HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

LUCYNA BERKOWICZ

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Eileen Steinberg
Date: April 21, 1985

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LB - Lucyna Berkowicz[1] [interviewee]
ES - Eileen Steinberg [interviewer]
Date: April 21, 1985[2]

Tape one, side one:

ES: This is an interview with Lucyna Berkowicz taped at the Philadelphia Gathering of Survivors, by Eileen Steinberg, on April 21, 1985. Please tell me when and where you were born, and then a little bit about your family.

LB: I was born in Lwów in 1914. My parents, it was during the First World War, right. And my, I'll give you my first memories. What can I tell you? My, I, when I came to understand that, who I am, and who my parents are, it was about when I was four or five years old. I was, I think that I was a very bright kid, and I'll prove it to you because I'll tell you something about that, an, a incidents in 1918, during the liberation of our city from the Ukrainians and, because the Americ-, Polish Legion, Legionnaire, Pilsudski's army[3], came in and liberated in 1914, in 1918.

ES: In 1918.

LB: And I was already four, four or four-and-a-half years old. And I remember they escaped from the Jewish ghetto. We were living in a Jewish section, see? And I remember like, it was a lot of shooting. I didn't understand at the time what it was, but I remember that, I can even see it clear and I am telling you the story. And my father and mother took the children and we were running to our, to my grandmother. Because she was living in another part of the city. And at that time, a patrol, patrol of Legionnaires...

ES: Patrol.

LB: Patrol, yeah, patrol, stopped us. And my father was keeping, "Come here, hold my hands." I was next to the youngest. My little brother was just born, a few months old. It was 1918. He was born in 1918. So they stopped him and he-- they ask, my father started to cry. He said, "Please let me go. I am just a worker. I want to go from this house because there is a lot of shooting going on and it was burned." The whole Jewish section was in flames. We were living near a big synagogue. The old synagogue in Lwów, it is not any more I don't believe, it was in fire, completely. So, and he said, "Prove to me that you are a worker." My father took me, and put me on this str-, on the sidewalk next to him, and he showed the hands. I remember that. And, when weeks later we reached my grandmother's house and we came in there and we stood there maybe two or three weeks, but when it stopped, when they start to clean up the city and they, it was a lot of killed Jewish people, a lot of them, and Torahs burned and everything-- they made a very big

[1]Mrs. Berkowicz's personal history sheet indicates that her birth name was Klara Sabina Wiesman.
[2]Recorded at the 1985 American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors in Philadelphia, PA.
[3]Marshal Jozef Pilsudski - head of Poland - Polish revolutionary and statesman, the first chief of state (1918–22) of the newly independent Poland established in November 1918. (www.britannica.com)

funeral for this-- and my father had to go. My mother couldn't go, because she was sick. My father had to go to the funeral. I screamed out to my father, "Daddy, if they will ask you who you are, show him the hand and tell him that you are a worker." That's why I'm telling you I was very bright.

ES: You were so little and you remember.

LB: Yes. I remember also the burning of the city, the houses where we stopped before we reached our grandma's house. That's not important.

ES: What did your father do for a living?

LB: My father was a plumber. In 1914, where I was born, in Austria, in Galicia, that was a part of Poland for hu-, over a hundred years belonged to Austria. And it was called Galicia, you know. So, of course my father was in the Austrian army on the front in the First World War, but he came back, apparently, after the war. The pact in Versailles was written, done. He came back home, survived. He, I know my father was in Vienna for four years, all the four years he was very ac-, he was...

ES: During the war.

LB: Yeah, during the war. And he was in the medical corps, on the front. He used to tell us stories about that. I had a very intelligent father. My father was, didn't-- he wasn't born in Lwów. He was born in Zolkiew [now Zhovkva] in Poland. And his further, his education he did get in a monastery. That means that my grandfather even was for education, because at the time in those years, it's about 150 years or more, yes, my father died in 1936. Or my father would be gone 130 years [unclear]. It was very, very, it's about 130, 150 years, right?[4] So, he had his Jewish education by a rabbi's home, and in a monastery he learned the German language, and Polish and arithmetic and everything. My father was a very educated man. And in our home, that was the most important thing, education. All the children always in the books, reading. And my father used to, was so fluent in Hebrew, and not in Hebrew, in *Lashon Kodesh*,[5] the language of the books. Because my mother wanted in Hebrew, but *Lashon Kodesh*, that he used, in the long winter nights, he used to read from the *Lashon Kodesh* and right away try to translate it to us in Jewish. Because the language was Jewish we talked. He was by trade he really was a, how would you call it? He, my grandfather, wait, that was probably going generations. He used to make those big candelabras, melt them, I mean, pouring them and melt them. He had often, how to...

ES: Lighting fixtures.

LB: No, he mold them. He made them. He made the molding.

ES: Out of metal?

LB: Out of bronze. That was it. And that must be, but this was done by my grandfather. This makes me think, that we come from a long way from my father's side, that we are coming from Spain, and if, when we, the Jews started to go after the Inquisition,

[4]She may be speaking about her grandfather. It's not clear.
[5]Literally "the tongue of holiness," meaning Biblical Hebrew.

ran, they must have come from there. Because that kind of art was known, coming from east, I mean...

ES: And you think...

LB: Palestine.

ES: Father carried it?

LB: Yes, because how did I found that out? When I met people from North Africa, they said that the name Weissmann [pronounced "Wees-man"], Weissman, not Wiseman [pronounced "Wys-man"], Weissman, is very common there. And we know that after the Jews ran from, some of them ran from Spain back to the Gibral-, from the Gibraltar back to North Africa. They came from Spain.

ES: So that's where you think your...

LB: So and this is, I think...

ES: …family came...

LB: That on my father's side, my mother came from a little town, all the children were born and raised in Lwów. But my mother came as a six-year-old girl from a little village, no not a village, a little town near Radziechow. It was Witkow Nowy they called. And she came from a line of Hasidic, Hasidim, Moreh and Moreh Haruv,[6] you know.

ES: All very learned people.

LB: They were very learned people.

ES: How many brothers and sisters?

LB: I had three brothers. And the two sisters.

ES: And they were all born in the same town?

LB: All born in Lwów, and from, I mean, it's, it was not a rich family. And, my father later on had to switch to, after the 1918, he had to switch more to plumbing and blacksmith, and a mechanic.

ES: And you went to live with your grandmother, you said?

LB: Yes. We stood by our grandmother only a few weeks and we had to find another apartment, you know...

ES: But you stayed...

LB: In the city.

ES: In the same town.

LB: Yes. That was, everything was in Lwów. We, till 1942.

ES: What was your life like before the war, before the Nazis?

LB: Before the Nazis. Oh, when I was already at the time, 25 years old when I, we left. I...

ES: Bef-, right before the Nazis came what was it like for you and your family?

LB: Just before the Nazis. I have two years of university, by the Russians. I had the opportunity to go into the University of Yi-, Ivana Franka it was even. Jana Kazimierza

[6]Rabbis who issue Halachic (religious) decisions.

in Polish. You know, it was our university. Before the war, before the Second World War, I couldn't go there because by the Poland it was *numerus clausus*[7], you know, one thing. And I wasn't able to go there, because, by the means, you know, money...

ES: You didn't have enough money.

LB: Right. And my education, like high school what you would call here, *gymnasium* in Poland, education, till I did get the *Matura*, how do you call it? Here, when you are finished high school you graduate and...

ES: Yes.

LB: Then by us, after the *gymnasium* you have *Egzamin Dojrzałości* [Polish: maturity exam]. That means the *Mat*-...

ES: Examination?

LB: Examina-, yes. This is the, if you are a full adult that they will. At that time, I had to go off for work. I was politically involved at the time. I start, I was politically involved very young, as a fr-, it was a, impossible to keep it from me. Is, I started to read at the age of six.

ES: Were your parents politically involved, or just you?

