

MINKEVIČIENĖ, Jekaterina  
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Jekaterina Minkevičienė, born in 1912, was 29 years old, and lived in Pavenčiai, near Kuršėnai (Šiauliai district) together with her husband, the director of the sugar factory of Pavenčiai, and their two children, when the Germans occupied Lithuania and Jews were brought and kept in the factory. She is recognized by Yad Vashem as a Righteous of the Nations for having rescued a Jewish girl, Zahava, who stayed with her family for an extended time, and ended up immigrating to Israel. She describes in detail the difficulties she faced hiding the girl. She also names two perpetrators, who participated in the massacre of the Jews.

**File 1 of 2**

**[01] 00:32:04 - [01] 02:58:04**

**00:00:27 – 00:02:59**

Q: I would like to ask you to introduce yourself: what is your name and your surname?

A: Jekaterina Minkevičienė.

Q: Tell me where you were born and when.

A: I was born in Viekšniai, Viekšniai district. In a forest, in a home of a family of foresters – my father was a forest ranger. In \_\_\_\_ village. But I was born in Kuršėnai – you know, there was a hospital or something there.

Q: In what year?

A: In 1912, on the 9th of October.

Q: Tell me, when the World War II started – where were you at that time?

A: In Pavenčiai.

Q: Where in Pavenčiai?

A: Near Šiauliai. At a sugar factory. When the second war—wait, the second war [*contemplates*]. When the Soviets occupied, I worked at a children's camp in Pagėlava. There was a workers'—well like now you have—it was called the „children's colony“.

Q: So you liked working with children?

A: I worked with children. There were 170 children, and I was the principal.

Q: Tell me: when the war started, you were at the sugar factory—did you live at the sugar factory?

A: Yes, we lived there. In the neighborhood of the sugar factory. We had five rooms, [the apartment] was fully furnished—and one young German informed us that a train had been sent to take all the specialists to Germany; that we should flee. Well, and at night, we took whatever food we had, and I left for the forest with my children. And that is how we escaped deportation.

**[01] 02:58:05 - [01] 04:47:05**

**00:03:00 - 00:04:53**

Q: And when was the deportation supposed to take place—at the beginning of the war, or at the end?

A: At the beginning of the war. Well, after some time had passed. All the specialists. They deported 25 people from the factory.

Q: Tell me: where there Jews in Pavenčiai?

A: One of my husband's employees was. A very good man, very hard-working and dutiful. And when they began being chased and shot at, he went mad. He was running across the fields, and then he was shot near Kuršėnai.

Q: Did you see this, or did somebody tell you about it?

A: I saw him running around. And my husband was very upset about it. But he could not recognize people, you know—nothing. Well, he had worked for my husband for a long time. [He] was in the raw materials unit and would collect [sugar] beets from people.

Q: And then they shot him near Kuršėnai?

A: Many of them were shot there – 170 or 180 people. They were assembled and—there is a monument built there at my son's. You could photograph that place. He visited those places with this girl, you know, a monument for her aunt has survived, and she is standing next to it [in the picture].

**[01] 04:47:06 - [01] 06:49:19**

**00:04:54 - 00:07:00**

Q: Who is „this girl” he visited there with? Which girl did he visit with—what do you have in mind?

A: Well, with the Jewish girl I rescued.

Q: The Jewish girl you rescued?

A: Yes.

Q: Tell me, where did she come from, this Jewish girl?

A: You know, I don't know where she had been before, but this is how she came to me: one beautiful day—you know, everyday those women would all be marched in lines to the manor to weed, in a long line. A couple of Germans would accompany them in the morning on their way to work, and in the evening they would come back. We didn't have a ghetto, but a "distribution center": when they were brought, the ones, who were able to work, were sent to work, while the ones, who were not able to work were taken to Žagarè and shot there.

Q: And how did you know that [they were taken] to Žagarè and that they were shot there?

