

LAURINAITIENĖ, Genovaitė

Lithuania Documentation Project

Lithuanian

RG-50.473*0085

In this interview Genovaitė Pupšytė-Laurinaitienė, born in Veiviržėnai, near Klaipėda, in 1926 talks in detail about her efforts to save a Jewish girl, for which she has been recognized as one of the Righteous of Nations by Yad Vashem. She recalls witnessing the Jews of Veiviržėnai being rounded up and the men sent to be executed; while the women were taken to the village of Trepkalnis near Veiviržėnai, where they lived through the summer. Mrs. Laurinaitienė talks about her neighbor, who was dating a Jewish girl, and would ask her to accompany him, when he would go to see the girl at the ghetto in Trepkalnis. She then describes hearing the women being killed and witnessing the looting of clothes after the massacre by the local women. She goes on to explain how she ended up in Varniai, where she befriended a Lithuanian partisan, who helped her to save a Jewish girl, a survivor of the massacre of the Jews of Varniai.

Tape 1 of 2

[01] 00:34:12 - [01] 04:26:12

00:00:37 – 00:04:28

A: My maiden name is Pupšytė-Laurinaitienė. Whichever is easier for you.

Q: Tell us your first name too.

A: Genovaitė Pupšytė-Laurinaitienė, and that's it.

Q: What year were you born in and where?

A: On the first of July, 1926 in Veiviržėnai town, Klaipėda district. And that's it. Maybe you want the old one? [In the old system] it was in Kretinga district, and now it is in Klaipėda district.

Q: Well, and now, briefly describe your family.

A: Well, I don't know what—what should I tell?

Q: Who was your father?

A: Oh, my parents were— My father was a simple worker, well, a repairman. He did repairs on apartments, laid roofs, made furnaces. Well, and my mother— My mother— What can I—what should I say? She was a homemaker and helped my father out, wherever she was needed. Well, and— Those were very difficult times. In order to add some more, to subsist—whenever she had time, she would go to the milk farm to chop wood that had been pre-cut into meter-long logs. Each piece had to be split in two, and that's it. Well, we would also feed pigs for ourselves to eat, and that's it. I was alone. Well, my father was a widower. He had two daughters and a son with his first wife. But his daughters got married a year after he got married himself. They were adults already. Well and— And I was the only one for my mother. I had a twin brother, but he died when he was eight months old. That is what I can say about my parents. Well, they were very hard-working people. They got along well with the neighbors. Well, and they were especially intimate with the Jews. There was a man named Blokas. And that Blokas was—well, he owned a bus and also had three sons. Now I know that there are—two of his sons are still alive and live in Israel. **Kalmickis** and—I cannot remember the second one. I know that he stayed in Vilnius for a long time and—what was—what was the name of the artist—Kybarancas? Not Kybarancas, a journalist. His daughter is still— Kybarancas?

Q: Kybartas.

A: Kybartas. So I know that the second one drove Kybartas around. He worked as a driver, that Blokas. And now he has left for Israel. Well, and— In my school years I always— Because our town was very Jewish. Very. They had a big synagogue. There was a school. But the school was only elementary. They would finish four grades and then get transferred to the Lithuanian school. So two of my girlfriends were Jewish—we were very close friends. Goldė **Gersonavičiūtė**. She was tragically shot on the morning the war started, and the Jews started screaming. Because a German plane came flying on the morning the war started in 1940—in 1941, on the 23rd of June.

Q: Stop.

[01] 04:26:12 – [01] 07:02:11

00:04:28 – 00:07:21

A: Such a serious consideration. When I recount it to my children now, it feels like I am telling a tale. Well, and my elder son is older than you are now – he was born in 1947.

Q: By three years then.

A: Yes.

Q: He is three years [my] senior.

A: And the younger one was born in 1952.

Q: There you go, so I was born in between your children.

A: Yes, yes, yes.

Q: Well, yes.

A: Well, so one lives in Šilutė, while the other one is in Chicago for now. He went there together with his wife.

Q: So the younger or the older one is in Chicago?

A: The younger, the younger.

Q: Well and how is he doing in America?

A: Oh my! I used to say, “my children, you’re looking for a cake, but you will only find dark bread instead, and even that will be rationed.” So I was almost right. They sit without work for two weeks or a week. Well, they said that they started working now. Well, he works in construction.

Q: Well, you see, Mrs., here in Lithuania they would sit without jobs for months.

A: Well, and my daughter-in-law— my daughter-in-law is taking care of some elderly woman.

Q: Well, it’s a hard job. But now, Mrs., let’s get back to the war years.

A: Yes.

Q: You mentioned that you had two girlfriends, right?

A: Yes, Jewish girls.

Q: So what were your girlfriends’ names?

A: Goldè and Gité.

Q: So what happened to both of them?

A: Well, Goldè’s fate was very cruel. On the morning the war started, as the Germans were bombing, the first shell fell—it fell— And you see, at that moment she was—when the thunder and the uproar started, she ran outside on the—well, there was a kind veranda—we called it a balcony, but it was on the ground floor. And as she ran out, the bomb exploded, and shrapnel got into her stomach. She was standing still alive, with the shrapnel turning around and around, while she screams, you know. All her insides started—while she was holding them with her hands and screaming. Well, and then she fell dead to the ground and that was it.

Q: And did you see all this?

A: How could I not see it?

Q: It happened in front of your eyes?

A: Well, not in front of my eyes. I only saw her already dead – she had already fallen. And all her insides were out. Well, and she was very— And all the Jews, as their custom goes, were screaming with their heads in their hands. „The first Jewish girl has fallen – a disaster is approaching us. “ Well, and they understood that the Germans were coming, and that nothing good would come out of it.

[01] 07:02:11 – [01] 10:14:09

00:07:21 – 00:10:41

Q: Did many Jews flee Veiviržėnai?

A: Not many, not many. Of those whom I knew, only two or three.

Q: So why didn't the others flee?

