not many. Not many. Polish names, Polish families, they pretended they were Poles, but we considered them Lithuanians.

Q: Okay. Let's ta – an-and the Jewish community spoke what language mostly?

A: They spoke Yiddish. I – you know, Yiddish is like a German.

Q: So di – how did you talk with them? When you were young, what – did you speak only Lithuanian?

A: I spoke Lithuanian, and little bit German, and then after the Russian, the one year –

Q: Some Russian?

A: Yeah, Russian, I s – I spoke Russian, I – we used to write Russian.

Q: How did you communicate with the Jewish community?

A: Lithuanian.

Q: Lithuanian.

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A: They spoke Lithuanian.

Q: Okay.

A: They knew Lithuanian. And I used to – I used to **[speaks Yiddish]**, you know.

Q: A few phrases.

A: **[Yiddish]**

Q: Yeah.

A: **Gevalt**.

Q: Yeah.

A: And some other ones, you know, we used to – or Jewish – Jewish songs. Some – something, you know, like –

Q: You would know some?

A: **Mekki-Messer**. Yeah.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yeah, someth – we used to listen, you know? And very interesting used to be the wedding, Jewish wedding. You know, f – under the –

Q: Canopy?

A: Can-Canopy. And unusual that they break the glasses. How can you break the glasses, it cost money. And they used to break the glasses. I attended ca – I – I didn't attend, but I – we – we watched.

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Q: Yeah.

A: They let you watch, you know.

Q: What – let's go a little bit towards outside life in **Kretinga**. What was the sense of the place that you lived in, this **Lithuania** that you lived in? How – how much did you feel it, how much do you think others felt?

A: You mean, outside the **Kretinga**?

Q: Yeah, I mean, what kind of a – what kind of a politics did you – did people talk about politics and world events?

A: M-My age that time, I – I know that the father and friends used to talk. They used to talk politics, and even argue. We had relatives in **Klaipeda** [indecipherable]. My mother's sister was married with a **Grigolyte**(ph).

Q: And what's that? Who's that?

A: That the name, **Grigolyte**(ph). And he was very much Nazi. And I remember that, even that – the **Smetonas**(ph) like I – '39, before the **Hitler** took over, he used to argue with my father – my father. They were already their time. And my mother's sister suffered very much. They didn't speak Lithuanian. In **Klaipeda**, in that time, the kids were almost the same age like my family, and they really – and I used to – we used to go to **Klaipeda** very often. You know, **Klaipeda** was the – the – that was the city of – of envy. Everything was in **Klaipeda**. Even the smell was

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the – the factory smell was g – was good, the smell. And I used to argue with that – that **villis**(ph).

Q: Your cousin.

A: My cousin. He was a year older, and we used to sleep in one bed and kick each other, one for **Smetona**, one for **Hitler**. That time I already knew **Germany**, what is going in **Germany**, because **Klaipeda** was very much for **Adolf**.

Q: Tell me, how far was **Klaipeda** from **Kretinga**?

A: 24 kilometers.

Q: So it's like 15 miles.

A: Yeah.

Q: Isn't it something like that?

A: Oh, what – half an hour with the train.

Q: Half an hour with the train. So, very close by.

A: Yeah.

Q: And what kind of a city? Tell us a little bit about the city of **Klaipeda**.

A: Was a harbor city. Was fisherman city. Was – everything was subsidized by **Smetona**. **Smetona** give so much money to every Nazi, to appease them. And even the **Grigolytes**(ph) got the place, new house. So that was – was odd thing going, what **Smetona** did.

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Q: Well, do you know about those policies? I don't know anything about them, what were these monetary policies?

A: Well, because they – **Klaipeda** –

Q: Okay.

A: – for **Lithuania** was like a punishment for all intelligentsia when they – in **Kaunas** they do not fit. So they will – will send to **Klaipeda**.

Q: You mean if you're a government official?

A: A government official, a professor or teacher, or some other activist against **Smetona**.

Q: They – they sort of exiled them to **Klaiped** –

A: They exiled to **Klaipeda**.

Q: And why is it a punishment? Why would it be a punishment?

A: Because **Klaipeda** was little bit odd. **Klaipeda** was not **Lithuania**. Was more German. The culture, everything. Lutheran. All of **Klaipeda** was Lutheran. So that's my – that's my – that I – I didn't mean anything – that's my impression, and I think I am right. There were the – the – the – a friction.

Q: So was it German Lithuanian friction?

A: The German, **Memelland**. Memel – [indecipherable] minor Lithuanian friction.

Q: So –

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A: Because the Lithuanians, they do not accept the kla – the **Memellander** as a full Lithuanian.

Q: And why wouldn't they?

A: Lutheran.

Q: I see. And is that why they were more pro-Nazi than **Memellander**?

A: And then many, many –

Q: Okay.

A: – **Klaipeda** ci – **Klaipeda** citizens were sympathizing with **Hitler**. **Hitler** promised many, many things, and it was easy for him to take over the **Klaipeda** 1939, what was March, or whatever.

Q: Do you remember that time?

A: Oh, I remember.

Q: Where were you when it happened?

A: I was in **Lithuania**, but I think I was in **Klaipeda** not lo – not long before that.

Klaipeda was – because we had the relatives, we always associate, yeah.

Q: So, you – do you remember the day when you heard **Hitler** took over? Not really.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Oh, you do?

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A: Oh, the day I don't remember, but to – it was uproar in a – in a – all **Lithuania**, especially in **Kretinga**. There were exodus from all the Lithuanians, who ran with the buses, with cars, with – with horses, ran to **Kre-Kretinga**.

Q: So you had this onslaught of people?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: And did they tell you about what was going on? Did they tell stories of what was happening?

A: We knew that. We knew that, we didn't like that.

Q: What did you hear, what did you know? Because we don't know.

A: So that **Hitler** took over **Lithuania**, part of **Lithuania**. That's like – like Polish and **Vilnius**, exactly the same. We in school – you know, in school in '37 - '38, we were already enlightened about the politics with **Vilnius**. Every morning in – in grammar school, we stand up, we look at east, and we say [**speaks Lithuanian**].

We will not be satisfied without **Vilnius**. So with **Klaipeda**, when **Klaipeda** was taken over, **Klaipeda** is ours.

Q: And yet it was taken over.

A: It was taken over.

Q: And what –

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A: And my mother's brother stayed there. And then repat – repatriated when then was exchange between Lithuanians who were German descent went to **Germany**, there was th-the – the treaty between **Soviet Union** and **Hitler** –

Q: Okay, tell us a little bit about that.

A: – where they exchanged.

Q: Well see, I don't understand any of that. Please explain it all.

A: Oh. It was 1940 - '41.

Q: Okay.

A: Already **Hitler** took – no, 1940. 1940, when the first Soviet occupation.

Q: Okay.

A: At one time, **Germany** agreed with **Soviet Union**, they will exchange.

Q: Exchange what?

A: The Lithuanians from **Klaipeda** or from **Germany**, who are Lithuanians patriots, want to come – [break] – **Lithuania** back, who stayed there. They didn't like the **Hitler** regime, they wanted to come to – to **Lithuania**, and the Lithuanians, whoever knew what the **Soviet Union** brought us, they claimed that they are Lutherans, they are Germans, they claim that they have relatives someplace, and they could prove to the Soviet government, they were let out. And that was the exchange, repatriation, what you call in **Lithuania**. And my mother's brother,

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Tarmynas(ph), came from **Klaipeda** to **Kretinga**. And then he was – because then he was trusted Soviet citizen, let's say, he was given a position in **kedainai**(ph) or someplace. And we say, why do you do that? He couldn't understand, he didn't want to live under **Hitler**. But we knew already that.

Q: So you –

A: There are two devils; one is brown, one is red. And to choose between two devils, you rather would choose the brown. That time, really I'm not lying, that time was already evident that the **Soviet Union** was cruel. Because immediately, you remember, when they took the – immediately they de-deported so many people and everything, so that –

Q: Okay, we've gotten ahead of ourselves a little bit.

A: Oh yeah, little bit, okay.

Q: But – so the first time that I sense that their – that this world that you describe to me in **Klaipeda** has a huge change, is when **Hitler** takes over **Memel** and klai – the first time –

A: Yeah.

Q: – yeah, that **Kretinga**, the world that you lived in gets changed, is when **Hitler** takes over the port city of **Memel** and klai – **Memel** and German **Klaipeda**, and Lithuanian –

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A: Yeah.

Q: – and there's an exodus of Lithuanians coming to **Kretinga**.

A: The first exodus –

Q: The first exodus.

A: – before **Hitler's** army marched in, they knew that they will march in that and that day, so that all the Lithuanians, where they could, they got everything – they could take everything what they wanted, they went to Lithuanian side because they knew that after **Hitler** will take over, or that **Germany** will take over, that you have no choice then.

Q: Okay, so here's another question, when those Lithuanians came, and I said, well what did they say, and you – you said, well, that **Germany's** taken over, I'm going after more of, let's say their experiences, their details, where they were, did they have discrimination in work, did they ha – were they –

A: On what time? What – what –

Q: Before **Hitler** takes over ger – **Klaipeda**, what was the experience of the Lithuanians living in **Klaipeda** –

A: In **Klaipeda**?

Q: Yeah, with Germans who were so pro-Nazi.

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A: That there was division already in the town. There was already, probably year before, was known for politicians that **Klaipeda** will be taken away because the war around, they were taking **Czechoslovakia**, they're taking there and there and there, that **Klaipeda** will fall anyway.

Q: Okay.

A: It was known. What the people there – and there were already th-the Lithuanians were discriminating – the Germans were discriminating, the Lithuanians already in **Smetona's** time.

Q: In what way?

A: A – not talking Lithuanian in stores, and the government was quite dominated by – by German – by [indecipherable] that – that means the – the administrators.

Q: Mm-hm. What about – did you hear about how Jews were being treated in **Klaipeda**?

A: I have no idea. Ma – I think that Jews had better time in **Klaipeda** than probably in **Lithuania** in – in the gross **Lithuania**.

Q: In larger **Lithuania**, yeah.

A: Because Jews integrated very, very nice with the Germans, because they speak the language – they spoke the language. Now, you would not recognize, is he a Jew, or is he a – a German, because they spoke perfect German.

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Q: But when **Hitler** came, was there a change there? Did you know –

A: I don't know.

Q: You don't know.

A: Oh definite – definitely there was.

Q: Yeah.

A: There was – I – I think every Jew ran out. Oh, I don't think that anyone – anyone stayed. They knew what – what is to become.

Q: Okay.

A: They knew that, th-there's no – no – there is no question.

Q: And do you know how Jews in **Kretinga** were reacting to all of these events?

A: With fear. With fear. It was – we knew that – and I think that the grown-ups knew already that – that wartime, that we will not exist from one, or from another. From one side or another si – east or west. But we kids, we didn't know. We kids, we didn't know, we just sensed that there is a tension, there is a tension, there is a tension. The parents always talk, what will happen to the kids, what will happen to us, how they will live, how they – how their future is. Like always they – they are elderly, they are talking and worried about the – the future generation, how will we survive when the war starts, and so on.

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Q: Yeah. Well, '39 is pretty late, you know, when – and when – it's sort of like the beginning of all these different events. So you recall –

A: It was already wartime.

Q: Yeah, in – in – in **Poland**, yes.

A: Yeah, **Poland** was already occupied September, and some other countries that – **Denmark** and – and where –

Q: Well –

A: I – I don't know now – now th-the dates.

Q: I think tha – **Klaipeda**, I believe, was taken over in March '39.

A: March '39.

Q: And so half a year later, war is declared on **Poland**.

A: Yes.

Q: And – and then **Poland** is quickly occupied.

A: Yeah, **Danzig** was then –

Q: Yes.

A: – before that all. There were so many events, so many events, y – in order to remember, I had to sit and then to sort out what was happening.

Q: Okay. Now in – in – in the fall of 1939, you'd be 12 and a half years old.

