

Holocaust Survivor

Oral Histories

STEFA (SARAH) SPRECHER KUPFER

July 24, 1987

Could you tell me your name please?

My name is Sarah Kupfer, but to everyone that knows me, I'm Stefa.

What was your maiden name?

My maiden name is Sprecher.

Where were you born?

I was born in Sanok, Poland.

Can you tell me something about life in Sanok before the war, your family, what it was like in your town?

Well, it was a very Jewish town. My grandfather had a long beard and peos [earlocks] and my uncle was wearing a streimel, my father was going to shul and Shabbat was observed and you mean life at home?

Well, how about your family. You could start with them.

Well, I lost a sister when she was two years old. So I was an only child until I was nine, then my other sister was born.

So there are your parents and your sister and you. Grandparents in the town?

I had grandparents on my mother's side, they lived not far away.

Any aunts and uncles?

Aunts and uncles, cousins.

About how many would you say?

About sixty, maybe 70 people just in the town. My father was one of seven and my mother was one of four, she had two sisters and a brother and everybody was married with children.

Where was your father's family, also in Sanok?

My father's brothers and sisters did not live in Sanok, they lived all over Poland. One brother lived in Belgium, one brother lived in France, the other members lived in other cities.

So it would be more than 70 relatives?

Oh, all together, of course, yes.

Do you know how many survived the war?

Altogether, I should have made account, um, probably ten or twelve of the whole family.

What did your father do before the war?

My father owned a hardware store. That was a well-established store from way, way back. It was one of the largest, he was a businessman.

You said it was a very Jewish town. Did you go to public school?

I went to public school, and in the afternoon, I went to Hebrew school. But a little bit until the war started.

So you were busy?

I was busy.

What was your home life, was it an orthodox home?

We kept kosher, of course, most people were orthodox, we kept kosher and shabbat, my father went to shul. The store was closed, holidays were observed.

How would you have told that it was a very Jewish town, you said it was very Jewish?

Well, you could see in the street, a lot of Jews were wearing streimlach, and beards and ear locks, and even my cousins, some of my cousins were wearing long ear locks, and the heads were always covered, my grandmother wore sheitel [wig], my aunt wore a sheitel.

Did your mother?

My mother did not.

What was a Friday like, a Friday night?

Friday night was wonderful. We would go to shul and come back and we would have a Friday meal and you would sing smirot and Shalom Aleichem and it was just wonderful. Just wonderful.

Did you sing?

I'd sing along a little bit.

Do you remember the song?

A little.

I won't ask you to sing.

No, don't ask me to sing. [laughs]

What would happen, you would have dinner, fish the whole...

The whole spiel, fish and chicken soup, and chicken and noodles and tsimmes and compot and...

And then you would sing and then what?

Well, it was evening.

And Saturday?

Saturday's summertime was especially nice. My father would go to an early mynyan and come home and have lunch and my father, my mother and I would go for long walks in the meadows, there were meadows not far from our house. And it was so beautiful, so peaceful, it was so green and open and nice and we would go for long, long walks. Especially summer time and spring it was beautiful.

This was before your sister was born?

This was before my sister was born.

Did your father, or you, or your mother have any relationships with non-Jews in Sanok?

My father was in the store and he had a lot of non-Jewish customers. Um, I don't think my mother did, I went to a Polish school so I knew Polish children, there was some that their parents had stores across from my father's store and we would meet in the afternoon when our mothers would come and visit the husbands in the store and then the children would meet in the street, too.

Do you remember any anti-semitism that your family felt?

Not personally, but I remember it was shortly before the war and before the Christmas holidays the college students that would come home for vacation would stand in front of the Jewish stores and boycott and not let non-Jews go in. They wanted them to buy from Polish people.

How about your parents or your grandparents, did they experience any that you know of?

Many times, when my grandfather would go to shul in the evening for evening prayers, Grandmother would send me and my cousin to go pick up Grandfather

because they used to throw stones at him. He was wearing ear locks and long beard and we sort of protected him. We walked with him home.

What do you remember about your grandfather besides that?

He was most of the time, he was learning, he was a business man, he was in the store, but then he would come home and sit with a great book in front of him and learn. That's the picture of him I remember mostly. We would have our Purim in my grandparents house and the whole family would get together there, it was a custom. They only went to well-to-do people and there was a group of performers and they would come and do the Purim spiel. And, I remember that from my grandfather.

Did they live near you?

The lived very close, my parents were neighbors.

So on Friday night would you be at their house or at yours?

Friday nights before the war, we would spend separately, but during the war after my father wasn't there anymore, we would go to my grandparents' house because it was only Momma and my sister and me.

When was your sister born?

My sister was born in 1938. Right before the war. A year before.

Do you remember where you were when the war started, when you first heard the war had begun?

Yes, it was a Saturday afternoon, and everybody was having shala shuis and we were sitting in our homes and we heard marching and tanks and trucks and everybody went into the street. And here are the Germans. They drove in.

What did you think?

I don't know what I thought, we saw these powerful men with their powerful machines, helmets... hardware, but they were throwing candy to the people on the street. And there was this whisper going around, look at them how victorious they are, how strong they are, we were defeated, "we" meaning the Polacks, at that time we were all one. We were not any different. And it started soon after.

What started?

What started? [sighs]... Hard labor, wearing arm bands... persecution.

How did your family feel the effects of the change in the day-to-day life... what changed?

Well, first of all, right before the Germans came in, my father left. And, he left because... he left because he was afraid for his life. There was a rumor going around that women and children the Germans are very civilized about, but the men they do take the hard labor or whatever they were doing. A lot of men who could afford to left Sanok. They rented a bus and they left to go East, to the other side of Poland, the side that the Russians were going to occupy. So, right away a few days after the Germans came in my mother had to go to the store. She was never the business lady, she was never in the store, my father carried it. And I sort of become, at the age of ten, the mother to a one-year-old until we could get somebody, Momma could get somebody to stay with us because our Polish maid had left us. Besides it was

against the law to have a Polish maid at that time. So, Momma got the Jewish lady to stay with us. So, this is how it changed from day to day and we would go a lot to my grandparent's house, they were still in their home. There were a lot of young people coming to my grandmother's house at that time trying to escape to the other side, but they had to wait for the right time for the borders to be... either they bribed the border guard or however they did it, I don't know. But they stayed at my grandparents' house and waited for the time to be right to leave. The children didn't go to school, of course, Jewish children don't need any education. So, we were left more or less to ourselves, you know.

When your father left, did he talk to you about it?