A: I knew that they were being taken to Žagarè from the local people—from the drivers, who took them to Žagarè. And that they were shot there—a colleague of mine, a teacher—you know, his parents were in Žagarè and he saw everything. It [took place] seven kilometers away from Žagarè—there was terrible screaming, shouting. And when he came to Žagarè, all four machine guns were still standing there, while inside pools of blood were gushing, and the corpses—they had all been buried there.

**[01] 06:49:20 - [01] 09:42:23**

**00:07:01 - 00:10:00**

Q: So this was told to you by your acquaintance's—

A: My colleague.

Q: Your colleague's father saw all this?

A: Not father, but the teacher.

Q: I understand.

A: A young man. He walked on foot from—he had been hiding, and when everything calmed down, he went to his parents. And he saw all this, and then recounted it to me. And we knew that from our camp women, children and the elderly were taken with trucks—children up to 12 years of old. Two girls had escaped that arrest. They were pulled out—they had been hiding among the [sugar] beets. They were grabbed by their necks, you know, [thrown] into the car—this I saw myself—and taken to Žagarè with the next group.

Q: Did you see them being pulled out from among the beets?

A: Yes, I did see it.

Q: And who pulled them out?

A: Germans. Germans.

Q: And you keep repeating, “our camp”. Where was “your” camp?

A: In Pavenčiai—three storage rooms at the factory were designated for Jews. Three storage rooms. Sugar would be kept there. The sugar was unloaded and taken away by the Germans. When they first arrived at the sugar factory, my husband was the director—they demanded six tons of sugar. And the connection with Kaunas had been lost by then. He could not call anyone, [didn’t know] if he was allowed to give it away or not. My husband refused to give it away. So, you know, my husband the senior engineer and I were put against the wall to be executed, and to rid my husband of the keys. But they shot, you know, above our heads—we got frightened, me too—[I was] 30 years old, and a thought crossed my mind that I have not lived very long, and the children will be left alone. And men, you know, they wetted themselves out of that—well, but then “ha ha ha” – they were laughing, as they only [wanted] to frighten us. Well, they took the keys and then the sugar anyway. Well, but when the war ended, my husband was not punished – he had no permission to give it away. Well, but they took the sugar themselves—how many tons were there—very many.

**[01] 09:42:24 - [01] 11:56:12**

**00:10:01 - 00:12:19**

Q: Let’s get back to the camp—to those three storage rooms, the three—

A: Yes. They were mostly women and children younger than 12 years old. Well, teenagers. And old people.

Q: And where did they come from? They were—

A: They were brought in trucks. In trucks, covered automobiles. At night, in the evening – anytime. We were—the sugar factory was surrounded by a fence, it was always surrounded by a fence, and next to the gates stood our employee guards. They would not allow outsiders enter the territory. Well, And then there stood the German guards and our „white strippers“—with white armbands, Lithuanians. [They] helped. And there were Ukrainians as well. The Ukrainians were in our territory – they had occupied a small house behind the fence.

Q: What did those Ukrainians do?

A: They also stood guard. But the marching to work – the marching was done by the Germans. The Germans. But you know, they were very cultured: from conservatories, painting institutes – very cultured. They were allowed even to—to renovate our employees’—their authorities, who had stopped. The Germans. Well, and they were the ones, who warned us—one of these Germans—they we should escape to the forest.

**[01] 11:56:13 - [01] 13:45:18**

**00:12:20 - 00:14:13**

Q: And tell me, those „white stripers“, who stood there—did you know any of them?

A: Our workers. Workers, who worked at the factory—a unit was formed out of them.

Q: All the workers joined the „white stripers“?

A: No, not all! Not at all! Individual people. Mostly the younger ones.

Q: So they stood—the factory workers stood at the gates as “white stripers”, right?

A: Yes. But they were already wearing German uniforms and white armbands on the shoulders. And they were mostly riding bicycles.