LB: My father was a Zionist, always reading the Jewish newspapers. And, and a active Zionist, always in the home. It was the politics, talking about how we should go, that all the Jews should go to Israel and we should have our home [unclear]. He brought us up in that longing to our land, because as a educated man he knew the whole history of what we went through, through the centuries. And as I was growing up, I was reading it too, and learning about our past. Not that I didn't feel that I am Jewish, but when I did get in on our, I mean, in this, in the ghetto, that Jewish ghetto-- in clo-, it wasn't a closed ghetto but a big Jewish-- there were a lot of organizations, just like here in Philadelphia you have Zionist, and *Mizrachi*, the *HaShomer Hatzair*. And you had the *Poalei Tzion* and you had, you know, you...

ES: Which organizations...

LB: Was all kinds.

ES: Were you and your father involved in?

LB: Mostly in Zionist organization. I think, I remember he used to read the *Shvilah* and the Jewish newspapers. All the Jewish newspapers, a lot of Jewish newspapers used to come. I don't remember the name now.

ES: So he was a Zionist from way...

LB: He was a Zionist, yes, of course. And a learned man. He, it was a kosher home in the house and my mother kept up kosher. I mean the holidays and everything. You

[7]*numerus clausus* - a Latin term meaning a restricted number which refers to a policy of restricting admission of certain people-- usually Jews-- to an educational institution. It was common in Czarist Russia. After World War I, Hungary also took on this policy limiting Jews to 5% of the total student population. Other countries took this policy on as well. In Poland Jews were limited to 10%. (The Standard Jewish Encyclopedia, Cecil Roth, Editor in Chief, Doubleday & Company, Inc. Garden City, New York: 1959)

know, like a, like a regular home with aunts and uncles and family and very spread, big family. My cousins were Belzer Hasidim. They did *Hatores Horo-oh* [phonetic].[8] That means, "Rabba" titles of rabbis from my mother's side. From my father's side they were going to colleges, you know, abroad, because I had a aunt in America for many years. She, and she was very wealthy when she came back to Lwów after the war.

ES: So your family was always very politically active. How would you des-...

LB: They were active but knowledgeable. Knowledgeable. Active. I was active. And I, because I, I was brought up in knowledge and everything, so I, in Poland, so the Polish language was very near to me, just like English to you, you know?

ES: It was your native language.

LB: Yes. And I didn't think about like my father thinks about Palestine or Israel. I read. I learned. I knew the history who I am, my background. But since I was in Poland-- and I loved the country, it was my home, right-- I thought that we should be acknowledged in this country as a part of another religion, right? I didn't at the time understood that we are a nation, that we are a people. And, we are a minority. Yes, we are a, we are a rel-, no, I wouldn't say a religious sect. I always thought that we are a minority, but we should have all the...

ES: Equal rights.

LB: Equal rights. And who the best gave me the answer to it? The far leftists. Right? So in the beginning I joined, I did, I have read a lot. I was looking around. I was in *Hashomer Hatzair* for a while. I was in *HeHalutz*,[9] you know? And it came a time that I started to go more left and left. And it was a time that I was working in *Hashomer Hatzair* and *HeHalutz*. I went on *hakhsharah*.[10] And I was active in the newspaper, you know, they made that newspaper. [unclear] all newspapers, I was writing a lot about, just working to split, to bring in destruction. Because I didn't, to tell them that it's a better way for the Jewish...

ES: You spoke out.

LB: It's, the, if we will go for such a lesson, this will be the answer to all of the questions, because everybody's equal there. There is not rich and poor, that, you know, all those things. We were on the border Russia and Poland. Ukrainia that's a little of is Ukrainia, you know? We had illegal literature brought in by you know, people went, were going to...

ES: So they would travel.

LB: Yes. And I was very active in the movement. It started with being active first for the pri-, political prisoners to make, and to make, to, to get money to help them. And later on I was more and more involved. It came to a time that I was, it's was illegal in Poland, you know. We used to make demonstrations. We used to make all kinds of things.

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[8]Permitted to render decisions.
[9]HeHalutz was a Jewish youth movement that trained young people for agricultural settlements in Israel.
[10]*hakhsharah* - farming training for Israel.

And I was, I used...

ES: You were right there.

LB: I used to get even literature from Germany. I used to be the one, that I went to the post office, to bring all of the literature. *The Road to Auerbach*, *Impracord,* the international press correspondence, all this was Communist literature. I was a technical worker for the whole section of Lwów. Was a big city, a very big city, with a opera house, with all. I don't know if you heard about it. It's a very very big city.

ES: How did your parents feel about what you were doing?

LB: In the beginning they didn't know. It started very early, but when they found out they were terr-, it's a big disgrace. This was one-- they loved me very much. They knew that I'm the brightest of the children, the daring of the children because I was speaking up all the time. They understand, but parents, I love them, they were trembling that I might go to jail, you know. It's that and that.

ES: How were...

LB: It...

ES: What were the relationship between the Jewish people in your town and the non-Jewish people?

LB: It depends on which section. In Poland it was always, this is 95%...

ES: In your town where you lived.

LB: My, that was Poland.

ES: No, I mean, but how did the Jews and the non-Jews get along?

LB: In peace time, peace, they...

ES: Before the war, I'm talking.

LB: They always hated the Jews. If you have a, had a good relationship with them it is when they needed you as a Jew. And the Jew is always willing to give and to help, to live in peace. So they gave a lot. Even the janitor in the house used to get from each tenant-- we used to live in a three-...

ES: Three story house?

LB: Very high, you know, in the big city. Each janitor, each tenant used to at Christmas to bring and give him gefilte fish and pastry and giving money and, you know. So why shouldn't, or, every Saturday Sabbath they came to switch the light...

ES: Lights.

LB: You know, the, so, and if it was in business, you know, what do I have to tell you how it is? It is just like it is here. If you are a big owner of a big factory and you are a Jew and you employ non-Jews they are nice to you because you are giving them pay. But if they know that they can get you somehow when you are down, they step on you, and they'll not remember what you did for them, that was always traditional, it's not too [unclear]. Didn't change nothing. Nothing. Even in this free country.

ES: You were a leftist and you were involved in leftist activities, and this was during the period from about '37...

LB: Till, till my early youth till '37 I would say, till '37. That was it. After '37, what do I have to tell you? I was almost like [unclear], how do you say, sa-, no, I don't have the right word for it. They didn't approve of my getting married in a Jewish ceremony. I couldn't do it to my parents not to get married, you know, in city hall. But that was against the policy, you know, religion, right? And so, I used, I, but I once felt that I did the right thing for my parents and I didn't feel that I changed any of that, my views. I still thought that the answer for the Jewish people, I felt always that I am a Jewish girl. I wasn't very much, I was a...

ES: You thought your leftist activities would help you as a Jew and not harm you.

LB: As a Jew, absolutely.

ES: When you...

LB: Always thought...

ES: Got married...

LB: Always.

ES: When you got married was your husband involved in the same activities with you?

LB: My husband was always a leftist. He was also [unclear]. But he wasn't active, no. But he always would help, like, come to put labor literature or like we need money or something like this, he would go for it. And also the books and everything, he was a very intelligent man. That's my second husband. So...

ES: What happened in 1939 when Germany invaded Poland?

LB: When Germany invaded Poland, and it came to, it, and it came, and they surrounded our city. Warsaw fell and they surrounded our city, came to attack, you know, between Stalin, Ribbentrop and Stalin, yeah, right? There is going to be a border, you know, on the Bug [river], where so far it is going to be Ukrainian and we are taking that part and we are taking that part. We came under the Russians.[11] And when we, they, we came under the Russians, I was working at the time in a factory as a, I used to be a packer, chocolate [unclear], a known factory, known in the years and, as a leftist, over there we had a group. We knew we worked there for, together always between the workers to be at the union, at the, be, to the workers' union, you know? And then I, [unclear], he is distressing [perhaps she is referring to the man talking in the background?]. Anyhow, at the time, I took over the reign of the whole factory. I was very active.

ES: You organized everybody?

LB: Yes. And right away, we knew who was persecuted us, our left [unclear] was working. We were so, they were always suspicious of us. They knew that we were working for the, for the unions. The unions were on the left employees, you know.

ES: Was it, the people who worked in the factory, was it mostly Jewish people?

