

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

LUBA MARGULIES

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Josey G. Fisher
Dates: October 20, 1981

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Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

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LM - Luba Margulies¹ [interviewee]

JF - Josey G. Fisher [interviewer]

Date: October 20, 1981

Tape one, side one:

JF: Mrs. Margulies, can you tell me where and when you were born and a little bit about your family?

LM: I was born in 1915, in Novogrod, being four years old, I lost my parents in the pogrom.

JF: Do you have any memories of the pogrom yourself?

LM: I just remember the fire and everything was burned to the ground. My grandmother took us to Poland, Ostrog.

JF: Were you in your house when it happened? Do you remember where you were and where your parents were and what happened?

LM: My parents was taken out from the house and was buried alive, they were buried. [On p. 2, Mrs. M. notes that only her father was taken.]

JF: They were buried alive?

LM: Alive, and a brother 14 years old, and a few days later they put the whole town on fire to burn it.

JF: Who started this pogrom as you know it? The Poles or the Russians?

LM: The Russians.

JF: The Russians.

LM: Yes, Kerenky or Kerensky--they know exactly, because this was the time of the war and every time it was a different group.

JF: This was after the Revolution had started, and this was 1919?

LM: Yes.

JF: Now, were many Jews from the town killed at this time?

LM: This time was just like 30 people, mostly men, rich people. They came to the houses, they took them out, they told them they have to give, like, money to...

JF: To the soldiers, to the government?

LM: To the government, probably, because a lot of times they took them this way, so my little brother who was 14 years old, he went after the father.

JF: Your father was taken from the home initially?

LM: Yes.

JF: Not your mother?

LM: Not my mother.

JF: So, your brother followed your father.

¹née Kozuszman.

LM: Yes, and he was killed there, too. They put him in the grave, they dig for themselves, the graves, because one of the men survived and he came and he told us what happened.

JF: How then did your mother also die?

LM: She died a few weeks later from--you know. She died from the *tzuris* [Yiddish-trouble].

JF: She was not killed, then, with your father. She died from her own grief, her own heartache.

LM: It was seven children.

JF: Where were you in that line of children? Were you near the--were you one of the youngest? You said you had a 14-year old brother.

LM: I was the oldest one from my mother, because it was a second marriage, so I was the oldest one, and I had a little sister, two years old.

JF: I see. And you mentioned the grandmother.

LM: The grandmother took us after they put--a few days later, they put the whole town on fire, thinking that the city is going to be taken over by the Polaks.

JF: The Russians burned the town.

LM: Yes.

JF: Was it a Jewish town?

LM: I don't remember how many Jews was there. I think that there was a lot of Jews.

JF: Was your home, also, burned?

LM: Yes. I think that when they put the grenade, it was straight--next to our house.

JF: And were you...

LM: We went out barefoot, with no clothes, just a dress, and no shoes, and we stayed for a few days with some friends and then later we went to relatives, to Ostrog. It was a town not far from Novogrod.

JF: Your grandmother was your father's mother or your mother's mother?

LM: My mother's.

JF: And she took all six of the remaining children to Ostrog?

LM: The older two children wasn't home. My older sister was a dentist and she worked somewhere and she wasn't home and the brother, I guess, was already married, so we was just five that she took to Ostrog.

JF: One of them had died with your father, right? And there was how many, five left or four left?

LM: Four left. Four girls.

JF: Four girls. Two older sisters then, you and your younger sister, and your grandmother took you to Ostrog at the time.

LM: Yes.

JF: Where did you live when you got to Ostrog?

LM: When we came to Ostrog, we stayed by relatives. I was very lucky because my mother's cousin was a very rich woman. She didn't got children. She took me right away like her daughter because my mother died already there.

JF: She took just you and not the other children?

LM: No, the others stayed right with the grandmother until my aunt went to America and she took the little one who was three years old with her in 1920.

JF: In 1920?

LM: 1920.

JF: Did any of the rest of you have the opportunity to go with the aunt?

LM: Yah, yah we was--my grandmother didn't want to let us go. She said that she would go with us, but because she was an older person, they didn't want to let her go, you know, the HIAS, to America. And this was our luck. We stayed in Poland. We were raised there in Ostrog...

JF: You were living then with your mother's cousin?

LM: Yes, I call her aunt. She raised me and she was very nice and she sent me to school.

JF: What kind of school did you go to?

LM: I finished high school, then I went to a *gymnasium*.

JF: What kind of elementary and high school was this? Was it a public Polish school or was it Jewish?

LM: Polish.

JF: It was a Polish school. And what was your experience there?

LM: After I finished 6th grade of *gymnasium*, I could go for another higher education, like, a profession or something, so I decided to go for a mid-wife.

JF: What was it like as a child living in Ostrog at this time? Did you have Jewish friends? Did you have non-Jewish friends?

LM: All kinds.

JF: All kinds.

LM: Yes, mostly Jewish. I belonged to organizations like Betar. Jabotinsky.

JF: Yes. Can you tell me a little bit about him?

LM: Jabotinsky always wants to have a country. He was fighting for it, you know. He said you need a country, you need to be strong, to fight. A lot of people was against him. It was very hard. The *gymnasium* was against, you know, we belong there to the organization--was against the Polish, the Polaks organization. We have to meet, like, nobody knows...

JF: You wanted to go to Israel, then, as a young person?

LM: Yes.

JF: But these had to be secret meetings?

LM: Yes, especially if you went to a Polish school. The Polish school was against people belonging to these organizations.

JF: Did you ever have any contact with Jabotinsky?

LM: We went to see him. He came over in, I don't remember, in '38 or '35 or something. He came to Rovno, not far from Ostrog² so we went, all the organization, to see him.

JF: Did you also belong to a synagogue in Ostrog?

LM: My relative was very religious, my aunt, so she was taking me to a synagogue when I wanted. You know, I was young and the holidays. I always went to synagogue. I love it. It was a real Jewish town. They got 35,000 Jews there.

JF: And what was the total population, about?

LM: Not such a big town. I don't remember. I don't remember how much...

JF: Did you have any Jewish education in addition to going to the synagogue with your family?

LM: My aunt she was teaching me you know, just Yiddish, and Hebrew, like *benching* the candles and prayers in the morning, *bruches*, *krishma* [Probably short for *Krias Shma*--the *Shma Yisrael* prayer] *davening*--she was telling me, not in the book you know. She didn't learn me from the book. No, I can't *daven* even. Just to show you are Jewish.

JF: So you spoke Polish, then, during the day in your school?

LM: Yes. Yes, mostly Polish. My sisters, they were older than me and they knew Russian, so we speak a lot in the house, Russian, too.

JF: Did you have any experience with non-Jews as a child that were difficult?

LM: It was very nice friends and *gymnasium* there were Ukrainian people and Polish and they were friendly.

JF: You played together?

LM: Yes, they invited me for Christmas sometimes to see. Yah, they were very nice.

JF: You did not have antisemitic experiences, then, with these children, as you were growing up?

LM: Then, in '35, I left my town, Ostrog, and I went to Lemberg.

JF: This was after you had finished your training to become a mid-wife?

LM: No, *gymnasium*. Sixth class *gymnasium*, when I finished I went to Lemberg.

JF: I see.

LM: Then I worked in a hospital, a Jewish hospital for three years, with children, newborn kids, you know, with the physicians and after that, I decided to go for a mid-wife.

²Ostrog today is in Ukraine. Before WWI it was in Russia. Between WWI and WWII it was in Poland. It was in Poland before the partitions of the 18th century.

It was very hard for me because a Jew, they don't want to accept. There was about 200 people in the school and five Jewish girls.

JF: This was in Lemberg?

LM: Yes.

JF: Had you gone to live with family there?

LM: I was supposed to stay in the dorms, there were Jewish dorms there for kids that were not so rich, it was a little cheaper.

JF: This was for people that were working in the hospital, or for students?

LM: Students who come from all over Poland and stayed there.

JF: So, you stayed there when you were in school for mid-wifery?

LM: Two years of staying in dorms.

JF: And before that, had you lived with family when you were working in the hospital?

LM: When I was working in the hospital, I lived with some relatives.

JF: Was your experience in Lemberg any different than Ostrog as far as...

LM: When I came to Lemberg, it was very antisemitic. Very.

JF: In what way?

LM: We were scared to go for a walk.

JF: What would happen?

LM: There was killing in the streets.

JF: There was killing in the streets?

LM: Yes. When Pilsudski died in '35, the older students started killing Jews in the colleges with knives. They killed a few Jewish boys and one day I walked--I met my husband in Lemberg. He was going to school there, too, and I met him. One day, we was going to a movie and passing by one of the streets near a park, we was--how you call it? They was around us, a few boys surrounded us, they punched my husband in the nose and he start running and I fainted and they were thinking that I am not Jewish. They said, "How come you go with a dirty Jew?" I was so strong and I said, "You can be ashamed of the way you are acting." They grabbed his hat and they threw it over a fence. And I said, "I would like to have the hat back?" I was not scared.

JF: What did they do?