Yes. He didn't talk to me about it. I asked him. He was packing his suitcase and I asked him, when is he coming back and he said, "never." So I said "What do you mean?" And I guess he caught himself and said "well, probably in two or three weeks when this is all over." Well, he never did come back. They killed him on the way. He wanted to come back, after it quieted down, and after the Germans came in and right away they weren't killing anybody and they weren't doing terrible things right away, so he tried to come back and on the way back I guess, the Ukrainian got a hold of him, and not only him other people too, and they tortured them to death.

How did you find out about that?

Somebody escaped and came back and told. Then my mother went to look and ... I think she recognized some clothes or whatever, but when she came back she didn't

talk about it. Only my grandmother came and said, "you can start crying now, you don't have a father anymore." And I, didn't want to believe her, I still didn't believe for years and years later, I always looked, even after the war when there was a crowd, I always looked I thought maybe I'll see a resemblance, maybe it wasn't true, there were rumors from the first World War that people came back after 20 years, after 30 years. I thought, you know, you never know but I was fooling myself, I wanted to believe it.

What town was he killed in?

Vszechyki Dolne.

How far was that from Sanok?

I don't know in kilometers, but it wasn't too far.

And your mother never spoke of this?

No. She never spoke and we never asked her. I guess it was too painful.

They had a special relationship?

My parents had a special relationship. My parents were in love for ten years before they were allowed to get married. My father had an older sister who needed to get married first. So, they had to wait. And they were always holding hands, it was really a special, special, special relationship.

Did your father and you also have a special relationship, do you think?

I think so. I think so, he was an extremely gentle person. And when I was sick with Typhoid fever, and I had all kinds of boils on my body, he was the one that would change the dressings, and he was the one that would bathe me, he was really special.

He would even pull a loose tooth that I had and I didn't even know he did it. You know when you lose your first teeth.

How did your mother continue then after that?

My mother was forced to open the store and be in it. Germans needed hardware and they would come from time to time, I don't know how often, twice a week or three times a week, and they would take whatever they needed. Everything was properly written down, no payment was ever made, of course. But they even forced her to open the store once on Shabbat and there was no choice, she had to go into the City and open the store which to her was worse than giving them the merchandise is to break the Shabbat.

Did she talk to you about any of this... what the prospects were for...?

No, it was just, you know at the age of ten, if a war starts, you grow up in such a hurry that you are not a child anymore. I really didn't have a childhood, I didn't even have a youth. Because at the age of ten, I became a mother to my younger sister, and everything that was going on, you don't have to tell it to the children, they know it, they sense it, you just sense it and your ears are always open and you listen and the grownups talk and you know it is there and you don't need to be told.

What happened next that was a major change?

Next, well not long after the Germans came in, they had out an order for everybody to register. And, a lot of people did and a lot of people didn't. My mother didn't, my grandparents and my aunts and uncles didn't. We didn't know what the registration was for. But, they just didn't. And, after the registration, a day or two

later was another order that all the people that registered had to come to the market place, the city square, with their belongings and they were told that at that time they will be taken somewhere else. They weren't taken, they were sent. They told them to go to the River San and cross it. Apparently, the Germans and the Russians had some kind of an agreement that they were letting the Jews out and they are letting the Jews in. And this is what happened, they were all walking, I remember staying in my grandparents' house at the time and we looked out the window and these people were walking with their pecklah and their bags and pushing the buggies and people with cane and old and young and in between and babies in their arms and they were all walking toward the river to cross the San. And I remember my aunt saying "look at those poor souls," you see, good thing we didn't register. So we can stay in our house. What we didn't know was they were going to life and we were staying with death, because once they crossed the river and were on the Russian side, they were treated as displaced persons, but they were not persecuted as Jews. Our persecution just started... there was wearing of the arm bands, with curfews, with forbidden prayer, you couldn't pray, in a mynyan, in a group, all sorts of things they were taking men to hard labor, to pull stones, to pull rocks out of the river and build streets, there were orders to give up your furs, Jews were not allowed to have one piece of fur, I remember people standing in line, to give up the furs. God forbid if they caught you with a piece of fur. There was an incident, that the woman forgot that she had a fur pompon on her slipper, and she still had the Polish maid at that time and she went and told on her, she was punished severely. That was this for

what she was punished, for having a pompon that she did not turn in. All sorts of things, all sorts of things, but still we were in our houses. Still we had what to eat. Um, not a whole lot, a lot of people had to stand in line for bread which was very, very soft and wet. Our family was quite fortunate because my father saw to it before he left the house, he ordered 100 kilo of white flour and 100 kilo of bread flour and 100 kilo of salt and 50 kilo sugar to be in the house just in case. So I remember Momma taking flour and sending me to the baker and he would bake bread for us. So we were still having bread, where other people had to stand in line already.

So they were rationing?

There were rations. Yes.

Had you registered at this point?

No. No, we were still at home. The registered people have left.

But they knew you were Jewish and they knew what you did?

Yes, yes, I guess they probably knew that not everybody is going to register, I don't know what they had in mind.

When the rationing began, you were still in your house?

Yes.

Who would go and stand in line?

Well, in our case, we didn't because we had flour, so Momma would send me to the baker and we would get our own bread. But all our neighbors did.

What about other food, meat, eggs, milk?

No, that was not available, that was not available, sometimes some farmers would bring in something from the farms, from the villages and you were able to buy. But food was right away scarce.

Were you in a ghetto?

No. Before the ghetto was erected, we left. And we left to save our lives. People in the ghetto were only between 18 and 40 or 45. Now neither I nor my sister were 18. My mother knew that no way will she be able to take us into the ghetto, so she decided that we are not going to go into the ghetto. And, at that time, her sister who lived in Krosno, that was a city not far from Sanok, they went through the action aktion before so she sent me there to find out what happened to them. And if they are alive and whatever, maybe we can come. I went to the city and I went to the Judeniat and they told me where my aunt and uncle and the two daughters are, they were working in the factory and living there too. And I went there. And I remember my aunt telling me, stay with us, don't go back, you can't go back they will kill you, and she could, I and my cousin could alternate because we were very close in age, so she wanted to keep me there, but I went back home and I told Momma that Tanta Marka said we should come.

Who made this up?

I made this up. I don't know why. I made it up. Because she didn't. So the next day, Momma packed a big suitcase and a briefcase with food and she hired the Polish lady to send my sister and me to Krosno, she was to follow a few days later. And we left and right away, on the train, people were saying, oh where are the

Sprecher children going? My father was very well known in the city and so were his children and his family and the woman heard it and I guess she got scared and she disappeared. When Nina and I got off the train, we were stopped by two plainclothes men. And they knew that we were Jewish.

Were these Polish police?

