

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Maria Kordalewski
May 30, 2013
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PREFACE

The following interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

MARIA KORDALEWSKI

May 30, 2013

[Maria Kkordalewski's daughter Lydia participates in the phone interview. She may repeat Gail Schwartz's questions in English or in a foreign language. The transcript includes Lydia's remarks only when she clarifies or comments on what her mother says. When she speaks, she is identified in the transcript as Lydia.]

Gail Schwartz: This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Maria **Kordalewski**, conducted by Gail Schwartz on May 30, 2013 at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. It is being conducted over the telephone. The interviewee is in Florida and her daughter, Lydia Kordalewski is taking part. What is your full name?

Lydia: Whose full name?

Q: Your mother's full name.

Lydia: Maria Kordalewski.

Q: And what is your maiden name?

Lydia: Her maiden name is **Bakalenko**.

Q: And can she answer the –

Lydia: Sure. Then we're ready.

Q: Yes.

Lydia: What is your full name?

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Maria Kordalewski: My name is Maria Bakalenko, maiden name. Now Kordalewski.

Q: And when were you born?

A: April 13, 1924.

Q: Where were you born?

A: In **Regevil** [ph] Poland.

Q: Let's talk about your family. Tell me your parents' names.

A: My mother is Elizaveta Bakalenko. My maiden name or her name after married.

Q: Well if you know her maiden name, but her married name.

A: Maiden name is Elizaveta **Zatsmit** Bakalenko.

Q: And your father's name?

A: My father's name, Nicholas Bakalenko.

Q: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

A: Brother is Nicolas Bakalenko.

Lydia: Not Nicholas. Nicolai.

A: Nicolai.

Q: Was he older or younger than you?

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A: He is the oldest in the family. He was born in 1919.

Q: Did you have any other brothers and sisters?

A: Sister, Nadia **Kovalski**.

Q: What kind of work did your father do?

A: We had a mill vegetable. We make a vegetable oil and some food products like buckwheat and other. You know vegetable oil and buckwheat.

Lydia: Millet.

Q: That's all right, and millet, that's all right. Let's talk about the town that you lived in. Can you describe it to me? Was it a big town or a small town?

A: Oh the Regevil was about I don't know exactly, 15,000 population. Was a nice city, our town, used to call because it's only 15,000. They are a lot of us Jewish people live in this city because they mostly had stores, all stores, all kind stores and mills. They made about five mills. They made flour for bread.

Mills, factories.

Q: Did you live near any Jewish families?

A: Oh yes, yes. On our land, next to us there were living Jewish. They bought land from us and built their homes. So one first house was Ginsburg, Abraham Ginsburg. Ginsburg or Ginsberg and he had about three sons and three daughters.

Q: You were close to them? Did you play with them? Did you ---

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A: Yes, yes. I used to play with them because that's my neighbors. We used to play together, yes.

Q: How much land did your father have?

A: Oh you know I can't figure out because I was younger then. I wasn't interested, but this was a lot of land in my father's possession. But I could tell you, I don't know acre or how, I don't know.

Q: But you could see their house from your house?

A: Yeah, of course, that's next to our house. The name, you want the name of this family. The three girls, there was **Basha**, but that's what they call her. **Yente** and **Siniya**.

Q: This is the Ginsburg family?

A: Yes. And then three boys. It was **Itzak**, **Shurem**, and **Yankel**. Shurem and Yankel they were the youngest ones, about ten and 11.

Q: What kind of games did you play with them?

A: Oh you know, you put a piece of wood on and then you hit this wood. I don't know what it's called. In Polish it's **spak**, spak.

Q: Did you eat at each other's houses? Did you ever have meals at their house?

A: No, no we – they you know have a different food, kosher food. No. We live very close because the oldest brother, he had a little _____, all kind of a little bit this a little bit sugar, a little bit salt and really very nice of them.

Q: Tell me about your school. Did you go to a public school?