[11]The city of Lvov (L'viv) in southeastern Poland was occupied by the Soviet Union in 1939, under the terms of the German-Soviet Pact. (www.ushmm.org)

LB: No.

ES: It wasn't.

LB: No, it wasn't mostly Jewish, but it was a lot of Jewish. And they, it wasn't Pol-, the, it was a lot of Jewi-, it wasn't a lot of Jewish people, but they, it was enough of them. And it, the, the managers in certain departments were Jews and they were very smart and they knew exactly who and how to read the personnel. I mean, they knew who I was, because I always stood up for my rights. A Polish girl didn't stood up, and she didn't talk the language I talked to them, you know? They could never do nothing to me out of work or something because I was a excellent worker, and I knew how to take care of myself not to be, not to lose the job and not to lose the place where I was working for the party-- regardless that I wasn't...

ES: So you...

LB: Officially.

ES: You did your job, so they...

LB: I did my...

ES: Let you stay.

LB: Yes. And later on I decided, I was, at the time it was a time that when the Russian came in. They talked to me, not to the owner of the factory.

ES: Because you were the organizer?

LB: I was the organizer of the whole thing. That didn't take long, because it take maybe two or three months and because they were activists from the party, that they said, "Hey," you know, political, you know, politics. I was idealistic and they were politicians. They wanted to take over the reign of the factory.

ES: Did the fact that you were Jewish, did the rest of the factory workers resent that, that you were their leader?

LB: They couldn't do at the time, because I had the backing of the, of the president, they called it president, master, like, the mayor of the city. And the political, all the political group that came in with the Russian army. It was the Russian army came in.

ES: So you had their backing?

LB: I had their backing. I was with the high officials. [unclear] surrounded. But, when it came to find really somebody after I-- there were going on political things like I'm telling you. The people that I worked with, to, who were in the party, they were right to think that me, not an official political member of the party...

ES: Was in charge.

LB: Was in charge. You know, political things. At that time we were very young, but it was. So, I wasn't so stupid. I figured, listen, at least there is the Russian army. They came to liberate us. I'll go back to school-- my dream of my youth. Now I can go to college, to the university. So I tried. I resigned from my post, and I said, "I'll go for examination." They opened it. I had no problems. My background, my father, my grandfather, workers, my brothers and sister, everybody works. I, they, we didn't own any factories. We were

just working people. So the social background, that's what they required. And, my leftist convictions. And I went, I, I...

ES: What was the name of the school you went to?

LB: Ivana Franka. In Polish it was University of Jana Kazimierza. Should I write it down?

ES: Okay, we'll write it down later.

LB: Yeah, good. That, and...

ES: You went there for two years?

LB: For two years, on the university, I went on the faculty of history. And I majored in archaeology. That was my major. And just the two years when I had to go...

ES: What two years?

LB: From 1939, the end of '39, '40, '41, '42 it was almost the end, right. In be tween I did summer jobs. I did take summer jobs, you know, with, vacation time. I did get a stipendium through them. They call it Stalin [unclear], Stalinism. Those are things that I won't like to come up, because I never talked about those things, never. What they did to help me to come to the free country, and at the time when I went to America, I was far from that. I just started to see, and open my eyes, when I came close to work with them, that something is wrong. First, I saw how the Jews, they were in the Russian army, how they were treated, and by the Russian, by their gentile colleagues. They were referring to them as, you know, like in English you would say "kikes" you know? And the Jews were afraid of them and were calling them Ivans, you know. I mean, there was in the eyes of the people there was, what they could see, it was a beautiful rapport. The Russian army, you know, the German army what they called the Red army, but when you were close with them, you knew what was going on. This opened my eyes. Even a general, a Jew, said to me, "Kid, what are you doing here?" He asked me, "What are you doing here?" Now, I couldn't understand at the time. When you are so many years, you read books and...

ES: You were an idealist.

LB: I was a idealist. I we-, I read international literature, translated from French, German, Italian, things in, at the time that were, today classics, but it still is something when you want to read about life, you'd still read those books. So I was in the [unclear]. But I, I knew something is wrong.

ES: And you began to see then that...

LB: Yes, and then...

ES: And then, things were not really this good.

LB: I find out my younger sister was in *Hashomer Hatzair* at the time. Yes, and then the biggest, the biggest thing was for me when it came, when they had to, they had to ma-, nominate a director of that factory from the working people. So they said to me, "Lutka," that was the name they called me by, "Lutka, those are political things. As a Jew we can't put you on the list. It has to be somebody else." It has to be, it was a friend of, a friend's wife. She was a Catholic girl. Kuzminska, Helena Kuzminska. "She is going to

be." And I wrote her speech. I couldn't take the place...

ES: So you couldn't be nominated...

LB: Because I was a Jew.

ES: Because you were a Jew.

LB: Yes. So they, this, I mean, not that at the time I was very interested, but the way they put it to me, as a Jew I can't, because at that time I was thinking about going and taking care of my education. But this, and so she said to me, "Please, Lutka, sit in the first row that I can look at you. I will read the speech, but I am so scared." She couldn't even write and read. She was a complete illiterate girl. But when she stood up and she read it...

ES: Your speech.

LB: My speech. And later, she started to go, to talk from her heart, because she was once thrown out from that factory in a strike. She was beaten up and when she started to talk-

[Tape one, side one ended.]

Tape one, side two:

ES: This is an interview with Lucyna Berkowicz at the Philadelphia Gathering of Holocaust Survivors by Eileen Steinberg, side two. Okay, after you found out that you could no longer be really politically active because you were a Jew, in the factory, how did you feel about that…

LB: It is not that...

ES: …and how did you react...

LB: You mean in the factory. I wasn't very much interested any more to be a active worker, but my political views didn't change by then. But I started to analyze the, what's going on. And, if it is, everything good the leaders, the people that I should look up to, if they are really the one that I was admiring so much all the years, if they are really going, doing the-, their job, or they are just politicians. And not only this, but I could see some cruelty too. I, like, they all of a sudden start to surrounded the Zionist youths, like, young kids, from 12 to 14, 16 years from *Hashomer Hatzair*. Youth organizations, they took them to jail. I mean, they were kids. What could they be...

ES: The Russians you're talking about?

LB: The Russians. As political prisoners, and it happened that one of my sister's, my youngest sister's pretty dear friend-- they grew up together-- was taken to prison. And also a friend from the University that was active in *Hashomer Hatzair*, that I worked with, by the Russians. He was an excellent pupil. And he was arrested. And even I was a leftist and he was a Zionist and I knew about that. We had a tremendous relationship. We used to have discussions together and one tried to...

ES: Influence the other?

LB: Influ-, not influence, but convince, that they are on the wrong side. But I knew that he was no, not the kind that he's going to overthrow the Russian government, or the kids. Now this was something awful, and when I found that out, so did my sister found out, my sister one day, she knew, she saw me many times with very high officials, because I still, being on the University I still had a clout. My, I knew the people that I started on the factory. So we were very good friends with very high Russian officials. She once did-- I met her on the street, and she told me, I asked her a question and I could see that she didn't want to answer me. She was like holding back something. When I came home and I asked her, "Batka, what happened?" She said, "I want to let you know that I am surrounded. They are looking. They are looking. I know that somebody is looking after each step I make, and I don't want you to get, to be involved in that because they might do something to it." Also at the time, many of our leftist friends started to be arrested and they accused them that they are Trotskys. And they never were Trotskys. Also, I was amazed by them that they said that the leftists, the people they were working before for, from Kreminsbad [phonetic] in Poland, that they are Trotskys. But they never were. Do you understand what I mean? They didn't have, they didn't, they took him out and they sent them to Siberia. We didn't

know. They disappeared.

ES: They were like political prisoners.

