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SPASOWICZ, Janina
Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project
Polish
RG-50.488*0112

In this interview, Janina Spasowicz, who was born on March 8, 1923 and was a lifelong resident of Bełżec, talks about her life in a farming family near the concentration camp in Bełżec and about her work on the farm near the railroad tracks. She was a witness to transports of Jews to the work camp and describes an incident when she met a female fugitive from one of the Jewish transports. Asked by the Jewish woman to sell her a razor, she refuses, guessing the suicidal intentions of the woman. Despite the refusal, she becomes a witness to the suicide of the Jewish woman who hanged herself from the fence the following morning.

Box 1, Tape 1

[01:] 00:40:20 – [01:] 08:34:01
00:00 – 08:47

The interviewee introduces herself as Janina Spasowicz, born on March, 8, 1923, a lifelong resident of Bełżec; asked if she remembers when the Germans were building the concentration camp, says that she cannot remember because she was living on the opposite end of the village and she was not interested in such things as a young person; adds that she heard of the construction from her brother who used to go to the construction site and most likely worked there as a forced laborer; mentions that her family worked on a farm and she was busy with sewing and altering of garments as well as with farm work; explains that personally she didn't know what was being built in Bełżec; describes the location of her home, which was situated about 50 meters away from the railroad tracks and explains that she could watch transports of Jews while working at home or in the field; adds that she would flee home whenever she saw a freight train approach because she was afraid of the armed German guards; initially says she doesn't remember how often the trains would go, later recalls that they ran daily, both during the day and at night, and that her parents would keep watch at night as they were afraid that their thatched roof would catch on fire from the engine sparks; remembers an incident when the train "fell apart" [*likely derailed*] although she was not an eyewitness to the accident; talks of personally meeting a Jewish woman who ran away from the train and later asked for a razor; recalls running home to consult her mother about the unusual request and not going out any more, suspecting the woman's suicidal intentions; explains that for fear of nighttime round-ups of Polish youth by the Germans, she and her siblings did not sleep at home but in haystacks instead; remembers seeing the woman who asked for a razor the previous night who had hanged herself from the fence; mentions a young couple, most likely a Jewish woman and her husband, who asked for lodgings in her parents' home on the day of the train derailment [*we can infer that they were turned away.*]