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A: Oh yeah, seven public, seven class public school. It was, the school was across my house.

Q: Did the –

A: We all go to the same school.

Q: The Ginsburg children went to school with you.

A: Yes, yes, yes they all went. We all know each other from school. Not only it is my neighbor but the other Jewish friends I had.

Q: That's what I was going to ask. Did you have other Jewish friends?

A: Yes, yes but I do not remember. Oh yes, I remember a good friend was **Ita Kagan**. Ita Kagan. It was the same grade and we used to make homework together.

Q: The teachers, were any of the teachers at the school Jewish?

A: No, there only was for religious but I do not remember his name. One is for Jewish religion was Jewish and others were mostly Polish. I don't remember all their names.

Q: Did the Jewish children ever come to church with you?

A: No, no.

Q: Was there any evidence of anti-Semitism in your town that you knew of when you were young?

A: No, we were all together. But you know when the Germans occupy our country our city, they used to go and announce on a speaker, whoever helped Jewish people escape, they'd be

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killed together with Jews. That was a everyday on a loud, loud speaker. And you want to know about one case.

Q: Yes, I do but just a moment, well get to that. Let's do it before the Germans came.

A: Oh before Germans. Before Germans came there were Russians coming in.

Q: Before that?

Lydia: Did everybody get along without prejudice.

A: No, no we are all along.

Q: So it was a good childhood for you and for the Jewish children until the Russians came?

A: Yeah, doesn't matter. No. We were, we were treated the same in school. There was not either Jewish or Polish or what. No, we were same treated in school.

Q: Were you very athletic? Did you do any kind of sports?

A: Yes, running and volleyball play.

Q: And you did this with the other Jewish children?

A: Yeah with everybody. Everybody. I didn't know if it was Jewish or Polish or Ukrainian. We are playing. Whoever like sports we did it.

Q: But the Jewish children were allowed to – were there sports clubs?

A: No, no, no. That's a school. We belonged in school.

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Q: Let's now talk about the first change, when the Russians came.

A: Yes, first the Russians came.

Q: And what the changes then.

A: It was from eating. It was nothing. Then the Russians came, that's a communist country. They – we didn't have a no stores, no food, everybody has to go on their own way to how to get the food. It was very, very bad. Very bad. And they were only two years.

And they start sending people to Siberia. First they did send those mill owners, mill which made flour for the bread. Big, big mills. They sent them and they sent Polish veterans from the army. Polish veterans so.

Q: This was between 1939 and 1941?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Tell me did Russians have any contact with the Ginsburg family?

A: No, no, no. Nothing special with nobody.

Q: So you could still go to school and the Jewish children could still be with you?

A: We did go to school yeah. This was different system in school. Like Russia ten classes. We used to have a different. We used to have a seven and then go to so called gymnasium. But then the Russians came, there was ten, ten grades. Yes, but they were, they didn't stay long because then Germans came.

Q: So then the Germans came, right. Was this 1941 when they came.

A: Yes.

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Q: And let's talk about those changes now.

A: Oh yeah. They –

Q: What happened first?

A: First they start to pick up Jewish family for camps. They pick up.

Q: You were how old in 1941?

A: Oh how old I was. I born in 1924.

Q: So you were 17?

A: No.

Lydia: Yeah, 17.

A: Yeah. 17 ok.

Q: Did you know where these Jews were being taken?

A: Where they were taken. In a someplace, I didn't see the place, but in a town in Regevil, they put them together and then they sent about four, five miles from Regevil, there was a big not a big, a high mountain, sand, sand, all was in sand. They took them over there. They put them in lines, all the Jewish people where they collect. They put them in lines and they shoot them in the back of the head.

Q: Now how did you know this?

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A: How I know, because my father and the other guy, they went to see what the Germans are doing because we had a lot of Jewish friends. We didn't know what they are going to do. Maybe they will go to do same thing to us which would happen for sure. So my father and the other guy, I do not remember the name. They went far away and looked this was sandy hills and forests. So they were hiding so they put those Jewish in line, shoot them in the back of the head, put little bit sand over them and then next row same thing. They shoot people in the back of the head until they shoot them all.