LM: He said, "Give me a kiss and I will give you the hat." And I didn't want it and I left. And I was so lucky because the next day was in the newspapers in the same place they killed a girl and a man was killed. This was an organization from Hitler, Hitler's *Jugend*.

JF: These were Hitler youths.

LM: Yes. But they was Polaks, like, here you have Americans.

JF: These were how old, these boys?

LM: College, from the colleges.

JF: They were college students?

LM: Students.

JF: Were these primarily the people who were agitating and doing the killing, the college students?

LM: I am not sure, maybe some private, too. I had even a friend, he was Ukrainian and he was to the school, this college. People came from Ostrog. You see the biggest colleges was in Lemberg. Everybody finished--Jewish people like my husband, he finished college, eh, *gymnasium*, and he couldn't become nothing. So here after going to the school they don't want to let him go. It was very hard, very hard. A small percentage of the Jewish youth could go to college.

JF: What was your experience like being in such a small minority in school? Did you have trouble?

LM: In school they was not so bad. I was lucky because they always say to me, "You don't look like a Jew." In the mean time, after I finished in Lemberg, I finished school and I married in a short time.

JF: You married when you finished your course in school?

LM: I finished school in '39 and right away starts the war. I wasn't married then. The war started in September, '39 when the Russians came into our town. I was already back in Ostrog.

JF: You had left to go back to Ostrog.

LM: Yes, because I got a diploma. It was very hard for me to have the diploma because they didn't recognize me as a Polish citizen.

JF: Can you explain that to me?

LM: They was thinking that Novogrod belongs to the Russians now so they didn't want to give me the diploma. Even though I was four years old when I came to Ostrog. So my aunt raised me, she adopted me in '39 for her daughter and this way I got a diploma. I became a citizen and they gave me the diploma.

JF: I see.

LM: I went home to my aunt and being there a few weeks later started the war.

JF: Did you have much feeling during these years that you are describing in the late '30s that what was happening in Germany would affect you in Poland more seriously than the Hitler youth?

LM: We didn't believe--because a lot of people came from Germany, running away and they came to our town.

JF: This was in Lemberg?

LM: In '39, '39.

JF: This was in Lemberg or Ostrog?

LM: Ostrog. We got a lot of people and they didn't talk so much about how bad Hitler is. So we couldn't believe what we read in the papers, like one woman came and she said, "Where is my husband?" and they gave her a box. There was ashes there.

JF: This was someone from Germany who had come to live in Poland?

LM: Yes. She told us and nobody could believe that Hitler would do something like that. I was very scared for the Russians, more than for Hitler.

JF: You were more scared of the Russians?

LM: Yes, of the Russians because being four years old and seeing the fire and the people in the streets dead, so I was scared and in '39, when the Russians came, they were very nice to us.

JF: The Russians then entered Ostrog?

LM: Ostrog. And they was very nice. I worked, I got a very nice job in the hospital.

JF: As a mid-wife?

LM: As a mid-wife, and my husband got a job. He was an inspector in a bank.

JF: Now, had you married by this time?

LM: I married in '40 and I moved to Lemberg--eh, I moved to Tarnopol.

JF: You got married in Ostrog?

LM: Yes. He came over. We married in '40. He took me right away to Tarnopol, and I got a job there as a mid-wife and my husband was an inspector in the bank.

JF: Now, this town was also under the occupation of the Russians?

LM: Yes.

JF: What were your living conditions like?

LM: It was very hard to find apartments. You live in one room with somebody's furniture and we was very happy and making a nice living.

JF: You found the Russians much less difficult?

LM: They was very friendly people. He worked, my husband, in the bank there, and they was teaching him, because he doesn't know even Russian, the language, and they sent him to school. Pretending his father was a bus driver or something like that, and you couldn't say that you was rich before. His father was agronom. You know, agronom--he was in a big landscape. Rich people, they got--he was like an agricultural engineer.

JF: An agricultural engineer.

LM: Yes, he was taking care of the fields and so he couldn't say even. What he said was like, his father was a bus driver or something. And we had a few nice years with them. And then started the war, between the Russians and Germany.

JF: During that time that you were under the Russian occupation, what kind of news did you get from Germany, or what was happening in the rest of Europe?

LM: A lot of Russian people, eh, German people³, start to be registered like, they want to go back to Germany. This confused us very much.

JF: German Jews?

LM: German Jews want to go back to Germany.

³Mrs. Margulies probably means Polish Jews from the western part of Poland who did not want to accept Soviet citizenship, registered to return to the western part of Poland (occupied at that time by the Germans) and were sent instead to Siberia by the Soviets who did not trust them.

JF: Why do you think that was so?

LM: We couldn't understand and this was hard for them, not knowing the language, it was hard for them to find a job, and a lot of them they took to Siberia. They start taking people.

JF: The Russians?

LM: The Russians start taking people to Siberia.

JF: Were you offered Russian citizenship during that time?

LM: They gave us right away passports. You don't need even a passport.

JF: A Russian passport?

LM: Yes, they give us right away passports.

JF: Did you then relinquish your Polish citizenship by doing that?

LM: Probably, but who cared then? The only thing was with the Russians, like, I worked in the hospital and some friends give you a gift. O.K. I help her to take care of the baby, tell her some instructions. And she, a Russian woman, her husband was in the NKVD. They got big stores, they could buy everything they wanted, and we couldn't buy anything. We had to stand in lines for bread, for sugar, for everything, especially for a pair of shoes you couldn't find, so one day she told me, "If you need something, tell me." She liked me very much, "And I will buy for you." So, she bought me, like, sugar, a pair of galoshes for the winter. One day when I came home an NKVD man was standing by my door waiting for me, and he say to me, "We don't like the way you are buying things from this lady. I think you are a speculant. You are making the black market..."

JF: A speculator?

LM: Yeah, like black market. And I explained to him, I said, "I have nothing to do [with the black market?]. She likes me and I am taking care of her baby, and I delivered her baby and she wants to give me a gift." And he said, "If you are going to do things like that, we will send you to Siberia. We send you out." They took my husband a few times questioning him what kind of man is this and what kind of man is that and it was very hard [unclear] lately.

JF: What do you mean "what kind of man"?

LM: Some friends working in the bank.

JF: Ah, to question your husband about other people?

LM: Yes.

JF: Whether they were loyal or spies?

LM: Yes that's right. It was a very hard life.

JF: Was this throughout these two years or...

LM: Yes.

JF: Throughout the entire time?

LM: Yes.

JF: What kind of reaction did you get from the non-Jewish Poles in the town?

LM: They became very nice to us. Like, I worked with nuns in the hospital where I worked was before a Polish hospital for the nuns.

JF: For nuns.

LM: Yah! And, when I came the nuns were not so happy with us. Later they liked us because they saw we were all in the same shoes like they are, you know.

JF: So that there was an alliance between the non-Jews and the Jews under the Russian occupation?

LM: Yeah. The Ukrainians became very strong.

JF: What do you mean by that?

LM: Ukrainians took over and pushed out the Jews. The director was a Jewish man before. They start pushing in.

JF: Under the Russian occupation the Ukrainians became...

LM: I made a mistake.

JF: That's okay. Back up.

LM: The Jews was stronger with the Russians. The Ukrainians became later, when the Germans came.

JF: So under the Russians...

LM: The Jewish got jobs nice, like, one became a director. My husband got a very nice job; he was a director for the bank. It was very nice.

JF: But it was after the German occupation, after the German invasion, that the Ukrainians gained power?

LM: In '41, the Germans started a war with the Russians, then everybody was running to Russia, a lot of people was running to Russia, and my husband was begging me, "Let's go to Russia. I don't want to see the Germans." And I was scared, remembering what is going on. I say, "I am not going, you go by yourself, I am not going." He was so upset and it was one, two, three, when we get up in the morning and the Germans was already in Tarnopol.

JF: Did you know at that point what was going on with the concentration camps and the plans that Hitler had for Europe?

LM: We didn't believe. Like, a lot of people say, for the woman is nothing to be scared, mostly the men, and a lot of men was running to Russia. They left and my husband was supposed to go, too, but he didn't want to leave me so he stayed, with his parents. He got a mother and a brother and a sister. His aunt was living there in Tarnopol. The whole family was in Tarnopol. So we stayed there and in the morning when we woke up--they--it was August, I don't remember the exact date.

JF: 1941?

LM: Yes, and the Germans came and they occupied. Three days later--I still worked in the hospital--the director was already a German.

Tape one, side two:

JF: You were talking about the German invasion in 1941 of your town in Tarnopol.

LM: Yes, on June 22, started the war with the Germans in Russia. My husband was ready, like, to leave to go to Russia. I was so scared of the Russians that I decided to stay at my house with the family.

JF: Did the Russians invade Tarnopol right away in June or was there some delay before they got to your town? The Germans, I'm sorry.

LM: Yes, it took like a week and people started running away and a lot of people was killed on the way running there, like my husband's two cousins. They was killed while running, so we was scared, listening to the news, and we decided to stay home.

JF: They were on their way to Russia, these cousins?

