

INTERVIEW OF BETTY ZARUCHES

*Oops, This looks problematic.*

1

1 to this country.

2 A Right.

3 Q But you were pregnant.

4 A But I was pregnant with my son and my husband

5 worked at night at the Shine's Express of his family,

6 his family had a big company, Shine's Express.

7 Q Right, right.

8 A From Trenton, New Jersey.

9 Q Right.

10 A They hired him.

11 Q Right.

12 A So he worked at night. He went to work three

13 o'clock in the afternoon.

14 Q Right.

15 A And I couldn't sleep at night. But I started,

16 I got a television. They bought me a television. So

17 I started to learn from that because I was very young,

18 in your twenties, you had to, but I couldn't go to

19 school, but I didn't have anyone to watch the children.

20 Q Right.

21 A I mean, to my daughter, and I gave birth in

22 1950, December, 1951, June 1951 I gave birth to my son.

23 So I wanted to go to school. I wanted to learn because

*ITS opening needs to be double checked - as this doesn't seem like a beginning*

1 I used to go in shopping. Instead of the potatoes, I  
2 used to say apples, and people will laugh at me.

3 Q Right.

4 A But I didn't care. Like the people are coming  
5 now from Russia, the young people. They learn English  
6 very very well.

7 Q And you learned in this -- in the park.

8 A That's right.

9 Q From children.

10 A And I used to go to the park with the  
11 children and the neighbors, my neighbors were very nice  
12 to me, very nice. And they spoke only English to me.  
13 They said, Betty, we are not going to speak Jewish to  
14 you.

15 Q Right.

16 A You know? We're gonna speak English. So I  
17 used to stay in the middle with the carriage in front  
18 of the building and in the park and I learned from the  
19 children, from the small children, they spoke to me  
20 English. So I learned English. And I'm very grateful  
21 to America. All of us are grateful to the Americans.

22 Q Right.

23 A Because the Americans hired the people.

1 They listened to our stories.

2 Q You felt they did.

3 A The neighbors.

4 Q They were open to you.

5 A I used to sit with them at night, in the  
6 evenings they used to come in, and I used to bake.  
7 And they wanted to know, what happened to us, what  
8 happened.

9 Q These were Jewish Americans.

10 A Jewish people used to come in and they spoke  
11 Yiddish to me. Betty, tell us, what did you go through  
12 because they read everything in the papers.

13 Q Right.

14 A But some people couldn't understand what  
15 happened to us. And now when we go to a movie and we  
16 see and we watch the films, I don't think it's very good  
17 but we have to.

18 Q What, you feel that you have to watch them  
19 again, I mean in films about the Holocaust.

20 A We have to. We have to go with our grand-  
21 children and friends of ours, Americans.

22 Q It's very painful to see that.

23 A That's right. It is painful.

1 Q Brings it right back.

2 A Discussions always take place. And I have  
3 a very nice family here, Americans, and in the begin-  
4 ning when we came here, they felt that they have to do  
5 everything for us to make us feel good, security,  
6 that America is very secure. We could do anything  
7 here because in Germany we wanted to go to Israel,  
8 but when the soldier who found our -- my husband's  
9 family here, and they wrote to us letters, and they  
10 said come to America, you could always leave America.  
11 America is a very free country.

12 Q That's right.

13 A Come, let's us see you. And we went. We  
14 came by boat, by a boat from Korea. And they picked  
15 up 1300.

16 Q From Korea?

17 A A boat in Hamburg, in Germany.

18 Q Oh, right.

19 A But I was pregnant, and I was supposed to go  
20 by plane, but my husband couldn't, so I didn't want to  
21 go. And they put us on the boat, general steward,

22 Q Right.

23 A 1300 people, took us about 14 days to get to

1 New York, and my husband's family stayed and met us  
2 here at 42nd Street.

3 Q Right.

4 A At the, you know, when we got off the boat,

5 Q Right, they came to the pier.

6 A They came to the pier and everything, what  
7 we brought with us, they took. They came with a truck  
8 because the Shine's Express, they put everything. They  
9 took us to their home, on the Grand Concourse, 2720,  
10 my aunt and my uncle, my husband's family.

