

NADIA KAPLAN

LITHUANIA/GERMANY/RUSSIA/JAPAN/CANADA
WORLD WAR II

PART ONE
Interviewed by

Renia Perel & Laura Jachimowicz

(November 30, 1989)

PART TWO
Interviewed by

Renia Perel & Reva Hollander

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Interviewee: Nadia Kaplan (K)

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Interviewers: Renia Perel (P), & Laura Jachimowicz (J)

K: At the time, Russia allowed the Jewish people to buy some land. I don't know, parcels of land. I don't know how much. This I don't remember. Probably enough for them to make a living. So my grandfather lived in a small town nearby and he decided, if a Jew can buy land, he's going to buy land. Land was the dream of every person, to have some land. And he bought land. He had ten children. There were six sons and four daughters. And he bought the land in Podubissa and there were another nine families who bought land. So all together we were ten families. Now my grandfather...I don't know if I should include it or whatever.

J: Go ahead.

K: He had ten children, and one of his sons, he thought, should become a rabbi. He wanted him [one son] to become a rabbi. So at that time, but probably [there] was very little money, so he sent him to the next town. 'Rosjane' was in Yiddish. Rosjanie was in German, 'Rosyanie' probably, 'Rosiyani'.

J: 'Rosiyani'.

K: Ya.

J: Rosiyani, that's...

K: Ya, Rosiyani.

J: I know, I've heard of that.

K: Ya, and, um...to become a rabbi. So, if a 'yeshiva bokher' comes, he is assigned 'Tag', it means days, where to, ah...this day he's here, this day it's [he's] there, and so on and so on. Two weeks later he arrived home [and] he says, "I don't like borscht and I'm going to America." He says, "A woman, for all the 'yeshiva bokhers' coming to there and makes potatoes and borscht and in two weeks, in two weeks, I had borscht and I don't like borscht." He was fourteen years old, [and said] "I'm going to America." He wrote a letter to his uncle. He sent him a ticket, and with fourteen years, he went to America. This was Uncle Charles, I don't know his Jewish name, probably it was Chaim, I don't know, but we knew him as Uncle Charles and he came to America, worked very hard and became a rich man, but this is nothing to do with it. Anyway, he was well enough, I mean he had enough money, so he could send for the whole family. My father was the one...a first, second...the third son, and he went to South Africa and he was three years in South Africa and he decided he had to work too hard and he came home and decided to look for a wife. So...

J: So, travelling between different countries at that time and Russia was easy, there was no problem?

K: I don't know, to South Africa. When I was a little girl in Podubissa, and I saw a procession, I mean, people going and crying. I always thought it was a funeral, but it wasn't. People emigrated to South Africa and parents knew they will

never see them again.

J: Ya.

K: I mean, this was a fact, so everybody was crying. So, to me, it was [like] a funeral, everybody was crying. Anyway, my father came home and started to look for a wife and my mother lived somewhere else. She lived two days by wagon away from where he lived. Ah...my mother was the youngest daughter. Everybody was gone, and she was four years old when her mother died. And she was the apple of my grandfather['s eye]. Nobody was good enough for my mother. And she got older and older, I wouldn't say she was beautiful, but she had four thousand ruble, four thousand ruble was a lot of money, and she saw my father. My father was very handsome. He was tall and blond and [had] blue eyes so she decided, okay -- I'll show you the picture of my parents -- she'll go to live in Podubissa. Ah...her father was in the lumber business. He worked for a company, for some relatives, and he used to ride a horse, and if they attempted or tried to buy a forest, he used to ride around the forest and...to tell them, approximately, how many cords of wood they can get from the forest.

J: In this section.

K: Ya, this was...he was an expert in it. So my mother grew up in lumber and she came to this town Podubissa and it was very small; it was pretty, I mean, to me. There were high mountains, maybe it was just a hill and it was a big river, maybe it was just a pond but she saw lumber and she saw

forest and she saw pines and she saw firs and she saw...and she said, "There's gold here, there's just gold." So, she wanted my father to come to her cousins who were already in the business, who delivered lumber to the pulp mills. There were two pulp mills in Germany. One was in Memel, at that time was Germany, and one was in southern Germany. And he wouldn't go. In the meantime my late other brother was born. He wouldn't go. I was born...Mama used to go out to the hired man and say, "Get the horses ready." Papa would go to say, "No, we are not going," until my younger brother was born. He is the artist. And then, one of my mother's cousins mixed in, and says, "She wants to go to see her father. You have to let her go to see her father." So we went to...[not clear]...took my father by the hand and went over to her cousins, the rich 'Yafshetz' [Oisher(?), from Hebrew, "wealthy man"], and she said, "There's gold where I live now," and he says, "Hindela," her name was Hinda, "Hindela, if you say so, here is a blank cheque and buy, buy, buy." And my father became a partner, and this was 1910. And this is a little bit of the story...

J: The background.

K: The background from 1910, after that...you know, 1910 we still stayed there. We used to buy big forests and many people who used to, um, chop the, for...the, the, chop the trees. In the winter they used to, um, throw it into the frozen river, in the [not clear]...and in summer they directed it to go to Memel to the [not clear], until the war

broke out.

J: In 19...

K: 1914.

J: 1914. The First World War.

K: The First World War.

J: Ya.

K: Um, I don't know the day the war broke out, I know only an aunt and uncle came with eight children and, um, because there were battles where they were. Where we were there were also battles. We were between the Rainer (?) Valley, and there were mountains on both sides. Don't ask me how high. When my grandfather used to come to visit, I was afraid he goes right into the sky, you know. The fights were between Russia and Germany. One day the Germans came and one day the Russians came. One day the Lithuanian told the Russians that my father is a German spy and the Russians came and were going to shoot him. And my father was a 'kohen', and at that time he was very religious. And he was on business when the war broke out. He was on business in Riga, Latvia, and he had to come home, and...can you imagine, I still remember, he said, "I had to go through a cemetery in order to avoid, to avoid the battles." You know, for him it was a terrible thing to go through a cemetery [being a 'kohen']. Anyway...

J: Did you continue living in the same place?

K: We continued living until one day, my uncle and my father decided, we had a cellar where we kept potatoes and, um, carrots, whatever, and ice, blocks of ice, and they started

digging out a cellar and we all had to go in. The battles were coming closer; we all had to go in. And the next morning we got up and nobody was [left] in this little settlement anymore. Everybody was gone. And there was a little synagogue and I remember it was round or something and they had one Torah. And my father was running to the synagogue, got the Torah, and we loaded the horses and the wagon and the Torah was under the bedding and we were sitting on top and I still hear the 'wizzing' of the cannons. I can still hear, but to my father it mattered to have the Torah, and then years and years later in 1940, when we were trying to get out, the same cousin who told my father she has to go and see her father, "Your wife has to go and see her father. You have to let her go." He says that our 'Schuss' [German 'shot'] was that Papa saved the Torah. You know, he was a very...this man was a very religious man. Anyway, we left. We were just going, you know, we came to a place where all the other people were, and my father met people from the pulp mill and he knew them very well. They were Germans, and he supplied everybody with what German people supplied everybody with, sugar and coffee and flour and whatever we needed. And he told my father, "Don't stay here. Go, just go. Go to the next city," which was Rosjanie. And we went to Rosjanie and the other people who lived in the settlements said, "Where are you going?," and "You don't know what will happen to you," and "Don't go!" My mother said, "We are going."

P: Rosjanie is R-O-S-J-A-N-I-E. [Pronounced 'Rossainy'.]

K: In Lithuania... 'Rassain', in Yiddish it was 'Rassain' and we didn't, ah... my father had business, somebody he did business with, [since] we couldn't get a place so we were [lived] in a barn.

J: You were living in a barn...

K: For maybe five or ten days, I don't remember. And then we got an apartment and then the Germans came to my father, they need horses, and he has to supply them with horses. So, he started buying horses. I never saw money. When I was little, living in Podubissa, my mother taught me to play cards, to play 'Sixty-Six', to play 'Telephone', to play all these things, because she had a maid and I was company, I was four years old [or] five years old, I was company. And I never saw money. When we had an apartment we didn't have any furniture, but the first time in my life that I saw money high up to the ceiling because they paid my father for the horses, and there was nowhere to put the money. There was no bank, everything was closed. But I didn't even know what this is [was]. I have to also tell you about my father. They started taking people, the Germans, took them as forced labour.

J: Where was this? What year was this?

K: In Rosjanie.

J: In 1918?

K: This must have been... I started school, I was six, seven, six years old. I started German school. It was occupied by the Germans.

J: Rosjanie was occupied by the Germans?

K: Occupied by the Germans.

J: So it must have been 19...

K: '16, '15, '14, ya, and my first school was German.

J: Was German school.

K: Was a German occupation. I know my brothers used to go and in Podubissa [there] was a 'kheder'. But girls didn't go to kheder; girls don't have to be educated, boys have to be educated.

J: So they were, they were gathering people to go to forced labour? Did you say that, at that time?

K: Ya, to forced labour, no, ya, mainly Lithuanians and also some Jews [were gathered to go to forced labour]. And they came to my father, if he can do something, so my father went over to a...ah, ah...in German, [it] is 'Hauptmann' [German army captain]. He overlooked the whole area. He was in charge of the whole area and [my father] told them, "What are you doing with my workers, they're all my workers. I need them for, for your war effort. I need them for the lumber. I have to deliver lumber to the pulp mill [in Memel]. You have to free them." He says, "Okay, let them put down 'S.Kaplan' on each arm [as an arm band], eight hundred." He freed eight hundred and they all came. [He freed eight hundred gathered on the marketplace]. They were all on the marketplace [which] was always the biggest place and Papa had a lot of trouble because they started smuggling and it was...he had a very bad time. But at one time we lived already in another apartment. We had furniture, we had a piano, and, um...one time

[sometime later, we saw] was a big procession, a church procession. The bishop came dressed in full regalia and the [choir] boys were there, and incense and things, and they go and we're all at the windows to watch and they stop at our door, and Papa went out and he was white as a sheet, and he said, "What's going on?" So the priest embraced my father and kissed him on both cheeks to thank him for saving the Lithuanians and my father was only afraid he shouldn't make the cross over him. You know, we were so afraid, at that time, afraid, ignorant or whatever. When we saw a priest with the long skirts, we used to cross the street. We were afraid he would make a cross over us and we will become Gentile. You know.... So at that time also my father thought that [since we were learning] German, we have to learn Russian too and we have to learn Hebrew. So, two teachers came to the house after school. A Russian teacher came to teach us Russian and I still apply the first fairy tales. I still apply...the Russian fairy tales have a moral, they have a moral to every story. I think one, something...do you speak a little Russian?

P: Uh hmm.

K: Like 'the mosquito was on the nose of an oxen', so it means don't brag. If you didn't do it, don't say you did it, you know. The second one was, um, 'A peasant got land, and it was full of rocks, so he started doing, taking the small rocks, it was very easy and then it came to the big rocks'. You know that I always, when I had to iron shirts and iron sheets, I

always thought of it and I ironed the shirts first and I still think of it when I have to do something that's hard, and do something that's easy, I still apply, you know, it's funny, and it's how many years ago and I still think of it. And then my father decided [that] we will have to move to Memel. So, the three of us, my older brother, my late older brother and myself, and my younger brother went to Memel.

P: How do you spell Memel?

K: M-E-M-E-L.

J: Where was Memel?

K: Memel was a separate state after the First World War. When the war was over, the French, the English made it a separate state. It didn't go...it was taken away from Germany [like Danzig].

J: But that was on [the] Russian side or?

K: No, it was the German, it was the German, Eastern Prussia. It was an ice-free port. It was a good port. It was on the way to Leningrad, to Riga, Leningrad to Finland...

P: On the Baltic Sea?

K: The Baltic, it was...

P: On the Baltic.

K: On the Baltic, so it was a separate state with a president.

J: What was the name of the state, did you say?

K: Memelland.

J: Memelland.

K: Memel Gebiet. 'Gebiet' is an area. 'Memel area'. Gebiet [is spelled] G-E-B-I-E-T. 'Memel Gebiet' [it] was called until

1923 when they gave it to the Lithuanians because Lithuania became a...became a state in 1918 [and was landlocked].

P: Oh, like Danzig, the 'free city'.

K: Free city, ya, it was a free city. Ah, Lithuania became, was a state, and they were landlocked. They didn't have a port so in 1923 they gave it [Memel] to the Lithuanians and so the Germans...

P: So after 1923 that was...

K: 1923.

P: It was an independent free city and then it became [part of] Lithuania.

K: And then, ya, 1923. So, this is the story which my husband, in 1923, you could choose to be a Lithuanian citizen. My late husband was not in town so he didn't choose Lithuanian citizen[ship]. His father was a Turkish citizen going back to Bismark's time. Bismark's time was 1880, 1878, 1872. Ah, Memel was a border city between Russia and Germany and he wanted all of the Jews out of the border cities. So, instead of going out to the border cities, they [went] inside Germany and bought passports. There were some that were called 'Christiapoler' that are Greeks. My father-in-law became a Turk, and his picture was on it. The name of the Turk was still under the picture signature. They stroked out with a pen, they didn't erase, they cancelled it out and they wrote down 'Abraham Moses Kaplan', my father-in-law, so he became a Turkish citizen, and the children were Turkish citizens and I married, when I married my husband, [he] was a Turk.

P: Oh, I see, so...

K: A Turkish citizen.

P: So, you were already married. When were you married?

J: Eh...that was probably 1923...

K: I was married in 1928 but before that, you know, this is leading up to why he could go out and I couldn't, you know.

P: And what was your husband's first name?

K: Bernard.

P: Married in 1928, Bernard Kaplan.

K: Ya, so he had a passport, we were married and he was a Turk and I was a Memellanderin. And one day they called him to the Turkish embassy. We lived in Berlin. [At that time] we got married, we lived in Berlin...

J: Oh, when you got married you lived in Berlin.

K: Ya, 1928 we moved to Berlin.

J: To Berlin.