LB: That, yes, we didn't know. They disappeared all of a sudden and then when we started to talk we heard that they were accused of Trotskyism, which wasn't true. So, we thought that something, I, in a way I was very satisfied that I am on the-- I am on the University and I am studying. But at the same time, on the University, when you came to meetings like student meetings, when we spoke up, we were, it was at the time a lot of Ukrainians because this is a part of Ukrainia, you know. So, of course they were nationalist. They were Ukrainian nationalists, but when the Russians came they were socialists, you know. And at the same time they knew what was going on, who was a leftist and who wasn't. So when the, it came the, the Germans took over[12], I was on the black list. And one of our girls that was very active on the University, a Ukrainian girl, was killed on the University. And when I went to see a friend of mine he said, "Lutka, please, don't come to me, and be careful going home. Don't stay in, by your mother in your home. Stay someplace else." I had a, I had my own apartment.

ES: With your husband?

LB: With my husband. "Don't-- one night try to sleep by your mother one night, is because they are looking for you." And right away I, I disposed of my library. I had a tremendous big library. At a time before the war, I had a big library. And the people from the University, professors, used to ask me to lend to them...

ES: Your books.

LB: Magazines and books. Because I had from abroad, you know? So, I had to dispose of them, so I brought them to my sister. My sister started to scream, "What are you doing? You are making, we'll all be killed!" That was when the Germans came in. So, in the back yard, it was a top from a canal, you know? I opened that sewer and threw all my books in.

ES: All your books.

LB: And they were in leather, with leather bindings. In the hundreds of *zlotys*, you know, and a thousand, like thousand. I disposed of that and I saw that my whole family is, at the time was, terribly in danger because of me. That what made me decide to hang up on my husband at the time I met him. He was looking for a place where to live. He was, he escaped from the Germans. He worked for the Russians, and when the Russians came they started to take those people as [unclear], and not citizens of that part of the country. Took them to Siberia. He was hiding out by a Russian boss that he liked him because he worked very good, you know, as a farmer. So he survived and he, but he came again under the Germans. Do you understand?

ES: Yes.

LB: When he came under the Germans he looked for a place where to live, and

[12]The Germans occupied Lvov after the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. (www.ushmm.org)

I had two apartments. I was being by the mother and having the apartment with my husband at the time. My husband ran away together with the old Russian army and the Jews, because the men, they knew they will be the first victims when the Germans come in. So not even in a-- then they didn't have the time to give them the uniforms. They ran with the Russian army from the city. And I never heard from-- he was killed. And he never, he never came back. And they later said who-- he [her first husband] was killed, and cousins were killed that they told us about. So the time I have an apartment, so I took him [her future second husband].

ES: How did you meet up with him?

LB: Through a friend from the factory. She said, "I have an, a lady that she has an apartment. So I, you, maybe she will give you a place." For me it was good, because I was all alone and it, the, right away it was very scarce with food and I reckon I was so, not only alone, but very frightened because I knew that...

ES: They were looking for you.

LB: Any time they are looking for me. He used to work at, just like he worked for the German- for the Russians as a good plumber, the Germans also took him in and he worked at a, as just work. He brought home cigarettes and all kind. And then his brother sent a Polish family to pick him up. So I said, "Maybe you will take me with you." Not even thinking about, I just, at that time I tried it to get a...

ES: Papers?

LB: False papers. It's a story how I did get the false papers, but I think that I skipped a lot, because I didn't tell you about my brothers and sisters. This is not important for you about my family?

ES: It is important to me.

LB: How they died?

ES: Yes, I would like to, we'll backtrack now.

LB: Right.

ES: While-- all right, let's talk about your family. You said your father died in 1936. He had a stroke. Okay, what happened to the rest of your family?

LB: My oldest brother had a wife and two sons, Carl and Otto, two children.

ES: Where did they live?

LB: In the same...

ES: Same town.

LB: Yes. And my sister, my older sister, she's eight years old, no, older than me, she and her husband lived in the same city, has two daughters. She lives now in New York City. She has two, the two daughters are still. She, through the whole Second World War she was in hiding places, and she survived with her husband. And my brother-in-law died on a stroke, a heart attack, in New York, 20 some years ago. But my older sister is alive. My, then was a brother after her. He, during the German occupa-, he was married too, had two children, two boys. During the German occupation he was the one that, he was the one

that used to make hats, officers' uniform hats? How do you call that?

ES: The caps?

LB: The caps, but the, for the Polish officers. And of course they knew he was one in the city of Lwów. A excellent worker. So they took him. The Germans gave him a passport and took care of him and the wife and the children; he could go to work. They didn't bother him because they needed him. And he worked, made them the uni-, the hat, the caps, you know. After the war, when my-- and then, I am the fourth in the, I am the fourth, right? I escaped like I was telling you. And then was the brother, the younger brother, Zigmund. He was able, the age of the drafting age at the time when the Russians came in, so they took him and he was stationed in Dombas, that, you know, Dombas in Ukrainia. That is a industrial part of Russia where they have mi-, coal mines, you know. And his, when he's stationed there he did write letters that in the beginning we didn't understand, that big clouds are coming over. And it is, it would be good if we would come to him. Things like this. He tried to tell us that it is going to be a war, that Germany is going to invade. Somehow he found it out. I can't tell you that. But this is how...

ES: He was trying to warn you.

LB: Right. And the year, youngest what's, sh-, the youngest was Petka. So, at the time, everybody was in their homes, right? And I was married yet. It was only her. She was home. She was working some place. I can't remember even. I really can't remember.

ES: She was with your mother?

LB: She was with my mother all the time, and I used to come in and go out, you know.

ES: Visit.

LB: Right. When the Germans came in, my oldest sister-in-law went out in the street. It was no ghetto, nothing, in the first days right away from the street, they took her on a truck. They were, the SS was going through. They grabbed her. She never came back. They used to take on the hundreds of people from the street. You never knew. One day they took the men or elderly. One day they took women. You never knew who can go out safe in the street. She never came back. So my brother, my oldest brother, took the two sons, he closed up his home and came to the mother, to my mother. It wasn't an apartment with a lot of rooms, but we tell it was one big rooms. And the beds was [unclear]. It was separate. Clean. Spotless. They don't tell the circumstances how people lived in Poland, because people will come and tell you stories. But she, and, so, mother had already the two children to take care of.

ES: So it was very crowded.

LB: Yes. I dropped in whenever I could. I, mostly I was home because I had it good, at the time, good, scarce, but good. Financially, and he paid me. He brought in profits and everything. That was during the Germans, the Germans, I wasn't...

ES: Occupation.

LB: …too long by them. I wasn't too long by them.

ES: So you stayed together in your town in the apartment with...

LB: Yes. They started...

ES: The man that's your husband...

LB: Yes.

ES: For six months. Now...

LB: They started to form a ghetto. They wanted to form a ghetto. That, to form a ghetto in Lwów it took a long time, because they, it was a lot of Jewish people in Lwów.

ES: So they gradually began to round them up?

LB: About, I would say 200,000.

ES: Okay, and you're...

LB: Yes.

ES: Now your, your older brother...

LB: So they are in, and they ac-, they made selections. They, on the all kind of pretenses they took them to jail and they shot them. They shot them. They took them out, out of town towards cemeteries and they shot them, from the streets, children also. My brother had to come with his wife and two children, my older brother, not the oldest, but the older, older than me, had to come also to the mother with his wife and the two children, because the apartment where he was living had to, couldn't belong any more to the...

ES: Jews?

LB: To the ghetto. I mean, that was...

ES: Oh, it was not part of the ghetto anymore.

LB: No, wasn't part of the ghetto.

ES: So he went back...

LB: It wasn't a closed ghetto yet.

ES: …to your mother.

LB: But it, yes, he had to clear up, clean up, that, clear out from there. So, at the time, he did get in contact with his brother, because his brothers found out that a fellow from Radom used to come to our city to pick up leather from a leather factory, Battah [phonetic]. It was a known for, it, with a big truck. So, he came over to him, and he said, "Your brother sent for me. I can bring you back." At the time, it already was a law that after 7:00 you can't leave the city, under the penalty of death. Now we, everybody used to wear a sign, *Jude*. And there were restrictions all over, I mean, with food, with everything. But, and there were certain, how you call it, restrictions where you can go. And you couldn't walk on the sidewalks. Or, you had to walk on the, not to go in a certain...

ES: Neighborhoods?

