*THIS IS AN INTERVIEW WITH:* LK - Lola Krause [interviewee]

LF - Lucille Fisher [interviewer]

Interview Date: October 17, 1981

*Tape one, side one:*

[Slight delay in beginning]

LF: You want to begin this interview by telling me where and when you were born, and how many were in your family and so on.

LK: I was born March 1, 1916, in Vitebsk. This is Russia, but this is White Russia. And in our family was, I have an older sister.

LF: When you say White Russia, what do you mean?

LK: This is like Ukraine, and then they have Belorussia in Russia, and this is like, it’s when you translate it’s like Belorussia. This is like White Russia.

LF: Belorussia.

LK: This is like a state, like Ukraine. Their state, and this is another state.

LF: I see. I see.

LK: Like Minsk, and this is belonged to Belorussia. You know, it’s a big state.

LF: O.K.

LK: And I have an older sister four years older, and I have a brother four years younger.

LF: You were the middle child.

LK: I was the middle one, and my mother and my father, all my family.

LF: Did you come from a family that had strong Zionist leanings or religious or Socialist traditions?

LK: I didn’t know about Zionists, you know. I was small. My mother died when I was ten years old. I know my grandfathers, they were, I think, religion. They even had their own *shul*, temple, private, you know.

LF: What do you mean, in their homes?

LK: Not in their homes. They had a couple of houses before the Revolution, and then they had a separate house was the *shul*, from neighborhood people.

LF: Oh, a neighborhood...

LK: They had a--well my father comes from a big family. And I remember when I was little my father used to go for the holidays, but I don’t think we were religious, very religious. We knew it was holiday. But we were, I don’t come from a very extra-religious family.

LF: What did your father do?

LK: My father was a photographer, and he was an artist too. He was one of the best. They offered him one time to move to Leningrad to like, here 20th Century Fox, there [unclear], to be a photographer there for the movie. He didn’t want it. And we were more than middle class people. We were close to pretty well-to-do people. We had a governess; we had a maid. We were, before the Revolution.

LF: Before the revolution. What about your schooling, and whatever work you did?

LK: Schooling? We went to school. And, to a public school. It was next to our house. And when we have the governess, then we all speak German. Why my grandmother lived in Riga, Latvia. My mother comes from...

LF: Riga?

LK: Riga.

LF: Yeah.

LK: My grandmother comes from there. And we used to write her letters in German. And we all, from six years old we take piano lessons. My mother was playing very well. And...

LF: You went to, how far in school?

LK: Oh I went to public school and high school and then when I was 14 I moved to Leningrad to college. In Russia I couldn’t go, in the little city, I couldn’t go to--there were a few colleges but they know my father was wealthy and they wouldn’t take me in. Then I went to Leningrad.

LF: This is in Vitebsk?

LK: Vitebsk. Then I went to Leningrad. See meantime my mother died. My father remarried, and I went to live with my aunt and my uncle.

LF: In Leningrad.

LK: In Leningrad.

LF: And that cut off your relationship with your father?

LK: Well, every summer I used to come for vacation, to Vitebsk. And we have a big group of students. Now one is the biggest composer in Russia. One is director of theater, and one is big on television. We are a whole group of people used to, I used to play; I used to play in college in the band, piano. And we used to, from a whole group of people for two months vacation.

LF: And when you were in Leningrad what did you study there?

LK: I went to Electr--Mechanical.

LF: Electrical Mechanical, like in...

LK: Yeah.

LF: What, in engineering?

LK: Engineer, the technical mechanical part of a engineer.

LF: You went...

LK: You see we have two school, we have like two schools. But you finish public school you can go to college and you can go to high school, you can go to technical. I finished public school. I have to get out from Vitebsk. I can’t study there anymore. Then I went to Technical and then I went to college.

LF: And then you went to college. For how many years?

LK: Four year college.

LF: Four year college. And then you were trained...

LK: I went to work. I was working.

LF: What did you do?

LK: I was working engineer.

LF: As an engineer.

LK: You see they are this way, like here Drexel...

LF: Yeah.

LK: You study, and then you go to work to the factory. And you start from the bottom. You start on every machine to know what’s, you know, to know what to say to the people when you look on the blueprint. And I was working in then, in this.

LF: In heavy machinery, or light machinery?

LK: No, we were working, I was working a couple ways, for a while working, they are making all the kind, like amperemeters for the current [electric current], for the ships.

LF: Wires.

LK: And planes. And then later I worked where they make cinefilm, opera, movie, for the movies, which...

LF: Film.

LK: Yes. My first husband was working there and I went to work there right, just the war started.

LF: Were you aware of any anti-Nazi propaganda before 1939?

LK: I wasn’t aware, we knew it was going on, but...

LF: What do you mean, you knew what was going...

LK: You know what Ribbentrop then came to Russia and they, Stalin signed the papers and everything. But...

LF: The peace treaty, you mean.

LK: Yes, but I don’t pay too much attention. You see in this, Central Russia, I wasn’t on the border. You see I was in Leningrad. This is close to the border too but we don’t hear. We hear talks, talking, talking, you know, but--we know when they went to Poland. You know, you read the papers, you read things like this. In Russia you can read whatever they write, not what you, you know, like our papers here. But the other way, you see I went to college, we were just, I and my cousin, and maybe one or two Jewish, the rest was all Gentiles. I was mostly with the gentile people than the Jewish people.

LF: So that you really weren’t aware of anti-Nazi propaganda or pro-German propaganda about the time of the Nazi-Soviet pact?

LK: No, even, you know, the peasants used to say on the border, they used to say--in the beginning the Russian Army, they went the whole battalion, they went to Germany. They don’t even fight. When they start to cross the border--Minsk, Vitebsk--they hard--they didn’t fight there. They was thinking be better than the Communists. But then when they saw what’s going on, they start to fight. In the beginning, why they’re pacifists.

LF: They, I don’t know what...

LK: Why German they went so fast through.

LF: The Germans.

LK: Russia didn’t fight hard enough, you see? The peasant who live there, they was thinking they be better than, they weren’t happy with the Communists.

LF: They were unhappy with the Communists.

LK: Right.

LF: You didn’t...

LK: But then when they saw what’s going on, then they already turn everything.

LF: So that they didn’t put up too much resistance.

LK: Not too much resistance.

LF: I see. [coughs] Excuse me. Did you experience any Soviet antisemitism?

LK: I don’t experience...

LF: No I mean before the Nazis came in.

LK: I didn’t experience too much antisemitism. I was most with the Gentile, you see, most start in Russia in the war, and right after the war more antisemitism. We don’t have no temples. I don’t know of a temple in Leningrad. I didn’t know about the holiday. I know when my aunt said there was a holiday. I didn’t know nothing. I live with my aunt and my uncle and he was a dentist. And they weren’t too religious people.