A: Yes.

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Q: Do you remember the next huge political changes of – of what happened after that?

A: So – Soviet occupation.

Q: And what happened? Tell it – in your life, not – not necessarily in –

A: Yeah.

Q: – the country's life, but in your town –

A: In – in Soviet occupation. No, we knew that – knew that before the occupation, that in a spring there is always a evening service in the Catholic church –

Q: Okay.

A: – in May. And everybody goes to the evening service, and my friends, they used to go there. I – I – we used to skip – I used to sing, I used to sing good, and I liked to sing. And in the church, the – the – the songs are very, very, very beautiful, and very sound – sound nice, and so. And that time the kids, they said y – do you know **Pranas**, what is going in s – in **Russia** – in **Russia** that time, not **Soviet Union**, in **Russia**, in **Ukraina**(ph). What is going in – in **Soviet Union**, or in **Russia**, how the churches are prosecuted that time. We – we – we didn't believe, as a kid, that – 12 and a half years old. And we heard already rumors. And then when the final occupation came, or invasion, the first invasion in – in the summer of 1940, we knew. And when we saw the soldiers. There is so much written about that.

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Q: Yeah, but tell us, tell us what you saw.

A: When we saw that, when – and y-you know, when they came to **Kretinga**, they already marched through all **Lithuania**. We have to consider they were hungry, dirty, smelling, **makorka**(ph). And that's what I saw. You know, that – the story, Lithuanian story, how the Jewish people accepted them with open arms.

Q: You saw this?

A: I saw myself. I saw the flowers, which is – it becomes so, you know, **shablone**(ph) now to talk about that, but that was.

Q: What do you mean by **shablone**(ph), please use –

A: That – that is already so mu – so much talked about.

Q: Okay.

A: So much put on the plate every time for the Jewish people.

Q: Okay, I see.

A: You accept it, you – you wanted that. You know, I understand, I – now I understand, that time I understand. You always side with somebody who treat you better. This is n-natural. This is your preservation, my preservation. If the German was better to me, I would go to German. If the Soviet would be better to me, I go to Soviet, so. In that time, we were disappointed. As a kid, we were disappointed that

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– with the armaments what they brought, with that – that everything – how they behaved, how they were dressed.

Q: How did they behave?

A: Most Mongols, you know, from – from **Mongolia**, the Russians.

Q: Well yes, but how did they behave?

A: The soldiers. So primitive. They didn't wash. They didn't wash. You know, masses of soldiers coming, and they go now to the **grafas'** palace. It was very unusual. Or someplace, they stay in some place with the tents, and we kids, we go there to them, and they say bring me **boulitchkai**(ph). Bring me something to eat, I'm hungry. I give you the – the **[speaks foreign language here]**. And give us money. And we go to the store, we bring them the – the – the – the food.

Q: Do the soldiers – were they friendly, were they scared, were they aggressive?

A: They were friendly. They were friendly, they th – ag-aggressors were probably **[indecipherable]**. We didn't ex – I didn't experience. We didn't experience.

Q: Okay. What's a **politrukas**?

A: That's **NKVD**.

Q: And what's **NKVD**?

A: The secret service.

Q: The secret police?

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A: Secret police.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah.

Q: But so, when the – when the soldiers came, what you have in your memory, if I re – if I can repeat it, would be that you saw the Jewish people greet them, and then you saw that they were hungry and dirty and smelly. But friendly.

A: Friendly.

Q: Okay.

A: They did not – the people who were taken immediately, the Lithuanian politicians, let's say, all the hierarchy, government – **[break]** – and – and all other, a-all the administration apparatus, they were enemies of the **Soviet Union**.

Q: Okay.

A: They were imprisoned.

Q: Did you know about this in the town?

A: Oh yeah. My father was called too. For days he was u-under investigation. And he didn't do anything wrong, he was let it go.

Q: Why did they arrest him? You don't know.

A: Yeah, carpenter.

Q: Yeah.

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A: What probably belonged to Lithuanian Christian organization, something. There were something. He didn't even belong to a political, but for years – for – for days he was. He was interviewed. And we feared he will put in prison. Why? We didn't know why. Why?

Q: Did he say anything about it when he came home?

A: He didn't talk much, he said he was interviewed, everything was fine, because he spoke with Russian. He could express himself in the – yeah. I'm not against you, I'm just a working man and – and have nothing to do with – with any – anything but **politicsis**(ph). And so we were – we were scared kids, and my wife – and – and my mom. My – my – my mother. And so – and some other people got taken. Many, many, many taken.

Q: Did they come back?

A: Some came back, some I don't know. I don't know. And then we're going now into that –

Q: Well, I'd like to do that. I'd like to do that.

A: Something way –

Q: Yeah, I'd like to – I'd like to now, when we're in this 1940, and the Soviets are – are there, and you have these, you know, soldiers, that's your first kind of interaction with them. How di –

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A: Yes. It – what interaction is – such a friendly interaction that we would go there, they give us money, rubles, **cherwonsy**(ph), the – **Lenin** with one side and other side. And this was 10 **litas** that time, was big money. And the soldiers, they had money. I don't know where they got the money. They had no feeling what the money can buy, so we could cheat them. We could take the money, that **cherwonse**(ph), and not to come. He doesn't know, he's behind the gate, he is locked in. He cannot go to city, the soldier, by the – by the cloister, he was locked. But we were honest. We went, we go, we buy a – a white bread, we buy bread, we buy butter and some other goods, and we bring him, and he gives us ruble, so we make money. Or we wanted something, so he – he take that star out of his hat, and he gives us.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. Okay, that's the soldier [**indecipherable**]. Now – and then the ah – then the first Soviet occupation, there are election. We knew already what the election will be fake and everything, I knew already, 13 years old. I knew already what's happening.

Q: Yeah, but can you describe how it took place? What changed in the town? How did life –

A: The first – the first the government.

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Q: Okay.

A: The government were occupied by some people we didn't even know. Where they came – let's say they're Lithuanian communists. Where they came – in school we have teachers already communists.

Q: And they were not known to you? You had – they weren't people from **Kretinga**?

A: Some yes, some no. But we didn't know that who was – before **Smetonas**(ph) who was a active communist. Like I say that **[indecipherable]** ran away. Came from someplace else. And you see that they are not educated. They are not fit to govern even the little city. But they were in charge, and then actually, the Soviet government was in charge. The military government was in charge.

Q: So how did life change in **Kretinga** when they were there? What happened?

A: Immediately, food changed.

Q: In what way?

A: We couldn't find. We had to hunt for bread, for – for some other goods. We have to search to get someplace. Then you deal directly with the farmer. You don't buy in the store any more. The drugstore changed and some other – life changed quite a bit on that. But we didn't – my family, we didn't suffer. My father worked, my

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mother worked, my – they got someplace, from farmer directly, or milk or what – whatever, so that we didn't – we kids, we didn't feel that. And we start to school.

Q: Okay.

A: In the fall we started school.

Q: Okay. And what was school like? Because that would have been the following – 1940.

A: We started school, school the same, in the same place – oh no, not in the same place, we didn't had the school this – our school was occupied then, tha – by soldiers. They were in some city buildings. In the city buildings we went to school, we went to – to – we had our – our excursions, we had a – groups of – theater groups. We went with the theater group, with a play. We went to **Jokubavas**, I remember, I was in a play. I was in a choir –

Q: Well, how far away was that?

A: Pardon?

Q: How far –

A: **Jokubavas** eight – eight kilometers.

Q: Okay.

A: And so we played there, and this – the Soviet regime was there, but was – everything was Lithuanian, actually.

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Q: So did you see any Russians?

A: Oh, we saw the soldiers. The soldiers was – used to have a – used to have a – a movie, **kino**, outside, what have – what is a **blankey**(ph). And apparatus, all the soldiers and we would, kids, or people, and watch the movies. That was that Finnish-Russian war.

Q: So wi – movies about that?

A: About that.

Q: So documentaries probably.

A: Documentary movies about –

Q: Or newsreel.

A: – **Lenin**, about **Stalin**, about revolution, I – I remember all the movies. And I used to – to help.

Q: So is that wha – is that part of what your experience was, is being in the cinema that you also knew about these movies?

A: No, no, no, that was – that was when – when Soviet – Soviets left.

Q: Okay.

A: That was first German occupation.

Q: Okay, so we'll talk about that later.

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A: Yeah. And we enjoyed, the kids. We enjoyed. And they used to – they used to have a – a presentations, you know, singing Russians, with – with **balalaikas**, with **mandolino(ph)**, with **cartusia(ph)** and songs. I knew a – every song, **cartusia(ph)** **[speaks foreign language here]**. And all th – all the songs what I used to – what I used to sing. **[speaks foreign language here]**

Q: Mm-hm, three **tenkis(ph)** – three – yeah.

A: Yeah, three **[indecipherable]** yeah. And all they used to show the wars with Japanese, documentary wars. With the Mongols. Samurai, how they –

Q: The Samurais.

A: Samurais. Russians, when the fought the – in the – in the east, in **Mongolia**, how they fought that – that. **[indecipherable]** about **[indecipherable]**, about oh, beautiful. Beautiful thing. We enjoyed very much. I enjoyed there – the – the whole thing was so interesting, was so interesting.

Q: So it sou – so it sounds to me like all this fear that people talk about, wasn't part of what your reality was.

A: We come to that.

Q: Okay. Okay.

A: Okay. The fear – okay, that's still – still – still – still the same, 1940.

Q: Yeah.

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A: The fear started when they started to draft the people to – for deportation – for deportation, even Jewish people. The good friends of my father, Jewish people. I don't know what **Mortkas**(ph) happened. They were taken and – an-and – and deported to – to **Siberia**.

Q: So Mr. **Mortkas**(ph) was deported to **Siberia**?

A: I don't know.

Q: Okay.

A: I don't know, but I know that he was suffering, that some good Jewish people, they were rich, and they were taken together with the Lithuanian, you know, patriots, whatever you call, or whatever. And they were –

Q: Tell me about what happened.

A: And I have na – I have – this was the beginning. Now, I could tell you about that – the year, 1940 summer. There's a summer vacation for our school. Summer vacation, the kids are engaged to go to **Palanga**, to pioneer camp.

Q: Okay, what i – **Palanga** is what – what –

A: **Palanga** is 12 kilometers on the **Baltic** Sea –

Q: From **Kretinga**?

A: 12 kilometers from **Kretinga**.

Q: Okay.

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A: West.

Q: So actually, you're very close to the **Baltic** Sea.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: **Palanga** was like – like – the same like **Klaipeda**. And now, a teacher – I give you the paper, you read the paper, you will know more. And now the teacher, Lithuanian teacher who was teacher when **Smetona** [indecipherable].

Q: In **Smetona's** time.

A: Yeah. He was young [indecipherable]

Q: Okay.

A: He was a – when the Soviet occupation, he was a museum director. And the museum was on a street, our apartment was inside, we lived there. And he was eating by us. We associated, our family associated with a young teacher. My sister was that time 15. He liked my sister. I hated him. You know how the resentment? And he didn't like in school me, and – and – and there was a friction between him and me. There was a rivalry. How can you my sister – love my sister, or something like that. And he said **Pranas**, what are you doing in summer? Vacation is coming. What you do in **Kretinga**? There is pioneer camp.

Q: A camp for the pioneers.

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A: For pioneers camp.

Q: Okay.

A: Go with me. I say, I am not pioneers. I am not –

Q: Tell me what are – what are pioneers?

A: Pioneer is the – pi-pioneers is the organization that Soviet – Soviet youth organization.

Q: Okay, so it's a communist youth organization?

A: It's communist – communist youth organization.

Q: Okay.

A: Like Lithuanian scouts.

Q: Okay.

A: Okay. I say, I'm not. He said, it doesn't matter, I will make that you can go. And I went to **Palanga** in the – in the pioneer camp.

Q: Okay.

A: There were, for all **Lithuania**, about thousand kids.