LB: No, trolley cars. It was a big city. Not to movies, not, this, not allowed for Jews. So, he had to make the decision. So I said, "Listen, I would like to go from this city. I'll be no troubles to you. I am going to try to get myself a passport. I don't think the Jewish nobody did accuse me of being, I didn't even speak the language at the time, the Jewish language, because mostly I used the siblings at home, we used to speak Polish. And to

answer the parents, Polish. They, mother and father talked to us Jewish, but we didn't have, answer, Polish. No accent, nothing. So I said, "I would appreciate. I'll be no problems. This, as soon we will come to Radom, I'll disappear. I have a..."

ES: Papers?

LB: Papers. "I will have papers prepared." So I tried to get the papers through my girlfriend's husband, who came from Warsaw. He was a Polish fellow. His name was German-- Kessler, Michael Kessler. And he, I gave him my Polish identity card, and I said, "I want you just to change my name, last name. My name. And birth, the date of the birth, and the religion." Because it was, in Poland we had like the religions *Mojzesowe* [Mosiac].

ES: That you were Jewish.

LB: Yes, that I am Jewish. So it was a, a nice story with this too. It is not important now. It's not so important to go into details.

ES: But you finally got the papers?

LB: I did get that paper, right, and my husband promised me-- he wasn't husband at the time-- he will do it.

ES: He would take you with him.

LB: He will take me with him. So he, I said, "You know," so he made up with this fellow on a night after 7:00 in the evening, he will come to pick him up. So, I said, "Listen," and he'll take me from, he did, he said, "When he will come, I'll tell him that, I'll give him a few *zlotys* and he will take you, too." We weren't sure that he'll do it, but he tried. So, I said, "You know, I have somethings by my mother. I didn't keep it in my apartment. You have to go and pick it up for me, and bring it here and, from here we will go together." He went, and he just came, came out from my mother's with two bags, you know, with my belongings. And he, because it was after 7:00, so he took off the band, "Jew", and police, Ukrainian policemen caught him. They arrested him. They beat him. They, he was on, he was, when the sheriff, that Polish fellow came to my house and asked for him, I said, "I don't know where he is." In the time we found out that he was arrested. I don't recall how I did find out, how that he is in, arrested by the Ukrainians. They always pulled out of the head. He had a big...

ES: The hair?

LB: Big curly, black hair. And he was like, he had to be the next day sentenced to another prison, to death. They used to shot for things like this. So I went in. First of all, I did get in contact with that German fellow that he was working for, and I did let him know that he, if I got the time, I can tell the story, that he is on the...

ES: That he was arrested.

LB: That he arrested him. Then I went to him. And he was beaten up so much that you can't imagine. And they, I did get him out, and I also sent a telegram, a cable, to his brother, to Radom, what happened. And of course that Polish fellow with that, the truck, he went back, and said he is never going to bother again. So I did get him out. If not for me, if I wouldn't know who that German fellow is that gave him work, he wouldn't be

alive. They would kill him. So, he came out and he said...

ES: Did he come back to your apartment?

LB: Yes, of course, where else? And he said, "Listen, it looks, I didn't want to take you with me." He talked me like that. "But it looks that it's my destiny somehow that I have to. If not for you, I would be killed. Now I owe you my life." You understand? "So I have to take you." So, I, we did get in touch again with his brother. He tried to work it out that next time when he'll come for a deliv-, new delivery of, to pick up a delivery of, a leather, he will take me too. In the meantime, I made sure with the family, mine, that I have to go. My mother was for it, because she knew that if I will not go, the whole family, they'll catch me, as a, and they'll pin me as a political prisoner. The whole family would be caught and, so, my mother said, "If you can, go..."

ES: Go.

LB: "…and try to survive if you can." So, and this what we did. But, from the time, from that time, till to the real pick, when he took us out from the city, we arranged some other people from that part of the country, from Radom and around that were living also like, came to Lwów like my husband. They wanted to go back home to be, if to die, it had together with their families. They wanted to go back. They didn't survive. They didn't go to [unclear] want to go back. So, and we had 30 some people hidden under the, under the leather. And at the time, because already the part till Lublin, it was the *Judenfrei*, *Judenrein*, *Judenrein*. There were no Jews in certain cities. Completely no Jews. So the 12th of January we left. We came in the middle of the night to Lublin. We came to a friend of this fellow, Polish fellow, took us in the basement. In the darkness of the night, he gave us something to drink. We were, it was, all of us would be shot, the Polish people. And then he brought us to Radom. In Radom everybody went to their homes, you know. And he brought me to his aunt. I was, then he found out that his mother was killed during...

ES: One of the roundups?

LB: Yes. And he, I stood there for, it was a terrible shock to him. They were seven brothers, and the mother was like a goddess for them. And it was, she was a very nice woman. I never knew her of course. So I was maybe, three weeks I was with the aunt, and then, by the time when I had to make the, the move to go away, I did get scared to. I never was away in my whole life. As a big politician I was, and as I never had any experience to be...

ES: Away from your family.

LB: I had not clear my family, you know? I was bright, yes, but I knew what-- the danger is terrible. I could see it that this, terrible things would happen. I could hear how they felt and I, my sister used to live in, near a prison. And they used to bring in the Jews in the prison. And when I was overnight by my sister I could hear like they, they, the salvos and said, "*Eins*, *zwei*, *drei*, *feuer*!" And the screams of the Jews and, you know, I mean, I, [unclear] but listen. "Let me stay with you, with your family. You know who I am. You saw my mother, you saw my brothers and sisters. Let's be together." He liked me. I was a

very attractive woman. "I have nobody. If we have to die, we'll die together. What difference does it make? I am scared." His family took very much to me, and brother and s-, the brothers and the aunts and the cousins. And, my father-in-law married us, gave us *Chuppa Kidushin* [Hebrew: wedding ceremony] you know, on the 17th of March, 1942. That means from January, in March I was married to him, officially. And my brother-in-law, that, Yaacov, Berkowicz, Yankel they called him, he made me a home. In that little town, was very nice. And gave me a job right away. I started to work in the Jewish community, you know. It was a small community but I had that work together there. And he was completely broken up. When he found out that the mother died, he couldn't do nothing. And what, the men couldn't do anything anyhow, because...

ES: There was no work for them?

LB: He, he no work. He was a plumber in a big city. What could he do there? There wasn't water. There wasn't electricity there, nothing there. So then when I came to that Wolanów, it was like 200 years behind in culture, that, from the surrounding. And by time I came, I came from a big city with libraries, museums, operas, theaters. I was brought up in the big city. Here I came and I found Jewish people that they didn't know even what electricity is, running water, nothing. It was horrible, but at least it was what to eat. I didn't, I had what to eat. It was potatoes. My father-in-law had two acres of land. You know, I mean that, the hunger wasn't there. But the fear of death. And then, like I told you, my brother-in-law, when it came to liquidate the ghetto-- they made a small ghetto-- it was maybe two or three weeks, or four weeks, or a month. But who remembers it now? He helped the young people to go in that Wolanów camp. That part of the camp-- people working, people for the Wehrmacht. The Jews who used to go out and, separate men and separate women. Of course a lot of children, mothers took children, and, you know, when they had selections over there, they took away mothers with children. They took away elderly people. They shot a lot of people during the marches even, for the slightest thing. If they saw them out of the...

ES: Out of line or something?

LB: Out of line, or out, they killed them. And one time they brought from Radom a few hundred people, a few hundred people from Radom, and they told them to, to dig their own graves. And we could see it from the, from our barracks we could see. It was in the men's barrack. We could see how they had to take, dig, take out, take off their clothes, and they were shot. Then came epidemic of typhoid fever. And my husband did develop it. I didn't. And I helped to, to, after the typhoid fever, when it cames the, it quiet down a little bit. Of course we tried to keep it very quiet, because otherwise they won't let us out to work. And they would come and liquidate the camp. So, somehow a Jewish doctor came after. They start, somehow somebody told him. And they came to look around for the people who had typhoid fever. And because, this doctor, pol-, like politics, was, I think he was even accused of collaborating with the Germans in Israel. But they let him go free. He is not alive anymore. He wanted to get my husband. I covered my husband in my, in the

barracks in my bed, completely, when the Germans came in.

