

STEPONAVIČIENĖ, Julija
Lithuania Documentation Project
Lithuanian
RG-50.473*0132

Box 1, Tape 1

In this interview, Julija Steponavičienė, born in 1935 in the **Vilkaviškių** region, discusses her recollection of the shootings of Jewish citizens of the Old Town area of **Kudirko** (present-day **Kudirkos Naumiestis**). She remembers walking home from school as a young girl and being told by a man not to go through a forest. She speaks of seeing Jews, mainly women and children, being carted to the forest later and discusses how her father said goodbye to their Jewish acquaintances before they left. She also tells of later being in the same forest, mushroom gathering with her grandmother and recalls how her grandmother got mad that the bodies were not well covered and produced a stench that reached their house.

[01:] 00:33:22 – [01:] 11:58:10

She explains that she attended school in Old Town Kudirko; says that there were a lot of Jews in Old Town Kudirko before the war; remembers how one day, on her way home from school, a man stopped her and told her not to go through the woods because Jews were being shot; recounts how later, she made her way home and there were about five more carts of Jews about half a kilometer behind her; explains that the carts were full of elderly people and children, and that women walked behind the carts; explains that the men had been shot earlier and that she had heard the shots; explains that the Jews in the carts were shot later; recounts how the Jews already knew they were going to be shot, and that her father had already said his goodbyes to some of them earlier; remembers that later the soldiers borrowed her family's horse to get more bullets from the town; explains that there were only about five German soldiers and the rest were Lithuanian civilians in brown uniforms, who mainly made sure that the Jews would not escape; remembers how she hid in a barn; remembers seeing the shooters drunk afterwards, holding the Jews' possessions; names one Jewish woman who said goodbye to her father: **Bijunkienė [Bijunkas]**.

[01:] 11:58:11 – [01:] 21:02:14

She remembers hearing that some of the Lithuanian participants came from farther away—possibly Šauliai; recalls that the participants divided the victims' belongings among themselves; talks about when she and her grandmother visited the same forest later on while mushroom gathering; remembers that her grandmother went into town afterward and complained about the stench from the bodies, which had not been buried well; recalls that after the war the bodies were dug up; remembers the exposed wood at the base of some of the trees and her grandmother explaining that this was probably the sign of some violence; explains there were two mass

graves: one for women and the elderly and a smaller one for children; notes that before the shooting, Jewish citizens had been allowed to move freely around the town.