11 Q Right.

12 A And my husband's uncle was like a daddy to  
13 us.

14 Q Yeah.

15 A He passed away. But I go to the cemetery  
16 all the time, Beth David Cemetery, I go to my uncle  
17 because I felt that he was my daddy, because we don't  
18 have --

19 Q A family, now you --

20 A --places where to go.

21 Q Right.

22 A You know?

23 Q It's important to be able to go to a cemetery  
and mourn.

1           A     Right.  And they were wonderful to us.  They  
2 treated us like their children, like their own  
3 children.

4           Q     Can I ask you some more questions and see  
5 how you feel about answering them.

6           A     Yes, yes.  I will answer.

7           Q     Okay.  These are more specific.

8           A     Right.

9           Q     One of the questions I want to ask you  
10 about is, were there woman who were pregnant when,  
11 you know, young women, or women who were pregnant in  
12 the camps, and were there abortions.  I mean, what  
13 happened to women who were pregnant?  Did women give  
14 birth?

15          A     Some of them.  Very few gave birth, but the  
16 ones, when the Germans saw that they are pregnant,  
17 they took them in a special place and they operated  
18 those women.

19          Q     They give them abortions.

20          A     Yes.  Abortions, or whatever.  Some of them  
21 had very big bellies.

22          Q     So those women, what happened.  They didn't  
23 survive.

1           A       I don't know what they did with them.

2           Q       Did you know of any women who were pregnant  
3 themselves who the Germans didn't know, real early  
4 stages.

5           A       If they had big bellies, yes, they knew  
6 because we were naked. Most of -- most of us were  
7 naked, you know. But the young girls, they didn't  
8 even look at us, but some women, twenties and, you  
9 know, the thirties, they took them away, you know.

10          Q       Did you see them again. Did you know what  
11 had happened?

12          A       No, none of them. None of them. They took  
13 them like into little hospitals, like it wasn't a big  
14 building. In Auschwitz, we saw them. They took them  
15 in like a -- it was a little place and they took them  
16 in and they were crying, they were hysterical. But  
17 the orchestra was playing and everything was -- and  
18 we didn't know what's going on in Auschwitz. Auschwitz  
19 was horrible, a horrible place. And there was a film  
20 on television that a mother who has a son, a doctor,  
21 from Canada. There was a film on Channel 13, and they  
22 showed the place where, in the black, where I was.

23          Q       There it is.

1 A Right. And I told my daughter, please,  
2 watch it. I called her up and I said, please, watch  
3 it. And I saw the place.

4 Q Were there --

5 A Yes, yes, I'm finished in a minute, Darling.

6 Q Oh, she --

7 A She wants to leave, yes.

8 Q Were women raped? Did German soldiers try  
9 to rape Jewish women?

10 A The German soldiers, yes, they took and like  
11 prostitutes. They made prostitutes out of them, the  
12 women.

13 Q They did. You know --

14 A Oh, yes.

15 Q Do you know women who this happened to?

16 A Very beautiful -- I don't know anyone. But  
17 they took in the beautiful girls, good-looking girls.  
18 They took in, they make prostitutes.

19 Q Do you know, you saw this happen?

20 A Yes.

21 Q You saw this happen?

22 A We saw the girls there. They looked very  
23 beautiful. They were wearing nice clothing.

1 Q These were Jewish girls?

2 A Jewish girls, right.

3 Q Jewish women?

4 A Right.

5 Q But, did they, they didn't -- in other  
6 words, if they wanted to beat you, they didn't rape  
7 women, in other words.