Q: Wow.

A: Or, let's say li – pro-probably exaggerate, 500 let's say, lots of kids. All the **vilas**(ph) there – there.

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Q: Stop. Th-The siren. There's a siren behind us. **[break]** Okay. Okay, you will.

The other thing I want to say is, I would ask you not to refer to what you have written, because in the interview –

A: Okay.

Q: – people will not be reading what you have written.

A: Yeah, I-I know.

Q: They'll only be hearing –

A: I know, I know, yeah.

Q: Yeah, okay. All right. Okay, so we'd like to go back to the summer of 1940. Tell us about –

A: 1940, I am in a camp there –

Q: The – the **[indecipherable]** camp.

A: And in a – in a pioneer youth camp.

Q: Okay.

A: Where are from – kids from – from seven, I think, from seven years to 16, from all **Lithuania**.

Q: Okay.

A: There are all kind of kids, and lots of Jewish kids. We have our – our events, we visit the **Skavaches**(ph) palace there. We go all over, we go swimming and like

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camp, the best camp, good food and everything. Now, one day, the teacher, **Lingeese**(ph) said, **Pranas**, they're calling me in the police station with my passport. I don't want to go. Now confidential, he's telling. Now we've become friends. I want that you take my passport and tell that I am busy, I cannot come. Go and register me. I go, I lie, I sense that something is happening. I register that. I convince them that he is busy, the teacher, you know, who was –

Q: Right, right.

A: Yeah. And – one time. Then I decided to go to **Kretinga**, visit my family. The 12 kilometers bus I go when I came to **Kretinga**, I was told the people are dep – they are deporting. That was the day 14, June 14, no, or – or – or July 14?

Q: June.

A: June. The deportations. My mother doesn't want th – she doesn't want let me go back. I say I have to go, I want to go. I went there, and I told the teacher –

Q: So –

A: – that they are deporting the people from **Kretinga** to **Siberia**.

Q: Did people know that they were going to be going to **Siberia**?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Did you see anybody?

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A: N-Now – now if – if they know, but that was deporting to **Russia**, to **Russia**.

Deportation. Because there were some deported people we knew that the first when **Soviet Union** took over, the first day some people were already taken to **Moscow**, some politicians.

Q: But when you say politicians, do you mean those in your town, **Kretinga**, or do you mean –

A: Not in **Kretinga**, in – in – from **Kaunas**.

Q: Okay, so it's not somebody you know –

A: No.

Q: – it's just somebody that you know –

A: No, no, no.

Q: Okay.

A: When they told me, I – I come back to the camp, and I told. And I little bit spilled out to some – some friends. I was called in already by the leader, and say what are you talking, what are you spreading propaganda? I was afraid, but the teacher save me.

Q: How did he do that?

A: He said, he is talking nonsense.

Q: The same teacher who –

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A: The s –

Q: – th-the –

A: – who – the **Lingeese(ph)**.

Q: The **Lingeese(ph)**.

A: **Lingeese(ph)**. **Lingeese(ph)** knew. **Lingeese(ph)** was big Lithuanian patriot. He knew that his days are counted. Now –

Q: Excuse me, there's something that we have to go back, because the chronology is not working. You're saying that – that you were in this camp for pioneers in 1940, in summer 1940.

A: Da – s-s – yeah.

Q: But the deportations only happened nine months later, in June 1941.

A: No, not '41. No. Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh. Okay, you-you're right, you're right, you're right. No, the first deportations. The mass deportation was in June 14 ni – '41.

Q: Correct.

A: But some deportations were already that – that told me –

Q: Oh, I see.

A: – that people are – people are taking by the Soviets, and deporting.

Q: So in other words –

A: Yes.

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Q: – people are being taken –

A: You're right.

Q: – being arrested –

A: Yes, arrested. And then **Lingeese(ph)** knew that something will happen, because this was right after the – after the war, after the occupation, Soviet occupation. Wait a minute. Summer, the **Soviet Union** marched in. Summer we went to the camp. Summer in **Kretinga** were already imprisoned people. Lots of Lithuanian imprisoned. And was known that some are already deported – deporting.

Q: I see.

A: Was known, that. Now, I return back and I told him I – I spilled so-somebody else, I was myself in trouble. They call again him, with the passport. I went second time. He did not want to go. He was with the kids, he was already, and probably some other ones there were Lithuanians, something was going on – on. And then – wait a minute, wait a minute. I'm – I'm – I'm – I'm a little bit out. I'm a little about. The camp was in 1941 summer.

Q: That's what I thought.

A: I'm sorry.

Q: That's what I thought.

A: The camp was in 1941 summer.

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Q: Well, June. June 19-four – 1940 – warty –

A: June, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because I was in a – in a camp when – when the war started and the Germans took over.

Q: Yeah. So it's not summer 1940 –

A: No, no.

Q: It's June 1941.

A: Yeah, I don't know how to –

Q: That's okay –

A: – how to correct.

Q: – that's okay, that's okay, we have it on tape.

A: Yeah, no, no, no, no, no.

Q: Okay.

A: I da – that 1940, I remember election was in the – in the fall, and it was a political turmoil there and – and little friction, everybody was afraid. And then, spring, I think was no event, something – I don't know what kind events. We went to school normal, normal.

Q: Yeah.

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A: And then was that summer vacation, 1941 – I'm sorry.

Q: That's okay.

A: 1941.

Q: That's okay.

A: If I – I didn't –

Q: That's a – that's all right. I mean, it's confusing in that the years as – you know, there were many events that took place in that time.

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: And –

A: 1941.

Q: One. In June, there was this huge camp.

A: June, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Be-Before that, that was the da – that my family told the deportations started, and that I told that **Viktoris(ph) Lingeese(ph)** that this is happening, that he was already aware that – how we'll lose out. And then –

Q: Hell will break loose.

A: Yes. And then the war started. We were in a camp. Sunday morning we hear **[indecipherable]** we hear that thunder. It was not the thunder, it was the war.

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Q: So for –

A: The cannons. And then we are in our villas, they say pack everything. Something is happening. Somebody said that is a thunder, somebody said in that a war, or – or the third version was that – the – the Russian soldiers have exercise – maneuvers.

Okay. We all went to **Baltic** Sea. We gather there, hundreds of kids, and we marched to **Latvia**.

Q: You went to **Latvia**?

A: We had to march to **Latvia**.

Q: By foot?

A: By foot.

Q: How long did it take?

A: Half a day.

Q: That's not –

A: Eight – eight miles. Eight – eight – eight kilometers. And the Germans already – the highway, they were already almost in **Latvia**.

Q: So you s –

A: By the end of the day, the first day, they were already in **Latvia**.

Q: So you saw them?

A: Oh, I saw – we saw.

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Q: And what did they look like?

A: Soldiers. Soldiers, nice dressed, with cannons, with – with trucks, with motorcycles. We went – now we are on the – in a **Šventoji**. You know, that's the little, little fisherman's town, **Šventoji**, on the border of **Latvia**. Like **Boutinga**(ph). I had my mother's relative in that, who said, stay there with us, don't go to **Latvia**. And there masses of kids are going, because they – they are – they are forcing us to go. We couldn't. We couldn't leave. We come to the border **Lithuania** and **Latvia**, there is Latvian guard. Lat – Soviet Latvian guard, doesn't let us in. What nonsense. And we hear that on a highway, the Germans are going with tanks, with everything. And finally we went into that **Latvia**, and the first house, first farmer house, we stayed there overnight.

Q: The whole stu – all of the kids?

A: No all the kids, part. Part of the kid. Some kids went someplace else. We were about far – probably 50, we went there. And then, we decided that night we will not go – they said, you go there, they – that will come the Russian boats in the **Baltic** Sea, they will take you to **Creme**(ph).

Q: To where?

A: **Creme**(ph) in – in – in a mid – mi – **Mediterranean**.

Q: You mean the **Crimea**?

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A: **Crimea.**

Q: One second, hold that thought. Wait for that train. Okay, all right.

A: [indecipherable] for **Kretinga**, we were smart. We say we will not go there. I, **Yosef(ph) Pavachis(ph), Remano(ph) Skydastahsi(ph), Ehrtaji(ph) Dukas(ph), Vianis(ph) Vuk** –

Q: What was his name?

A: [indecipherable] **Yoshka(ph)**, but –

Q: **Yoshka(ph)**?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay, you don't remember his full name?

A: I don't remember the name.

Q: A young Jewish boy.

A: Yeah, a boy, because he was from **Kretinga**.

Q: Okay, there were four of you?

A: Yeah, four. We decided to go back to **Palanga**, and then from **Palanga** to **Kretinga**.

Q: So, one but –

A: And this is the –

Q: Okay, one – there's something that's a bit confusing here.

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A: Okay.

Q: The confusion is that you start out about 500 kids from the **Baltic** Sea, going north to **Latvia**.

A: Yeah.

Q: And you're forced to go.

A: Yeah.

Q: Someone's telling you to go here, and here.

A: Th-The – the leaders.

Q: Right.

A: They have instructions from their leaders, from – from Soviet, from – from – from Russian.

Q: Okay.

A: Okay.

Q: And then your relatives – **[break]** – in a small village near Latvian border ask you to stay with them?

A: They ask to run away from the group.

Q: Right. And you say you can't.

A: I didn't want. I didn't want my – me and my friends.

Q: Got it. What I don't understand is how you get to be a group of 50 from 500.

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A: We don't know. Some stayed in that little town. They had food there.

Q: Šventoji.

A: Šventoji. We – we spread.

Q: But th-that was you –

A: Some – some couldn't even walk.

Q: Okay, what I want to know is, is it because there were leaders who were telling you you have to go here, you have to go here, or was there mass confusion and kids were just going all over the place on their own?

A: Mass confusion. Mass confusion between the leaders too.

Q: Okay.

A: My **Lingeese**(ph) confiscated a bicycle from one civilian. Because he was the leader, he had to organize that. Confiscated that bicycle. I gave my luggage, and he disappeared. Disappeared, I have not seen him in my life any more. I only heard where he settled.

Q: Did he settle, or did he die?

A: Yeah – no, no, he settled and he was active all the Soviet occupation in **Alytus**.

Q: So he never left **Lithuania**?

A: No.

Q: And he didn't marry your sister?

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A: No, no, no, was too young.

Q: And did he become a Soviet activist?

A: Yes.

Q: Even though he could have been deported to the **Soviet Union**?

A: Yes. But he was a Lithuanian patriot. And another patriot was **Edward Desbalsees**(ph), your famous musician, composer. You have heard about him. **Edward Desbalsees**(ph), who wrote that – that hymn to – to **Stalin**. Composer.

Q: Don't know. I don't know.

A: One of – oh, encyclopedia '71 of the biggest composer so – Soviet Republic, **Lithuania**.

Q: I see. I see.

A: Yeah.

Q: Well, I think at this point we're going to take a break. We've spent the morning talking about pre-war life, what **Kretinga** was like, what the communities were like, the political changes, the turmoil. And when we come back from lunch, we'll get into what happened [**indecipherable**]

A: Yeah, I – I would like that.

Q: Okay.

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A: I – I don't know [**indecipherable**] like that, how we say – how we tried to save that Jewish guy.

Q: Okay, we'll do that. We'll do that, but let's save that.

A: Yeah, and how, you know, how there was no resentment, how the people said, when we s – okay.

Q: Let's wait then til after lunch.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay? Right, thank you.

End of Part One

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Beginning Part Two

Q: Okay. All right. This is a continuation of the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **Pranas Jurkus**. Let's take up where we left off, and that was – I believe the scene was that you were in **Latvia** with a group of your friends from –

A: [indecipherable]

Q: – from the camp. There were four of you –

A: Correct.

Q: – who wanted to go back to **Kretinga**.

A: Correct.

Q: And so, you just told us earlier who they were.

A: Yeah.

Q: And tell me what happened next, when you decided you want to go home.