ES: They couldn't see him?

LB: No, and I used to take every day out, from, you know, I don't know if you know the, how after the typhoid fever the people that are coming out of the sickness they are very childish. They walk very slow. They talk like kids. It took a long time. At that time I lost two brothers-in-law, and two sisters-in-law, and my, and the children of theirs.

ES: All to this typhoid?

LB: Yes, to typhoid fever. One child fell. He wanted to run to a-

[Tape one, side two ended.]

Tape two, side one:

ES: Interview with Lucynda [sic Lucyna] Berkowicz, taped at the Philadelphia Gathering of Holocaust Survivors, April 21, 1985, by Eileen Steinberg, side three. Okay, what happened to your nephew? You said...

LB: You see, when we came to Wolanów, in the camp, in Wolanów labor camp, we were, there were five Berkowicz brothers, five brothers. One of the brothers, Michael Berkowicz, and his wife Ruba and a little boy, he worked as a tailor in the shop on the place where the Wehrmacht was, and he was a very capable tailor. And they, he used to do a lot of favors for other people to be able to work there. And the master, the master of that ca-, shop, liked him very much. So, when it came the selection of mothers and children-- he did let Michael know about it-- so Michael did find a place for his wife and children on a *forvork* [phonetic]. You know what *forvork*? You don't know what a *forvork* means? Means like a estate where also a small group of people were, with children, hiding, because they were working over there for some kind of German, big officials. So he, but always when they used to know, they were bribed those Germans too. As long as they need them to keep care, they knew that it will come a time they will have to let, they will go also to concentra-, to the last solution. They will be killed. So at the time, his wife Ruba did get somehow, get sick and typhoid fever. And the child was running around with all the children. They knew always, the children they were already trained, they knew when the SS came or some visitors came to, that they will go, they knew that they should run and hide. So this little boy, when, usually mothers looked after their hiding and where they are going. This time mother was sick in bed, and the little boy run, and somebody took a big pot of soup, you know, put it to boilings. And he was running, he fell in. He died. When my, my brother-in-law Michael found that out, he almost lost his mind. He lives now in Sydney, Australia. This man, I was twice now in Australia. I think, he is a very nice man, he did a lot for the whole family. We have now a big family in Australia from the other side of the cousins from my husband's side because from mine nobody is left. Michael is not completely normal. I mean...

ES: He was affected by the death of his son...

LB: I mean he is, was, we are all affected. Like I said to my husband, "We are walking around like living dead." You wouldn't believe it, but we are trying just to adjust.

ES: From all the memories.

LB: From all, but it's impossible. I mean, everything, it's, ev-, we are always motivated with memories and whatever we do, we always, behind in our mind...

ES: You can't forget.

LB: We can't forget. And it's a, just like I am talking now you see, it came out from Michael.

ES: How long were you in Wolanów labor camp?

LB: Till 1943. From 1943, by the end of 1943 it was, we divided. The camp was divided. They liquidated the camp so some went to Blizyn, and one Starachowice. Me, my husband, another brother-in-law and sister-in-law, and my st-, father-in-law, we all went to Starachowice in 1943.

ES: Which is another labor camp?

LB: Yeah, a labor camp. And in this labor camp, also were the same thing. We worked, I worked in a factory of ammunition and from that factory I ran, and I did run away. I did, it was planned, everything of course. Because I had to make the decision to go. Actually, everybody around in the camp said, "Lutka, you have no place. You are not like one of us. You don't look Jewish, and you should get out from here, and try." And, I witnessed this ha-, witnessed this selection of men and women. My father-in-law was taken in a selection in the morning. At night time I had his boots and his clothes. He was gassed. They gassed them right away on the trucks, with Zyklon, in Feralong [phonetic], in Feralong [phonetic], near Radom. And after this I made, also in this camp, I was in my fifth month pregnant...

ES: Pregnant?

LB: In Starachowice, yes. And they took out in pieces, I mean I did pay for it, I mean, whatever I had to so I bought. I paid off and I went from work. They took me to a doctor who was a Polish doctor. And he performed the operation on me. They took out the lit-...

ES: Abortion.

LB: Yes, an abortion. And I went, I lost a child. It was a male. And from this camp I escaped. I had prepared papers. The whole story when I had the papers, the last night before I left that camp, my closest friend slept with me. You know, we were sleeping on the bunkers. She took out, she knew, she was the only person that knew that I have my papers and...

ES: Even your husband didn't know you were planning?

LB: Oh yes, yes.

ES: He did know.

LB: Everything, yes. He told, yes. They took out later my husband and they tried to...

ES: Make him talk?

LB: Talk, but he didn't of course he didn't. Yes. And the story that with my husband that it's too, I can't make it and my husband helped me to get out by-- he worked as a mechanic for the Germans. And from a rifle he made a little gun. He took out that gun and sixty bullets and brought it into the camp. And he sold it to people that might go into the partisans. Because it was always planning to let, nobody let you know that the Jews did not fight. They fight whenever they could and whatever they could. So, he was risking the life of his brother that worked in the same camp. Even his own brother didn't know about that. That was after the father was dead. But there were, were two others sisters Berkowicz

in that camp, in Kazas [phonetic]. And he risked there to give me the money that I could get out. And I did get out. And I arrived in Warsaw. And from Warsaw I went to Falenica, a small community there. And I just couldn't stay by my girlfriend. Her husband at the time said, "I have enough, one Jew, to take care." So, I had to go as a volunteer to Germany. I had false papers, and the false pa-, I gave them all the money that I had, and he did get a, papers for me, false papers, just from the underground, from the leftist underground, telling him who I was. That money he took for himself. This is known about that. And he brought, but he brought me the papers and I went through. I was a week, I was in a special unit they, before they sent people to Germany for work. They checked them out through Gestapo, he says and it'll take a whole week. They couldn't find nothing. I, on my papers I have those papers and the copies and everything. I'll be very glad if you get in contact with me to give you the copies. I have them by my daughter now, because when I went the first time to Australia I gave her, I had the original German passport. And a, *Kennkarte* what they call. But I made copies of it. And...

ES: So you traveled as a non-Jew...

LB: So I came as a non-Jew, as a widow...

ES: To Germany.

LB: Yes. And that was the name. Lucyna Lesiuk-Osowska [phonetic]**.** My name was at the time, born in Lwów. My real name, date of birth, Roman Catholic. The wife of a officer that fell in the fights.

ES: So you were a widow...

LB: In the wars.

ES: Supposed to be a widow.

LB: I was a widow. They couldn't check, because Lwów was going from hand to hand. And finally, Lwów is now a Russian city, in Russia. So they never found it. After the war, not after the war. I was liberated in '4-, oh, '45.

ES: Where were you? Where did you go in Germany to work? Where?

LB: Flatow by Schneidemühl. On, it is on the border, the Polish-Russian border that was before the First World War. Now that part belongs back to Poland. Poland took it back. See...

ES: So you were working again there, also in a factory?

LB: No, no. I worked for, first I knew German very well because I learned in school. And I went as a *Dolmetscher* [interpreter] in the beginning to a farm, big farm. And he was a *Rohprodukt*, an handler, they call raw material handler. Like, he had, he used to pick up in big trucks from big, from camps, clothing, old clothing, papers, all kinds of this and he sent it to factories to...

ES: Reprocessing?

LB: Reprocessing. And then when he found out that I am capable to do things like writing, to help out with paper work, he told me that he can find work in the house for me. He was of Polish and German descent. You see, he had that sentiment from, for, as a

Polak [Polish]. The father was a *Polak* and the mother was German. You understand? Because that was on the border. So...

ES: You stayed and worked there till the end of the war?