LF: Well, do you think it was because you were part of the so-called intelligentsia that...

LK: No, was a lot of intelligent people who know, but you don’t have no temples. My oldest son was born; he wasn’t circumcised. I never had a *chuppah* in my li--when I got married.

LF: That didn’t--you didn’t know about it?

LK: Well I know; I remember my aunt got married with a *chuppah*. I know about circumcision.

LF: And it didn’t bother you.

LK: But then in the hospital they don’t do it, like they do in here. Now they’re talking about maybe they need it or don’t need it, whatever they do. But to go and get a *mohel* or something, I didn’t know nothing about it.

LF: Was it legal? Had you wanted to? Or don’t you recall?

LK: To me, I don’t think I, I didn’t want care. I didn’t know it have to be this way, it really should be this way. You see, I should, I got married I don’t have a *chuppah*. We went like to city hall and that’s it.

LF: I see. Well...

LK: See this time was already, religion was strict, you know. They don’t have many churches. They don’t have, maybe some place, you know, in the house somebody has a *shul* or something. But I didn’t know nothing about it.

LF: And this is around 1939, 1940?

LK: This is, yes, between ‘38. My son was born New Year ‘39. And this was between ‘38 and ‘41. ‘41 the war has started.

LF: Did you get, you weren’t involved, or were you involved in any war activity, in any defense work, and in the army and civil defense and all?

LK: You see, I have a little child. Then usually they sent you dig a, trenches, you know, before the army come. The whole factory used to go and dig everything.

LF: What do you mean?

LK: You see, in Russia like this, like all, a lot of potato fields. And the German was coming in. They can take 300 people, 400 people from a factory and say, “Go ahead, pick up the potatoes, for a day, or for two.” You know what I mean?

LF: Because they wanted to get it before the Germans.

LK: Before the Germans, yes. And then they were digging trenches for the army.

LF: The workers.

LK: All around the city.

LF: The workers were digging.

LK: The workers used to go and work every Sunday, every Saturday, in the middle of the week. But I have a small child, and I was breastfeeding him. Then I used to work like more hours on the factory.

LF: And your husband, your first husband, was he involved in that?

LK: My husband, they won’t take him to the army. He was too valuable.

LF: What did he do?

LK: He was the head engineer in the color movie.

LF: In the where?

LK: In the production of cameras. He had his own patents.

LF: Cameras.

LK: Cameras, movie cameras.

LF: Yeah.

LK: He has his own patents. They have five Stalin scholarships in the whole of Russia. He had one of them in mathematics.

LF: In mathematics.

LK: We grew up, we lived on the same street. We ride with his brother, went to school together.

LF: In Vitebsk. And, so that he wasn’t involved in having to dig trenches or...

LK: No, he had the--you see, for such people they have special things to protect them. They don’t, they didn’t take him, they don’t take him to the army.

LF: Did you personally observe the mass execution, mass killing of Jews by the mobile killing units that...

LK: You see, Germans, they went, see I lived, I used to live, Pushkin, where Pushkin lived, say, this is about 25 miles from Leningrad. I lived there, and then commuted with the train. We used to go to the city to work. And German was coming in. And I was at work, and they say, “The last train goes. There won’t be any more trains.” The Germans already too close. And a nurse with my son were there. Then I went from work, and I took the, I got the train. But coming back we had to walk, all the way under the fire. And I have to carry him. He was two, two-and-a-half years old.

LF: Under fire.

LK: Under fire. The German was coming and...

LF: Yeah.

LK: Bombing and everything. And we, everybody came to the city. Was no place to go. Army came to the city, and everybody came to the city. And then I have, my aunt, it was a empty apartment--somebody--for two years already. I’m supposed to get out from Leningrad too, with my son. But my husband came home and he say, you know, “In three days we’re going to leave with the factory. Everything’s already on the platform. And we’re going to leave.”

LF: The factory was going to be moved back.

LK: Moved back. Some went to Siberia. Some went to Iran border. Then I said, “Why should I go by myself?” I said, “We’ll go together.” A day before we have to leave the German closed the ring. We couldn’t get out.

LF: Oh my.

LK: So we were left then inside the city.

LF: Well, during this time, what happened to your husband when this occurred?

LK: We’re always in the city, we’re always in the factories. They bombed the city. And the food’s diminishing. Was no food. Start to get cold. October, November, December. No water. Nothing. We used to get 100 grams of black bread a day. And wasn’t just bread. They mix with paper, with anything. Very little flour.

LF: The government gave this out?

LK: Yeah. They have coupons whatever there is. Whatever they have put away, everything they used to bomb them, and everything went on fire. Sugar and flour and whatever was there. Was no food at all. My son used to lay and cry, “Mom, give me a piece of hard bread.” I didn’t have it. You can imagine how you feel?

LF: Oh, terrible, terrible.

LK: And then you get so hard that you just can’t talk anymore.

LF: You shut out your feelings.

LK: And then my son got measles, and pneumonia. Two-and-a-half years old.

LF: No medications and...

LK: Was nothing to eat. One of my uncles was the head of [unclear] hospital. And then sulfadine just came out.

LF: Who?

LK: Sulfadine.

LF: Oh, sulfa, sulfa, yeah.

LK: Before the penicillin.

LF: Yeah, yeah.

LK: And they used to get in the army hospital. I used to, he gave it to me. And this I save him. See my husband, we all start to look a little bit, we start to lose weight. I was 60 pounds.

LF: 60 pounds!

LK: 60 pounds, a skeleton.

LF: How did you, did you keep any contact with your family in Vitebsk? Were they able to...

LK: You can’t keep no contact. German was there. We don’t know what’s where, who. We don’t know nothing. And...

LF: Your aunt and so on, then you were all in the same position.

LK: They’re all in the same position. Then a man start to lose weight and then he start from hunger to swell. People swell from hunger. But first you lose weight, and then you swell. One day Lake Ladoga froze. Then they start to bring with trucks. They start to bring food, what America start to send food, with the trucks, to Leningrad. See the only place they put the Germans a little bit apart--Lake Ladoga.

LF: What, how do you spell that?

LK: Lake.

LF: Lake?

LK: Lake.

LF: Yeah, L-A-K-E.

LK: Ladoga, L-A-D-O-G-A, Ladoga. And there is so cold, and ice is so thick, you can put right on a thousand trucks together. They used to start, come in, and bring some food, and take out people out of Leningrad. They were afraid, in the spring, that so many dead people in Leningrad, laying on the street, can be cholera, you know, sickness, anything.

LF: Cholera, sure.