A: Oh well, where could they have gone, where could they have fled? Nobody believed it. Nobody expected the war to start. Well, and the Germans – so early, they were here at ten in the morning, and one could say the war was over. Simple as that. And then the second morning – on the second morning after the war had started, two huge German cars arrived and immediately all those—the army and they had also brought simple civilians from somewhere, with their sleeves rolled back, as it was June and very—that summer was very hot, very hot. With their sleeves rolled back. And all the Jews were taken to the market square. When they all were brought to the market square, the women separated from the men. The men were put into cars, while the women were taken to the countryside, to Trepkalnis. The village of Trepkalnis. There was a manor there. So they built a ghetto there in that village. And the Jewish [men] were taken to Šilutė. And through the summer they—I didn't see it, only was told by the ones, who knew. So through the summer they worked at a peat bog, those Jews. And then, as the fall approached, they were all gathered in the peat bog and were trampled to death alive by horses. The ones, who managed to swim to the shores, were shot. But the majority were

trampled by horses, and that was it. And so they died in the peat bog of Šilutė, the Jews of Veiviržėnai. Some two Jews managed to escape from there, and that's it. There you go. And we don't know anything else. And the Jewish women in the fall were—I think it was the 23rd of October, on the day of St. Mateušas, at four o'clock were— Because in the evening the grown-ups were already— There was a car making rounds around the town. There was keg or two of beer in the car, also mugs. Some were wearing masks, some donning a machine gun, yet another leaning on his gun. Their arms with their sleeves rolled back – it was a very warm fall. So they were drinking, clinking their mugs together, made jokes. They were making rounds. And the grown-ups all around started talking, „something will happen, something is about to happen. It cannot be any other way. “ Well, and at four o'clock it started—

[01] 10:14:09 – [01] 13:49:01

00:10:41 – 00:14:24

Q: So it started at 4 pm.?

A: It started at four at night, at dawn—the noise started. It took place two kilometers away from the town, so we could hear easily – we could hear the shooting. So my father came out and began to— Then I woke up, and my father and mother were walking around the house and crying. They were saying, „they're probably shooting the Jewish women. “ There. Well, and then later we learned that they were indeed executed. Because in the morning— Our neighbor was the district's secretary, and he was my greatest assistant, because he dated this Jewish girl. She was his age. That Jewish girl had a clothing store. Their surname was Leipkė; she was Leipkutė, and they were called Leipkės. So they had a clothing—not clothing, but a materials store. And they lived in that store. They had three daughters, and that neighbor of mine dated one of those daughters. And he had connections with those—with the guards.

Q: And who was standing guard?

A: Oh, there were many. I remember only one; I know his surname was Kinčius. He is still alive in Veiviržėnai.

Q: What was Kinčius' first name?

A: Juozas Kinčius, and he is still around there. At that time he had not been married yet, and he stood guard. I think he [the neighbor] had some connection with him [Kinčius], because they had been school friends at some point. So he probably would inform him. So when he [the neighbor] went to dates, he would take me with him.

Q: To the ghetto?

A: To the ghetto. But he would not enter the ghetto. The ghetto was, you can imagine, on a hill. And at the foot of the hill the Veiviržas River runs. So we would walk with him to the other end of the town and wade across the Veiviržas River. Well, and whenever we saw someone approaching, we didn't know who was approaching, and—I wouldn't even have thought of that, but he was much older than me, so he would put his arm around my waist, around my shoulders, you know.

Q: Oh, pretending that you were his girlfriend?

A: Yeah. Pretending that we were dating. But we were going there to meet Goldė. And if we see a man we don't recognize, he bends over and kisses me, and everything. Well, and then Goldė descends down the hill. So then I step back and I walk a little further. And they talk. Like that. And he asked her ardently that she—well, he wanted to bring her to his home. His parents were very tidy and great people. And he was their only son.

Q: What was his surname?

A: Juozas **Astrauskas** [**Astrauskis**]. He was our neighbor – there was only a fence between us. We would go to bring water from each other. Well, and I knew everything about his dating. Whenever he would go for a date, he would run over and say, „Genutė, let's go.“ Well, and I would go. So the last time he—he already knew about the shooting. As the district secretary he must have know for sure.

[01] 13:49:01 – [01] 15:50:23

00:14:24 – 00:16:31

Q: Did he tell you?

A: He didn't tell me. He didn't trust me. I was only sixteen, so he didn't trust me. So he went on that date and he tried to bring her home in a very impertinent manner. But she would run to the hill, saying, "no, Juozas, I cannot, I cannot leave my sisters. Two sisters and an old mother." She runs back, they kiss, runs away again – and then again. And so he could not convince her in any way.

Q: But did she also know they were going to be executed?

A: She did not know, she did not know.

Q: She did not know.

A: He told her this: "I want to take you home, because maybe tomorrow they will take you to work, and it will be very hard work." "No," she said, "it doesn't matter, as I have my sister and my mother."

Q: What was Goldè's surname?

A: Leipkutè, their family name was Leipkè. Well, and—and she returned. And then, when the shooting started at four o'clock, Astrauskas came to us. He was holding his head in his hand and said, „so this is it for Goldè. She is not," he said, „among us anymore." Like that. So he was very upset about her. And then in the morning I went with him there again. But we didn't wade across the river, as there was no point in it. We only stayed on this side, and we saw the trenches. And those trenches—you cannot imagine; those who didn't see, cannot imagine—the trenches were moving, heaving. It was horrible. Blood all around—well, horrible. And everything was covered with chloride, barrels of chloride. Barrels; whole barrels of chloride. And everything was moving, waving.

[01] 15:50:23 – [01] 17:26:06

00:16:31 – 00:18:10

Q: So it was only covered with chloride? It was not covered in earth yet?

A: No, there was some earth and everything else piled on top as well, but we watched from afar—we didn't come very close. So we—What did I see? Juškienė, the tailor's wife, was there. She was very posh. In the town she was considered as very smug.

Q: What was her first name?

A: I cannot remember Juškienė's first name. She lived in Vilnius later, but is deceased now. Juškienė was there, also **Auškalnienė**, the forest ranger's wife. And some other women, but I saw clearly only those two. So they were collecting rags. There were piles, piles of—well, of underwear, as they were executed naked. Naked.

Q: How do you know that they were executed naked?

A: Well, because all the clothes, all the underwear was there. Had there been only outward, but there was underwear too.

Q: There was underwear.

A: The underwear was piled up, and that's it. Well, and then later Juozas [Kinčius] also talked about it a little after he drank some. In the town—it's a small town, you cannot hide anything there. Petras Valasnavičius also stood guard, but he has fled to Canada. But I've been told that he is dead now. I don't know exactly, but I think he fled to Canada. Petras Valasnavičius. His brother died here. So he—

[01] 17:26:06 – [01] 22:20:21

00:18:10 – 00:23:17

Q: The brother also participated in the execution of the Jews?

A: No, no. No, his brother was very opposed. No. And that Valasnavičius during the execution—he was weak in general; his mother had been mentally sick and had died; so he probably was also very weak mentally—so he went mad during the execution. Well, the Germans put him in a car and took him away. So he was in Germany—and then somehow he ended up in Canada.

Q: So he was put in a car and taken out of Lithuania?

