

KUODZEVIČIENĖ, Genovaitė
Lithuania Documentation Project
Lithuanian
RG-50.473*0107

Tape 1 of 1

In this interview, Genovaitė Ambrizaitė Kuodzevičienė, a local of **Žiežmariai** [**Žiežmarių**], discusses her recollections of her Jewish neighbors and their fate during the German occupation of Lithuania. She remembers witnessing the trench being dug for the mass shooting as she was herding cows and recalls in great detail witnessing the Jewish women of **Žiežmariai** being marched through the streets to the shooting site, where they were killed. She also describes exploring the grave site the next day and what became of the site over the following years. She discusses foreign Jews from Poland who lived in the ghetto and worked on the highway and how her family befriended them but did not agree to hide them. She goes on to discuss the establishment of the ghetto workcamp and the shooting, claiming that the local Jews and the foreign Jews were all put to work on the highway and were then shot together.

[01:] 45:18:11 – [01:] 53:16:13

She introduces herself by her maiden name Ambrizaitė, born in 1929 in **Žiežmariai** where she lives to this day; mentions that there were many Jews in **Žiežmariai**, and that her Jewish neighbors would bring her family waffles and wine on Easter; remembers an episode when she was five years old and went to the Jewish neighbors' house across the street to eat bullion and focuses on the fact that she was scared to eat the chicken that was in the soup because she had heard rumors that Jews catch children and eat them; recalls going to the store where Jews gave out food made from carrots named "imberuvkas" for free, but she would not take them because she had been sent specifically to buy things from the Jews; recounts an episode in which she saw how men were digging the trench for the mass grave; remembers going up to an acquaintance and asking what the trench was being dug for, who then told her that Germans would shoot the Jews; specifies that five men were forced to dig the trench; remembers hearing rumors that the Jews would be shot into it; remembers acting together with two Jewish boys in the third grade play and how they taught her to dance during rehearsals; talks about how Jews would celebrate on Fridays.

[01:] 53:16:14 – [01:] 59:34:02

She returns to the episode of seeing the trench being dug while herding cows, repeating her dialogue with the man digging who told her that she cannot herd her cows there today because Jewish women were going to be shot there; recalls a nearby German who told her to leave the area; describes that her brother came and told her to go home; describes seeing her aunt crying at home and how she told her to go to the pantry where there were no windows; describes how she came back into the room and heard cries and moans from the street, looked out the window and

saw the Jewish women being marched in lines; focuses on how her neighbor **Iršė**, while holding a baby, tried to escape into their yard but a German caught up to her and threw her back into the line; *[eyes water, voice cracks]*; explains that the following day after the shooting, she went back out to herd cows and decided to go to the gravesite to look at it; remembers seeing scattered socks and shoes along the way; describes in detail how she saw the ground move on the gravesite, indicating that not everyone in the grave was completely dead yet; remembers how her father recounted what he saw of the shooting while perched up in a tree, focusing on a beautiful Jewish girl with blond hair who was running around the grave pleading for her life, but was shot in the end anyway; describes how her father cried about it; *[brief silence until interview resumes]*; discusses how the Jews were forced to undress; comments on the clothing of the Jews—that not all of them were very poor.

[01:] 59:34:03 – [02:] 02:53:19

She talks about a Jewish dentist who frequently visited her father from the ghetto while working on the highway; goes on a tangent about her family's livestock and her father's work, lifestyle and drinking habits; returns to the Polish dentist who asked her father to hide him away and in return his relatives in America would give him gold; recalls the conversation between the dentist and her father, who refused to give him refuge, but would give him food; comments on the dentist being a foreigner from Poland.