A: Yeah, we decided that we don't want to go to **Crimea** or anyplace else, that the best for us is to return. Now, we three, we are natives of **Kretinga** and it's better for us to be at home than anyplace else during the war. And – but our friend, the Jewish boy.

Q: **Yoshka**(ph).

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A: **Yoshka**(ph), he – he was from **Kretinga**, but in **Kretinga** we did not know him. We decided to go together and wi – now we – we four guys were a – one girl and four guys were. We take the road back. We took a little road, which goes that nobody sees us, there are some little houses. Now, from **Šventoji** to **Palanga**, it took us about two hours, we stop for a – for water by some people there, for – for herring, or for something else. And it – at one – one i – house, the lady looks at us, say, boys, you know that – boys and girls you know that – that in **Palanga** they – they are gathering the kids again. They heard already they are gathering. They said, for you three is okay, but for him – because he looked Jewish. So we – we ask if she has a hat. The lady gave us a hat, and he put the hat on and we ma – we marched. Now we arrive in **Palanga** and immediately they look at us and they say, okay fine, what you want to do, we don't have place, we don't have anything. This is big house, there at – at – at the **vilas**(ph) –

Q: You have to tell me, who is they?

A: The leaders.

Q: Oh, so the co – so it's the **komsomol**(ph) –

A: Yeah.

Q: – camp leaders were still there?

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A: The leader – some leaders, somebody took over. I don't know, either new leaders, or old – or the old leaders. And say but – but he is going someplace else. I say no, we are going to **Kretinga**. No, he is not going. We said, you go awhile, and then run away and we go to **Kretinga**. We waited for about two hours, he didn't come, and we don't know any more. And we came –

Q: So that was the last you saw him?

A: Yeah. And we came to the – that – it took – it took probably more than a hour or two to reach **Kretinga**. We arrived in **Kretinga**, there was a – the fourth day after the war [indecipherable] Thursday. And then we – we saw what is happening there.

Q: What did you see?

A: Then we – we heard the rumors, everything is fine. It seems so. We saw some bombed station, we saw some – the new – the flux – flux factory was burned down. And – and then we heard that rumors, how the people, the Lithuanian activists and communist activists and the Jews were all rounded up, taken to **Prishmanchyay**.

Q: And what's **Prishmanchyay**?

A: **Prishmanchyay**, about three ki-kilometers between **Palanga** and from **Kretinga**, three kilometers.

Q: Is it a village?

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A: Is a village. And the village is just a – just a – yeah, small village. Couple – couple – 10 – 10 buildings. And they were given the orders to – to dig the ditches, and they were put in the ditches, and they were shot.

Q: So how –

A: That's –

Q: So ba – about how many people do you think that was?

A: As I – I heard they told, a-about 50 people.

Q: And they were a combination of –

A: Only man, Jewish man.

Q: Men, and –

A: And Lithuanian co-communist activities.

Q: Activists.

A: Yeah. These were given – surrounded by Germans and given the names by Lithuanians. That was like a revenge st – to turn in somebody else.

Q: Oh, so – okay, so you're saying Lithuanians told the Germans –

A: Lithuanians pointed out to all the activists, and to Jews.

Q: Okay. Okay.

A: So, this one I have not seen. I – I heard and – and I mention that – that –

Q: Okay.

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A: – I have not seen that.

Q: So you didn't – so the first four days aft – as the war is –

A: The first days from Sunday, Thursday, it was the fourth day –

Q: Yeah.

A: – that I came back to – from **Palanga**, from the pioneer camp, to my native –

Q: Town.

A: – town.

Q: Okay.

A: And all the who is what – wha – who is doing what – what is happening – everything seems fine. But there – there was a tension in the city, and suddenly somebody told the Jewish churches [**indecipherable**] is burning, the old one.

Q: The one that you had gone to?

A: No, no.

Q: The one you –

A: No, that – that – that – the Thursday –

Q: No, no, no, what I'm saying is that earlier, when you were – years before, you had gone to see the service –

A: I-In that – in that one.

Q: Yeah.

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A: Is burning.

Q: Okay.

A: All the town in uproar, is burning. Nice weather, no wind, no nothing, is burning. And then, since the – the – the – they close buildings, they started to burn too. Now, who did that? Nobody knows, they said Jews did themselves. Lithuanians did, or what – na – started, the new church started, new [indecipherable] started to burn. Started to burn, the fla – I mean, the – the fire was very intensive, started to spread in all the Jewish quar – quar – quarters, wind started like a god's punishment. Wind started, and [indecipherable] burn four – three parts of that city.

Q: Three-quarters of **Kretinga** go –

A: Three sa – the **Kretinga**. Burned the church, bur – burned the – everything around schools and everything, and – and the high school half burned, so.

Q: So this is both the Lithuanian and the Jewish part of – of town?

A: Everything.

Q: Everything.

A: And the fireman came from all vicinity, they couldn't do anything.

Q: So what happened with the people, did any people die in the fire? You don't know.

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A: I don't think so. I – I heard – I – I never heard. And by the end of the day, the main flame was over, just next day was – everything was over, the city is gone.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: Yeah.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: And the church. And I saw how the church's tower, the cross – I was in my apartment on the third floor, there is such a attic –

Q: Yeah.

A: – the attic, and I was looking.

Q: Could you –

A: That – the –

Q: Yeah?

A: The – the church was burning and part of the church, the cross leaned and hit that church's roof and the organs were gone. They were very famous organ. Ev – half a church was left and half burned. So that was over.

Q: So was both – the –

A: And that was the Thursday.

Q: Okay, so that's the Jewish synagogue.

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A: Jewish synagogues, Jewish – Jew – all the Jew – Jewish residences, everything was burned.

Q: And then part of the Catholic church too.

A: Catholic church.

Q: Okay.

A: Left only the – the west – the west side, where the Lutheran church was. All the city was burned. And you know, we – my family wa – all – all the furnitures were already taken. It did not touch us, we lived much farther, we were – all the ci-city was – what was left was evacuated. Everybody – everybody was gone, because the – the fire was just unbelievable.

Q: So the f – in other words, there were fewer people in **Kretinga** then, they – they all had to leave, or they had no homes any more?

A: They – they had no homes, I don't know where they – behind the river, there was a part of the city. They moved. They moved. You know, Lithuanian people are so inventive, they – they find relatives or – or something else, so that is tragedy, but everybody can find something. And besides, it was summer. Summertime is – is much easier too, so –

Q: So nobody knows who set the fires and how they started?

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A: No, and I mentioned there that – that rumors, and the rumors never – never realized who actually did, so –

Q: Yeah. And – and that's all within the first week of the war?

A: In the first week, first four days.

Q: Four days. Four days.

A: And the more – the most peculiar, that the front went through – through **Kretinga** without any substantial damage, just a station. Germans knew, and Germans knew where the soldiers are. They didn't aim at that, the Russian soldiers, masses, they didn't aim. Just so, scared.

Q: Well, did the so – did the soldiers run away, the Soviet ones?

A: They all – they run away and there were thousands of prisoners.

Q: Did you see –

A: At first they des – the war started five – four o'clock in the morning.

Q: On what day? On Sunday?

A: On Sunday. By – by – by six o'clock the **Kretinga** was already taken, and – and Germans were gone. The first wave were gone. Then after that they came there, the special troops, **Einsatz**. They came to – to clean up.

Q: I see.

A: All the communists and – and – and the administration.

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Q: So tell me the – when you got to **Kretinga** on the Thursday, did you see any German troops there?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah?

A: Na – troops – just – just soldiers, some soldiers, because they didn't guard anything that time.

Q: I see, I see.

A: But they were Lithuanian appointed with the white –

Q: Armband?

A: Armbands. They were.

Q: Okay.

A: Tha-That – the German – German military government de-delegated some – some to – to those. I don't know if they are known, or who they were, I-I don't know.

Q: So you didn't know these people, your f – **[break]** – family didn't know them.

A: I don't know.

Q: Okay.

A: Their family do not, no, no.

Q: Okay, okay.

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A: Young – young – young pa – se – let's say 17 - 18 - 19 - 20.

Q: What was – what was the reaction when your parents saw you come back? I can imagine they had been frightened.

A: Yeah, they were. There were tears, there were tears and – and – and when I came –

Q: Were your sisters at home?

A: Yeah, and – yeah, and ask where is the teacher, and the teacher – and after that I have to pay the teacher. I had – I have to pay for that, I have t – I have to give his bicycle, which I loved, his bicycle – one person came after two months to claim the bicycle, that probably he told, or somebody told that during the – the [indecipherable] the pioneer camp, see he took that bicycle, now he wants his bicycle.

Q: Well, yeah.

A: Yeah, it's okay.

Q: Yeah, yeah, I mean –

A: He came and he took and I – I was crying, but nothing, parents say you have to give. I hid that bicycle, his bicycle, but anyway, but that's how it is.

Q: Yeah.

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A: That how it is [**indecipherable**] understood. And so that was the – the – the front was gone, nothing – everything is quiet. I –

Q: When did those – when did those shootings happen, of the communist party activists and the Jews, was that on –

A: Oh, they ka – they – they – they –

Q: That Thursday?

A: – day it happened, I think on a Tuesday or Wednesday.

Q: So you had – you were still gone when that happened?

A: I – I was gone, I didn't know.

Q: Was this –

A: And some other shootings then.

Q: Oh yeah?

A: After that there probably wa – were shootings, and that all the man, the Jewish man were already gone from **Kretinga**. Everyone.

Q: When you came back.

A: Everyone, when I came back. The last one that were **Prishmanchyay** when they shot them. Womens, and children, they were left. And I – I met them, still in some houses there or what – whatever, women and children.

Q: Were they hiding?

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A: They – they were not hiding, because they were open, know, what – what women and children can do? Nobody – nobody done anything to them, but later, they were interned in a isolated house – home, or – or school. And then they were a – transported to the Soviet **[indecipherable]** that these are the border guards' barracks, not far away from the German – from German border. But it was Lithuanian German border, so they were there, interned with the children, in according what I have said, they were then taken to – nights, taken to – I – I have not seen – it was – I – I was t – wou – there was a open – open – open talk, open **[indecipherable]**. They were taken nights, in groups, and killed at a Jewish cemetery.

Q: In Kretinga.

A: Yeah. This was that – the – another thing which should be written or said, who was there, or who has seen. This was a tragedy that I – I don't want – I don't want to begun to tell what – what I heard.

Q: Well, tell me what you heard.

A: Huh?

Q: Tell me – tell me what you heard.

A: I heard that the women were put in a line and with – with the swords in the back. And the kids were killed by hand, and put in the graves, yeah.

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Q: No bullets?

A: No – no – no – no shooting.

Q: So that means they were – the women were bayonetted with swords –

A: Bayonetted and – and killed and half alive buried, yeah.

Q: And tho – that's the talk that was going on in the town.

A: Yeah, yeah. And I believed, I believe that. W-Well – when I will tell you what happened there, then you – we – we have to believe. This –

Q: Can –

A: This event, which I would like to tell, I have not heard anyplace, not even **Ukraine** or **Poland** or any – anything. Even a concentration camp was not that cruel, what was done, what I saw.

Q: Okay. So I want – before we get there, I want to ask you, when you came back to **Kretinga** and you heard that the day or two before, there was this mass shooting of 50 people, those communist party activists and – and Jews, is this the first time that you heard of any kind of murder like this in **Kretinga**?

A: Yes.

Q: So even during the Soviet time, there hadn't been this kind – there wasn't this kind of thing going on?

A: Oh, Soviet time?

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Q: Yeah.

A: There was torturing yes.

Q: Okay.

A: The same place which I will describe.

Q: Okay. What had happened in the Soviet time?

A: Soviet time were – there was a – there was a church cloister ther – they have their own – own quarters, there was one big building where America's Lithuanian, who wanted to retire the end of their life in **Lithuania**, 1937 - '38, build their ha – big building and lived there.

Q: A house, then.