K: [In Berlin] they called him to the embassy and they asked him how come he didn't fight in the [First World] War. He was already seventeen years old or eighteen years old [at the start of WWI]. He was ten years older than I am. So, he said, "Well, I was too young." [They said] "No, you were not too young." So they took away his passport...and he didn't have a passport. He didn't have a Lithuanian [passport]...he didn't have a Turkish [passport], so he became stateless. No passport. At that time it was 'Nansen'. After the First World War many people were displaced. So [there] was a Norwegian by the name of Nansen and he said, "They have to have a

passport, they have to have a Nansen Pass." [Since] a 'Nansen Pass' was 'stateless' not every country would let you in. Not every country...you could travel. You couldn't travel through Russia at that time to be stateless and all those things. But before that, so we were in Memel. My parents moved to Memel and we bought a house --here I have a picture of the house-- we bought the house and we lived in Memel.

P: Oh, he went back to Memel after they took his stateless, eh, his passport?

K: No, no, he was still in Berlin. No, no, this was still, no. I am talking that I went to school in Memel, um, actually I was with Cantor Kahn. They took borders in, children, like my brothers and I. I was too advanced for the class and I was too young for this class so I had private lessons until I was about twelve years old, twelve and a half, so my parents decided to send me to Frankfurt am Main, to girl's boarding school. Well, they had different groups, you know. They had about forty girls, very religious. We had to 'daven' [pray] in the morning, we had to 'bench' [say Grace] after every meal.

P: What year was that in Frankfurt am Main?

K: This was in 1920, 1920, between 1920 and 1921. Something like that. At this time my father also went. My father and mother went to Carlsbad. [It] was the Zionist Congress at that time in Carlsbad. The Second or the Third I think. [Note: The Twelfth Zionist Congress was held in Carlsbad September 1-14, 1921.]

P: What kind of school was that?

K: This was...[not clear] Dr. Heinemann and...

P: The name of the school? No, the name of the school.

K: Dr. Heinemann.

P: Dr. H-E-I-...

K: -N-E-M-A-N-N, and there were forty girls...

P: See, it gives us the school in Germany.

K: Ya, for all the girls, the girls were...there were very few [girls] my age. They were, at that time, a couple of girls came from Poland, shtiebel, and a shtiebel was a girl whose father, um, was the first one to print Jewish books in 1890 [in Wilno or Vilna]. The first publisher not of Hebrew or Bible or so, Jewish books, you know.

P: So, this was a religious school.

K: This was a very religious school and I was the interpreter for Polish, for Serbian, for Yugoslavian because I spoke a little Russian.

P: Jews from all over Europe...

K: From all over. We had Americans. We had girls who were eighteen; for them, it was a finishing school. There were girls who were my age, there were girls who were sixteen, there is still one, ah, whom I see every time in Montreal. There was one who was in Chicago. [I was very close to her.] She died. And, um...and one of my brothers was also there and he didn't like it so he went back, and my father sent them, my older brother, my younger brother, he sent them to ah...what do you call it? Talmud Torah high school in

Hamburg, [Germany], and this was one, [a principal,] by the name of Carlebach. Carlebach was [a family of] seven brothers, seven rabbis. One was the principal. One Carlebach was our rabbi in Berlin when [where we lived after] we got married. A nephew of the principal in Hamburg married my grandson and this was such an unbelievable [coincidence. He died since.] It was in Quebec, in Ste.-Agathe, and here, Rabbiner Carlebach was coming to marry my grandson. It's, it's uncanny, it's just uncanny you know, when this happened. So, um, then I came home when I was sixteen, it [school] was finished. The most embarrassing moment in my life was...one of the most embarrassing, I had several, [was] when I had my cancer operation five years ago. There were three in the room, and one woman asked me, she tells me her life story and then she says, "So, what did you do before you got married?" And that's the first time somebody asked me. And I looked at her, I didn't know what to say. I said, "Well, I married very young." I came home, in the meantime, and there's another story. My father lost the big house. We had a very large farm; sixteen families worked on the farm. We moved out to the farm, that's where I got married. It was a very big farm; an 'estate' they called it in, you know, and, um, I took French lessons. We used to go into the city, we had a car. I used to take French lessons, English lessons, piano lessons. I didn't work. But the first time that somebody asked me, "What did you do before," I caught up, don't worry, I caught up with work, later on when I came over here, used to work in

the studio when it was busy till four in the morning sitting with [retouching negatives] until it used to come back and go back and come and go, you know. Anyway...

J: So we are going to the year of 1928.

K: '20, well, '24 when I came back from...

J: You came back in '24 and you got married in 1928.

K: Well, '24, I mean, I could include what happened to my father, it's interesting because they considered him as a Lithuanian patriot and at that time my father bought a very big forest with a partner. [He] paid an awful lot of money. I remember he got the money from England. And the banker came to our house to look us over. And we always had maids. We had a cook [and a maid], my sisters had a governess. You know, it was good times. The table was set with the best of everything and we had a silver samovar was on the table, everything. And they made a deal. Papa had another two houses [two other houses], besides the villa. They made a deal and then Lithuania came. They needed land for the peasants and they need this forest [for many peasants], and Papa lost the money, he lost the villa, he lost [the] two houses in the city but he had a farm, the big farm. We still had a car, we still had a [not clear]...we still had the horses, we still had a housekeeper, we still had the cook [and the maid], we still had everything. But we didn't have Memel. So, when he lost that...I was, a year later, I was married on the farm. We had a musician[s]. We had a caterer [who] came from Tilsit [then part of Germany, today 'Sovetsk']. I was reminded of

the caterer one day before I came here. I remember sitting next to a young man who didn't speak English. He was forty years in Canada and spoke only French, but we spoke German. He says, "I remember when you got married." I said, "How could you, you were, you are so much younger than I am." [He said,] "My aunt was your caterer. From Tilsit, you brought my aunt. [She] was your caterer. She told me all about it." Anyway, so then my father. In 1924 we had relatives from the [United] States coming, the rich uncle and aunt and cousin. And they were dined and wined and everything and my father wanted to go to the States. And he said, "Here you live like a millionaire and the States will be much harder. Stay here." In '29, my father sold the farm. He got, I was already in Berlin, he got, I don't know at that time...at that time, he got really, I don't know. The Depression was on. He had thirty or forty thousand dollars [in] cash and he had other things. He could make at least fifty thousand dollars. He wanted to go [to] the States. He went over to see his parents. His parents lived in the States because they came out --I never met them-- before I was born and they died three months before I came. And my grandfather died. And he [my father] came to the States and says, "Look, I can do something." They said, "No..."

J: Your father came to the States?

K: Ya, to the States to see his parents and the rich uncle. [His parents said,] "You don't take advice from poor brothers and sisters, you take advice from the rich ones." So he says,

"Don't come, the Depression is on. What are you going to do here? You stay where you are." So, my father took the money and started building a storage tank...

P: In, ah...

K: Memel.

P: In Memel.

K: Ya, in Memel, a storage tank, a big one. And, um, there was 'Shell' and 'V.P.', and there were many storage tanks but Rumania was willing to give him all the petroleum, all the gas that he needs. He put rails in. He bought tank cars, all the things, you know. We didn't know anything. My husband and I were in Berlin. Shell came to us. They will pay us two thousand mark a month if we'd dissuade my father from building a tank. That's the first I had heard that they were building a tank. Naturally we didn't go into it. This was the time before we left anyway, for Memel, because I had started seeing swastikas in '32. They were already...

J: In Germany.

K: In Germany, and I was scared to death. I don't know why, I was just scared to death. My late son was born in '31. I used to go with the baby buggy and um...they have in the West End, let's say they have in the corner a beer parlor and every beer parlor had already a big flag with a swastika and I used to cross the street and go a little further and there was another one. And one time, I got very nervous and I came home [and said] "I am going home. I'm just going home and not staying." Anyway, so to come back to the petroleum, we left

Berlin in '32. To come back to the storage tank, Lithuania decided they need one, they need a storage tank, after all, they are a country and they need a storage tank and my father has to sell it to them, and they dictated the money. But [he had] to sell. And he [the Lithuanian government representative] says, "If you don't sell we will disappropriate [appropriate or seize] it." And it was a very well going business. [After we had the petroleum business for a year or so, it was doing very well.] And again we had to start anew. You know from...so since he knew lumber, they started building in Memel lumber, he decided he wants to have the delivery of the homes of lumber for the homes that they need. So, with a bribe, a good bribe, he got it. And he had a yard, he rented a yard filled with lumber and we [they, my father and family,] had to leave Memel. This was...they left [in] '39, they left one day before they [the Germans] took over Memel, [under] Hitler.

J: Who left [in] 1939? Your parents left. Where did they go?

K: To Lithuania. [They went] inside Lithuania.

J: To inside Lithuania in 1939.

K: 1939. We, ya...

J: What happened to you?

K: What happened to me was, in '35, I had a polyp, and my doctor couldn't help me. He says, "I can send you to a surgeon here but I want you to go to Berlin. Berlin has the best doctor, Dr. Joseph, and he'll operate on the polyp on the womb." A polyp, and he'll operate. And I remember when I asked him

[Dr. Joseph], "Will it come back?" and he says, "What [I,] Dr. Joseph takes out never comes back," and it never came back. It was 1935. I still had a friend in Berlin in 1935 [whom I knew from my school in Frankfurt am Main] and we heard [about] Hitler and Nuremberg Laws.

P: It was already Nuremberg...

K: '35. Nuremberg Laws. In 1935 from Nuremberg. And I came home and said, "I'm going to learn a profession," to my friends.

P: After the surgery.

K: After the surgery I was fine. And I said, "I don't know what, but I'm learning a..." [They said,] "You, you are going to work? You?"

P: Your husband said that?

K: No, not my husband, my friends. And I said, "Yes, I'm going to learn something." I went to Kovno, which is the capital city, and there was a very good photographer, a woman, and I asked her if she would teach me. She learned [studied] in Berlin. I didn't want to be just a plain photographer like, I had pictures taken, my wedding pictures...

P: This is 1935 or 1936?

K: 1936. And, um, I didn't want to have the pictures taken in a clamp like I had my, my, ah...engagement pictures, my husband, I still have it. I didn't want it, I wanted modern. So, I studied at home, everything was fine, I had a maid and I had a nanny for both children and I...

J: This was in Berlin?

P: No, in Kovno.

J: Oh, you're back in Kovno in 19...

K: Back to Kovno, and then I came back to Memel in order to get, ah...in order to get the diploma I had to come back [and] study with a 'Memler' photographer. He was a German whose son was 'ein Gauleiter' [leader of a district during Hitler's time], in Berlin. 'Gauleiter', it means he had a district. He was a Nazi, the son was a Nazi and the district that he [had] was under his jurisdiction.

P: What is it called?

K: Gauletier.

P: How do you spell it?

K: G-A-U-L-E-I-T-E-R, Gauleiter. And once we went on an assignment, you know, near Memel. There were, there were little cities and they were very, very poor. There was no industry. Twice a week they used to come in to beg. Twice a week you just open the door and you hand out the pennies, you know, and they used to sell, some people used to sell apples, so Jewish people with a wagon and they had apples, like our MacIntosh, and I went on an assignment with this, my teacher, and he said to me, "Mrs. Kaplan, Hitler doesn't mean you, he means these people," pointing at the man who's selling apples, "calling 'Apples! Apples! Apples!'" I said, "What did he do, he's trying to make a living?" [She said,] "But Hitler doesn't like them. He doesn't like them, nothing will happen to you, but [Hitler] doesn't like them, he doesn't like these people."

J: I want to question you on something before you continue. How

did you know, at that point, what Hitler will do or doesn't do? Was it a...

K: Because I heard them once even before 'Nürnberger Gesetze', [translated from German] Nuremberg Laws, "Köpfe werden rollen," [translated from German] "heads will roll." Ah, we heard, we could hear Goering, "Juden, werden, werden wie Wanzen treten," you know, like bed bugs, "We'll step on them [the Jews] like bed bugs." Goebbels, you know, it was, they were always talking [about] what they'll do with the Jews.

J: Was this on the radio?

K: This was on the radio that we could pick up [in] Memel, we could...

J: Because I want to know how people knew that Hitler is going to destroy the Jews.

K: Well, that's how we heard...

J: Through the radio and through the press.

K: Through the radio, through the 'kämpfen' [German "fight"]...[not clear]. I think, at that time, this was before he [Hitler] murdered Röhm. You know a little bit [of] history, Röhm was the...he [Hitler] was afraid of Röhm, that he'll...but he murdered them all. You saw it probably in the movies too. He probably meant 'kämpfen' [not clear], he probably meant S.A., you know, Röhm was the leader of the S.A. but I took it that Jews, that he's against Jews. I was afraid of him. In '38, I...my son had what they call 'Mono' [mononucleosis]. He was seven years old, and my doctor told me to take him to the mountains; we didn't have any

mountains. So, we went to Czechoslovakia. That's where I also bought my cameras. And my friend was still in Berlin, Hilda and her family and, ah, you know, Berlin was a city where people used to stop you, a man would stop you and ask you, "Didn't I meet you there" and there and so on and so on and so and so. And I remember in '38...a German stopped me and I could get all the money I needed, they thought I'm 'Eine Volga Deutsche' and, ah...a German with a name 'Nadia' because I'm a 'Russian German', Russian German, they didn't take me for a Jew [but rather for a] Russian. They were very polite to me and I was shivering like this because I [had] heard how they talked to Mrs. Rosenbaum, how they [sie haben] 'angeschnauzt' [German past tense of 'anschnauzen', to snarl at, snap at, bawl out]. You know what is 'angeschnauzt' [anschnauzen]? It was just terrible to listen to it, how they in the same place where I went for to change, exchange the money, and she wanted to immigrate and she also needed to exchange the money, how they talked to her and how they talked to me because they thought [that] I'm a [non-Jew]. So, one man stopped me on the street, "Didn't I meet you...?" there and there, I said, "Would you like..." I have to say it in German. 'Rassen [not clear], [racial-...] Do you know what [German word] is? "You are not allowed to sleep with a Jew." He said [that] it's a Hitler's 'Nürnberger Gesetze' [Nuremberg laws]. I have never seen a man running as fast as this guy did. When I wasn't afraid [spoken in German]. He

didn't know that I was Jewish, you know. I had...