LK: Anything. Meantime, my husband, they open a sanitarium in the factory. And they took, you know, the first, they start to give them food. I don’t know what they gave it to them. They used to, they should start from a little bit something, I don’t know. Somebody told me they gave them fried hamburgers. Well I don’t know what they give them. I wasn’t there. I used to go just to see him every other day. One day my friend went. We have to walk about 20 miles, across the frozen lake. And when you’re 60 pounds you don’t have no strength, no nothing.

LF: Of course.

LK: And water we have to bring ten blocks from the river. And everything was frozen. You take a bucket, you come home with so much. To make fire I have to chop our concert piano. You know, this was no meaning. I took off two-and-a-half karat ring for a little piece of bread and a little bit cereal. Who need it? Nobody needs nothing. Then one day I come in and I see his bed is empty. He died in the night. See, the body couldn’t adjust, take anymore.

LF: Over how long a period did this happen?

LK: This happened maybe two weeks he died.

LF: And the starvation before that had gone on...

LK: The starvation was going on from October.

LF: And this was like...

LK: I never remember a New Year of ‘41, this birth--my son’s birthday. In the beginning when, in September when they sent everybody to dig up potatoes, then my husband went too and he brought home potatoes. This was more than money. Then when I cleaned the potatoes, the skin, I wash it out, and I dry it out. I don’t know why, but I did it. Then for New Year I boil a big pot of water, and I put some of the dried, and two sardines in a pot of water, and a lot of pepper.

LF: You made some kind of soup or something.

LK: I don’t know what was it, whatever was it. And when I came in I see he is not there. I say, “Where he is?” He say, “He died in the night.” But there’s a funny thing; when the war...

LF: How old was he?

LK: 27.

LF: 27 years old.

LK: When the war started, he told me a funny thing. He say, “You know, Lola, I don’t think I’ll make the war. But I know one thing. When the war finish, everything will be different. Everything will be better. But I don’t think I’ll see the day.” That’s it. And in Leningrad was the situation like this. People were dying, laying in apartments, and nobody did know if they’re alive or dead. Then they don’t see anybody for ten days. The police, special units, used to come in, army, break the door, and the family, five people, they’re all dead in there. Nobody buried. We just have to take a frozen bo--to take a body and put outside. And the big trucks be coming and taking them and take them to the mass graves. My husband died. I came home to my aunt, and I was, I don’t even know, all my legs with wounds, everything was in blood. When I was crossing the river, the German was shooting. They were so close to Leningrad. And people was dying, falling and dying, around my legs. And I don’t care. I just walk. I said, “But I have to live.” My son tells me, “Die, we’ll die today or tomorrow.” Sick with measles and pneumonia. My husband died. I don’t have anybody. My parents, my brother, my si--I don’t know whatever they is. I want to die. And when I came to my aunt she said, “What happened to you?” I said, “I don’t know.” And she said what happened with my husband. I say, “He’s dead.” And you know, quiet, no tears, no nothing, like you...

LF: You, your feelings were cut off.

LK: You know, you’re like a stone.

LF: Sure. Maybe this will be a good place. We’ll turn the tape now.

LK: O.K.

LF: All right?

*Tape one, side two:*

[There is a six-minute delay before LF is heard.]

LF: You say they did not want to bomb Leningrad.

LK: They bombed. They bombed the outskirts of Leningrad.

LF: The Germans didn’t want to.

LK: The Germans, but they don’t want to bomb the center city.

LF: Because?

LK: Because was too valuable, too beautiful. You see, they have a chance to take out all the paintings from Hermitage.

LF: The Hermitage, yes.

LK: Yes. Then they have beautiful sculpture on the bridges of Nevsky Prospekt, the center of the city--horses with many, and they buried them in the river. And everything was very valuable. You know, where Rastrelli used to build, you know?

LF: The what?

LK: Architect Rastrelli.

LF: How do you spell that?

LK: Italian. Rastrelli, R-A-S-T-R-E-L-L-I, something.

LF: That was an Italian architect who came to build...

LK: Yeah but he came with his family, then his son was born there. And they built all the palaces in Leningrad, around Leningrad. Beautiful.

LF: Oh, this beautiful, beautiful city. Were you having any contact with any Jewish anti-fascist committees or organizations?

LK: No, let, I’ll tell you something. Then, when I have to bury my husband, you can’t have no coffins, no nothing. Then they gave me a man who helped me to go to the cemetery. I put him on the blanket. And I, with the man on the, what do you call them with the children’s slides, they’re going, sliding in the snow?

LF: A sled.

LK: A sled. We went to the cemetery. And we left him there, in the cemetery. And then the machine was digging graves and they were putting them. And when you come to a cemetery, you know, for fifteen years when I came here I couldn’t go to a funeral. I don’t see one person laying down. I saw the whole place with frozen, dead bodies, like a mountain of frozen, dead bodies. I never saw one person. I saw the whole thing.

LF: Is it pain; is it too hard for you to continue to talk to me about this?

LK: That’s all right. It’s all right.

LF: Would you like to stop a little bit?

LK: That’s all right.

LF: It’s all right. You, it doesn’t seem real to you yet, I guess.

LK: Oh, real. I wake up in the night and I see and I think, well I was already here. Everything was good. And the cold sweat coming. That’s all right. And after this I have to leave Leningrad, in March. I left with my son.

LF: How old was your son then?

LK: He was three years old. He weighed seven-and-a-half pounds from starvation.

LF: Three years old and weighed seven-and-a-half pounds!

LK: And nine months old he was a child like this. He walked, nine months. He talk one year. He can me the whole children’s story. But from sickness and no food. Then I was lucky. A friend of mine gave me, like a Jeep, and took me to the train station. When you couldn’t get for a, I don’t know what you couldn’t get anybody. Everybody say, “How do you do it?” We came there, we were staying 24 hours. We couldn’t leave. They was bombing the station. We went with the cattle train.

LF: Where were you going?

LK: We were going to Samarkand, to Iran border, the factory.

LF: That’s where your husband had gone, to Samarkand.

LK: That’s what I meant.

LF: Yeah.

LK: Then...

LF: That was S-A-M-A-R-K-A-N-...

LK: Samarkand. S-A-M-A-R-K-A-N-D.

LF: Yeah.

LK: We were about five weeks, six weeks in the train. We were going, we were stopping. And the hair was frozen to the, you know, to the wood of the train. And hardly any food. We have lice. We’re dirty. We don’t wash, nothing. Finally I came, before Samarkand, was city of Tashkent. I had an uncle there.

LF: How do you spell that?

LK: Tashkent?

LF: Yeah.