LM: Yes. Yeah.

JF: You continued to work at the hospital?

LM: I was still working at the hospital for a few days and then, I don't remember exactly the date when Tarnopol was occupied by the Russians [Germans]. I think, it took about a week, but they came in July the 27th or something and they came in very quiet. I still was working at the hospital, a lot of Jews was hiding in the hospital, so they came to hide because they start already killing people.

JF: How were they killing people?

LM: They came from house to house and taking out the men and killing them by the door. Three thousand people in one day, they killed. This was the third day of the occupation from the Germans.

JF: They took them out individually and killed them?

LM: We lived not really in town we lived in the suburbs, between [pause] not Jewish people so they couldn't come to the house. They didn't know that there were Jewish people living there. So my relatives tell me that they want me to go and check some relatives that are living in town and see if they are alive. I took my band, my Red Cross--because I worked in the hospital you got a strip--and I walked out from the house to visit the relatives. And walking the streets, I saw people lying dead in the streets and I meet some Germans. They didn't recognize that I am Jewish, that I am a Jew, and they asked me in German where are Jewish living so I decided to keep quiet and tell them that I don't understand German, because when I will speak German they will recognize that I am a Jew. So I spoke Polish and I say I'm very sorry, I don't understand you.

JF: How would they know that you are a Jew by your German?

LM: You see, when you speak German--he asked me, "*Sprechen sie Deutsch?*" The accent is a Jewish and I was scared to speak.

JF: Like a Yiddish?

LM: Like Yiddish accent, so I spoke Polish and I said that I am very sorry, but I don't understand you, and I don't know what you are talking.

JF: Did the people that you saw lying on the street, had they been shot?

LM: Shot, yes. I saw one man, like, he was a shoemaker. He was right near his shop lying with his tools, by the shop.

JF: With his tools.

LM: Yes, outside and they kept the people for a few days and the Polaks was walking around and holding their noses, like, the Jewish perfume smells terrible the Jewish perfume until they clean out the streets. So, people was swelling up because it was summer. It was terrible.

JF: Who ended up cleaning up these bodies?

LM: They took Jewish people from the houses to clean everything, and then on the Saturday they killed them. One of my two cousins was killed.

JF: They killed all the people?

LM: They took Jewish people.

JF: To clean up the other bodies.

LM: Yes.

JF: They shot these people as well?

LM: They beat them to death.

JF: They beat them to death in the cemeteries?

LM: Mostly, they were Ukrainians. The Ukrainians came from house to house to *shlep* Jewish people. They recognized Jewish people right away. Not the Germans. If they would see me they would recognize right away that I am a Jew.

JF: Now were these Ukrainians who lived in the area or were these Ukrainians that had been brought in by the Germans?

LM: A lot were from that section and a lot came from all the little villages to help.

JF: So, these were not necessarily people who knew people personally in the town; it was just that they recognized Jews.

LM: Recognize--[unclear]--or somebody showed them because they came to our house a week later and took my two cousins out, and my husband was in a different building, like a bar, but they killed them, this way, cleaning, cleaning Saturday the people. They took them to the cemetery or they opened up a big building, like, a jail, and in this jail was killed people and they told that the Jews killed them. Who knows, maybe the Russians killed them? Nobody knows who killed them. In the jail was the same thing; they was beating to death the Jewish people to clean out the jail.

JF: Were these people who were buried in the cemetery buried in a mass grave or was there an individual [unclear]?

LM: The parents were supposed to come. They gave permission to come to recognize and to bury them. We came and recognized the two cousins. Only we could

recognize them by the belt. You couldn't recognize the faces, nothing, because the climate and the beating and it was already like a few weeks on the cemetery.

JF: So the people that were beaten to death in the cemetery had just taken the bodies to the cemetery, not to bury them.

LM: No.

JF: They had just taken them there so that when you went to the cemetery, you saw...

LM: My two cousins. I don't know. Maybe they were beaten in the jail. We don't know, we find them there in the cemetery, they took them for cleaning. When I walked, I saw exactly where they was taking them; you know when I was walking with the band. I wanted to see if maybe we can do something, and I came home and I told the family that they took them to the jail to clean the jail and nobody could do something. I talked even to a German fellow and he was in our house. He came and he pretends that he was very nice because he wasn't from them. He was from the army, like, a soldier, and I told him and my mother-in-law started crying about the two boys that came out, and he says that he is scared to go there to do something.

JF: This was all within the first three days of the occupation.

LM: Yes. At the hospital, we got a new director, a Ukrainian. You are not supposed to speak Polish, not Russian, just Ukrainian.

JF: Did you know Ukrainian?

LM: Yes, I speak a little. I like better Russian, and he says to me, "No more Russian here. You have to speak Ukrainian." Before, he was a very nice man; I worked with him for years; he was my doctor.

JF: He was your personal physician?

LM: Not personal; when I worked at the hospital as a mid-wife, I worked with him. He was a gynecologist.

JF: And his attitude towards you changed at this time.

LM: Yes.

JF: In what other ways did he change towards you?

LM: We worked for a while there and then he starts the ghettos.

JM: He permitted you to continue your work.

LM: Yes, I don't know how long it was, for a few weeks, I think, and then they came and they made the ghetto for us. And in November we moved out from the house. We had to give up the houses and everything, we left there, furniture. And we went to a different place near the border where they was throwing the trash, and they made the ghetto. So in the ghetto we got a hospital and I worked there in the hospital, in the ghetto hospital, not like before.

JF: About how many people do you think were put into this ghetto?

LM: Tarnopol was a very big town and there was a lot of Jews. I don't remember. You see, I am not from Tarnopol. I just married--it was just two years that I was there, so I don't know exactly.

JF: How was the ghetto formed? What were the exterior boundaries?

LM: You could not go out from the ghetto without a special guard, like a policeman. A lot of Jewish boys became policemen. They didn't know what was going to be later. They was helping us to go to work, and helping us to stand in the line where they were giving us a piece of bread and soup. They got a little store like connected for a family; a piece of bread. So a lot of policemen later when they started taking people--one day they came and they told us to save the older people, not to take them to work. We need a special paper, a *Bescheinigung*, that costs 25 zlotys, Polish silver money, and the mother can be saved this way by telling that she is taking care of the house and the children are going to work.

JF: Who told you this?

LM: This came from the Jewish *Judenrat*. I went but I didn't have the 25 dollars, I borrowed it from one of the doctors; I borrowed 25 dollars, zlotys.

JF: From one of the doctors?

LM: I worked with them.

JF: From one of the Ukrainians?

LM: No, from a Jew. I borrowed to give to the *Judenrat* to ask for the paper.

JF: For your mother-in-law?

LM: For the mother-in-law. My husband, in the meantime, he knew that something was going to happen, and we have to be in hiding. He started to build hiding places. He built, in the house, a hiding place in the kitchen. We got two pieces of wood to take out.

JF: To take out of the floor?

LM: Yes, and there was a hole to go to the basement. So he divided the basement into parts, and the place that we was living was near water, so the whole basement was with water. He was lucky this way so he made a wall and when they start making--oh, I am mixing up everything.

JF: That's okay.

LM: You see, we prepared already. In case something happened to be there in the basement. So we were standing in the water in case somebody would come from the Germans or Ukrainians to take us out. Because of this *Bescheinigung* [certification] I got from the Jewish *Judenrat*, the mother put everybody in this hiding, and my husband went to work, and I went to work in the hospital and she was working around in the house. The police came--mixed, Ukrainian and Jewish--and they told my mother-in-law that she has to come to this place, a special place in the middle of town, they made a place. She had to show this paper, it had to be signed. She went and there was a lot of men there and children and women. And then they segregated. They took all the women, all the people, children

on one side, young men and young women on another side, and then a few minutes later, trucks came and they took all of the women and the children and the older people away. This was the first time that they knew that they were going to kill them. They took them to Dachau. And my mother-in-law was the first.

JF: How did you find out this was what happened?

LM: We couldn't find out. There was all kinds of stories, that they took them to work and they took them there and they took them there, but then some people start to telling that they took them for killing. [Crying]

JF: You and your husband...

LM: But then this young people, they told: "You have to stay here, you are not going home, you are going to work. They are giving you rooms on the other side of the ghetto and this will be the place where you are going to live."

JF: In a special part of the ghetto?

LM: On the other side of the ghetto.

JF: Outside the ghetto?

LM: Yes, it was not far; this was the ghetto and this was here. You are not going to go to the ghetto, you stay here and you are going to work here. And they start the *Zwangsarbeitslager* [forced labor camp] for special work. I decided to there, too, because I wanted to be with my husband.

JF: Your husband was with this group?

LM: Yes, the younger men. They took them to work--there was my husband and my brother-in-law and one of my cousins, a young 16-year-old boy with the men, and they stayed there. So I decided to go there, too and I tried to go there, too. They took them to the Aryan side, for work. I was still working in the hospital and it was very hard. They gave us food once a month, soup from a horse, and I almost died when I ate this soup. This was the best food because there was pieces of meat and I came home and I almost was dead. [unclear]

JF: When you say you were almost dead you mean in what way? From having eaten the soup, it turned your stomach?

