

PURLIENĖ, Elena
Lithuania Documentation Project
Lithuanian
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In this interview Elena Purlienė remembers the war years in Šakiai and describes her experiences and those of her family members, who were Communists. She speaks also about the fate of the Jews who lived in Šakiai.

Tape 1 of 1

[01:] 00:15:23 – [01:] 07:51:19
00:15 – 08:10

She introduces herself; mentions that her maiden name was Gurskytė; says that she was born in 1926 in Šakiai; remembers that while she was living in Šakiai, there were lots of Jews there and she knew them; remembers the fates of those Jews who were friends with her brother; says that **Marineris** died near Klaipėda while others emigrated to Israel and some of them have already died; says that she also had a Jewish friend and that their family used to communicate with Jews very often; remembers that at the beginning of the war Jews were told that they have to pack food because they will be taken for work and they believed in these words; tells that she told her Jewish friend that it would be better to try to escape but her friend did not want to leave her mother; says that they all were shot later; remembers that her friend's name was Lilė; says that it would have been better if the Jews had not believed what the Germans told them; remembers that all Jews were brought to a shed and from there they were taken to the place of execution; says that she did not see how the Jews were taken to the shed but she saw how they were taken in groups to the shooting because the house of her aunt was not far away from that shed; remembers that there was about 500 meters between the shed and the shooting place; says that she did not see that shooting place and could not see if men or women were shot, but remembers that there was about 50 people in each group; says that she did not recognize those people who brought Jews to the shooting place because it was too far, but she is sure that among those people were **Tautkus**, **Valceris** and **Rudaitis**; remembers that she heard a series of shots and voices; says that in Šakiai four thousand Jews were shot; specifies that Lithuanians also were shot and that her family members were among those executed; tells where her family members, parents, and brother were buried; says that the grave where Jews were buried and those where Lithuanians were buried are not so far away from each other, and that Jewish men, women and children were buried in separate graves; says that she did not know where her family members were buried because she did not go to watch it because she was in prison but that people told her; says that she went to the graves for the first time when she was back from prison.

[01:] 07:51:20 – [01:] 17:36:20
08:11 – 18:19

She describes how she was imprisoned; remembers that she was imprisoned first, followed by her mother and then finally her father, who was hiding in the shelter at home; says he was betrayed by **Galinskaitė**, the wife of her brother; says that this brother ran away with the Soviet Army at the beginning of the war and his wife stayed with the family so she knew everything; says that she betrayed the interviewee's father because she was afraid of being tortured; describes how she herself was tortured and beaten so hard that she lost consciousness four times but she did not tell where her father was hiding; says that her brother's wife was not taken by Gestapo, but maybe she was afraid of that; says that she and her father were taken by the Gestapo because during the Soviet occupation of Lithuania her father was the chairman of the town executive committee; remembers that her brother who was ill was shot when he came back from Druskininkai sanatorium after the course of treatment; says that she brought some food for him to the prison but there she was told that he was not there, and so she understood that he had been shot; says that he was member of Komsomol and she was not yet, and that is why she was not shot; explains that she was arrested by Gestapo, by German militaries, and that at that time suspicious people were arrested; says that among these people were her mother, **Kazlauskienė**, and **Bieliauskienė**; says that **Bieliauskienė** was not shot but that her mother and **Kazlauskienė** were shot; says that she was in the same cell with her mother, but not from the beginning, and that she saw how her mother was taken to be shot and both of them knew where was her mother was being taken; remembers that the last words of her mother were, "Go live with **Marcelė**"; explains that **Marcelė** is her aunt and that people were shot without any sentence [*cries*]; says that in prison she was tortured because the Gestapo wanted to know where her brothers **Jonas** and **Juozas** were; says one of them was the secretary of the local Komsomol section, and the other was the member of the Communist Party and worked for the party committee; claims that she herself did not know where they were; describes an incident when **Dineikis**, who worked for the police, was taken by plane to the partisans, landed in Tilžė, and was arrested by the Germans; says that they found in his pocket a photo of her brother **Juozas**, who wore a military uniform; says that in the Gestapo she was tortured both by Germans and by Lithuanians but more by Germans; remembers that Lithuanians did not wear military uniforms; says that they were from Šakiai but she does not remember their names; claims that she spent two weeks in Gestapo; explains that she was fifteen and she was beaten very hard; says that they talked with her in Lithuanian and that there was an interpreter; claims that each execution lasted about 20 minutes; says that her mother also was tortured.

[01:] 17:36:21 – [01:] 21:35:19
18:20 – 22:27

She states that she was set free by the Gestapo because they wanted to track down her brothers and hoped that she would provide information about their whereabouts; says that before that she was taken to Pravieniškės work camp for one month; describes how she worked in the fields during that month; says that when she came back from Pravieniškės her empty house was locked and she had to go to the security office to ask for a key; remembers that she wanted to study in Šakiai gymnasium [high school] but she was not allowed to join it because of her origin; says that instead she studied for one year at Zybliai school of agriculture; says that after the regime changed she was sent to study law and after she finished her degree she worked as notary in Šakiai; adds that after her marriage she left Šakiai; explains that when she was in the Gestapo, she did not see her father and that she saw her mother just one time; recounts that while she was

in prison, she knew that they would be shot, but she didn't see the graves until she returned from prison.

**[01:] 21:35:20 – [01:] 27:05:03
22:28 – 28:11**

She describes how the property of Jews was stolen and carried away with carts; says that houses were burnt and Jews were shot naked; adds that in the evening their clothes and gold were put in carts and taken away; claims that she did not see those carts but she heard about it from other people; remembers that there were only Lithuanians in the Gestapo prison where she was; specifies that only **Kazlauskienė** was Russian; says that on the day of the massacre she saw red fire-engines a few times through the cell window; explains that people were taken to the killing site in these cars; explains that at that time Jews had already been shot, and that the Lithuanians who were taken to be shot were not Communists but just suspicious people; explains that they were those suspected of being able to help Communists; says that Jews were shot first and then they started to take suspicious Lithuanians; remembers that she saw the fire-engines on the day when she saw her mother for the last time in her life, but through the window she could not see people coming in or out of those cars, only that fire-engines came and went away.