HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

RACHEL HOCHHAUSER

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Lynn Hoffman
Date: April 22, 1985

Holocaust Oral History Archive
Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

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RH - Rachel Hochhauser[1] [interviewee]
LH - L. Hoffman [interviewer]
Date: April 22, 1985[2]

Tape one, side one:

RH: Yeah, because to get into college, they don't check you which school you went. They check you, how well did you score.

LH: That's right.

RH: And in Brooklyn it was very hard to make a good score. [unclear] it was much easier. So, he doesn't have to push very hard. So you went to Brooklyn Tech. Were you in Engineering?

LH: No. I'm a commercial artist. I know...

RH: [unclear], my girls graduated from the *yeshivah*, colleges, Israel.

LH: Uh huh. Rachel, I wanted you to tell me a little bit about where you were born, and what your family was like.

RH: O.K. I was born in 1928,[3] on July 2nd. My mother was the oldest of seven children. The first three children, no, no, the first three were girls in my grandfather's house. Then came a boy, a *meshiekhel* [little messiah]. My grandfather was the rabbi, a rabbi and a *shochet*. Actually his profession was a *shochet*. You know what that...

LH: Yes, a slaughterer.

RH: Slaughterer, right. Well this is a very dignified position in those days for a religious person. I come from a religious background. Then the rabbi of our town died, which not to my knowledge, but I remember the *rebbetsin* being a widow. So my *zayde* [grandfather] was the *rov*, of, the rabbi, the *rov*, not rabbi. Rabbi is a modern expression, but the *rov* of the town, he with the white beard, and he was the *rov* of the town. Because we have to sell *chometz*[4], people had to ask *shayles* [questions]**.** Then the *rebbetsin's* daughters grew up. And one married a *rov*, and he became *rov*. In the meantime my *zayde*, being an older person, was ailing, and he died, my grandfather. But, one of my uncles, which is my mother's brothers, became a *shochet* as a young boy. And he married a girl, and he moved to a different town. We were a prominent family in our town. My grandmother, being she was [unclear] with girls--see my grandmother was a business lady--to provide for the family. In World War II, in World War I, they ran away from Russia, my grandmother, my grandmother being as a young child, or infant or something, I don't know exactly the year. They ran away from Russia because of the pogroms, or the persecutions of the Jews in Russia. And they settled in a small town. Maybe they settled to

[1]née Swerdlin.
[2]Recorded at the 1985 American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors in Philadelphia, PA.
[3]Rachel Hochhauser was born in Krzywicze, Poland.
[4]Before Passover, Jews must sell *chometz*, leavened foods.

a different town, but since my grandmother and my grandfather are not here, [unclear] dead history. But they settled in a town, which in Yiddish it's called Krevitz [phonetic].

LH: Krevitz.

RH: Krevitz. In Polish it's pronounced Krzywicze. In Russian, Kree-vee-chee [phonetic]. The reason I say in the three languages, because this is the languages were spoken in my town.

LH: Oh.

RH: The Jews spoke Yiddish, and in order to communicate with a, with the farmers [unclear]with the others, with the Gentiles. Some were Poles. You speak Polish to them maybe. And some were Russians, or White Russians, or Belorussia. You speak their native language. You know, the Jewish people are people of the book, and they learned. And that's why, we spoke their language, and they hardly could speak ours. We had, *goyim* [non-Jews]; we always had a maid. She had Sunday the day off. And on *Shabbes*, being a very religious family she didn't housework either, maybe bring some water from the well or wash the dishes. And she also had a day off. We had neighbors. My grandmother being a business lady; why was she a business lady? There was a house with seven children. And my *zayde* was a *shochet*. So how many chickens a week he would *shkite* during the week? Only for *Shabbes*. Or how many cows he would slaughter for the small population of our town? So my *zayde* was a learned man, a scholarly man. He would sit and learn and study the *Gemara*. And I remember stories from years back. The soldiers came to our town, and my grandmother baked bread and sold bread to them. Now what was her profit? They were give her ten pounds of flour. And she had to give them back ten pounds of bread. So whatever, when you bake bread and put in water and yeast, you get more, more weight than what you put in. And meat, when you cook, it shrinks. You put in a pound and you take out less. But in bread, or in cake, you put in a little bit and you go still a lot. So this was the arrangement with the officer, for her labors, the extra pounds of bread was her profit, for the labor that she baked for the soldiers the bread. Maybe a 100 pounds of bread she'd make.

LH: This was your mother?

RH: No, my grandmother.

LH: Your grandmother.

RH: When they just came and settled into the town. Then, this is World War I. And being they were soldiers stationed in our town, this was the profit that my grandmother made. So when she saw they are soldiers, she provided, so she would bring them cigarettes, or tobacco and sell them. And that's how she got involved being into business. That's how she got herself involved into business. She would go to Minsk, or in other cities, and this was legal, and to sell maybe thread, maybe buttons, maybe this. And then she started out into business. Salt was a big thing, salt, sugar. And she would bring from the big city from the houses with a little food to sell it to the local people. And that's how my grandmother got involved in the business. As the children were growing up, they helped out. And every

time, but my grandmother was also busy having babies, and having more children. So the older children were running the business. The older children were running the business. And then, by the, by '39, we had a big store, like a general store. Because by then the children grew up, and they were running the business.

LH: This is your parents' generation?

RH: Yes. In order, this is, you asked me what...

LH: Yeah, right.

RH: Where does the family come from. So I'm just bringing you a foreword...

LH: I got it.

RH: With my, I come both. In those days, it was very prominent to be scholarly in Yiddish. So my *zayde* was a *rov* for part time. When the *alte* [old] *rov* is *geshtorben,* died, and then my *zayde* was a *shochet*. This all comes later, I'm telling you. But we were searched to, to kill us, during the Holocaust, because we were the *shochet's* family. So, I'm just telling you a little background.

LH: O.K. Now tell me a little bit about your parents.

RH: O.K., my parents. I--my father was killed, and I, it was a long time so, and I was an only child, and I was with my mother, hiding out with my mother. And my mother's sister...

LH: What do you remember about your father?

RH: Very little.

LH: Very little.

RH: Very little. Because, you have to understand, it's 40 years back. My father was a businessman. My father was also learned in Talmud because he went to *yeshivah*.

LH: And he...

RH: And he was, being my mother was the first daughter to get married, and she came from that, from a prominent family for that era in that town. You see you have lots of scholars in Philadelphia or in New York, but in a small *shtetl*, the people is the working class. And he had a good business, and a scholar. So my mother of course married somebody equal. He's a fine, prominent family from a different town called [unclear]. She, but, I took, when my mother married my father, I don't remember his parents, because I'm named after the grandmother. And I have cousins from my father's side who were older than I, and, but they were named after the grandfather. So I realized that when my mother married my father that, he had no parents at that time.

LH: What was your life like before the war?

RH: Before the war, as you see of my age, I was a little girl, going to school, to a, to public school, to Polish public school. I had friends. On *Shabbes* we didn't go to school. After school, I learned in *cheder*, in order to learn Hebrew, the prayers, *chumash* [Bible], whatever was appropriate for my age group. You started as a seven-year-old. You learned just *Siddur*, to read and to write. You get older, you learn *Chumash*. You get a little bit older you learn *Novi* [Prophets].

LH: Tell me a little about the Polish school. Did you have friends who were non-Jewish?

RH: Yes, yes, yes. I had friends who were not Jewish; they were a little bit anti-Semitic, some were not, as among children, it happens. Like on *Shabbes*, or Yom Kippur, I did not go to school. We would come to the Gentile girls and ask them for homework, and bring them a slice of *challah* to taste, some our *challah* which my mother made from homemade, homebaked, or a piece of cake, which my mother baked for *Shabbes*, for homemade, some to take to school. For *Pesach* we bring a few pieces of *matzah*, and...

LH: Do you remember how your family got along with the non-Jewish neighbors?

RH: Nice, nice. I remember, people would come. I remember we didn't--one lady, she used to have miscarriages a lot. And my mother would help her, and for her remedies, what to do when she was pregnant, she shouldn't have a miscarriage the next time. And then finally, after the miscarried, she had a little girl. And the girl, there were worms in her stomach. And my mother was telling her and teaching her how to take care of the child, for the worms to come out. There is one worm which is called, very long one, three feet long, how to do it, for the little girl, what medicines to give her, what food to give her, what to put in the potty that the worms should want to come up, smell the good food, smell the boiling milk. Other women would come and tell with a child with his temperature. My mother would give them remedies what to do, tell them, from homemade remedies what to do. We got along well with the people. I remember my mother, or my grandmother, giving cigarettes to the farmers who would come in. Or people, they would come to the house like with stories, they had a fire and their farm burned down, lend them money they should be able to build up the farm. And then they would gradually pay off the money. We got along well. We tried to get along well. We n-…

LH: Did your family belong to any Zionist organizations, or...

RH: I...

LH: Any other Jewish...

RH: To tell you the truth, as far as I remember, being that I was a little girl, so, I remember, well--you, like, I went to public school. And after school we come to the *shul*. And I had a, there was a *rebbe,* and he put me in a group, me and two boys, to learn *siddur*. But then, the m--every week, on a Wednesday, we would have a farm day, which all the farmers would bring in their goods to sell - the eggs and the chickens, and the mushrooms in summertime. And the berries in summertime. Wintertime the dried mushrooms, [unclear] products, and wheat, and potatoes, and vegetables. And the Jewish people, or the other people who didn't have vegetables, if they had their own gardens, would buy from their products or the eggs, would buy, and the butter, and the chickens, buy from them. They would have the money, and they would come to the Jewish stores, and buy goods, salt, and needles and thread, and fabric and galoshes, and shoes, and stockings, and whatever they need. And herring, and pots, and pails, and sickles, to cut the wheat.

LH: Tools.

RH: And to cut in the hay. They had no tractors in those days. And I remember they offering, always giving us cigarettes, [unclear] or candy, because he came from a long [unclear] of walking by foot. So we, we helped each other. We did business.

LH: Do you have any recollection of Jewish organizations?

RH: Oh, yes, so, every Wednesday, after the day was over, the fair was over, they were coming people to the storekeepers to collect money, to build a building to make a Jewish school for the children. The building was done, but somehow we never got organized, only maybe a year or two before the war, before '39. But if you had organized, they had a formal school, maybe like [unclear]. But we learned in that school, after the public school we come home and had, whatever, a snack, and go back to that school. And have a *rebbe*, and he made us groups. While teaching me s*iddur*, he would give others to write. While reviewing their writing, they would give us to write. This one teacher had a few groups where he would orally test us if we know. And so we learned in that school. But I remember coming like there were organizational stuff. But I can't remember what organization. I was a little girl, they put up a space [unclear]. I remember speeches. And I remember there was a *posek* [interpretation] of Dr. Herzl, and maybe it was his *yahrzeit* [anniversary of a death]. I me--I don't remember what organization it was, but it was some kind of a celebration.