A: He was taken out of Lithuania and into Germany. And in Germany he was probably treated there or something—none of us know anything about this, except that he somehow ended up in Canada. And we only learned that he was in Canada after the war. So that is all I know about the guards. So, we went there together with Astrauskas. We went there and we saw them picking up those rags. Well, and then— And the dry clothes, the good clothes were in another pile. So I remember **Auškalnienė** put something on, and started swinging around with a fox collar, turning around. And there was a very poor woman **Bumšienė** – she was very poor, and so she was rummaging through the rags that were covered in blood and that's it. So there. That's what I saw with my own eyes. And my Juozas fell down and passed out. I didn't know what to do. I brought water with my handkerchief and put it on his forehead. Well, he came back to life and returned home. Well, and then I—during the war nothing, then—how was it that I— Some time passed and I went to Rietavas. My father's entire family lives in Rietavas. So I left for Rietavas to study at a housekeeping school. I went to a housekeeping school there – it was a girls-only housekeeping school. So that year was fine, and then the second year—the second year was probably in 1942. Yes, it was 1942. I did not live on campus then. I lived with my aunt, not in the dorm. One morning I come—my braids were really thick, and my face was also not too ugly, but— I was walking, and the horse groomer— Well, maybe you have seen there in Rietavas, where the manor is located, there were—you haven't been there?—well, in the town itself the mansion is surrounded by a wall—so there is a gymnasium there in Rietavas—and then there is the agriculture school— So I was walking past the huge stables that were there, and the horse groomer started shouting – in Samogitian dialect, you know, “where are you going? Where are you going?” I said, “can't you see I am going to school?” “Don't go there,” he said, and then I see two cars parked. The Germans had arrived from— The housekeeping school was girls only. There was not a single boy there. Under the Russians there were some boys studying there. But then the curriculum was also different, there was—they even taught about tractors. But then we knew nothing about agriculture. Well, and that person didn't let me pass. I said, “what is going on there?” He said, “can't you see? The Germans are taking the girls away”. The Germans arrived—and then later we learned that there had been two cars, and they put the ones they liked better – the better-looking ones – in one car, and the others – in the other. Well, only later some girl from Rietavas reappeared, and recounted that one car was taken to the barracks and the other girls were taken to work. Well, so I was lucky to have escaped it. Well, and during my second year there, Elzė Dužinskaitė from Varniai town was also staying with my aunt. Her surname is different now. Maybe Roželė gave you the surname, I don't know. She was called Elzė Dužinskaitė.

[01] 22:20:21 – [01] 24:07:06

00:23:17 – 00:25:08

Q: Dužinskaitė. She has not changed her surname. Oh, no—

A: No, no. She has changed it.

Q: Jadzė?

A: Dužinskaitė.

Q: Elzė?

A: Elzė.

Q: Oh!

A: Elzė Dužinskaitė. So Elzė Dužinskaitė dated a photographer, who had gotten her into that school. Something wasn't working for them. He put her up in that school and told her to study. Well, she also didn't live on the campus, but she—there was no purpose for her to study. She studied whenever she wanted to, and didn't study when she didn't want to. I had invited her to come to school, but she stayed sleeping. So I ran back home and told her. She said, „so you see how well I did by not getting up!“ Well, and that's it. So she—so we were happy. And then later the photographer came, „what will you do now?“ Well, I didn't know myself what to do. So he said, „come with me, you can start working.“ I didn't know what to do. That photographer, he was slightly assertive—maybe he liked me or something, but he told her this: „if you don't convince her to come with you, don't bother coming back yourself.“ So she wholeheartedly tried to convince me. I thought it was out of our great friendship. So I went to Varniai. Well, and I started—I did well, I immediately learned to make the photographs. And he started, you know, harassing me. So we got into a fight and I ran away. I ran away. I ran to Tverai – maybe you've heard of it, it's next to Varniai. He chased me down with on his bicycle and brought me back.

[01] 24:07:06 – [01] 27:45:08

00:25:08 – 00:28:55

Q: Oh, so you fled on a bicycle?

A: No, I was running on foot. Well, and he caught up with me with his bicycle, and he seriously apologized and everything. And he dragged me back. “Where will you,” he says, “poor thing, where will you go?” Well, and I started working, and continued working. I was very successful and I worked a lot after that. And I was grateful to him. And he didn’t harass me anymore, so Elzė was also happy. Well, and one beautiful day a Jewish girl came over. I could see she was Jewish. I asked, “where is that Jewish girl from?” “Why do you care? Oh, she is our friend.” He was quite smart in his own way, that Baltrušaitis. He, as it turned out, had appropriated many Jewish possessions.

Q: From where?

A: Well, from Varniai. He was from Varniai. I was told that he had brought home a lot: the photography material and everything – gold too. Well, and he—how was it—when Rožė—Rožė, maybe she already told you. She escaped on the morning of the execution. And she escaped naked, as they were all executed naked. She escaped to the forest next to Telšiai, the Rainiai forest. So she escaped in Rainiai with a few other Jewish women. And those Jewish women had children with them. One was carrying a child in her arms, while the other one was holding one by the hand. And they tried to shoo her away, they said “go away.” She ran and ran, and then she grew tired. As she grew tired, she fell underneath a tree and fell asleep. And the other Jewish women continued on their way. They escaped. Well, you see, the executioners were very drunk and at that moment they— Her mother was trying to tear her away from herself, pushing her away. She wanted her to run somewhere. And then she was found by the forest ranger. The forest ranger found her; he was a very good man. He took her home, dressed her in his children’s clothes. “Now,” he said, “my child, I live in the middle of the forest, I cannot [put you up]—they are going to check on me somehow.” So he sent her away. “I will come back to Varniai.” And she was so—you saw how absent-minded she is. And then she was even more—it was also difficult to hide her, as she was—well, how do you put this?—well, her appearance. One cannot hide his or her ethnicity that easily. So she was saying, “why should I be afraid? I did not do anything.” She came back to Varniai. She returned to the town, to the very town. Well, she went to the outskirts. She knew a man named Vasiliauskas. So she went to Vasiliauskas. And Vasiliauskas had seven or eight children of his own. He was a very poor man. But in his yard there was a—well, how do you say, there was a cellar for storing potatoes. So he took her and led her to that cellar. She found the other Jewish women there already. He had ten or twelve Jewish women there. And so every night he would—he was such a good person—every night he would—he had a horse and he would take them away. He would arrange with his family at one place or the other, and he gave Rožė away to a minister. That minister is now dead. Rožė knows his surname and everything.

Q: What parish was the minister from?

A: Varniai. Varniai. I don't know, there—

Q: He was the minister of the Varniai church?

A: I cannot tell you if he was at the main [church]. Because there are two [churches] in Varniai: the old one and the new one. As far as I know, he was at the old one. Well, and— But he was in some village outside the Varniai town. So that minister gave her away to—he gave her away to a manor. And then the minister took her back again. And then later Baltrušaitis, who was very smart, decided that—well, the Russians were approaching—the Russians were approaching, and he wanted to demonstrate to them that he saved a Jewish girl.