Yes. And they questioned us. And they told us, we know that you are Jewish and tell us where you are going, and I denied it. I said I am not Jewish. My name is Stefania Gajewska, name I took from our non-Jewish neighbors' daughter, and we continued walking and they continued asking me and my sister called me by my Jewish name and I kept correcting her with my Polish name and they questioned me and questioned me and finally they pointed to my briefcase that I was carrying and they said that two days before there was a similar incident, they saw a girl looked like me, acted like me, had a briefcase like I have and she had ten kilos of gold in it. Probably, I have the same they said, but I said no, I don't but open up and see it. I had no idea what was in it. But when they opened it, I almost fainted. Because in the briefcase was a whole uncut halla, because it was shabbat and there was some tomatoes and soap and other things, some food, that Momma packed with us. And this was a dead giveaway because Polish people don't eat halla on Shabbos. But for some reason they ignored it. As long as they didn't find the gold they didn't say anything, and my sister is calling me by my Jewish name and apparently they don't hear it or they don't pay attention to it. Because after awhile, they just let me go. They walked away. They didn't tell me to go. First they threatened if I don't tell

them the truth they gonna take me to the police station. I said, yes I would like to go to the police station because they will be able to find my aunt, I'm coming to my aunt and my aunt is supposed to wait for us at the train station and she is not here and I don't know where she lives... and I don't know what to do. And maybe the police can help me. And maybe they got convinced, I don't know. And they walked away. So Nina and I walked around a little bit I thought they were tricking me maybe they will follow me after they watch where we are going. But they didn't. So we started walking toward my aunt's apartment that I knew where it was from the day before when I was there. And when we got there, the house was closed, locked. The landlady wasn't there and it was middle of the day and we went to an outhouse and we sat in an outhouse until the landlady came. It was very hot, it was a very hot day. But we sat there, [softly] we were afraid to come out. So then when she came, the landlady came, we came out and she let us into my aunt's apartment and we were hoping that either my aunt or a cousin or somebody will come. Because from time to time they did still kept the apartment while working in the factory and they used to come from time to time. But they didn't show up for a couple of days, so we were all alone and we didn't know, I assume that the woman probably never went back to my mother to tell her what happened with the children, because she probably didn't know, or maybe from far she observed us being questioned, I don't know, but the fact is that she didn't come back, my mother didn't know what happened to us, she was gone day after day to the woman's house and the husband said, "I don't know what happened to my wife, but because of your children, I probably lost her." Later on,

Momma said to me, she probably came back but she was hiding out she didn't want to face me, how could she tell me, that she lost my children, she didn't know. So we stayed there, I don't know how many days, a lot of days. Finally, my cousin showed up and my aunt came and said "what am I going to do with you? Okay, stay in the apartment as long as you can, but I don't know, you know, they couldn't take us to the factory, Nina was too young.

How did you get food for those few days?

The landlady would bring it from time to time something.

She knew who you were?

Yes, she did.

She knew you were Jews?

Yes. She knew we were the nieces of my aunt. But then something happened. Uh, one day my cousin came in, with a man, with a Polish man. And I didn't know this man, but what happened was, when Momma saw that she couldn't connect with the woman, she didn't know what happened with the children, and the ghetto was going to be erected in the area where we lived, in fact our house was part of the ghetto, she decided to go into hiding in order to be able to get out later maybe go to Krosno to see what happened with the children. And this is what happened. She went into hiding, and after a few days she asked the Polish man to go to Krosno to locate her sister and see if she knows anything about the children. But the man didn't know where the sister lives, and he walked and he walked and he met a young woman about 18 and he stopped her and he asked her if she knew where the Ettinger's lived.

And she asked them why and he said I have some news. And this 18 year old was my cousin. So she brought him to the house. Who was the man?

His name?

His name was Drewiega.

How did your mother know that she could trust him?

She met a neighbor, single woman who went into hiding, who decided she did not want to go into the ghetto, she decided to go into hiding by a Polish man. And she told her that her children are not here and she needs a hiding place for a little bit, and when the man came to take this young woman, um he agreed to take Momma for a few days, he said I can't keep you for long, because there is room only for one, but I will keep you for a few days until you connect with your children. If they are alive, or whatever. So she sent him out and he found us, then he went back, and at night, a couple days later. at night they bundled up her face pretending of having a toothache and he brought her on a train and we connected.

And she came to your aunt's house?

She came to my aunt's house, and we were together from that time on. But at that point, we almost didn't have where to stay anymore, because here we are three and my aunt could not keep the apartment any longer and the landlady said you know, "Jews are not allowed to live out in the open." So Momma said, "what are we going to do? You have to help us." And she said, "Well, I can only help you for two weeks. Because you sister paid a month's rent, she only lived here for two weeks,

and when I wanted to return her money, she said no, keep it. And I don't want to keep her money, so you live the two weeks that she has paid for."

And your aunt was still at the factory?

My aunt was still at the factory. So we stayed for two weeks, after the two weeks, Momma said "what now, you just have to help us." So she took us. She said, "okay, we'll see what happens." Oh, at that point she had to give up the apartment, totally, she had to rent it out because people knew there was a Jewish apartment vacant and housing was scarce and there was a distant relative that wanted to move into this house. She kept saying to her, I want to rent this apartment and she couldn't say no, because she had no reason. So she took us to a room in the attic. She had a room in the attic she used to rent out, but at that time it was not rented. So she took us to the room and the apartment was rented to the distant family of Mrs. Orlewska.

Her name?

Mrs. Orlewska. She lived in her house with her brother and so we went to the attic room where we stayed for a while. But then, this distant relative that has moved to the apartment kept saying to Mrs. Orlewska, "you know, you have this attic room upstairs, why don't you rent it out, you know, you could get some money for it." And she kept giving her different excuses... not the right party came, not the right person, this and that. Finally, she couldn't anymore, she was under too much pressure, because everything was very suspicious, if you didn't do it just right, you probably are doing something wrong, you are probably helping somebody, you probably are having a Jew or something.

So, they suspected?

I don't know if they suspected so much as she thought that they suspected. You know. And, so she said okay, I am going to rent out this room. Oh yea, this woman said, you know I have the perfect person for you a young student, and you know, and he will come to sleep only. So, she rented out the room. So we went a little bit to the attic first, and then it was impossible because it was just too close and then she took us into the basement.

She kept you there?

She kept us again. It was on a month-to-month and a week-to-week basis, but she kept keeping us.

How long were you in the attic?

In the attic room? Probably two or three months.

And there was a family living right beneath you?

There was a family living right beneath us.

What was it like from day to day?