After they put a little bit sand on it, so this blood was coming from the sand you know because they didn't cover it too much the sand so the blood was coming. That's all what I know. And then one day my father went to work his land. On Saturday. And then he hear somebody calling. Nicolai, Nicolai. Nicholas, Nicholas. My father look. There was two youngest brothers, Ginsburg, Yankel and Shurem. About ten, 11 years old and they were calling my father's name. My father showed them with the hand, go down, go down. I am going to bring you some food. I go to my house. You hide. So my father came. My mother fixed bread and whatever she had, eggs, bread, what she had. Food. And my father took to them and said to them like this. At day time you hiding because they can see you, but at night you walk, wherever you want to walk. I don't know where they walked because my country **Regevilo**, it's a **Bolling**, the name of the district.

Lydia: County.

A: Country Bolling.

Lydia: County.

A: Yeah, next one was Galicia, **Radi**. Maybe they did go this way. I do not know. I do not know. And he never saw them again.

Q: Did your father tell you this, then?

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A: Yeah, of course my father came to house and said that to my mama, Liza, fix some food. There is Yankel and Shurem hiding so whatever you have, give it to them. So my mother cut the bread because we made the bake around the loaf of bread. My mother cut the bread and whatever she had, it's not even kosher but she gave because the escape you had to save your life. You eat what you get. And that's all what I know. Oh yeah my father right away came say you know.

Q: Were you frightened when you heard this? I mean you're 17 –

A: Of course I was fright, frightening yes. Yes because we didn't know what will happen next to us because the Germans, the German nationality they say like this. The German is the highest. Nobody could survive but Germans. And they, they were running after food. They were always hungry and they took everything from us. From people. They come in the house. They see eggs, they took it and whatever they see, food, they took it. Was very, very bad. Very bad. And –

Q: Did you understand them? Did you speak German?

A: Yes, a little bit. Not much because when my brother, older brother went to school, he learned in Poland in sixth grade they start learning foreign language. German or French. My brother was German so when he made the homework, I listened and I was interesting. I learned. I do speak five languages. Yes, five languages. And then later on they arrest my brother. Oh how old he was. He was born in 1919 and they arrest him 1941.

Q: So he was 22.

A: Yes. They arrest all those young people because they were afraid of them to make an uprising. So they arrest him. They put in a big building in Regevil, in the basement and they beat them. My brother was very handsome guy, long guy and they beat him. But after, after German lost the war, because they very prepared cold weather was worse by Leningrad. A lot of German died so they, they what?

Yeah the Germans lost the war so the Russians came again. So Germans left and then –

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Q: Can we go back a little bit, go back a little earlier. Did you have a chance to say goodbye to any of the Jewish families or Jewish children?

A: No. No, no, no I couldn't. I couldn't, I see them. I didn't see them.

Q: When they took them away you didn't have a chance to say goodbye.

A: No, I didn't have a chance. Everybody was hiding because they thought they would kill whoever ask for Jewish people because that's what they said. If you try to save Jewish people you going same way. So everybody was hiding.

Q: Did you talk about this with your friends, the other girls your age? Is it something you spoke about to your –

Lydia: Where, in school?

Q: In school or outside of school. Did you talk about this? What was happening to the Jews?

A: No, that day they caught Jewish people. There were no school at all. We didn't have a school. When Germans occupy country, no school, nothing. They closed no school, so we didn't see nobody.

Q: Did you talk this over with your parents, you know about what was – about what was happening?

A: We were afraid. We were afraid what'll happen to us when they finished, because what they say Germans they say, Deutschland, Deutschland **uber alles**. You understand. Yeah that's what they say. Deutschland, Deutschland uber alles. That's only they have a swastika.

Q: So you never saw any Jews after that, after your father saved, give the food to those two little boys.

