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In this interview, Ona Bečelienė, born on July 7, 1924 in Paražniai, (a village in the Vilkaviškis region, in southwestern Lithuania), describes prewar relations with the Jews in Kudirkos Naumiestis. She speaks at length about Jewish shopkeepers and their businesses, and provides several names. Bečelienė also describes the mass murder of Jewish women and children in a forest outside of Kudirkos Naumiestis. While she did not witness the transport or killing of the victims, she did hear the screams and shots. She reveals that she went to look at the massacre site afterwards and gives several gruesome details, both from her own testimony and from hearsay. She briefly discusses the looting and sale at auction of Jewish property, and the requisitioning of Jewish homes. She mentions that local priests condemned the mass murders and forbade the buying of Jewish property during their sermons, and she identifies two priests specifically. Bečelienė tells two separate stories of Jewish survival. She talks about a petition initiated by a priest, signed by the town residents, to the local German Commandant, asking to spare the life of an elderly Jewish doctor named **Griaušmonas [Griauzmonas]**; the petition was not granted and he was subsequently killed. She also tells about a Jewish woman who had converted to Catholicism, was not denounced, and survived the Holocaust with her husband. Bečelienė provides the names of several perpetrators in her testimony.

Box 1, Tape 1

[01:] 00:41:16 – [01:] 06:10:25
00:35 – 06:17

She introduces herself as Ona Bečelienė, maiden name Petrauckaitė, born on July 7, 1924 in Paražniai (a village in the Vilkaviškis region, in southwestern Lithuania), near Kudirkos Naumiestis; briefly talks about her family recalling that there were three brothers and four sisters; says the family had eight hectares of land and that the children would work at the neighboring manor; asked by interviewer to talk about the Jews, she says that she was 17 years old when the Jews were massacred; names a few Jews she was acquainted with: **Zybermonas** had a yard to park wagons, **Žalarskis [Šalarskis, Šalaskis]** had a fabric store, and Mrs. **Tabijankė [Tabiankė]** had an industrial store; says that the Jews were good to them and would give them treats; discusses Jewish food and customs, including matzo and Jewish funeral observances.

[01:] 06:11:00 – [01:] 09:57:25
06:18 – 10:13

The interviewer asks her to talk about the start of the war: she says that her neighbors saw soldiers at the border and that there was a military barracks near the village; says that she saw

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parachutes descending; states that the Germans captured the (Russian) border guards; recalls that Germans came by her home and asked for food; says that she knew German because she had worked for Germans from the time she was fourteen years old; explains that the Germans captured Lithuanian youth to send them to work in Germany.

[01:] 09:58:00 – [01:] 14:56:07
10:14 – 15:24

She talks about the situation of the Jews when the war began: Jews were forced to wear yellow “patches”; says she witnessed this when she went to the market; says that the Jewish men were rounded up into the synagogue first and that the women were left behind; adds that later the Jewish women were told that they were being taken to see the men and that they brought food and other belongings with them; says that when the group turned onto the road toward the forest, they realized that they were being taken to be killed and began screaming; says that she was told that the Jewish men were taken to Žyniai and killed and that the women and children were left behind in their homes; explains that after the massacre she saw many of the items that the Jewish women had dropped on the road on the way to the killing site; says that she saw brain matter hanging from trees and that the woods were spattered with blood; reveals that after the massacre she went to look at the site as there were no guards; says that the graves had to be covered in bleach and earth again on the corpses; states that she does not remember the exact date of the massacre in Paražniai, but says that she was weeding flax that day for Mr. **Žemaitis**; says that the Lithuanian Riflemen’s Union, “Šauliai,” (LŠS) – a nationalistic paramilitary civilian defense league, hereafter referred to as “Riflemen” with [a group of] “White Stripers” came by to cut down clubs and switches; says that afterward she heard screams; says that a neighbor woman watched the entire massacre and then talked about what happened: the neighbor said that when the killers ran out of bullets, they would murder the children by beating them against trees.

[01:] 14:56:08 – [01:] 20:34:04
15:25 – 21:16

She mentions that the Jews were killed over a period of several days; talks about the day of the massacre: she was weeding flax and stopped when the killings began and went home; recalls hearing the victims shouting “Gevalt” [an exclamation of alarm, “help!”]; says the victims were shot in groups; confirms that everything was audible because the massacre took place in the forest; expresses the horror she felt when she went to take a look at the mass graves; says that two long pits were dug in advance; says that her mother saw the pits dug when she was out picking mushrooms on the day of the massacre; talks about the son of Jewish victims who arrived in town after the war to exhume the bodies of his parents; says that people came from Naumiestis and dug up the victims searching for gold; confirms that her mother saw that the graves were dug beforehand but that she did not see them being dug; speaks briefly about other shooting victims and about German soldiers buried in Naumiestis.

[01:] 20:34:05 – [01:] 26:56:07
21:17 – 27:54

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She repeats that on the day of the massacre she went to weed flax and that the killings began at around noon; mentions that she felt sad for a Jewish girl named Judita, who was learning to sew with her sister; says that they did not really spend any time with Jews socially, except for one Jewish woman, Mrs. **Legotienė**, whose maiden name she does not know, and who converted to Catholicism; reveals that she was not denounced and that she and her husband survived; asked by the interviewer to talk about the day of the massacre, she says that the first people she saw that day were the “Riflemen” walking with clubs; says that the victims were undressed and if they did not undress, their clothes were cut off without regard to whether the knife sliced the body; mentions that she was told that the murderers – the “Riflemen” and the soldiers – were drunk; says that **Andrukaitis** (does not remember his first name) was a perpetrator who escaped to America and left behind his wife and four small children in Lithuania.