LM: Yes, we didn't get food so we was eating some leaves. Like, when the mother was alive she made a garden to keep us alive and she picked up little leaves and made a borscht, leaves, I don't know, and some grass. She made all kinds. She was very generous; she liked to feed people; if somebody came in she gave away her soup. In the meantime she was all swollen up not having food. It was very hard. We gave away a lot of stuff, going to the outside world--clothing, jewelry. A lot of things they took away when they come to the houses, the Ukrainians. They took away everything they saw: silver and better clothes. But we hide some, and we went and sold. Like I went to the hospital where I was working. I went to her, to the nun, and I gave her some pearls, I got, a bracelet, good shoes, and she gave me bread or she gave me--this way we survived, you know. Because the people was dying, not having food.

JF: Did you have any kind of rations handed out by the *Judenrat* or anybody else? Was there any certain amount of food that was given to you?

LM: Yes, they gave us some bread; it was like a store, I told you in the beginning.

JF: That was where it was distributed.

LM: Yes.

JF: Can you tell me a little bit more about the *Judenrat* in your town?

LM: There was a doctor working with me in the hospital before the war and then in the war. He became like a guard for little kids. For little kids to take care of them, and one day he got a duty to take all of the kids and visit this place. And he didn't know what was going on, and they took all the kids away, and he hanged himself.

JF: Had the *Judenrat* given the order?

LM: They was scared. Maybe, they didn't know even, who knows? The Jewish guards, the police, they gave them, before they start to take the people, they came so wild, they gave them to drink a lot. They had a party, they gave them whiskey, and when they came to the houses they were so wild, like, animals, they didn't know what they were doing.

JF: The Germans gave the Jewish police liquor before...

LM: I think so, I think so, yah.

JF: And then they were violent when they came to the homes.

LM: Yes.

JF: To get people or to take them?

LM: Some of them decided later to step out, with a few policemen. They stepped out, and they took them; they didn't want to go to the houses. They knew something, so they stepped out. Some of them not. One in our town got a silver or gold medal for taking Jews.

JF: When the Jews who were in the police decided to step out as you call it...

LM: Every few weeks or every few months they have to deliver a certain kind of people.

JF: What would happen to them, anything, if they decided not to follow directions?

LM: Some of them maybe was stupid and they think to deliver these people they will survive, but the end was, they were killed, too. So, some of them stepped out.

JF: And what would happen to them if they refused to do it?

LM: They would be killed.

JF: They were killed, also.

LM: Yes.

JF: So, there was no way once they became a policeman of avoiding.

LM: In the beginning, they didn't know probably that there was going to be somethings, and maybe they got a bigger piece of bread because they worked and--this was so terrible.

JF: Did you feel that the *Judenrat* was able to help, in any way, the Jewish community in the ghetto?

LM: How they could let us know, I don't know.

JF: They could have let you know?

LM: It was hard for them. Like they say this time you have to bring all your furs. Even collars from fur.

JF: Fur collars. You have to take off from your coat--your sleeves a piece of fur...

LM: They took collars and pockets, everything you have to bring to the synagogue and they took people, Jewish people, to help them to pack and they sent them to Germany, all that they got.

JF: To your knowledge, was there any religious activity going on inside the ghetto? Were there any services that were held? Any rabbis that were able to help organize things?

LM: We would say, quiet you know, on holidays they would come to the house and pray all together.

JF: Individually in houses.

LM: Yes, in houses.

JF: The synagogue...

LM: There was no synagogue.

JF: There was no synagogue inside the ghetto. Were there any rabbis who were able to lead things?

LM: There was always rabbis, sure. They killed them; they were screaming, "*Shma Yisroel, Shma Yisroel*; God help us," and they killed them.

JF: The rabbis?

LM: Sure.

JF: Was this at one time that they gathered the rabbis?

LM: When they caught them. You see, a lot of rabbis, like I was working with a young rabbi, I don't remember, no other ones. He shaved himself, you know, and he worked with us. It was a Saturday and we tried to cover for him.

JF: Cover for him.

LM: Cover for him not to work.

JF: But you recall other rabbis being caught?

LM: Oh, they took the rabbis same like they make every few weeks, they make like a pogrom. They deliver them, the police would deliver them. They came to the house, a lot of times they came to my house and we was in hiding, and they look for houses. Somebody told them that in this house was supposed to be, they called a bunker, a hiding, and they knocked and they chopped the floor, and they chopped all over the kitchen floor and they couldn't find the right little hole that we cutted. They came to the basement and

it was with water and the wall was separated, so we was lucky, and we was--we survived there.

JF: How long did you live in that house?

LM: We lived in this house in '42, one year, and then I went to the *Zwangsarbeitslager* [forced labor camp] and worked there.

JF: When you were still within the confines of the ghetto, were you aware of any teaching that was going on of the children or of the adults?

LM: The ghetto, they liquidated real fast. They liquidated the ghetto in '42.

JF: So the ghetto actually only existed for a year.

LM: Not even a year.

JF: During that time, was there any attempt to have the children taught, or any groups? Or was there no time?

LM: No.

JF: There were no schools.

LM: No.

JF: Were you helped in any way during that year, when the ghetto was still in existence by any non-Jews? You had mentioned before that you were able to sell some things to nuns at the hospital.

LM: Yah, they helped a lot of people who got some friends who came and they helped them.

JF: Who did this?

LM: Aryans, yes.

JF: Aryans?

LM: Yes.

Tape two, side one:

JF: You were telling me about help received from non-Jews while the ghetto was still in existence.

LM: They came and gave us a piece of bread and some things, and some people had friends who came to take them to hide them.

JF: So some people were able to get out and be hidden.

LM: Not too many, some. Some got real good friends; some got friends who took everything and sold them and killed them. There was all kinds of stories.

JF: Was there any contact with an underground group?

LM: Not in Tarnopol. We was too far. Tarnopol didn't got too many forests, like, the forests was like a garden not a forest.

JF: Was there any kind of resistance group that was organized within the ghetto?

LM: We didn't got ammunition; how we could fight? With what? Some people took their lives; they was rich to buy some poison.

JF: Only the wealthy could do that.

LM: Some people built, big already in the--working on the *Zwangsarbeitslager*. People knew that some day would come the end of us, too. We knew because we knew that all around they were killing our people, people, people. So one of these days they would kill us, too, so we start preparing ourselves. Rich people, they could build on the other side they built big, big places where they could hide.

JF: Bunkers?

LM: Yah.

JF: This was on the outside of the ghetto?

LM: Yes, they built.

JF: When did you go?

LM: They built in the ghetto and went through to the other side; this way they could run away or something. But they didn't survive.

JF: They didn't survive. You and your husband were able to leave the ghetto to work in this special work detail. When was it that you left the ghetto? In 1942?

LM: In 1942, *Pesach*, there was no more ghetto. This *Zwangsarbeitslager* was before May--where we lived already you could go and visit the ghetto once in awhile.

JF: Did you have any trouble joining your husband in this work camp?

LM: We were separated. Men was separate and women was separate. We was working in the same place and I left the hospital and I worked outside so I got communication with the Aryanish people. And I could, a woman could pass and make business. Like, I gave her my pearls and I gave her this, and I got some money she gave me and she bought food for me and I came and got an extra piece. Even I was helping the people in the ghetto.

JF: This was while you were working in the ghetto or this was after you had left the ghetto when you were on the outside?

LM: Yes, I was working and then they segregated; they took my mother-in-law away so they put us on the other side, the young people, to work.

JF: There was no trouble then, your being with your husband in this other area?

LM: It was a little trouble.

JF: How did you do it?

LM: It was some communication, like, you gave them something, clothes or porcelain, and he gave you a job.

JF: So, after your mother-in-law was taken you were able to leave and join your husband on the outside.

LM: Yes, I worked in the same place. He was like a builder. When the Russians left Tarnopol, they burned the railroad station and they took a big group of Jewish people to build there. And I was between the men, I was one woman who worked with men. I was pregnant.

JF: You were pregnant and you were helping build the railroad station.

LM: Yes, and it was a very hard job and my husband was strong. He was 20 some years old and it was the best years of his life, and he killed himself because it was seven floors to take upstairs the wood by himself on his shoulder, a very hard...

JF: And what happened?

LM: He was strong then. Later, when he came here, he didn't have his health.

JF: So, he worked extremely hard but was able to handle it during those years.

LM: To survive.

JF: And the men and women lived separately in this group of people.

LM: Yes.

JF: How many people do you think were working repairing or rebuilding the railroad station?

LM: Oh, about 200.

JF: Were these the only survivors then of the ghetto?

LM: No, there was different groups, all kinds of groups; not just--we were working with building and there was people that work as furriers, shoemakers, barbers...

JF: Was this in the ghetto or outside?

LM: Outside.

JF: You were under the control of whom, the Germans or the Ukrainians who were directing you in these jobs?