Q: Why did he need to demonstrate it to them?

A: Well, to show to the Russians that he is very good, that he saved someone. He tamed her. Well, everybody around got used to it, and she would come to Baltrušaitis. And that's how I met her.

Q: So she openly walked around Varniai and did not hide?

A: Well, she didn't walk around too much, but she would come here. And then later, you know, he held a meeting. One time I was going upstairs, as I needed to take some photo material. I go upstairs, and there's plenty of men there. You see, there was a meeting there. I cannot remember how they were called—that, well—bandits, not bandits, how do you call them— They were partisans, gathered in a group. The police chief was among them, and many others

[01] 29:26:12 – [01] 31:34:17

00:30:41 – 00:32:54

Q: Who was the chief of the police?

A: I don't know. You see, I am not from Varniai, so I was not paying any attention. I don't know who he was. I only know that they were upstairs. They were upstairs, and I was on my way upstairs, when I heard them. Nothing. They were discussing among themselves about the need to eliminate Rožė. She has to be eliminated and that's it. „What do you think,“ they said, „the front is almost here.“ Well, Bronius was saying—

Q: Why should she be eliminated, if the front was almost there?

A: Exactly, exactly. Well, but she needs to be eliminated, and that's it. So Bronius said, „maybe I will hide her somewhere.“ So when everybody went their ways, and we were eating dinner with Bronius one-on-one, I told him, „you are planning to get rid of Rožė.“ He looks at me, and asks, „how do you know?“ he says. Well, I told him. I said, „give her to me. She is such a good child,“ I say, „I feel so sorry for her, I can't,“ I say. „Will you help me?“ „I will help you,“ I said.

Q: How old was Rožė at the time?

A: Well, she is only a year and a half or two years younger than me.

Q: She was fourteen?

A: She may have been fourteen and a half—well, yeah, she was at least fourteen. I said, „give [her to me].“ „Where will you put her?“ Oh, by the way, my father had recently died. I said, „well, give her to me.“ So he said, „ok, but what will you do?“ I said, „I will take her to my mother.“ „Jesus and Mary,“ he said, „to the very—you will take her right to the border with the Germans.“ Well, Veiviržėnai was—Pėžaičiai was seven kilometers away from the border. „Whatever. I will take her anyway.“ I didn't think about anything. I liked her, and I was scared that she would be executed—„give [her to me].“ So he borrowed a bicycle and gave it to me, while he already had one for himself. He mounted her on the bicycle bar, gave me the bike and we rode to Laukuva. In Laukuva we left the bicycle and the two of us set off on foot.

[01] 31:34:17 – [01] 33:34:05

00:32:54 – 00:34:59

Q: And Bronius stayed?

A: Bronius returned home. Only the bicycle stayed with an acquaintance of his – he left the bike for me, so that when I return, I could take the bicycle and go back. And now we set off on foot. We still had to make it to Rietavas, and then from Rietavas it was 28 kilometers. So we walked, the two of us. We were walking on the road and joking, and all that. And then a German car passes. All of a sudden I raise my hand. I raised my hand, and they stopped. There was an officer, who was dozing off. I raised my hand. “What do you want? Was? Was? (German)” “Well,” I say, “I want to “fahren” (German), I want get a ride.” “Ok, go to the end,” he says. I walk to the end [of the car], which was full of soldiers. They take me by my hand and they lift me up. They put me on the car. They move aside, one offers his seat, then another. They are not looking at me, but staring at my Rožė. And then—well, that’s just fate—a grown man, who could have been my father probably—I couldn’t tell the German ranks apart, but he was some senior soldier—moved aside. He ordered them, „no, no“ and „here, here.“ *[She imitates him motioning her to sit next to him.]* I could understand separate German words, but I could not put them together. My mother spoke fluent German, but I cannot. I know only separate words. He sat me down next to himself, her – here. He started stroking and stroking me, touching me. I had very thick hair. „Schön Mädchen, schön Mädchen (German), what a beautiful girl you are.“ And he started crying, he was stroking me and crying. He says, „my daughter is just like you, my daughter. But where will you,“ he says, „put that Jew?“ I respond, „no.“ „Jude (German)—she is Jude.‘

[01] 33:34:05 – [01] 36:00:06

00:34:59 – 00:37:31

Q: And he was saying it aloud and in front of everybody that she was Jewish?

A: Aloud! They were all shouting. He says, “she is a Jew.” He says, “aren’t you scared?” he says, “why are you walking here? You will be executed!” I said, “no, no”. When he said the word—you see, I could understand separate words—but he says, “you will be executed,” and points to me. “You will get,” he says, “tee tee tee,” *[imitates shooting]*. And then I felt, you know, a shiver down my—Well, so he and the soldiers talked among themselves in German and he—he was sitting right next to the car—he knocked on the car, and we stopped. He [the driver] asks, “What do you need?” They said, “we want to go outside” – meaning to take a leak. In the forest. “Well,” they say, “the forest is ending soon, and we want to go.” So we go. And that German says, “you,” he says, “go—when we get out of the car,” he says, “you get off the car too and—“

Q: To the bushes?

A: To the bushes. “Run away,” he says, “run away, and then walk on foot – don’t walk on the road.” He warned me. “Do you understand?” “I understand.” Now, as I was getting out of the car—the German took a look to check which way the officer went, and told the soldiers to take us to the opposite side—and then just I was about to get off, the [officer] returned for some reason. The German made my Rožè get on her knees and wouldn’t let her off the car. Rožè was staring at them, while they were pressing her down. Well, the officer went away without seeing her, and she was also taken down from the car. And then the two of us walked in the bushes. Well, in other words, we walked back off the road. We came back to my aunt.

Q: So the soldiers left just like that?

A: They left. They simply said goodbye and left. That German kissed me, stroked me and cried, that poor man. I reminded him of his family. Well, and when we reached my aunt— We rode—we walked—to my aunt. The aunt started shaking her head, and she said, „my child, my child,“ she said, „it’s horrible. Very. What did you do? What did you do?“ Well, and that’s it.

Q: Mrs. Genutè, let us take a break now. We will replace the tape. We will put a new tape in.

A: Aha, ok.

Tape 2 of 2

[02] 00:34:12 - [02] 03:32:03

00:00:29 – 00:03:34

Q: So now tell me. How can you explain it that a full truck of soldiers knew they were taking a Jewish girl and—

A: Yes.

Q: And no one even—

A: Nobody said a word.

Q: But they were the fiercest enemies of the Jews.