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A: No, no, no.

Q: Til the end of the war.

A: No, I didn't.

Q: And what did you do during those years, til the end of the war. Did you work?

(discussion Lydia/Maria in foreign language)

A: When German occupy or when –

Q: During the war when the Germans were there?

A: The German occupied, there was no school. Children were home. Nobody was going to school.

Q: Right, and so did you work? Did you have a job? What did you do?

A: No, at home.

Q: You stayed home.

A: Yes in hiding from Germans.

Q: What would happen if you saw a German on the street?

A: I don't know what would happen. I didn't walk on the street. (laughs)

Q: You didn't go out on the –

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A: My father said oh Germans are coming. Children hiding, hiding. Yeah.

Q: Did you ever speak to a German soldier?

A: No, I didn't speak to Germans only when they came to our house. They ask **modka, yeika** [ph]. It means, mother eggs, eggs. That's all the words I hear. They say eggs, eggs. Yeah, they were always hungry.

Q: Did you know or did your parents know what was happening to the Jews in the rest of Europe at the top –

A: They were no radio, no news this time when I was in the camp. But when the Germans occupied, no when Russia occupied first, Poland, Regevil, a lot of Jewish people left **Regevilov**. They went to France. They went to England they went everywhere, but not either Regevil. So are a lot of people, doctors, dentists they had the money and they left Regevilov because they were afraid what will happen.

Q: But your parents or you did not know about the concentration camps in 1943 or 1944?

A: No, not in Regevilov. Not in our city. They took so Poland the big camps they built.

Q: Did you know about those?

A: Yes, yes that they built the camps.

Q: How did you know about them?

A: No, it's because everybody knows that they built the rest --

(interjection by Lydia in foreign language)

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A: Yeah because we didn't have a radio, we didn't get no news. People talking you know. But that was, they went to Poland and built big, big camps in Poland. Yes.

Q: And you knew about them at the time? That's what I mean.

A: No.

Lydia: She didn't know about them. She just heard people talking.

A: No, no after war.

Q: You only heard about them after the war?

A: Yes. And after war we wanted to see the camps you know after war. So we went to see in Poland camps. How it looks.

Q: Where did you go?

A: Oświęcim. And –

(Lydia provides name)

A: Dachau.

Q: Oh you went to Germany?

A: And the other one.

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Q: When did you go to these camps?

A: I didn't remember exactly. Many, many camps they built.

Q: Right. And you went to see them.

A: No, I got only in one in – After war.

(Lydia clarifies in foreign language)

A: After Russia occupy. Yes, yes.

Lydia: Before she left.

Q: I see, ok. So now the war is over. It's 1945 and what do you do and what does your family do?

A: Ok. Since we see the Russians were coming and my father saw how they look and this, my father said children we have to think about, we have to go away. We can't live in this country, communist country. So my father sent me, my sister and her husband to big city Lvov. He say you wait over there til we come, parents, it means mother and father. And then we go further to like Czechoslovakia, Prague, or someplace. We have to run away from communists. So when war was very big between Regevil and **Brode**, it was three months front line. A lot of people died. There were Russian and German fighting. So my parents are going and the Russians kept them, kept them and said where are you going. So what, my father he's not stupid. He said I'm going home. Ok so turn around and go home. Since then I didn't see my parents but we went on other side, close to Czechoslovakia and my parents had to go. The Russians returned them to Regevil so after then I didn't see my parents. I suffered very much because I didn't see my mother, my father, my brother. So that's what happened.

Then after war is finished, American bombs and I was in Czechoslovakia.

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Q: What town, what city were you in?