LM: The building was like by Polish people. He was an engineer and he was a Polak and he was very nice, maybe he helped us, like we were together.

JF: He let you stay together.

LM: Yes.

JF: And then you said the ghetto itself was liquidated shortly after.

LM: The ghetto.

JF: The ghetto was liquidated in Tarnopol?

LM: In Passover.⁴

JF: In Passover. You were outside the ghetto at the time.

LM: Yes, I lived already there.

JF: Can you describe what you know about the liquidation of the ghetto?

LM: We hear shots and shots, and we have a feeling that this is the end. And they let us go, I don't know. I don't remember who took us to take a look to find people to see what is going on, who is dead. The *Judenrat* let us go and find because we got families there. And we find an aunt and another aunt and my husband's sister, killed there.

JF: The *Judenrat* was saved, the men were not killed?

LM: They still stayed to the end, you know. I don't know. Maybe there was a change; they killed somebody and they got new people. I couldn't pay attention to there, what was going on.

JF: What did they do, they just gathered people together and shot them or they shot them individually or what exactly happened?

LM: They find people in the bunkers, they was looking all over with dogs, and if they find them they killed them, or mostly they took away to the gas chambers.

JF: And who was left?

LM: The end when they liquidated all the Jews was in August '43, they liquidated all Jews.

JF: In Tarnopol.

LM: All Tarnopol was liquidated.

JF: Were you still working at the same job at that point?

LM: We start hiding before. We know that they are going to liquidate all of the Jews. There was a small group of us, about 500 people left. So, they took us, from all over what they find us--we were hiding there. They knew that something was going to happen.

JF: Where were you living at this point?

LM: Already at *Zwangsarbeitslager* they start to liquidate people.

JF: They were liquidating outside the ghetto then as well.

LM: Yes. In *Zwangsarbeitslager* they didn't need so many people, so my husband made hidings. When you lived even there was a big, big room, dining room, where they made coffee; it was a kitchen, not a dining room, it was a kitchen.

JF: In the living quarters.

LM: In the living quarters was a kitchen with two big--I don't know what you call them, not pots...

JF: Kettles?

⁴The first Aktion took place in March 1942. Aktionen continued through August of 1943. [Encyclopedia of the Holocaust, vol. 4]

LM: For coffee. They made coffee everyday, or tea. I don't know. Under this kitchen was a big basement, so we start preparing hiding places, and my husband helped to build there so he could take me and his brother and the cousins who was working, in this place. So one of these nights when we knew something was going to happen we hear that soldiers are coming in some soldiers were coming and taking over this place to watch us. So, we went there and we hide there. It didn't took too long, they was throwing in every basement, they was throwing gas and we was not prepared for gas, so some people opened up the doors of the hiding place and they went out. I didn't; my husband didn't; I didn't know even that my husband was there.

JF: You didn't know that your husband was there?

LM: I know he's there, but when they opened and there was 30 people hiding under the kitchen and they opened the cover and they went out. The Germans were screaming "*Raus, raus!*" and they went out. And I was looking--we made some places to sleep, so I went down and when I went up it was even worse for me because I was choking from this and when they opened I got air. And I looked around and I found my husband, a little boy and a father. Four people from 30 people. My cousins, everybody, my husband's brother, they went out. They went out and we just hear, you know, shooting, shooting, shooting, shooting, and we stayed there. They was screaming but nobody came down to look for somebody's left. We stayed maybe overnight and then we decided to look for people. You know this was located with the sewers. In the sewers we was.

JF: The basement of this building was connected with the sewers.

LM: Yes, so we went through and we found another place and there was people sitting, and we went to them to be a little warmer, to be more with people. And between these people was the rabbi's wife. She told us a story, the rabbi's wife. She was sitting there and she told us a woman came, she was the cleaning girl, and she wanted to take her to her house and she didn't want it. She wanted to stay to be with all the Jews.

JF: Tell me about this person.

LM: It was the rabbi's wife. She didn't want to go out with her; I don't know, she wanted to be with us.

JF: This was a female rabbi?

LM: Her husband was a rabbi, she was the wife.

JF: I see.

LM: She got a big stick cause she was sitting so with us. And when the Germans saw, they knew that there was supposed to be more people so they closed up the sewer and I don't know, it came like from God, a rain, a tremendous rain and the whole water came to us. There almost was [unclear] dead. They locked up all the sewers so we couldn't have air even, and the water came. So a lot of people kill themselves, not in our group. A lot of people they got poison and in the hiding place they kill themselves. And the rabbi's wife, we couldn't believe, so she gave my husband the stick--she was holding a cane--to check and see if the water was coming higher or lower. And he saw that the water comes higher

and higher. We took handkerchiefs to breathe, you know with the water, but we couldn't breathe, so my husband says, "Let's run. Let's run out." We ran out and we left the people.

JF: How many people ran?

LM: In this hiding there was maybe about 20 people or so, and they was sitting like that with the water. Maybe they came out, I don't know. We ran out just the two of us.

JF: Just you and your husband ran out.

LM: We ran straight to the kitchen and the kitchen was empty, and we went straight to the kettle and the coffee. The coffee was cold because it was no people this day; they didn't make coffee. And we covered ourselves and was sitting there. And this was sitting maybe like to the evening. This was daytime. Maybe about six hours in the kettle. And then came a girl, she was Jewish, and she was serving coffee and she offered to us. She said, do you want tea or coffee? My husband, he was very sensitive. He says, "Now is our end; this is going to be our end," and in a few minutes came a soldier, he opened us, a German, and he took us out like that.

JF: He grabbed your collars.

LM: Yes. He took us out and he was laughing such a funny this, and the coffee was dripping from us. And he took us to the place where they were shooting or what was the end of shooting. They got a certain time, the Germans, 12 o'clock the shooting was finished, so we saw all the people lying, dead people. And they took us to a room, there was two women on the bed with their legs shot.

JF: With their legs shot?

LM: And little by little more people came out, they start opening, more people came out because they couldn't breathe.

JF: These were all people who had been in the bunkers.

LM: Yes, they came out 500 people. It took a few days until they came out. And then later they gave us functions to work. The Ukrainian police gave us functions to clean up this bunker, to clean up that bunker, and there were a lot of bunkers with dead people. Dead.

JF: They wanted you to clean out the dead people from the bunkers.

LM: Dead people. Women they gave--my husband was chopping wood. I was washing clothes, and everybody got a function. Some people was burning stuff left over, belongings. It was for 500 people. So this day in this cleaning place, to clean up this place took us a week, a week. Every day we got meetings with the *Untersturmführer*. He was the head from the camp; his name was Rokita...

JF: Can you spell it?

LM: Rokita a German, he was half Polish and German, he was our boss. He talked to us and he says, "I am your father, and I am taking care of you. Go home and see what happened. The people are dead. If you stay with me, I will take you to Lemberg, and Saturday we will have buses and I will take you to Lemberg and you will have a place there

to work." All places--one police I didn't know about the *Judenrat*, because it was already gone, I think so.

JF: You were kept in a place that was outside the walls of the original ghetto where you were staying at this point?

LM: The ghetto long was liquidated. This was the same place where we was working.⁵

JF: And about when was this, what years?

LM: This was '43.

JF: In what month of '43, do you have any idea?

LM: August.

JF: In August of 1943.

LM: He gave us like to Saturday to have to leave. We decided that before Saturday we have to be on the rich people's bunkers, what they ask, or to run away somewhere in the forest. And I was the one, very much I bothered my husband, and said, "I want to live--I want to live!" He didn't got the patience. Oh, he was a good leader, he know where to go, he know the town and he knows how to be quiet, a good leader. So, I say, let's run away, and everyday he says, tomorrow, tomorrow. I got a good friend who was working with me and he promised me that he would take me to this bunker with no money. He liked me, and he told us that Thursday night he will come and he will take us.

JF: This was a Polish man?

LM: No, from the Jews. They got the rich bunkers that were built up and going through to the other side.

JF: This was a Jewish man who was going to guide you.

LM: Yes, and he never showed up. Then Friday, he came again and I saw him and I said, "When are you going to take us?" and he said, "Friday for sure," and he didn't show up. So Saturday night we run away. There was seven of us. We decided to cut the fence. The fence was made from wires. My husband cut the fence. I was the only woman and five men--six men--there were seven people, and we run out. It was very hard to run out because a dog came and the dog was probably guided by police or something. So the dog started barking and the men run away and I stay with the dog and he walked away from me. He stays a little and then he walked away, and it was quiet and the men saw that I am not there and they came back and we start going. There was a field, from corn, you know, a field, how you say?

JF: A corn field?

LM: Yes, and a woman saw us, a Polish woman saw us because it was already like daytime and she says, "*Szczęsc boze* [Polish-good luck] Help you God." It was very nice of her and then we went a little further--it was forest, a very small forest, there was like bushes and we stayed there and this was Saturday morning Sunday. We hear all of the

⁵There were three (3) camps outside Tarnopol--Kamionka, Hluboczck Wielki and Borki Wielkie. [Encyclopedia of the Holocaust, p.1458]

shoots. This guy who promised us to take us to Lemberg shoot them all. So I don't know how many survived. There were 500 people. They trusted him.