LK: T-A-S-C-H-K-E-N-T. [Tashkent] And my uncle was the head of a army and navy hospital. He was professor of nose, throat and ear. And when he came and he took a look on my son he said, “Where are you going? He’ll die today or tomorrow. Where are you going? Stay here.” I say, “Look, I do the best what I can but I don’t want to stay here.” I said, “There is a factory and I’ll have work to do, and I’m going there.” And there was the biggest army and navy medical academy, [unclear] from Leningrad in Samarkand.

LF: In Samarkand.

LK: I say, “When I’ll come,” I say, “when they can’t help me, nobody can help me.” And you know, is a funny thing. My aunt asked me what happened to her sister. And I don’t know, I don’t have no feelings, or we were sorry. “So what do you mean, what happened to your sister? She is dead like anybody else.” And when she started to cry, I was looking on her and I was thinking, “*She is crazy. What she is crying*?” You know? I don’t know what. I think we weren’t human anymore. We lost the period. We don’t--we were skeletons. See, in Leningrad was the register of dead, was dying on the street 30,000 a day, just registered.

LF: In Leningrad.

LK: Yes, just registered. When we came there, when I left to know, my husband’s friend was the director of the factory become, and he ask what do I want to? I say, “I need somebody to take me and my son to the hospital.” I came to the Leningrad army and navy hospital was there.

LF: Was there starvation there like there was...

LK: Not, you have just to have money there. You can buy on a market there everything. Just you have to have money. I came to the hospital. I didn’t know where I will sleep tonight. You know, but so many people came from all over. There’s no place to go. I came to the hospital, and a big professor came out and I told him, I say, “I just came from Leningrad.” And they were all interested. They came out before the siege, blockade of Leningrad. I came already after. I told him what’s happening there and everything. He say, “You know, we don’t have no place even to keep him.” I said, “Listen, you don’t have a place to keep him. I don’t know where I’ll be even sleeping tonight.” I say, “I hardly can move. We were six weeks in a cattle train.” He say, “O.K., I’ll take him. I’ll put back in the hall. Meantime we’ll see what we can do.” They took him. He was there a year-and-a-half, in the hospital. They used to take my blood every other day. They don’t have no father. They need my blood or the father blood, whatever they--And they told him, “Whatever he want, he asks something to eat, give it to him.” His stomach couldn’t work. He just don’t want nothing. He wants fried potatoes.

LF: He wants what?

LK: Fried potatoes!

LF: Fried potatoes.

LK: He wanted to--half the night they used to bring him, whatever. Then I signed the papers. See, one of his assistants write a dissertation, you know, for the professorship.

LF: Writes what? I don’t...

LK: Well I don’t know how do you mean. Just they write a book for the profess-...

LF: You write a text, yes.

LK: For the professorship.

LF: Yes.

LK: And I signed the paper he can do all the experiments what he wants to do. I know I have nothing to lose. I saw it. And after a year-and-a-half in the hospital I took him home.

LF: At that, and what did he...

LK: He couldn’t walk. He couldn’t sit. He just learn a little bit to sit. When I, he was just like this.

LF: And what did he weigh then?

LK: He weighed then maybe eight pounds.

LF: He was to that, oh. He gained a little weight.

LK: A little weight, but...

LF: How is he today?

LK: Wonderful. Fat.

LF: Fat!

LK: Not fat, but plump.

LF: Aw.

LK: And he--when I took, carried him home, the people on the street used to go on the other side. They was thinking a skeleton, like a skeleton. But he came to himself. He start to walk, and that’s when I put him to the kindergarten.

LF: Where your husband had been working.

LK: Where my husband, and he saw he’s a tiny little. And he tells stories like, he was a very good-looking kid. And he was there; I was working. And I used to take him home once a week, just Saturday for Sunday. And Monday I, in the morning, take him back there.

LF: What kind of work did you do?

LK: I was a engineer.

LF: Still an engineer. And he was in like this nursery for a week and you would get him...

LK: We were connected with our factory. A lot of our kids were there.

LF: Oh, I see, like a daycare center.

LK: Yes.

LF: But except it was for the week.

LK: Yes.

LF: Tell me, during those years, during that time, did the name of Ilya Ehrenberg mean anything to you? Had you...

LK: Oh, Ilya Ehrenberg, we read his books. We know. You know, we read his books and we know. He...

LF: What did you know about his books?

LK: He wrote the, what do you call, eh...

LF: *The Black Book*?

LK: *Negaytash in America* What do you call, *Multi Floor America* or something. I don’t know. You have here the book or not. And that’s how it went on, but...

LF: How do you spell that?

LK: What?

LF: Multi?

LK: In Russian they say *Negaytash in America*. This is like the United States have so many big buildings, you know, like the whole country is just building with a lot of floors, something.

LF: Skyscrapers.

LK: Something like this.

LF: But *The Black Book*? That did not mean anything to you?

LK: No.

LF: That, his collection of material for *The Black Book*?

LK: You see, you couldn’t get in Russia the things like this. When they don’t want to have you read, you can’t get it. You can’t get this. And you have a library. Here you can get anything--a good book, junk, anything that--you have everything. There, in the library, you have what they want you should have it.

LF: So you didn’t know about his collection.

LK: I didn’t know about collection, but I read this book and I know about him. He is a, he was a writer, and a very good writer. And that’s all that I know about him. I know he was Jewish.

LF: How did, how would you describe the attitude and the behavior of non-Jews toward Jews?

LK: You see, in Samarkand we lived in...

LF: During the war, I mean.

LK: Yeah, that’s what I am talking about. You see, in Samarkand was the war. I came there in March, ‘41 and I was there till ‘46. But now a lot of people start to get packages from the front. The soldier used to send home. And talking about Jews and everything. Then you start already to have a little feeling. Where I worked was no feeling. We have a lot of Jewish people. You know, there was nothing. But one funny thing, I went on the market one time, and I bought soap. And I came home and I washed the clothes and the soap has such a funny smell. And doesn’t have no suds. And I used to say, “What? What the hell? It, what is in it?” Then my husband came home. I said, “What is it?” I wasn’t married then, but I know him.

LF: You knew him.

LK: And somebody finds out this is made *Rein Judenfett* [pure Jew fat]. This was made from concentration camp. They used to, after the crematorium, the fat of the people, this was, the soap was made from from human fat, meat. I don’t know what they put in it. Then somebody organized. They bought up whatever they can, this soap, and they bury.

LF: They...

LK: Buried.

LF: Buried it.

LK: Yes.

LF: Who did that? Was that a Jewish merchant?

LK: A Jewish, sure Jewish. See, we start to know more about Jewish*keit*, when the Pol--was a lot of Polish Jews in Samarkand. And they used to keep Saturday and they used to, they were more religious than Russian. Russian Jew were religious. They have, like Lubavitcher *Chasidim* used to be in Russia.