A: Bratislava. And then they start after war, they start to build DP camps. It means displaced persons. All the persons who are displaced from home, they built camps that they built in Germany, in Regensburg, Bavaria. Camp. And then we did go there. And they gave us a little bit soup, food and that's all. And after, and I was in Regensburg, I hear because I was educated and I want to study so I hear about the Munich. Munich in Germany. They had for DP or displaced person who, whoever want to go, American, UNARAT [ph], to American organization is helping those people. All nationalities. Doesn't matter. Ukrainian, Polish, Lithuanian, all those nationalities. So we went to Germany and then I finished my pharmacy in 1949. I finished pharmacy. Then I applied to go to America because I was just alone like orphan, alone. No family, nobody. And I had to wait in line for, to go through all those tests, everything, medical, to go to America.

So 1950 I came to America.

Q: Were you with your sister and brother in law then?

A: Pardon me.

Q: Were you with your sister and brother –

A: No, no, no. We were all separated. We were all, so we didn't know about.

Q: Let me back up a little bit. Back to, during the war. Did you know about the Warsaw ghetto uprising in 1943?

A: I did hear, yes. Yes. But you know what. I am very observant and I do not understand how Jewish people could go like this that Germans catch them. They should go together with the Ukrainians, in forest and fight against Germans. But they just walk into ghetto.

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Q: Did you know when it was happening at the time? Did you know about it at the time?

Lydia: Like what time, which time?

Q: Did she know about the Warsaw ghetto? In 1943, when it was happening?

A: Hear, you just hear yes. Yes, yes. Lot of, lot of people, Polish people, were helping Jewish people. They brought them food and everything, somebody saw it. I even knew one case but I don't remember her name exactly. She was Donna. She was a baby and then before camp in Poland, they ask her, please take my baby. So some Polish dentist took this baby and raised her. I don't know her last name but her name was Donna. And she came to America and then she married Italian guy, that's what I know. The Polish people took this child. He was a dentist, Polish dentist and raised her and then she came to America.

Q: Did you ever see any Jewish people during the war, after they took the ones out of your town?

A: No, no I didn't see those.

(Lydia interjects in foreign language)

A: No, no I didn't see nobody. I just –

Q: Did you ever see your parents again after the war?

A: I didn't know what to do, no. I was –

(Lydia interjects in foreign language)

A: No, no, no until 70.

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Lydia: 70, she saw her mother. She went back.

A: And I said doesn't matter what happened to me. I have to see my mom. So I went to see my mom in Lvov, big city and they didn't let me go to her house. She has a house. I had to stay in a hotel and they come to hotel and see me.

Q: Your mother and your father you mean.

Lydia: No, father passed away.

A: Father passed away yeah.

Q: So now you're coming to the United States you said in 1950.

A: 1950 I came to United States.

Q: What was your feeling when you arrived in the United States?

A: The feeling was I just here. This is free country. Everything but I did understand that nobody will help me (sound drop out)

Q: It's hard to hear.

A: They gave me an --

Q: Hello. I can hardly hear her.

(Lydia speaks in foreign language)

A: 1950.

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Q: Something has happened to her phone.

(phone adjustment)

A: Well I found very strange because nobody helped, gave us one dollar on the ship and you do whatever you do.

Q: What was the name of your ship?

A: General Lightfoot. General Light. This was military ship which were soldiers they brought it to Germany and back, they took those displaced persons.

Q: Were there a lot of Jewish people on the ship?

A: Oh I wouldn't know. You don't know. Make a difference, we don't know.

Q: So then you landed in New York?

A: Yes.

Q: And where did you go?

A: The people from my country, from Regevil where I born they pick up me. They knew me since I was a little baby so they pick up me and I stay a little bit til I find a work in New York. When I find a work –

Q: What kind of work did you do?

A: They came, before Christmas and they say if you fill out application in English and they put me away then we hire you. So I did fill application. They hire me. I _____ the battery. I had no

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experience. I make more, more damage than right one. So they check which good one, I didn't make money. It was very -- because in America was everything piece work, piece work, piece work. You have to do piece work. That's all. I was --

Lydia: Did you speak English, Polish, what. You didn't speak English right.

A: Yes, I did.

Lydia: What language did you speak when you came to America?

