

Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

P.O. Box 25506, San Mateo, CA 94402

Name of interviewee: Avrutin, Liza

Date of interview: 5/20/1992

Summary: Liza Avrutin was born in 1930 in Odessa, Ukraine. Before the war, Liza had a big family consisting of nine brothers and sisters. Even though her family was not very religious, Liza remembers various religious traditions such as the one in which all of the kids said a Shabbat wish in front of the candles. Before the Nazis entered Odessa, Liza and her family had a chance to evacuate. However, her mother did not want to leave. At the time she felt that the Nazis would persecute the Communists, therefore, she felt safe because her children were not active in the Communist party. Liza's uncle evacuated to Tashkent where he and his family survived the Holocaust. The Nazis entered Odessa on October 16-17, 1941. On December 22 an order was issued which summoned many of the Jewish residents. Liza and her family were among those summoned. The Jewish residents were brought to Slobotska where they spent three months. Meanwhile, the biggest pogrom occurred in Odessa on October 23-24, 1941 in which much of the remaining Jewish population was murdered. Liza and her family spent three months in Slobotska. At the end of the three-month period, Liza and her family along with others were boarded on cattle trains and brought to Vaselinivska. The train ride took 1 to 2 days. When the train doors were reopened and the people were allowed to exit, there were 20-30 dead in front of every car of the train. Among the dead were Liza's father and her four-year-old brother, Boris. When her mother realized what had happened, she lost her mind because of the horror and the trauma of the event. Later she stopped recognizing her family and what was going on around her. Later, the Nazis murdered her and desecrated her body.

After Liza and her surviving family were brought to Vaselinivska. Then, they were rushed to Vasisenska. At Vasisenska there was a sorting post from which people were sent to Krivoroochka Babibi(?) or Babini Balki. Liza was sent to Babini Balki. In Babini Balki there was no forced labor or any food given out by the authorities. People died because of starvation and the cold. Once only 500-600 people remained the Russians came to murder the civilians. Everyone was killed except two girls, Liza Avrutin and Rosa Lifchitza, who were rescued by the nearby villagers. Liza woke up with a bullet wound on the top of her head in Nadia Zhigalovna's house. Nadia asked her for her name and she told her it was "Lida" not "Liza" to hide her Jewish identity. She told Nadia that she was mistaken for being Jewish, and therefore persecuted. Her new family took her into their house, erased the number (1333) given to her by the Nazi authorities, and changed her name to Valentina Ivanovna Panchivka. Liza goes on to tell about her life in the village. She also tells of sacrifices that her new mother made for her. Liza lived with Nadia and her family till 1947. She told Nadia that she was Jewish, however, Nadia's family still does not know about her Jewish identity. She keeps very close contact with the family that rescued her and considers

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them to be her family. Liza later got married and immigrated to the United States. She changed her name back to Liza when she became a US citizen.