LH: You don't have any recollection of your family participating in the organization?

RH: Well, my grandmother, O.K., my grandmother was an older person, you understand? So, I don't think my grandmother went. And my mother, I don't know, maybe she was busy after a whole day's work. Maybe when they had this evening, maybe my family all went to this. But, as a child I was anxious to go much earlier, to get myself a space, where they came in later. There was an organizational life in our town. There was an organization life. But, being I was seven or eight. Take a child now, I, or nine...

LH: Well, O.K., you were eleven when...

RH: When the war broke out.

LH: Yeah.

RH: Then is no organization. But till then, let's say in '35 or in '36, I remember being in some kind of meetings. But I can't remember from what organization or however. I remember being in meetings. I remember going to them. And let's say the meeting's called for 6:00, we were also sitting there from 4:00 waiting. Maybe later on my mother or my aunts or uncles came in, too. But, for children, we should be quiet, we were happy that they let us sit there.

LH: Did you have any idea of the Nazis in the time before they invaded?

RH: Yes, yes.

LH: What sort of news...

RH: We had a, we had, in our family, we had a radio. So we heard news. Of course, the newspaper was coming to me also. We also had a newspaper every day. But with the radio I could hear. It was in Polish, so I could hear. And we heard about Nazis being in Germany, about Hitler being--we were hearing that the German people are running away, to Poland, or to France. But this was in '38, let's say, during, we heard on the radio that the Germans invaded Czechoslovakia. And Germany invaded Austria, other countries, including [unclear], let's say in March, it was very strong news, in March. That's, before *Pesach*, and very strong news between the border, Polish soldiers, the Polish-German border, Polish soldiers were shot, or something, something was bad news, [unclear] bad news. I remember one instance, that our radio, the battery went out. There wasn't electricity like we have here, it was a battery. And this expired, the battery. So my grandmother went across the street to the druggist, they had a radio, to hear news there. Because my grandmother was very worried about the war, because she had three young men in the house. She had two sons and a son-in-law, and a third son who was a *shochet*, who was already married in a different town. So she wasn't worried about him, but...

LH: So the son-in-law was your father?

RH: No, the son-in-law was my aunt's husband.

LH: Your father wasn't in the...

RH: He was a businessman. A businessman, my father. But this was [unclear]...

LH: I'm sorry. I don't understand. What does that mean? That means that he didn't live with you?

RH: He lived with us, but not in this house. We lived in a different house. But my grandmother was worried, because she had two young sons. One just finished the army, just finished the two years' time of the army, like, everybody had to go at the age of 20 or 21 had to go to serve two years in the army, to learn training. I, he was enlisted. Who wants to go? But there was, forced. You had to come to the army. If you're eligible, unless you're sick or crippled or something. So, she had three young sons and a young son-in-law, very close [unclear] that she felt if there's a war, they will be drafted. Let's see, maybe my father was older a little bit, so maybe she wasn't worried about him as much. There's also ages involved. So she went to the druggist to get the news, and then she got a cold, and after that she got pneumonia, and she died, in a very short, in one week from this my grandmother died. And this was a very big shock to the family. And she left *Erev Pesach* [Eve of Passover]. And because she went, because this winter there was snow, and warm in the house and it was cold outside. And she didn't maybe have a sweater on [unclear]. We had very cold winters there...

LH: Yes.

RH: In the northern parts, where I come from. And she got pneumonia. And this is before Pesach. So I remember hearing, and I di--the reason she went there is because of news [unclear] Hitler. And in '39, on September 3rd the war broke out.

LH: So what happened then? What happened to you immediately? How did you know about it?

RH: I, we had a *minyan* [quorum of ten adults] in the house, saying *kaddish* [prayer for a dead person] for my grandmother. See, we were a close family. And I came in and the radio was on. And I heard the news that, somebody was bombing already. [Unclear] that cities were bombed, and there's a war. I was telling everybody, "There's a war." And they couldn't believe me. They said, "Well how do you know? What are you talking about?" I said, "I just heard it on the radio. I just heard on the radio." The radio was on and people were busy eating breakfast. See the radio's in the living room, the breakfast was in the kitchen or the dining room and they, you know. I heard it, and I mean I came in to get something, and I just heard. "There's a war! There's a war!" Maybe I didn't hear exactly what all they said, because it's 40 some years back to remember what the words...

LH: Yeah, well then what happened?

RH: There was a war, and fighting. Fighting. I remember when there was a, when you were supposed to, the windows supposed to cover with blankets. There's not supposed to be lights in the house. There was a curfew, not to be out in the street beyond certain hours. We were very concerned. We heard about the bombings in the big cities. This, it was a *Blitzkrieg* ["lightening war"-for quick victory]. Six o'clock in the morning they were bombing, and the delegate, a German delegate came to tell the Polish government eight o'clock in the morning when the offices open up, that there's a war. Hitler declare a war. We were upset. I mean, we're hearing this is Germany. But we knew what Hitler was like. Maybe we, maybe the, by then they didn't have the concentration camps, yet. We knew it was bad. We didn't know how bad, but it was bad.

LH: Now do you remember your parents talking about this?

RH: Everybody was talking. Everybody was talking. Everybody talked. I mean, you go on the street, you, you eavesdrop, hearing people talk. Everybody talked.

LH: But you don't remember your parents specifically discussing it at home, or...

RH: Everybody talked. That's all.

LH: That's right.

RH: I mean, who talked to us from 45 years back and I was 11 years old. How can I pinpoint exactly who talked to me?

LH: Gee, I don't know. O.K. Look, so what happened then?

RH: Before you to judge me, put yourself when you were 11 years old. I mean, specific occasions who talked about what? If it was a week before the war, or maybe it was a week during the war. But we were afraid there's going to be a shortage of food. We had a store. So we had the groceries. So I remember my mommy sending me to the next town, to a wholesaler, I should buy soap and salt and whatever I can buy. She gave me money, and I went with a horse and wagon, with a pa--with a man that my mother rented him, he'll be *shlepping* [carrying], but I should be the one to handle the money to buy as much as I can. So I remember in the wholesaler's and my putting down a list, five pieces of long bars

of soap. And then you cut it into pieces. And then everybody was hopping. Everybody was grabbing a lot. I bought more soaps, even more than my mother had told me. If my mother put me down five sacks of salt, I bought more salt. Because this, those things are very necessary to surviving, because it's not something you can grow this on the farm, but salt. And if there's a war we wouldn't have any. And even for a pound of salt we could get a few pounds of bread from a farmer. They'll be needing salt and we'll be needing bread, or needing wheat, or meat or something.

LH: O.K., so the *Blitzkrieg* was on.

RH: The *Blitzkrieg* was on.

LH: And it's coming closer to you.

RH: But we were far...

LH: Well what do you remember about that?

RH: We were far away, see. We were near the Russian border, and this was Poland. The *Blitzkrieg* was on, near the German border. Of course, the Luftwaffe was very good, but still not as advanced as today. They bombed, Polish, the Polish soldiers was very good, but they didn't have anywhere to fight. They were very patriotic, the Polish soldiers. Of course the Jewish soldiers who were in the army also were very patriotic. But they were bare hands. Because of the *Blitzkrieg*, all their supplies were cut off. And one morning, they used to put on, being the radio stations in the big cities were bombed, we did not hear the news. So we used to put on the *Minsk radio*, the Russian stations, which by air we were only twenty-some kilometers. So the waves would pick up the news from the Russians. And we would hear from their news. Also we were very happy when France and England declared the war to Germany. We hoped, being they're coming out to help, maybe. Maybe somehow the Germans would not reach us. So we tried to listen to news. But that [unclear], September 17th the Russians came to us. It was early in the morning. They put on the radio, and I heard the Russians crossed the border. And what was their speech? They want to take their brethren, White Russians and Ukrainians, under their wings, to survive under their, under their what...

LH: Under their wings, under their protections.

RH: Under their protection, their brethren. And they crossed the border.

LH: So...

RH: So you know what, in a way we were happy.

LH: Of course.

RH: We were happy. Because it's coming the Russians, but not coming the Germans. And we were happy. It was the day after Rosh Hashanah, and this was *Tzom Gedaliah*, [Fast of *Gedaliah*], it was a fasting day. And as was customary on that day, also on *Tisha B'Av*, to go to the cemetery. I don't know the reasons why. But for small children it was a big deal because in the cemetery, to see the monuments of the grandparents. And everybody was going, and everybody was *shushken* [whispering], telling each other, "Did you hear the news? Did you hear the news?" The Russians are across the border. We were

afraid. Then the Polish were running away. We were afraid. There was a bridge in our town. We were afraid they might burn the bridge, which I think they did. And couldn't find out if didn't burn the bridge. Because then we could get no, no communication from the other side of the town where they burned the bridge already or bombed the bridge or something. And the Russians came. And they made local *militsia*, because for anarchy, from, from, hoodlums, from lootering, from loiting [she must mean looting and loitering], from anything, so, local people made guards with sticks to walk in the streets to watch. And these Jewish boys joined also, and the Gentiles. It was like the town, till a government will be settled. Till the Polish run away and the Russians didn't arrive yet. So we needed, from local, local protection. And then shortly after, the school went back to normal. The school was established. I went back to school. They tried to teach us the Russian alphabet, the White Russian alphabet. I suppose, the lessons that being in Russian, a White Russian, Russian songs.

LH: So was your life much different with the Russians there from...

RH: Yes, yes. Life was much different. First of all, and they started arresting people and sending them to Siberia. And in this they took first people who were first, prestigious people, like who was a Polish officer, they took them. Who was a judge, or a lawyer. they arrested them. And, of course, some of the rich people. They took people from our town who were rich. I don't know whether they accused them of capitalism, or whatever. And we were also afraid it might be our family, too. We were afraid it might be us also. So we tried to disperse. Everybody tried to leave our, the town. And it was a different town, where nobody knew us. And then get a menial job, and to work. And nobody would know you are a capitalist or *Bourgeois*. They would call a *Bourgeois*, which means rich people. So we were also scared of them, that they might do that. So...

LH: So you moved out of the town while the Russians were there.

RH: Right. Right. So we were afraid. Life was much different. First of all, we were religious people from our background, and this was deprived. So I remember crying to my mother that I had to go *Shabbes* to school. My mother said, "We are in *goles* [diaspora]. What can you go? You better go to school. Try not to write." So I went to school not to write, wearing my *Shabbes* dress. But then we had to write, so again I was upset. My mother said, "We are in *goles*. You have to visit city. Otherwise, they might send us to Siberia or take us to jail. What can you do?"

LH: So, did your whole family, or, where did you go? What was the town you went to? Do you remember?

RH: Went where?

LH: When you left your hometown because the...

RH: We weren't really, we were in Krevitz till the Germans came. And then we left the town.