A: A house. There was a theater there, there were printing shops and everything else. And that building – that building was called **Švento Antano(ph) Namalas(ph)**. Saint **Anthony** House. And that building, when **Soviet Union** first occupation came, they chased all the Americans out, I don't know where. And since the building was very prominent, the foreign guard, **Soviet Union** army foreign guard took over there. They were nice looking guys, good dressed, very attractive. Attracted all beautiful Lithuanian girls that time. Wa – that – this is fact.

Q: Okay.

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A: Because they were educated more, and they were called **Pogroneichdik(ph)**.

Pogroneichdik(ph) is that whose – who is the border guard. Their uniforms were such a green blue. Okay. They had th – occupied the whole building. In that building downstairs, they had a prison. Made it in a basement. They made cells, they made a prison where they imprisoned Lithuanians, Lithuanian patriots, burger – mayor or some other, who was not suited for – for Soviet regime. Okay. There was the prison, and the prison, in the nighttime or daytime, they had the one place where they used to torture. How they used to torture, I don't know. I only saw after that, when Germans took over. I saw the place, I saw the skin, I saw the hand, I saw some other paraphernalia there, along there.

Q: You mean you saw a human hand?

A: Human hand. Human hand, all the – was burned, and like a – like a glove was taken off. So, and in that what I say prompted me first to give that introduction, that what was done before –

Q: Yeah.

A: – before the Germans made their theater. Okay. And so that I have not seen the torture, I have seen only the rem-remnants what was done.

Q: I see.

A: And this is fact, the chain, th-the tree, th-the-the other things.

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Q: Oh, excuse me. You didn't – what is the chain, and what is the tree?

A: They were chained, chained at the tree and – and tortured and burned and – and genitalias taken out and everything. There were the torture like many places in

Lithuania [indecipherable]

Q: Okay.

A: You know, many, many places where Soviet performed these kind of things.

Q: I see.

A: The – and am – I – right there, I said that I know only – I have not seen, I know that this was done by – by the Russians and their helpers.

Q: Were there Russian – you talked about Mongol soldiers. Were there also Russian soldiers?

A: Mongols did not participate. They were too primitive.

Q: Okay.

A: They were too primitive.

Q: Well, what was –

A: They march as a army.

Q: Okay.

A: But they were the Russians. Russians torture us. You know, the people like on one side or another side who are – are willing to do that, or they have to do.

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Q: I see. Yeah.

A: Or they have to do, because you cannot. If somebody stays behind you with a gun, if you don't do, you go there. That was from both sides.

Q: Yeah.

A: From the **Soviet Union**, and from Germans.

Q: Yeah.

A: If the Lithuanian who refuses, he gets a shot in the – in the back of his head.

That was the – that was the rule, and everybody knew that.

Q: So, you'd – so you – **Kretinga** had already tasted that kind of violence, had already known that that kind of terror is happening.

A: Yes.

Q: But the – but it had – there hadn't been that kind of killing before. Or had there been?

A: That, no.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: Okay. So that –

A: We know that the prison was under **Smetona**, you know, there was

[indecipherable] the heavy, you know –

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Q: Labor.

A: – yeah, labor camp in **Bajorai** or so, we knew that, you know, there are criminals, poli – politicians, oh yeah, politicians was – Soviet time, politicians were by in **Dimatrava(ph)**, where **Paletskis** was imprisoned.

Q: Where is **Dimatrava(ph)** in relation to **Kretinga**?

A: About 14 kilometers, going north from **Kretinga**.

Q: Okay, so locally.

A: Yeah. **Smetona** imprisoned **Paletskis**.

Q: Palets – who was **Paletskis**?

A: **Paletskis** was prime minister by **Soviet Union [indecipherable]**

Q: Okay, so he was – when the Soviets came, he became the prime minister, okay.

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah, he was that. He was in prison and when the **Soviet Union** occupied us, there was made like a museum. We fa – schoolbo – schoolchildren, we were taken there to look where **Paletskis** was sitting.

Q: I see.

A: And you know **Paletskis** was a poet, writer, and his son is – is functioning now.

And I know the – I know the – the – even the – the poems –

Q: Mm-hm, that he wrote.

A: Yeah. [speaks poem in foreign language here] We had to learn.

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Q: Yeah.

A: And I – I – I – I learned, like I say. I – well, I like songs, I like poetry, I like, and that's – so – so that. That was – that was the Soviet time. The Germans came, there was just eliminated ev – **[break]** – thing, nothing was left in that – that place. No museum, no nothing.

Q: Okay.

A: The Lithuanians took over, there was just a – a farm.

Q: Well, you know, the sense I'm getting – and it's a very macabre, also horrifying sense, but there's this juxtaposition – you talk about yourself as a young boy as being very curious, you know, that you like to go out into – into the town, into the – into the area, kind of see what's going on. And – and you're 13 years old, 14 years old when – when you see the – the remnants of what the Soviet prison had, and you see this hand, and you see the chains. How much of the – were you frightened, or were you more intrigued, or were you terrified? How did you –

A: You just kind of **[indecipherable]** it. You just kind of – neither. It did not hurt me s-somehow. Although, I had the feeling that if you inflict pain to somebody else, think about yourself. How would you like if somebody takes you with the hand, and turns around? I was always aware, cognizance of that – that I don't want inflict pain to anyone, because I know that it will hurt me. So that I was just indifferent looking.

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And I was not alone, there were some other people. Sunday they go and look, because that – the Germans encouraged us, or the – the local government encouraged, look what the Soviets has – have done.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah. And that was like a memorial place.

Q: I see.

A: And the names were there, but I don't remember.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: The names of the Lithuanians from **Kretinga**.

Q: Who had been hurt there, who had been tortured there.

A: Yeah, yeah, in that place.

Q: Yeah.

A: And now that place, there is another side. That place, the Germans took over, three weeks or – or two weeks or three weeks after the war, everything is quiet, the gover – it – civil – German civil government, there is Nazi regime. You cannot talk what you want, you cannot – you have to be just –

Q: Careful.

A: Careful. We got to stay in line for bread, stay in line for this. There is no food available. Again you – you go and you fish someplace by farmer, or whatever you

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do. It was – there was a shortage of food. And – but otherwise, nobody prosecuted. Church is free. Church is half burned, but we go to the church. The altar is still there, organ is gone. We go to church, the Germans did not forbid us. We are singing all the songs. German do not interfere. So we – we just live. It seems everything is fine. Now, every Sunday, you know, after the turmoil which we lived through that, and the front, and the Soviet time, after that, people used to go for a walk in the city, in that city, even was burned, but used to walk around the marketplace. And there was a beautiful park, **Varninas**(ph), because there were so many crows. We call –

Q: Was called **Crow Park**.

A: Yeah, **Crow Park**. And we go there, not far from the **Skavaches**(ph) pa-palace, people go there for a walk. And there is a stadium, there is a football, there is a basketball, go for a walk. And one Sunday, rumors. It will be something, it will be something. Some Jews will be paraded. Paraded Jews, where? There and there, by that sa – Saint **Anthony** House, they will be – they will perform something, like a – like a theater.

Q: Had the Jewish women been killed yet, or was this before that?

A: Jewish women were not killed, not all, not all.

Q: Okay, so this was before that massacre.

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A: Before that, three weeks after that war – that is still in June.

Q: Okay, so what – let me get the chronology right. It's still in June, it's three weeks after the war starts –

A: Three, two weeks, I – I – I –

Q: Okay, but it's before the women and children are killed in the cemetery?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: Okay. No man. But they – the Germans did not, or Lithuanians did not catch all the Jews. Some, you know, body able –

Q: Able-bodied.

A: – man. Able body. They're hiding. They were hiding, and they were rounded up one by one and put downstairs in the prison, in **Antano(ph) Namalas(ph)**, where the Lithuanian patriots were i-imprisoned. You see how that –

Q: Same place.

A: Same place. Now they said people come and look at those who – traitors who escaped. And then, people stopped because they – they parade. In German we call **spazieren**.

Q: Yeah.

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A: – in Lithuanian **spazierohity**(ph). Yeah. And they stopped, and the kids and I and some other people, and we stopped, and we say, what they will do? And suddenly, there come a car, German, like officers, **SS** and some soldiers, and finally they chase out, out of the prison about 16 young Jewish man.

Q: How did they look?

A: They looked with suits, still nice dressed. Some probably already tortured. They come there and they had to run around, you know. Was announced in German, we did not understand. Nothing Lithuanian. And now we – all the Lithuanians are looking. Suddenly, they take sticks, they take belts, they take longer guns, and these people are running around, and they started to hit them. **Jesus**. They started to hit, and they go around, around, you know. That takes about five minutes, 10 minutes. The blood is already going.

Q: Are they screaming?

A: They're not screaming. Probably they didn't know what – what happened. You know, is better to be shot than to torture like this. Okay, they run around and – and it seems that the Germans, so viciously, more to inflict pain – okay, people are looking, looking, and all the masses – not masses, let's say hundred people from both sides, because that was round.

Q: So 200 people.

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A: I could even make a picture there or –

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean, not the picture, but I could make a scheme how it was, to – to eliminate more – e-eliminate more. Now the grown-ups suddenly started to leave. Where they watching, they start to leave. They don't want to see. Like us, we want to see what's – what – what – what will happen.

Q: You're kids.

A: Yeah. Kids and some – some other – some people can, some people cannot. Now, I cannot imagine. People start to disappear, and – and they start to, about half an hour, the people hit, when they cannot walk any more, when they fall on that, and they pretend like they are dead, the other prisoners have to take them, and put in the pond, 300 feet away in the pond, where I – to revive.

Q: Is that a pond where you used to ice skate?

A: Yeah. They had to revive. Now, when the – the people who cannot, you – they are all dead, they want to drown themselves. They go in the middle of the pond and **[indecipherable]** the others ones have to pull them out, and again the same, the same.

Q: Round and round and –

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A: Round up. The one who is half dead, was thrown in that well for construction materials, the lime and the building material compounds, they were half – still left when they build the – the house, in that – in that – i-in the well, in the ditch. And then German came with a revolver, with a pistol and shot.

Q: And you saw all this?

A: I s – I saw. I saw that. Now –

Q: It – this must have been – you saw a murder. The first time in your life you saw somebody being murdered.

A: Yeah, murdered. Now, is still left let's say 10 or – or – or 12, or three, or – all in – already in the well, ditch, dead. Until they almost couldn't walk, they were so tortured. And suddenly announce that wi – these who are left, and who we will catch in the future, will be perform next Sunday.

Q: So they don't kill them?

A: They put everything there, everything is over. The town is in astonishment. Nobody talks, nobody talks. Everything is quiet, the joy is over. Go home. The kids, sure we ran to see what is in the ditch, what is in there.

Q: What do you see?

A: Vo – we see all full of – of – o-of dead people. There were six or – or – or – or more, I – I do – I don't remember, you know, one, another, and so.

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Q: Was it the first time you saw a corpse?

A: Yeah. And then, okay, then we leave that. They left one soldier to watch. One German, simple soldier, not of those, you know, Nazis.

Q: And you know those were – these were Germans who were doing this?

A: Germans, only Germans. Only Germans. Wa – tha-that's what I emphasize. If would be a Lithuanian, I would have said, yeah, there was that and that. Which I could say who was that instrumental then wa – is two –

Q: From those –

A: – ou-out of the four.

Q: From the four that you've mentioned to me before?

A: Yeah.

Q: We'll talk about that later.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Now – and that is over. It's already late, about six o'clock probably and everything is quiet, you know. I go home, my father doesn't want to talk. He didn't go. My mother didn't go, my sister didn't go. And you know, they say why do you go there, why do you stick your nose there? Okay, I – I stick. And now is over, next day, in the evening already, the city farmers, who lived li – outside little bit, with

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the horses and wagons, they are called next morning to take the dead ones and bring to the Jewish cemetery.

Q: So they're ordered to do so?

A: They were ordered. And we knew that – that – that in the morning early, we were – [break] – we were there already looking. What – what they – how they will do.