It was whispers, it was almost not walking, but walking on tiptoes, and barefoot, we couldn't open the window, we were just in the room.

Was there a bathroom?

We had a pail, a covered pail that the landlady's brother would come every evening and pick it up, empty and bring it back for us.

So is this when he would knock on the window?

No, this was still. That was in the room, he would come up with the stairs. She would cook for us, she would make us a soup every day. She would make us a potato soup. To this day, whenever I peel a potato, I remember that potato soup. Mrs. Orlewska was a good Christian. My mother was a very Orthodox observant Jewish lady. And Mrs. Orlewska respected the fact that my mother was Kosher. She took one pot and one spoon and this was for us. She scrubbed it, washed it and that was for us. She only cooked potatoes in it, and some flour without any fat make it a little thicker, and this was our meal that she brought us every day in a big pot. Sometimes for a surprise, she would throw in a whole potato, not a cut up potato, and we would discover it on the bottom, she used to do, besides saving our lives, she used to do nice things for us. She used to buy apples and bread was rationed, so we couldn't have any fresh bread you know, there were only two people, how much bread could they buy? So, her brother would go to the soldiers to the German soldiers and they would sell him bread, old bread, two three weeks old the date was stamped on the bread. And we would cut it with a knife, you know, it's like sawing wood, so, Mrs. Orlewska would say to Momma, "you know, take the apple and scrub, rub it and put it on the bread and the juice will sink in and it would make it soft for the children." And you know what, it was delicious, it was soft bread. She was a remarkable lady. [pause] She was special, special lady.

She took you to the basement?

Yes, she took us to the basement. Well it was a three part basement. Uh, the entrance there was an entrance from the hall where there was a main entrance from

the hall... steps going down where the neighbor and she shared the steps, except to the left, there was one chamber that belonged to the tenant and it had a separate door. And then there was Mrs. Orlewska's basement with a separate door and the next room next to it. And we were in the center room. And that, he erected a little platform there for us so we could sleep, out of boards, and this is where we were, there was also an entrance from the garden. Again the same thing, at night he would come and empty our pail and bring us the pot with the soup and the bread, but only after dark.

Did you ever go outside?

No, we never did. We never went outside, not from the basement. Except once I had to because my neck was getting very large, it was after a while sitting in the basement. I don't know how many months it was, maybe through the winter, I don't remember. One day Momma looked at me and she called Mrs. Orlewska down and she said, "Take a look at Stefa, she has no neck." My neck was totally swollen. So Mrs. Orlewska said, "My God if you ever live through this war, you'll have a sick child." And she said we have to do something about it. So she went out and she bought some black salve that I could put on my neck, and then on a sunny day, when it was quiet in the streets, nobody was around, she would come and get me out and in her shadow I would walk to a safe distant place there were fields not far from the house and sit in the sun. After a while, my neck got better. It went away.

And your mother and your sister didn't see the sunlight?

They never saw the sun. When we finally came out of hiding, it was very difficult to walk, that's besides the point, we would be talking in whispers, I just remembered this recently, we couldn't speak, we only spoke in whispers. We thought that we were talking loud, but we only spoke in whispers, but when our voices came back, we were shouting and many times now I have to control my voice not to shout I still have this tendency...to... because we shouted and still the voice didn't come out. There was no voice from all of this whispering all this time.

So you think your vocal chords atrophied?

I don't know. Something happened. It all came back.

Under what circumstances did you leave the basement?

Well, we left the basement because my sister developed whooping cough. She used to always cough into the pillow, but sometimes the cough escaped or she didn't catch the pillow right away. Don't forget at that point she was about three or four years old maximum. So somebody heard and they said something to Mrs. Orlewska, I heard coughing in the basement, who is in that basement? She said, there is nobody there. And she came and said, you know, you have to leave. Somebody heard you. So not far from Mrs. Orlewska there was a house, there was a field, one house and there was a house after, there lived a single woman in that house, so Mrs. Orlewska suggested that mom should go there and tell her that we are from out of town and the child has whooping cough and she needs a change of climate, would she rent us the place? And the woman did. You know at that time, I don't know if it's still true today, but they believed that change of climate helps whooping cough.

Did the woman know you were Jewish?

No. She did not know. Momma told her that the child has whooping cough and besides she is also hiding from the Germans because they want to send her for forced labor to Germany and not having a husband, she needs to be with her children. And the woman bought the story and rented us the place. It was a two room house. She occupied the second room and we were in the first one. And it was very good because she worked all day, she was a maid and she worked in the city. So she left in the morning and she came only at night. So all day long we were by ourselves. Except for one time she said, you know, your child is better and you have some neighbors here and your children never go play there, send the children to play with the neighbors. There was a house between Mrs. Orlewska's house and the one we were occupying, there was another house where a family lived. So Momma said, you got to go and play with the children, you know, or otherwise they will think that we are hiding. So, we went to that house and you know, every Polish house, has a lot of holy pictures on the wall, you know Jesus, Maria and all kinds of saints... and the minute we walk in my little sister says, and whose portrait is this on the wall? And, I said, that's it, they know us. And the little girl says, what do you mean? It is a picture of God. Don't you know? I gave her a little zat on the side and she quieted down. And I almost gave myself away too, because it was before Christmas or something and they were talking about the holidays and what are people doing and I said, by the way, when is Christmas this year? And the woman says to me, what do you mean? Don't you know it is always on the 25th, I said yes, I know it's on the

25th but what day, you know what day, what day is it coming out, I didn't know it was on the 25th. But I got out of it. Somehow, you know, there was always, there was never, never, a time that you, oh! I'm completely safe. This is where we are going to survive. This is how we are going to stay. There was every minute there something. There was a time where this woman was, I don't know if she was getting suspicious, or if she had enough, or she had really wanted the house for herself, but she kept saying, you know, your child is better and it's quiet now, they are not catching women so much to go to Germany, why don't you go back to your home town where you came from? Besides, my neighbors thinks that you are Jewish. So Momma said, well, I don't know, how can I prove to you that I am not, you know? Well, you want my brother to come and visit or something like that? She said, yeah that would be nice. So we had a friend to whom my Momma wrote, and he came and posed as our brother, as Momma's brother and our uncle.

This is a non-Jewish?

A non-Jewish man, who used to shop in Momma's store. Blond hair, blue eyed to the big broad smile, with a flat nose, turned up, Polish, Polish farmer came carried, brought food, brought vodka, brought butter and bread and some flour and stuff and waited until this woman came home and he was introduced as Momma's brother.

What was his name?