[End of tape 1, side 1]

Interviewee: Nadia Kaplan (K)

Date of Recording: November 30, 1989

Ident. Number: 05-1

Track Number: T1-S2

Interviewers: Renia Perel (P), & Laura Jachimowicz (J)

K: In '38 I went to buy some...first of all I put my son in a Kinderheim [German "children's home"], there was a Dr. Cohen and he was there and the mountain air and little skiing and all those things he got very well and I went to Prague to buy cameras. I spent about three or four thousand dollars at that time for cameras and I opened up a studio. My dentist vacated the place and he moved and I took his place and opened up a studio and I was very busy.

P: This was in...?

K: In Memel, in '36, '38, '38. and then they wrote down on the showcase 'Sarah', the studio was called 'Nadia Kaplan', you know.

P: Um hmm.

K: And then they wrote in big letters, 'Sarah'. Then they started breaking the windows, in my, ah...

J: In 1938?

P: In 1938, in Memel?

K: In 1938, in Memel there were Germans in Memel, many Germans, there were many Nazis.

P: They didn't apply the Lithuanian law?

K: Who would tell? What could Lithuania do? I didn't know who

did it. How could I charge them? And then, Germans who used to come to have their picture taken, came up with tears in their eyes, to [say] "Please take me [i.e. 'my photograph'] out of the window. I'm getting very nasty phone calls." So, in 1938 we started writing to the [United] States for affidavits. So, again my rich uncle said [that] we should stay in Europe and fight the fascists. So, I had a second cousin who studied art in Europe, and every vacation used to come to our place and he knew us and he knew how we lived and he knew us all. He used to spend three summers with us, and he went to his family and he was just pounding on the table [telling us that] we should get the affidavits, and we got the affidavits. Anyway, in '30...my husband was general manager of all the tobacco factories in Lithuania. There were two general managers. One was the indoor; one was the outdoor. There were seven factories and it was like a combine and each one had a quota. The larger ones had larger quotas. They considered it as the biggest job in Lithuania that anybody could get. In '38 they [the tobacco factories] decided to leave Memel because they knew that Hitler is going to come to Memel.

P: When you say 'they', who do you mean?

J: Who? Who?

K: The, the, ah...tobacco factories.

P: They were Jewish?

K: Jewish [owned]. All of them. One [of them] was my girlfriend's who is still in New York. There were two...one

big factory in Memel and all the other factories were in Lithuania and they decided that it's too risky to have the office, the accounting office in Memel. They should have it in Lithuania. So my husband had to leave. This was the beginning of '39. We left and went to stay in a hotel.

P: In Kovno?

K: No, in Shaulay [Šiauliai, Lithuania]. Schaulay, Shaulein... was, ah, S-H-A-U-L-E-N was in German.

P: S-H-...

K: Schaulay. I'll give you the Lithuanian [name] S-C-H-A-U-L-A-Y. 'Shaulay' [Šiauliai, Lithuania]. This was the second largest city in Lithuania, the largest was, was Kovno, Kaunas, and the second was 'Schaulay'. And there we stayed in a hotel for a year and three months.

J: With the children.

K: With the children. We had two rooms...

P: Two children now?

K: Two children. I had a girl to teach them Hebrew. My daughter was four years old, my son was seven and he didn't go to school. They had a teacher coming in to teach him Algebra, Math and things like that, and one to teach him Torah; an old man with a long beard who always fell asleep, and my late son, instead of being taught by the young teacher, taught the young teacher dominoes. When I came in, they were playing dominoes. We taught him Rummy. He taught him all those things. Anyway, they didn't have any schooling until they came to Canada and he was nine years old when we came to

Canada. So we...

J: So, what happened in 19, ah, let's confirm to 19... In 1939 you're living for a year and half in a hotel, what happened after that?

K: Now, my parents were still...

P: No.

K: Just a minute, my parents were still in Memel.

J: Right.

K: In Lithuania, my children got whooping cough in a very, very bad way. We lived in a hotel, we had to pay [twice a day for] the, the heating, um [not clear], you know, the ovens, you remember, the European ovens, no central heating, tile ovens.

P: Yes, I do.

K: They were heating once a day, but we paid them to heat twice a day because it was 42 degrees [sub zero]. It was the coldest winter I ever remember in my life.

P: In '39?

K: '42, eh...was '39 was the...was just impossible. My parents were still in Memel. So, the doctor in Schaulay [Šiauliai] said we should send the children to Memel because it's near the ah, Baltic Sea and also has gas 'Anstalt'. What's a gas Anstalt? They had gas...

J: Installation of gas.

K: Ya, gas. They say it's good against whooping cough. You know, the gas [company] that supplies the city with gas. And I sent along the girl, it was a Jewish girl. [I] sent her along and one day, ah, they were there two weeks [when] I got a phone

call from my husband that the Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs had an audience with Hitler and the Minister fainted and it went like a fire through all of Lithuania. He fainted, and [my husband] called right away Memel, "The children have to come home." The phone is not like here. You wait, a normal phone [call] is two hours. An urgent [call] is one hour. Three times urgent is, you get maybe in half an hour. And I said, "Send out the children and my mother and father, everybody out." In two days time, all the Jews left Memel. They knew, everybody knew, that Hitler is going to come. Everybody left. My mother left, left an apartment with a piano, as I've said before, with everything you can imagine, and she came out with the two dresses that my, that the girl for my children left and I had to make another urgent, urgent, urgent phone call, she forgot her two dresses. I said, "I'll buy you dresses here in Šiauliai." No, she wants her two dresses. So Momma carried her dresses and one pot of flowers under her arm and Germans were lined up and said, "To Palestine, to Palestine, to Palestine, Jews..." [In German,] "Juden nach Palestina. Juden nach Palestina." That's what my mother heard. This was the last she heard from, ah...we had, she had a maid, [a] Lithuanian maid and the maid was able to come in with a peasant and a wagon and take out a couple of things, she took out a couple of chairs, she took out things like that. When my mother left...[phone rings]...[Before my mother prepared to leave] we were packing our sterling, my sterling, and we want to send it out to Lithuania and bring,

"Maybe you should pack too and we'll send it out together." I said, "Momma, you do your thing, I'll do my thing." So, we were going to go to the [United] States because we had the affidavits from my cousins, relatives, and we're going to the States and they told us in three months we will go to the States. So we bought, ah, big, big, big boxes and put in my silver, um, my trousseau was all hand embroidered, you know, ah, it was customary to have, ah...[not clear]...invite once or twice a year sixteen or eighteen ladies and it was tablecloths for eighteen and all hand embroidered and all. And my trousseau, I was planning...

P: This is in Šiauliai, you are in now?

K: No, no. I'm...no, no, but this was still in Memel, still in Memel, and I said no. So, when my husband called that he [the Minister] fainted and Hitler is going to take Memel, [that] this is a sign he will take Memel, I called and the, um, fellow who looks after [where] my, our boxes were and the tobacco place, in the warehouse, and the warehouse attendant came to the phone and says, "I can't do anything, there are two S.S. men, S.A. men right in front of the door; that's it, I can't do anything, I can't ship anything." So they kept everything. So, I was in Lithuania, so I sued him as a Lithuanian citizen, I sued Memel, I want to have my things out, all my stuff. So, I got a [letter], I'll show you the letter, I got the letter. They sent out the crystal, the china. Ah, they stole all the tablecloths. They stole all the pictures, [and] all the carpets, everything else and about

the sterling. This, I have to give you the letter. Can you turn it [the tape recorder] off? I kept it.

P: You have a document? Give it to us now.

K: Ya, the document...

P: Just, ah...ya, I'll just mark it down that you have it.

K: No, no, I'll show you.

P: This is a copy.

K: Ya, and it says, um, in German, can you read German?

P: Der Oberbürgermeister.

K: Bürgermeister. That's [the] head mayor of the city. Do you speak, do you understand German?

P: Doesn't matter, it's for the [not clear].

K: [Reads original German document]

P: May I ask you to translate it since you are so good at it.
Like...

K: Ya, I can translate it someday.

P: Would you please? And then...

K: Do you want it now?

P: Well, just in a few words.

K: I have to take my glasses, they are in the other room.

P: Oh, that's fine then.

K: Now, it is that, um...

P: We can use that document for the book.

K: Ya [reads in German]. Anyway, they complain, I mean, they are very, um, ah...indignant that six liqueur glasses, silver, are not sterling, just plated. So, they sent it out because they are just plated. I got it.

P: And they call you 'Jewess'.

K: The Jewess, "Die Jüdin." [In English] "The Jewish sterling of the Jewess, Nadia Kaplan."

P: The Jewish sterling.

K: Ya, so, in the hotel I was sitting and I'm reading the letter and I was laughing, I was just [laughing], you know, so, another woman who came from Memel too, they had a big shoe store, Salamander. She said, "What's the matter, why are you laughing? What's so funny?" I said, "Here they melted all [of] my sterling." And then [she says,] "You are still smiling?" I said, "Sure. We are here, nothing happened to us. You can always replace sterling, you can't replace a life and we are here." She couldn't understand it, that I wasn't sad about it. She just couldn't understand it, you know, when it came to the china. When I was fourteen years old, I think, Momma started a trousseau, you know, and, and then, she bought me very, very, very expensive hand-painted roses, German [Dresden] china and everything. Service for eighteen. I couldn't take it out from Kovno because the Russians came in.

P: Oh, 'Schalber', that was the name of the place, ya? No?

K: Šiauliai.

P: 'Schalber' it says here.

K: 'Schalber' is the name, [like] Kaplan. Schalber is the one who is in charge of this, Schalber it was, it was in a...they were um, brokers and they were travelling brokers.

J: Just for a moment, how...

[End of Part One.]

Interviewee: Nadia Kaplan (K)

Date of Recording: December 22, 1994

Ident. Number: 05-1

Track Number: T2-S1

Interviewers: Renia Perel (P), & Reva Hollander (H)

P: Hello Nadia. Good evening.

K: Good evening.

P: Here we are together again. We are taping the concluding interview of Nadia Kaplan's life and her survival, and the concluding part, ah, begins about circa 1938, '39, when...with her departure and the continuing story until her arrival to Canada and her life in Canada itself. Okay Nadia...

K: Well, I can tell you it's, it's a long story.

P: Of course.

K: It's a really long story, um, um...I know there were people who started thinking...I don't know if I mentioned it here in 1935, ah, when I was in Berlin and I heard Hitler. I think I mentioned it beforehand.

P: Yes you did.

K: That when I came home I said I have to learn a profession and my friends didn't believe me, you know. "You are going to work? It's impossible, you are going to..." I was already married, I had two children, I said, "Yes, we'll all have to leave." In '35 nobody believed that you'll...something is going to happen. What does he want from little Memel? Nothing

has happened. Then it came '37, '38, people started thinking. This people who had a big party were going to Sweden and they had a good-bye party to [for] all their friends, and the youths, and everything, and it was...they went all out. The party was after breakfast which I didn't take part anymore because my brother took my husband and myself home. I never found my shoes. I don't know what happened to my shoes, if they were in the taxi or whatever happened, I don't know. Anyway, this was, it was happy and it was also very sad. And then, um, on my doctor's advice I went to Czechoslovakia with my son. He had to have a change of climate. So when I was in Czechoslovakia for four weeks, he was in a home for children who needed, um...

P: Special care?

K: Not special care, but they needed, after a sickness or something, to recuperate. And I left him...

P: It's a convalescent home.

K: Ya, convalescent home. And I remember my son always had big ideas, he was seven years old, when he grows up he'll be King David, you know. Anyway, so I went to Prague, first I want[ed] to buy the cameras and then I wanted to see all the old synagogues, the...all the Jewish area, the Jewish, ah...there is one synagogue, as everybody knows, the 'Altneuschul', you know it's five hundred years old. Everybody knows that this rabbi [Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague, also known as the 'Maharal of Prague'] wrote the book the Golem, he put a little heart [a soul] into a figure of clay,

after the Gentiles [falsely] accused the Jews for [of] using the blood of children for Passover. And he went, he sent him [the Golem] out at night, and when they saw him they got scared and they didn't say anything. The same rabbi was...this is [from] a book I read. The book is called "The Golem." Now I have to tell you, when [the film] "The Golem" played in the 'Rosjanie', in this small town where we lived, then...

P: Where was that?

K: This was in Lithuania before we moved to Memel. When, ah...my parents went. When my parents went the whole family went, everybody, all the children. And when I saw the Golem coming down, you know, and looking at you, and he was [so] big, I fainted.

P: Um hmm.

K: And four firemen [from] the fire department [were] watching. They carried me out and, you know, through the movie [theatre]. I saw it later on; I didn't faint. And the guide in Prague, when I was in Prague, told me also that, when we came to the cemetery of this Rabbi Loew, I think it was, that I was to put in a wish in [on] his grave. You know, everybody throws in a wish, so my wish was that Hitler shouldn't get us [that] we should be saved from Hitler, you know...

P: That you should be...

K: To this day...

P: That you and your family should be saved from Hitler?

K: Ya, saved from Hitler. And to this day I believe in it. It's

a funny thing. I just believe in it. My parents got out. My sisters, and they were not married then, they all got out. We got out...

P: You and your husband...

K: Except my husband's family didn't get out.

P: Um hmm.

K: Nobody, none of them. My in-laws had two visas. They had a certificate to go to Israel, they paid thirty thousand 'litas', you know like zloties [Polish currency], like 'litas' I don't know. And they had a special visa to come to the [United] States, an exceptionally special visa [obtained] through the rabbi who founded the yeshiva in Cleveland. This was his son-in-law. But they couldn't get out because of the Russian occupation of Lithuania. You had to have a permit to leave the country, and they couldn't get the permit to pick up the visas, or their certificates. Subsequently, my father-in-law was taken out to the forest and he was killed, my...and this was before the ghetto. My mother-in-law was at home with her daughter and three grandchildren, and two soldiers came in and they shot the children first and then my sister-in-law and then my mother-in-law, she had to see it all. I have to tell you also about one of her daughter's daughter, I mean, a sixteen-year-old who ran away, in hiding, and she...

P: Whose daughter was that?

K: My, my niece. My mother-in-law who was with her daughter and the three grandchildren. There was a fourth grandchild, a

sixteen-year-old girl...

P: Uh hmm.