A: They talked among themselves. They were simple soldiers. Only the one who defended me, only he was, as it seemed, a little senior. But not an officer – the officer was sitting in the car. And they talked among themselves. He probably convinced them that a human life needed to be saved, and that was it. And he told me, „run as far as you can.“ So I took her back to Rietavas. And my aunt, when she saw us, said, „my child, my child, who did you bring here,“ she says, „you brought your own death.“ So she fed us and everything. And then, at five in the morning, at dawn, we were woken up and we left on foot once again.

Q: Why did she say „you brought your own death“? Had anybody perished because of the Jews?

A: Well. Well, people were talking in private. If you are found with a Jew, you don't know what you are getting yourself into. If anyone had a prejudice, or if anyone simply hated someone—well, they will talk, and then not only the Jew, but you as well will be taken. That's how it was. „What will be her duties? For what purpose are you taking her [with you]? And you—,,

Q: Were there any people who perished because of the Jews?

A: Well, I don't know, I cannot tell you. There surely were none among us. We all lived in respect. Our town had had especially good relationships with the Jews. They were very honest. Very. Well, and I left from there to Veiviržėnai, I returned to my mother. I returned, and my mother looked at me in the same way, and said, just like the aunt did, „my child,“ she said, „you brought death not only onto her, but,“ she said, „you and I will die too.“ Well, and she fed us. And then we hid her for several—not several days, but until she got used [to the environment]. It was difficult to hide her, because when she was not allowed to leave at all, she grew angry, cried and fretted, „what did I do?“ You cannot tell her anything. I say, „you will be arrested,“ and everything, so she— At my home, it was possible to see the hallway in you were in the room. Well, from the other room you could see—like a shadow. So whenever I returned from somewhere, she would go, „do you know, do you know, Gene, who was here for a visit?“ „Well, who?“ „Your

neighbor with fat legs.“ Well, we laughed and that’s all. Another time she says, „You know, who was here?“ „Well, who?“ „The one who talks la la la.“ And so we knew who she was talking about. Well, I can only say that it was really difficult for her to—

[02] 03:32:03 - [02] 05:10:13

00:03:34 – 00:05:16

Q: But the neighbors, who were visiting, they couldn’t see her, right?

A: They didn’t know. Nobody knew. Well, then little by little. My mother would take her out to the garden and everywhere. The neighbors got used to it. Then later she was walking freely. I kept her for two years. Well, and—

Q: When did you bring her home?

A: What?

Q: When did you bring her home?

A: Well, I brought her home in 1942 and—

Q: What month was it?

A: The month was—well, I cannot tell you right now. It was in the fall, as I remember, it was fall. And in the year that the Russians returned for the second time, in 1944, and when I was there— Well, I had gone back [to Varniai] later. I had returned to Varniai. I rode to Laukuva, then took the bicycle, and returned home. And Astrauskas—well, I talked to him. Well, I had helped him when he went to visit Goldė, so he was happy to help me take care of her [Rožė]. So he would tell me all the secrets – what was going on; or, if somebody started talking something, he would scold them. Then, priest Petrauskas—you see, I had been in the choir when I was young, and we got along very well with Petrauskas—so Petrauskas did the same. He would bring food at night, and would call me on the phone with the news. Then, one night—

[02] 05:10:13 - [02] 08:21:18

00:05:16 – 00:08:35

Q: So what would he tell you on the phone?

A: Well, how she was behaving; what was going on. If people started gossiping, he would make them stop. Well, when they understood that the priest was involved here, they really calmed down completely. So it was good then. Well, and then one night one called at the dawn, and the other – at midnight. Astrauskas and priest Petrauskas, both called. „Genutė, get Rožė away from here as fast as you can, because there is—the front is approaching,“ they said, „and they want to eliminate her.“ Well, so I came back as soon as I could. My mother obtained a horse from Astrauskas right away, because we didn't have one. [We lived] in the town proper, but they worked the land. So he gave us the horse already harnessed, and packed some hay too. We put Rožė into the hay under the seat, while me and my mother, we sat on top. We made sure we warned and intimidated her enough to—it was most important to get her through the trenches. Because the Germans were digging trenches. And there were a lot of people brought there [to work], well, strangers. Civilians. But my mother had been in captivity once during the Great War [WWI]. Germans had held her prisoner for five years. Where was she? She was on the French border. So she spoke in literary language with a French accent. So the Germans could not believe her and would say, „you are German, not some kind of Lithuanian.“ She spoke very, very well. So she, my mother, sat me down, and we sit together. My mother gave me a scarf to wear. She smeared something on my face. Well, then we are stopped—and here the trenches are being dug. They stop us. We were going to Endriejavas town – from Veiviržėnai to Endriejavas. So, [they asked], „where are you going?“ „I am taking“ she said, „her to the doctor, she has a toothache.“ The German just stands staring. And the Germans, they were very clean. „How are you,“ he says, „are you taking her to the doctor, when she is so dirty and so disgusting?“ „Oh,“ she says, „you cannot you take care of everything, you start washing her, and then her tooth starts aching, she puts her hands like this [*She puts her hands on her face.*] and then she is dirty again.“ But my mother was very smart. She says, „oh, the teeth are nothing, but she,“ she says, „also has diarrhea.“ „Jesus,“ says the German, „go as fast as you can, fahren [*GERMAN: drive*].“ And they let us through. So she took us past Endriejavas, not too far—halfway—to Rietavas, and we were let go. We said our goodbyes, and we set off on foot again.

Q: And your mother returned to Veiviržėnai?

A: My mother returned to Veiviržėnai. She told them that she left me with the doctor and that's it.

[02] 08:21:18 - [02] 10:17:18

00:08:35 – 00:10:36

Q: So when did this transfer take place?

A: In 1944, right away. The front was almost there. Well, so I returned to Varniai. I came back to Varniai, and—

Q: Together with Rožė?

A: We came back to Varniai together with Rožė. We said our farewells, kissed each other goodbye. And Baltrušaitis took her back to the minister. And then from the minister she—I don't know it happened, but she fled, and then she appeared in Germany, in the ghetto. She was in Germany. But somehow she managed to escape successfully. Only after the war, when the Russians were here, and I lived in Klaipėda already. Jesus, I hear a doorbell, open the door – and Rožė is standing there. So I— I hadn't seen her for many years. Well, only later she reappeared again.

Q: Rožė. What was Rožė's last name?

A: Goldenštein.

Q: So this is her husband's name, right? Her husband is Goldenštein, right?

A: Yeah.

Q: And—

A: And her [maiden] name I have written down somewhere. I have forgotten her surname.

Q: Now look, Mrs., our friend is asking—he doesn't know, so maybe you can tell him. Explain please, what is this decoration that you have? What is this?

A: Here?

Q: Yes.