Q: What did they do?

A: That – you know, the – the – the farmers, they – the Germans offer them a fork, with a fork to take a body. The Lithuanians, they wi – say no, we don't want. We take two – two – two men, one body, and we put in a – in the wagon, there were three wagons, I think, and we bring that. They di – they refused that. Now – and they bring to the Jewish cemetery and they bury there. Okay, now what I heard. Then the farmers started to tell. The couple guys were still alive, and when they – when they took the body, he resisted, or he wanted – wanted to choke, tha-that was told, I was told. He wanted to choke. Now I am thinking that could be true, because in the evening, we saw some breathing, but we didn't say anything. I – I saw some – some like breathing. It was –

Q: The evening before.

A: Even before, in the evening.

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Q: Yeah.

A: It could be that was still alive, but I didn't see that [indecipherable] was choking.

Q: So if I can understand, the – the – the – the men who were in the pit, who were supposedly dead, were taken out the next morning, and the one who was still alive wanted to choke the one who was taking him.

A: Well – well, yeah, to choke.

Q: Okay.

A: Or reflex or whatever –

Q: Yeah.

A: I was just –

Q: Of course.

A: There was a rumor.

Q: Of course, of course.

A: But I did – did – deducted or detected –

Q: Yeah.

A: The – only – only I, that yes, we saw that one was – or two were breathing, were still alive, although was already put in that with all the lime and – and everything. That could have been. That could have been. But this is – the fact can tell only that

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the farmer who was – no – and – and that was – was quite – and the city was terrible – terrible atmosphere in the city, and – and just depressed, people depressed. People could not believe that the Germans could do that.

Q: And were they – did they talk about it?

A: They talked just – just very mute.

Q: Very quietly then.

A: Very quietly. They – they didn't want to talk. Nobody wants to talk about anything that time. The kids, we talked that we saw that and that and so on. Now, that time when they ended, they announced that next Sunday the same. Now, not to extend the story, next Sunday was the same. The same people down. There is another probably 30. They caught another bunch of hidden people. And the ones who were already dirty, with – with – w-with the – with the wounds, with everything, and I saw how the German, with – with – with sword, cut one, the ear was hanging here, I saw that. You imagine, how could I live not – not putting this to history? Was hanging. I don't know if he survived or not, but that time when they ran around. Now the people came and you could detect which one was torture already, which came with the nice suit, nice shirt and everything. And after a half an hour, they all looked the same. The same scenery, the same torture, the same beating. Now, if the same soldiers beat, I cannot tell. I don't recognize that – that –

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the Germans. All uniforms, and only was summertime, and you know how they were –

Q: What color were the uniforms?

A: Greenish. Infantry. Infantry **SS**. Not the black.

Q: Okay, and so they weren't – and they weren't regular **Wehrmacht**? As far as –

A: Not the regular wehr – regular **Wehrmacht**, only about five were guarding around, because, you know, they feared that could escape, could run or – or – or jump someplace. And second time. Now, second time, there were no people looking. Germans were angry, and I think they told through the translator that – why people don't want to see those vertrai – those –

Q: Say it in German.

A: Yeah.

Q: Those what?

A: Those **[indecipherable]** that – that's – no – criminals –

Q: **[indecipherable]** okay.

A: – or criminals or whatever, who – you know, who – who e – ate you before, who torture you there. And so kids came, some other came, we would watch again.

Q: You were kids.

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A: I – yeah. We ah, kids or – or – or teenagers, or – and the same, little bit shorter –

[phone ringing]

Q: Excuse me for a minute. I'm so sorry. I should have turned it off, but I will –

Q2: Do you want me to pause?

Q: Yes, please.

Q2: Okay, pausing. **[break]**

Q: I'm sorry for the interruption. Can you tell me the second time you saw these events, you say the Germans were angry that no –

A: There were no spectators.

Q: That's right.

A: Or lack of spectators what they expected.

Q: Okay.

A: They expected – that is my assumption – they expected there would be, you know, enjoyment to everyone. Enjoyment? You see what enjoyment, you know.

You torture animals, you don't have enjoyment. Anyway, and the same procedure.

Reviving was dragged into the pond and back, revived and beaten, beaten, beaten until they couldn't walk or so. And I remember that time, I don't know if I was until the end or not, they were again put in the prison, and supposed to be third Sunday.

You imagine, every Sunday was spoiled for all the **Kretinga** that – that walk, the

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people's enjoyment, with that kind of things. And I didn't see that – the third one, I don't remember. And if I would remember, I would repeat the same. Is irrelevant now, that – that – that – but some told me that even was just a few people, the fourth Sunday. I – I don't know. I mention in my writing that – that somebody claims, but I – I don't – I don't want. No – and – and that was over, and all what I have seen. But I –

Q: And then – and then you as – do you assume that then if they weren't killed during this kind of torture, then they – tho-tho-those who survived were simply shot later?

A: Shot later. No – no one survived. No one. If they didn't die there at the place, the torture place, they died in the prison. They – they were not fed, they were not – not – no – not care, nothing. [indecipherable] yeah.

Q: And did you n – did any of the people look familiar? Would they – did you know to – nothing.

A: Not one man, not – not one. Probably some – some recognized, but I don't.

Q: Yeah.

A: I – I didn't recognize any one.

Q: The second time when you were there, you say it was only kids, and maybe some teenagers.

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A: There were some people too, there were some people, but –

Q: Grown-ups.

A: – not that masses, not like the first time –

Q: Yeah.

A: – that everybody do – what – what – what will be there. Because that – that –

Q: Was this –

A: – sa – sane people cannot stand it.

Q: Well, here's another question. You say that – you say that – that they ruined the Sunday, you know, the – the Sunday walk. But was that the reason why people didn't talk, or – or was it that they were horrified?

A: Horrified. I – I would assume. The – now I'm just speculating, I'm guessing.

Q: Yeah.

A: They were – they were stunned that why they should do that? The first **[indecipherable]** they were put in the – in the – in the ditches and shot, and that's it. You know, that – that's something else, but the torture. And you know, like si – little bit – little bit e-e-ex-ex-exploring that, the **NKVD**, or the – the Russians tortured, but Germans don't torture. They exterminate, but they don't torture. But why they – why they wanted this one – and I don't believe that such a – such a program was anywhere else. I have not heard, and like **Eidintas** did not write?

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Q: He's an historian, right?

A: Yeah. And nobody else has published like that.

Q: Have you ever heard –

A: Why someone who was, that time of – in the 20's, in 25 or so, they knew that, **Kretinga** knew what was happening. I'm not the only one who witnessed that. Why nobody else comes? Why nobody el – calls **Pranas**, your article is interesting, I – I have seen. No. No one. It seems that I'm li – like a – like a liar.

Q: You feel that?

A: You know, I was disappointed. I was disappointed with you a little bit, you know, that you don't call. Because I said why? Because no Lithuanian was participating. This atrocity, done in **Lithuania**, in my hometown, and done by Germans.

Q: Yeah.

A: Ca – to show Lithuanians. You know Lithuanian, there were Lithuanian tortured my Germans, too, oh, concentration camp and everything. Oh yeah, Lithuanians, especially in **Memelland**, in – in – in – who had something to do with the – the process. That was in 1936 –

Q: Oh, you mean the trial against the Nazis.

A: The trial a-a-against **Neumann** and **Sass**, yeah.

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Q: What do you know about that?

A: I know from history only.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah. But from – they – somebody could have responded to me more. Couple guys call me and say, ah **Pranas**, you know, oh, everyplace happened that. So I know, tell me. And I – I – I showed the big book. And the big book, nothing. And I – I think you s – you told that there is something about **Kretinga** in the museum archives, something similar.

Q: Well, I heard – I saw some information. There's not much. There's not much.

A: No, but not s – not such a thing which I'm telling now.

Q: No, not that

A: No.

Q: Not that, not that. Now –

A: And I – I – I – I want to tell that. I want to tell that – that, you know, somehow is a part of that tragedy which we have not solved yet between us, between Jews and Lithuanians. And I always see still the articles, or the accusations and this and that. No comment. I want to give what I have seen. You judge.

Q: I want to find out from you, after these events – after these events, ho-how is the atmosphere in the town?

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A: Just terrible. Terrible.

Q: In what way?

A: Just terrible. You imagine that **Kretinga** should be the now atop of the world in such atrocities. Well, there's not. There's a **Kaunas** fort, Fort Five, or whatever.

Q: The Ninth Fort.

A: Yeah. Was there more? Was there more? No, they were shot, were shot. But not such a thing. And I could give you the – the – the place, the – where the people were, where the torturing were, how it was, how the pond is. I could draw you a – a map.

Q: Tell me, when – the second time you went, and you came home, did your parents still not want to talk about it? Did you tell your parents what you saw?

A: They didn't ask me, they didn't talk. Becau – I – we were very free **Lithuania**. We – the parents used to tell, be for lunch, but where you go in summertime, what you do – we didn't work, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: School, we didn't ne-need to work. Soviet time, we had to work in a – in a – the **Skavaches(ph)** – the **Skavaches(ph)** garden. But by Germans we didn't have to work.

Q: So you could run around and play?

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A: We – we play, yeah. Teenager already, 13 - 14.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you talk amongst your friends?

A: Not much. Not much. It was – it was assumed that you saw, I saw, there is nothing m – no-nothing more to talk. Nothing more to talk. A tragedy. I don't know how – how to describe the tragedy. In this age, when – oh, when I tell you, I – I could say that tragedy the top of the world, but that time? Event of the day. Event of the day. Cruel, yes. Like I say, if somebody h-hits me or – or – or pokes me, it hurts me. I know that people hurt. The people hurt, but there was such a notion that guilty, guilty. Who is guilty? No one is guilty, guilty ta – the one who is doing that.

Q: What I'm trying to get a sense of, is how did it work inside of you when you see this? Were you numb, were you sh – were you terrorized, were you stunned, were you –

A: I was terrorized, I was – at that time?

Q: At that time.

A: At that time I was neither terrorized nor stunned. Astonished little bit that I – I witnessed such a thing, and it was inside me which I carried when I – I said I carried so many years. So many years, I had no one to talk, no one would actually –

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would listen that. They would say, like I repeating, they would say, yeah, everyplace was. There was a this – this and – and – and that. But I never ex – I never heard anyplace else, how much I read and everything. Was all shooting, extermination, concentration camp. Some torturing most likely in – in a – in – you know, in prison, but not that open. Three or four Sundays, to show the little town. Yeah.

Q: Was there a time when you wanted to talk and there was nobody to listen?

A: Probably it was. I knew one thing, that I will not forget, and I will write. And I will write. Now I come to that. And I ca – and I see my age is going – you know, we're getting older, days are passing, and this event I will take to – to my grave? No. I told myself no. And then happened that I saw there a Captain **Sporelli**(ph) in the – in the film, and I start in the beginning for that, I say here is th – my – my clue or my incentive to write what happened in my country. And I start and I finish. And I say why this had to happen to us?

Q: You first wrote about this publicly in 2010?

A: 2010, November six.

Q: And it was published where?

A: In **Chicago**, in **Drogas**(ph) daily newspaper.

Q: And it's a Lithuanian language newspaper?

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A: Lithuanian language newspaper. I have given – I had given my script – **[break]**
– for former editor, two years ago.

Q: Two years before that?

A: Before that. And I called **stairdinas**(ph) massacre.

Q: Yes.

A: Slaughter. And the editor did not had time to read that or to give me a comments.
And I was little bit unhappy when – when – when, and she never returned that to
me. The one I wrote, I did not correct much. I only gave to my sister. My sister said,
I was three or four years younger, I don't remember much. She only remembered
that she saw some torturing – Soviets torture Lithuanians. She was that, as a
schoolgirl, put that – to look at that. She remembered that. Otherwise she doesn't
remember. Parent did not – they – parents did not talk. Should be kids on their own
who – who would kind of search, think about, or whatever. And then that – then we
only heard later, you know, what happened there, what happened there that 1941,
what happened in **Kaunas**.