8 A This I don't know.

9 Q If they were going to punish you, that was  
10 not something you were afraid of. You were afraid of  
11 being beaten or killed. You weren't being --

12 A We were afraid of everything.

13 Q Right. Okay.

14 A We were afraid of everything. But they took  
15 very beautiful girls. They took the beautiful girls  
16 and they made prostitutes out of them. And after the  
17 war, there were some girls. There was a special news-  
18 paper in Germany, in Hanover, there, and we, in Hambush,  
19 in Hambush there's a place of prostitutes, German  
20 prostitutes, and there was one of -- it was a Jewish  
21 girl, and before I went to America on the boat, we went  
22 all around there, and some man said that he knew that  
23 prostitute, a Jewish girl, because the Germans took her

1 in Auschwitz. They made a prostitute out of her. She  
2 didn't want to leave because that was like her pro-  
3 fession, you know. But, in Auschwitz, it was horrible.  
4 There's so many stories to tell about.

5 Q Let me see if there's anything else. There  
6 is one other question. Well, the next question, you  
7 answered this I think. Were you part of a group in  
8 the camp? Did you make friends. You did, of these  
9 women. Obviously, you became close friends, the women  
10 you met again.

11 A Yes.

12 Q Now, this is the question. Was there any  
13 romance in the camps? Did you or anyone you know have  
14 this? That is, were there relationships, were there  
15 sexual relationships, close relationships --

16 A There .

17 Q -- between people --

18 A There was some relationships. I tell you  
19 with what women. The women who were running the,  
20 like, from -- girls who came from Hungary, or from  
21 Poland, or whatever, nice, strong girls. They were  
22 running our camps, too, with the Germans. Just about  
23 the (unintelligible) for instance. There was a little

1 booth, like a little, like a bungalow. They lived  
2 inside, and they were running our area.

3 Q So they were -- the Germans select them.

4 A That's right.

5 Q These were Jewish women.

6 A That's right. The Germans selected them.

7 Q These are Jewish women.

8 A That's right.

9 Q They were selected to --

10 A That's right. And men from other places  
11 also, men, who, you know, our Jewish boys, who were  
12 running the men's place.

13 Q The men's area.

14 A They were going into the girls in the  
15 evening, and they had a very good time. But we don't  
16 know what they did there, you know what I mean? But  
17 we saw them inside. The light was on, and they were  
18 dressed nicely. They had food.

19 Q So they had privileges.

20 A That's right. They probably had some  
21 connection with each other, but didn't bother us too  
22 much, you know what I mean? We weren't interested in  
23 that because our life was entirely different. We were  
frightened of every moment, you know. We knew that the

1 Jewish boys had girlfriends there and --

2 Q But you didn't come in contact with the men?

3 A No, no, no. Oh.

4 Q You had no contact with the men.

5 A No, no.

6 Q You were separated.

7 A No, no.

8 Q Only these special women --

9 A My husband went through an awful lot. My  
10 husband's life was horrible because he was a very  
11 young man when he got into Auschwitz, and Okal, and a  
12 lot of places around there, you know, not only in  
13 Auschwitz, in so many places. I know where he was, but  
14 I don't remember every place. He was one of the  
15 youngest men and he was arrested once because he was  
16 getting some -- stealing some bread or so and he was  
17 in -- he was arrested and he was with a group that  
18 they used to put the people on the chair and hit them,  
19 you know. They used to beat them --

20 Q Right.

21 A Twenty-five times a day. My husband was one  
22 of them.

23 Q He had to do that?

1 A They --

2 Q Or he was beaten?

3 A The Germans did that to him.

4 Q Beat him.

5 A That's right.

6 Q They beat him.

7 A My husband went through an awful lot. You  
8 know that now that I am here with you, I forget the  
9 names of the places where he was. I forget a lot of  
10 things, you know, because it's emotional. A lot of  
11 people are very emotional now. If it's a different  
12 time, you know, our feelings would be a little more  
13 calm, you know, but now everyone of us is very, very --

14 Q Filled up with emotion.

15 A Very emotional now, you know. That we saw  
16 so many thousands of people coming from all over. It's  
17 a wonderful thing in this country, even the President  
18 this week, I don't know, were you there?