LH: Oh, you were in Krevitz till the Germans came.

RH: Which is shortly after, a year-and-a-half after.

LH: Yes.

RH: They came in September '39, and in '41, June, July, the Germans came, in '41. So with the school year was '39-'40, and '40-'41. The school year was over and the Germans came. The Germans came. So people took the *shkotsim* [non-Jews], the local hoodlums, the teenagers, they're throwing rocks at Jews. They throw at one old man a rock and he fell. He hurt his head, and he died a few days later. They took a few people and they accused them of being Communists and they shot them. So, of course, the mood it leaves the people, some hoodlums, local, who throw rocks in the windows at night. So we were all huddled up in one room. And with six, cause we slept under the beds. Because we lived not in big apartment houses like here. One floor houses. So if the rock falls in and the glass, it falls on you and you get hurt, with the rock and the glass. So we go to slept under the beds. So the rock and the glass will fall on the bed. Especially on Sundays, they would get drunk with the homemade *samovanke* [phonetic], this is homemade liquor that they made on their own, the moonshine. And they would get drunk, and then go and, it was a *mitzveh* [good deed] to hurt a Jew. It was a *mitzveh* to them. So, you know, like teenagers are. Some are rebellious, and here they had the opportunity. But, I must tell you, this one time a woman was passing by a house, and she saw that a Gentile woman was hitting her son, with a strap. And she was hitting him because he was among the *shkotsim* the night before, throwing rocks at Jewish families. She felt embarrassed that her son was in this group.

LH: Huh.

RH: The Gen--the Jewish woman walked by a Gentile house, and the mother was hitting the son with a strap.

LH: Yes, I heard you.

RH: I want to emphasize.

LH: O.K.

RH: And the mother was hitting this, the son with a strap, or with a piece of wood, with something, feeling embarrassed that her son, that that teenager, maybe 16, 17, was among the hoodlums throwing rocks. She does not want to be embarrassed for her neighbors and for the Jews that her son was among the hoodlums throwing the rocks at a Jewish family.

LH: Now was there much anti-Semitism before, or did this all just seem to come up?

RH: Before the war, anti-Semitism was such, not so much to hit a, in my small town, not so much to hit a Jew as to support the Gentile, with the strength of Gentile stores with groceries or other stores, to support the local, the local businesses. Not to buy from the Jewish people, but to buy from the l--to support the Gentile stores, to support them. Here the Jewish people were in the businesses, small grocery, selling *nafta* [kerosene] for the kerosene lamps, selling sugar, selling flour, selling herring. Herring was a big deal. Because it was a poor section where we lived. Northern part was mostly farming, no industry. There were a few Jewish tailors in town, a few Jewish shoemakers, tailors,

shoemakers. So they had Gentile apprentices, taught them the trade. We had a store, very few sales clerks. And I was also working. Later on before the war we even took in bicycles to sell, and parts. We had a man, a Gentile man, who would put the bicycles together. First we brought in one summer, regular bicycles. Then we put in parts to put them together, a bigger profit, to sell parts also. We had a man who assembled them for us. We had Polish friends.

LH: So what happened?

RH: During, in '30, in '41, when the Germans came, and they were going to the front, and the army would come into the town, the battalion or army, I don't know, or division or whatever, or a small group, we were afraid that they might hurt us. So my mother tried to put us children to sleep over the night with *goyishe* families, with Gentile families. My mother would go early and ask them to, if she could bring over the children, because they felt, in case there is a pogrom or something, as adults they could run faster. And us as children would be caught, and wouldn't be able to keep up, and would hinder them. So many times we slept over in Gentile families, me and my cousins slept over in Gentile houses. And they would give us bread and milk. We were allowed to eat bread and butter and milk. And we would stay over the night. The next morning everything's quiet. My mother would come and get us. Some in town, or, usually in the outskirts, further from the town, not in the center. Because center was...

LH: That was where it would happen.

RH: Yeah, it wasn't that safe.

LH: Let me ask you what happened when the Germans came.

RH: When the Germans came, it was terrible. Whether the Germans gave the word, or the local *militsia* [militia], I don't know, but we were not allowed to walk on sidewalks, and we had to walk in the middle of the street. And in our town there weren't too many Germans, maybe one or two people who ruled the town. The only thing is the soldiers going to the front. They would come to the houses and rob, rob, look for jewelry or look for clothing, and take and send home to their families. Also, I remember as, I saw them approaching on my street from far, I see, I would put a long dress, my mother's, a [unclear] especially if it's a [unclear] dress. So it would be long, and if they see me unattractive, they should not hurt me. Because by then I was already twelve. In '39 I was 11, but like '42 I was already like 13. In '43 I was 14. And I was growing up...

LH: So you knew about that possibility when you were...

RH: Oh yes.

LH: By the time you were 13.

RH: Yes, yes. I didn't know exactly what, but we were afraid they shouldn't hurt. As I saw them coming they would come two, three, and look for food, to take out food or jewelry or clothing. Anything. But then we were robbed from the local people, from the local *militsia*. They came to the house and took out the nice furniture from us, took out this. Whatever they wanted, we didn't say a word. They could hit us with the side of the rifles,

hit us. We had to comply, or they hit us. And one time they took away, each Jewish family had a cow, it should be sustained us with milk and milk products. Each family had a cow. They took away over the Jewish families, the cows. O.K. So we didn't have any more milk. Of course it was a tragedy, because this is the food small children at home. And it was a big family, because by then one sister came running from a different town with two children and a husband. Another sister came running with one child. And we all lived together in the same house. And my uncle had to, they picked him and some other people to take the cows to the big city. And there they would be put on transport probably to Germany. And the cows ran away. And they beat up my uncle very hard. And black and blue spots they made him because the cows ran away. He wasn't a cow man or a cow boy. He was a *shochet* [ritual slaughterer]! He was a *yeshiva bocher* [student at a yeshiva]! And they punished him for it. So when the cows ran away, he did not know how to herd them back. They ran in, near the other cows which ran away. The other cows ran away. This was a big thing. And then I remember that and this was a local, he was a policeman, but he soon became a *Kommandant* or something, only, in the police. And he was a very terrible person. His name was Lischinsky.

LH: Lischinsky.

RH: Lischinsky was his name. When he was from there-

Tape one, side two:

RH: A bad person as a person, and he was, being of his background he was. And now, his wife was come to church, in beautiful Jewish coats and suits and dresses and furs and foxes, which they took away, they robbed from us, from my aunts and uncles. They took away a whole cellar of clothing, fine clothing from us, to come to church. She became the lady of the town, the first lady of the town. And being he wore always dark glasses, so we couldn't see him, but he could see us. So we called him, that he had four eyes, two eyes, and two with the glasses. We called, he had a nickname, *Fier egel vigger* [phonetic]. See, we saw him coming, we didn't say Lischinsky's coming, he shouldn't hear his name mentioned. But we said the *Fier egel vigger* is coming. So everybody in town knew who was the *Fier egel vigger*. *Fier* means four eyes.

LH: Four eyes.

RH: Two of them glasses, and two of them his own eyes, the *Fier egel vigger* is coming. And they, then, through the *Judenrat*, through the committee that we had in our town established a *kehi*--established a government. Because we had to go to labor, to the work. They should, one person could go a lot, and one person could go a little. So the police would come and tell them, "Only five people here, or ten people there." And they would already pick according to the list who went to work, and who's next is next to go to work. So through them we arranged to make some kind of peace that he shouldn't pick on us, on our family, Lischinsky, the *Fier egel vigger*. So he wanted a gold watch, a pocket watch. And we didn't have. So we tried to search in town from the rich families who had a gold watch. And then we paid with gold to buy from this lady a gold watch. Because her, by then she was poor herself, and she was rich before the war. Her husband was in Siberia, sent through the, through the Communists, through the Russians. He was sent to Siberia. But she had this gold watch. So we bought the watch from her, the gold, [unclear] gold. And invited this Lischinsky to our house. We put on *schnapps* to make peace, and we presented him the watch that he should, should be nice to us. We bribed him. But I want to tell you a little interesting story.

LH: Please.

RH: Yes. Being Lischinsky was the *Kommandant* of the town, and he was always coming with a whip, and always hitting people, or hitting people, across the street from us was a very nice house. Actually it was my aunt's sister-in-law and mother-in-law lived in that house. And all of a sudden, I come from work, from someplace else--whatever work I did that day, I don't know--and they tell me that a *Kommandant* from a different town, from a bigger city, moved in here to that house. And my mama tried to get me I should work there. Number one, I could hear news, and tell the others what's going on. Number two, in case there's an execution, maybe I could hide myself in that house, in the *Kommandant's* house, so I could survive. By then, it was shortly before *Pesach*, which was March that year.

LH: And had there been executions already?

RH: Yes. They were taking like groups of people, groups of people, four people, five people, tell them dig their own groves, and then shot them and, and execute them. From prominent family usually.

LH: [sneezes]

RH: Bless you. But what I want to tell you, that this *Kommandant* moved in, and because my mother's main aim was that I should work there. I could hide under a bed, in a closet, in a barn, in a cellar, and I could survive. Because we heard from on Purim at night was a big execution in a town called Vilayka, which is about 38 kilometers from us. And people were executed there. Until then we didn't hear, we just heard of groups, a few people here, a few people there, the *shochet*, the *rov* [rabbi], ten best of *baal habatim* [prominent townspeople]. But not as a whole town. And this is the first time we heard as a whole town. This is Vilayka. This is a big city. But by then already they had taken out some people, which we didn't know where to. My cousins were taken out. They lived in that town. Two young boys. They were taken out. My aunt's husband, my uncle, went there. And this is my grandmother's sister. And she was the last one to be perished. After the *Megillah* [Book read on *Purim*], the people went to sleep, and in the middle of the night they woke them up and took them in the back of the town, and they shot them. My grandmother's sister's name was Taybeh. And nobody survived from her family. Her husband was killed, her two sons, and herself. So when I had a little girl, I named her Taybeh, after her. There was just nobody in the family who could name her, and I named my daughter Taybeh, which we call her Taybeleh. This is my grandmother's sister. Her all, she was all wiped out. Herself, her husband, and her sons.

LH: When did you go into hiding, Rachel?