JF: And, these were the only people that were left from the entire ghetto.

LM: Yes. From our ghetto.

JF: From your ghetto.

LM: From our *Zwangsarbeitslager* because the ghetto was liquidated long ago. The seven people we fall asleep because we were so tired and disgusted, and when we woke up three had disappeared. Three disappeared; they went by themselves somewhere, and my husband, an older man and a son, 16 years old, we stayed together. And we went a little further and my husband decided to go in the direction of his father was years ago worked. He was agronom [agronomist]. He told me that he had some friends there, some Polish people, and maybe they will help us.

JF: When your father-in-law was involved in the agrarian development...

LM: He died before the war, his father.

JF: Yes, but he had been involved in agrarian activities.

LM: He got fields, like agronom, an agricultural engineer he was, so he got a lot of people who knew him who worked there and they was very nice to us.

JF: What section was that?

LM: This was six miles away from Tarnopol, a village.

JF: Let me ask you one question before you go on. You had said that you were pregnant. Were you still pregnant at this time?

LM: I lost--the baby was born in this hospital. I don't know; they probably killed it or something. He was alive--it was seven months, you know because of the work--and they didn't want to help the kids. Like before I worked, I was a midwife there and a German man came to me and he said, "Don't let the little kids suffer. They will kill them anyway. Give them a pillow, put it on their faces. And let them better die," so I don't know what they did to my child.

JF: This was in the hospital where you had worked in the ghetto?

LM: Yes. When I got my baby, the baby was born and in the morning they came and told me that the baby is dead.

JF: You saw the baby then.

LM: I saw the dead baby.

JF: You never saw the baby alive after it was born.

LM: No, they took away the baby right away and...

JF: It was born alive though.

LM: Yes, it was a seven-month baby. It was a little boy, and two days later I went to work. I worked on the building. So, I was carrying heavy things and I became very sick. I came to the same hospital and they told me that I had typhus and they wanted to take me to the typhus department where you never would go out, so I started begging them. I said--it was doctors I knew, there was still Jewish doctors around then, too--and I

said, "It is not possible that I have typhus because I have high temperature. I think, it is my uterus because I worked hard carrying and I think this I have." And the next day I became better, the temperature went down.

JF: Were they able to give you any type of medication?

LM: They probably gave me something and they didn't put me in the typhus department, so I was so lucky. I survived this way.

JF: Now, you are back, we went...

LM: Yes. I am back in the fields where we went and we tried to find some place to hide. So walking around there we met a woman. It was evening, late, and we was very hungry; we didn't eat for three or four days. We didn't have anything to eat. So she says that she will give us some food if we trust her. And she told us, "You know what, not far away is a broken house. When the Russians came, they took out the rich people to Siberia and they burned the house. So go there, maybe you will find some hiding." And she gave us bread and she gave us some milk, and it was very nice of her and she say once in a while...

Tape two, side two:

JF: We were talking about the family that, or the woman that directed you to this burned-out house.

LM: So we find there like a great patch, where you put potatoes, and we went there all four of us, the man with his son, my husband and I, and we stayed there. And around was fields, so nighttime we took a look around and we got some cabbage, beets and potatoes. I couldn't eat the potatoes, but the cabbage was delicious, the best food. And we was walking around and stealing, to have something to eat. And once in a while we went to her, not too often because we was scared to go there. And she got a man whose name was Peter, and she told us, "Be careful with Peter, because he is Ukrainian." And she wants to be very good because her husband was taken by the Russians out, you know, and she wants to be good to us, and maybe later can help us when the Russians will come, you know. She liked my husband very much and she wanted him to come to live there, but he don't want to. So my husband made a poem; it says, [in Yiddish]:

*"In der finsterer Nacht
Zwischen Felder und Welder
Weit von Menschen
gehen zwei Menschen
Strecken mit a Messer in der Hand
Sie gehen, sie suchen
Sie willen gefinen epes zu essen
Zu bleiben an Leben
zu erzählen der Welt
was hot übergelebt"*

[In the dark night
between fields and forests
far away from people
two human beings
strain with a knife in hand
They walk, they search
They want to find something to eat
to stay alive
to tell the world
what they survived]

JF: Can you translate that for me?

LM: My husband was always walking around between fields and forests and he was always saying, "In the fields, two people in the dark, dark night was walking around and digging and looking, maybe they will find some things to eat to keep our lives and be able to survive and tell the story of what happened to the European Jews."

JF: Where were you sleeping during this time?

LM: In this hole. My husband always was a builder. He built. He took some branches and he made like a bed on the hole, and he dugged out deeper and deeper and put this on the top of this bed to make place for the people. Now I have to talk about--we was there and one night going to the woman for food we met a man who he says, "*Amchuh*." [phonetic] *Amchuh*⁶ means, "I am a Jew." so we got another companion. We took him to our house.

JF: Was this word a code name? Or was this a term?

LM: It is Hebrew, I think.

JF: *Amchuh*. Is Hebrew?

LM: Yes. So he was living with us for a while and then was going there to this woman for food once in a while. One night they decided to go just three of them, leaving me and the boy there. And they left. And it was a funny thing, I got a dream. I was dreaming, like, somebody is running after my husband, like, a German and he wants to kill him and I say--and the German, it was very dark and you couldn't see him and the German went to take a light (this was my dream). And I said, "Oh, thank God, he is not going to caught him because he will have time to run away." And I hear something and talked to the boy who was with me together and I said, "Leo, did you hear a shot?" And he said, "No, this must be the bed from the branches." And we didn't know the time, we didn't know anything, and we went back to sleep. It was already daytime, and I saw daytime and they are not here, and I said that something happened. Then my husband jumped in and his heart was beating like, how you say, boom, boom, boom and I said, "Boomek [phonetic]." And he said, "Where are they, where are they, the two men?" And he said, "People were after us, and they was shouting and shooting. And I don't know where they are. I went straight to the forest." He was the youngest one; they was two older people. They were shot. The boy became hysterical, he jumped out right away--not right away, we went to the forest and then later, at nighttime, he went to look. He said, "I have to see where my father is," and he find him burned to death, shot and burned. The other man we never found. So we decided to leave the hole and go somewhere. The son told us that he is going to Tarnopol, six miles, that he has some friends and, maybe, they will be able to keep him. My husband decided to go to the place where he was always vacationing when his father was alive, and there on the corner of the edge of the village was a shoemaker, a single man, Bolek [phonetic] was his name. And he says, "I will stop to Bolek, maybe, he will help us."

⁶Amchah [Sephardic] means "your people". Ashkenazic Yiddish pronunciation and Yiddish is Amchuh, used here as a code to be recognized as a Jew.

JF: This was a non-Jew.

LM: We came, it was night time, to the barn, and went up to the attic and stayed there for three days, not telling him that we were there. And we was eating some seeds, like, corn seeds, and I was thinking that I am going to die. I got terrible pain in my...

JF: Head? Temples?

LM: Temples, and I was begging my husband to let him know that we are in the house, and he was scared. He said, "Maybe, he will kill us, who knows?" We, you know, took over his attic and when it became dark, he started calling "Bolek, Bolek." When Bolek hears our voice, he closed up all the doors and he came upstairs. He was a very religious man, he crossed himself and he said to him, "Bolek, it is you, you have already a wife?" He knows him from a little boy. And he went and he gave us food, like, tea and bread, and we told him the whole story and he kept us for five weeks in the attic feeding us very nicely, bringing every day milk and bread. And after the five weeks he told us that he is scared, he is scared to keep us, because his life was in danger. "Go look around," he says. "Find somebody, maybe, other people that were your father's friends, but remember one thing," he says, "my door will never be locked," and he left. We left the dark night, it was very dark and rainy and it was maybe two o'clock and we hear somebody walking and it scared us very much. It was another man who knew him, he worked with his father and he gave us an idea to go in the fields, as in the summer when they cut the corn, the wheat for bread. They make a house like this. He said, "Go in there and I will help you; stay there and I will bring you food." He opened up some, pulling out pieces, you know, made like a hole and we went in. We stayed in there all day and it was very hard to stay, so I probably pushed my foot back and forth and opened up the place and some people came and they discovered us. They said, "Don't worry. We will take care of you. You don't have to run. Don't be scared." My husband said, "Okay. We will stay a while," and they left and we run away. We run away. We run back to the same hole where we stayed in before.

JF: Where the house was that had been burned down?

LM: Yeh, in this same hole. We left because we was scared after the two people was killed; we was afraid that we would be discovered. So we went back there and we stayed there and every three weeks when it was very, very dark, was very cold, rain or snow then we went to this Bolek's house and went to the attic and let him know that we were there and he gave us food. He gave us potatoes, he baked up potatoes, and brought some bread and milk and the next night we went back to the same place to stay. But we got food so we was very happy. We was lucky, and this was in February.

JF: February of what year?

LM: 1944, and we came from Bolek's house and we discovered that our place was falling apart from the rain and from the snow, the water.