His name was Wierzbicki. And he talked to her about keeping us that you know, they are looking for Momma, they want to send her to Germany, and his wife is not about to take on two more children to take care of and surely this nice lady is going

to let us stay here until the Germans, or until the war is over and we can come home. She said sure, she is going to keep us. She is going to keep us as long as necessary. She is convinced, he gave her a little drink, put her in a good mood and everybody was very jolly and he left and she was convinced that it's okay.

Were you paying her rent?

We paid rent. Yes. He even said that he is going to send us money for the rent because how would the single woman with two children have money, but...

How did you have money?

We had our own money, my mother must have been a very, very smart lady. Because the minute the war started, maybe my father told her what to do, I don't know, she started to buy, I just told my husband about it, he also didn't know, she started to buy dollars, twenty dollar bills and she had it sewn into her clothing, and every time she would take it out and Mrs. Orlewska's brother would change it for us and this is how we lived. After the money ran out, which it ran out, we still had a little jewelry which he sold for us, also some clothing, Momma had very beautiful clothes and she brought it with her when she came. Nina and I had no clothes to wear at all, because our suitcase went with the woman when she disappeared, but Momma still had beautiful clothes that she brought with her and it was worth a lot of money. Every time she sold a dress we lived on it for a month. So, this is how we lived, but he told her he is going to send us rent money, so not to worry about we are not going to be a burden to her.

How long did you stay at this woman's house?

I don't remember exactly how long, but after a while, she really had enough. She said you have to leave. Just like that, I want the house for myself. Whatever her reasons were, I don't know. Maybe she wasn't so terribly convinced, she just wanted us out. And Momma talked to Mrs. Orlewska about it and she said, we have to leave, what are we going to do? So Mrs. Orlewska said you are going to go to Wietzbicki. So we left the woman's house, went to Mrs. Orlewska, we slept over night in her bed, she rented us a sled with a driver, it was winter time, and we went to Wierzbicki's village. We went on a Sunday morning, hoping that the roads would be quiet, it was Sunday, which it was quiet, when we drove into the village, we drove in, exactly the time when church let out and all the Polish people came out of the church and saw three Jewish ladies, three Jewish faces, they couldn't see much, we were little bundled up, but nevertheless, they saw nice white pale faces, and everybody says, a ha, Jewish woman are going to Wierzbicki, they knew immediately that we are going to Wierzbicki.

How did they know that?

Wierzbicki was known, in the village, to be involved with whatever was against the Germans, be it help Jews in hiding, help Jews that were in the woods, help to black marketing, underground, you name it, whatever was against the Germans, Wierzbicki was involved. So, we got to Wierzbicki's house, a few minutes later his wife came home from church and he says, "Jesus, Maria, what am I going to do with you?" He went like this (threw his hands up). He says, "I can't keep you in my house. I'm traif I am just as un-Kosher as you are." So Momma said, "what can we do? We have no

where to be, you have to help us." So he rented us a place. The man knew that we were Jewish and he was paid well and he rented us, he let us stay for a month, it was rented for a month. Just before the month was up, Wierzbicki came to see us and he says, "you're not going to stay the full month here, you are going to leave." Momma said, "what's happening?" Because it sounded like a safe place, you know, he was a man with two daughters, not much commotion going on in that house. He said, "somebody knows about you. I don't know how, but they found out and they are going to take you out in the woods and they are going to chop your heads off." They are not going to denounce you to the Germans because they don't want to endanger the man's life or his daughters. But they'll pretend that they are transferring you from one place to another, you won't know where you are going, and in the woods they'll take care of you. So what are we to do? I am sending you back to Mrs. Orlewska just like you came. Then, hiring a sled, with a wagon with a safe driver I'm sending you back to Krosno. We had no choice, so we went to Krosno. We came in an early afternoon, we didn't want to drive up to Mrs. Orlewska so we drove up to a restaurant and we stayed there and Momma went by foot to Mrs. Orlewska and she went in and she told her what happened. She said, "Okay, what can I do?" At night, bring the children. So in the evening when it was dark, she came and got us, we went back to Mrs. Orlewska. Back to the basement. And, this is where we stayed until the Russians came the first time. [Pause] They came twice.

The basement was one of three parts. Who was in the next?

In one part, the first part belonged to the tenant, the center belonged to Mrs. Orlewska and the third part also belonged to her, she had the two chambers, so we were in the center part with the entrance from the garden and from the house. Then when the front was coming closer and the Russians were moving in, some Germans occupied the first part, the tenant part of the basement, they were occupying it. And we were still in the center.

So, Germans were a walls width away from you?

Walls, we could hear their radio. And all conversation that was going, we knew the front was closed from what we heard through the wall.

These were Wehrmacht?

This was Wehrmacht.

Not SS?

Not SS. SS was still around, in fact, I don't know how, but somebody told on us. And it was just before the Russians came in, in fact the front was so close, that one day, one evening, Mrs. Orlewska's brother said to Momma, I am going to leave the garden door open, I'm not going to lock you in tonight. The front was coming very close, and in case there is bombing or the house catches fire, you'll be locked in. So, only the entrance from the hallway, from the stairs will be closed, here it is going to be open. Nobody will know it's like that. Alright. That same evening, I don't know what time, it was night already, we hear knocking on the other door. Juden Öffnet. That was SS. Somebody told them that there were Jews. The Germans said, Jews, open up!! So in a split second we made the decision to get out, we went into the

garden and hid in the bushes and within seconds there were flashlights in the basement and they were looking and they didn't find us. They found the place where we were sleeping and laying and they, we could hear them speak saying... oh, the old man is probably sleeping here when there is bombing or something, probably prepared himself a hiding place and they left. But, we weren't certain, so we went into the field, the corn was very high and we could hide in there. And the next morning, the same morning, a few hours later, the Russians came in and we were in the fields. So, can you imagine the Russians are on their back already and they still have in mind to pursue the Jews? Anyway, we were sitting in the fields when we heard that the Russians came in. You know, there were shrapnel all around because there was a lot of shooting going on. And Momma said to me, I'm going to go out, and we are going to join them. But we didn't all go out at the same time, she went to the house and told Mrs. Orlewska, the Russians are here, we are going to join them. Because, whatever happens, I don't want to take any chances. So she said, you know wait a day or two. Because, you know the neighbors will see you and who knows what what's gonna happen to me. You know, they were not, not all Polish people were like Mrs. Orlewska. They weren't out to help the Jews. So Momma said, okay. So, from the field we went up to the attic and we stayed, I don't know, maybe a couple of days, maybe not even that much...

She wasn't renting the attic?