A: Oh I speak Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, German and a little bit English. But English I started in Germany because they did send some American teacher to displaced person who want to go to America, they had to learn English. So I learned English.

Q: Now how did the people from your town know that you were coming to New York? How did they know that? Were you in contact with them?

A: What people?

Q: You said people met you when you arrived in the United States?

A: That's people from my home town.

Q: But how did they know you were coming?

A: By mail. Yeah, by mail.

Q: You knew how to reach them, how to contact them?

A: Yeah, yeah by mail and then they found some people who said oh she could come, that she could sew something, but this was only pretending. I didn't know sewing just to go to America.

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Q: So then you started that work and then what happened?

A: Oh that first one. I work a little bit, they lay off because it was very bad time in America. They lay off me and I start looking other job and I found other job. I worked a little bit on this other job and then moving, moving we are moving. It was very, very bad and then I got to oh -- And then my sister with her husband was in Detroit after. We didn't know it. About each other, but she was in Detroit and she said you come to Detroit. Maybe you can find a job or something you know. And I went to Detroit. There was a bus strike. I couldn't go. I didn't drive a car like this in America you know. Look for a job. So I walk on the street and I saw name. It said **Respondik** pharmacy, just big **Apteka**. And it's the name of the guy is Respondik and he has pharmacy. So I went there say could you hire me but I didn't say what I was doing. He said ok. I hire you. They hire me and after two hours I worked there then I asked the girl. She was working too, young girl. I say how much do they pay. She say 75 cents an hour. I said what, 75 cents. How can I support myself so I took the white uniform, went to his wife, this Respondik wife. I said I'm sorry I can't work for 75 cents an hour because I can't support myself. So I quit with them. I was working there maybe three hours. Then I start looking for other job. Where you going to look when you -- bus strike, no transportation. So there was not too far factory, Dodge Plymouth factory. I went over there, I went over there by foot. It was far away and they hired me. It was very, very hard work but I had to support myself so I did work there. They paid good but very hard --

Q: What kind of factory was it?

A: Dodge Plymouth, Plymouth, car, car factory. Cars. Yeah. And it was by the oven, hot. They coming that piston. I don't know what the, like cylinder for the car. They had on both opening for the ring. You had to grab it. Of course you had the gloves. You had to grab it and put since they are hot, the opening are free, you put those rings up here and here and push away. You had to put about 160 pieces an hour and I came home. I was all wet, smelling. It was terrible. That was America for me.

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Q: And then what happened?

A: And then what happened. Then what happened. Then one day I -- one Saturday me and my friend, we went to Canada to register for dance. Polish dance. And then I met my husband, Mr. Kordalewski and I met him and then I got married him after one year and we were in --

Lydia: Detroit. Did you have something else?

A: Yeah, yeah just a second. Then he came to Detroit. My husband, Kordalewski. We, he worked slave camp. The Germans when they occupied Poland they took him to slave camp and for the hard work, the whole family. His mother, father, brother and sister. Yeah. He was in the camp.

Q: So then you got married and where did you --

A: Hard labor. They beat him over there. He, even when he came to America he had big bruises from beating.

Q: Where was his camp? Do you remember --

A: No.

Lydia: I forgot the name of the town too.

A: I knew it but I don't remember.

Q: So then you stayed in Detroit?

A: Yes.

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Q: And you had children? You have a daughter.

A: I had my daughter, Lydia. She born in Detroit. Then there was no work in Detroit. Was very bad time in America so we went to California because my husband, he still had an old friend. He says he can come to California. Here is warm weather, you could find maybe some jobs and then he went, pick up my daughter and went to California. And then we are living in California til we moved to Miami to Florida. That's all that I know.

Q: Tell me what your thoughts are about Germany now.

A: I don't like German. I do speak German but I even don't want to speak German. I hate them, I hate them, that's all. Yes, that's what they did. Even in park in Poland, in park on nice benches, they put the name. **Nur für Deutsche** [ph, foreign language]. Only for Germans, it said. You just try to sit on this bench, you will get it. I don't like it, I don't like it.