RH: Oh, this is what I want to tell you where our hiding started. So we knew about Vilayka that there was an execution. Now this *Kommandant* moved in. So my mother wanted me to work in this place, so I could hide myself there. And when the *Kommandant* unpacked, I came in to help him unpack his belongings. He came in with twelve wagons. And there were lots of silver with Jewish inscriptions, which were given as gifts to, to, as wedding gifts, some kind of an object, a sugar dish, or bread box, or whatever. I can't remember all that. But I remember the Hebrew or the Jewish letterings, as wedding gifts to the families, or gifts given. Because he came in from a big city, and there were maybe people more financially to do, better. And the wife was expecting a baby. And being I was a young girl, and I spoke a nice Russian, very good Russian, very good White Russian, good Polish, somehow they liked me. So I helped the wife. The *Kommandant's* wife had a young sister about 16. So, being the *Kommandant's* wife had a baby, so the 16-year-old was in the kitchen preparing meals, so I helped her in the kitchen with the meals. On a Sunday, they send me to call the midwife, to tell the midwife that the *Kommandant's* wife is whatever. I had to tell her that she should, that the midwife should come. I was, someone should come. The next morning, Monday morning, I came, and the *Kommandant's* wife

had a baby girl. And by then were Jewish girls, older in age then I was, doing laundry, washing dishes, which were in blood, or whatever, dirty from the delivery. But I still worked in the kitchen helping them. The *Kommandant* spoke a very well Russian. And somehow, whenever he spoke about the Jews, he did not use the word *Zhid*, which was, he used the word *Ivrei*.

LH: Oh this was a Russian *Kommandant*?

RH: Well, he was a local, Russian, you see, we had nationalities like we have in New York--Puerto Ricans, and Irish, and Italians. So our town was Polish [unclear] and White Russians, and Russians. Because, originally from the First War, this part of Poland...

LH: Right, it had gone back to Poland.

RH: Belonged to Russia. In the 1800's or 1920, no, 1918 or 1920, whenever the wars were over, the First World War, and Polish borders were established, we became Poland. We became Poland. But before that, in the First War, this was Russia, I suppose. So, for us to speak Russian in our town was common, accepted. Russian and White Russian and Polish. So this *Kommandant*, he spoke a very good Russian. And being I went to school, I also spoke Russian. I was a good student. I had good marks, excellent marks. And this was Monday, these girls are doing laundry. And this, the next day was Tuesday. And the *Kommandant* came to eat lunch. And he brought along with him Lischinsky, who was also in the police, a big shot. I don't know what was his title. But he was *Kommandant*, and then this *Kommandant* who came in had a different post, even higher. And then there was one, a deputy *Kommandant*. His name was Seemashkevitz [phonetic]. There, Seemashkevitz and Lischinsky were local people. Seemashkevitz was from a farm a few, maybe two miles from Krevitz, and Lischinsky was in Krevitz, and the *Kommandant* came from a different town. So the three of them came, they had dinner and they drank. They drank *schnapps*, vodka. And the *Kommandant* came into the kitchen for some reason, and I went out from the kitchen to the pantry to bring in some, some kind of food or something. And he followed me. A little bit I was scared that he followed me. But all of a sudden he said to me in Russian, if I may repeat in Russian, and then I can translate to you.

LH: Oh, certainly, very good.

RH: He said to me, "(in Russian)." Which means, we are going on a short, on a small war, on a war. I knew from the politics that the war, the front is very far. He's not going to war to fight the Russians. A war, it means, to round up the Jews. I asked him, "Hudah [phonetic]?" Which means, where? He told me, "*Karotki*, *karotki voi* [phonetic]." Means the short war. And I asked him, "Where?" Then he frightened. I asked him, "Where?" He told me, "*Dolginevah* [phonetic]," what means in Dolhinow, a town, which is 15 kilometers from Krevitz. The highway was good, because the Jews clean the snow every day. And there were a motorized army with trucks and cars and buses, or whatever else they had. We knew in 15, 20 minutes they're here. And he continued telling me. So I asked him what happened. Or I maybe didn't have the nerve to ask him what happened. It's like [unclear], he could speak to the president here, but he could not speak 40 years like

this to the president in Poland. I don't remember how I asked him. But what he explained to me in Russian, the S.S. *viscar*, means army, the S.S. came to Dolhinow," [unclear] *Ivreis* [unclear]." "And all the Jews started running away. So they called us to come to help." So I knew what help it was, to round them up. I, like to keep some kind of a face**.** I didn't know what to say. I'm Jewish. My mother always asked me, or hinted me that I should try, maybe I could mention something to hide by them. But I was too scared to ask. Because this is very risky. If he knows I'm hiding there, he can, could take me out himself like Mengele took out the Gypsy boy, pushed him himself in the gas chamber. And if I would go to [unclear] fetch water in the well, somebody was always in the window in my house, watching for me, and come and help me. And if I could tell them any news. I mean, I was in the *Kommandant's* house. Maybe I eavesdropped something. I quickly got through with the pail of water I had. A little water here, a little water there, into food, into this, into that. And I caught the pail and went over. "I'm going to get water." He said, "Fine." They looked in the window. I wink them. My mother went to help me fetch the water. I tell her, "Mommy! Guess it's *tsores* [trouble]!" She says, "*Nicht gut*?" Which means, "It's bad? It's not good?" That, and I told her word by word what happened--my conversation with the *Kommandant*, that he is going to Dolhinow, for the execution in Dolhinow. We had relatives there. My father's family, brothers, cousins. And besides, it was a big city, much bigger than Krevitz. Were about 3,000 people in Dolhinow. So it mean's there's an execution. We didn't know how. We didn't know what to do ourselves. We were panicking. I told my mother. Later on, I went back to the work out. Later on I went again for water to see what's happening. And my mother again came out to tell me that her, as I mentioned earlier, or I don't remember if I did mention, in our town we had three faiths. Was the Jewish faith, the Polish belonged to Roman Catholics, and the White Russians and Russians belonged to Greek Orthodox. The Roman Catholic is a priest, but he's unmarried. He was a older person. He had a housekeeper. But the Greek Orthodox, he is married, and he has children. And they were friends of ours, especially his daughters. He had a couple daughters. He is called "the Pope". He usually wears long hair, a beard, he wears long robes, and the big white sleeves. One of his daughters was married to a person, his name was Dubovik [phonetic]. Dubovik went to University of L'vov. And he was something like Mayor of the town, or something. He had a prominent position. So one of the daughters from the Pope, I think maybe it's Dubovik's wife, either, his sister-in-law, the wife's sister, came running to tell us that in Dolhinow is bad. And we all knew if Dolhinow is bad, it's very shortly going to be bad in Krevitz, because of the highway. The distance, the highway is good, they are motorized, and it's the nearest town. That we should be prepared. So she came to run to tell us. "I want to tell you!" She came to tell us, to warn us, that Dolhinow is bad, that we should do something about it. It's going to be bad in Krevitz also. So, my uncle and a little boy went away earlier, like four o'clock in the afternoon, went away to leave town. One aunt and her two children were on a farm. The only people who were left

in town, from my family, was my mother, my mother's younger sister, and me. Everybody else sort of left town earlier, a couple days earlier.

LH: Where was your father now?

RH: By then my father was killed.

LH: How did that happen?

RH: They shot him. They shot him. And we were going to leave town, but we waited. I couldn't leave my job. If I would disappear they'd be looking for me. But I finished my work at whatever time it was, in the afternoon, finished my work. I asked them, "Can I go now?" They said, "Yes. There is nothing else. I washed the dishes, did my housework." It's already getting toward evening. I could go. I came home. We put on a few dresses, on top of each other, and a few undershirts. Because we always see if we run away, we may never come back to our hometown. So we should be prepared. My mother sewed some money into my clothing. If, in case we split up, in case it's being shot after us, in case we run in different directions, that we should be prepared. So, as we were leaving town, in the back of our house, in the big garden, land, plot that we would farm things, potatoes, carrots, beets, cucumbers, vegetables, a vegetable garden, a little one. And as we started leaving our house, going through that garden, not to go by the streets, but go through the field, and [unclear], and from there we'll be running away. All of a sudden I heard saying, "*Halt*! *Halt*! *Jude*, *halt*!" Which means, "Stop! Stop! Jews, stop!" We thought that the Germans are chasing us already. We turn around, and there are a few little boys, maybe 12, 13-year-old boys, neighbors' children. They knew the word J*ude*, which means Jew. And they knew the word *halt*, which means stop. They just had fun. They really didn't mean anything. They just had fun. But, since they saw us, we were very afraid to take the chance of running, because they could go with the street to the police quarters, and tell them. They were on bicycles. By the end they reach the end of town on bicycles, they'll be ahead of us and waiting for us there. So we saw we can't run away. We can't go. So what do we do? So we decided, across the street from us was a drug store, a druggist. The original people who had the drug store, when the Russians came--her name was Shemenshek [phonetic] - she was a widow. And she and her children were taken to Siberia. They were [unclear] to Siberia. So, but the Russians, they put in somebody else to be a druggist, because in those days they didn't have so many educated people, pharmacists, who could do the prescriptions. You needed somebody knowledgeable. You just can't put anybody to mix up medicine. You needed a pharmacist. Then, and when the Germans came, the person who was running the drug store, he went to his hometown. But it was a Jewish man from a different town. He ran away from Ilja [phonetic]. His na--the town is Ilja, and his name was Klukt [phonetic]. He came running from Ilja, with a wife and three children, to our town. Because, being afraid that there were executions there, and being he was a pharmacist, he ran the drug store. Everybody needed him, because when this, not only Jews, but the *goyim*, the Gentiles, cause he was the, this is the only drug store for the, our town, plus all the surrounding villages around, if anybody got sick. So we decided we'll sit in his house. We'll

sit through the night in his house. They're not gonna come to take him to shot. Because if they shoot him, who's gonna make medicines for them? So we sat through the night, and in the morning, we left town. Also we had in our town curfew. We had curfew, so, beyond eight o'clock nobody should be seen in the streets, I think till seven in the morning or whatever time. So we sat through the night there. And in the morning we left his house to go to a village. Somehow the night went through quiet. The Germans did not arrive yet to our town. But we didn't know what was going on in Dolhinow. Because nobody came out to tell what's going on. It's night time. Those who ran away didn't reach our town yet. And we left in the morning the town. We wore our yellow star, because, in case if somebody sees us through the streets. But as soon as we left town, we took off the star. So if we meet people in the stree--in, in the, in, on the road, they'll think we are Gentiles. They wouldn't know who we are. We left town and we went fast to find where my uncle was, and my cousin. My uncle's name is Moshe Drayzen [phonetic]. He is now in Providence. He's an older aged person now. He had, he was a rabbi, in Providence. Also was a *shochet* in younger years. Now they're older people, close to their 80's. Their son Shabsi [phonetic] is married. He lives in California. And he's a *shochet* there.

LH: And so you were going along the road...