K: Who ran away and hid with the peasants. And she used to come in at night and take out some little cousins. She gave him gold, and gold earrings, or gold rings, whatever she had in gold, and he was hiding them, the peasant was hiding them, and she saved some, that's how we know the story. One got to, um...after the war, she got to 'Batolz' or Munich or somewhere and she told the story. And there was the story in the Jewish paper, I think the Forward or another one, "The Heroine of Lithuania," about Henny, my niece.

H: What was her name again?

K: Henny Bloch.

P: How do you spell...

H: How do you spell it.

P: Would you just...

K: Henny. H-E-N-N-Y. Bloch. B-L-O-C-H.

H: And she was your?

K: My husband's, my husband's niece.

H: Husband's niece.

K: Ya, Henny Bloch.

P: And she was sixteen years old.

K: Sixteen years old. She used to go in with the peasant at three o'clock at night and take out some little cousins of hers.

P: And this is [a] Lithuanian peasant?

K: In Lithuania, in Telschi. In Lithuania, in Telschi. Telschi,

ah...in the Jewish religious, ah...not community, but people who are very Orthodox or religious know about Telschi. It was...

H: And how do you spell that?

K: Telschi...Tels. 'T-E-L-S' I think it was, or '-Z' in Yiddish. [Telz Yeshiva was situated in Telz (Telsiai) Lithuania.] And Telschi was...we called it Telschi, T-E-L-S-C-H-I. It was one of the largest yeshivas in...next to Slobodka [Yeshiva, in Kovno], in Lithuania. Very large yeshiva.

P: Next to Slobodka?

K: Ya, one of the largest ones. So, um, one night she had also a couple of kids in the hay wagon with the peasants and soldiers came and with the bayonets they went into the hay and they killed them all.

P: They killed the others, the ones that were covered...

K: Ya.

P: But not the ones that were...

K: Not the...they were there already. The ones that survived were already at the peasants.

P: I see.

K: They were hiding in the, um, in the pig sty with their heads under, you know. They were the survivors, they could tell the story. What a big story.

P: So, did you ever meet her or...?

K: I'm sure I met her. I was in Telschi. I was in the family.

P: No, did you ever meet her after the war?

K: I'm...I didn't meet her, she died, but I met the one that

survived.

P: Oh, that's the one I'm talking about.

K: Ya, ya. I used to go to visit in Cleveland, you know I had my niece there, my husband's niece, I just loved her, she died about five years ago. And it was not too much of an age difference, maybe ten years.

P: Ah ha.

K: She was maybe ten or twelve and I was twenty.

P: Ah ha.

K: And we took each other, I have a picture. She was just a wonderful person, a rebbetzin [rabbi's wife], with a degree, and with a master['s]...with, you know, she was teaching, and all her seven children. She was stuck in Shanghai [China]. She went out of Lithuania as a Polish citizen.

P: Um hmm.

K: And a Lithuanian family...you know, I go from one thing to the other. A Lithuanian citizen, ah, I mean, a Polish family came to Lithuania as refugees. And they put on their passport, so they could get her out, she was Lithuanian, and she went out with a different name on their passport. And actually married the son of the...

P: That family.

K: Of the family. [He] was also [a] rabbi.

H: And what was her name again? The...

K: Sorotzkin. Chasia Sorotzkin...Chasia Bloch was the sister of Henny Bloch.

H: Chasia, C-H-A-S-I-A.

K: Ya, ya. And her name when she died was Sorotzkin. T-Z-...

H: T-Z-...

P: Z-O, isn't it?

K: No, Tzorotzkin.

P: Z-O?

K: S-O-R-O-T-Z-K-I-N. Sorotzkin.

H: Sorotzkin, okay. Ah ha, that was Henny's sister.

K: Henny's sister, ya, she had a little brother who died, another...they were five children and only one survived, and this was Chasia, the one who was in Shanghai.

P: The one that went to Shanghai.

K: Shanghai, with the Polish family.

P: But this was after the war, after the Second World War they took her to Shanghai? At what time did they take her out from...

K: 1940, 1939 or 1940. When the war started in Poland, they, they were able to run away or maybe they were near the border, I don't know where they come from, from Poland.

P: To Lithuania?

K: To Lithuania and went to, one rabbi goes to another rabbi, you know. So, my brother-in-law who founded the yeshiva in Cleveland used to come very often to Windsor [Ontario] when we lived in Windsor. In Memel when he came for tea, once he came, and he brought his brother-in-law along, and I was dressed, you know, I put on a hat, I put on everything, you know, I was scared, I was scared to death when they came. And they had...

P: Why were you scared?

K: Because I...my parents were not like that, my mother didn't wear a 'shaytl' [wig traditionally worn by married Eastern European Orthodox Jewish women], you know. My in-laws were very religious, you know, but with my in-laws, they knew that I wouldn't wear a shaytl. My girlfriends didn't wear a shaytl.

P: Just hold it.

K: I didn't grow up in such an environment, you know. As a matter of fact I met, ah, my future in-laws when I was fifteen years old. I was driving the car and I had, ah, I couldn't...it stalled. The car stalled. Like they used to say 'nypany', you know at that time, the car stalled, and I went in to phone, we had a chauffeur at that time, to come and help me out and start the car. And he asked me to come upstairs, they had a very large wholesale dry-goods store, a very large one.

P: What city was this?

K: Memel, Memel.

P: Okay.

K: My mother used to buy her trousseau in the store. You know when she got married she bought her trousseau there. So, he asked me to come upstairs and meet his wife and we had a very nice conversation. Then I became engaged and I met them again. He says, "You know, we liked you right away. We didn't know which son." If they had four, three, still three unmarried sons. Which one would be the one for me? So,

anyway...where was I?

P: Go ahead, go ahead. We were now, ah, maybe you could go back and we would like now to hear about your getting out of Lithuania and all the particulars that pertain to the visa, the papers...

K: Oh ya, well...

P: And the children, and just your own family.

K: Sorry, okay. My...as I mentioned in the story, my husband was director of Tabak [tobacco] Syndicate. The Syndicate was seven factories...this I wrote already, ya? It's in the story.

P: Yes, you have everything about this, the factories...

K: Okay, so then...

P: That he was the director...

K: Ya, he...

P: One was 'inside director', one was 'outside director'.

K: Ya, oh ya. He had to, we had to leave because the office left to Lithuania, so we, instead of being in Kovno we were in Šiauliai. We were about...and then it disbanded. They decided it cannot carry on because the war broke out in Poland and everything they, ah...to each his own. The Russians came in, this was a little later, the Russians occupied Lithuania and they took, confiscated all the factories anyway, and they sent some to Siberia. Not the one that my husband, that we were friends with, they left before. They went to France. As a matter of fact they arrived in Brazil the same day I arrived in Canada, the 27th of October, 1940. So, we heard

that you can, there is a way to go to Canada, we didn't have a visa yet. We thought it's very easy to go to Canada. Didn't I tell you about how my father got to Canada? I don't think, no, I didn't.

P: No, you didn't speak about it.

K: One day we hear that, um, the Canadian government sent the C.P.R. [Canadian Pacific Railway], sent one of their people over to Lithuania to, um, get some people to come to Canada as farmers, Lithuanians. Lithuanian families have sons, they have five sons, six sons. So, one of our friends called the name Sorenson and asked him, "Would you take Jewish farmers?" He says, "What do you mean, are there Jewish farmers also in Lithuania?" He says, "Yes, of course there are." And he decided to give him the names. And this same lawyer could not get out, his father got a stroke but he told my father about it. My father spoke some English because he had been to South Africa for three years, 'pigeon-English', he could make himself understood. So he says, "I'm a farmer, I have a big farm, I don't know, thousand, two thousand hectares. I have sixteen families." He says, "Okay, you come and bring me anybody who wants to come, any Jewish person, family who has anything to do with farming, is it a dairy or is it a mill, or is it selling horses or selling cows." Nobody wanted to go. They didn't want to go. "Canada is too cold. In Canada I won't be able to buy a banana for my child. I'm not...I'm not going. I'm not going." So altogether five families went from all the other families who could have saved themselves,

nobody wanted to go. So, my father went, and my husband was...he [was] questioned and examined as a farmer. He was not a farmer. He asked him [my husband] one question, "Which side do you use to milk the cow?" He didn't know. He didn't know. He didn't know. He [my husband] was never a farmer so he didn't get the permit. But later on we thought we would get out of Lithuania and we were still in Šiauliai, and we went over to get all the papers and buy the passports and buy the permit to get out and we...it was a lot of money, eight hundred 'litas', like eight hundred dollars to spend. My son was then eight and he was waiting for us in front of the hotel and he said, "You threw out the money. We can't go because I heard over the radio that Goebbels occupied Norway, and we can't go by Sweden or Denmark, it's all closed up. We can't go." So we couldn't go. So then we decided what can we do here? Šiauliai is the small...I think my buzzer is going, excuse me...

P: Okay, put it [tape recorder] on.

K: We were, we were trying...

H: It's on.

P: Okay.

K: We were trying maybe my father could do something, you know, from his side.

P: And he was already in Canada?

K: He was already in Canada.

P: With [your] mother?

K: Everybody. My, my father and my mother and my younger

brother, Nathan, and three sisters.

P: And name them please.

K: My sister's name...my brother, younger brother, Nathan, and my sisters, Bertha, Fanny, and Fanny died in the meantime, and Ide...

H: Just a minute, Nathan, sister Bertha, Fanny...

K: Should I give you her last name too?

H: Bertha, Fanny...

K: Bertha Bergman...I mean they were then not married, you know, they got married later.

P: Um hmm.

H: And Fanny, and what was the closest...

K: And Fanny and Ide.

H: Ide.

P: F-A-N-N-Y?

K: Pardon?

P: Fanny. Fanny or...

K: Fanny died. She died two years ago.

P: Ya, but how to spell the name, double 'N'?

K: F-A-N-N-ÿ with two little dots, like the German 'Y'.

H: Oh.

P: Um hmm.

K: You know, üpppsilon [German 'y']...

P: Um hmm.

K: Üpppsilon with two little dots [Umlaut], she still signed like that, she always signed like that.

H: And how do you spell Ide?

K: I-D-E.

H: Okay, so...

P: So they were already in Canada, where did they go, to Montreal, Toronto...?

K: The boat sailed...they went to Montreal and they were looking at farms, and at that time there was the [not clear]...you were not allowed to take out any money from Lithuania, only a certain amount. My father was allowed to take out fifteen hundred dollars. Fifteen hundred dollars Lithuania said is a fortune. You go and buy a farm for fifteen hundred dollars. You buy a shell, no clothes, no machinery, old house, a hundred-year-old house, absolutely nothing. So, fifteen hundred dollars, how far does it go? Ah...but we didn't know that, ah...my cousin, my husband had sent out some money, he was able to send out some money because he worked with tobacco companies, and sent it to a cousin, to New York. And the cousin told my father, he says, "Your son-in-law has got to have money. I'll send you the money." So he sent him the money, and they were able to buy coats, they were able to buy new shoes, and they were able to build over the house and make bedrooms and whatever.

P: And machinery too?

K: Anyway, but they didn't tell us, they didn't tell us, but this has nothing to do with it. We were...

P: When you say "us," [you mean] just you and your husband and your two children.

K: Ya, we were ah...we saw we can't do anything in Šiauliai, we

have to go through Kovno. In Kovno we stayed with my brother, he was still there, with my brother and Sonja Rohm, you know, his wife.

P: Um hmm.

K: And...we met somebody, we heard of somebody who were close friends of ours in Berlin, when we lived in Berlin, and she is...her daughters are dancing in a cabaret, and she is, um...called in German 'eine Einlaufsdame'[?]. Einlaufsdame[?] means she was all dressed up but still a beautiful woman and, um, she sits at a table and then some officers come and order drinks and she drinks ginger ale.

P: Um hmm.

K: And they drink and she makes them bill, the bigger the bill...[phone rings]...

P: Like a geisha type.

K: Ya, something like that.

P: Like a geisha.

K: Ya. Her husband, they came from, they ran away from Germany, they left Germany. They went to Prague. In Prague her husband died, and then they were able to come to Lithuania, and they had nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing. So, the girls were dancing and that's how they made a living. And then I heard that she has [had] a little something, a relationship with first-secretary of the German Consulate.

P: Hmm.

K: We were, we were looking for a way to get to Italy, or to get to England, or...just to get out from this...

P: Lithuania.

K: Lithuania. So, we approached her, and, you know, we were once upon a time, friends.

P: Ya.

K: And she says, "Well, for two thousand litas," which was, it was a lot of money...

P: Ah ha.

K: "Something can be done."

P: Um hmm.

K: So, she says, "I'll call you." And she called us [to say that] we should come on Monday, ah, some...two o'clock in the afternoon to see Mr....Herr 'so and so', at the German Consulate.

P: Um hmm.

K: And we came, "Ja, jawohl...gemacht werden, ja, ja."

P: "Yes, yes it can be made."

K: "It can be done, it can be done, but something is going on, I can't give you a date, something is going on. Call me on Thursday." On Thursday we didn't have to call anymore because they [German troops] flooded Holland and Belgium, and the way via we were going to go away [was through] Belgium.

P: Um hmm.

K: Lithuania, through Germany via Belgium to England or Italy or wherever we could get in. We didn't have to do it anymore because it was over. He [Hitler] attacked Belgium and then he went on to France, so it's again another story, we can't get out.

P: Ya.

K: So I decided, in the meantime on the 15th of June the
Russians occupied Lithuania.

P: 1941.

K: 1940.

P: '40?

K: 1940.

P: Already '40.

K: 1940. 1941 Hitler attacked already.

P: Ya, that's right. So, 1939 then?

K: 1940.

P: Oh.

K: 1940.

P: Oh, I see.

K: Ya, it was 1940 and...

P: June 15th.

K: Ya, we were sitting and playing Rummy and [we] look[ed] out
the window and there are tanks near, it was near the station.

P: Soviet tanks.