LF: Yeah.

LK: But my generation, we weren’t just religious.

LF: You weren’t. So you were then aware of the destruction of the Jews.

LK: Oh, oh, look. Sure I was aware of destruction of the Jews. My father was killed. My sister was killed by the Nazis. They just, they came out from Vitebsk. In the beginning my father didn’t want, I told him, I say, “Come over.” I say, oh, this and this when he decided to go. My sister didn’t want to go without my father. She wasn’t married.

LF: Samarkand was how far over the border from Poland?

LK: Oh, this is the other end.

LF: The other end.

LK: This is, well this is so, this is the other end.

LF: Yeah.

LK: But my father was in Vitebsk. And I, when the war started I said, “Come to Leningrad.” “No,” this and this. Vitebsk fell very soon, right after the war. And when they start to evacuate, the German took him. And we don’t know what happened.

LF: Were there camps that they took them to or...

LK: No, I don’t think there was a camp. I think, we really don’t know. I think they were on the way or bombed or shot or something. See my brother was in the army. My brother was in the army.

LF: In the Russian Army.

LK: In the Russian Army, sure. See my moth--my mother died when I was ten years old...

LF: Yes.

LK: From accident. Fire, we were in the country and they were like kerosene stoves and there was a bottle of gasoline on the top and...

LF: This was years ago.

LK: This is in 1925.

LF: So then your...

LK: My father remarried. His second wife was a doctor, but she died. And my father remarried. When I was getting married he said, “What should I do?” I said, “Listen, I don’t live here. My sister,” I say, “she is old.” I say, “How long we’ll be with you? You’ll be alone. You better get married.” And he marry again and when they were caught, we don’t know what happened.

LF: You don’t know what happened. And that was approximately what year?

LK: This was ‘41.

LF: ‘41. So, you heard the news from the Poles that were coming in to Samarkand about what was happening in Europe?

LK: Oh, we hear people was talking, but we really don’t know too much about the crematorium. You see nobody came there so far in ‘42 from crematorium, you know. Later they start to talk about it.

LF: But you had your own killings in Russia, like your father and his family, from the bombings and the...

LK: The whole my family. This, we had a family maybe 100 people. Not many left. I don’t even know. Now I found out when I was in Russia I still have a couple cousins. But we were a very, very large family. You see, my grandfather was like a merchant, a first-class merchant. And Jewish people wasn’t allowed to live in Petersburg before they renamed Leningrad. And our family always have a right to live there.

LF: So you had special privileges.

LK: Yes. They were all doctors. They were all...

LF: So, were you ever deported from this town you were in, in Samarkand? Were you...

LK: No, I...

LF: Deported from there?

LK: Was no place to be deported. The German wasn’t in Samarkand.

LF: No, the Germans never invaded there.

LK: No, they never, no.

LF: And you never did, then, return to your hometown?

LK: No.

LF: You never went to Leningrad?

LK: I returned, and the first time I returned in 1974, from here.

LF: From here you came back. And you never went back to Vitebsk?

LK: My brother was there. I find my brother after many, many, many years.

LF: You mean before you came to the United States or after you came?

LK: Oh no. I found him, I think, in ‘70.

LF: Oh!

LK: I don’t know nothing. I got one letter from him. You see, one aunt was living in Leningrad and everybody know the address and everybody whatever want to find wrote to her. And when my brother came from the war, after the war, end of the war, and I was then in Germany, and my aunt have the address. And I got one letter. You see, he came from the war. And nobody, just one aunt is there.

LF: Where was he?

LK: He was in the war. I don’t know.

LF: No, but I mean what city was he in?

LK: Oh, in Leningrad.

LF: He came back to Leningrad...

LK: Yeah.

LF: Too, yeah.

LK: And he say now he’ll start, he, before the war started he was admitted to architectural college. And the war started. They all went. And he say, “Now I came. I went back to college. Nobody there. Nobody to help me. I am all alone.” And this is the last letter I got from him. And then I didn’t know a thing till 1970. Then I have an aunt in New York from my father’s side. She used to sing with Chaliapin.

LF: She used to what?

LK: Sing with Chaliapin.

LF: With Chaliapin, yeah.

LK: She, when she came from France here--they came in 1940--she was singing on the radio many years. When Roosevelt died, whatever, she was, has a program. My uncle is a sculptor, and decided he was an art collector. He used to buy and sell.

LF: Here in the United States?

LK: Yes. And she went to Russia. She has a big family there, all her brothers was conducting. One brother he was conducting Metropolitan. And then he was in Louisiana. He conducting Chaliapin, in *Boris Godunov*. And she went to Russia. She had a sister there and a brother. The first time she went she couldn’t find my brother. See, Moscow doesn’t have a telephone book. Then she went the second time, and she ask her brother maybe he will have a chance to find what happened to him something. Well I didn’t know I had cousin in Leningrad. Nobody told me anything. And her brother found him.

LF: Where did he find him?

LK: Moscow.

LF: In Moscow.

LK: Yeah. And when she call him up, and she told him I am here and I am alive, he just couldn’t believe it. And then when she came back, she called me on the phone and she told me, “Misha is alive.” And you know, I passed out.

LF: Really.

LK: Then when I, I ran out outside and I just started to scream, “I found my brother!”

LF: Oh my. And that was what, like 30 years?

LK: 34 years later.

LF: 34 years. And then soon after that you went back to...

LK: I went ‘74.

LF: To see your brother. Well, let’s get to that later. So you never returned to your hometown. You just--and you met your husband...

LK: In Samarkand.

LF: In Samarkand, your present husband.

LK: My son marry me. You know, he was good to him. He see a cute child and talking like a grown-up boy and everything. He start to give him, see, there are grapes growing all over there. He used to bring him grapes. He used to bring him, extra something. You know, a child. Give him something. Three, three-and-a-half, four years old.

LF: Your husband was working in the nursery, yeah?

LK: Yeah. And he start, he comes home one time, he say, “You know, this and this I want he should be my daddy.”

LF: Oh my.