Q: And how do you feel about Poland?

A: Oh Poland, it's all right, Poland. Poland was –

Q: What ever happened to the two little boys that your father helped?

A: I do not know. I do not know. One time in Miami we went what do you call this –

Lydia: Holocaust memorial.

A: Yeah, Holocaust memorial. We used to go with my daughter to see maybe we can find some names you know. And one tall, tall guy was walking behind us and said Jew, Jew to us. He didn't know nothing. And he was telling us, he was for sure, German, German type. We wanted to see maybe we could see the names of some people I did know other people.

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Q: You said later on you went to Auschwitz to see the camp?

A: Auschwitz.

Q: Do you remember any of your thoughts when you went to –

A: What, terrible you know. The pants and all kind of -- from the people, shoes or was lying glasses, teeth, you know. Because they were, before they killed them they wanted to have all the money, they used for money you know. So after they killed them then they pick up all this gold and teeth and everything was laying there. Not the gold no, but the shoes. Clothes. Yeah, it was terrible, terrible.

Q: When did you go back to, when did you go visit to see Auschwitz?

A: Oh I don't remember. After war. I don't know, I can't recall, I can't tell you this, what year

Q: Is there anything that you can say that this could happen again? Do you feel –

A: What I think. You want to know what I think.

Q: Yes, I do.

A: I think that this coming to the end of the world what's going on, this is terrible, this is impossible. Killing, killing, everything. This comes, no, no this is the end of the world.

(Lydia -- foreign language)

A: No, no, no, no. No.

(Lydia -- foreign language)

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A: Oh it couldn't be like this. It would be like me and my daughter, our best friends are Jewish. Yes, they are good people. They come visit us. We sit with them even ex-mayor of our city. They very good people. I do not make a difference between the nationalities. Yeah.

Q: But you are saying you don't think the world has learned any lessons?

A: Oh yeah sure.

Lydia: World War II.

A: That's for sure, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. But if the people have do something good. You know but like I said this comes, end of the war. If everything was happening now. They're killing babies. It's just terrible. I don't know what's going on. I don't know.

Q: So what you're saying, the world has not learned.

Lydia: Because of World War II (foreign language)

A: Oh we don't know. We don't know. Maybe it could but who knows.

Q: Do you feel very Polish or do you feel American? How would you describe yourself?

A: I am not really Polish, not American. My parents are Ukrainian, born in Poland. I went to Polish school because we didn't have other school and I don't make any difference. I was born in Poland and then I, all people are dying without their stories.

Q: Do you know of any other people who helped save Jews during the war?

(Lydia – foreign language)

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A: No, I would love to see some people from my home town. No, no.

(Lydia – foreign language)

A: I don't know if they were, I know lots of people good at this and they were working Polish people for the dentist. Maybe they were but like I said when the Russians occupied Poland. The Jewish people start moving from Poland.

Q: Is there anything –

A: This should never be forgotten, this, never be forgotten you know. Like I do remember everything and I do not know.

Q: Do you think more about the war now that you're getting older?

A: No, I remember everything how it was. Oh boy, if I write this, I had to _____ of the books about the war. It was terrible, terrible, terrible. No food, no dentist, no vitamin no nothing. That's -- I said people should work not to have a war, that's it.

Q: Is there anything else you wanted to say before we finish the interview?

A: No, I just said Holocaust should never be forgotten, never. It's terrible. This is, this is unbelievable.

Q: You have been to the Holocaust Museum in Florida?

A: Yeah. Yeah, yeah I go.

Q: What are your thoughts when you go through there?

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A: I was, I thought I was looking for the names you know. Maybe I knew some. Crime, you know what you can think about. It is just, it is unbelievable that they killed people alive. And so many people. So many people. They had a, orange swastika, not swastika and Jewish --

Lydia: Star of David.