A: This is the World Rescuers [award]. It may be given to [rescuers] of the drowning, it may be— Well, in short, [it is given to] rescuers.

Q: Who founded this award?

A: It may be— It may be [given to the rescuers of people from] a fire or drowning.

Q: Who gave you this decoration and when?

A: It was given— Well, here [*She lifts a photograph, puts on her glasses.*] it says in which year. [*Reads:*] „The decoration was given to the rescuers and their relatives—,, Here, on the 23rd of September, 1997.

[02] 10:17:18 - [02] 12:10:10

00:10:36 – 00:12:34

Q: And who decorated you?

A: Brazauskas. And then there was lunch. But then—

Q: So Brazauskas was the President [of Lithuania] at that time?

A: He was the President then.

Q: Show the picture to the camera, turn it like this.

A: *[She turns the picture to face the camera. The camera focuses on the picture]* This is a group picture. A group picture, with everybody, including those, who are dead – so their wives or grandchildren had come instead.

Q: So these might be the children of the rescuers too?

A: They may be the children of the rescuers too.

Q: Not the rescuers themselves.

A: No. And then— This is my Rožytė *[Diminutive of Rožė. Points to a woman in the photograph]*. And then later Brazauskas said, „now I want to make a picture only with those [rescuers], who are still alive.“

Q: So show this one as well.

A: So this is the other one *[She shows the picture.]*. So these are—

Q: These are only the real rescuers.

A: These are only the real rescuers. Well, and here am I *[She point to herself on the picture.]*, this one. And that is it. So here, this is really just us *[the rescuers]*.

Q: Mrs. Genutė, let us return now to the beginning of the war. What did you see in Veiviržėnai, when the war started?

A: Well, when the war started— What did I see? Well, only how the Jewish men were separated from the Jewish women.

Q: You saw it at the square, right?

A: They were separated at the market square. Well, and then, when they were at the so-called ghetto—over there, next to the hill—me and my mother would bring them to eat whatever my mother had to offer: potatoes, grains, bread or something else. Well, and they [*the Jewish women*] would run up and take it with them. And nothing else, [we heard] nothing else of them. We only heard the shooting.

[02] 12:10:10 – [02] 14:49:24

00:12:34 – 00:15:20

Q: I want to ask you now, when they were gathered at the square in Veiviržėnai—

A: Yes?

Q: Who rounded them up there?

A: They were rounded up by—they had brought people. There were soldiers. There were German soldiers. There were Lithuanians too, everybody spoke Lithuanian. Where had they been brought from? There was one or two of ours as well. But we were in such a shock that we did not know each other anymore.

Q: So the Germans were in uniforms, and what were the Lithuanians wearing?

A: Well, they were dressed in simple clothes. They were in simple clothes and nothing else. Nobody wore anything particular.

Q: Their clothes were civilian?

A: Only the Germans were wearing military clothes. Our civilians were very rough, disgraceful, with their sleeves rolled back. One had a hat on his head, pulled over his [eyes] – maybe he had a conscience or something. But in short, they were rough. One pushing the other. Some of us had come to watch how they [Jews] were being hustled, you know. You see, I was there on the morning the war started – not that morning, but

the second morning of the war. Not the [first] morning of the war, but the second morning. And the Jewish women were hustled probably on the third morning. So on the first morning, when they gathered all of us, I was also put in jail. Everyone was. Well, they said that I was a Komsomolsk youth. So they put us in jail.

Q: So who arrested you the Germans, or—

A: No, no, no. Lithuanians. Lithuanians.

Q: Did you know anyone?

A: Well, you see, I do not know anymore. Many of them have died since then. There were Germans among them, and our people as well. We were all put into one cell. Maslauskas was there, the women's organizer was there – I cannot remember her surname anymore, but she was there. Well, and then came— They didn't even give any water [until] the next morning. The next morning they brought water, put it down. I was then released together with maybe ten others. They called out our names. They didn't find anything, no papers, nothing. I was going to school then. If the war—during the war—well, not during the war, but just before the war started—I had finished the sixth grade. Our school had six advanced grades, and then after the sixth grade, we could enroll in the second year of the gymnasium (a type of high-school in Lithuania). So I had finished six grades. So how could I have been a Komsomolsk youth?

[02] 14:49:24 – [02] 16:41:07

00:15:20 – 00:17:16

Q: When you were detained, were there any Jews detained with you?

A: No, not there. Well, there were—I don't know, maybe there were some men, but no. No. There were none.

Q: There were mostly Lithuanians there.

A: The Jews— There were the so-called—all kind suspicious people there. Well, the members of the [Communist] party or the like.

Q: So you were released, but the others remained?

A: They remained. They were taken—they were taken to the Kretinga (a town and a district center in the Klaipėda region) prison, I cannot remember what it was called.

Q: Dimitravas.

A: They were taken to Dimitravas (a town in Kretinga district, where a forced labor camp had been established). **Nakrevičiūtė** was the name of the women's organizer, and she was executed. I know for sure that she was. She was executed, while Maslauskas escaped from—he had escaped the transfer somehow. And now I know that he has died in Russia.

Q: So when you were released, it was already— Were the Jews brought to that square later, after that?

A: After that. As they were brought in, we had been standing there, and they sent us away. They were very rough. Where had they come from? They must have been intentionally brought in from somewhere else.

Q: Were they in uniform, or in civilian clothes?

A: They were dressed in simple, civilian clothes. Only the soldiers—the German soldiers—were in uniforms. The other people were dressed in simple, civilian clothes. One in a shirt, another one in a jacket or a sweater. Most of them—I recall it as if it had happened today—had their sleeves rolled back. Because it was warm.

Q: Were they armed, those civilians?

A: Well, this I cannot remember, how it was. The ones, who stood next to the car, they stood in pairs. If a car is standing like this, one would stand here, and the other one — here. And when they [Jews] were hustled to the car, they were really—I really saw them holding guns, but the others—

[02] 16:41:07 – [02] 18:19:21

00:17:16 – 00:18:58

Q: So it was the men who were hustled into the car?

A: Yeah, well the ones who were taken away to Šilutė. And the women were simply taken away and that's it. They were all extremely obedient.

Q: Well, and have you seen the Jews being beaten or mocked?

A: Well, they were mocking them. We saw it at the square.

Q: What did they do to the Jews?