Q: And the drivers—tell me, when you said that “the drivers said that they were taking them to Žagare”—they told you—

A: Yes—

Q: Do you remember the surnames of those drivers?

A: Oh, I don’t remember. I don’t remember, you see. My son remembers one of them—he was friends with the driver’s son. So if you want to, you can ask him. I don’t remember.

A: Tell me, have you yourself ever entered that ghetto, which was next to you?

Q: I have. I had entered once – I was looking for the mother of this girl. Because she had been brought at night by a man and a woman. I was standing guard, while my husband took the girl and brought her home. My husband brought that girl home. So you know, I don’t even know—

**[01] 13:45:19 - [01] 15:41:12**  
**00:14:14 - 00:16:14**

Q: So tell me from the beginning: the girl was brought to you—how did they know that the girl should be brought to you? Did you know the mother of that girl?

A: I did not know her! How could I have known her? Some of those, who had been brought there, were complete strangers. I knew the ones who were from Kuršėnai. But they fled, you know, those women were hidden by people, while they brought others from everywhere else—probably they had assembled them and brought— And where the mother of our girl was from—I only learned this later from that girl that she was from Kuršėnai. That her parents had a sawmill there.

Q: I would like us to return to the very beginning—how did that girl appear at your place?

A: Well, how did she appear? One beautiful day, from that crowd of women who were being marched to the manor, a young Jewish woman ran over to me, got on her knees and

started crying and imploring me that I should take in her girl. They had learned that they would be taken away somewhere—taken somewhere. And I, you know, I was eight months pregnant; I could not tell her that I would not take the girl. I agreed to take her. And so at night they brought that girl.

**[01] 15:41:13 - [01] 17:30:23**

**00:16:15 - 00:18:08**

Q: She brought her herself or somebody else did?

A: I don't know who it was. It was at night, at 11 or 12 o'clock. Somebody banged on our window and, you know, my husband came out, while I stood guard in the hallway—in case somebody walks by or something. They led the girl in hurriedly and then disappeared. The next day they were all taken to Žagarė; all the storage rooms were emptied out. And that's when—that's when they were all executed.

Q: But you said that you had gone to the ghetto to look for the girl's moth—

A: Earlier. That was earlier.

Q: Oh, earlier.

A: Earlier.

Q: And the next day they were not there anymore?

A: The next day—I went there the next day, and all of them were still there, but I did not meet the mother. I only saw a young Jewish guy standing by the door—he was some sort of a superior there, he was in charge of that entire affair—he was from Skaudvilė. But I have forgotten his surname now as well. They had a manufacturing store. And when he saw me, he rapidly disappeared.

Q: Why?

A: I don't know. He probably did not want me to accost him—he was in charge of all those Jewish storage rooms. He was elegantly dressed and I think he was assisting the Germans.

**[01] 17:30:24 - [01] 19:27:07**

**00:18:09 - 00:20:09**

Q: So he was like like—like a Jewish what—superintendent?

A: Well, it looks like that. The Germans probably did not know neither the Jewish language nor Lithuanian, so he was like an interpreter, or maybe some kind of a superintendent. But [he] didn't want me to accost him, and I did not accost him. And later, after some time had passed, many cars arrived and took them away. And I learned from the drivers that they were taken to Žagarė. And later, after a few days, I met that teacher and he told

me what had happened in Žagarė. He could hear the shouting [coming from] seven kilometers away from Žagarė.

Q: And tell me, when did you—when did you—how did you enter the ghetto? Could you freely enter it?

A: [It was] easy. The neighborhood had been fenced off, so I only had to be let in by the guards to enter the neighborhood. I could enter, because our apartment was there—we had to move into the dormitories. We lived—there was a special apartment with five rooms designated for the director, on the second floor. And then we—my husband lost his position, and he remained only as the head of the raw materials department and agronomist. Under the Germans he worked as an agronomist. Under the Soviet army he was a director, and then— so we moved into the dormitories. It was in the dormitories.