JF: You mean the hole.

LM: Yes.

JF: It was falling apart.

LM: Yes, it was falling apart. So my husband says, "We cannot stay here, we have to run back to Bolek's." We went back to Bolek's and we stayed there but not letting him know for two or three days and then we told him that we're there. He says, "Okay, I am preparing food for you downstairs and you will take the food and go back. Don't go back to the hole, it's dangerous." But not far away was a woman and she was helping us with food, too. She was a widow, her name was Mrozowa. "She will probably keep you. Go there in the attic and stay there; don't let her know." So we went there and we stayed and we was supposed to go out, and in the meantime, there was knocks on the door, knocking and some noises and the Germans were knocking on the door to let them in.

JF: This was at Bolek's house?

LM: At Bolek's house the Germans came. They was running away already. In Tarnopol was already fights with the Russians with the Germans. And this was near Tarnopol, it was six miles, and they was running away. They stayed two days in Bolek's house. And we couldn't reach the food; we was staying upstairs with no water and no food and already dying. So it was my husband's birthday, and I say, "Today has to come the *Mashiach* [Hebrew for Messiah]." And in the roof there was an opening from the straw--the roof was made of straw--so some snow came in, so we went and we picked up--my husband couldn't walk, he was lying, but I reached there. I took some snow and we was, you know, all covered. I don't have to tell you with all kinds of louse. We was like skeletons already and we got this water, this little bit of snow and we was very happy to be alive. And then, maybe it took a few hours we hear some Russian voices and I went and I saw some Russian people, but we was scared of Russian people, too, because there was a lot of Russians that in the time of the war they became friends with Hitler. It was a special, I forgot, this general's name who came to Hitler's side.

JF: A Russian general who came and worked for Hitler and served under Hitler?

LM: Yes, and the Russian people they was all around. And a lot of Jews, they hear people talking Russian and they think the Russians came and they went out and they was killed this way.

JF: Did this Russian general⁷ bring Russian troops with him to work for the German army?

LM: He was a general with the army. But they went over--I forgot his name.

JF: So, the general and some of the Russian troops went over to the German side.

LM: Yes, this was in the beginning.

JF: In the beginning of the war.

LM: Yes, and they was in the ghettos all over, and a lot of people was thinking the Russians are here so they went out and in this way they was killed. So we was very careful not to go out. In the meantime we was hearing, they talked, like, "Is Germans

⁷Possibly General Andrei Vlasov.

around here, Germans in your house?" And he said, "No, no." And they came to the attic and they didn't see us; we could be killed by them.

JF: By the Russians.

LM: Sure, because--they came and they looked and they didn't see us. This was our luck, too, and they went down. Then Bolek came to us and he said, "Please don't go down stairs," and he gave us food. "Stay here for a while because the fight is going on and who knows, maybe, in five minutes the Germans can be back, so be quiet and I will tell you when." So, it took two days and we were still in the attic there. And two days later, he took us downstairs, and we went to the other woman and she made a beautiful meal which she fed us and we met a lot of soldiers, Russian soldiers, and they was very nice, and one of them talked Jewish to us, and he said, "You are Jews? You survived? You better run away, right away. Take a stick--because I was not able to walk--take a stick and run, because we are fighting now and a few hours, the fight can be, you know, the fight can be this way, this way." In the meantime, Tarnopol was fighting six weeks--six weeks we were on the other side we couldn't go to Tarnopol, to our home, and we left the same day that he told us. We met another Jewish man who came out from the forest, and all three of us went to Zbarazh, not far from this. When we came to Zbarazh...

JF: How do you spell it, do you think?

LM: Z-B-A-R-A-Z, and when we came to Zbarazh, we want to go in, in the town, and some Jews came out and they told us, "Run away from here, run away. They will take this man and this man and even you to the Russian army." My husband was with a long beard, you know.

JF: The Russians would take you.

LM: Yes, to the army. In the meantime, we met a Russian man and he say to us, "Take a look, a Jew, and he survived Hitler. He survived. A Jew," he said, "can make all kinds of tricks. He survived. He made a trick of Hitler." This way he says, [Russian] *Smotri evrei, dazhe Gitleza obmanul, asta Zyd*. [Look, a Jew even deceived Hitler, the Jew is alive.]

JF: What does that mean?

LM: "He made a trick of Hitler and he is alive." So we run back. Going back, we stop to ask a place where there is a village, where a man takes care of--What do you call this? In Europe they say *soltys* [bailiff]. He takes care of this village.

JF: Like a caretaker?

LM: Like a [unclear].

JF: A mayor.

LM: Like a mayor from the village. So he took us in and he gave us food; he was very nice. We were sitting there.

JF: What is the name of this village?

LM: I don't know exactly the village. This was the way going to Zbarazh. And sitting there in this house, there came a man almost like crazy, screaming, hollering. He

say, "*Dragunowka, Dragunowka*." This is the village where we were in the attic, by this man, there is a fire and it is burning. And this was the day when our friend was killed and his house was burned.

JF: He was killed in his home?

LM: Yes.

JF: By whom?

LM: From the shrapnel.

JF: From the fighting between the Germans and the Russians.

LM: Then we went to Tarnopol.

JF: You told me before about something he had given your husband, this man.

LM: When my husband wanted to give a ring for a piece of bread, he took off his mother's ring, and he wanted to give to Bolek and he say, "No, no; you have to wear this; it belongs to your mother." And he wouldn't take.

JF: He wouldn't take your husband's mother's ring.

LM: No.

JF: He gave him the bread without.

LM: Then start another--coming to Tarnopol, working. We found a house.

JF: You went back to Tarnopol then.

LM: Yes.

JF: About when was this, what month?

LM: It took a while because still every night there were fights, but we went there because we was scared walking around because they was taking men to the army. So my husband came back to Tarnopol and was standing near the bank. He was thinking maybe somebody will come and recognize him and give him a job because with no job he will have to go to the army. And another friend, the man--the cousin's husband who run away to Russia came with a car to the bank and he recognized him and he says, "Go with me and I will give you a job." He gave him a job so nobody can touch him, like, not to go to the army. They call it *Bronirowka* [Russian-exempt from military service] to work with cars, with trucks. My husband was a mechanic.

JF: The town of Tarnopol then was again under Russian control at this point?

LM: Yes, Russia. We was occupied by Russia.

JF: And you don't remember what month in 1944.

LM: Yes, March, the 24th, we was liberated by the Russians. In 1944.

JF: So, you had returned to Tarnopol before the liberation.

LM: No, no.

JF: After.

LM: Yes, we was liberated in '44 on Bolek's roof. This was the liberation. We went to Tarnopol and my husband got a job, but, of course, there was still fights. We went to a different town called...

JF: That's okay.

LM: I don't remember.

JF: Describe it, and then maybe you will remember.

LM: We didn't stay too long there, and then we went to Brzezany, and there my daughter was born.

JF: Now, how do you spell that? That's B-R-E-Z-A-N-Y. [Brzezany, Berezhany]

LM: Yes. There he worked.

JF: Now, you say that your daughter was born there. You had been pregnant during this time.

LM: No, we lived in Brzezany for a while and she was born in '45.

JF: This is your daughter Amy?

LM: Amy, yes. February.

JF: She was born in February, 1945.

LM: A year later. Yes.

JF: Now, what did your husband do in Brzezany?

LM: He worked as a mechanic, like, they found some trucks after the war. And they have to go for them and bring them to the garage and fix them. All kinds of machinery. Mostly the cars. Trucks, army trucks, to fix army trucks.

JF: What was it like living as a Jew again in liberated land? What was the treatment like that you received on the part of the natives of the town?

LM: You see, we was a group and we lived like all survivors. They gave us houses.

JF: Who gave you houses?

LM: From the place, the working place; they gave us a place where to live.

JF: So, there were many survivors working in this same place.

LM: Yes, and we was, like, a group and we lived together. We could open a store; the Russians gave us permission. Like, I was pregnant. I was able to have a store. If not, they could take me to the army. You had to work. So, we worked there and we had a house.

JF: How was the Russian's treatment of you?

LM: Pardon me?

JF: How was the Russian treatment of you in Brzezany?

LM: I wasn't too much in touch with them, you know. My husband was working across the street with Polaks, Ukrainians and Jews working in this garage.

JF: What kind of experience did he have working with Ukrainians?

LM: They was nice, everybody was like the same. There was all kinds of killings anyway; they was killing Russians; they were killing some they called them *bandes* [gangs] groups that they was against.

JF: Which groups were these, groups of Poles?

LM: Ukrainians. Bandera, Bandera his name was Bandera, the general, they called him Bandera.⁸

JF: Oh, the general that you talked about before. The Russian [Ukrainian] general who took the troops over and worked for the Germans.

LM: Yes, they were in groups and they was trying to kill. A lot of people that survived, they was killed. I knew a man here who lost a brother and sister after we was already working.

JF: These Russian troops [Ukrainian groups] that had defected and worked for the Germans were still on the rampage after the war.