[02:] 02:53:20 – [02:] 10:27:17

She specifies that she saw five men digging the trench and one German; specifies that a uniformed German shoved **Iršė**; describes the guards who were marching the Jews to the shooting sight; does not remember how they were dressed; describes seeing the scattered clothes, not near the trench, but several hundred meters away; talks about the establishment of the ghetto in the movie theater; goes off on a tangent about how her father would take his children to the movies, how much money her family had, what livestock her family kept, and silent films; cannot remember what year the ghetto was established; explains that the ghetto was established when all the Jews were brought there before they were shot; mentions the Jewish dentist again and discusses a Jewish woman from the ghetto who would come over to her house by bribing the "Vachai"(guards); goes on a tangent about how she had an uncle whose house was burned, as well as the school at the end of the war during the German retreat; returns to the Polish Jewish dentist who was in the ghetto and whose brothers were in America; explains that the Jews of Žiežmariai had not yet been shot before the ghetto was established but they were imprisoned in the ghetto and forced to work on the highway every day; talks about a Jewish woman who would bribe her way out of work and would visit her uncle; specifies that all of the Jews were forced to build the highway including some local Jews; explains that the building of the highway lasted a couple months; describes seeing the Jews working on the highway while she herded the cows.

[02:] 10:27:18 – [02:] 21:08:03

She talks about what happened to the shooting site during the years after the shooting—that grass was allowed to grow on it; explains that the cows she was herding would not go near the shooting site because they sensed something wrong with it; describes a row of Jewish houses

where a Jewish woman hung herself and burned her house when she found out that her sister had been taken away while she herself was in hiding; does not remember the names of the trench-diggers; explains that the Jewish woman who tried to run into their courtyard with a child had wanted to drop the baby so that it could be found later; goes on a tangent about Lithuanian traditional clothes and knowing a Jewish girl who gave her these clothes before the war; talks about how a Jew named **Vitembergas** owned a school supply store and how her father would bring him packages of pencils and papers and not charge him for it; explains that he also would try and give her chocolate when she went to him to buy school supplies; discusses what her family might have done with the abandoned infant if the German soldier had not thrown **Iršė** back into line with the child; remembers one Jewish woman named **Chaya (Chaja)** who survived the war and would come during the Soviet times to trade goods for chickens and eggs; goes on a tangent about how she mentioned to **Chaya** that she wanted sandals and that she brought them several weeks later in exchange for meat; discusses how **Chaya** told her family that she was going to travel to Israel where her sister lived; discusses hearing the shots from her house at a distance; talks about how she felt sorry for the Jews because they were all acquaintances; talks about two Jewish sisters who sold cloth, focusing on the fact that one sister had dark hair and the other had dyed her hair blond; explains that this blond sister was not the beautiful girl who was pleading for her life around the pit.

[02:] 21:08:04 – [02:] 32:11:06

(The first interview ends but a second round of questions begins here in which an interviewer poses the questions in English through a translator.)

She affirms that the Jewish women and children of **Žiežmariai** were shot, and that the Jewish men of **Žiežmariai** had been taken to **Kaišiadorio [Kaišėdoriai]** and shot; explains that all of the Jews, both the locals and foreigners, were kept in the ghetto together and shot together; explains that she does not understand how this happened; speculates that the foreign Jews had probably come to visit the local Jews and were therefore all shot together; explains that the same Jews first worked on the road and were then shot; explains that the foreigners were shot together with the Jewish men of **Žiežmariai**; explains that there were only a few foreigners, that she only knew of two; discusses how the Jewish dentist explained that he came from Poland on business; she poses a question whether Jews were being shot in Poland and concludes that the dentist was probably trying to escape the shooting in Poland; explains that the local Jews of **Žiežmariai** were shot when the Germans were trying to take over Moscow; tries to remember how long the German occupation lasted; explains that the Jews were not shot immediately after the Russians were driven out of Lithuania because the Jewish men and women were still put to work on the road after that; talks about a kitchen where some of the Jewish women worked, who were later taken to Germany and ended up in America; reiterates that she only knew of two foreigners and does not know if there were more; explains that women were only shot once and that the men were also shot only once — that there were no more shootings after that.

-- 0 --