K: We were at Rohm's, at your cousin's, and I look[ed] out and
there are [were] tanks, you know, Russian big, huge, big
tanks. And we don't know, we run on the balcony, we don't
know what was happening. And then we hear airplanes and
everything. Anyway, the radio said that Russia occupied
Lithuania because otherwise the Germans would do it. So they
decided, so...the first thing they do, they get the children.
Nomi, my daughter, was very, still very young. She was five

years old, or four and a half, five. My son, he was as they call here a very precocious child, I mean, he knew everything. He knew the Maginot Line, he knew if they go here, if they go over. He knew exactly what's going on.

H: What was your daughter's name again?

K: In German, I mean, she has a biblical name, "Noemi" in...

P: Naomi.

K: No, it was in German, "Noemi" is in Jewish...

H: How do you spell that?

K: Hebrew, no, no. Now she is Nomi, I want to explain before you do anything.

H: Okay.

K: We named her Naomi, in the Bible is Noemi. Noemi and Ruth, you know the story from the Bible. Ah...Noemi.

P: Um hmm.

K: And when we came to Canada we started calling her "Noomi."

P: Um hmm.

K: So, we called her then here the name is "Naomi."

P: Um hmm.

K: Now she changed it to "Nomi," N-O-M-I, that's her name.

Anyway...so the Russians get the children. Right away they gave them, when we were, when the Russian occupation came, we were afraid even to talk in front of my son, he was eight years old and we were afraid to....

[End of tape 2, side 1]

Interviewee: Nadia Kaplan (K)

Date of Recording: December 22, 1994

Ident. Number: 05-1

Track Number: T2-S2

Interviewers: Renia Perel (P), & Reva Hollander (H)

K: They got the children, they [the Russian authorities] showed them movies [about] how the rich people hit the poor people, how they have [been] lashing them, how they, how they mistreat them, and the children are, you know, very impressionable.

P: So, propaganda you mean.

K: Propaganda.

P: I see.

K: We were, I used to go for a walk with him, and I see my son is going either ten paces in front of me or ten paces behind me, and I said, "What's wrong?"

P: What's going on?

K: "What's wrong? What's wrong?" He says [said] I look like a bourgeois.

P: Oh, bourgeois.

K: Bourgeois. I looked too rich, you know, I looked like a bourgeois. He can't go with me. Then I got really very, very scared, very anxious...

P: Oh...

K: And my husband and I stopped talking to each other and the children even. We were scared to death. We were really very

much afraid. But then I decided, you know, I wanted to know if there is another way since we couldn't go this way, we couldn't go the other way, maybe there is a way through Russia. And I took the children and I went up to the Russian Consulate. At that time, I still could speak a little Russian, I remember in the book that my father insisted to have a teacher come...

P: Ah ha.

K: And teach us Russian.

P: Right, you said so.

K: Ya, so, anyway, um...I went up. [There] was a very nice looking young man sitting there and I tell [asked] him, if there is a way to go through Russia to Canada. "Sure," he says. "You go through the express, you can go to Chita, you can go to Vladivostok. From Vladivostok you can take a boat." And then I had my husband's passport. He says, "Not with this passport you can't. This passport," he says, "is like a white swallow in winter."

P: Ah...

K: You don't see a white swallow in winter. He can't go. "But why do you want to leave? Now it's good here." And here's my daughter on the lap and here's my son, and [he said,] "Such nice children, beautiful children, and they'll have a future here." And I said, "I'm very very lonesome. I'm very lonesome and my parents are gone and...they're in Canada, and I'm here alone, just my husband and the children, I want to go."

"Well," he says, "with this passport you can't on..." talking

a little bit, very friendly and very nice, and then I applied for a passport. So, they called me to the N.K.V.D.

P: Ya, and...

K: At that time it was G.P.U., G.P.U.... N.K.V.D. were the Secret Police, and...

P: N.K.V.D.

K: Ya, N.K.V.D., and they asked me if I speak Russian. I said, "No." They called me in. "What do you speak?" I said, "Yiddish." So they gave me, ah, a Jewish interpreter. Very good, nice looking young man. I felt so sorry for him. He was from Minsk and he started asking me, here the Russian asked him what to ask me.

P: Um hmm, of course.

K: So, I understood what he asked him. So, I answered in German.

P: Um hmm.

K: Then he says, "I don't know what she says," you know. So, the Russian asked if she has a profession. I said, "How can I have a profession, I have the children. I look after the children, and I, you know, washing and cleaning and all these things," all in German. For fifty-five minutes like that. My cheeks were as red as this.

P: [laughs]

K: The end was, after fifty minutes, he says, "You know, she is, in Russian, she is so dumb. She can't even speak Yiddish right, and she speaks so terrible Yiddish, I can hardly understand her. She is too dumb." That's it and I went out. I was only afraid that my cameras were standing in the room. At

that time they assigned you one room, the whole family. Anyway, and that's how time past, and then they decided there is a way to go, a foreign-born, Bernard was born in Germany. He can go with his passport, he can go through Russia. The children were on his passport. I can't go. I don't have a passport. I am born in Russia and Russian citizens are not allowed to leave the country. But he can go. So, we had, my husband and I had a meeting. I said, "You'll go and the children will go and we'll see what will happen. You make the arrangements. I don't want the children to be brought up in this, in a country where you are afraid to talk to each other. They have to be saved. They have to go." [He said] "Yes, but what will happen to you?" I said, "Maybe I can get out." And we asked people and lawyers and everybody, "Oh, they'll let her go, they'll let her go." So I said, "You make [the] arrangements." He made all the arrangements, he got the, the tickets for the children. The last day before the, ah, Sugihara left, the Japanese consul, he was leaving the, ah, consulate already. He was in a car and the, ah, window was closed on the car, and my husband knocked, "Stop the car!" he knocked, and he [Sugihara] opened the window, and he put in his passport, he [Sugihara] looked at the children, smiled at the children and looked at me. I said, "I don't have a passport." He [Sugihara] gave him the visa, and this man gave, went to the train. And I understand he gave, from the train he gave [visas to] several hundred people that were waiting, you know. I decided then that the Polish people are

much, the Polish Jews are smarter than the Lithuanian Jews. They knew everything. They knew how to get false passports, they knew how to get false visas, they knew everything. I'll tell you why I know. First of all, they knew about this Sugihara, that he gives a visa, transit visas...

P: But the coincidences. How did it happen that you were exactly at that moment...?

K: At that moment...

P: Together, in Sugihara's car? The consular's car.

K: The consular's car. I was with him, you know, and the children, I had the children, my husband, and he looked at me and...

P: How did your husband know that this was a consulate?

K: Because the Polish people told him. They went...

P: Polish Jews you mean.

K: Polish Jews told him [about] the Japanese consul who gives visas. Ah...transit visas to go to Ceylon [Sri Lanka] for two 'litas' or two dollars or something. So, he says [my husband said that] he'll get it. He'll get it to...

P: To go where? To...

K: To Ceylon.

P: Oh, Ceylon!

K: Ya...

P: C-E-Y-L-O-N.

K: Where the pepper grows, you know. [laughs]

P: Oh ya, ya.

K: Ceylon. But I don't have [a] visa and this was...

P: And he says, "It doesn't matter you just go."

K: He said, "You go!"

P: I see.

K: And I met one of my second cousins, she says, "I know that you can't go and you'll stay with me." Because she stayed with us since she was sixteen and she married from our house, you know, and she says, "I'll do the same as you did for me and you stay, what will happen to me will...I'll look after you." I had no alternative, but then he was leaving and I, one day I got very, I, I used to go to the, to the Ministerium [ministry], "What can I do, how can I get out, how can I get my passport, how can..." The one who helped my father, he says [said], "I can't do anything there is here a Russian Altgolz and..."

H: A Russian what?

K: A Russian, um, he's the head now, the minister of foreign affairs...

H: And what was the word, what did you say?

K: Altgolz.

H: How do you spell that?

K: A-L-T-G-O-L-...

P: -D.

K: -Z, Altgolz.

P: 'Golz'.

K: This is, "Altholz," the Russians don't have a 'G', the Russians don't have, the Ukrainians have a 'G'. The Russians don't have an 'H'...

P: Right.

K: 'G', they have a 'G'. Altgolz.

H: So, he was the head of the ministry?

K: Huh?

H: He was the head of the foreign ministry?

K: He was the head in charge of all the, what's going on, in the, inside the Ministerium. So, I go into...he had an office and I said I want to speak to him, and the fellow there tells me to come back on Friday and they'll be leaving on Wednesday. So, I walked down, I went down again to this Lithuanian and I know, still remember his name, 'Banaitis', Banaitis, Bana...

P: B-A-N-A-I-T-I-S.

K: Ya, and I said, "What can I do, what does he look like?" He says, "I'll tell you. He is oiled. His hair is oiled. He uses cologne. He is...he wears a Russian 'rubakha'" that's a Russian shirt, embroidered. You know, the Russian shirts that they used to wear?

P: Rubakha. R-U-...

K: -B-A-C-H-A.

P: B-A-H-...K-H-A, 'kh'.

K: Ya, and, so, I go to the Minister and I tell my husband, "I am not going home if I don't get...I am not coming home. I don't want to see the children leave without me. I am not coming home."

P: On Wednesday.

K: "I am not going," I said. I left Monday morning, I got up, I

said, "If I don't get something I am not coming home." So, I wait[ed] for him at this, I was there [at] seven o'clock, at ten o'clock they opened, and I smelled him before I saw him.

And he is...

P: You mean the whiskey or...?

K: No, perfume.

P: The perfume.

K: Cologne.

P: Cologne, oh, I see.

K: Cologne, I smelled the cologne before I smelled [saw] him.

P: I see.

K: And I pull him, he walks in front of me and I pull on the shirt...

P: Ah ha.

K: And he turns around, and I said I want to speak to him. He said, "Come to the office." I said, "He doesn't let me in. I have to come Friday. My, here, my, my family is leaving." [He then said] "Come in the office." I come in, I show him the paper. "They are leaving, this is Monday, they are leaving on Wednesday." He calls up this poor guy Banaitis...[phone rings]...and he goes with his fist on the table and [says], "In Russia we don't tear families apart, and you see to it that this Grazdanka," this citizen, "leaves together with her family." So he whispered something in his ear...

P: Who whispered to whom?

K: To Banaitis, whispered something in his ear. He says, "I don't care if this woman will know the head of the secret

police, the head of Lithuania." And he tells me, "You go to the phone and you ask for Keden and tell him that Altgolz sent you, and don't tell anybody, anybody the name of this Russian head of the secret police."

H: And what was his name, 'Keden', how do you spell that?

K: Maybe you shouldn't put it in.

P: Why not? It's...

K: I don't know.

P: It's over now.

K: It's over now.

P: Not to be afraid about anything.

K: Ya.

P: Oh, heavens no.

K: Anyway, so I...

P: What is 'Kaden' the...?

K: 'Keden' was the head of the secret police in Lithuania, for all of Lithuania.

P: But what, oh...

K: That was the name, I don't know what he was. He was the head of the secret police.

P: K-A-...

K: K-E-...

P: K-E-...?

K: Ya, Keden. K-E-D-E-N.

P: And don't tell Keden, ya, you can say now it's over.

K: Ya, I don't know. Altgolz I don't mind, but Keden. He says, "You are the only, only private citizen who knows the name,"

he tells me. So, when Banaitis hears, you know, he gives me already a man to hold my papers, then he was afraid that somebody might, you know, mug me or tear away the papers. It could happen in Lithuania at that time. So, we go to the police, he tells me where to go and we go there, and I say [said], "I want to speak to Keden." He looked up, he says, "What?" I said, "I need a passport. I want a passport, Altgolz sent me." [He says] "Okay, you sit down." And I am sitting, and I am sitting, and I am sitting. And by...to come back tomorrow. Tomorrow is Tuesday.

P: Oh...

K: I come back tomorrow [the next day], he says, "And again sit down." I said, "Look, I am not going to sit." It was four o'clock. He says the, um, "Where they issue passports closes at four o'clock." So, the man who was holding my papers says, "I am going to call them to wait until you come." And this man by six o'clock, they gave me a piece of paper that I can get a passport. I had the pictures, I had everything. It was six o'clock in the evening, and this man, the 'Virschininkes' says, "That's nothing..."

P: The what? 'Virschin...

K: Virschininkes, Virschininkes, the head of the, ah, place where you get the paper, the passport, they call Virschininkes, the head. That's not his name. It's a Lithuanian word Virschininkes, like the boss.

P: How do you spell, how do you spell that word, Virschininkes?

K: Virschininkes.

H: I just sounded it out.

K: V-E-...V-E-I-

P: V-O-...you see?

K: 'Virschininkes.

P: Oh.

K: V-I-R-...

H: V-I-R.

K: C-...S-C-H-N...let me write it down. Virschininkes. Anyway, um, he says, "That's nothing. You still have to get the Russian visa. I'll give you the passport but you won't get the visa. They won't give you visa." So, the next morning my husband tells me, "Don't go...the consul is a very nice man. He is very nice and very friendly but don't go where the secretary is, he is just a dog. He'll throw out, he'll yell 'anschnauzen' [German, "snarl at, snap at"]..."

P: Um hmm.

K: He'll 'anschnauzen'. And so I'm there at six in the morning, they open at ten. I'm number two. I think I'm fine; the train leaves at two o'clock in the afternoon. I come and somebody comes out and announces that the people, forty people, Polish people, who couldn't get served yesterday come first. They, ah, the consulate is open from ten till twelve...

P: Um hmm.

K: So, I have no, no chance even to think of getting in to the consul, so I think, well, I'll go to the secretary, what can [he] do? He won't bite off my nose.

P: Um hmm.

K: I will, I will just, he can scream, and what is worse than just remaining. So, I go in and I knock and he said to come in, and this young man, when I went to inquire if there is a way to go through Russia, who had Nomi on his lap...

P: Um hmm.

K: And who was saying, "Takiye haroshinkeye [Russian, "so beautiful"]...you have such nice children and why are you going away?", this young man. And I see him, and I get, I became hysterical. I couldn't stop crying. I could, just couldn't stop crying. And he came over and said, "What's the matter? What's the matter?", you know, "What's the matter?" He recognized me.

P: Um hmm.

K: I said, "Here, they are leaving today."

P: My children and my husband...