[01:] 26:56:08 – [01:] 32:28:06
27:55 – 33:41

She says that people took the belongings of the Jews after the massacre and that the goods were sold at auction but that her family did not buy anything; confirms that she saw the auction in Kybartai and that things were brought to the market in Naumiėstis; says that beds and other furniture was sold during the auction and that the Jewish property was brought over and sold out of wagons; reveals that a priest named **Dubrovolskis [Dabravolskis, Dubravolskis]** said during a sermon that people “should not buy clothes soaked in blood”; confirms that she heard this statement and heard the priest forbid the buying Jewish property; says that the priests also told people not to kill; mentions that the priest **Damijonaitis** fought against the killings.

[01:] 32:28:07 – [01:] 36:19:06
33:42 – 37:42

She talks about how the priest collected signatures at church to petition the local German commandant to spare a surviving elderly Jewish doctor named **Griausmonas**; says that despite the petition, **Griausmonas** was killed in the Jewish cemetery; recalls that there was a young Jewish girl hiding with him and she was shot alongside him; says that **Griausmonas** was a good doctor and pharmacist; talks about 14 young Lithuanians who were killed as communists by Germans near Naumiėstis; says that her family did not participate in anything; adds that she married young so she would not be deported.

Box 1, Tape 2

[02:] 00:42:13 – [02:] 06:40:17
00:45 – 06:57

She adds further information about Doctor **Griausmonas** saying that he was not killed initially because he was the town doctor but that his family was killed immediately; states that she does not know if he treated people after the massacre; recalls that **Kriauėiūnas** was a Lithuanian doctor in Naumiėstis; talks about the Jews she was acquainted with including Jewish manor

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owners whose sons were veterinarians and treated animals; says that Naumiėstis was a Jewish city; talks at length about Jewish-owned shops; says that her father bargained well at the shops.

[02:] 06:40:18 – [02:] 12:25:12
06:58 – 12:56

She says that the Jewish shopkeepers were very good at foisting goods; she talks at length about how much she enjoyed shopping at Jewish-owned shops; adds that Jews would sell goods on credit and that Jews were more willing to lend money than Lithuanians; when interviewer directs the conversation back to the story of Dr. **Griauėmonas**, she explains that the residents of Naumiėstis organized the petition and that the priest urged people to sign it; asserts that she and her sister signed the petition; recalls that the priest urged people to save **Griauėmonas**; reveals that she did not know what was written on the petition paper because the language of the text was German and there was a German eagle stamped at the top of the paper; states that the petition was taken to the Commandant of Naumiėstis.

[02:] 12:25:13 – [02:] 22:05:01
12:57 – 23:00

She explains how the city residents took over the homes of the murdered Jews; says that predominantly it was people who had worked for the Jews who moved into their homes after the massacre; says that other people bought the Jewish homes; talks briefly about how German soldiers would tell them (her family) that they were going to be taken to Siberia, when the interviewer asks her how she felt when all of her Jewish acquaintances were gone, she says that it felt like a member of the family had died; expresses her sorrow; talks about a Jewish man who would come visit her family home; says that they would always buy or trade something with him; states that she does not remember his name; mentions other Jews in the area, trade crafts, and about the slaughterhouse that was owned by a Jew; says that when the Germans arrived they took away the shops from the Jews and Lithuanians; again discusses the Jewish man who would stop by to see her family with goods.

[02:] 22:05:02 – [02:] 27:04:18
23:01 – 28:12

She explains that on the day of the massacre she saw how the Jewish women were brought to the forest; says that several Jewish women ran away into the fields but were caught and beaten; admits that she did not actually see the women running away but that Mrs. **Rudaitienė** talked about it; says that she herself only saw the women being transported in carts several times; states that does not know how many carts there were; repeats that the Jewish women were brought near the forest and that they were told they were being taken to see the men; further describes that they were taken off the cart near the forest; explains that she did not actually witness the women climbing out of the carts near the forest; says that she only saw how they were transported from Naumiėstis in wagons, and that that she heard cries and screams, and that the victims were shouting “Gevalt”; says that to this day she still hears the screaming of the victims.

[02:] 27:04:19 – [02:] 33:49:23

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28:13 – 35:14

She discusses the details she was told about the massacre: says that the victims were undressed, they stood at the edge of the pits with their heads lowered, and the shots were aimed at the back of their heads; says she was told that a few victims crawled out of the graves; adds that the children were shot together with their mothers but that the mothers were always killed first; says that she later figured out that there was brain matter hanging from the trees because as the victims were shot in the back of the head, everything spattered; attempts to remember the names of the murderers she recognized from sight: **Andrukaitis**, and two farmers whose names she can't remember; says that that all escaped to America; continues to provide names: **Jukšaitis** and **Čipaila**; says she does not remember his first name but that he was imprisoned for a while and that she recently saw him directing a music group near the church; says that the two **Jurkšaitis** brothers participated in the killings and then ran away; adds that the two **Jakeleičius** brothers also participated in the killings and then escaped to America; asserts that she does not remember the others, or did not recognize them at the time.

[02:] 33:49:24 – [02:] 36:16:23
35:15 – 37:48

The interviewer asks her about the Germans and she says that she only ever saw one German soldier; says that the “white strippers” were dressed in militia or “Riflemen” uniforms; [*she seems to be growing tired; interviewer asks her to talk more*]; mentions the name of another perpetrator: **Jonas Grigas**, who also escaped to America; notes the current situation in Kudirkos Naumiestis.