19 Q Yes, I was there.

20 A And you heard. It was very nice of him to  
21 come. And people from all over the world came here,  
22 you know, but the President, his speech was unbelievable.  
23 He made us feel very, very good. And every speech was

1 wonderful. And we feel better now, you know? That  
2 they're going to save Israel, they gonna do everything  
3 for Israel, you know, that we hope there's not going  
4 be a war in Israel, because in Israel there's a lot of  
5 people who went through the war with us, and they lost  
6 their children. I have a lot of friends in Israel who  
7 lost their children during the wars, and they cannot  
8 go on living. Their life is unbelievable. I have one  
9 of -- a girlfriend, and I went to visit her. She  
10 cannot talk. She don't want to live anymore. They  
11 don't want to go on.

12 Q Did she have another family. Did she have  
13 new children?

14 A She has -- her son got killed. Her son-in-law  
15 is a cripple. She don't want to talk about anything.  
16 And I cannot go visit her anymore.

17 Q It's too painful?

18 A That's right. I go to Israel, I spend with  
19 my son, my daughter-in-law is a wonderful person, a  
20 very intelligent girl. She also works. She's a social  
21 worker also. And I'm trying very hard to go on living  
22 and stay very often with my daughter on the holidays.  
23 The holidays are not very easy for me because I miss my

1 son, but I'm on the phone with him very often now.

2 Q How long ago did he go to Israel?

3 A It's going to be 14 years July 8th when he  
4 left. He finished high school, Columbus High School  
5 in the Bronx, and he went for one year, and when he  
6 came back, he said to us, Ma, I want to go back, I want  
7 to live in Israel, I have to be part of your life, to  
8 live in Israel.

9 Q That's amazing.

10 A And he became a soldier. He's a captain now.  
11 Everybody loves him and appreciates --

12 Q I have another question. When you were in  
13 the Ghetto, before Auschwitz, in Auschwitz, were you  
14 aware, was there a resistance, were there any news-  
15 papers, were there people trying to organize Jews,  
16 trying to organize --

17 A Oh, yes.

18 Q --fighting or sabotage?

19 A Oh, a lot of people, writers, and we had  
20 Jewish newspapers, you know.

21 Q Did they talk about resistance? Did they  
22 talk to the Jews about fighting?

23 A No, well, only Warsaw, is the only place.

1 And Lodz, was the Dutch--

2 Q Was there anything in Lodz that you knew  
3 about?

4 A No, no. We couldn't fight against the  
5 Germans. We couldn't. We couldn't, because a lot of  
6 people went to Warsaw from Lodz, a lot of young men  
7 went to Warsaw, you know, and they felt because Warsaw  
8 was the major town from Poland, and --

9 Q The Bund, or any --

10 A Yeah, the Bund. That's right. The Bund.  
11 They were, you know, they had meetings, you know, in  
12 the evenings, they had meetings, but I was young --

13 Q Nineteen, seventeen.

14 A No, I was younger in the Ghetto, fifteen  
15 years old. So in, you know, when the war started.  
16 So I don't remember a lot of things, you know. We  
17 had a lot of Jewish papers, and in the newspapers they  
18 tried to print the papers, but the Germans stopped  
19 them. So they had meetings, I was told by other  
20 people. And even Communists. We had Jewish communists  
21 and they wanted to have meetings, but it didn't work.  
22 It didn't --

23 Q Very --

1           A       Very few hours. It was very difficult  
2 because only 'til six o'clock in the evening we were  
3 allowed to go out of the house, you know.

4           Q       Right. And then you were working the rest  
5 of the time.

6           A       That's right. We were working during the  
7 day and we had an awful lot of intelligent people,  
8 writers and school teachers, and professors, you know.  
9 But everything ended. But when we went into the Ghetto,  
10 the Jewish people formed high schools, and children  
11 were going to high schools, some of them, for a short  
12 while.

13          Q       Were the children going to elementary school?

14          A       That's right. Elementary schools, a few  
15 schools, dancing schools, music schools, they tried  
16 very hard --

17          Q       To make it normal.

18          A       That's right. To make it normal. Some  
19 of them did belong, and they went to Bott. Some of  
20 the families, and families, the Germans sent away some  
21 part of the families, so the families weren't very  
22 happy, you know, they didn't want to go on, and they  
23 couldn't. But we had no choice. We couldn't go

1 anyplace.