RH: Along the road, and we found the place where he was hiding. And the family didn't like, didn't want to keep them there. It was very cold. So the only place they let us stay was in the sauna, which was far from the house. And there it was very cold. And if you make a wood to warm up, a smoke would come out of the chimney. And the farmers usually would make sauna. It's like a bath house. Each farmer had it. It was, oh, like a couple boards and some wood and water. And they usually did it on Saturdays. And this was the middle of the week. So this was not proper to have a bath. It was very cold. So we went, asked the family if they could take us to the house. He said no, he's too scared. He's too scared. He says, "Yes, you should go to a different farmer." And [unclear] had to go. So my mother and my aunt went to a different farmer, and to ask if we could come. And she said, yes, we could come. So my mother and my aunt came back to call us. And we went. I must tell you, this was a very cold day, and we were going through the fields, through snow, not with the road. We were afraid in case somebody will see us. And on the snow we didn't have footsteps. On the snow, the snow was frozen. So, on the snow we didn't have to put, some places the foot would go free, go through. Otherwise we were walking in [unclear] footstep, if somebody would follow us. Maybe someplace would find it, the foot would go through. And we reached this house, and we stayed there. We asked him to stay for a day or so, just for a couple days to stay. And it was very cold. And this was *Pesach* already. They left *matzahs* hanging in a pillow case, which they baked matzahs hanging from a beam, under the ceiling. And we were hungry. My mother asked the farmer to buy some eggs. And it was from a, from her eggs, and my mother took out some coal to bake the eggs. Because it's Pesach. We didn't want to use the farmer's pot. We were observant. We are observant still. So the farmer offered us a cup to cool the egg, and I says

no. Now she thought we didn't know how to cook eggs, so she explained to us that eggs are being cooked, not baked. Potatoes can be baked, but not eggs. My mother said, yes, she knows, but we are baking them, because, for *kashrus* [observance of kosher laws] We didn't want to use her pot. My uncle made *kiddish* [prayer over the wine] and [unclear]. Then, it was very cold to sit in the cellar in the house, so she gave us a long coat made out of sheepskin, so we could all huddle ourselves and cover ourselves. We were five people by then--my aunt and uncle, my mother and I, oh yes, and my little cousin, my uncle's son. And we were there. My uncle urged us a few times we should go to town to see if we could come back. So my mother and my aunt, [unclear] to go. He's too weak to go, he's a man. He would be recognized. He had a beard. So my mother and my aunt, they are women, so they could be taken as farmer women. They could go. And I was too small to go. So they went. They tried to reach town, and they heard somebody on the road, people coming. So they hide behind bushes, and they were frightened. And they ran back. They made a second attempt at different, the sec--a different night to come back to town. And they went into, I think to the first house, of the suburbs of the town. And they heard dogs barking. They got frightened and ran away. They thought maybe the police or something. And they ran away. So then they decided that they knew there is a farm where Jewish people come to work. Maybe they'll go there and talk to the Jewish people, and find out what's happening in town, if we could come back. This had been a couple days. We are hungry. We are cold, and uncomfortable. We went to this farm. And, we knew the Jewish people are working there, but we didn't know exactly which field, or which area they are at work, where. Because it's a big farm, and we didn't know where they are. So they sent a girl from that house. "Ask her, do me a favor, and call the Jewish people. Maybe you know who is at work today, which people." And she said whom she saw. She mentioned Jewish names. My mother picked the one name. And his name was Mendel Rabinovitz. Call me Mendel." He was known, because he was the, selling a lot of farmer's supplies. So all the farmers knew him. He was dealing mostly with farm supplies, hardware. In the meantime, there was an old grandma rocking in a cradle a baby. And the grandmother was, asked my mother and my aunt, "Who are you?" So they gave a different name, and said they're from a different town. She said, "I don't know. I am blind. I can't see you. But according to voice, you sound like you would be the *shochet* Yudi's *kinder*." The *shochet* that has children, or the *shochet*; see, my grandmother had a name, Szacherzingc, because my grandfather was a *shochet*, which in Polish would be Szachnikowa. Or in Russian would be Rayznichika [phonetic], Rayznik [phonetic] my grandfather was. So, this is how they titled my grandmother**:** Panish Szachnikova [phonetic], or Rayznichika [phonetic] because my...

LH: So, what happened?

RH: So the meantime, my mother and, tried to deny who she was, but asked her, "What's doing in Krevitz? What's doing in the town?" "Ah, you don't ask what a tragedy befell your town. They killed the rabbi and his wife and his children. And the *rebbitzen* [rabbi's wife] had a single sister. And they killed her." And the *rebbitzen* a married sister,

from the one who we bought the watch, the gold watch, earlier in the story. And her husband was in Siberia. They killed her, and her four children--the two sons and the two daughters--because they did not want to have a trace. And they were looking for the *shochet's* children, which means they were looking for *us*. They came to our house. They were looking for us. The Germans knew that in the Jewish community, the *rov* and the *shochet* are the leaders of the community. And the people will follow what the *rov* and the *shochet* will say. So this means they killed the *rov* of our town. They wanted to kill the *shochet* of our town, because we were the leaders. And they looked for us. By then my mother didn't want to wait anymore for Mendel, to tell us what's doing in the town. So we tried to leave, but by then he arrived. He came from wherever he was working. And he told us, "Don't come back to town. They're looking for you." So as, earlier, see, my mother and my aunt had obstacles. They could not go into town. The dogs were barking, or they heard noises, or voices. Each time they turned back, they said it was a *mazel* [good luck], because, never knowing whom they could step into. And they would catch them and being executed, because they were looking for us.

LH: So where did you go from there?

RH: So after that, we did not return to town. We asked the lady where we stayed if we could stay with her more. We stayed with her a little bit longer. This Mendel suggested that there are still some towns which they didn't have executions yet. Maybe we could go to those towns, and be there with the other Jewish people in the ghettos. He suggested some towns, some names. Our town wasn't executed yet. Only the rabbi's family was taken, which was actually the rabbi's family, the *rebbitzen's* sister and children, and the single sister. It was three families taken. And they were looking for us. But not, it wasn't the mass execution yet. It was only like single families. So we asked our farmer if we could stay with him a little bit longer. We didn't tell them exactly what happened, because they might be frightened to keep us. Being that there was hunger in land, because when the Germans arrived, and they were going through the fields, they spoiled the crops, and also they burned the crops. So people did not have any wheat or potatoes, because they ruined the crops. They arrived on, in the summer time, in '41. And they were going with their tanks through the fields. So they ruined the crops before the crops could be harvested. So by the end of the winter, was hunger. The people had no food. Being we had money with us, we had gold, gold rubles, we gave her money, a five ruble, a ten ruble, and we sent her to, which, we knew in the area who are rich farmers, that maybe still have supplies, that she could buy from them. So being we helped her with food, she kept us. Maybe she didn't know the consequences, what was gonna come to her, if we were discovered. In fact she thought maybe nobody knew that we are there. So this was, we came to her about March 30th. By then it's already April, beginning of April, '42. And a few weeks later, like, not, was gonna be the *yahrzeit* [anniversary of disaster] for my town, *Iyar* 11th. I don't remember what date it was as far as regular, the secular calendar. But I remember one afternoon we saw a big fire through the window, from the farmer's house where we stayed.

And each of us tried to guess the location, where the fire was burning. Each one going through the air, looking, having the [unclear], next to the church, or a meal, or whatever we could see from far, because it was, we were about five or six kilometers from town. But we saw the flames. So we could take guesses what it is. My guess was that this is the public school. The way my orientation was, I said, "This is the public school." Other people in the family, including the farmer, looking at the fire, "Look, there's a fire!" Everybody tried to guess something else. We tried to send the farmer, the man from the house where we stayed, he should go and find out what it was. Just they were executed.

LH: It was the what?

RH: The execution.

LH: It was the execution.

RH: It was the execution. So we tried to send the lady--she was more [unclear] to town, to find out what happened. She went to town to find out. And when she came back, she came down to us to the cellar where we were hiding under the foundation of the house. She hugged us and she kissed us. And she said, "I'm not even gonna let you go. You stay with me. Whatever's gonna happen to you, is gonna happen to me, or to me or to you."

LH: What was this lady's name?

RH: The lady's name is Anna Kobinska.

LH: Anna Kobinska.

RH: Kobinska. She lives now in Krakow. She is in Krakow. She lives now in Krakow. We have a correspondence. I send her Christmas gifts. We exchange pictures. She asks me many times to come to visit. And every time I make the plans to come, my husband cannot make it for one reason or another. Because I want very much to go to see her. She asked me, "While I'm still alive. I'm getting older. I want to see you." And every year I make the plans to go on vacation, and every time somehow my husband does not get a vacation. He can't go. And, she told us about the tragedy, what happened. She cried, and we cried, and we cried, and she cried. And she said all the stories. Later on she went again to town on a Sunday to church. And there were stories talking, which people were taken, a baby, one mother, a young mother tried to put a baby in the crib and put some blankets and people found her with the baby. They heard the baby cry. They shot the baby, and she had to carry the dead baby, the blood running, to the execution spot. One mother carrying the baby, from crying, was biting the baby. Some people told there were screams when the Jewish people were rounded up and going through the streets. They heard screams. They couldn't listen to the screams. In the houses, they put the blankets on the windows. They put pillows over their heads. From the Gentiles, they couldn't take the screams of the people. The Jewish people were rounded up, and taken. We had a big church. That [unclear], the Roman Catholic Church, and there was a big fence made out of big brick or stone, a very tall fence, about ten foot tall. They put the people there, between the church and the fence. And they had to give out their money, or jewelry, whatever was sewn in their clothing. They told them they're gonna let them free. They did, but they didn't. I was

right about the location about the public school. It wasn't the public school, but across the street from the public school there was a big warehouse, where the Russians lived when they occupied our town between '39 and '41. They built a big warehouse. And that's where they put in all the Jewish people, in the warehouse. They went through a few times with a machine gun. They put gasoline, and they burned them. Many were half alive, wounded, and many were alive. A little girl, I think her name is Chaya Sora. Her mother's name was Reesha, so we used to call her Chaya Sora Reesha. She was about 12, but small in height, short in height, not very a tall girl, a small girl. Her parents were shot. She ran out, and the one man - I forgot his name - he caught, a man from the local people, he was Lischinsky's brother-in-law, from the *unterveltnikkes* [the lowest element] of the town. You know what it is, *unterveltnik*? He grabbed this little girl, and threw her into the fire. She ran out, frightened, and he chased her. She was little. Her steps were small. She was running. He chased her. He grabbed her. He carried her, threw her in again a second time. And she ran out. By then, by the second time she ran out, her clothes were burning, because he could throw her-

Tape two, side one:

RH: Where do I start?

LH: Well...