A: Star of David.

Q: Have you been to the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington?

Lydia: She hasn't been there. I have, several times. Washington, DC. (foreign language) My father was, but my mother wasn't.

Q: When did your husband pass away?

A: Four years ago, April 26, 2009.

Q: I'm sorry. And the rest of your family. Everybody lived in the United States?

A: No. Brother died Ukraine, mother too. Father. My sister die in Detroit. My brother in law and that's all that I have. Yeah.

Q: Thank you very much for doing this interview. Is there anything else, as I said before we finish?

A: No that's all that I remember. You know that's all that I remember and I saw, I tell you.

Q: It's important that you did and it's important that we got your father's story.

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A: Especial Jews yeah. It was terrible treatment of everyone, especial Jews, that's all. Yeah that was terrible. You couldn't walk on the street and this time and they pick up also from their home. Terrible.

Q: You still think about it?

A: Of course I will think all the time til I die because you can't forget these things. This is just unbelievable, to burn people alive who, to get and buried alive people. They told them oh yeah, you are going to take a shower and so they took all clothes off. They put them to oven. Oh yeah, terrible, terrible. Like I told you when we went to see this camp, Poland, those shoes, those teeth. Oh terrible, terrible. How could they do this?

Q: How do you feel about Poland today?

A: Well it's my country. What I can feel. Poland is helped by nobody. Poland is suffered too much because they built this, all those camps in Poland. Poland doesn't want this you know. They build, they should build in Germany but not in Poland and said it's the Polish people, that no. That's German. Yeah, this is terrible.

Q: Do you feel the young people are being educated today in Poland about the war?

A: Some people who are interested yes, but not everybody is interested about war. They think they just interested about money. That's all money, money, money, money. They don't take what's happened. You don't know, you don't know.

Q: Do you have contact with people in Poland now, still?

A: Once for Christmas send a card, my husband brother and daughter live still there. Not too much family, no, no.

Q: Do you have any desire to go back and see?

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Lydia: No, she can't. She's sick now.

A: No, no. I don't want it. Some people that they tell that they don't believe it. It was like this you know, the Holocaust, everything. They don't believe it. They don't understand. But, no I don't want to go there. Because in Poland always was, everybody wants to take something from Poland, especially Germans. Germany, they have a lot of population. They don't have enough food. They go further and further and further. Yeah.

Q: Do you have any German friends in Florida?

A: No, no, no. I don't have a German –

Q: Did you ever have friends from Germany?

A: Pardon me.

Q: Did you ever have friends from Germany?

A: No, not that. I didn't stay in Germany.

Q: No, I meant who came from –

A: No, I didn't have a friend in Germany.

Q: Who came from Germany?

A: No. They don't like us. They like only Germans, that's all. Deutschland, Deutschland uber alles.

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Q: Well I appreciate your taking the time to do this interview. And I wanted to thank you for doing it.

A: Well only just Jewish background and you know some they are here. They like us. They visit us. We talk about this you know. They are good friends, but not many people they don't understand this. They don't believe it. It could happen like this. I hope it will not come and I am 89 years old already. I am old person. But I went too much through the war, too much.

Lydia: Thank you for your time.

Q: Thank you.

Lydia: Anything else Gail.

Q: No, I just have a little thing to say at the end. But thank you.

A: Where you calling from, DC?

Q: I am calling from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington is where I'm calling from.

Lydia: And then you put all this information together.

Q: Yes.

Lydia: Yeah maybe you know you never know. Maybe some Ginsburg family will do research you know.

Q: Wouldn't that be wonderful?

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Lydia: And that's good you know. It helps always to have other people's perspectives on everything. So that everybody saw what was going on.

Q: Right, no it's very important that you did this.

Lydia: And I wanted my father to do it but nobody would listen until you know -- after he died, he did one little story in Miami and then he passed away and then you know.

Q: Well let me finish with the -- ok just one moment. This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Maria Kordalewski.

(end)