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Summary

Yelena Gorodetsky was born in Kiev, January 3, 1935.

Her mother, Hana (Anna) Aronova, was Jewish, her father was Russian -Vadim Konstantinovich. Her father came from a wealthy family of jewelers in Odessa. He used to be an opera singer. He was married with two children when he met her mother.

Her mother came from an orthodox Jewish family and for many years they didn't accept her father. However, when her mother's mother got into the accident and she came to Kiev for treatment her father took great care of her and the "ice melted".

Yelena has two older sisters. Her father was a postal carrier. Her mother stayed at home. Although her mother's family spoke Yiddish she didn't learn the language. Before the war she never experienced antisemitism.

In the beginning of the war Yelena was 6 and a half years old, her older sister was 23 and the middle sister was 16.

Kiev was occupied by Germans on September 19, 1941. At that time her father was traveling for work. Although her mother's sister was prepared to evacuate the whole family, her parents waited for their older daughter to graduate medical school, so they stayed in Kiev. Just in two weeks Germans posted proclamation ordering Jews to gather at one place. Jews thought that they will be deported to Ghettos, they never believed that they were gathered to be killed. People were trying to take money and food with them. Her neighbor brought 2 suits and asked her mother to keep them for their brother who was at the front then. Old men were pushed on the cart, others held their children's hands. Her mother didn't go right away, because she was waiting for her husband to come home. Her father's friend came to their place, he gave her mother a special black belt for her father (that had some mystic meaning), he asked them to go with him to avoid German's round-up. A day or two later they heard on the radio announcement that people who hide Jews will be killed, then her mother decided to go to the designated place. Thousands of people were still moving towards area called Pervomaysk, what we now know "Babi Yar". They moved through "Jewish bazar". Then the miracle happened, her mother's friend Marusy Bandesh, who lived close to the execution place and heard shots all night, warned them that they will be killed. Her sisters started crying and they went back home. Her father came home next morning and he couldn't believe that all Jewish people were sent to be killed. The execution was going on for several days, policemen and German soldiers surrounded the place, but people in the city were slowly learning the truth.

When her father came home he started acting "crazy", he was losing his mind. Her older sister told her that in 1937 NKVD tried to recruit her father, but he refused and he was paranoid all his life. Her family lived on a small street where poor people lived, the owner of the apartment was a Polish woman who took the name of the family off the books, she didn't betray them. The girls had red hair, so they didn't match German's stereotype of Jews. The parents were terrified and slept with nooses around their necks in case Germans come to get them. Her father tried suicide once, but his older daughter saved him.

Then in March 1942 her father's father died from cancer. After the funeral her father took her home and during the night he hung himself on the black belt. Her mother tried to commit suicide several times, the older daughter kept eye on her.

During these years they were saved by their neighbors. Their mother never left the apartment, older sisters knew how to hide. Polish neighbors didn't know that they were Jews and they brought them soup and other food. Their neighbors helped them to dig the whole in the kitchen where they stayed during regular SS Round-ups. One time they made themselves look like they had typhoid.

Yelena knew many cases when husbands reported their wife's to German police, Jews were betrayed when they came from hiding in the woods and other incidents when local non-Jewish families supported German round-ups. However, she and her sisters were never betrayed.

Almost all mother's siblings were killed by Germans. Even sister's husband who converted was killed.

They lived in hiding till 1943. When Germans started removing all people from the center of Kiev the Ukrainian woman Ustiya whose husband was sent to gulag in 1937, who used to deliver milk to the people on their street for 15 years took them into her house 7 kilometers outside of the Kiev. They lived there for 3 months. They ate soup and frozen potatoes and carrots. Her older sister went with her fiancé who was Russian to hide in a small city away from Kiev, and they survived.

Yelena remembers that in March of 1943 Soviet Army moved into the area, her mother rejoiced she wanted to give everything she had to the soldiers she saw on the streets. However, later her mother had terrible encounters with KGB, they questioned her for 8 hours, they accused her in collaborating with Germans. Soon after that her mother committed a suicide.

Yelena talks about bombing of Kreshatik- Main Street in Kiev. She heard rumors that Jews started the fire, but official theory is that Germans bombed and destroyed the street.

After the war Yelena only graduated 7 classes, then she went to technical school and became a communication technician. She first met her future husband when she was only 14. Both of her sisters got married, they have children, they live in Kiev. Both of Yelena's daughters married Jewish men.

In 1991 her younger daughter with the family immigrated to Israel. Later her older daughter with family moved to Israel. Her younger daughter and she returned to Ukraine, because of employment problems. They lived in Israel from 1991 till 1998.

Yelena would like the names of her relatives to be included in the lists of Jews killed by Germans.

The names are: The family Kosoy who were killed in Pervomaysk.