A: Well, what did they do? If somebody asked something—a Jewish woman didn't want to—she wanted to run to her husband, and they took her and threw her against the sidewalk. I don't know when she managed to get up. When we were being hustled, they were also very rough. They were beating and tearing. It was terrible. And the men were terribly beaten up. Now, the back of the car is open, and two soldiers stand here, and then another soldier a little next to them. But the latter had no gun. If he did have one, it must have been a pistol, while the others had guns. So now the Jews had to run towards the car. They have to run and get on the car as fast as they can. And the—well, how to say this—the German cars were raised very high. So he runs, and, you know, his bottom is really tight. And down goes the whip. Well, if there is someone in the car, then it's easier. Then they [*the ones who are already in the car*] would run over to pull up the others. I only remember the rabbi, who was a very, very good person, but he was also old. He was so beaten up. Well, he was not able to climb into the car. And there were very few people on it, so it took them some time to pull him up. He was terrible beaten. The sight was very—it was terrible what happened.

[02] 18:19:21 – [02] 20:00:03

00:18:58 – 00:20:43

Q: So they would beat a person before he got in the car?

A: Before— Well, so he [runs] fast, and he cannot get on. How could he get on, when he is such an old man. He cannot lift his feet up, just imagine. The younger ones would simply jump onto the car. You know, their behind would be all tightened so when the whip lands, sometimes the pants would even tear. It was terrible.

Q: So was it the Germans who were beating, or Lithuanians too?

A: Germans, Germans. The Germans were standing there. I don't know who they were, what their language was, but the beating was done by the ones in uniform. They were standing in uniforms, but who they were—were they Lithuanians or somebody else— There was such a commotion, that a neighbor couldn't recognize a neighbor. It was terrible, what was going on. And the screaming, the screaming of children; then the tearing and pulling of women. They were kicking the children; and the children were screaming, while being torn away from the crowd. It could not have been more terrible. So that's how much I saw.

Q: So did you know any of the locals? So there was that—what was his name, Kinčinas, you said, right?

A: Kinčius.

Q: Kinčius.

A: He was not at the square. Only later he participated at the so-called ghetto. He only stood guard there. What did he do, whether he was cruel or not – this I don't know. We did not— We had never entered the ghetto. We would bring it to the hill, and they [*the Jewish women*] would run over or send children; the Jewish women would send their children. My mother would tell me who should I hand the basket to, and that's it.

[02] 20:00:03 – [02] 22:54:14

00:20:43 – 00:23:45

Q: What would you put into the basket?

A: Oh Jesus, whatever we had ourselves. Everything was bought with coupons. We would put potatoes. We would bring raw potatoes, and boiled potatoes, grains, bread, etc. Once my mother—I don't know how it happened, but somehow she put a—she had killed a chicken and brought it there, so I don't know. I didn't come close enough to—

Q: Was the chicken cooked or not?

A: She handed it uncooked, but probably—I don't know what happened there, they probably arranged it that the chicken was returned, and then my mother cooked it and the next day she brought it to them already cooked. They probably let her know that they have nowhere to cook it or anything. So my mother cooked it. They asked her to add salt and everything.

Q: So when it was cooked they took it again?

A: Then they took it all. But not much else. Everything was bought with coupons. We ourselves had nothing. Oh, we would also bring them saccharin. You could get saccharin under the Germans easily. Well, you could get it at drugstores, but also at regular shops. They sold it freely.

Q: So how would your mother tell you whom you should hand the basket to?

A: Well, she would tell me whom I should hand it to. She knew. In those days we did not know people's real surnames like we do today. We knew Blokas. Blokas we knew for sure. We knew Leipkēs too, while the others— Well, **Ručnikas** maybe, there was a **Ručnikas**, I think. He had a clothing store as well. While the others we called by their first names. Gerškē—well, Gerškē was not a surname for sure. Well, they were known by their first names.

Q: So your mother would tell you whom to give it to, and then how would you call that person?

A: I would only go with my mother. I would only stand there, and watch if anybody sees us or not. My mother would walk up higher. Then somebody would run over. They had it arranged, they had been informed to come. A child or someone else would run over.

Q: Why were you not allowed to come closer?

A: Well, I don't know. Maybe she was afraid to give me in. I cannot explain it to you. I was not entrusted any secrets, and I didn't have Rožė with me yet. Maybe she didn't want me to be taken away. Or maybe my mother was afraid that I would not give it to whom she intended it to be given. Well, this I really don't know.

Q: Were there many people, who brought [food]?

A: No, not many. Not many. Only a few, there were not many. Well, there were some people from the countryside, who, I was told, would also bring [food], but I have not seen any. The Astrauskas family would bring, or had brought at least once. Well, I don't know the others.

[02] 22:54:14 – [02] 24:21:23

00:23:45 – 00:25:16

Q: Well, but were there any instances, when you would approach the ghetto and see that there already—

A: No, no, no. No. No one would show themselves. We would go through—we did not take the regular path to the ghetto. We would go, as I have already told you, through—Veiviržas river flows through our town. The ghetto was on the one side, while the other side was empty. We would climb over the hill, and only then we would walk. Well, Trepkalis was about two and a half kilometers away from the town.

Q: Why was the ghetto established in Trepkalis?

A: Because there were large premises there. Because there was a manor there. There was some Polish person who had a manor there during the Lithuanian [independence] years. There were no other premises like that. And then in the fall there was no place to put them, so they were taken out and killed.

Q: And when the war started, was the manor empty?

A: Well, there were maybe only two workers there. He [*the owner*] was in Kėdainiai or somewhere. You know, I was young and cannot remember this, I will not lie to you. I only know that he used to come visit with his wife. And they would leave some workers here through the winter. And in the summer, when the land needed to be cultivated, he would hire people, and they would come to work at the manor.

[02] 24:21:23 – [02] 26:33:15

00:25:16 – 00:27:33

Q: Well, tell me now: you would approach the ghetto, and then what would you see inside? Did you see people outside the building?

A: They would come out, walk around. They were given work at the manor: weed the [flower] beds, sweep. Well, and they would move around performing their own tasks. And the elderly, who couldn't walk were—they would sit outside and cry, and that's it. Well, and they cook whatever they could. They were given some kind of pots for the cooking. And they had their own food reserves. They didn't have to stay there for too long. They—well, they stayed there for maybe four or five months, until the fall. Because by the winter they were gone.

Q: So it was quite long. In other places in Lithuania they were killed right away.

A: Yeah, yeah. Other places—maybe in other places.

Q: And here they lived through the whole of the summer, even longer.

A: I am only talking about Veiviržėnai.

Q: I see.

A: And the others, I do not know what happened elsewhere.

Q: Well, and where there any cases when someone would be killed in the ghetto?

A: I don't know. I don't even know whom you can ask about it. You can ask him [Kinčius], but he will not tell you. Really, he will not tell anything, he will pretend [that he knows nothing], that Kinčius. Well, they were said to have been beaten. People from the village would talk.

Q: But you didn't see?