LB: Yes. I didn't f-, wait till then. It's a whole story. This, I can't tell you now that. It's, impossible. You wouldn't believe the things what I have done. And how, when I came, when the Russian and Polish army came into that city, my boss already knew that I am Jewish. I told him, because he wanted me to go with a family, with the kids, to Berlin. He had a sister in Berlin. And I said, "I am not going. I am a Jew. If you want to kill me, give me up to the Gestapo." He said, "You know me better than that." But it's a whole story about that family. It's just unbelievable. If you would hear what's going on, it's an answer to President Reagan when he want to tell us that the young SS men were victims like we are, that's not true. Because his young son was a volunteer to the SS and the father was against. He said, if the father will not sign it, he will give him up to the Gestapo, because his, his father took off the portrait of Hitler, when he came to power. So, and each time, he, I used to iron for his son the uniform, he was forced to sign the papers, because he was afraid of his son.

ES: So he didn't believe in what his son was doing, but he was forced into signing...

LB: Yes, right, right. He always never, when people were going, when the second front was coming nearer, a lot of people were running, mostly the *Volksdeutsche* people that collaborated with the Germans-- Polish people that collaborated with the Germans--they were afraid. So they were going to Germany that they thought they will save themselves. He never stopped me from giving out, I, not that I did it because I liked him so much, but when he saw mothers with children and, you know, how Jewish heart, I couldn't just see people suffering. I knew what it means. So I used to give them milk, water, this, and I should, I had to pretend also that I am Polish, you know? He always looked the other side because he didn't want me to stop to help his Polish, he had a sentiment for Polish people. He was half Polish, you know.

ES: So you remained there till the end of the war?

LB: So I said, "If you, I can assure you, my dear boss, if you will not give me up, I will save your life." And that's what happened when the General [unclear] from that, from the, from that part of the army came into the city, into this small city. I went there and I said, "I am a Jewish [unclear], and this is the fellow that knew all the time," I said, "that I am Jewish. And he saved my life." And they didn't do nothing to him, till it came official that they have to leave that part of this. Because when I was in Stuttgart in the DP camp, I st-, he was already in Berlin. And I used to help him, from my UNRRA rations. I used to send him something cause of...

ES: Okay, after you left, the war is over now, where did you go?

LB: I went, I told [unclear], the war wasn't over there. It was in January. I came again in January I came to, back to Poland, in 1945. January the war was, end of the war

was 1945, in May.

ES: Right.

LB: I was in January liberated by the Polish, Russian army, and with the trucks, and with the army, I left everything. I left a house without anything, just when I came in into this house I ra-, I left the house...

ES: The same way.

LB: In the middle of the night. Because he was crying to, leave him-- not to leave him. And I was afraid, because the night before, it came in a Jewish fellow from the General [unclear] side. And he said, "Lutka, you get out from here, because we are going forth and back, and it's around a lot of Nazis in the woods, and we are fighting. You never know. You, you're n-, and already everybody knows that you are Jewish, so you are not safe. Just get out." And, even I promised him that I will stay with him till, and save the children. He had an old mother also that I, I said, "I have to run." And I came to Radom [corrects herself], to Lublin. In Lublin, in the Jewish community.

ES: So you were back again in Poland.

LB: Yeah, and I looked for my husband. And when I came to Radom, one of my husband's aunts, that she was on, in hiding with her two daughters, and son and son-in-law, came out from her hiding. She was one of the first. And she had a beautiful apartment and already at the time, because she was a rich lady and a known lady in the-- anyway, she saw me when I came in. Of course the nephew's wife, she liked me very much. She said, "I, for you, I can offer you whatever you want. Stay with me." So I figured, I said, "Thank you, if I will be able to find a job, I will, whatever I can. And if you'll give me where to live it will be all right." So my aunt, so I, I said, "But I will try by myself." I went out and I went to the *PPR*[13], a Polish party, the Polish Party, Worker's Party. And I said, "I am this and this. I was working there and there." And I said who I am. "I want a job." I will work still, working for the Nazis, you know. I already at that time had crystallized in my mind that I am not the same. But, I have to survive. I did get the job. And then it came people that they knew me from back home and it came to the central committee in Warsaw, who I am. I was *Tussa* [phonetic] they told me. First of all, you stay on your papers, false papers. Don't say who you are. I was working and I had a very big position there, very big. I was chief of propaganda, twelve cities in Województwo Konecki. How can I say it?

ES: You were the chief of propaganda.

LB: Imagine. What was my work? To control. I didn't talk. I wasn't to talk. I was a organizer good. I knew where to put it to send the people. And then, for that time, I saw their work very close. It was a time that I knew that they are, they found out that I am Jewish and they are trying to get rid of me because I saw too much. I found out that they used to kill our partisans, Jewish partisans, when they came, they run to them in the woods.

[13]*Polska Partia Robotnicza, PPR*, was a communist party in Poland from 1942 – 1948.

And now they are working in the Polish party. They were in the government, I mean not in the, this local government, you know. I was, just what I'm telling you. I don't want to have it, I was the first woman, the only woman in the first city council of the city of Radom. The only one, woman, in the city council in Radom.

ES: After...

LB: Till today nobody knew about it. I have even a paper with the signature of the first mayor of the city, Kazimierz Tulczewski [phonetic]. And I, at the time knew exactly that they wanted to get rid of me. They did kill a fellow policeman, a Jewish who worked for them, because they knew he is Jewish. He did go joi-, he was in the partisans, then he came out. He went in the police to take revenge, what they did to the Jewish. You know how, to arrest or some. They took care of him. He was killed at night time probably from a good close friend. It was a time that I am sleeping in my be-, yes, and one thing, I was, I could get an apartment in this same house where my aunt, my husband's aunt. I on the first floor, she on the second floor. I did a lot for my aunt in the, around. And she, yet she knew from everything what I was thinking. And she knew to take care of me and I...

ES: To serve her.

LB: Took care of her. And I was sitting so long, till I found out that, till the liberation, when the liberation came, comes, I started to show up in places. And I used to go to the Jewish commu-, I used to come in there in the uniform of a officer. They gave me a officer's uniform too. I looked, and brother Berkowicz, in Litzmannstadt, in Beckshayd [phonetic], in a camp. I didn't know which. There were five brothers. I didn't know which one. Two I knew. Three were left, because two died. So, I didn't know if my husband is there. But when my aunt started to get, then she started to also to, people wanted to be run from Poland because that was that uprising. But, they're killing in Kielce, a pogrom in Kielce. In that Kielce, in that Kielce, was the pogrom. When I was in Radom. If I would be in Kielce at that time I wouldn't be alive either. They just looked for people, you know, that they knew, that they have inclinations, leftist inclina-, they didn't want to, them to know exactly what they are doing you know. They wanted to finish off the Jews. The Polish also wanted to finish off.

ES: Yeah.

LB: So after this, we, my aunt tried to get some paper, papers to go to Vienna, to go back to see how the situation is. Because before the war she had some contacts. She was in business. Maybe she will, this way she will get her, go out, be able to get out.

ES: Is this in 1945?

LB: Forty-five ['45], yes. This was in, so I didn't have papers from, I went to Warsaw. I said, "I heard my husband is there. I want permission to go to look for my husband." And I went, and never came back. Do you understand what I did? I knew that I will never come back. That was the end. I went with the aunt and in Vienna two of my husband's cousins, two nieces, I took with me. We went through another border, another border. I used all the papers that I had of who I am, and I worked, I worked for the Russians.

It was a time where they exchanged us in Litzmannsdadt. They wanted, there was an American Zone and a Russian Zone and I had to, we, they want to stop us. But somehow with my papers, and influenced the pass, did a very good job. I mean they had to acknowledge it. They were Allies at the time. I went to, and I came to Ger-, to Austria. From Austria I found my husband and my brother-in-law, one of the brothers-in-law. We left all who were...

ES: You found your husband in Austria?

LB: Yes. In Beckshayd [phonetic] in a, in a Polish army camp, the prisoners. And me and my brother-in-law and the two niece, cousins of his, and later came a wife of that brother. We all went to Germany. It was very hard. Everything was in a turmoil. No stations, no, you know, no wagons. It, the journey if I will tell you, we came out black like this in coal, wagons of coal, you know? Meantime I already did get pregnant, right away when I met my husband. My sister-in-law did get pregnant and I did get pregnant. We came to Bergen-Belsen, where the Allied president want to go in that camp. Well, what we saw over there, you can't imagine. When I came over there, already I had a miscarriage, and I was too weak. I went through a lot because of that...