No, there was nobody there anymore, because it was already a turmoil, there was nobody up there, it wasn't a room anymore it was the attic itself not the room. And

wouldn't you know it...the Russians retreated, the Germans came back in and we were back where we started for the next six months. So then, she said, okay, you have to go back into the basement, can't keep you in the attic, you know, it's too open. So we went into the basement. The Germans were again occupying that one part, we were still in the second, in the center in our old place. Then they came and ordered to, they needed to evacuate. They needed to leave the house and the street was evacuated. So, Mr. Pietrzycki, Mrs. Orlewska's brother said, I don't know what to do with you, why don't you stay a day or two and I'll see, I'll come back in a day or two. Maybe it will quiet down, see what happens. So, we were there and then we heard noises, and we knew they were going to come and take the other part that we were in and we went to the third part of the basement. There were a lot of clothes and bedding and all the stuff from the upstairs and there was one door and a window, so we barricaded the door with the stuff and we went into this third part. We were in a crouching position for two days or three days, I don't know how long, we still had some bread that he left us and there was some water and after two days, I think, we heard a knock on the window, first he came to this basement, he saw the Germans are there and then he saw the door was locked, so he assumed that we went to this third part. So he knocked on the window, we looked out we saw who it was, we opened the window from the inside. First he threw in a loaf of bread and then says give me the pot. And then he had a conversation with Momma and he said we can't sit here, I mean how long can you sit stooped down, you know, you couldn't stand up, you couldn't sit, you couldn't lay down, nothing we were in a small corner

the three of us. So he schlepped us out through the window, Nina and I had no problem, but Momma was a little larger, but we all got out and he told us, you know, it is such a turmoil, everybody is away, the street is empty, Germans are all over, why don't you go to a public shelter, they have a public shelter in the town square, it's against bombs, the air raid shelter. Stay there, there is a lot of people there. Nobody will know. Alright, we went there. There were a lot of people there and after a few minutes, Momma says to me, you know what, they recognized us. We can't be here. There was whispering already. They were whispering, Jews, Jews, you know... We had pale faces, we... maybe we didn't look very Jewish, and we didn't speak... our Polish language was very good... but we were very, very pale, from sitting inside so long. So, prior to our going into our shelter, Mr. Pietrzycki said to Momma, look, if you really, really in trouble, there is a house not far from my daughter, there is one single man, crazy professor, he occupies the whole house. He's crazy, but he is harmless. If you're really in trouble, take a chance go there. What else can you do? That's what we did. We went to the professor's house. And he was very sweet and very nice and he invited us in and he said, of course, you can stay as long as you want to and fine, we were out in the open. We had papers, but we were out in the open no more hiding. Um, there was only family living on his street. Part of the house was occupied by Germans, but actually they were from Vienna... and they were very nice to us and they were always saying good morning, and hello and how are you and how are the children... some of them even felt sorry for the children being so pale and so thin and even brought some food to Momma.

Did they think you were a relative of the professor's?

I don't know what they thought, they didn't think we were Jewish. That's for sure, they saw a woman with two little girls and I guess they felt sorry for us, and from time to time, they even gave us food. But, couldn't last forever, there was trouble brewing. While we were leaving the basement through the window, Momma scratched her hand and she got an infection, didn't pay attention to it, and she had a red stripe running up her arm, and one of the soldiers noticed it, and said to her, my God what happened to you, you have Blutvergiftung, you have blood poisoning. And what happened? Momma said, "I don't know, it's some kind of a boil here, and it'll probably burst open and it will be okay." He said, well, it can't wait. I'm going to open it up for you, I'm a felcher, I'm going to open it up for you and release all the pus. Okay. So he did. And he opened it up and it was okay, and she was still having that bandage on and the next day or the day after, somebody else asked her, oh, what happened to you, who helped you out? This felcher helped you out? Momma, said, yes, as a matter of fact he did, wasn't that nice of him. What's so nice, that the next day they came to pick us up and they were calling us to the station. We had no idea for what. Nobody told us, just "Kommen Sie". Come with us. So Momma went and I and Nina after. And we are positive, this is it. You know, turned out, they didn't think we were Jewish, they were calling us because of what happened with Momma's arm. They wanted to know if this man posed as a doctor, and why was he helping a civilian lady? And they stripped his epaulets, stars or whatever, and he really suffered, I think they even gave him some kind of a fine

or what... but they let us go, in the meantime, we died a hundred deaths. This is ??? and then, then we had to leave this safe place altogether because they really evacuated everybody. The Russians were coming this time for good. So Momma really wanted to stay, but there was still a Polish family living in the neighborhood and they were going to a village escaping the Russians, and we couldn't say, well, we want to stay, because this would give us away. So we went with them to a village and this is where we were liberated by the Russians.

What was the village?

I don't know, I don't remember. We were in the air raid shelter. Together with other Polish people. At that point, we already had some color, we already had voices, and we looked like normal people, in fact, Momma became very, very friendly with another Polish lady who was there with her husband and her daughter... and this lady was making such plans after the war, the war will end, we'll go back to our home town and start a business together and do something and she was very disappointed that Momma told her later that we are Jewish and we are not going to go with her to her home town, we are going to Sanok and we are going to look if anybody is left and what happened. She couldn't believe it.

Why?

Because, we were nice people. Momma was a nice lady. And Jews "are not nice people." You know, we had this, they had this image of Jewish people being terrible in some way, I don't know why. Most Jewish people I know are very nice. [Smiles]

Let me take you back a little bit. Your aunt and her daughter who had gotten past the aktion in Krosno, do you know what happened to them?

Yes. It was my aunt, my uncle and two daughters. They got past the aktion and they worked in a factory... it was a rubber factory in Krosno. And then one day, they were going to be shipped somewhere else. To a camp. And my younger cousin came and she came to pick up some things that they still had by Mrs. Orlewska, and I remember Momma begging her, she said, Doccia, please stay with us. It's no use going", it's like my mother saying the same words that my aunt said to me before... stay with us, whatever will happen with us will happen with you. Somehow we will share the bread and the hiding you will stay with us maybe we will survive. She said, "I know what is going to happen to us. For sure we are not going to live through the war. But I could not live the way you live." And she chose to go back. And sure enough they were sent to a vernichtung camp, and they perished.

Do you think your aunt knew?

I don't know if she knew, but at one point, she said to my mother, you'll see, because Momma was complaining that you know, it would be so much easier if we were out even in a camp or in a ghetto, but out with other people, not just by yourself like this, and my aunt said, you'll see, you will live and we will not.

You felt isolated?