A: No, no. I have not seen anything, but there was that man, whose name I cannot remember—they both are dead now—so he, that man was like a manager, and his wife would come over. So the wife ordered people around more than her husband. And, it was said that she would beat the Jewish women. So they would say, „we'd rather the man comes than—than—, I forget the surnames, I cannot remember. They were—well, they were. They lived next to Bružiai village, but are both dead by now. She was very cruel. But both of them also died from a very cruel disease – cancer.

[02] 26:33:15 – [02] 28:27:22

00:27:33 – 00:29:32

Q: What were the guards of the ghetto like?

A: Well, the guards—Well, you see, I was young and didn't pay much attention. I only know that among the guards there was Kinčius and—well, the one that I talked about—and Petras Valasnavičius. But who else was there, I don't know. They didn't need many. They [*the Jewish women*] were very quiet, they— They would stand guard in shifts, that's all. They were hoping to be released or that they would be taken somewhere. They had been convinced, and about the shooting— Juozas knew it from somewhere, and Juozas told me that, in order for there not to be any uproar, [they were ordered to], “pack everything, arrange your suitcase, and leave an unbreakable mug and an unbreakable bowl, a plate and a spoon accessible on top in the suitcase.” So they arranged everything. And they put it all on top in the suitcase. But all they had to do was to walk down the hill. They didn't even have to walk half a kilometer. Well—

Q: Mrs. Genutė, and the ones who—

A: So I was told all this by Juozas.

Q: Juozas told you.

A: Yeah.

Q: I want to ask now—you mentioned, that the ones, who were going around with a barrel of beer—

A: Yes?

Q: Before [the massacre].

A: They were all strangers. There were some soldiers, wearing German military clothes. But there were many civilian men too. A full car of them. They were standing around the car, leaning on it, with mugs in their hands. There were two barrels of beer there. And on top of the barrels they put those huge glasses.

[02] 28:27:22 - [02] 30:51:12

00:29:32 – 00:32:01

Q: So now—

A: Mugs.

Q: Yes, yes. So they—

A: They made rounds, drinking. They circled the town and that's it.

Q: Was there one car, or several?

A: No, two cars.

Q: Two cars.

A: And so they circled around. Where did they disappear after that? Only when the shooting started, Astrauskas said then, “so they drove there,” he said, “to show the executioners around.” But they were—there were no people of Veiviržėnai among them.

Q: And you did not know any of them?

A: Oh, about the guards, I was told that Juška was there, but I cannot remember his first name. Juška was there. So he is already dead now. So of all of them only one, Kinčius, is still alive. And he is also very unhappy. I look at him, all feeble. Nobody talks to him, he is all by himself. And his daughter died at twenty. He is not very happy. Well, and I don't know what else I could tell you. Maybe you want to ask something?

Q: Now, Mrs. Genutė, the executioners who were shown around—

A: Yes?

Q: Driving around with the beer. So the civilians, it's clear. And who were the ones in uniform – German or Lithuanians?

A: Germans, Germans.

Q: They were Germans.

A: They were Germans. They [spoke] German, but maybe they knew Lithuanian as well. But they shouted in German. They said „hi“ in German and everything. So the ones, who were dressed up [in uniforms] were really Germans. And the ones, who were in civilian clothes, they— When they hustled the Jews, they were shouting in Lithuanian. They [shouted] in German and in Lithuanian, but they were not from Veiviržėnai. They had been brought from another town. So there, I don't know what more to say. My youth has passed, but the memories stayed. I didn't have any fear then, nothing. Now really—now

it sounds terrible. But I am very grateful for those hardships. Our Jewish community is wonderful, and I am very grateful for them.

[02] 30:51:12 – [02] 34:13:15

00:32:01 – 00:35:32

Q: Where? In Klaipėda?

A: Yes. Very. They built an alley – you should see it. They have no money. They took care of the surroundings too. They also serve lunch, and we eat there. Oh Jesus, they don't forget me. They serve lunch. But they serve very, very good lunch. They serve it on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays – they feed us four times [a week]. But very, very— Well, in short, I can only say very positive things about them.

Q: So they serve lunch to the rescuers?

A: No, to their people as well.

Q: To their people.

A: To their people, who get small pensions, you know. Well, in short, they show attention. Well, I asked—

Q: But you also go for lunch there?

A: I do. If I don't come once, right away they go, „where are you? Are you sick or something?” Because they visit about thirty others at home. Because, you see, they get those – they buy the food with the money they get from America, from some Jewish National Fund. And then [the money] is distributed. We are supervised by the French, the Jews of France. Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. So they come— And a hundred dollars is allotted to each person. So once we were told to write petitions, and we agreed to receive one hundred dollars [instead of the lunch] – then we wouldn't have to walk or anything – and a hundred dollars would be enough for me to buy dinner and breakfast [in addition to lunch]. So we did. They told us to write petitions. The French came, looked and asked around, and said, „the Lithuanians are alcoholics, and the Jews here could be counted on

fingers. “ One Jewish man is married to a Lithuanian, another – to a Russian woman, or vice versa: a Jewish woman is married to a Lithuanian or a Russian man; so they—well, only a few are left. So that’s how they—„No, “they said, „they will get drunk and have nothing again. “ So they imagine that we are dying of hunger here. So they said, „they will get drunk and that’s it. “ Well, and the allocation of money makes sense. You need to pay for gas and electricity, and pay for the service. And the money is gone. But, as I say, they are very fair. Sometimes they recalculate each month, and if there is any food left, they prepare presents: some oil, a kilo of sugar and so on.

Q: So they make sure that they give everything away.

A: They give everything away. I don’t know now, but if you let a Lithuanian in, nothing would be left, but they are very— And we went to this party of theirs on „Paskos“, a holiday of theirs.

[02] 34:13:15 – [02] 36:36:18

00:35:32 – 00:36:58

Q: Pesach.

A: Yeah. So we attended this party. A rabbi from Vilnius came. So he read and told us about the traditions, you know. And they gave us matzos. The table was loaded, although in accordance with their historic laws- there were matzos, onion leaves, and salty water. Well, and what else was special there? Oh, there was fish and— And the rabbi asked everyone, „don’t put anything else.“ You know, many bring something—some snacks—when they come. They brought a lot of wine from Vilnius, the benign [non-alcoholic] kind. Really, quite tasty. So the tables were loaded with that wine. „Just don’t put anything else. Don’t put bread, please,“ he said. Well, nothing leavened. Well, he wanted to demonstrate the historic tradition. Well, everyone liked the party a lot. I took my neighbor there, and she liked it a lot.

Q: Well, ok.

A: Such cordiality.

Q: How much tape do we have left? That’s it, nothing left, right? So ok—

[02] 36:36:18

00:36:58

End of Interview.

Translated by: Milda Morkyte

Date: 12/16/2010

No restrictions