K: "My children are leaving today, my husband is leaving and I can't get into the consul." He says, "Quiet down, you'll go, you'll go. I promise you, you will go. But the consul, the, the, the consul left for vacation yesterday. It's a new consul. I don't know him too well, but let me talk, just let me talk." He goes...he says, "You'll be number two. First I have to call in this one, then you'll be number two." I was an hour with the consul, he didn't want to give me the visa, and he [the secretary] argues, he says, "This citizen is coming here for the last three weeks every single day, she was standing in line. Yesterday I had to promise the consul,"

he gives the name, "that this citizen is going to leave together with her husband. I can't go back on, on a promise, he promised." He [the consul] says, "But you know we can't give visas to Lithuanians...Russian citizens who is [are] born in Russia. All we can do, we'll write to the 'Soyuz' [Russian, "union"] when in March every..."

P: Siyes, soyuz.

K: 'Soyuz' ya, "every member from all of Russia, parliament members get together once a year and it will come up, and if they decide you can go, so go." He says, "But I promised, I promised," so, he asked, "What's the name?" "Kaplan." He looks at 'Schwartzte Liste', the blacklist...

P: The blacklist [in German], ya.

K: He sees a 'Kaplan', I say, "Ya, my husband was packing tobacco. He was a labourer, he was just packing tobacco." He didn't see him. He didn't see [that] they asked my husband to become a buyer for the Russians, a buyer of tobacco, to go all over Russia and buy, it's a big position and everything. My husband denied, and I said, "He is just a tobacco packer." And then he says, "Anyway, she can't go today. The train leaves today, she can't go today because we sent down the visas to be signed to the embassy at three o'clock in the afternoon." So this young man says, "You know, I got a phone call to come down to the embassy. I'll take along the passports with the visa and they'll sign it." I gave him a hundred litas, I had a hundred. "Well, we don't have...let's leave it till...I don't have any change."

P: That's 'litas' of money?

K: 'Litas' like [Polish] 'zloty', is like [German] Mark, like dollars...

P: I see. I see.

K: You know. Our standard of living was the same as a dollar here, 'litas' there, you know.

P: I see.

K: When you exchange, when you went to, when you went to buy the, um, the ticket to go through Russia, was thousand dollars. And you had to pay in dollars. And the dollar, instead of six litas for a dollar, was forty litas, inflation, and you were not allowed to have dollars. You got jail [sentence] if you had dollars, but they insisted it has to be paid in dollars, the Russians. [laughs]

P: Okay.

K: You understand?

P: Of course.

K: So...

P: So, go on so...

K: Anyway, so he says, "I'll, I'll, I am going anyway." He took a taxi, he says, "You sit down and don't talk to anybody."

P: To you he said that.

K: Ya, "You'll probably...just call your husband to get the tickets and get the money," the, the, "and nobody else, and just sit, and I'll come back in time, and you will go in time." And the way he said good-bye to me, he says, "I wish you only one thing, when you talk about it, don't cry, just

smile. Smile that you are going together with your family." You know, and that's how I got the visa. And the people who came, came to the station, they were all crying...

P: Let's...

K: They were all crying, they, they couldn't believe that I am going. Everybody in Kovno, all my friends, everybody knew that I am not going and [that] they are going.

P: Let's name this great man that did all this...

K: I don't know his name.

P: You don't know his name? He was...

K: Something with "Chechenko." I don't know his name. I just don't know his name.

P: He...but he was the attendant at the consulate.

K: He was the secretary.

P: The secretary.

K: And it was not, it was that he recognized me and that I was friendly, I am always friendly with people, you know, and, ah, and the children...

P: And he loved your children probably...

K: And he loved the children. You know, he, he saw there is a tragedy here. This was a tragedy.

P: Was a great humanitarian man.

K: You know, when I was already in Vladivostok and the next...

P: So, to back up just now. So now you have the ticket, everybody is crying, what happens? You go on a train or a...

K: What happens, what happens, I'll tell you what happens...

P: Are you sail[ing]...

K: No.

P: You ride...

K: No, I'll tell you what happened...

P: You walk...

K: Here is a, I have a...documents, all these things that we took along when I heard the war broke out, we had a radio in the hotel...

P: On that same day?

K: No, no. Beila was in Šiauliai. Beila still, before was in Kovno, when the war broke out in '39, I figured Canada is very cold and in case, hopefully, we will go to Canada, we will need wool. And I bought, and I bought, and I bought for the children twenty-eight pair of wool, everything, everything wool. Underwear for my husband, wool underwear. Everything, you can imagine. And I have the permit here that they allow me to take it out. So, we couldn't put it on the suitcases, so we had canvas bags, everything was packed for the children, for everybody except for me. Nothing was packed for me. I went in woolen suit, a rain coat, a blouse, underwear, stockings, and that's all I went [with]. It was nothing.

P: Um hmm.

K: So, we took it, it was on a train, and they insist [that] we have to take it out, it has to be checked through. "Either you go or the baggage goes." So we checked the baggage and it never arrived. We wrote to 'Intourist', we wrote to Moskva [Moscow], and to all over the country.

P: So, which way did you travel...

K: To Moscow.

P: And where did you get it.

K: Moscow.

P: Straight to Moscow from Kovno.

K: From Kovno we went over the border, we went to Minsk...

P: Tell us about the trip, like where you stopped. Just a stop over, see if you remember.

K: Ah, I have, I have here written out exactly the trip...

P: The itinerary.

K: If you want to take it, because we needed [it] for the [Japanese consulate official] Sugihara.

P: Um hmm.

K: Have you heard I have the whole thing in my purse, it's a long story, I can't...

P: No, no, I don't think we...so just mention the places where you went from, Kovno to Minsk and from Minsk to Moscow.

K: From Minsk we had to stay over night, ah, and I didn't have a Japanese visa.

P: No.

K: And in Moscow I got the permission to get off the train and go to the consulate for a visa, for...

P: Japanese consulate.

K: Japanese consulate. So, I had an interpreter, Russian interpreter because on the train I didn't understand a word of Russian. I spoke only German.

P: Um hmm.

K: Didn't understand one word. [I] told them I don't understand one word.

P: That was for political reasons.

K: Ya, well, I was afraid.

P: Ya.

K: So we went and in comes a Japanese secretary with a telegram, "Telegram from Japan, no more visas for Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. No more, that's it." So, I figured they must have a Japanese consul in Vladivostok because the people, the fishermen go back and forth to Japan and back and so on. They will...[they] must have a consul. So, we...two things happened on the way. They called my husband in...

P: Who "they"? Who is the "they"?

K: From the Russians...

P: The N.K.V.D.?

K: No...ya. He was called to leave the train and come in to be, ah, have a few questions.

P: Interrogated?

K: They have a few questions, again, his profession.

P: Ah ha.

K: What he did. And what he did is pack tobacco. You know, what he did. The second incident was in Chita, a place where we had about two hours stop...

P: C-H-I-T-A.

K: Ya, and we had, um...and we got dressed to get out and get some air, and we look out and all of a sudden we see there are thirty secret police surrounding our car, our wagon.

P: Ah!

K: Thirty. And I was standing like this.

P: Shaking.

K: They came for, there were three compartments all with Europeans. There was one a Mr. and Mrs. Sapier and their little boy, there was us, and there was a family from Poland with two sons and a little girl, um...and, we didn't know who were they coming for. They come for, they came for this family.

P: With the two sons?

K: With the two sons and the little girl. And the little girl, when they were running from Poland, was chased by dogs and she lost her mind, and she became like an infant, and she was ten years old so the mother told me, no, she was rather like six, you know, they had to teach her how to walk, how to talk, all of this. And they [the Russians] took them off [the train].

P: [coughs]

K: When we, and they told us, you know we talked to them, they expect the next shipment her brother will come and family.

P: Ah ha.

K: So...

P: This woman talked to you and she explained that her brother is on his way.

K: She said that her brother is going to come, and, you know, they're...

P: This is in Chita?

K: And then, before Chita she told us, but then they were taken off. And you have an 'Intourist' guide, and she was...there all the guides they said were spies. And she was a beautiful Jewish blonde girl. Later we found out she was Jewish, young, maybe twenty-five, twenty-six, and we were, we didn't say anything in her presence, you know, and she didn't come in for two days, and we, ah...then when she came in this Mr. Sapier spoke Russian to her and said, "What happened to the Steins? Why they, why did they leave the train?" She says, "They didn't have, they didn't have..."

H: This Polish family was called Stein?

K: Ya, they didn't....

[End of tape 2, side 2.]

Interviewee: Nadia Kaplan (K)

Date of Recording: December 22, 1994

Ident. Number: 05-1

Track Number: T3-S1

Interviewers: Renia Perel (P), & Reva Hollander (H)

K: Okay, um...so, we knew that they expect the brother, so, ah...we waited for the second batch of people to come, refugees, all Polish people. So, we...any man who came in we asked, "Sind Sie Herr Stein?" you know, "Are you Mr. Stein?" and one says "Yes," he says. "Come, don't talk to anybody" and they, my husband and Mr. Sapier, called him into his hotel room and said, "You are sick, you have the flu, you are not going out, you don't talk to anybody, and your wife looks after you because..." we told him what happened, that, "your sister, and your brother-in-law and the children are [have been] taken off the train, and nobody knows your name, so you just stay." And this man came with a false passport.

P: Um hmm.

K: He told us later that he has a false passport.

P: Um hmm.

K: We will, we are going...we got the permission, it was Rosh Hashanah, and we got the permission to, ah, use a room as a, as a synagogue, from the hotel, and we had it in his room. And they only said, "Just don't be loud, do everything very quietly. No singing or nothing, just to pray and that's it." And that's what we did, and we were about six days in

Vladivostok. Now, I didn't have a Japanese passport [visa], I had needed a passport [visa] so I went to the Japanese consulate, they told me where it is, and it was a very creepy place, and, you know, everything...everything was funny, and the fellow came out and I said, "I want a Japanese passport, ah, visa." He sees my passport, "Kaplaniene, Kaplanaite..." 'Kaplanaite' is a girl's name, no, unmarried person. 'Kaplaniene' is a married person. He said, "What is it? Do you have two names?" I said, "No, I was born 'Kaplanaite', and now I'm 'Kaplaniene'." [He said] "Do you know what, come back tomorrow."

H: Just...how do you spell those two, 'Kaplanaite'...?

K: Kaplanaite.

H: How would you spell that?

P: K-A-P-L-A-N...

K: -A-N-, ya, 'Kaplan' and A-I-T...'Kaplanaite', T-E. And 'Kaplaniene', 'Kaplan' and then an I-E-N-E.

H: -I-E-N-E.

K: -N-E, ya, Kaplanaite and Kaplaniene.

H: Okay.

K: My husband was Kaplan also, anyway, so he says, "Could you come back tomorrow." I come back tomorrow, and I...he was like a changed person, all 'geshnugled and gebugled' and, you know, beautiful suit and beautiful tie, and there's whiskey on the table and there are cigarettes on the table and...and he says, "You know, I don't believe that you are married." Don't forget I was thirty-two years old, whatever I wore,

very well dressed, very, you know. I was three-and-a-half inches taller and maybe, I don't know, ten pounds thinner and, um, "I don't believe that you are married. Would you have a drink?" I said, "You know, tomorrow I will bring you some witnesses and tomorrow you'll have the drink." So, the next day I brought my husband and my two children, "And this is Kaplanas, and I am Kaplaniene, and that is Kaplanaite and this is Kaplanas" and [he says] "Oh, oh, oh, ah so, oh," and he gave me the visa and we had a drink. And I got the visa. So this was...[laughs]

P: [hand clapping] Bravo.

K: This was the 'bravo'. Now, I have, I had some jewellery. So, how do I get my jewellery out? you are not allowed to wear a gold ring. Only a silver wedding ring, you are not allowed to have a gold ring. I had, when I became engaged my parents gave me a lavalier [a pendant on a fine chain worn as a necklace] with diamonds, a diamond [not clear], you know fifteen diamonds here and fifteen diamonds here, and a big diamond in the middle, and I, and I had rings, and I had a diamond, diamond watch with thirty diamonds and sapphires. My husband gave it to me instead of a diamond ring, diamond watch. So, how do I get it out? I didn't want to put it on the children. I was afraid that they'll tell me to get undressed, and I had, um, I wore a coat, I had a coat with me, a winter coat, not a raincoat, a winter coat, trimmed with mink, if you please. In Europe when you get a winter coat it has a pocket in the lining, so I figured I had the

pocket in the lining but it's still not safe, and then I started watching, I was, you know, there were a hundred and twenty people. They were called in and out and in and out, and I looked for chalk marks, you know, that it's already examined. And there was one black suitcase I saw with the chalk mark, and I walked with the children and I come closer to the suitcase, closer...and I had taken off the coat, it was over my arm, and I put my coat with the diamonds and everything, on the suitcase. And we went into the...I had nothing, you know, I didn't have a ring, I didn't have, just nothing, and I could tell them I have nothing because it was not on me. I had nothing. So on the...when the time came to go the boat, was very, very cold. I remember I was holding Nomi, you know, around my coat and I picked up my coat, and I went through, and went to the Japanese boat. And the next morning everybody was glittering, all the women with diamonds and pearls. How did they do it? I couldn't understand how did they smuggle it out. The end was, when they finally came to the farm, after thirty-five, thirty-six days on the road, we finally came to the farm, and there was no income, nothing. Except for the watch. I gave my father the diamond earrings, they gave it to me in the first place when I became engaged. The diamond earrings, rings, and the lavalier, and as Papa go to Montreal [not clear] and sell it. And he came back with twenty-five dollars, we got twenty-five dollars. He didn't go to a place like Birk's, he went to Main Street, you know, to where Jewish people, Jewish jewellers. He told them it's not

the same cut, it's not this...the gold itself was worth more. So, Papa was very upset, and I said, "Papa, we have for five weeks, we have food for five weeks, and after five weeks we'll see what will happen." That's a condition was on the farm. No winter clothes, no warm clothes for the children. I unraveled, um, dresses that my sisters had knitted to make them leggings I had to go to school. No nothing, I mean, here refugee style, you know, to bring them, they wait for them and give them right away whatever they need, a house, the money, whatever, you know. All I wanted for them [was] to have a warm coat, and they had inside fur coats that they, you know...stole from, from...they had everything, and...

P: And none of it arrived.

