

RG-50.120 *0144

Anonymous interviewee

TAPE 1 OF 2

01:01:20 I was born In Belitsa. My family came from Slonim. My father had a flour mill and a sawmill. We were five children who were born in: 1911, 1912, 1917, I and a sister in 1926.

Belitsa was a small town, with 80 families (483 in WOWW). Many of them were poor. I remember my mother went out on Thursday night with baskets of food in her hands to give to the poor people. We had a youth movement and we were very active in it. I had a wonderful childhood.

01:07:00 In 1936 I went to Vilna to study in a seminar to become a teacher. I came home only three times during the year, although it was only 120 km from our town.

01:10:15 Our home was Orthodox, but I was the shikse (the gentile) of the family. My father knew it, but he let me go with it.
The town was near a big river, the Neman River. I had a kayak, and we spent most of our time in the summer on the bank of the river or in it.

01:12:50 When I arrived in Vilna, I saw signs on the sidewalk: "Don't buy in Jewish stores." I was blond, and looked like a gentile.

01:16:40 Vilna is in my heart. I have very good memories from there. I have never gone back to Europe, it is full of blood and anti-Semitism, but I wanted to see Vilna again. We had a wonderful library, Yiddish theater and much culture.

01:20:10 When the war broke out in 1939, many Jews came, as refugees from Warsaw and Bialystok. We were happy to be under the Russian regime, although they took all our property and our capital. My father worked as an accountant. My brother was a headmaster of a school. I was a teacher. We were fine.

01:27:00 I married my boyfriend, Ya'akov. In 1940 I gave birth to our daughter, Leah. When she was nine months old, my husband was taken to

the Russian Army. In 1941 the Germans took over. They burnt most of the houses with their inhabitants, because they were afraid that we hid Russian soldiers.

01:33:10 The Polish refugees told us that the Germans burn houses and do bad things to the men. My brother begged us to go to Russia. I told him to go, but I had to stay to wait for my husband. We convinced my father to go with my brother. I stayed with my baby, my mom, my little sister, who was 10 years old and my sister-in-law.

The Germans burnt down the town in the autumn. We ran away to the open field. The rain was pouring. After two days we came back. The house was burnt down to ashes. We found a new place to live in. There was a street and a half where the Jews gathered. The Germans rounded them up and sent them to work.

01:37:00 One day a German officer came in and asked: "Where are the men?" I told him that they went out to work. He thought that I was a gentile, so he told me that they were going to kill everyone and for my own sake, I should better run away.

01:41:40 We took a wagon and went to Zetl (Dzyatlava), a town near by. We lived in a friend's house. My sister and I went to work. My mother took care of my baby. My sister in-law said that she is going to hide in the forest. I wanted to send my sister with her, but my mom didn't approve it. It is still very hard for me, when I think about it.

01:49:30 In Zetl (Dzyatlava) I went through two actions. We hid in a tunnel we dug in the basement. In the actions the Germans rounded up the Jews, took them to dig pits and then shot them.

02:05:30 In the second action, we had to hide five days in the tunnel. Two mothers had to suffocate their babies. When the Germans discovered our hiding place, we had to escape. We went to Dvorets, 15 km from Zetl (Dzyatlava).

02:15:50 Dvorets was a labor camp. I was in charge of a group of 25 women. We had to build a railroad. One day our manager, a Polish man, told us to run away because the Germans were going to liquidate the camp. We hid in a hole until the night, then we came out without knowing where to go. It was a bitter winter with a lot of snow and a very cold wind. We

started to walk, but the storm was so heavy that we found ourselves in the same place. The next day we entered a secluded house. A farmer gave us food, but we had to move on. We were on the way for 20 days, full of lice.

02:27:00 We had to split. We could not continue to go in a big group. It was terrible. Peshka, my friend forced me to come with her, and we ran away. We walked for days and nights till we came to a friend of Peshka. She was gentle and she let us stay in her attic. Peshka's son came too. We had to leave. All the villages were burned. We entered the forest where we met Partisans.

02:35:10 I met there relatives from Zetl. I was broken. I missed my family that I had lost.

02:39:25 We lived in a camp near the Partisans. We had to find food by ourselves. We moved from one place to another. I have no idea how I survived. Once I went with two other men to Lida, 180 km to bring some Jews. We rescued 24 men and one woman whose name was Shulamit.

02:53:40 She was a pharmacist and she worked with the doctor in the Partisans' hospital.

03:01:00 The sanitary conditions were very poor in the forest, but we even had one abortion and one woman gave birth.

03:07:00 We lived in "Zemlnkot" – holes that we dug in the ground. We were 8 people in each one, but every month or two we moved from one place to another.

03:11:15 In 1943, I was told that one man from Belitsa was looking for me. He brought me a letter. Eventually it was not for me, but for my cousin's wife. He arrived to Palestine, but she had died from hunger.

03:17:00 Our liberation was very tragic. We didn't know where to go, where to return. Most of us were single without a family. The partisans had contacts with the Russian leaders.

03:27:30 I arrived to Belitsa with the Russians. I collected some workers and started to run the mill again. But I wanted to find my father and my

husband. I heard that my father was in Tula (Russia). I received three letters in one day - from my father, my husband and my brother Eliezer. I took the train and went to my father. It was a terrible journey. It was almost impossible to get on a train because there were thousand of people there. I could not recognize my father.

03:33:15 I brought him back to Belitsa with his new wife. From there we went to Poland and then to Berlin. In Berlin I got a letter from Russia and was told that my husband died near Moscow from a mine. We didn't hear anything from my brother again.

03:43:40 In Poland we lived some months in Lodz. Then we heard from my brother Zorach, who lived in Palestine and served as a soldier in the British Brigade. He served in Berlin, so we went to him and lived in DP camp, Wittenau.

TAPE 2 OF 2

Interviewee is going back to the past and tells about her father.

04:01:30 My father was a very busy man. He ran his own business but had always time for “gemilut – chasadim,” charity activities.

04:21:20 In the camp we got certificates for Palestine. We traveled to Marseilles and after two weeks we boarded the ship “Kedma” to Palestine. We were so happy to hear Hebrew from the captain and his crew. It was like a miracle.

04:26:30 I lived in Hadera and worked as a kindergarten teacher. I met a survivor who came from Paris and we got married. I went with him to Paris, but when I had to give birth to my first child I wanted to come back to Israel. It was 1951. We had a small shop and two children. When the eldest was 16 1/2 and the youngest 13, my husband died. I moved to work in an agriculture school for 16 years.

04:35:50 In one lecture that I attended the lecturer blamed the Catholic Church for not helping the Jews during the Holocaust. I asked him: and what did America do?

I lost all my family. Nobody loved us; and today, isn't it coming back?