2 Q Was there a high suicide rate in the Ghetto,  
3 do you think? Were there people who killed themselves?  
4 Or people who just didn't --

5 A No, there were shooting. One day they were  
6 shooting ten people in Lodz Ghetto. And we all had to  
7 stand there and watch. The Germans were shooting them.  
8 They caught them. They did some wrong things. I don't  
9 remember exactly what they did, you know. They hung them  
10 in a very grand place. They hung them up and shot them,  
11 you know. But I remember like it would be now, but  
12 exactly what they did to them. We were looking, but  
13 people were closing their eyes, you know, with their hands.  
14 They couldn't see it. But life was very, very, difficult,  
15 very difficult. There's a lot of things happened, you  
16 know, that I could sit for hours or write a book, everyone  
17 of us.

18 Q Sounds like you should.

19 A Yes, believe me. But it's health-wise for  
20 simple people like me, it's not so easy. But there are  
21 people who are running --

22 Q You are very eloquent. You're very eloquent.

23 A That's right. That's right. But there are

1 people who are running organizations like the VADGRO (?)  
2 and they, you know, like Wiesel, he is a very intelligent  
3 person.

4 Q Remarkable person.

5 A A remarkable person, really. And he writes  
6 stories about, and he's writing books, and he's very  
7 active and hundreds of people are active, you know. And  
8 they organized. They're gathering now. It's a miracle.

9 Q Let me ask you another question. This is some-  
10 thing in here which interests me, as well, which I'm going  
11 to ask you. Did you develop intimacies with people during  
12 this time, in the Ghetto, in the camps, that were unique,  
13 I mean, that you think that wouldn't have happened if you  
14 weren't in the situation.

15 A That couldn't be.

16 Q No.

17 A There was no such thing.

18 Q Close --

19 A Maybe other people were running out. They  
20 were trying to get out from the Ghetto.

21 Q Right.

22 A They gave money to some Germans.

23 Q Oh, in terms of escape.

1 A That's right. That's right.

2 Q But, were there close relationships that you  
3 developed with other women, or in the Ghetto with men and  
4 women --

5 A No. Not to me.

6 Q -- that were very close.

7 A Not to me.

8 Q No, you didn't get --

9 A But there were some people who had enough money  
10 or jewelry and so on, and they were -- they got out from  
11 the Ghetto.

12 Q So people were able to buy their way out of the  
13 Ghetto, some people were.

14 A Some of them.

15 Q Right.

16 A Some of them. Not many. I don't know about it  
17 exactly, how many, because my father was ill. I went to  
18 work every morning. My mother was mentally ill.

19 Q Right. You had no time to --

20 A You know what I mean? My type of family, right?

21 Q Right.

22 A My type of family, was different, but there were  
23 other families that I really didn't know so many things about

1       them, because where we lived was --

2               Q       Sounds like it was poor.

3               A       Family, regular families, you know.  Fathers  
4       were working, and made a living, a nice living, you know,  
5       but other families lived a little different, you know,  
6       trying to get out.

7               Q       What did you think of the Judenreich, the Jews  
8       who were in the leadership in the Ghetto.  I mean, what did  
9       you -- I mean thinking now and thinking then, what do you  
10       think that was about?

11              A       Well, we had some people who were leaders in  
12       the Ghetto, and for them it was also very difficult to  
13       lead the Ghetto.  How we should stay in line for the food,  
14       right?  And orphans, orphanages, right?  And the guy who  
15       was running our Ghetto, he was the head man of an orphanage,  
16       but he became a very tough man.  But he was very nice to  
17       the orphans.

18              Q       Right.

19              A       He gave them nice jobs.  That's the boy who I met,  
20       he was an orphan also.

21              Q       Oh, right.

22              A       You know what I mean?

23              Q       Right.

1           A     So that's why he used to come into my -- into  
2 my little room, and speak to my mother and my father. He  
3 was sitting with us and he was running -- he was working  
4 at a place where they were giving out the food, you know.