LM: To kill the Russians, to kill Jews, you know. And they called them Bandera.

JF: Do you know what happened to him?

LM: I don't remember; a lot of things I don't know.

⁸Stetan Bandera of the Ukrainska Povanska Armyia [Ukrainian Insurgent Army-UPA].

Tape three, side one:

LM: We was living in Brzezany and we was living there for a year.

JF: You arrived in Brzezany shortly after you were liberated?

LM: Yes. They took us there because Tarnopol was still fights and we couldn't stay in Tarnopol. They took us to Brzezany, and my husband was working there, and our baby was born. And she was about eight months old when we hear about who was Polish citizens can go to Poland which is now territorial from the Germans. Katowice, Walbrzech, Wroclaw belonged before to the Germans and now it is going to be Polish. So, we have to wait for a special train to come and take all the people. We are supposed to go to a special point and take all of your belongings and sit there and when the train will come, they will take you. So we was sitting two weeks.

JF: This was in...

LM: Russia.

JF: The end of 1945?

LM: Yes, this is already, like, the beginning of '46, in Russia.

JF: And where in Poland were you planning to go, or did they just take you?

LM: No, we was just going to go away from the Russians. And we was scared that maybe later that they wouldn't let us out, so we took everything we got and we was waiting in the fields that the train will come, a special train that picks up, not a people train. It was, like, for animals, you know, we call them *eshalony* [phonetic]. And it was raining and we were sitting under the skies, making some, you know, from a coat, to be protected from the rain. It was terrible, we lost a lot of belongings and we came to Walbrzych and lived there for about...

JF: What is the spelling of that town?

LM: Well...

JF: W-A-L-B-0-R-Z-Y-C-H [Walbrzech], and you lived there for a short period of time?

LM: For a short period, making all kinds of business, you know, like, the Jewish, you know, selling something, buying, like, black market, a little.

JF: Was there any kind of significant reaction on the part of the townspeople to you as refugees coming back?

LM: The Polish, they gave me right away a house to live with a German family, because I told them that I have papers and that I am a midwife, so they gave me right away a place and they told me that I can open an office and I can work. I didn't.

JF: In the home of a German family?

LM: Yes.

JF: A German Christian family?

LM: Yes.

JF: What was that like?

LM: Of course, they was taking everything from the Germans and they treat them very bad. The Germans was supposed to take off the hat...

JF: How did this German family treat you?

LM: They was nice to us because we was nice to them. Jews always feel bad, they forgive, so when I cook some things and I saw that they don't have any food, I gave them sometimes something to eat. She was taking care of the baby, her daughter, so they tried to be nice. They was hard workers, they worked in the coal mines. Most of the town was coal mines. So we didn't stay too long because came out a new law. The Jews that want to go to America or someplace have to go to the DP camps. They opened the DP camps, and I don't know what year it was. I think, the same year we went to the DP camps.

JF: In 1946?

LM: Yes. We went to the DP camps.

JF: This other town that you have written here. Bytom, you also stayed there for a while?

LM: Bytom I stayed maybe for two months because this town was all coal and Amy became very sick, and I went to a doctor and he told me to leave everything and run away from this town.

JF: And this is when you went to...

LM: Walbrzech.

JF: I see, I see. And Bytom is B-I-T-0-N [Bytom].

LM: Yes, and I didn't stay too long.

JF: And this is when you received the news that you had to go to a DP camp in order to emigrate. What did you do?

LM: It was hard to come to the DP camps, with a little kid walk and the trains and we got a lot of trouble from the Russians. And we got a friend--this is a nice story--who came from Russia and he was in the army and because he was wearing the army suit he could go on the train anytime he wanted with no buying tickets. So, he was helping my husband to buy some things and to sell and buy bread. You know, clothes--the Germans, you know, was in a very bad condition. They didn't got food. So for food they gave a lot of things away. People was smart. Some people they got diamonds and my husband got *shmates* [Yiddish for rags]. [Mrs. Margulies laughs.] You could make good; a lot became very rich, very rich. He was so good that I gave her food for nothing. He was feeling bad for them because I never got food. He was feeling bad for them, I gave them food when I was able. This fellow was living with us together and one day, I was home and my husband came and told me that he was arrested. The Russians came and arrested him and he is in jail. Why they arrested him? Because he didn't got permission to come to the city. He was from Tarnopol and he is looking for his wife, but he didn't tell them that he wants to go to Bytom, so they arrested him. So he went, my husband was trying to get him out from jail. He took him out from jail and then he made papers. They are not supposed to touch Polish people, the Russians, we were already in Poland, but they was still after him and

they were telling that he is a spy. So this poor fellow was arrested again, and then he decided that he run away and he went to Israel. I just visit him; he is a very good friend. He says he never can forget what he got it. He doesn't want to see America, he doesn't want to see anything. He just wants to be in a Jewish land. So, the DP camps started; we came to the DP camp.

JF: How did you decide where you were going, or did they just send you to a DP camp?

LM: Yes, they gave us a point to come, this and this. There was special trains like this...

JF: The Poles did this?

LM: No, Jewish organizations. This is mostly from HIAS.

JF: And which camp did you go to?

LM: I was in Wetzlar near Stuttgart.

JF: Do you know how to spell that?

LM: Oh...

JF: V-E-T-Z-L-A-R [Wetzlar], near Stuttgart.

LM: Yes, there my daughter was born, my younger daughter was born in Wetzlar. And my husband became a teacher.

JF: In the camp itself?

LM: Yes. In Wetzlar.

JF: What was he teaching?

LM: He was teaching to be mechanics. For boys, for the ORT, the ORT, to go to Israel. When they liquidated Wetzlar, after a few years, they liquidated, a lot of people went to Israel. And I decided to look for my relatives in the United States, in Philadelphia. So I was pregnant with Bonnie, so I figured out that it would be better for me to be between relatives especially I had papers from them. They sent me papers. So my husband gave up his profession and he came here, and here he suffered plenty because not having the language was very hard. When you don't know the language is terrible, so he took any job.

JF: What year was it that you came?

LM: I came in October '49. Bonnie was six months old.

JF: What kind of work was your husband able to find?

LM: You see, he was a mechanic; he finished school. If he would go for a year he could be an engineer. He got papers but Poland never accepted his papers. And here, I didn't get opportunity. I didn't--maybe, it was my fault because I could say, "I will go to work and you can go to school and finish." He would have a very nice profession. This way, he went to a place where they were making tools. They didn't give him to make tools, they gave him to shlep iron, and then he got a cast. He couldn't walk, he was six months...

JF: Were you able to work as a midwife or anything like that?

LM: No, maybe yes, but I never tried because the relatives told me not to try. "When you don't know the language and you will have to go to a factory." And in second

things, the kids were small and I couldn't work. So I didn't work for four years. And when the kids became older, so I went to a place where they were making teeth. It was a very nice place, Universal Dental Company, I worked. It was a very nice place and I make nice wages. I forgot about mine--after all, years ago they didn't use midwives, you had to be a doctor. And this was the story.

JF: Before, when we were talking, without the tape recorder on, you were telling me a few other stories about the ghetto and I wonder if you could share those with me now, about the child?

LM: Yes, but when we lived in the ghetto was a lot of people in the same house occupied, you know, and we got a young couple with a little boy about four years old. His name was Chaimle Katz, and he always made up a song, like, he was singing; he said, "Chaimle, Chaimle will never grow up, because Hitler will kill me."

JF: And what happened?

LM: When they took him, when they made *Zwangsarbeitslager* when they took the first time people to Dachau, when my mother-in-law went, they took all kids, older people, this Chaimle was on the truck and his father, when he saw that Chaimle was taken, he jumped on the truck after him and they went together.

JF: You said that this was not uncommon for parents to follow their children when the children were taken.

LM: A lot of people, yes. I had a cousin who went the same way. They took her little boy.

JF: Your cousin?

LM: That's right.

JF: They took her little boy and what happened with her?

LM: She went too. A lot of mothers and fathers.

JF: Are there any other things that you want to share with us?

LM: Like, my husband said, "Chaimle was sitting all day in the corner, like, in between, with the jackets or something so nobody will see the little boy and maybe, it will save his life. But somebody walked around and they saw him, and they grabbed him and put on the truck, this little kid. There was a lot of kids, like, one girl. She survived and they took away the mother and the father and she was alive, and then she was walking around and they took her the next time. A beautiful girl. My sister-in-law was sixteen years old; she was blond with blue eyes, you never would say that she is Jewish. They took her.

JF: During those years in hiding, especially, did religion play any part in your life during that time?

LM: No, we didn't know what day, when was Saturday or a holiday, we didn't know even. I remember just maybe one time *Pesach*--anyway, we didn't got bread. I think, my mother-in-law took some potatoes and she made ground potatoes, raw, and she put them on the fire and she made like *polinitzkahs* [phonetic] they called it.

JF: This is in the ghetto still.

LM: Yes.

JF: Is there anything else that you want to add?

LM: I don't think so.

JF: Okay, thank you very, very much, Mrs. Margulies.