

BRAŠKIENĖ, Elena  
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Tape 1 of 1

In this interview Elena Braškienė discusses her family background, her early life near Giedraičiai, and the fate of Giedraičiai's Jews. She talks about how the Jewish men were rounded up and driven out of Giedraičiai first, while the women initially remained until they were rounded up and driven to Ukmergė. She focuses on one episode in which her husband was forced to drive a neighbor and her children to Ukmergė. She also reminisces about the close relationships she had with young Jewish women in the city. She discusses hiding a child for several weeks in her house, focusing on how afraid she was. She mentions his fate after the war. She also describes in great detail how she witnessed the shooting of a Jewish friend of hers and that friend's brother. She recalls the burning of the synagogue in Giedraičiai at the beginning of the war and discusses the fate of a Jewish girl who survived the Holocaust because she was hidden by the priest during the war. She lists the names of local collaborators and mentions the various memorials and monuments for Jewish victims, Lithuanian forest fighters, and Soviet *Stribiteliai* that were built around the site of the mass grave.

[01:] 00:33:18 – [01:] 10:03:14

She introduces herself and states that she was born in 1921 in **Gižų [Gižiu, Gižai]** village, a part of Giedraičiai; discusses her family background; mentions how her mother worked for widows before the war; point out how in 1925 her mother received part of her own mother's land and moved from Giedraičiai to **Kopustiškės**; explains that there were many Jews in the town of Giedraičiai before the war, but that in the surrounding villages there lived only two poor Jewish families; mentions that in Giedraičiai there were Jews of all economic classes; talks about how she had been acquainted with many of the Jews; mentions good relations between the Jews and non-Jews of Giedraičiai but nonetheless a separate Jewish school was established as a result of the bullying of Jewish boys in the Lithuanian school; *[tears up when asked to discuss what happened to the Jews once the war began]*; explains that Jewish craftsmen and skilled laborers began to disappear and mentions that no one knew where they were going; mentions the last names of those who disappeared: **Heikelis [Haikelis]** and **Gutmenas**; describes an episode in which she went to milk the cows at dusk and heard women's screams coming from Giedraičiai across the lake; says that she ran home to tell her parents to do something about it but was sent back out with her mother to continue milking cows; explains that she later found out that it had been the cries of the Jewish women lamenting that all of their men were being rounded up and driven away; describes the names she heard being shrieked and identifies the language as Yiddish; describes how the following day she went into the town of Giedraičiai and noticed that the streets were almost empty and that "JDN" was written in black paint on the doors of some of the houses; explains that everything was quiet for a couple of days and then the Jewish women,

who had been locked inside of their houses, were allowed outside again but with yellow stars sewed to their clothes.

**[01:] 10:03:15 – [01:] 13:18:19**

She returns to the discussion of her Jewish acquaintances in Giedraičiai, focusing on a playmate named Sora who later taught her to how to sew and how to sing Jewish songs; [*sings a fragment of a Jewish song that she had learned*]; estimates that the German occupation lasted slightly less than three years; talks about how the Germans forced her husband to drive Jewish women and children from Giedraičiai to Ukmergė; describes her husband as a sensitive person who had a difficult experience when he was appointed to drive their Jewish neighbor named **Jankelienė** with her son **Šukas** and daughter **Riva**; describes the belongings **Jankelienė** brought with her such as pots, pans, and jams; explains that a German with a machine gun rode with them to the manor near Ukmergė where he forced **Jankelienė** to take her children and her belongings out of the carriage and then ordered her husband to turn around and drive home; recounts that her husband would not talk about the events until the next day; describes the good relationship she had had with that Jewish family and how she does not know what happened to them.

**[01:] 13:18:20 – [01:] 17:12:09**

She recounts another episode in which, late one night, her husband heard a knock on their door and found a small child nicknamed **Sroliukas Anolikas**, whose father was **Sroikus**; recalls how they tried to hide the boy on top of the hearth; explains that because the boy was too young he would not listen and that after two weeks they sent the boy to stay at another person's house for a while; explains that he moved him because their house was directly on the main road patrolled by German soldiers with dogs; recounts how the boy survived the war by hiding in a number of different households; explains that he came to visit them after the war and wrote them a letter to say that he was well; mentions that he had hid in four other houses throughout the village; mentions that at the time they did not know his whereabouts; comments on how terrifying the experience of hiding him had been for them; tells of her suffering when the soldiers stole necessities from them and when they cut up her weaving.

**[01:] 17:12:10 – [01:] 24:18:16**

She recalls witnessing an incident in which an 18-year-old Jewish friend of hers named **Minka** and a younger boy were shoved down the street and across the field where the synagogue used to stand before it was burned in the beginning of the war; mentions that they were pushed by two men with weapons, one with a uniform and the other without; recounts in great detail how on the way home she suddenly heard a gunshot, turned around, and saw the two men climb out of a pit; remembers that there was another shot and then one of the shooters quickly jumped into the pit and climbed back out; speculates that perhaps they were searching the pockets of the murdered Jewish children; wonders whether the two who shot **Minka** and her brother were the same men who had forced them through the streets; explains that that summer as there were many similar episodes; explains that the synagogue was burned down in the beginning of the war; explains how her family, while living in **Kopustiškės**, carried all of their belongings out of their home for fear that the fire from the synagogue would spread from Giedraičiai; mentions that when she saw

Jewish women she knew walking in the streets in Giedraičiai they would not interact much because they had been forbidden to speak to locals; remembers a beautiful Jewish girl named **Mera** who survived because a priest named **Lesevičius** had hidden her throughout the war; mentions that after the war **Mera** married **Butėnas**, the director of the post office in Vilnius and how she met her on the street many years later.

[01:] 24:18:17 – [01:] 31:41:06

She talks about the local collaborators, mentioning the names of **Broniučiukas** and **Matjošukas** whom she described as drunkards; mentions another man named **Kostas** who worked for the Jewish family **Jofė** and wonders what became of him, whether he was shot together with the Jews; mentions the sons of **Gutmanas** and that if they had tried to hide they must have done so in Kaunas; mentions that the child they briefly hid was 10 or 11 years old; points out that the child did not talk much, and that she did not have much time to interact with him; describes daily life with the hidden child; explains that they ordered him on top of the hearth or into the special hiding place they built for him under the floorboards of the house when they heard a dog bark or saw soldiers passing; describes how Jews were most often called by their first names; speculates that the Jews who managed to escape successfully must have been in larger cities; specifies that the pit near the synagogue where the two siblings were shot used to be the place from which villagers would take sand; explains that she does not want to go to the mass gravesites even to see the monuments; mentions that that not only Jews were buried on the site but also “forest brothers” (a group who fought against the Soviets) had been buried there after no family members claimed their corpses that were lain out in the squares; discusses how the corpses of Soviet **Stribiteliai** were buried near an important monument but were moved during the *Sajūdis* (Reform Movement of Lithuania, a political organization that pushed for Lithuanian independence between 1988–92).