K: None of it! No, it was stolen right there. When I, ah...I have something to tell her, from your relatives, when I gave, ah...I had a dinner set, the Russians wouldn't let me take it out, a tea set, they wouldn't let me take out, was bone china, and the dinner set was, eh, old Dresden Meisner [Meissen], hand, hand-painted flowers, service for eighteen, you name it. Mama bought it already when I was fourteen years old. And I said to my sister-in-law, she had a very good dinner set, I said, "You take the tea set, service for twelve, for Milchig" [Yiddish, "milk products"]. We had kosher. You know, I still have kosher. And I said to Zenaida, "You take the dinner set." And they came to pick it up and your relative, your 'Grossonkel' [German, 'great-uncle'] or whatever he was, "hat abgeschlossen die Türen" [German "had

locked the doors"] and he wouldn't let them in and wouldn't let them take it.

P: She, she locked the doors.

K: He.

P: He.

K: Mr. Rohm. Mr. Rohm locked the door to the room where the china was...

P: Kept.

K: Ya, kept, and he wouldn't let them in to pick it up, they wrote to me to, to Canada. They couldn't get it because they...and while still in Memel, I had a, a nanny for the children, I had a maid. The maid was with me for six years and she got her, she became engaged, she got her trousseau 'für Weihnachten' [for Christmas], and, you know, presents, they used to buy eggs from her parents, and one day she comes and she says...[that] her fiancé doesn't let her work for Jews anymore. So, this nanny, Fräulein [Miss] 'Piplo', a very nice girl, her father had a jewellery store, says, "Don't...Mrs. Kaplan, don't worry I'll do everything. I'll do the dishes, I'll do the floors, I'll do everything, don't worry..." also, a German girl, "I'll do, and I'll look after the children. Don't worry one little bit." When I left, I left her a...bone china, it is beautiful, for twelve, a tea set. I said, "What you did for me, I, I," you know, "it's unbelievable. You, as a German, aren't you afraid?" She said, "I don't give a darn, you are good to me, you are nice people and I am going to do it and that's all." You know. Everybody

who came up to say, "Mr. Kaplan, you don't have to leave."
Another thing happened with my dentist. I had "Stift Zähne,"
ah, caps made, caps you know, and it was a big bill. And
before I left I came up and said, "I want [the] bill because
we are leaving, we are living to Šiauliai," and I told him
the hotel. He said to his nurse, "The bill is not ready yet
is it, it's not ready yet." She said, "Nein ["No"], it's not
ready yet." I said, "Okay, then send it to me to..." ah, it
was still Lithuania, "send it to me to Lithuania and I'll
send you a cheque, a money order." [He responded,] "Okay,
sure." Then we...there was a very bad accident. Friends of
mine came to visit us from Memel, by car. My girl friend
still lives here. She was the wife of the tobacco...one of
the [owners of the] tobacco factories, and a young man was
with them, a young doctor about twenty-eight or thirty years
old, and they had ah, ah...she had sandwiches, my sister-in-
law was in the car, she had sandwiches and she wanted to give
the chauffeur a sandwich, he turned around, he went against
the tree, and this young doctor was killed on the spot.

H: Oh!

K: And we said that this was the first Hitler victim, the first
Hitler victim because we left because of Hitler and they came
to visit us and he died and she had a broken neck. Ah,
she...so I went in to see her, and I went up to the dentist
and I said, "You didn't send me a bill." This was already a
month. "Oh, we forgot." [I then said,] "Bestimmt...for sure,
sure, you will send me the bill," and he never did. He wanted

to do something, you know, to, to...he was a German, but he wanted to do something to make a right for the wrong, at least with the bill he did something for, for Jewish people. You know, it's, it...I, I just couldn't understand it.

P: Not everybody was so greedy...

K: Ya, there was a, a group of them.

P: And murders, there were exceptions.

K: Ya.

P: But eventually they were swept by the tides...

K: They were swept, ya. I don't know what happened to him, Dr. Höllger.

P: By coercion, you know, 'everybody did it' so they were supposed to do it too.

K: And you know, I didn't like to go to a dentist.

H: What did you say his name was?

K: Höllger.

P: How do you sp...?

K: H-O, with two dots on top, -L-L-G-E-R.

P: And what's his initial, Dr...? You don't know.

K: He was a handsome young man, but I don't know his...

P: Well, then dentist, in brackets doctor.

K: My dentist, he was a doctor, a dentist, and, um, and sometimes I had...his mother was sitting...his father was working for my girlfriend's husband, the factory, cigars.

P: Um hmm.

K: His mother was knitting in the next room, she was sitting and knitting. She didn't trust any of his patients. One time, I

had an appointment, and I just didn't come. He was going to drill, it was going to hurt, I didn't come. And all of a sudden I see there is a red sports car and "In!" He stopped the car [and shouted,] "In!" I have to go in and he has to finish my teeth.

P: I see, so he was after you. I'd like to go back now to Canada. When you said you unraveled the sweater...

K: Ya, my sister...

P: Did you know how to knit?

K: Well, at that time [it] was very much in fashion.

P: Oh, so you knew?

K: Knitted, and, and um...in the 30's...

P: That was 40's because you're in Canada now.

K: Ya, but in the 30's my sisters each one knitted dresses for themselves.

P: Oh ya, I see.

K: They all knitted dresses, and I took their dresses and unraveled it [them], and they are all knitted.

P: Uh huh.

K: And I made for Nomi a little prom dress, and with embroidery and a little green dress with smock, you know?

P: Um hmm.

K: And very artistic, and for the boys...and for her, leggings.

P: Um hmm.

K: Double, triple.

P: Um hmm.

K: Because they, the snow was so high it went over the apple

trees.

P: And I would like to know for, ah...what was the name of the farm, the place, the village?

K: Williamstown.

P: Wi...?

K: Williamstown.

P: Williamstown.

K: Ya.

P: That's one word?

K: One word.

P: Okay.

K: 'William' is a name, and his 'town'.

H: Uh huh. What does that mean?

K: 'Williamstown', one word.

H: Williamstown, in Ontario?

P: In Ontario?

H: Ontario.

K: Ontario, ya, Williams..., On...

P: And how far was it from a big city?

K: Um, I suppose from a small town, maybe fifty thousand, sixteen miles.

P: What was the next big town?

K: Cornwall.

P: Oh, Cornwall.

K: Ya.

P: That's...

K: Ya, the station used to stop at...

P: Cornwall, Ontario.

K: Ya, Cornwall, Ontario.

P: So, was the farm successful?

K: The...

P: Eventually?

K: Look, my father was sixty-two years old when he came here.

P: Yes.

K: When I saw my father carrying a sack of grain, I was crying.

I've never seen him do any manual work. I never, I never saw it.

P: Um hmm.

K: I was crying. An old man...look, I was thirty years younger.

I was thirty-two when I came. He, an old man, 'shleps' the grain, and we had two hired men, they used to get up at four in the morning...

P: Well, we know farm work is a very hard work but...

K: That was nothing, look...

P: How long did you stay there?

K: We stayed only...we were supposed to stay five years.

P: Yes.

K: We stayed one year.

P: And what did you do?

K: Well...

P: Now you can go on with the story.

K: Okay, I can tell you, we didn't have any money, as I told you the money was used up.

P: Yes.

K: Somebody came to visit us, he wanted to know about his brother, and actually, I was sitting next to his wife, ah, his brother's wife, when I waited for the young secretary to bring back the visa, you know. When I went to the Russian consulate...

P: Ah ha.

K: I was sitting and waiting...

P: Yes.

K: And he went, and there was another woman sitting there, a Mrs. Wolpert...

P: Um hmm.

H: Mrs...how do you spell it?

K: Wolpert, W-O-L-P-E-R-T.

P: She was a Jewish woman from Poland?

K: Ya, she was sitting on one side, Olga Levine was sitting on the other side, I was sitting in the middle, waiting.

P: So, what happened to the farm?

K: The farm was a total loss. That I, who had the [photography] studio, had to send them money, we could never save, saved up three hundred dollars, you know, it was hard work. When it was busy I worked till four in the morning, retouching the negatives. When it was not busy money didn't come in. This rush...they come before Christmas, they come, maybe there is a wedding or birthdays, and you have to buy furniture...

P: So, where was your studio?

K: My studio was in Windsor, Ontario.

P: The first day...

K: No, I want to tell you why I had it. I, so far, only Christians helped me. It's a funny thing to say. I'm not anti-Semitic, but as it happened, the Lithuanian, the Russian Altgolz, the Russian secretary [at the consulate], he was not Jewish, now we come to Windsor, we borrowed five hundred dollars...

P: Williamstown you mean.

K: From Williamstown. People used to come, they here...in seven years there were no refugees, no people came because they wouldn't let them in.

P: Um hmm.

K: And here, all of a sudden, Jewish people [are] coming, so they come from Montreal, they came from Cornwall, all the Jewish people, they brought 'shmates' [Yiddish 'clothes' or 'rags'], what you give to the [Hadassah] Bazaar here. My sisters came in fur coats and all those things, you know, real plush, and they brought all the 'shmates'. The mice were eating it in the attic. So we ah...borrowed five hundred dollars to open up a little dry goods store. There was one manufacturer in Montreal, a Mr. Klein, K-L-E-I-N, who knew my father. He says to us, "If you can open a little store anywhere, I'll give you all the merchandise you need. I'll give you all the nylons, I'll give you..." at that time a pair of nylons was during the war was, you can't buy it for gold. I wore one pair for half a year.

P: Um hmm.

K: You know, I washed it and wore it, and washed it and wore it.

"You will get all the merchandise and you'll do very well."

And we had five hundred dollars, so we come to Windsor.,.,

P: Windsor, Ontario.

K: Ya, because Levine...

P: Was there.

K: The brother was there, he says, "Come to Windsor, you'll do well." Okay, we come to Windsor, first of all, she thought I am a maid. For a whole week I had to wash her floors, I had to wash all the...you know, until my husband put his foot down, he says, "We didn't come here to be, to help Ruth, we came here to look for a store." We started looking for a store. We found the store. We had to rent, um, sixty-five dollars a month, but you have to [pay] three months in advance, you have to put in shelves, you have to put in glass, you have to put in all this. Two thousand dollars. We were two weeks in Windsor when they wrote, "Where's the money?" They want the money back already, the five hundred dollars...

P: Oh.

K: They want the money back. We were at our wits end, we didn't know what to do, so, we decided...this Levine said, "How about photography?" He knows somebody, a man by the name of Spurgin, he has old cameras, very old. Here, I bought cameras for three or four thousand dollars. Here, he says, "Okay, I can fix you up with a studio for five hundred dollars." All second-hand, everything. I didn't even know how to work it, but I learned. And he also gave me...the best income was

[from] a wedding. A wedding they order [photographs] for friends, for relatives, for everybody it's the best thing. He even sent me a wedding. Little by little, I didn't have any display, I had an old picture of my sister Fanny [that] I put in the window. And then a soldier came up, and he said he wanted to see some pictures. I didn't have any. I said, "You know, I'll make a deal with you. I'll give you one thousand 8" x 10" free if you'll let me take your picture, so I'll have a picture in [the] display and I can show other soldiers." It was...you know, at that time soldiers went to [fight in the] war, Canadians...conscription. So I gave him. He came up and then his mother came up [and remarked,] "How beautiful the pictures are." And then people started coming up and...

P: This was in the this dry-goods store? No, another...

K: No, in the...we didn't have the dry-goods store, in the photograph[y] store.

P: That went bankrupt or, or lost?

K: Mr. Spurgin, Mr. Spurgin fixed it up for me...

P: I see.

K: Free.

P: I see.

K: He says, "You'll pay me, it's five hundred dollars, you'll pay me when you can afford it."

P: Oh, wonderful.

K: And one day I said, "We can pay you." He said, "I'm not taking any money. I'm not taking any money from you. I'm not

because you worked so hard, and you supported your family..." my husband was a manager, "and you needed furniture, and you need...the children have to have shoes." And I...

P: Where was your husband a manager, excuse me?

K: In my studio.

P: Oh, in your studio.

K: I wanted to see the people only once, take their picture and bye-bye, and fix it up the way, the best I could, and it was beautiful. It was really...the sales[wo]man used to come, she became later my girl friend, she says, "Look at madam's photos, look at her cameras, look at her lights, and look at the pictures that she does." I went to study with Sinaida in Kovno because she studied with the best photographer in Berlin, and [therefore] I had different lighting, I had different, you know, because I studied it. And little by little by little, and then I got, after seven years, eight years, I got poisoning. The 'Elon' poisoning, the developer. Now, now the way the [photography] studio works, they put it [film] in a tank and forget about it. Put a timer on, take it out, put this, put this. There [it] was all handwork, everything handwork.

P: And you didn't wear gloves?

K: I couldn't feel with the gloves. I had to feel the negative. I had to feel everything.

H: What kind of poisoning did you say?

K: Pardon?

H: What kind of poisoning did you say it was?

K: Elon. E-L-O-N, because, um, you go elonobromide in all, it goes seven. I have to make the developer.

H: Ah ha.

K: And not to buy the developer. My daughter is a photographer, I mean, it's, it's nothing to develop, and I had to give up the studio, you know, and then the bread and butter was scarce. And then, um, my son finished school. He went to Western first. We could afford the tuition.

P: Um hmm.

K: And then...

P: What school was that?

K: Western Ontario.

P: Oh, oh, I see, the University?

K: He made his B.A. there, and then he went to study law. He went to school in Detroit [Michigan]. He wanted to become a lawyer in Detroit, and then the consulate said it will be 1970 when he will get the permission, ah...the quota, so, he decided to study in, in Toronto. Ah...tuition was \$350.00 [per year] but we couldn't help him. We paid for board \$35.00, but he had to have jobs. He worked very hard. He worked so hard you wouldn't believe it, he worked [on a] beer truck, he, he worked as a waiter. You know, he has to go to school he has to do homework.

P: Um hmm.

K: And, um...from, there were 270 students and only 110 graduated because it's a very hard school and he is...

P: What's the name of this school?

K: The University of Toronto.

P: Ah ha.

K: No, Osgoode Hall, he went to Osgoode Hall [at York University].

P: Oh, Osgoode Hall.