[01] 19:27:08 - [01] 21:54:00

00:20:10 - 00:22:42

Q: And tell me when those—you mentioned that the Jews were taken away the next day—did the storage rooms remain empty after that, or did they bring new Jews?

A: There was no one. They didn't bring anyone anymore. And it turned out that the mother of the girl was identified as able to work and taken to Germany – to Zachau (Dachau) camp in Germany. And I only learned about her fate there from **Zahava** herself: that her friend got ill and could not work anymore, so she was sent to the gas chamber—you know, where they use gas for lethal— she was sent there. So **Zahava's** mother, being her friend, went together with her and died there.

Q: You said „**Zahava**“ - so as far as I understand, the name of the girl, who was brought to you was **Zahava**?

A: You know, in the beginning she didn't even tell us her name—what her name was. She was quite taciturn and shy, you know. Thin—only skin and bones. Where had they been keeping her; where and how she lived—I wanted to know something about that child from her mother, you know. Well, but I did not meet her and did not learn anything. The only thing: when they brought her, she had a letter to her aunt in Israel—her mother's aunt in Israel—her father was some kind of a superior in Israel. She [the mother] asked me to somehow send her to Israel. So I had given myself an oath to somehow fulfill that wish.

[01] 21:54:01 - [01] 23:53:17

00:22:43 - 00:24:47

A: And so after the war I started searching for relatives or namesakes. It happened that there was a doctor, gynecologist that I knew in Šiauliai, who had the same surname—the girl had told us [her surname]. We called her **Liuda**, you see. Why **Liuda**? Because I had a neighbor, who was very curious – she felt that [we were hiding] somebody, you know. And one beautiful day she came over, and while I was busy in the kitchen, she ran to the bedroom. My **Liuda** had pneumonia and was lying in bed. You know, she uncovered her rapidly—she had been covered with a sheet, and saw who was there. But we said that it

was **Liuda** (a Russian name) – a child of Russian prisoners. Well, but whether she believed me or not – this I don't know even today. But she did not tell anyone. After the war I learned that there were more workers, who knew, but nobody—

Q: Was it difficult to hide that girl?

A: Oh, very difficult. You cannot imagine. I am frightened to even think back now – that's how much I suffered.

Q: So tell me.

A: I would walk around the courtyard at night, I could not sleep peacefully. Didn't matter that I was pregnant myself, but I wanted to rescue that child somehow. [*Her eyes well up.*]

[01] 23:53:18 - [01] 25:47:06

00:24:48 – 00:26:45

Q: And you could not sleep peacefully out of fear—or why?

A: Out of fear that we could be denounced. She would sometimes peer through the window, and somebody could see that a Jewish girl was hiding with us. And the Germans were—well, there is a hallway here [*shows*], the Germans – here, and we lived here. So you can imagine what our life was like. I am frightened to even think back. We learned that in Šiauliai one – and then another – family, who had been sheltering an adult or a child of Jewish nationality, was shot. Well, I had worries like these.

Q: So what did you do for her not to be noticed? How did you hide her?

A: My two children hid her – my daughter and my son. They were her guardians. I was the supervisor, and they— my husband bought a French lock—when somebody knocked on our [door], they would unlock and let them in, but her—she would run to the closet, into the bed, under the bed or into the bathroom. Well, and we hid her in this way. And when we had to leave the sugar factory for my husband's parents in the countryside, we—my brother in law carried her in a barrel for a hundred meters onto the hors-drawn cart—and that's how we transported her to the countryside.

[01] 25:47:07 - [01] 27:39:13

00:26:46 - 00:28:42

A: And in the countryside—a bunker—my children lived with her in a bunker for three months, because otherwise— The Germans had set up a stopover point at our place. We were all evicted, only I had a privilege to sleep in the corridor. Germans respected pregnant [women] [*She smiles.*] And all the others were evicted to [sleep] on hay in the stables. The entire family. So the men made a bunker, you know, in the garden, and all of the three children—my two children, and she was the third one—stayed in the bunker for three months.