RH: O.K., I'll start because it shut off. When the Jewish people of my town, when the Jewish people of my town, Krevitz, were rounded up to be executed, there was one very beautiful girl. There were lots of beautiful girls. But I know the story of one girl, that was told to us. I don't know who witnessed it, probably not Jewish people were able to witness it, because anybody who was there did not survive. Maybe from the local militia, from the local police, who were the boys from our town that helped the Germans. Maybe they saw it, and they told this to their families, and that's how it became knowledgeable to us. Her name was Merka. They call her Merka. Maybe it was Miriam, but they called her Merka. Her father's name was Shmuelka. Shmuelka was a *katsov*, he was a butcher. Merka was a very beautiful girl. She was in her early twenties. They told the people, all of them, or just her, I don't know, to get undressed, and she was undressed. And a German touched her body. She was very beautiful, had a beautiful figure. In revenge, she slapped the German. After that, not only they shoot her, they punish her father. They ask which one is her father, and somebody pointed out to her father, but, it was, I guess, a mistake, and they took the father's brother, which his name was Shinsel. They were neighbors. They were tall, good-looking men. And they poked out Shinsel's eyes before they executed him. From this family survived one son. His name was Micha. He must, oh, have been 19, 20, 21. I don't remember now how old he was then. And somehow he reached the partisans. And he was in partisans. And there was a fight between the partisans and the Germans. And he had either a rifle or a machine gun, and he was shooting. He was very excited that he could shoot a German. Whether he killed him or not, I don't know. I don't remember from the stories they told me. But each time I know that when he shoots, he said that this is in revenge for my mother, for my father, for my sister, for my brother, and he mentioned every time the names of his family. I remember he had one sister whose name was Beylka. [Unclear] in the family. And the commandeer told him, from the resistance, he should get down, because he was standing. He was very excited about it that he could take revenge. And he was shot. People who were in the resistance, in the partisans with him, told us what happened to Micha. It was after the war, when we survived, and we met other people in our town. And, of course, we inquired about each and every one in the family, if they know whereabouts, where they are, and who survived. And that's when they told us what happened to Micha. And Micha got killed in the partisans that time in [unclear].

LH: Did you hear from your farmers, did you hear much about what was going on with the resistance?

RH: From the farmers we could hear about the resistance, because at night the resistance would come to us for food from the farm, and also maybe for some information. We had a railroad not far from our town, and also not far from our hiding place. We would

see during the day trains, long trains, going to the front, to the Leningrad front, to the Vitebsk front, to the Russian front, going for ammunition. And every night partisans came, and they put mines under the railroad. So the Germans became smart. And the first two cars would be sent before the engine would be sent, so they were stepping on the mines, so that only the sand would get splashed, and the train would be survived, the ammunition and all. So the partisans learned to make time bombs that the first two cars and the engine would go by, and in the middle it would get exploded. So then the Germans [unclear] and they put on guard local farmers to guard the railroad. They were afraid to put there Germans. They put local farmers to guard the railroad. So the partisans would not destroy the railroad, because this was a connection with the front, with the Leningrad front. So the partisans would come, and tie up the people, and still do, and still do, put bombs or mines under the railroad, because the local people by then cooperated with the partisans. Besides they had no choice. The partisans would come with guns. And besides, the people didn't like the Germans anymore, because from the First World War the Germans were the good Germans with Kaiser Wilhelm. The people prospered. I remember my grandmother telling stories from the First World War, because I asked her once, "Whom did the people like better - the Germans or the Russians? Like the Czar, or the Germans?" [Unclear] she says, no, they preferred, because the Czar's army didn't come, or the Cossacks would come and they would persecute the Jews. But the Wilhelm army, they were good Germans. They, somehow, I don't know, they were different people, polite, whatever. They would come. So here, by this time, they already heard of the trouble the Germans were doing. They were scared of them too, because one doesn't know what's gonna happen. So then they gave out a law to cut out all the trees near the railroad, because we had lots of woods – forests - growing. Now, lots of forests. So the partisans come to the forests, and come to the railroad. And then they go on their stomach. So they cut out all the trees, I don't know how many feet from the railroad, cut out all the trees. But somehow the partisans always managed. The partisans are people, were patriots, and doing underground work. This is not bought for money like a, or anything. They did because they wanted it. They are volunteers. It's not that people are being drafted and they're forced to do. They are volunteers. They do whatever they, because they want to do. So, a lot of people, the young Jewish boys by then were in partisans, and, of course, they were very involved, and very active in the partisans. But we were hidden in the farmer's house. We didn't know where the partisans are. We wanted to join them, but we didn't know where they are. We could not get connections. But after being maybe a year-and-a-half, maybe twenty months in the farmer's house, they burned down her house, because it was a big house, and not far from the railroad. And the partisans were afraid that the Germans might make a base, might make a base there. And they needed a, they didn't want the Germans should make a base there.

LH: Oh, so the partisans burned down the house.

RH: Yes, but they told, came and they told her and she could take out her things, whatever she could, she could take out her things. They gave her time. But by then we were

gone from there. We were gone. The farm lady what we stayed, she had a man, it's called a *parobek* [Polish farmer], that he worked the land for her. And they had 50-50 arrangement. It's her land and his labor, and they divided the crops. And they were a young couple. They were young. They could do. But she couldn't do the work on the farm. She was a woman. In fact, either he noticed us, he heard noises. But every Saturday night he would go home to his village. And the one time he saw so [unclear] partisans and they found us there. So being he knew, the *parobek* knew--his name was Ignatz--that we are there, we were afraid to stay with him. Being there, we were exposed, that the Jews are hiding on this farm. So we were afraid to be there.

LH: So what did you do?

RH: So what did you do? So first of all, we had to decide quickly what to do. So right away after the partisans left the house and they exposed us.

LH: You didn't trust the partisans?

RH: No. No. And we didn't trust Ignatz either. What I do, Ignatz and his wife they know, and maybe he'll tell. [Unclear] they could be drunk one Saturday night and tell somebody else that she's hiding Jews. By then our town was executed completely. No Jews. From the fifth execution, some people ran away. Either they were at work during the day. Either they were, if they have a chance to run away, a few people ran away. They survived. Then they lived in the one house. It was a, the, a woman her name was Sora Meira. She had a big house. Everybody lived in Sora Meira's house. And this, a bomb was thrown into that house a few weeks later. A bomb was thrown into that house. So whoever was still there, they got killed by the bomb. But somehow the few people survived that, I don't know how. So once Ignatz knew that we are there, we didn't trust him. So what did we do? So my mother and I went right after the partisans of [unclear]. And Ignatz was with them. He didn't even come himself, maybe he would let it go. But Ignatz came with them. We're looking like into Ignatz' window, telling Ignatz, "You must take us in. She's throwing us out." But, we called her the pani, because in Polish, like here you say Mrs. or Miss. In Polish you use, you say pani, or pan. Pan for Mr. and Pani for Mrs. So we called her pani. Instead of calling her Mrs. we called her pani. We didn't call her the first name. When [unclear] we call her Pani Anna. But then with ourselves, we just, the pani, the pani, like the Mrs.

LH: How many of there were you? Were there still five?

RH: At one time, we were by the pani - eight. My uncle, Laber Kafla, was shot on the farm. So my aunt Frieda - who had two children - came to us. We were, oh yeah, I forgot to tell earlier, we made contact. My mother made contact with her sister, who was on a farm at that time, because a few weeks earlier, we sent her to the farm because her husband, head of *Smolarnia* [Polish pitch factory], is a, a factory, that they made out of woods of certain trees. I think *sosna*- [Polish for pine] I don't know which tree. Trees like you use for Christmas trees, that had a lot of tar in them. So he had a factory to produce tar, before the war. He was a rich man. He owned twelve factories like this. You put in a

big kettle the roots of the trees, and you hit them, and the tar leaks out. And this is being gathered into barrels, and the barrels are being sold to businessmen who are involved in shipping industry. They were going to Gdynia and to Gdansk, to the Polish ports. And this was very necessary to smear the boats, because this is waterproof, with this tar, to prevent them from leakage. Because in those days boats were made out of wood, not out of metal.

LH: So how many of there were you at the time this happened with Ignatz?

RH: Well, at the time of Ignatz, I don't remember, but I remember that my mother and I went to Ignatz. We knocked on his window, and we told him, "You must take, you must take us in." He didn't want to. I said, "Ignatz! You are gonna have on your con science - where can we go now in the middle of the night!? You're a Christian! You're gonna have on your conscience not to take us in now! She's throwing us out. She will not take us back. And where do you expect us to go now?" My mother says, "I am a widow. I have a child. You're a Christian, and you're supposed to help me. So at this point you must keep me." He said, "I'm scared." I said, "I'm not gonna go in the middle of the night. You have to take us in." All we wanted that Ignatz should feel guilty if he's hiding Jews just the same, so by then he will not go and report that the pani was holding us. We stayed with him at his house for two days, in the cellar. In the daytime they went to work. They would give us a little bit food to eat, bread, whatever they gave us. They gave us, whatever they gave us, food to eat. And then, he says, "Look, you can't stay here." So we asked him, "Where can we go? Where are partisans?" And he told us. But we pretended that we went. But we went back to the pani. But we wanted to shut up Ignatz, that he should not be able to call Germans to tell that pani's holding Jews, that he should be just involved, even for two days. But now he was holding Jews. He already was branded that he held the Jews. He couldn't go to tell the Germans. If he told the Germans that she was, that the pani was holding Jews, then she could say that, "Ignatz, you were holding Jews too."

LH: Hmm.

RH: Making Ignatz feel guilty. This was our aim, that we can get Ignatz to keep us here.

LH: So you stayed with the pani then for the rest of the war?

RH: Not for the rest of the war. We felt it's too dangerous to stay there. The partisans know. The partisans are gonna come. They're gonna burn the house, because Ignatz came one time. He said, "The partisans are talking of burning down your house." And this was in the fall, so this is in like fall. I don't know how long we stayed more, but we went from there. See, my aunt, the one who, Frieda Kafla, being her husband was shot, and she was in the village, and the villagers felt sorry for her because they saw with their own eyes when he was shot. And she happened to be away from there, factory, from this *smolarnia*. Every day she would go with her children to different farmers [unclear], go to visit them, in case a, because the Germans knew there's a Jew on this *smolarnia*, running the business, running the smo--even for them, she was afraid they might come. When they round up the Jews in the town, they come to round up here. He is a one man, he could run