Yes, often we talked about it that we, of course, didn't know about the concentration camps and the gas chambers and the stuff like that, we had no idea this existed... but we always felt that being in the ghetto, being with more people, being with others

would be easier to survive, even to be hungry together is easier then just, we were very, very isolated. We didn't know who was alive and who was not and what was happening on the outside, we had the Polish paper every morning, but it didn't talk about the Jews. They didn't talk about much anyway. We were reading mostly the matrimonial pages in the back, my sister and I, at the age of four she knew how to read already. So, we would read the matrimonial pages.

You said your sister could read, she must have learned when she was in hiding...

She learned when she was about four to read.

What kinds of things did you do with your sister to keep occupied?

We, I used to make lists of songs that I used to know, and would sing in whispers. We would talk, and we would try to read, and that newspaper saved our sanity a little bit there was some writings of saints... our landlady was a very pious lady and she was subscribing to monthly magazines of saints, there was some cookbooks, there was a house doctor book, we read everything. Even the recipes, whenever a recipe called for preserves or fresh fruit or vegetables, we would say one day, maybe we'll live, maybe we will have a garden. Maybe we'll have trees, maybe we'll make preserves, maybe we'll be able to cook.

Do you have a favorite saint?

Saint Anthony. [Laughs] Yeah, I read his miracles. Mrs. Orlewska subscribed to this monthly magazine and that was all about St. Anthony of Podwa, and I read all about his miracles.

You told me once that when your mother left and didn't come back for a while, that you started to pray to anyone who would listen.

That's right. We stood in the window, first we counted the stars it was a starlit night it was so bright the moon was full and I thought, my God, if she walks, everybody will see her. You know, nobody looked. It took her longer to come back, maybe she had a little chat with Mrs. Orlewska, probably did. And we prayed, and I cried and I prayed first to my father, then to my heavenly father then to St. Anthony, too. And she came back. We prayed a lot.

What do you think would have happened to Mrs. Orlewska if you had been discovered?

I don't think I know. Both Mrs. Orlewska and her brother would have the same fate as us they would be shot on the spot, together with us, or hung, or both or whatever they chose to do. Or maybe some torture before, maybe we know of other people, usually people know of other people. Maybe they would torture us to tell about other people.

Did she know that?

Of course. She knew. She knew, but she felt that this is what she wanted to do.

Why do you think she did it?

Well, she did it for the second reason. The first reason, let me tell you. She wasn't that young anymore when she got married. She was married to a convert. And she was a wealthy lady, and her husband used her. She bought him clothing, she bought him a house, I don't know what else she bought him, and then he left her. And I don't know how long they were married, but he left her, and she was quite

heartbroken. It would stand to reason that she would not like Jews, to put it mildly being wronged by a Jew like this. And Momma asked her this, and she said well, when I was a little girl, and I was coming home from school and we were crossing a frozen lake, children were crossing by foot, and apparently, the ice was thin and she fell in, the ice broke and she fell in and she was drowning. At that point a man in a carriage, in a sled, was passing through and he saw her and both he and the driver jumped in the water and pulled her out. And this was a Jewish man. So she was convinced that the Jewish man saved her life so she could save Jewish lives later. And this was her belief. She um, got no payment from us. She uh, sold some jewelry, some clothing, whatever and if Momma offered her a little payment for her troubles, she would say, I can't take money from you, I'm not doing this for money. If Momma would say, so give it to a poor person, Momma really wanted to give her something to show a little appreciation, what could we do, she would say, there are no poorer people than you. No light, no sun, no freedom, no food, who is poorer? She would go to Mass every morning, she would pray for us. Yet, after the war, after the Russians, after we were liberated, we came back to Krosno, and Momma went to see her, on her own, she left us with somebody, and she wanted to really be in touch, she begged her, please, please, please, don't come here anymore, don't write to me, let's not be in touch, I am afraid for my life. My Polish friends and neighbors will point a finger at me and say that I saved Jewish lives, something should happen to me. You see the Polish underground was very anti-semitic, Polish people were

very anti-semitic, Mrs. Orlewska is one in I don't know how many million. But we never had a chance to even reciprocate, this is a very weak word to use.

And Mr. Wierzbicki?

With Mr. Wierzbicki, I am still in touch.

Why do you suppose he did it?

Why he did it. Well, he hated the Germans, number one. He knew my father, he used to come shop at my father's store, and then when father was gone he would come when Momma was in the store. Was strange. Whenever he would come into the store, he would go into the back room. We had a storage room in the back of the store. And I remember every time Momma would come home after Mr. Wierzbicki was to the store, she would say, I know he steals, his pockets were always full. You know, small things in the hardware store could be very expensive. And I remember my answering to her, why don't you say something to him. You know I can't, so he steals, so what. I don't know if it was his conscience, if it was because he was against the Germans, for sure he is not anti-semitic, whatever his motives were, I don't know. Maybe he was hoping for some reward after the war, we had, my parents were very, very well to do, and my father buried a small treasure. Maybe Wierzbicki hoped to, and believe me, if we would get any of that treasure, for sure he would benefit, or get something from Momma, but that treasure was never found.

What about the university professor?

Well, what about him. He was a very nice professor, he was crazy, he would run around naked, one night he came pulling Momma by her hand, both Nina and I said,

my God, he's gonna kill her or something. We didn't know where he was pulling her. He wanted to show her a holy light. He pulled her to a window, there was a fire going on somewhere, maybe a bomb fell or what, so he was showing her the holy light and from that time on we lived very peacefully together except he was running around naked.

But he knew that you were Jews?

No. He didn't know. He knew there was a woman with two children they need to stay somewhere. At that point, a lot of people were displaced already from their homes. A lot of people were, including Poles, yeah. But the Jews, we didn't even talk now because they were gone.

You were liberated in this village. What happened when the Russians came?

When the Russians came, Momma said to me, now this time, I have nobody to consider, we are going out, we are joining them, if they stay, they stay, if they move back again, because the front was moving back and forth constantly, we'll go with them. So she went out and she met, a soldier or an officer or what, and she told him in Polish who she is and what she is and he said I am a Jew, too. And he said, stay right here I'll be back I have something to bring you. He said that he found a Sefer Torah. What happened to him, I don't know. He never came back. So this was the end of the encounter with the Russians. Then we went back to Krosno. And there were a lot of Czech soldiers in the Russian army, too. And we actually got food from them, because at that point there was no food available except that I remember that the children were sent into the streets and the grown ups too, and we were going

around saying, "amhu", meaning brother, a Hebrew word for brother, and they knew who ever was Jewish answered and this is how they supplied us with food. There was no food at all. Then after we couldn't go to Mrs. Orlewska, we couldn't be in touch with her, there was no point in staying in Krosno anymore, so my mother decided to go back to Sanok to see what happened. She left her parents, she left her sister and husband with two children, a brother and wife and a few children, and cousins, distant cousins, close cousins... so when we came back, we found out what happened. But the reception we got was, "oh, so many of you are still alive..." we thought everybody was gone. This was the reaction of the Polish people. "So many of you still alive." There were still too many Jews. Of course, nobody was alive anymore, we found out that they, prior to erecting the ghetto, a lot of people went into a hiding place which was a large cut out ice cellar, there were 40 people in that cellar, and they were hoping to wait out the time in the cellar until the ghettos closed so they could come up. But there were two old women living near by and they saw what was going on and they just pointed their finger and they came and got them. After we came back, we had people say, oh your uncle, the pious one, he sang all the way to the cemetery, Sh'ma Yisrael [Hear O'Israel], he was leading them, they were all saying, over and over and over, and they were singing some songs, I don't know what they were singing.