Q: Tell me, when she appeared at your home, did she understand Lithuanian?

A: You know, it is hard to tell – she was so taciturn. Cowering, she was afraid of everyone, you know. My husband felt very sorry for her, he would stroke her head, and she would cuddle up to him, to my husband. She didn't cuddle up to me for some reason. I would carry her to the second floor for bathing – we did not have a bathroom on the first floor. So you can imagine: she was around six years old, but I could take her in my arms and carry her, being pregnant myself, you know. Well, she had to be bathed, so that nothing *[lice]* would show up in her head and so on.

**[01] 27:39:14 – [01] 29:36:09**

**00:28:43 – 00:30:44**

Q: And why did you carry her, why couldn't she walk?

A: She was afraid of stairs. [I] had to carry her to the second floor. She was afraid of stairs. Well, and the other thing – I would cover her with a towel, so that neighbors wouldn't see what I was carrying if they walked by. But it could have been any child. That's how I saved her.

Q: Did she look like a Jewish girl, if you looked at her?

A: Oh, a crooked nose, black hair – generally a typical Jewish girl. Very – the gait and— In short – very. I dyed her hair – dyed it brown, you know. I had to cut it. In short, there were many stories with her. Well, then— When the war ended, we decided in our family—my time to deliver was approaching, you know, it a difficult situation. Everything had been stolen from us, we found nothing—not furniture, nothing—of our own. The rooms were empty, the windows – shattered, doors and everything. I gave birth on a sheaf of straw, on the ground—a son—that son of mine died, he's not here anymore. And, you know; now the surname was like—there was a doctor gynecologist in Šiauliai, and I went to him to inquire if she was not his relative. We decided in our family that she needed to go to school. And that she had to grow up in a Jewish family.

**[01] 29:36:10 - [01] 31:34:14**

**00:30:45 – 00:32:47**

A: Had my family been smaller, we could have kept her maybe. But, on the other hand, my husband was determined that she should be raised in a Jewish family. There was a very good Jewish gymnasium in Šiauliai, and Frenkelis' factory was there. And she had to be raised by a Jewish family. Not many of them remained in Šiauliai, but those who remained, they remained. And that [doctor], his son had been shot by the Germans. You know, they had been hiding at a farmer's house, and as one of his children, a boy, was playing outside, a German recognized him: „Yiddish! Yiddish! “And he was shot. I did not see it, but that farmer recounted it to me. Well, and you see, he agreed. He agreed, but I think that he did not do it out of good will, but because we gave him the letter that was meant to be sent to the aunt. And he had learned that he could receive some privilege or something there. And he took her there. You see, they didn't let me even approach her, when I visited Šiauliai – I could not meet the girl. Well, but it wasn't long. He soon sold

the hospital, bought a plane and through Poland he left for Israel. And he took her with him.

[01] 31:34:15 - [01] 33:41:22

00:32:48 - 00:34:59

A: And we did not know anything about her for 50 years. You know, just like that she left. And I only learned that Ble—I forgot the surname. What did I say was the surname of the doctor?

Q: Well, you said that he had the same surname as—as the girl did.

A: Oh well, I keep forgetting the surname. Well, and you know, in this way—well, I cannot remember. **Blecheris** was the doctor, who—the commandant let him leave the ghetto to visit the patient, when she had pneumonia.

Q: That girl?

A: The girl. They brought her to me with fever – she had 40 [degrees Celsius] and was all burning, you know. Well, and we could not get any medicine anywhere or anything. So they—I brought a chicken for the commandant and he let me take **Blecheris** home with me from the ghetto. And he, when he saw that it was a Jewish girl, got so frightened, you know – he was all *[shows]* shaking like this.

Q: I—where did you bring that **Blecheris** from – from what ghetto?