Q: When you're talking – now let's go back to **Kretinga** and – **[technical interruption]**

A: Okay, no we – we almost –

Q: No, we're not done.

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A: No?

Q: We're not done. No, no, no, because I want to talk about **Kretinga** afterwards.

A: Okay.

Q: **[inaudible]** So, you said that after this, people were quiet, they didn't talk, they were stunned in the town. That you haven't heard of anything else that happened in quite such a similar fashion elsewhere. What – did any – did life normalize at any point, or do you think **Kretinga** was changed forever?

A: I think it was – was fairly normalized. Normali – the front was far away. There was already **Kaunas** taken, was **Vilnius** taken, the Germans were in – in **Russia**.

German administration, the military administration was changed to – to civil

German administration, although the lower echelons were Lithuanians, but was

German. German regime. And you have to **[indecipherable]**, you have to

[indecipherable] because you don't know. Some people were taken, deported.

Q: To **Germany**.

A: To **Germany**. Some girls who were a little bit loose, they were pointed out and the Germans took them to **Germany**. There were no mass deportations to **Germany** for work. Lithuanians were not in that category as Poles and Ukraini-Ukrainians and some other ones. Although there were Lithuanians who worked in a – in a – during the – the war in German factories.

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Q: Did you – after this – after these events, these horrifying things that you saw, did you hear of more murders while you were in **Kretinga**? Those women and children, for example?

A: Oh, oh, the children, I didn't finish that?

Q: Yeah.

A: They were star – I don't know when they started, and I don't know when they finished, but I know they finished, definitely. They didn't let them go. There was no in – no – no – no intention. And some people who lived there, not far away, although it was far away to [indecipherable] is that – that's like a – like a free land. The Jewish cemetery was very isolated by woods, by trees, and so that nobody heard, nobody – nobody knew. And I think there were some incidents. You know, we still had German occupation for years.

Q: But that's what I want to find out about.

A: Yeah. But that's non-event. It was war. German nationalized what they could. They took cattle, they took pigs, they took horses, they took everything what they have with the – and 1941 was fine, 1942 the front started and east was going bad, that **Lithuania** was short of food, short of everything. Speculation was high –

Q: You saw that in **Kretinga**, you –

A: Oh yeah. Every speculation. And –

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Q: Black market.

A: – black market moonshine was made and sold, and all other things. All other things, and robberies and – and unruly things.

Q: And what about – but the life – in other words, there were no other violent events that you can –

A: The viol – now, there were such a – there were many Soviet prisoners, soldiers, masses, in **Kretinga**.

Q: You saw.

A: They had no place to put them. The Ger-Germans were guarding. They were so hungry that they should grab something, or you know, their cabbage or something, and I have not seen. But I – they used to shot on spot. If you leave that, to grab that piece of whatever, carrot or whatever, they shoot.

Q: They shoot –

A: They want – yeah, they – they shoot the prisoner. They wanted to get rid. What can they do with the masses? There were thousands and thousands Soviet prisoners. What they did t-to them, all kind of rumors. Some were – let it go and work by **Lithuania** in the farms. Many, many. Later they returned to **Russia**. They were lucky ones, so.

Q: What did your life – how did your life continue? What did you do?

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A: High school. School.

Q: How was your school changed? Did you –

A: Not much.

Q: [inaudible]

A: Not much, there was only reformation – reform in the school system. I started then from grammar school in 1940s, I started immediately on a second cla – high school, or secondary school. And then I – I used to speculate, I – I used to go to – to – through the border and bring to **Klaipeda**. You know, there was a border. You couldn't cross that, **Klaipeda** and **Lithuania**, was exactly the same. It was a guards and everything. We used to go to the – secretly through that – to that with the – with the [indecipherable] with the si – with the pork, with ducks, bacon, goose, geese and bring back salt, sugar, thread, something like that. And one year, the first year when I speculated like that, all winter, on my school re-record, I had six two.

Q: And two was a bad grade?

A: Bad, was bad grade. Five was good, four was – was er – was very good, good, three was just okay –

Q: Okay.

A: – sufficient and two was bad, yeah. I still have the booklet. I pride myself. Then I went –

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Q: You were a businessman already.

A: Yeah, yeah. And then, I started working in movies.

Q: And we were going to talk about those movies.

A: I started to work in the movies with one fellow, who was a mechanic, who was an expert in radios and everything. I wanted. And – and that Saint **Anthony** House, there were the theater, movie, the – a lone **kino** theater in **Kretinga**.

Q: The only **kino** theater?

A: The only one. Okay.

Q: So it was a prison as well as a the – a –

A: Yeah, all – but the prisoners were down. I saw that – cells, too. And I started to work. And at one time – you know, there were electricity, used to go all kinds of wires there, there. And one wire, he put one wire – the mechanic put one wire, and kid – shi – one child came, pulled and got electrocuted. He was put in the prison, and I was, 15 years, I was running all the movies. And the movies which our school did not permit to pupils, to students, and I used to. And I used to call my friends and show them. **X** rated movies.

Q: Were there **X** rated movies?

A: What, just little bit that, you know, the – the German – German movies. Yeah.
So.

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Q: Bet you must have been a popular guy.

A: I don't know if I was, but I was – I – I have done little things. Not – not – except you know, some windows and some – beating up some kids. Nothing else. No big damages.

Q: No? [indecipherable] very naughty?

A: No, I sh – I – I was kind of moderated – moderating. I knew that I will get at home. My father, he had the big – big belt – big belt, and I used to get.

Q: When the war was winding down, you would have been about 17 years old, right?

A: 16, yeah, 16 - 17. Then wa – I was in the – in the sixth – in the fifth – sixth grade, I – in a class, you know, two years before ending, before my **abitura**(ph) And then we – we – I was – I was active. I was active in political groups. We fought **Soviet Union** and we fought the Germans in school.

Q: Well, how did you do that?

A: Songs. Would balsee – [break] – in my book, you – you will see.

Q: I see. I see.

A: There are songs written which was – there were secret groups in a school, and the songs were against one occupier and another occupier. No occupier is good Lithuanian, only free **Lithuania** is for us. That was our – and I was – I was young,

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but I always associated with older ones. And I provided some – some – some –
some – a movie – a movie equipment that we could watch some movies there, and
so on. And then k-kim –

Q: Well, tell me, what –

A: Can –

Q: Okay, I'm sorry for interrupting.

A: Yeah.

Q: But I wanted to go back. You had mentioned earlier to me that you knew of four
Lithuanians who had collaborated with the Germans in the way of –

A: Yeah.

Q: Tell me a little bit about that.

A: Four – he is dead, his son is dead, everything is dead. He was a tailor.

Q: What – one person was a tailor?

A: One per-person.

Q: Okay.

A: I have not seen him, but he was designated one of those. I can only tell what –
what – and I think I should have known because the son was with me, which was in
the group of four. He was a **Parviches**(ph).

Q: He was there with you in **Latvia**, you mean?

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A: Di – in **Latvia** and in – in pioneer camp.

Q: In **Palanga**.

A: Yeah. And his father was a top tailor. Uniforms for Lithuanian – Lithuanians officers, you know how dressed they were, oh – for Soviet officers –

Q: He did the same.

A: Yeah, and when the Germans came, he did Germans.

Q: Okay, so he was a tailor for all the armies.

A: Yeah. But apparently he participated, and he spoke perfect German, and when the Germans came, he became active. Revenge. For what kind of revenge, I don't know. Revenge.

Q: And you heard this from other people?

A: I heard for people, and I heard from yor – **Yornukas**(ph), from that little **John** –

Q: Who's he?

A: – that – the son.

Q: Oh, the son.

A: That he used to indicate my – my – my father is, you know, very angry on the Jews, on – on the communists. What did they do to him, I don't know. They won.

Another one, apparently was just a town vagrant, was a **valkata**.

Q: He wa – okay.

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A: A beggar.

Q: A bum.

A: A bum. A bum, we could say a bum. He used to sell and make potato peel knives. You know, when –

Q: Yeah, potato peelers.

A: Yeah, and he was called **Skutakalis**(ph). He was as a bum, I think, that I heard that he apparently participated in some. What he did, who did that, where they did, I have no idea. **Prishmanchyay**, who did that, who actually put that people or – I have no idea.

Q: So you don't whether in – in **Prishmanchyay** it was Lithuanians or Germans.

A: Oh, German soldier guarded.

Q: Okay.

A: Germans did not trust Lithuanians. Don't forget, German relationship and Lithuanian relationship was very bad. There was no love for Germans by Lithuanians because of **Klaipeda**, of the **Memel** take away. Latvians, Estonians. Latvian, Estonian girls, the first days they could frat-**fraternizie** with the German soldiers.

Q: They could fraternize with the –

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A: Fraternize. You know that Lithuanians were forbidden for a long time, probably one year? German was not allowed to go on a date with ger – with Lithuanian girl. Because of that, Germans hated us, and we hated Germans, because of that. Tha- That is natural. Was enemy.

Q: What about the third person?

A: Oh, the third person, I don't know. And the fourth person I don't know.

Q: These are just names you heard?

A: I could only guess. I could only guess. If he was not ordered to do something with a woman, he lived there in a – in that vicinity, he had a farm. And I know that he was as a guard at one time, with a white armband. And was indication that he could have been. Oh th-the fourth, I have no idea.

Q: But th – what you know –

A: But I – I – I should, but I – I don't know, and I – not even in my – my imagination I could point who he was, if he was a little bit more sophisticated, you know, educated, for some kind of revenge, some kind of – what had been done to him or his family, but I don't know. And peculiar, he was a **[indecipherable]**. In **Germany**, when I was in **Germany**, you know, and was studying there and – after the war, and we go from one camp to another camp in **Germany**.

Q: You're talking about a **DP** camp.

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A: **DP** camp. And I go in one camp, I was chauffeured by one priest. We come there, the lady is taking care of the priest. You know, cleaning there and [indecipherable]. And I see the mother of **Tyonis(ph)** and husband – wife of that **Yosa(ph) Parviches(ph)**. You know, I know, but I don't say anything. She invited to visit them. She probably thought I was young and I don't know. When I came there and met that guy, he was already old. I met that guy, he didn't want to see me, he didn't want to talk to me. He sensed that I know his past. And I don't know what happened to him, by all them [indecipherable]. I don't know what happened, he died most likely. His son was in German – what was that – that work forces at – with trucks were going someplace. Was sent to **Paris**, the German time. And after the war was in Foreign Legion, you know what the Foreign Legion, that in – in –

Q: French Foreign Legion?

A: French Foreign Legion. And then vacationing in **Paris** and a auto accident, died. I just – I – I don't even know who told me, or the mother told me, I don't know. So that's that. Or the **Skutakalis(ph)** were the – the one who – I don't know what happened to him. I know that he was a long time in kalna – in – in **Kretinga**. I know that he would fight with Polish prisoners. There were some young Polish deported from **Warsaw** and put in some barracks in **Kretinga**. And the Germans let them go, you know, in the city. They were all intelligent, all students. Lithuanian

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girls were very happy, all the gymnasts', were really fine guys. And they used to fight with these hooligans, Lithuanians, with the stones.

Q: This is all during the war?

A: And use a street – du-during the war. And the Germans would not do anything. Neither police, our police. Used – the fights used to go that, you know, we – we – we kids, we – we were afraid. That was tough. So.

Q: Did you stay in **Kretinga** for the rest of the war, until the time you left?

A: Until the time I left, yeah.

Q: Okay, so did you go to **Kaunas** at all, during that time, to visit?

A: Yes, I go to **Kaunas**. I go to **Kaunas** twice. One time I go a little bit earlier, with that, with – with – with some friends who already studied in **Kaunas**, you know, some were older, studied in **Kaunas**. And the last time I was in **Kaunas**, when **Vilnius** was occupied second time by the **Soviet Union**, when we had to run just out of **Kaunas**.