LK: I say, “What are you talking about? Your father is dead.” So he don’t say nothing any more, but we, sometimes we used to walk on the street and he see a man walking before. “Take a look, my daddy is walking there.” From the back, you know? And one day I didn’t feel good, and we have to go maybe eight, ten miles. And somebody, they’re all passing my house when they go to pick up the children. I say, “Will you do me a favor, to bring Mark home?” He said, “O.K.” And they pass by. You see, we lived like so many evacuated people were there. Somebody has a room, then they gave me just a corner in their room. And I have just like one bed, and a little table and a chair. That’s all that I have. And another woman was living on the other side. Was no place to live. Too many people came to this city. When they pass on the way back they told me, “Somebody working there, and he’ll be coming back later and he’ll bring him.” So, and when he, my husband, came and he brought him, he say, “This is my daddy. I want you should be my daddy.” I was, you know, I didn’t know what to say. I said, “O.K.” “I want you should be my daddy.” I say, “Your daddy died.” He say, “O.K.,” he say, “get a--I want another one. I want a daddy.” Then the Polish Jews, they start to apply with a law they can go back to Poland. And he comes to me, “Marry me.” I say, “I don’t want to get married.” I say, “I am going back wherever I came from and I don’t want to.” “You don’t know nothing. They, whatever they write here on the paper, everything is a lie. Poland doesn’t have nothing.” I say, I told him I have a relative in United States. My, I had an aunt--she died now--in Brazil. And one time I sent a telegram there that I am alive, when I came, when I was in Germany. No, when I was in Russia. And she send me, she send, maybe fifty packages. They’re allowed to send a pound a package. From the fifty I got maybe three. But whatever I got [unclear]. My aunt from here sent me money. She sent-

*Tape two, side one:*

[Delay in beginning]

LK: They're crazy about jewelry. When she and her mother and his sister will come together, they don’t stop talking. They say, “Here's jewelry, there's jewelry, jewelry!”

LF: Your daughter-in-law. Well, it happens in every family, you know. There’s all kinds.

LK: Look, I don’t care. Let them do that. I decided this way. I have my life to live. They’re happy. Let them do whatever they want to, and that’s it.

LF: So that when you got back with your husband, and your son, and you went back where, from Samarkand?

LK: Poland.

LF: To Poland. Where in Poland?

LK: This was, we were in Niederschlesian [Lower Silesia]. This was in, we were in Poland in a *kibbutz*, Wroclaw.

LF: Now when you talk about a *kibbutz*, who ran these *kibbutzim*?

LK: The Israelis.

LF: The Israelis.

LK: Yeah, Israeli Jewish Agency.

LF: The Jewish Agency.

LK: See, we don’t have no place to live. They was preparing the people maybe they’ll be able to go to Israel.

LF: Israel.

LK: To Israel.

LF: So this was where? In...

LK: Wroclaw [Breslau].

LF: How do you spell that?

LK: Wroclaw I have to take a pencil and write this.

LF: All right. Yes, it’s hard, I know, to--you can see it better when you write it.

LK: Something like this.

LF: Yeah, that’s, let’s see.

LK: Maybe C. It may be C. I don’t know. It’s a Polish name.

LF: A Polish name. It’s...

LK: Z-J?

LF: W-Z-O-C-...

LK: It’s C, put the C.

LF: Oh, yeah.

LK: W-...

LF: Well...

LK: W-R-...

LF: W-...

LK: O-C-L-A-F.

LF: Oh, I see. And where was that near?

LK: This was near the river Oder.

LF: Where?

LK: The river Oder.

LF: The, yeah, the Oder river, O-D-E-R.

LK: Yeah, this was, before it used to be Germany. It’s near the Schlesian. And we were there about six weeks. They took my son to the children’s *kibbutz*.

LF: Was that close to you?

LK: This was not far from me. This was about, I don’t know, five, six miles.

LF: Did you have a choice in that? Could you have not sent him?

LK: I don’t have a choice in this. Why, when we have to go across the border, we couldn’t go with the children.

LF: Why?

LK: We were going in the night. You see, the Israeli--the organization, they used to bribe...

LF: Smuggle you out? Or...

LK: They bribed the guards.

LF: At the Polish border?

LK: Polish-Czechoslovakia border. And we used to go in the night.

LF: Even though your husband was a Polish citizen?

LK: It doesn’t make any difference. We were leaving Poland.

LF: You were leaving Poland.

LK: We were leaving. We want to leave Poland. We don’t want to stay in Poland. Is nobody left there to stay.

LF: So you’re heading now toward...

LK: We’re heading now...

LF: Towards Germany.

LK: We’re heading now to Germany. Then he went with the children.

LF: Oh I see.

LK: And we went in the night, walking. We walk a lot. In the night...

LF: That must have been a very frightening thing for you, to be separated from your child again.

LK: From the truck, they put him on the truck and they took him and he start to scream, “Mother! Mother! Where do you sending me!? I don’t want to go! I want to be with you!” I just collapsed. I couldn’t believe it.

LF: Sure. Sure. And from there you went where?

LK: From there we were in Czechoslovakia and then we walk again to Vienna. We have to pass, crossing border. And we wait in Vienna, in Salzburg.

LF: In Salzburg?

LK: From Salzburg, some people went to Italy.

LF: Now you’re still not with your child yet.

LK: No. Some people went to Italy, and some people went to Germany...

LF: And who said where...

LK: Closer to, they were thinking closer to Israel.

LF: Oh I see.

LK: And somebody told me the children passed by and they saw my son. I said, “What direction did he go?” We’re supposed to go to Italy. He say, “He went to Germany.” Then I went to the people who send you, and I told them, “I can’t go to Italy. I have to go to Germany. My son is there.” I looked like I was maybe 17 or 18 years old. They say, “You don’t have a child. You’re just talking. You want to go to Germany.” Then there were people what I know from Russia, Polish-Jewish people, and they signed the paper I have a son. They don’t believe me, my age. And when we came to Germany we were living in the field, the airfield used to be, the airfield for the German Army. And for six weeks or seven weeks...

LF: This is in Salzburg?

LK: No. We already left Salzburg and we went to American Zone in Germany.

LF: To where?

LK: In American Zone.

LF: The American Zone in Germany.

LK: In Germany. And we was living, they have no place to put us. And we were living in a field with a tent.

LF: And this was run by the Joint Distribution or by the...

LK: By, I don’t know Israeli Joint Distribution--it’s a Jewish organization. And the army gave us a little food twice a day, like a piece of bread, a little soup with nothing. And we were hungry. We used to steal potatoes. And I want just water, water from the potato. That’s all what I want. Cook potatoes and drink the water. And we were there about six, seven weeks. And when we came, then they sent us to Wetzlar.

LF: How do you spell that?

LK: [pause]

LF: W-...

LK: W-E-T-Z-L-A-R.

LF: In Germany.

LK: In Germany.

LF: Yeah.

LK: It’s not far from Frankfurt am Main. And I was there I think a week or two weeks. We were living about eighteen people in one room, a big room. This was *Kaserne* [barracks] army. It used to be for German Army. And then I decide I have to go to look for my son. So somebody told me, “He is there.” Somebody told me, “There.” I couldn’t find him.

LF: How long were you separated from him?