A: From the ghetto. From the ghetto—from—the surname—that place—

Q: But not from the ghetto, which was next to you – from another one?

A: No, no, no, no – it was a real ghetto. Ours was not a ghetto – it was a “distribution center”. They would be brought from everywhere and separated into the ones able to work—those women would be sent to Germany. Well, and **Zahava’s** mother ended up there this way, but—

[01] 33:41:23 - [01] 35:59:00

00:35:00 - 00:37:22

Q: So that ghetto, where **Blecheris** was—you brought **Blecheris** from that ghetto, and what happened next? He, you said, got frightened. What happened next?

A: Well, he gave me medicine, determined that she had pneumonia, told me what I had to do – and that’s how we treated her. He returned back to the ghetto. But how he managed to escape the ghetto – that I don’t know. Because I would run into him in Šiauliai after the war. His daughter was shot by a German in his eyes – it didn’t matter that he had lived with her for about a year.

Q: Did you see how she was shot?

A: No! I did not see. There—the ghetto—I only know about the ghetto, because I went to the commandant of the ghetto, and he brought in the doctor to his office—and I left the office. I did not go into the ghetto proper, where people lived.

Q: And tell me, at that distribution center, while, as you say, was next to you, have you seen any people who had been killed, any corpses of Jews there?

A: No, there—they were guarded by very cultured Germans there—I cannot say anything [bad]. In Šiauliai though, you see, were those, who had skulls on their hats – these were the brutal Germans. Brutal! You see, people sometimes would give a piece of bread for a Jew as he walked by. So they would shoot that person and that Jew! This I did see! With my own eyes! How one gave—in the center, the very center many Jews were being marched—where were they marched, I don't know either. And so, he took out the gun and shot both of them on the spot. This I saw myself.

[01] 35:59:01 - [01] 38:45:10

00:37:23 – 00:40:15

Q: And what else have you seen in Šiauliai that—

A: I saw a terrible thing in Šiauliai: how children and the elderly from the Šiauliai ghetto being put on the trucks. This I saw, how children were grabbed by their legs and thrown into this— And the screaming of the mothers, you know. This I saw with my own eyes. Why did I go to the ghetto? My friend Sara, with whom I used to sit at the gymnasium, had given birth to a girl there, and I wanted to take the girl from her. And she didn't give her to me, she said, "I will die together with my child."

Q: And how could you meet that Sara at the ghetto?

A: You know how—

Q: *[To the camera man]* That's it?

*[The camera man talks behind the camera.] [New frame.]*

Q: So you said that this classmate of yours—how did you learn that she gave birth and that—

A: You know how—well, we would learn—

Q: And how could you enter the ghetto?

A: It was not enclosed. They were settled in private homes. My grandfather's home was also appropriated for the ghetto and burned, when the ghetto was destroyed. The house burned down. So you know, the people, who lived there were acquaintances, we had grown up together. For example, I arrived in Šiauliai when I was 12 years old. Well, and then I

lived there for seven years. Every step—so that's how we would learn – through them, you know. That Sara was also well-known there – she worked as a cashier at the cinema after she graduated from high school. So everybody knew her. She was blond and so beautiful! So well, she got married, gave birth to a child – and then they were all arrested and taken to the ghetto. Her whole family was executed. And I don't know her fate, because we [left] Šiauliai then. From Pavenčiai we left for Kaunas – my husband was transferred to work at the agricultural technical college, and everything remained here.

[01] 38:45:11 - [01] 41:23:16

00:40:16 - 00:42:59

Q: And now let's return back to Pavenčiai, ok? You said that there were "white stripers" among the workers – some kind of group. Did they—did their life change somehow after they became "white stripers"?

A: You know, they became drunkards and and—such—bad people.

Q: And did they gain any riches?