They were shot?

They were all shot in the cemetery, all forty of them. Women, children, men, old, young, everybody... He was such a pious man. Even after they didn't let him have...

he had a myayau [prayer group] in his house, so they arrested him. So we paid a lot of money so they let him out, so for Yom Kippur here there another mynyau, so they arrested him again. They beat him, but they paid money again, they let him out again, and if you asked him, what's going to be, he says, God will help us. It's gonna be okay.

What are your feelings about that?

A waste. Sadness. Loss. I don't know my feelings anymore. Bewilderment. Why? What a loss. Look at the contribution the Jewish people made (softly) to society, to culture. Who knows what geniuses went down. Who knows what these people would have grown up to be. Just wiped us out.

And yourself, you said, you were ten years old when it happened?

Yes.

What are your feelings about your own experience in that kind of loss?

I lost, not even talking about losing a father, everybody still have a father when I was an orphan, and he didn't die because he was sick. A loss of childhood. I didn't have a childhood, I didn't have a youth. At ten years, I was totally grown up. Not only I, but my friends too. We had such a void, such a, (softly) I don't know, it's a terrible loss. It's an emptiness. I don't know right now.

Have you, I know we had done an earlier interview, but have you talked to your children, your husband, your sister?

Well, when I met my husband, of course we talked. He was saved in Russia and he thought, oh when I come back I will have such stories to tell, but then when he heard

my story and other stories like this, he didn't... and many times I would say to him, you know, if you don't believe it, if it sounds unbelievable, I don't blame you, I really don't blame you. Because many times it sounds unbelievable to me even though everything I told you is true. And there was a lot more that I didn't even tell you. Because it's not just a straight road, there are little avenues, little side streets that you can go into every minute of the day, it is almost impossible to tell it all, unless you kept going back and back. My children I didn't tell the whole story, maybe they know it from listening here and there with my friends, no matter what the occasion is, somehow we always wind up standing at the door for a half hour talking about the war experiences. Everybody had his own and something will always trigger this conversation and we commented on it already so many times, no matter what we do, we always have to say goodbye on this note. With my mother I did not talk much, it was very painful. She did not open up and we didn't ask questions. Recently, I spoke with my sister, I asked her if she ever talked to Momma because they lived together, and I was married, and she says, she asked Momma once about our father and she said, all she said, he was a very fine man, he was very good natured, had a beautiful voice, he loved to sing and he was an angesehen mensuh, and he was well known in the community, respected in the community. And he was a good, fine person.

How do you think your mother dealt with it?

I don't know. She never talked about it. The relationship that they had and the love that they had for each other, she probably couldn't face the loss, I don't know. And

then at a young age, she had to be both father and mother to us, she was as very strict mother, but... maybe because of that. A lot of children were allowed to do a lot of things that we were not. We were always held back a little bit, and I always thought that that was the reason that she was mother and father, she had to be both.

Did it effect your life after in what you would think about when you were doing certain things that didn't seem to be related to the Holocaust, you said every time you peel a potato, for example, you think of Mrs. Orlewska's soup?

When my children were very young, my husband worked in a factory at that time, and if he didn't come in time, or if he was delayed, for whatever, I was always thinking, oh my God, I'm going to be like Momma, I'm going to be left with three young children. Yesterday is going to repeat itself. It always followed me. There are things that will trigger all kinds of memories, um, smell of a cigarette. When we were in the basement, there was a room above the basement, which was occupied by a young couple, and in the summer time, they would be out and obviously, they smoked, and the smell of the smoke would come into the basement, and believe it or not, it smelled so nice, it was a different smell, it wasn't the basement kind, it just drifted in, or they had music playing, and I thought oh my God, how nice it is to be outside. You know, when I bake cookies in the winter time, I open the windows sometimes. At one time, I left the basement to go to a neighbor of my aunts, we knew her name, because Momma had a big piece of jewelry that she wanted to sell and Mr. Pietrzycki wasn't able to do it, so and one time, my aunt told my mother, if you really need some contact, not for hiding, but if you need to sell, you can trust this

man, he was an old neighbor from the other house. So Momma send me there and it was a winter day, it was so cold, I don't remember how many kilometers I walked, but I came into this wonderfully warm kitchen and she was baking cookies, and she was in short sleeves and this smell was this side of heaven and the windows were open and it was hot in the kitchen. I was frozen stiff. And I said to myself, my God, this is the epitome of luxury, well being of richness, of freedom, of not being hungry. Baking cookies by an open window in the middle of the winter. So this will trigger. Recently I met with a Polish friend and we were talking about cherries and there is a special expression when you express the pit from the cherry and she said she was doing this and I said, my God I didn't hear the expression in fifteen years, when my mother used to do it. There is a special instrument that you poke a hole and the cherry pit comes out and then you marinade it or make marmalade or wine, or whatever or however you use it. And this triggered it and I went on to say, you know my mother used to make jelly preserves, jelly preserves and vischneyk, and stuff like that. You know, at the drop of... you can't think like this, but there is always something that triggers, it's always coming back...

Is there anything you want to add to this, any final comments maybe about Mrs. Orlewska, Mr. Wierzbicki or the experience in general?

For Mrs. Orlewska, this is a monument. We were never able to show her what it meant to us what she did, it was impossible. It was her request, not to come and see her or be in touch by mail. So this is for her, so people should know that not everybody was a beast. That there were people like Mrs. Orlewska. She should

never be forgotten. What happened to the Jews has to be remembered. Wierzbicki, he's a nice guy... I'm in touch with him, I send him coffee, I'm being invited to his house, maybe one day, if I have enough courage I will go to Poland again, I don't know. I hope children and grandchildren and future generations should never have to experience this, and it should never be forgotten.

Thank you.