K: Osgoode Hall.

P: Ya.

K: I know when he worked, ah...

P: A very famous Canadian university [law school].

K: Ya, he worked in, ah, he worked in, in London...London, Ontario. Ah...his teacher, his instructor was the manager of the work force at night at Kellogg's Cornflakes. So he used to work at twelve o'clock at night. He had to...he went, he worked all night, seven o'clock in the morning he had to go to school, and work...get ready for school, take a shower. From school, he had to do his homework, write essays, he slept maybe three hours and then had to go to work. I mean, this was...and one day, he was already, ah...two years in school, I get a letter he wants to stop...

P: Um hmm.

K: This was very hard on us, that he wants to stop...

P: 'Cause you couldn't help him financially.

K: We couldn't help him financially, and he says he works so hard he can't take it.

P: Um hmm.

K: And I had, it was the, the, the, the saddest letter I had to write, I had to...well, I said, "You have only maybe a

year..."

[End of tape 3, side 1.]

Interviewee: Nadia Kaplan (K)

Date of Recording: December 22, 1994

Ident. Number: 05-1

Track Number: T3-S2

Interviewers: Renia Perel (P), & Reva Hollander (H)

K: Okay, um...where did I stop? Ya, he wanted...so I want to tell you, he [my son] graduated first ah...he was married, you know, while he was still in school, and she was working, and they had two sons, and um...then later on when the children were already bigger, they were separated, and ah...then he [my son] was on a plane and he was sitting next to a man and they started talking, they both liked to drink, and, um...the man said, "Oh, since you're a lawyer maybe you can do something for me." He had a minor car accident, he did this and then he called him, "I have something, my parents died, my mother died, my father died, I want you to help me with the Estate," very rich man. And then he called him, they had a meeting with him, he says, "I want to have you as my lawyer," and...my [son] he was working by himself, he [the man] says, "I want you to join one company, who has maybe a hundred lawyers and I want you number three, top." He went over [to] Mr. Black, Conrad Black, who owns all the newspapers and also stocks to the newspaper here, and he went over to the company and says, "You'll be...I'll have your company as lawyers but you have to hire Igor [Kaplan]..." I-G-O-R, "then you'll be my company, otherwise I'll go

somewhere else." And they hired him right away because he was working with Igor together and have all the literature and all the magazines and all the things to take over a six-billion-dollar company, and Igor helped him take over. And I have a book that's written about Mr. Black, and I got the book, and the writer...I'm in the book, and the writer says, if not for my son, Igor, this book would never be written, because Igor helped him take over the six-billion[-dollar company]. I, I...

P: Is this Conrad...?

K: Conrad Black.

P: Oh, a very famous Canadian.

K: A very famous, ya.

P: And that's who he worked for?

K: Ya, this was Conrad Black...

P: Oh, fantastic.

K: Conrad Black donated...

H: I haven't got that.

K: This is important, he donated a hundred thousand dollars to the Theological university in Toronto to create a Judaica chair in the name of Igor Kaplan, after he died.

P: Oh, wow, what an honour.

K: What an honour. He still...

P: And Conrad Black did that.

K: In this book he writes, in this book, the last book, "Life in Progress," I can't read it, I saw only in the back my name. Under, naturally, Igor, a lot about Igor, and my name,

ah... "His mother Nadia Kaplan, the lasting beauty," the
"lasting beauty," we were close friends, you know, so...

P: Um hmm.

K: Nomi has beautiful children, she was married before and
divorced, and she has a wonderful husband now, Gerry Growe,
he is a medical doctor, he is a haematologist, and, ah...she
has three children of her own, and Gerry has two children,
Gerry Growe is her husband, um...all three children went
through university. One even was a Rhodes scholar, which
means, um, one in each province wins the scholarship, the
Rhodes, Cecil Rhodes...Rhodesia [now called Zimbabwe] was
named after him...Cecil Rhodes left enough money that one
[student] from each province can go to Oxford [University],
and Nomi's youngest son won it. He was a Rhodes scholar.

P: Congratulations.

K: Ya, there were only two Jews who ever from here, from...

P: From Vancouver?

K: From Vancouver, ah...Turner, the [former Canadian Prime]
Minister Turner was a Rhodes scholar, Trudeau was a Rhodes
scholar, you know. [Note: P.M. Pierre Elliott Trudeau was not
a Rhodes scholar.] They have the tie, they all have the same,
the same tie that they...it's like a club, you know, and
thank God, you know, my grandchildren are very successful,
they're also lawyers, they...my son's. One has two children,
one has three children. Nomi became a grandmother, she has
one...a little, her oldest son got married, and there's a
little girl, and, um...Gerry has two grandchildren now. So

it's one very happy family.

P: Well, it's been a successful family after all.

K: Very.

P: The grandchildren...

K: And the grandchildren, my son's...

P: And great-grandchild now, one great-grandchild?

K: I have seven great-grandchildren.

P: Ah! fantastic.

K: Look, I'm eighty-seven years old.

P: Ha ha.

K: What do you expect?

P: Well, this is just so wonderful.

K: I was eight-seven on the fifteenth of this month [December 1994].

P: And what happened to your husband if you want to conclude, you mentioned to us about your son...

K: Well...

P: You started saying that he got...

K: What happened to my husband I'll tell you, I was, I...he had a prostate operation, and he got a stroke. And two months before he had the operation, he didn't know when he was going to have it, he knew he needed it and he, um, said, first of all, "Meine Hand zittern ["My hand trembles"]," his hand is shaking a little bit. He wanted me to learn how to write a cheque. [I] never wrote a cheque, you know, he did all these things. Then one day he says, two months before, he says, "You know I want to tell you something, I had a very happy

life with you, I was really very happy to have you as my wife." I said, "What are you talking about?" [He answered] "No, I want you to know. I want you to know." When he got a stroke and he was comatose, and I talked to him, I begged him to go with him. I didn't, I didn't want to live. I, I just didn't want to live anymore. The children were happy, everything was good, [but] I didn't want to [live]. But I am happy that he died before Igor died, because this, it would have killed him on the spot.

P: So how long when he, since he past on?

K: Igor passed away five years, um, he [my husband] passed away five years before, '75; Igor died in '80.

P: Um hmm.

K: He [Igor] had everything to live for, he was in "Who's Who in Canada," you know, "Who's Who." I'm in it too, as a mother. I'm in "Who's Who." But he left wonderful children. One is a professor [who] teaches law. He's a lawyer and a professor, teaches law at Carleton [University] in Ottawa. The other one is also a lawyer, and they have...one has wife [who is] a lawyer, and they are wonderful children. I mean, they are, they are very good to me, and they called me in October. I have to come in October to Toronto.

P: Now you can call your brother maybe, remember?

K: It's ten o'clock.

P: You wanted to call.

K: No, it may be too late.

P: Oh, it's too late?

K: It's too late.

P: At nine o'clock right.

K: I'll find out.

H: She's got enough?

P: Huh?

H: Shall we stop now?

P: So, shall ah...so, is there anything that you want to say specifically in concluding our interview about your...?

K: In concluding, I have everything...

P: About your life, what gave you longevity, what inspired you...

K: Well, I don't know what inspired me. Longevity is genes. I have my father's genes. You know, my father was not an educated man, but he had so much charisma. He could do anything he wanted until he came to Canada. In Canada he died a poor man. In Europe he was...a charity, to me, that's Jewishness. To me, to be Jewish is to be charitable, is to give. You have, you give. And this I learned from my parents. Mama, during the First World War, used to dish out...we had everything. She used to dish out [on] Thursday, the maid was standing, and she had [on] one side, a sack of flour, one side a sack of sugar, and women were standing in the back door and with containers to get the flour and the sugar and the fat, what they needed to bake 'khallah' [a braided loaf of white bread] for Shabbat [Sabbath]. There was not a person that, that didn't benefit from my father. And one, one benefited which I, I don't forget him. You know why? because

he decided...he was a pharmacist, an old boy friend, a "Jugendfreund," grew up together from...since they were little, he was a pharmacist but he hasn't got the money to open a pharmacy, "Let's go [become] partners." So my [father] opened...my father built him a pharmacy, all mahogany, all built, everything wonderful. And when he opened up my father wanted to go in, he said, "You have nothing to do here. You are not allowed to be my partner. You have nothing to do" and "out!" And my father couldn't, ah...

P: Comprehend.

K: Couldn't fight him.

P: Um hmm.

K: Couldn't go to court.

P: He had no documents.

K: No.

P: Um hmm.

K: You see? I mean, many things. I know many people took advantage of him but look, what's gone is gone and that's all.

P: Well, for eighty-seven, you are still full of the fighting spirit...

K: [laughs] Fighting spirit.

P: Forward looking future and full of life and full of humility and charm.

K: And in my, in my youth, the "shadkhonim," [professional matchmakers] you know what a "shadkhen" is? Did you ever hear of a "shadkhen"? You know a "shadkhen"? They used to come in

droves. A "shadkhen" is a [male] matchmaker. A matchmaker used to come, they used to come. When I used to see one with the black suit and the red hanky I figured it's time to leave house, to leave, I moved I think.

P: [not clear]...okay?

K: Ya, I...

P: That's your survival.

K: Well, I...like I...

P: Do you feel fortunate, do you feel lucky, that kind of thing.

K: Well...

P: Just one sentence or two, sort of, put it on.

K: You know, my sentiments...

H: It's on.

P: I want you to erase what I said.

K: No, that's okay. My sentiments, you know, that I wanted the children should get out. What happens to me it doesn't matter. When we heard, for two years, for three years we didn't know anything [about] what happened, [not] anything. My husband and I, we were just crying all the time. He lost everybody. He lost twenty-nine members of his family, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, everyone, and it was, it went so far that we talked it out and I said, "Okay, we talked it out, but you have to live now. You can't help it, you have to live, you...." It's very hard to live and to think all the time about what [happened to our family], you can go...you can get very depressed. I said, "We did what we could." One time I wanted my girl friend who was [the owner

of a] factory, and brought out money, lots of money, to take...my sister-in-law was our girl friend too, to take her little boy. I called her, "Take Gabi, Gabriel, take him." [She responded] "How can I take him?, What will I do with him?, How can I take him?" I said, "Take him out, we'll look after him, take him out with...somehow with money, somehow you will be able to [manage]." She wouldn't do it. She wouldn't do it. [siron heard] We didn't have it, and we couldn't do it, and he was, he was the first one to go, because they took the children, 'Aktion' [round-up of Jews].

P: Um hmm.

K: The 'children raid'. It is ah, ah...one thing which I can't understand, still can't understand, that it took about more than twenty years until people started [speaking] about the Holocaust. Nobody ever said anything, even the survivors who came. They never talked about it. Nothing was done. Um...all of a sudden, you know, it was an upswing. I am very happy about it. It should not be forgotten, and people should remember, and people should do something about it. But where was everybody, nobody cared. It is, "Look, I survived, 'Mirs gut'" you know, "I'm well," and even, even the survivors didn't talk about it.

P: Ah, well, as a survivor, I will say it would be too painful for there is so much trauma...

K: Ya, but okay, but then somebody had to start.

P: When I...when one is so traumatized and still so young and so oppressed and everybody says, "Oh, how was it, how was it?"

but when you start talking they say, "Oh, you don't want to say anything about that, forget it."

K: No, I, I talked to my sister-in-law, not this one, not the Rohm, the other one my brother married, my younger brother married...

P: So you can't blame survivors, that's what I'm saying.

K: I am not blaming, I am blaming ourselves too.

P: Yeah.

K: I am blaming ourselves. Why we didn't do anything?

P: You don't need to blame anybody.

K: But the first time when he came, [Irving] Abella came, and I heard Abella is coming, Nomi heard, and she said, "Mother, he is going to talk about the Jewish farmers, about Jewish people who were not allowed to come in. We didn't know that they [the Canadian government] don't let in Jews. We couldn't understand that [why] my father doesn't [couldn't] send us the [entrance] permit, when we were in Europe. We couldn't understand it.

P: Ya, there was a law against it. "None is Too Many" is the book [written by Irving Abella and Harold Troper].

K: But, um, my...I don't know if I mentioned it last time how we got in [admitted into Canada]. We got in through the, one of the big anti-Semites in Canada, it's again a Gentile, Mr. Blair. Mr. [Frederick Charles] Blair, Professor Abella wrote a book, 'None are [is] Too Many,' and he writes about Blair, and Blair said, "None..." he was the Minister of Immigration [from 1936-1943, Blair was Director of the Immigration Branch

of the Department of Mines and Resources], and when it came to Jews, "None are too many." When we arrived, um...on the train, we passed by Winnipeg, the train stopped and all of a sudden [there] was a reception. [There] was a photographer, newspapers, [they] took our pictures, I said, "What's going on?" Well, it was seven years that no refugees came through the western part [of Canada] at that time. When my father finally got somebody to ask Mr. Blair, [my father wished] to talk to him, he wanted to come to him, he [Mr. Blair] said, "I [will] give the Jew fifteen minutes." And my father gave a date, and my father took the train and had to borrow the money, and came to Ottawa, and came to Mr. Blair. He kept him for an hour and a half. And going out, he went out with his arm around my father's shoulder, and said, "Jews like you we want." What's the difference? What does he know about other Jews? He doesn't know anything about other Jews. What does he know?

P: That's part of the illness of bigotry...

K: Ya, I mean, what does he know about other Jews?

P: And prejudice.

K: Like my teacher, my photo[graphy] teacher. One was the surrounding cities, you know, I used to bring in apples and I had a wagon and I called out "Apples, apples, apples!"...

P: Yes, you were saying that in that part, first part.

K: What did he do? Hitler doesn't mean me. He doesn't mean me [my teacher had said]. And why did he [Blair] say this to my father? Maybe all the Jews are nice people.

P: Thank you very very much, Nadia. It was a pleasure.

K: No, I mean...it is a pleasure and it's not, for me, it's a pleasure and not a pleasure, you know. I do something for the Holocaust, but it's hard on me.

P: Of course.

K: You know, and so many things come...

P: It's hard on all of us but we must say, we must do something.

K: Well, I know, it's my duty.

P: Yes. Thank you.

K: It's my duty if I can do something, you know.

[End of interview.]