LK: About three months, maybe four, close to four months. And I was afraid, when I won’t find him now they’ll send him to Israel. Then somebody told me, “In the other end of Germany.” Then I took a train in the middle of the night. I was going, empty train. I’m…

LF: Where did you get money to do this? Where did you have the fare or the...

LK: The fare wasn’t so much.

LF: And you were able to get a little money.

LK: The fare wasn’t so much. I don’t know what I was able to, where we got the money. I had--I was, this wasn’t too much money. And I went to the other end and I come there and they told me, and it was Sunday. Buses didn’t go. When I came from the train I have to walk ten miles, fifteen miles, I don’t know. Finally I came there and they told me, “A week ago they send them to another place.” And this place was closer where I was. Then he said, “Wait till tomorrow morning. You can sleep there. They have food and everything. And tomorrow morning some people are going to them.” I said, “No, I’m not waiting. I’m going.” I walk back again and took back a train. And again in the night. Then I have to change trains. Finally I came to Frankfurt am Main. From Frankfurt am Main I have to take a bus. They were living in the mountains in a beautiful place. When I came there it was about 7:30 in the morning or 8:00. They were just--the children was getting up. And when he was coming from the stairs, I see him go to the--they say, “Take a look, your mother!” He said, “I know. I told you last night.” He told everybody, “You’ll see tomorrow my mother will be here.” I don’t know how he knew. I don’t know. And oh, “Leave him there.” Everybody was so crazy about him. “Leave him there.” UNRRA then used to take care of them, UNRRA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration].

LF: United Nations, yes.

LK: “Leave him here; he is good here.” Oh, they live on a beautiful pensione, beautiful! Food, the best food. They have everything there. I said, “No, I’m taking him with me.” And then I brought him with me to Wroclaw.

LF: And then what happened?

LK: We were living there, and I was pregnant. And we were living there in the big room. Then finally we had a chance to put like from the tent to make a wall, and to have a small room for ourselves. And they had a school there. And they used to give us food. And my husband--they work in the woods--was cutting wood, for the American Army. And they used to pay cigarettes. Like, “Now I’m on nine cartons cigarettes, ten cartons.” But this was more than money. And sometimes a little bit money. Then we could manage. In the meantime I got in touch with my aunt here and she start to send me packages. Then I told her, “Don’t send me much. Just send me a little bit Crisco, a little bit sugar, a little bit coffee.” Well, the coffee I always--Germans crazy about coffee. I always can exchange for something else. And she send me clothes. They send me diapers. [unclear] son is a couple of years older than my youngest son. Whatever she have children clothing, they send to me. And I had a very bad pregnancy. I always have bad but he was born twelve-and-a-half pounds.

LF: Oh my!

LK: And after this I had a lot of trouble already here in the United States. But we were living there.

LF: How long were you there before you came to the United States?

LK: We were there from the end of ‘46 to the end of ‘49. We were in Germany. We were there, but the last year-and-a-half they sent us to another place, Waseralfinger, close, Waseralfinger.

LF: How do you spell that?

LK: Oh [pause].

LF: W-A-S-...

LK: W-A-S-E-R-A-L-F-I-N-G-E-R.

LF: And where was that?

LK: This is not far from Stuttgart.

LF: Oh, near Stuttgart.

LK: Yeah. And we were there about a year-and-a-half.

LF: And again still with the Agency.

LK: Yeah, the same thing.

LF: Yeah.

LK: We couldn’t have...

LF: You were waiting to get admitted some place.

LK: We was thinking we’ll go to Israel. Then I say to my husband, and then they used to say they come to Israel they don’t have no place to live. They live in the tents. And I told to my husband, “Listen, I suffer enough. I don’t have anybody in Israel.” I have a second cousin, third cousin, but then I didn’t know I have anybody. I say, “I don’t have anybody in Israel. You don’t have anybody in Israel. I have one aunt and one uncle in the United States.” I say, “I don’t want to go to Israel.” Then we came to United States.

LF: And that was in what year?

LK: This was the end of ‘49. Was Thanksgiving, ‘49.

LF: And that’s where your husband talked about your, that you’re not being able to stay in Philadelphia.

LK: We, you couldn’t get an apartment there. Then my father had a second cousin that lived in Bradley Beach, not far from Asbury Park.

LF: Bradley Beach, mmm hmm.

LK: And she has a big house. Summertime she used to rent out the rooms but this was already almost December. And she say we can stay there. The win--we stay there the winter and following summer.

LF: Did--were the--your aunt and uncle able to take care of you till you got situated?

LK: They take care of me. They used to give me $15 a week to live on. I had to take a bottle of milk, and measure for the kids a little bit milk to each one. But not just this uncle. I have another uncle, the [unclear]. They live in New York. And he came to see us with a little box of candy in a glass jar. “This is candy for your children.”

LF: And this was what year? 19-...

LK: This was ‘49, ‘50.

LF: ‘49, ‘50.

LK: Yeah. Then working hard we couldn’t get an apartment. My husband learned to make nylon stockings. He used to walk, work, he used to walk ten miles to work and ten miles back on the night shift. Nobody have transportation. Then finally we were, got an apartment, made over, with two tiny rooms and a bathroom--from one room to another room we have to walk in the bathroom. And a closet with two burners was my kitchen. But I was glad I was on my own. I was for myself. And I started to work. Somebody--I never know how to sew--but somebody gave me a sewing machine and show me how to put the thread, show me how to sew. I went to work for a factory.

LF: And what did you do with the children?

LK: My oldest was all right, and my youngest one was what, he was four years old. Then I sent them to a nursery school. I used to make $25.00 a week, and twelve-and-a-half I paid for the nursery. And I give them lunch there. But at least I know they’re taking care of him. But I used to leave for work before the car used to pick him up. And he stayed by himself, wait for the car, used to go. And when he used to get sick then my oldest son have to take him out from school and have to stay with him. We need the dollar.

LF: Of course.

LK: We need the dollar. See my family could help me but they didn’t. See, my uncle--she is my mother’s sister. But my uncle was very good. He would know what to do; if she wouldn’t let him.

LF: Really?

LK: Yeah. He had a patient who took care all his life, and he has a big junkyard. But the property cost a fortune, land and everything. And everything was already going. Then when they know he has a relative came from Europe, the son--one was a lawyer, one was a doctor--came to him, “Look, doctor, you were very good to my father. We want to do something good for you. My father maybe fifty years ago paid for the whole thing $2,000. Give us the $2,000 and we’ll help your family.” He want to. He would give a thousand and my other uncle will give a thousand. My aunt say, “How do you know they will give you back the money?”

LF: So you made it on your own.

LK: We made--hard, hard.

LF: Very hard.