away. But she was with small children. What's she gonna do? So every day she would, for the day she would go out, and at night she would come back. But the farmers knew her, and being he was buying from them this, the woods, the roots of the wood, he was giving them a living. So somehow she would come there and ask for food, and they were giving some bread or a bottle of milk or a couple of eggs. And somehow she got contact for us. And now we felt there was danger there with the pani. I don't remember exactly what, but we felt danger there. So we went away to different people. And then we tried, and then again she would go to the villages and find out, and they told her, "Oh, Jews were here, yesterday, Jews were here, Saturday. 'Where are they? Find me! Connect me!'" We contacted, you see, there were the partisans. In our area were islands, but not islands from water, but islands surrounded with, with, how can I say, with swamps. Swamps. So the area was swampy. But a little bit further, with their little, like a little hill, which is dry, and there are trees. But how do you reach the little hill? You had to go through the swamps. And the swamps could go as far as your knee, or even as far as your chest. So wintertime the swamps would be frozen, but in summer time they were swamps. So the partisans could not go there. Now, in a bigger area, there were already a strong base from partisans, and they already took in people who would do supplies for them, like tailors and shoemakers, so they could, and blacksmiths, so they could do their horses the horseshoes. And the tailors could sew clothing for them, or whatever they ever they needed. And the women could bake bread for them and make food. And there was like a base established. I was never there, but it was, the families of the partisans were provided, or protected in other words. So people told us, "There is a base of partisans." Now they didn't take in everybody. They only took selected people, either strong people, people who are young, and people who could fight. So the women and children they didn't need. So, on the other areas, on those islands, families were hiding and having to make bunkers in the woods. But by then it was already '4--end of '43, the winter of '43, like, the winter starts like maybe like October, November, December, '43, going into '44. So we were in one of the swamps, and it was very cold. And it was raining. And they made a shed out of leaves, and some twigs. And the wind blew and it blew all apart. And it was cold, and no food. So, from the farmers, and we, by then they already made trouble for the villagers, too, took away Jews to go to camps. They did not go to concentration camp, it was working labor camps. I believe there were not concentration camps, because, the only paper you could get was a German paper - printed in Russian or in White Russian – but German use. So they wanted to show in the paper their victories in Russia, there on to Moscow, the victories in Leningrad. But they did show the *mapoleh* [disastrous defeat] in Stalingrad, because they were wearing like arm bands. But mostly there was white, it's victory, victory, in Africa, victory in England, victories in the other, in Italy, wherever they had a victory. But wherever they had *tsuris* [trouble], they didn't show it. And, but a farmer would get news from the partisans. They had underground radios, in contact with the Soviet Union. And they might get news. So, from the farmer we'd get news of bombings of anything. We were very eager to hear

anything, hear if the war is getting near. But even if it's not getting near, at least, so the Russian army is standing near us, that we could be freed from the, from the Germans. But remember, I am near the Russian border. We waited for the Russian army. I'm not in France there, waiting for the...

LH: Well, Americans.

RH: For the Americans.

LH: Right.

RH: I am too far from there. If the Americans would have reached me, I could be dead ten times. So, my mother went, and my aunt, Aunt Frieda, went to a farmer. This farmer was a rich farmer. He was [unclear]. He had lots of land. He also was a, he was a farmer. He was a smith, a blacksmith. And the partisans would come to him to fix the horses, the horseshoes for the horses, because they were riding on horseback, to make it faster to get to their destination. Also fixing their guns or something fixing for them. So they would get spoiled. So we figured he's involved with the partisans, so maybe he wouldn't be afraid to meet with us. My mother went to him. And she begged him, and offered to pay him in gold, he should build us a bunker. We were undernourished. We were very skinny. I tell you as a matter of fact, we lost the menstruation. From being undernourished, my mother and my aunt, they were young women, and I was a young teen, we lost the menstruation. We didn't get any menstruation, because we were undernourished, no food. It made me stunt my growth. Maybe I would have been taller. Because no food in the growing years, in the years when I had to grow. He said he would ask his wife if he should do it. By then, that was, this was in Pilcaschidna [phonetic], Pilcaschidna, Pilcaschidna. My mother had to cross a river, and the bridge was burnt. So there was a lot of wood, to cross on that log. The log was frozen with lots of ice. She couldn't walk on the log. The log was all ice, my mother and my aunt. By this time, my mother's different sister, Frieda, her younger sister, was going with my mother, to, to cross the river. And this is almost a little bit more safe, because German tanks could not cross the area. There were no bridges, unless they, they crossed there, the army, which put up portable bridges. But otherwise, and this takes time. Otherwise, the bridges were burned by partisans. The local people would cross either on the ice, or on the log. So, now when they came to cross the river, my mother and my aunt were debating who should go first. My mother being the older, so she says, "I'll go first. And you see me, if I cross safely, then you follow me. Don't be afraid. You follow me." And Frieda kept saying, "No! I will go first, because if something happens to you, we are all lost. Me and my children, including your child. But if I go first, and I drown, and you survive, and you do not go across because you see it's dangerous, and, at least you'll be a mother to my children." So the two sisters were arguing who should cross first the river. Each one tried to spare each other's life, not to save their own life. My mother wanted to go first. In case she drown, so Frieda could be alive, could survive, and not cross the river any more. On this log, which was round, and icy. It was very slippery. And Frieda kept saying, "No Fanya. Let me go first. Because if I

drown, and you survive, at least you'll be able to be a mother for your child and my children." They were both widows. The two sisters are widows by now. Because Frieda felt my mama is more energetic, older, and Frieda was very depressed. She used to be very rich. Her husband was killed. She was sick. She had from the cold, she had no warm clothing to wear. She was dressed very poorly, in *shmatas*, in rags. Her feet were [unclear]. She wore, she had a robe, so she was in this. This was her only clothing. No coat. Nothing. So she got sick. Her blood was like it put a cold in her blood or something like that. So she had cysts all over her body. We had no medication to heal it, so people would give a little bit flour, corn meal or something. She would put it, it should dry. This was itching, in her head. Especially on her behind. She would sit on her back, on her arms. So the two sisters were arguing who should go first. Each one tried to spare each other's life. Finally when they crossed the river and reached the farmer's house, he received them very nicely. He knew who we were, from the family, that we are from a prominent family from our town. He gave them food. He gave them lodging, slept over the night. And she begged him, and he said he would ask his wife. And the wife was too scared. So she begged him that he and his brother who was, his bro--this was Yosef, and his brother's name was something else. But the brother already suffered from the Germans. The whole village where Yosef's brother lived, was burned down. They had no places to live any more. The whole village was burned down. Probably because they helped partisans. Or they were accused of helping partisans.

LH: So did he build the bunker for you?

RH: Yes he did, for 20 ruble gold. He built the bunker for us. And my mother and my aunt came back to us, and they told us good news. Promised by Saturday the bunker will be ready. And we had to endure, suffer through the few more days from the cold in this shack that we built from twigs and leaves. And we came to this bunker. But when we came into the bunker, it looked like a palace, like a mansion, to us. First of all, it was warm, made out of logs, in the ground. And to disguise it was sand and grass and twigs put over it. He built us a little window so we could see, so we had light, at least see what's doing outside. He built it from rocks a little stove. And in the woods we could chop wood, and we could boil a little water. And out of logs he made a table for us. Out of logs. He also made something like a deck. And he brought us fresh straw. So we slept on it. So one deck was small, for three people. So it slept my aunt Bushka and her husband Moishe and Shevi, their child, for three people. And the one side was longer, so I slept with my mother. And then Frieda slept with her two children, Sam and Annie, Shamma and Hannah. And then later on my aunt found her brother-in-law--her husband's sister's husband--that she was killed, with this one child Sorah. And Shmuli and Sorah and Labele they were killed in this execution in Krevitz. I don't know if it was in [unclear], I don't remember. But her husband Label and one daughter Sonya, they survived the execution, because they also were on the farm, in this *smolarnia*. They survived. So she found him and brought him to us, that he could be with us. Sonya is now in Israel. Label also lived in Israel, but he died of natural

causes about ten or fifteen years ago. As of age, natural causes, but Sonya lives in Haifa. She's a teacher. Her husband is a scientist. They have two children, and grandchildren.

LH: So you were in the bunker and, was that where you...

RH: So now we are in the bunker. The bunker was like a mansion compared to where we were there. At one time later we were someplace in a village and we found a man all alone, from Dolhinow. He was a blacksmith. He survived. So we found him. He didn't know where to go. So we brought him along with us. And we lived there, and we made food. And we lived there. So this was the winter '43 and '44. And by spring of '44 we heard like shatterings, from very far away, like shatterings. And I said, "It sounds to me that this is bombings. Maybe the front is coming near us." This isn't a joke. Because this was impossible. This isn't a joke. And one day, Label, he used to go to the farmer. He was well liked with the peop--local people. He was a joker, a likeable person. He liked [unclear], he was well liked by the farmers, by their local people. And, but this is in the villages, far away from our town. We are in the woods. This, the bunker is built in the woods. So you'd think all this, all this banging that we hear, this is the front. But it must be very far away. At night, when it's very quiet, we could hear boom, boom, boom, boom. And I figured by air you could hear very far. Maybe it's the front coming nearer. Then one time we heard the good news that the Americans had [unclear] in Normandy. We didn't exactly knew where it was, or who or how, but the Americans came out to war. So we were happy about it. And then all of a sudden the bombing, the boom, boom came nearer and nearer, and running into the village, they said, "The front is coming nearer, that this is it!" But we had to be very careful, because the German army is breaking away, and the soldiers are running where they can. They're not going together as an army. Each one for their own lives. And if they come to the woods and find us, they could shoot us. So we have to be very careful. Also, by that spring, we were growing up. Me, I was the oldest from my cousins, I tried to teach them, because you have to. So we didn't have paper or pencils. So on the ground, on the sand, we made it level, and take a stick, and teach. My younger cousin, Hannah, which, and, she lives now in Canada, teach her one plus one. Teach her the ABC, Russian ABC, teach her a little bit arithmetic. I had to teach her. We were at time four children: me, the oldest, Rachel; then my cousin Sam, Shein; and then my cousin Shevi, she is now in California; and my cousin Hannah, Henny, she is now in Canada. Sam died in Canada not too long after, with a heart attack. He was overweight, and he died about fifteen years ago.

LH: So when did the front come to you?