5           Q     Right.

6           A     And, but I didn't like him. He was very moody boy,  
7 and I was moody, too. I didn't have the patience. I  
8 couldn't understand why my mother said, oh, he's such a  
9 nice boy, because she knew that he's bringing food in, but  
10 there were quite a few people who were working with the  
11 Germans, and they arrested Jewish people. The rich ones,  
12 you know, and they were telling them all the things. Some  
13 of the Jewish people weren't very perfect. That's what my  
14 parents told us, and other neighbors, but I don't know  
15 exactly because we were young and we weren't interested  
16 in that. But we heard, oh, this guy gave what, my mother  
17 said, this guy gave a few names of him, and the other fellow,  
18 and the other fellow? And the Germans arrested him? Oh,  
19 my God. Neighbors that used to say that to us.

20          Q     Right. So you'd hear talk.

21          A     Right. Right. That was the story. And he says,  
22 oh, listen, this guy and this guy are -- and the Germans  
23 arrested him. What they did, I don't know. What they did

1 to them, you know? And everybody was afraid. Oh, my,  
2 thank God, that they did not arrest me, the Germans didn't  
3 arrest me, that he stayed with the family.

4 Q The constant fear every day and every moment.

5 A That's right. That's right. I have quite a  
6 few people. I belong to the WALGRO(?) too.

7 Q Right.

8 A But, I have friends, you know. I joined VADGRO  
9 and I have some friends who are working, Sonya and Leo  
10 Weissman, you know. And she's a German, too. She's from  
11 Warsaw. So they're very active and they tell us stories,  
12 what went through. And they're very active people. And a  
13 lot of people are active. Otherwise, we wouldn't have  
14 the VADGRO.

15 Q Right. Right.

16 A Benjamin, the guy who is very ill. Benjamin  
17 Meich.

18 Q He's very ill?

19 A He is not well, no. He is not well. His wife  
20 is a wonderful person, you know. I met her years ago,  
21 you know. And Benjamin Meich went back to New York  
22 yesterday. He couldn't stay here. He wasn't feeling well.

23 Q I want you to take care of yourself. You take

1 your medicine and you do all that?

2 A Yes.

3 Q That's important.

4 A I'm trying very, very hard, believe me.

5 Q I want to thank you. Is there anything else  
6 you want to say before we end. I mean, anything.

7 A I appreciate it.

8 Q Well, I appreciate it. I really am very moved  
9 with the important -- you were the opening this up.

10 A Your parents --

11 Q My parents live -- my father's dead. My mother  
12 lives in Westchester and I'm not related to survivors. I  
13 came just because I think --

14 A Well, you lost your father. You're young, too.  
15 So it's a terrible feeling.

16 Q Yes.

17 A My mother, you see my daughter. And she looks  
18 at her son, and she knows that he's not going to live  
19 forever. (Unintelligible.) We got to the funerals.  
20 My girlfriend's brother passed away. I went to school  
21 with her two kids. Schula, in Cherry Hill, New Jersey.  
22 She was born with (unintelligible) something in the brain.  
23 But she never went to a doctor because she was perfect.

1 You know. She said, well, that's right, she felt. So  
2 they put her on the table, you know what's on the table,  
3 you know. But she's buried, what do you call that, the  
4 stone, the headstone. And a lot of people are dying, and  
5 a lot of them are losing husbands, in the fifties.

6 Q It sounds like you have a tight community though of  
7 people to support each other. You take care of each other.

8 A Yes. I'm a very sensitive person. What I'm  
9 going to do, I don't know, between you and me.

10 Q What does that mean?

11 A I don't know. I have to change. I'm very  
12 sensitive. If I know somebody is sick, I help them.

13 Q Why do you have to change?

14 A I have to change because my pressure goes up.  
15 Everything what happens. The doctor said the same thing.

16 (End of interview)

17

18

19

20

21

22

23