ES: Traveling.

LB: Traveling from Germany to Poland and from Poland now to...

ES: Why did you want to go back to Germany again?

LB: To be to, why I want to? I wanted to escape from Poland. And...

ES: Just to get out of Poland.

LB: I wanted to get out. That was the only way to get out.

ES: To go to Germany.

LB: To get out. And take my family. I already knew that the Berkowiczs are in, and if my, I wouldn't find my husband I had my brother-in, brothers-in-law. I knew it that I don't have no, yes, at the time, I already knew who survived in my family. Because my brother came in the meantime, when I was in Poland, my brother came from Russia back. And he told me he was in, in, in Lwów and they told him about how my brother died, how one died, how one brother was taken, beaten up terribly. When he found out that his wife and children were taken to Treblinka he was running. He wanted to go with them. And the officers didn't want him to go because he had to make those caps, yeah. They took him and he didn't want so they beat him up, that they took just a living, just a mass of flesh and they threw in the, that's what he told me. And, he told me that my mother and the two grand-children were hidden in the cellar. So some of the neighbors, *Polaks*, gave her up and they came in and they, with hand grenades in the cellar they killed...

ES: Oh my God.

LB: … them. Now those things, yeah. And Betka was with, she married in the mean time, my youngest sister. My youngest sister married in the ghetto. And she and her husband, with a group of doctors-- intellectuals, because they all were intellectuals. My brother-in-law was, he was a real Trotskyist. Imagine I can't remember even his last name,

would you believe it? They were in the ghetto in Lwów. It was completely destroyed. They hide in one of the cellars. They were there for a long time, with, they had, with ammunition. They had everything to defend themselves. But it was cold in the winter. And they did make a fire somehow, and the smoke gave them away. And that was a shoot-out. And all of them were killed. So my youngest sister was killed on that day. She also was in a, before twice she escaped from Janów. There was a concentration camp, a labor camp, in Janów, near Lwów, a famous one. I don't know if you read about it. Twice she had, she, once she escaped, and once she convinced them, she had all false papers that she is not Jewish. It's, the first time they let her out. The second time they didn't want to let her out. So they took her on a train. She, she did jump out from the train. She had broken hands, arms, and she came back to the city. And she did, like I said, survive, to the time till she went in that bunker, in the ghetto. And this is the way I found out from my youngest brother.

ES: Brother.

LB: Yes. This is the story so far.

ES: What happened after you were back in Germany with your husband now...

LB: Yes.

ES: When did you leave Europe?

LB: Oh, when I left Europe? From Bergen-Belsen we came to Stuttgart, to a DP camp. And there I had very good friends. And they, the president of the camp, a Mr. Pasternak, and his wife, Sonya Pasternak, they were from Radom. They were people that we helped them to come from Lwów to Radom. Very close friends. And after the war, she was also on false papers. In Radom, when I was on that high position I gave her a very good job, you know, I can't, I always was the idealist. I mean, I changed in my political views but I couldn't be a, a...

ES: A person?

LB: I would, I couldn't be, to steal, or to do things for my [unclear] little things. Do you understand my ideology changed. But as a personal...

ES: You were a *mensche*.

LB: As a person I didn't change. So, when I came to Stuttgart, it happens that they were the ones on the top. They were the, so that he gave me an apartment for the whole family, apartment with furniture, with a sewing machine for my brother-in-law, Michael. And for the other brother-in-law. So we were three brothers were living together in this, and the two girls, the two cousins had also a room. And I was the first to go to America, because my brother came with my sister from Lublin. My sister stood in Vienna, but my brother came to Stuttgart, and together with my brother we emigrated to America through the HIAS. I did get somebody in the, some distant cousins that...

ES: To sponsor you?

LB: They didn't really sponsor, but they said okay that they, they didn't sponsor. When they found out that, when I arrived in New York and I said that I am pregnant-- I was in the sixth month's pregnancy-- they didn't want me to come to

California. So I stood in New York. And after three months, after my arrival, I gave birth to a daughter. I have a daughter, Ruth Berkowicz Pangas. She lives, she's in New York. She works for New York University, a graduate of New York University.

ES: When did your husband come?

LB: Pardon me?

ES: When did your husband come?

LB: We came together.

ES: Oh, you came with your husband. I thought you said you just came with your brother. You, and your husband, and your brother...

LB: Oh, sure.

ES: You all came together.

LB: Yes, we all came together, right.

ES: So what year was that that you came to the States?

LB: April 1st, the day fool...

ES: 19-...

LB: 1947.

ES: '47. And you've been here ever since.

LB: And I've been, ever since I was living four-and-a-half years in New York City. And then when the Korean War broke out I came to New York, to Vineland, and with the help of the Jewish Farmers Associa-, [unclear], yes, yeah, Farmer's Association, they did help us out. We worked very hard. I worked as a inspector in a glass factory and then I changed to electronics. I worked 14 years for them and I worked only for my, now my retired. And...

ES: And you have a daughter in New York City and you have...

LB: I have a s-

ES: A son in Australia.

LB: A son in Australia. My son is a graduate of Johns Hopkins University, and he's working for his Master in microbiology, maybe for doctor degree in pathology over there.

ES: That's wonderful.

LB: And, it, that's wonderful, but I gave them all s-, [unclear, I don't agree with that term that they say that, you hear from the, from a lot of our leaders, that when they are coming out and they are talking, they'll say, "You don't have to have a guilty conscience. You are, nobody has-

[Tape two, side one ended.]

Tape two, side two:

ES: Lucynda [sic Lucyna] Berkowicz being interviewed by Eileen Steinberg at the Holocaust Conference in Philadelphia April 21, 1985. Okay. Go ahead, finish up what you were saying.

LB: I don't believe that we are going around with complexes of guilt. Nobody does. I don't know what they want. They shouldn't put any, take with some labels on our mental state. Because, even in normal conditions people have all kind of uphangings, or fears, or what we call, yeah, fears, right. So, of course that was a terrible thing, the Holocaust. That is something that, it goes beyond imag-, human imagination. When we read it from the time of the Inquisition. We heard the burning also now by the, new technology they burned them in the gas chambers. So it is no difference. The Jews are always persecuted and always burned and always, it didn't change nothing. And though the generations after that Inquisition came out pretty healthy because they gave great men for all the civilization, for the whole world. So how can they say that, right? That's right. And also now, after Second World War, our children are the living proof that it has nothing to do with the mind. But, we gave him, gave them a legacy of insecurity. They are not secure. But maybe it is a healthy thing. Maybe then they will start to think that our place should have been in Israel. Now, I can really say, and now 71 years old, it's a long time to take me to that conclusion. I didn't belong to any right organizations in the Zionist movement. I belonged to Pioneer Women for many years. I wasn't very active, because I know what's politic, politics means. If you are a very dedicated in the ideology, it is better when you can talk with people and mold their minds if you have the opportunity. I didn't have that because I had to make a living and be able to give my children the education. And so I didn't got that time. But, I would never be a politician. A politician is not an ideologist. A politician is a person that wants power, one way or the other. This is my conviction? And what else can I tell you? Now I said it before that we are walking around like in a daze. That's true. Because whatever we do, we can't...

ES: You can never forget.

LB: Shake off. Like, I learned when I was, the first thing about physics I remember, in sixth grade we start physics in our country they start. They said that, "Your mind, your mind is like a photog-, a camera, like a photograph, that has the negatives. And when you want, you bring out the picture, and that's it." This you can't take...

ES: You carry it around with you...

LB: You carry, you, this you carry around.

ES: Forever.

LB: Forever, right. That's what it is. I have no guilty conscience of nothing. I went, my political views changed very much in years, but it is quite a while. It's almost, almost 30 years that I know exactly what it is this sort, in Marxism, and maybe if, it was the people what did make our, from this, but in Russia there is no Socialists. [someone

calling: "Lucy Berkowicz?"] Yes?

ES: Thank you very much for sharing your story with me.

LB: Yes? Thank you.

[Tape two, side two ended. Interview ended.]