RH: Actually, we did not see a front. It was a *Blitzkrieg*. The Russians learned from the German strategy. And they did not stop fighting. The partisans helped in the back, and there was a *Blitzkrieg*. And every day later, when somebody else would go to the village, talk to the, to the local people, hear what's going on. And they told us this, it was the front Hastrevitz, so a little further. So one day Label went to Krevitz to find out what's doing, if any Jews are there. He went with somebody, or probably the Shmied [phonetic], Yankele Shmied from Dolhinow. Alone he wouldn't go, but he maybe went with Yankele

Shmied from Dolhinow, went to Krevitz to find out. Yes, there's already a government, a Russian government, local, from local people. And the front is already far away. And we decided that we are gonna come to town. A week later, a couple weeks, because in the woods was dangerous. Because it is broken up the army, two, three, four, five German soldiers, and they had ammunition. They could kill us. So one day we decided that all the people from this area who survived from my town, plus people from the next town, that were near us, they should all come with us to Krevitz. We should come in as a group, not as individuals. We should come in as a group. So we hired a wagon, a horse and wagon, this is for the children to ride. And adults walked. We walked the whole night. Because, let's say, "our" family, a few miles away at a different island, and a different few families, from a different town, from Yargov, we took them with us. Then from a different island, other families from our town, we took them. And we took them in. We came in to the town, on a Sunday morning. We walked the whole night. And as we came, we saw how they, the trees that were chopped by the railroad, they were growing like little bushes. So we knew what was happening. And we came to the town, and people were living in our house. So my mother went to the local authorities to tell them that we are back, and we'd like to, we suffered enough, wherever we were hiding, and we would like to have our house. So they told them, the people who occupied our house that they should move out. And, it was our furnishings. Misery because everything was robbed, taken. So we went to our house, and all the people that came along with us, our friends, moved into our house. I mean the local people in my town, from Krevitz, maybe they could get their houses, too, but they were too scared to be a one person in their own house. They'd rather sleep on the floor, but as a group. We still didn't trust the local people either. And the local people came running to see that we survived. And some people would say, "We thought you were in America, you're, because you were so rich, that maybe hi--you chartered a plane and went to America or to England." Some came with eggs and milk, butter with bread. "We're happy you survived. Thanks God you survived. It was terrible for you. It was terrible for us." And people came to greet us, with presents, presents of food. Because they were happy that we are here. Then a little girl was playing there. But she looked like a *shiksehle* [little Gentile girl]. So my mother says to me that, this is a *shikseh* girl. Whose child is this? Is she like from which neighbor? Because none, she says, *"Ich nicht a shiksehle. Ich a Yiddishe.*" [I am not a little Gentile girl, I am a Jew.] I say, "Oh yeah, who are you?, *wu bist du*?" She tells us, "*Ich bin fun Miagov*" [I am from Miagov.] "*Wer bist du fun Miagov*?" [Where are you from Miagov?"] And she told her, Miagov was a town, I don't know how many kilometers from us. But we heard of this town, Miagov. And I heard when the Germans came in to us in '41, it's from Miagov they took the *zwenzig beste baalebatim,* the twenty prominent people - the rabbi, the r*ov*, the *shochet*, the business people, and they tortured them. And how did they torture them? They put boiling water over them. And the rabbi's beard they pulled. They put vicious dogs, that the dogs should bite them, and pull them apart. But they were very tortured. Before they were shot they were tortured. And among

these twenty *balebatim* was this girl's father. My mother prayed to God being I was an only child, that He should spare my life, that I should not be killed during the war.

Tape two, side two:

RH: That he spares my life. She felt it's gonna be a lot of orphans after the war, boys or girls, that she's gonna take a orphan, and raise it as her child. So my mother wanted to take this little girl and raise her as her child. But she was with a different family. Her parents were, her father was killed in the beginning. Then, she had a uncle or a cousin in Dolhinow, who was involved in partisans. And he arranged to take out the Jews from that town one night. There were prepared horses and wagons to take out the women and the children, take them out from the town. And they did. And they were hidden in woods. And one day, the local people came to tell the Germans, that this is not an army, and no partisans, but women and children. And the Germans came, and they made a, they rounded them up. They were shooting them. They rounded up and they were running away. So this little girl, her name is Chayala. Her name is Chayala, was Chayala Gordon. Now she's married. She lives in New Jersey. She has four children of her own. So Chayala was holding her mother's hand. Her little brother, who was older than she, he fell. And she was [unclear] her mother, and her mother fell. She saw her mother trip over a wood, or a bush. She let go of her mother's hand, and she was running, falling, running. When it quieted down, she found a uncle, and she was with her uncle. And by the end of the war, the uncle knocked on somebody's window in the middle of the night, asking for shelter or for food, and German people were in that village, and they shoot him. Because she was little, standing next to him, they didn't notice her. And he was of natural height. And she was a child, maybe five years old. So they didn't shoot her. That's what she was telling us. And she ran away, and she found this, joined different people, and she went with people. And then my mother took this little girl Chayala from this family. My mother raised her. And she was with us in our town. When the time came for us to leave our town to go to Poland, we took her along. When we came to Poland, you see, Poland was not a Polish government. Maybe they speak Polish, but it was under Russia, under the Soviet Union. We did not wish to remain there, because we wanted to go more to a western. Our aim was to reach Israel or America, the United States. By then my mother had a sister in Canada, and a brother in the United States, and another sister in the United States. So we did not wish to remain in Europe. We could not stand walking on the sidewalk, which were blood shed on the street, and seeing our *shul*, which was historic. When the Germans first came in, they burned the *Sefer Torahs* [*Torah* scrolls], and all the stores in our town. They made a big fire. And they took out the *Sefer Torahs*, put them up like logs of wood. And they burned them. Even the local people felt that this was a shame to do, because they knew that for our people, the Torah is very holy. So one of the, maybe a few of the local people helped schlep the *Sefer Torahs* to be burned. Later on this guy, somehow, for whatever reason, the Germans shoot him. And when the people, the local people went to his funeral, and he was displayed in his coffin, they said that his right arm was hanging, like it was shot. And they felt, the local people, because he helped to carry the Jews' Torah to be burned. Even he was shot by the

Germans. He was punished. The local people were very Christian, very religious, at that time. Maybe now they're modernized and maybe they're not so. But at that time they were very Christian, and very religious, and believers in the Almighty. So they felt that to a Jew this is a very holy thing, the Torah. And because he helped the Germans burn it, he was punished for it. He was shot by the Germans, and his right arm was sort of, to the shooting, cut, or, was hanging down. It's funny. His name was Stavitsky. I forgot his first name. But I remember his face. I forgot his first name. My mother raised Chayala when we came to Germany to the displaced persons camp. We came to Foehrenwald. She came along with us. She was always with us. She was a little girl. She used to go to school. She was a blonde. She was beautiful. She was cute. And she did come to the United States. Actually, we sent her. Because, my mother registered in the Committee[3] of, all our names. And our relatives here saw the names in the Jewish newspaper. So they started making papers for us. Maybe they saw Chayala's name also, but they didn't know that she belonged to us. We registered her name as Chayala Gordon. Maybe some of the family would see her from Yardov. But they didn't know that we were raising her. We had no communication by mail with them. No communication with mail. So they didn't know. So for her we didn't have any papers. So that time they were taking children, orphans, and bringing them to the States. They signed them orphans. And my mother registered her, to send her to the States, to our relatives here. And when we will come, she is going to come to live with us. So when she arrived to the States, my uncle, my mother's brother, his name is Rabbi Mendel, Al, Nachum Mendel Altari [phonetic]. At that time he was in Worchester. And a social worker contacted him. And he took her, and he raised her. And he married her off. He wrote, my mother also had a sister, Tolador, Telagor [phonetic], in Worchester. She also wanted Chayala, to raise her. But Mendel wanted to raise her because Mendel was rabbi. The others were modern. He wanted to raise her in a religious way, that she should know that she is Jewish and why her parents perished, because of being Jewish. Now she's living a religious life. She married a Lubavicher. My uncle was a Lubavich, a Lubavicher. Her husband is a rabbi. He went, he made through college in his spare time, and he became a math teacher. For he, he, as, to earn a living he was a Hebrew teacher in a *yeshivah*. But in odd hours he would go to college and he became a math teacher. He was teaching high school math. And he works in computers in Manhattan. They have four children. Two daughters are married. A son is engaged. All went to *yeshivahs*. All very fine family. We are very proud of her, that she grew up on her own. I mean, with our help, of course. Chayala's children call me *Tante* Rocheleh. My name is Rachel, and they consider me as an aunt, as being an older sister to Chayala. They call me *Tante* Rocheleh and my husband is Uncle Moishe. And we treat her children as our own, and whenever there is a *simchah* [joyful occasion], with nice gifts, and we love them. Chayala already has two grandchildren. Her two daughters who are married: one is married to a doctor who is Lubavich. And the one daughter is married to a Lakewood student. And he is still keeping and studying Torah in Lakewood *yeshivah*.

[3]Central Committee, the authorized representative of displaced Jews in the American zone.

The son also went to Lubavich *yeshivah*. The youngest son, her daughter is named Hannah for her mother. And the son is named Michel [Michael], for her father, the two other children for different relatives, perhaps her husband's family. Well, she still has one son engaged now, and one son is about 16 or 17, went to the Longbeach *Yeshivah*.

LH: Just let me ask you something about, you said you were in a camp, a DP camp at the end.

RH: Well, this is a displaced persons' camp...

LH: Right.

RH: This is after the war. In the displaced persons' camp, we were in '45 till the end of '47, actually beginning of '48 we left the camp to go, to come to North America, which we arrived to Canada.

LH: What was life like in the camp?

RH: In camp? Well, remember, the camp life was after the war. It's normal times. We were supported by the Joint [American Joint Distribution Committee]. Right away we were organized . . .

LH: By the Joint.

RH: By the Joint.

LH: What's the Joint?

RH: In other, the Joint is some kind of American organization, HIAS or something, or Joint, or Jewish philanthropies or something like that. This is after the war. This is displaced persons' camp. They organized right away a school. Schoolchildren went to school. We taught them Hebrew and other subjects. They opened up an ORT [Organization for Rehabilitation and Training] school. I went to the ORT school. I learned sewing. Which I made beautiful gowns and beautiful dressed that I sewed. I work with it. I earn my, when I arrived to Canada I worked in a factory to sew, because I learned sewing in this ORT school. There was also knitting. I was working in a knitting school. Or the knitting, I was already professional, while being hidden at the farm. The farm there also had a name, the *agrono*, because he was an agricultural engineer. Another one who was hiding us, actually, the original people who owned this farm, his name was Kuchevsky [phonetic]. He was a Polish officer. And his wife was a teacher. Her maiden name was Kobinska. Now, to Kobinska came her sister Anna, for summer vacation. and to Kuchevsky had his brother, who was a [unclear] a little bit near [unclear]. Also, his father, who was a president of the bank in Lublin, came on vacation, and the war broke out, and they couldn't go back. Now, Kobinska, actually her name is not Kuchevska because she married the officer Kuchevsky and had two little girls--Marinka and Anushka. Anushka lives in California. Marinka is in Poland. Then Mrs. Kuchevska was arrested, and she was sent to Siberia. And Kuchevsky was arrested, and he was put in jail. And the father, through all this *tsuris* [calamities], he couldn't reach his family in Lublin - his wife and his other children - and the *tsuris* here. He couldn't take it. He hanged himself in a barn. Now, they left the two, they left the two, the two orphans - Marinka and Anushka, little children. And

Anna, which is their mother's sister, raised them, and her uncle, which is the father's brother, raised them. And we stayed with them. We stayed with them. And that, when we arrived to this, to the, that we came to our, in the States, with Anna, that's the Kobinska, which I call her pani for my conversations, I call her pani because, between ourselves, we always say the pani, the pani. We did not want to mention the name. So, she survived with the children. The uncle, he married and he died. And she came to Poland with the two children. Then their mother, Kuchevska, came from Siberia. She survived the war. And she came to Poland, to southern Poland. Anna lives now in Krakow, and Kuchevska lives someplace not far from there. I don't know exactly which village. And Marinka went to college, and she married a dentist. Anushka, my aunt Frieda helped bring to Canada, married her off, and she lives now in California. She started going in Poland to medical school--Anushka--but she didn't finish, so she's a nurse assisting at operations, in surgery. She's a nurse. [tape off]