A: Riches, riches—I can tell you about the riches. When those Jews were shot –170 or 180 of them, my husband's assistant took part in that shooting. Well, you can kill me, but I won't remember his surname. So he came over the next day, put a golden watch on the table – a heavy watch. My husband came [home] all agitated and said, "You see, he probably took that watch from a dying person, "he said, „and he came to work and put it on the table, just to show that he had a golden watch." So that's the only episode I remember. Well, and then there was one, **Mateckiukas** [**Matackiukas**] (diminutive) – I still remember his surname. He was also shooting, and he walked by with a gun in the morning. I said, „How could you shoot?" I said, "you know all of them." He said, "One needs to live!" There, "one needs to live!" He probably had robbed, snatched some possessions from them. For example, in Žagarė – that teacher, my colleague told me—everyone was told to take their possessions with them, all their possessions. And the earrings were torn off them, rings taken off hands. What else did they take from them? Well, whatever they had with them – parcels.

Q: Let's stop.

### File 2 of 2

[02] 00:32:11 - [02] 02:25:07

00:00:10 – 00:02:08

Q: So you mentioned that you met some person **Mateckiukas**. Who was that **Mateckiukas**, the one with the gun?

A: From the countryside he—he was walking past Pavenčiai from the countryside, and accosted—I accosted him. He was walking past with a gun early in the morning, I said, "Where are you coming from?" „Well," he said, „we were shooting there." So I say, „Didn't you feel sorry shooting people, acquaintances?" I say, „you have lived here." He

says, „One must live”, and he walked away. How could one understand that remark of his? He probably had robbed those who had been shot.

Q: Did he have a white armband with him?

A: No, he did not. He was dressed in civilian [clothes]. Young, maybe 19 or 20 years old – like that.

Q: And when he said, „We were shooting there“ – what did he mean? Where was that „there“?

A: Well, even now I still don't know that. Now I know, but then I did not know, where they were shooting. Where they had been shooting. Where they were taken from the storage rooms, I learned that from the drivers, when they were all taken away to those—the ones, who were unable to work. And the ones, who were able to work were sent to—straight to the station, and taken to Germany.

Q: So now I want to clarify something: that **Mateckiukas**—**Mateckiukas**, and what was his real surname?

A: **Mateckis**. That's what [people] called him.

Q: Maybe you remember his first name?

A: No. I think—maybe Viktoras?

[02] 02:25:08 - [02] 04:17:13

00:02:09 – 00:04:05

Q: So that **Mateckis** and that engineer, who brandished that golden watch in front of your husband – were they shooting at the same place? Are we talking about the same place?

A: The same.

Q: What was that place called?

A: My son can tell you what it was called – they went there. There is a monument for the aunt of **Zahava**; it has miraculously survived. At she had her picture taken at that place.

Q: So who was shot there – **Zahava's** relatives have been executed there?

A: Father.

Q: Father.

A: Father. In the first days, when the shootings had just started, they were assembled from Kuršėnai and all the surroundings. And there were many Jews in Kuršėnai. They had

shops, there was a Jewish sawmill. Well, and they worked – one Jew worked at the sugar factory for my husband. So like that.

Q: And that Jew, who had lost his mind, was also shot there?

A: He was shot in the fields. Oh, you know, I cannot tell you where he was shot – there or in the fields. He was running in the fields with a pillow – this I saw. He went mad when he learned that they were going to be shot. Well, he had somehow fled the group, when they were being assembled. They were assembled at the stables of the Kuršėnai manor. All of them. And then they were marched to the forest. And that forest was maybe eight kilometers away from Kuršėnai or somewhere – they were shot in a forest.

[02] 04:17:14 - [02] 06:08:12

00:04:06 – 00:06:00

Q: And did you see them as they were marched?

A: No, I did not see. *[Pause.]* Only from descriptions how they were assembled at the town – everywhere.

Q: And was that **Mateckis** among those „white strippers“?

A: You know, he probably disappeared from that place and nobody knew where he was. For a while I was after him. I thought: „I should inform the ones, who need to be informed.“ *[Laughs.]* But nobody knows, where he disappeared, where he—

Q: But he disappeared after the war?