Q: Okay.

A: I was there then.

Q: Did you ever go to **Vilnius**?

A: No.

Q: Okay. Di –

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A: Only **Vilnius** now in –

Q: Okay. Did you, during the rest of the war, hear anything about the massacres of Jews in other places in **Lithuania**, not just in **Kretinga**?

A: When I was in **Lithuania**, I heard.

Q: I mean, when you lived there.

A: When I lived there. Yeah, I heard about that, about not massacre, but you know that I – as I – I-I – I should not ask, you know, I heard that not all Jews were exterminated immediately. Some places in the east, they were left year or two, until 1942, sub – some groups that were working something or doing something. I heard that, but I don't know –

Q: While you were there. When you were still there.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: So, I just heard.

Q: Okay. So, I'm trying to get a sense of how much one would know at that time.

Not much, it sounds like.

A: What my – my understanding is that there were not many left. There were not many left – left, who hid themselves and somehow survived, because that started the partisan times. There were Soviet partisans and there were Lithuanian partisans.

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Lithuanian partisans fought the Soviet partisans and German partisans. And so – and they were tel – told that, you know – so that was the – the tragic time again for Lithuanians, for young people.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know that the Germans, that the [indecipherable] army – the [indecipherable] army, all the Germans – all the Lithuanians were almost exterminated by Germans, or – or taken to **Germany** to concentration camp. Young guys.

Q: Yeah.

A: They done nothing. They refused to join the **SS**. They refused to join. And [indecipherable] said no. And then all the elite of the – the army, the [indecipherable] they were imprisoned, yeah.

Q: Tell me, how did it come to be that you decided to leave **Lithuania**?

A: We knew that our age, when the **Soviet Union** comes, we will be the first in the army. [break]

Q: So you were a young man at the age.

A: We knew – we knew that that age we had to run someplace, and I had the mother – sister was in **Klaipeda**.

Q: And so that –

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A: Ran to German side that.

Q: Okay.

A: I had the chance to live there.

Q: And you took it.

A: Yeah.

Q: And your father was still alive?

A: My father and my three sisters were at home, lived at home.

Q: And your mother, it –

A: And my mother died that year, 1941 spring.

Q: She died in 1941?

A: 1941 spring. I was on the pond ski – skating.

Q: So she died before the war started?

A: No, 1941. The Germans were already there. Oh, 1942.

Q: 1942.

A: '42. The Germans were. The Germans were.

Q: Okay. What did she die of?

A: How – yellow – yellow –

Q: Yellow fever?

A: **Gelbsucht** i-is in – in German, yellow f –

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Q: Yellow fever?

A: – y-yellow fever. All the – probably she had the cancer. The whole body went yellow. And the – there were no medicine. We tried to get the German doctor, German doctor didn't come, there were no doctors. And whatever she took. But she was already – one year before she always complained that she has something, something, something. And she probably sensed that she – you know how Lithuanian mother is that said, little **kinder** – little children, I probably will be leaving you. I probably will be leaving you. And one day suddenly, she was yellow – yellow, she worked and everything and suddenly died, and then when she died, my father was little bit on edge. He didn't know how to cook, he didn't know how to do anything, laundry or anything. My elder sister was a dame. She never peeled a potato, she never did anything. Mother spoiled her. I was the one who knew little how to cook, because my – my mother was my friend. Our father was the girls' friends. So that I took over and Father was very angry many times. I – I had the –

Q: You didn't cook as well, did you?

A: I – yeah, and I – I felt that I – I have to disappear. And that was for me a good – good reason. I said, I am going to – to mine **tante**, or aunt, and I will stay there. And then after that when they – I mean, when they run someplace, I'll run with them. And they ran too, we ran with them. And we separated and – and I don't

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know. The bombardments in **Germany** was – and you have to hide. I had a da – advantage. Guess what?

Q: What's that?

A: Small.

Q: You were a little guy?

A: S – yeah. Small, young looking. I looked like – I was 17, I looked like 15, like 14. And I hid myself like this. They didn't take. Now I could – I – now I tell you, but I – I just speculated, you know?

Q: Yeah.

A: I used to go with a – on a bus from **Kretinga** to **Palanga**. And you know, for kids was free. But I was playing yi – small, and I didn't need to – to – to pay for that. And I used to go free for [indecipherable]. So that, hey, combination, you know, speculation, all kind of things.

Q: I want to ask something, going back to the main topic of our – of our discussion. And that is, did what you see with that torture and I'd say defilement and cruelty to those Jewish men, did that change you? Did you feel like you – somehow or other it changed some part of you?

A: It changed.

Q: In what way?

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A: It changed when I grew up. When I grew up, it changed. It changed that the – to subject one what I don't want, to pain some other one. If you break, if you do, if you beat. And, you know, when I was young, I was little bit, you know, edgy and so, you know, **[indecipherable]** and – and hitting something. After that, I had never had a fight in my life.

Q: So after you saw such things.

A: Ne – te – but I – I kind of – I kind of grew up very early. But I was in a – in a **Germany**, or – or something, or – or some disagreement with some friend or something, I never wanted to get in a fight. Not that I was afraid that I will not win. You know, you just protect yourself. But no, but just – just a – now, when I see grown people fighting, or the lithu – you know, Lithuanian fights, especially **[indecipherable]** you know, when – when they – they get drunk and they fight. And I never smoked in my life and I don't drink. I drink socially, but I – my father was drinking and I swore to myself, I will not subject my family what he subjected us. And there is a story, laughing story to tell.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: But – but so, what you saw did change you.

A: Change, change.

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Q: Yeah.

A: And when I see now – when I – you know, I watch the movies and everything, and I see those tortures. And especially now recently was history channel about the – the – the Third Reich and the fall. And they showed pictures, and after that they showed the Germans, how they have to go to **Dachau** and take care of the bodies, and you see – and I think it was good. Now, the Germans claim – probably this is not, but the Germans claim that we didn't know. Yeah, you didn't know, but feel the guilt. Feel. Because yeah, this was your people You elect na – not elected, but you supported **Adolf**. You supported **Adolf**. He was good, so long at wi – everything was okay. When is bad, then is bad. But not all Germans too.

Q: No.

A: Germans fought quite a bit against that.

Q: There were some.

A: But about Germans in – in **Klaipeda**, I have nothing good.

Q: The other thing I wanted to ask you about is that it took a long time, if we talk about 2010, when you wrote this article and you had it published – maybe you passed it in 2008, but it sat in you for a long time, until you were ready to speak.

A: It's – it sat, yeah.

Q: Why did it take so long, do you think?

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A: I think I mentioned a little bit that I was not sure if I should reveal this. I was – I knew that one day, after me, or before me or whatever, I have to tell. But there was my personal neglect. I always set priorities. You know, to sit such a article, you have to sit, you have to concentrate, you have to have time. I was working. I was – I had this tough – tough job. I had the – I was in charge of several office of **Citibank** international banking, **Cleveland, Ohio, Minneapolis, Saint Louis** and **Chicago**, the hub for **Citibank** international business. So – and I had the people, it – so – and I had many, many Jewish friends in **Citibank**. Jewish hired me, and my bosses were, my co-workers were. So that – that I – I – I couldn't tell anyone. I couldn't tell anyone.

Q: So you didn't share this with anyone?

A: No, no, this – this I didn't share.

Q: Did you share it with your wife, or your kids?

A: My wife?

Q: Yeah.

A: I shared with my wife, no not – not the kids. The kids didn't want to – to – to listen. They didn't want to. They don't want to. And the kids – Lithuanians were poor – poor Lithuanian, I wrote to **Lithuania** – like the book now, which I

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published, sorry. I published in Lithuanian, they cannot a – they – they cannot enjoy the reading. They can understand, but they cannot enjoy the reading.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I'm sorry that I was lazy, I could not, at least part translate too.

Q: Now, I want to ask you. You mentioned in your book that you wrote about everything, but you didn't write about this part in your book, about what happened to the Jews.

A: No, I didn't write, I didn't.

Q: And why would that be? Why would you leave it out?

A: Well, because that – but that time, what I wrote in that book, I wrote my high school, how I left **Lithuania** and how I started high school in **Germany**.

Q: Oh, so you li – you don't talk about before?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: No. The – in **Germany**. What we did in **Germany**, that you – you will see that it – that's what we – how we prayed, how we learn, what we learned, how was that. You will see that in the book is just that part, and then university, **Baltic** University and the end.

Q: Okay.

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A: And nothing else, no **America**.

Q: I see, I see.

A: No **America**.

Q: I see, I see.

A: They wanted that I – I write again and now they are asking me, and I must admit, I – I am newly married, and I – I don't have time. I don't have the patience, I don't have time. And that book was published when my first wife was already with **Alzheimer's**.

Q: Oh dear.

A: And I was in such a hurry, I ask my friends, group, we had the group, that we all contribute. If we publish the book, each one part. And I waited three or four years; nobody responded like to this article. Nobody wants to talk.

Q: Why? Why do you think that's the case?

A: Yeah. Nobody – nobody calls me, nobody there. There probably are some Lithuanians someplace, but no.

Q: Nobody was interested in what you had revealed there?

A: No, no. And when I ask, di – have you read? No. I say, was in two pages, in Saturday publication.

Q: The most read publication of that newspaper.

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A: Yeah. One lady wrote me, say oh, I read your article – email – I read your article. My mother told me something that happened someplace else, and I would like to – what my mother told, I would like to write, or whatever. And that's it, yeah. And that's little bit, kind of angered me that was not enough response for th –
[break] – and I hope, therefore that this will be the contribution to your museum, and to the relationship between the Jews, the folks, and the Lithuanian folks.

Q: Thank you. Thank you very much. If there's anything else you'd like to add, that I haven't talked to you about –

A: Nothing. I – I wanted, because there is no lie, nothing is a lie. So if – if there is some doubt, there is not intentionally, but probably. Because I went to **Lithuania** special, on a trip. I went there, I measured, I looked. I walked around the pond, and this one, that I don't make mistake. And in that article is much more than I told you today. An explicit.

Q: Yeah.

A: What was on one side, what was on other side, how that was. Is – is much better expressed that I expressed in my report now.

Q: But tell me, did people in **Kretinga** read this article?

A: I gave to my relatives, the day we delivered to **Kretinga** newspapers. I don't know. You know that they hesitate? They don't want to know that such things

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happened. Because there is always some needle come out from someplace. There are some people who probably feel, and to publish this one, there would be sensation. And when I went to **Lithuania**, when I presented in **Kretinga**, in a church meeting, I presented my book, because I am from **Kretinga**, there were about hundred people. I give presentation. I didn't had the article yet. I didn't had the article. And you know, my book was presented in **Mažvydas** library, and was said to be [indecipherable] ga – was that – in charge. He said, one of the best books about **DPs**, which doesn't talk much individually about the person, but about general, about everyone. So.

Q: Congratulations.

A: And, you know, I sa – I'm not a writer, and such a – and then [indecipherable] in **Kaunas**.

Q: I see.

A: In three places, yeah. And is a – the books are in the national library in **Myronis(ph)**.

Q: Okay.

A: And in – in **Kretinga** and [indecipherable] so.

Q: Again, thank you very much, I appreciate it.

A: Thank you for listening.

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Q: I appreciate this.

A: I enjoyed. I apologize for the language –

Q: No.

A: – which I forgot. And now I will understand how people forget languages. I couldn't believe that someone lived in **Germany** a long time doesn't know German. I say, how could you forget? Yes, we forget our own language.

Q: It can happen.

A: Yeah.

Q: Well, we understood and we heard it and we're grateful. And this concludes –

A: That was typical **DP** English.

Q: This –

A: I'm ashamed. Don't show anyone –

Q: No, no, no, no, no.

A: – because –

Q: This concludes our **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum – Museum** interview with Mr. **Pranas Jurkus**, on April 12, 2012 – April twenty – 30th, 2012. Thank you.

Conclusion of Interview