A: After the war.

Q: And during the war he was there, right? Was he there, or you didn't see him around?

A: Well, he—I did not see him. Only that single morning, that early morning. I was picking dry stick for heating the stove, and he was walking down the road towards the village.

Q: And that engineer, who brandished the watch?

A: He lived at the factory. He lived at the factory.

Q: And what was his fate afterwards?

A: I don't know either. You know, they all went abroad. Many went to Germany. When I arrived in Šiauliai, they had dispersed from Pavenčiai – to Kuršėnai—they did not live in Pavenčiai anymore. The Čiulta family – he was an accountant and did not take part in anything, they lived in Kuršėnai. Others – in Šiauliai, still others left for Germany or for America.

[02] 06:08:12 - [02] 09:51:23

00:06:00 – 00:09:53

Q: Tell me, the Šiauliai ghetto – was it a big ghetto?

A: Very big. You know, the Frenkelis' leather factory was there, a pond was there – basically the ghetto occupied a territory of a huge village. It was big. Well, Šiauliai—there were many Jews in Šiauliai. All the trading, one could say, was in Jewish hands.

Q: And have you ever seen them being marched to the ghetto or how—for how long did the ghetto exist in Šiauliai?

A: Excuse me?

Q: For how long did the ghetto exist in Šiauliai?

A: Well, you know, the entire time. When the Jews were arrested—I cannot tell you the exact time—from when they were all arrested until they were exterminated.

Q: And what happened to the Jewish possessions in Šiauliai, after the ghetto was liquidated?

A: Confiscated, stolen—all the possessions. Stolen.

Q: By whom?

A: There were enough who did. Whoever could get closer. Us, for example, even though we were not Jews, but as we were leaving the factory for the forest, I turned back to look at my five rooms and [thought to myself] that other people could start living there right away. Jams and other kinds of supplies – everything remained. And when I returned, everything had been stolen. From my husband's shirt [*shows to her wrist*] a golden [cufflink] – I still keep it as a memory, while the second one is long gone. Somebody had taken it. But they did not have time to take the second one, or didn't take it for some other reason. Underwear, clothing – everything had been taken away. And us, you know, we are very "lucky" people: we were robbed by soldiers in Kaunas – they took everything, including underwear that was being washed. I remained with a single dress. That was after the war. So well, they were arrested, sentenced to ten years of prison, and we were to be paid 40 thousand, but we didn't get the executive order. [*She laughs.*] Like that. That's how people lived, you know. And we lived. We lived even though it was very hard – you know, we had five children. [It was] hard. Well, but we worked, both me and my husband worked – and we lived. All of our children received higher education. And I worked until I was 80 years old. [*She laughs.*] I don't have enough energy after I turned 80. And it is very hard, you know. Work as long as you can, as long as you can. Now, all of my children retired this year: my son, my daughter. Well, this younger one, with whom I live, had retired earlier.

[02] 09:51:23 - [02] 11:36:13

00:09:53 - 00:11:33

*[New cut.]*

A: Are you tired?

Q: I wanted to thank you very much, Mrs. Jekaterina, that you found so much time for us, that you provided us with such an interesting narration. You told us some very important things – things that maybe only you could have told us.

A: You know, I could have done it earlier. I could have [told you] even more. Now I can only so much – my head doesn't work anymore. My head started hurting a lot, and I am afraid will have a stroke.

Q: Well, thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you.

A: Well, thank you for your great work. You're doing great work! I only think it is a little late – you should have done it earlier, when there were more people. Many have died now, many forgot things. You know, you try not to live that life again, you try to forget. But you know, at night, when you're not sleeping, all those horrible things appear in front of your eyes again. And I jump up at night, and start doing something else right away. I read a novel *[laughs]*, read letters from my youth – and that's how you manage to forget.

**[02] 11:36:13**

**00:11:33**

End of the interview.