LK: Hard. When we came here, we used to live there but the factory closed up, no place to work. And we bought the first cleaning store in Strawberry Mansion. And we saved up $1500. You know, I’m old fashioned. I cook, I bake, I know how to save a penny. Then we lived like on my money we have for food and my husband paid money was rent. And whatever he can he put a dollar a week, five dollars. But he have to put away. He can’t live not to put away. His sickness. He has to put something away.

LF: Well...

LK: So we bought the cleaning store, and I was two years in this store. And we started, we were on each other’s nerves. We can’t--I can’t stay with my husband 24 hours. Some people can work--is no good. Then my doctor told me, “Lola, get a job. Get out from the house.” I got a job in a factory, and I was working. I retired in ‘64, March in ‘64 from it.

LF: Tell me something. If you had a message, if you had something that you could say to American people, now, from your life experience, would you have anything to say that...

LK: I would tell them one thing. American people complaining too much. They--a lot of them too lazy. A lot of them too wasteful. They don’t appreciate what they have. They don’t appreciate what they have. You know when the Korean War started and they said, “We won’t have nylon stockings! In the Second War we couldn’t get nylon stockings because...” I said, “Open your closet. When you won’t find there ten, fifteen dresses you don’t have no one.” “But they will have a different style!” I say, “When you have a hole you put a patch. But you won’t be naked.”

LF: You can talk from experience and from what happened to you.

LK: I say, “You don’t have to live year from year with wet feet what never dry out in wintertime, no place to dry out.” I have arthritis from this time. I can’t move my arm. I have all over my body. Why? My--I never have in winter time dry feet. I never--I don’t have anything. And here, everyday, yes I have to, I’m spoiled already too.

[Both chuckling]

LK: It doesn’t mean I am not spoiled already, but not like this. But Saturday, Sunday, nobody cooks. “What do you mean, cooks on Saturday? You crazy? You’re cooking Saturday? You’re cooking Sunday? You’re cooking seven days a week? You crazy?” I say, “Listen, to go to a very good restaurant I can’t afford. To go to a junky [unclear] and another junk, for this money I have a better dinner at home.”

LF: I bet you do.

LK: How long takes to make a dinner?

LF: Tell me something, what feeling did you have about the creation of the State of Israel? Did, when Israel was created, did you feel that it affected your Jewish consciousness? Because you...

LK: No.

LF: Didn’t have...

LK: Right. I was very, very affected. I was--see my husband already start to educate me in Jewish. Because I didn’t know nothing! But you know, a funny thing, in ‘72 when we went to Israel, and when the plane start, we start to see Israel, we came close to Israel, I just, tears was running. I don’t know, I have just such a feeling. I can’t even explain.

LF: I know, I know.

LK: But look, I am not a religious, but I made up my mind my children know what is a holiday. I am not religious. I won’t change the dishes for *Pesach*, but I don’t have bread in the house. I can have downstairs in the freezer! [chuckles] Even I am not that crazy. But I don’t use bread. And for a *seder* is a *seder*, and the second *seder* is a *seder*. And *Rosh Hashanah* is *Rosh Hashanah*. And *Yom Kippur* is *Yom Kippur*.

LF: But it wasn’t that way when you were growing up.

LK: No, no. Maybe I was a tiny little but I don’t remember.

LF: So you really in a way came the full circle.

LK: My children went to Hebrew school and everything. I say, look, whatever they do later is their business. But let them know a holiday is a holiday.

LF: Well what made you turn around that way? Because you yourself never had that kind of training.

LK: When I came here, and I met so many Jewish people, especially in Poland, and in the camp, they used to call me the *Russisha*. Why? My children used to bed, went to bed on time. And whatever they used to leave dirty like a pig, I have a tiny little room like that what was spotless clean with flowers on the windows. I had made a table from a box but it was a covered top. The first thing I sold my bra--I had a little bracelet from, we’re supposed to, we was thinking we’re going to Israel. I bought a piano. I didn’t think my children be brought up not to play a instrument. I was brought up this way. And my older son was taking piano lessons. He was very good. And they used to go in the hall screaming, “Oh! Take a look! She has her piano lessons and she has a piano!” After I bought that piano we were thinking Israel was very expensive. A piano, I said, “Well, maybe I’ll be able I’ll teach him myself.” They shouldn’t--they won’t be maybe first class musicians. But I want they should understand something about music.

LF: The cultural.

LK: This culture, this, everything goes for your education. And the religious people in the camps were very mad at me. I used to hang up diapers on Saturday, outside. And they used to come and tell me, “Don’t you ashamed of yourself? The diapers are hanging on Saturday!” I said, “What do you want to, we have a tiny little home like this. The diapers you wash them by hand. What I have to put them on the hands?” “The Saturday you don’t wash.” I say, “Where will I put them?” I say, “Can I tell a child not to pish, excuse me, in the diapers?” “Don’t be smart!” They don’t care how long they will smell, and how long I will hang outside? I said, “Listen, don’t bother me.” Then they called me *Russisha. Russisha shiksa*.

LF: But yet you...

LK: And I don’t let circumcise my oldest son in Germany. I don’t let them circumcise. I want to do in the hospital. He was a big boy.

LF: And you did go through that?

LK: He was eight, nine years old.

LF: Why did you go do that?

LK: I didn’t do it then. I did in the United States.

LF: Why?

LK: He wants to be circumcised.

LF: He wanted to be circumcised.

LK: Right. For one...

LF: He wanted to be Jewish?

LK: He wants to be circumcised. Besides Jewish, but why? He used to go to the shower. There was a man day and a woman day. And everybody is circumcised. Every--they look at him like he is a, not a Jewish, you know. He wanted to be circumcised. When my son was born, the doctor in the hospital tell me, “Come on, I’ll circumcise him in the hospital.” He was from Latvia, Lithuania, whatever it is.

LF: This wasn’t your oldest son.

LK: My younger son.

LF: Your second child.

LK: Yes. And I say, “You know, they’ll take my head off.” And all the rabbis do what I wanted. I say, “They don’t let me live this way. They’ll kill me all together!” [laughter] Then, he say, “O.K.” Then a rabbi came, a *Mohel*, whatever they used to, came to circumcise the children. And I told my husband, “I don’t want him. He looks so dirty. I don’t want him.” “Oh, everybody doing, and you’re doing, and everything.” “O.K., you want it? Fine.” They circumcised him but he was dirty. He rinsed the mouth off with a little bit beer and I don’t know what he did there. He had an infection. For a whole month I have to bathe him, boil water, and I have to take him to the doctor he should take care of him. He say, “You see, I wanted to do it, you don’t let me.” I say, “Not me.” And they--the rabbi start after me they know my son is not--should circumcise.” I said, “How we--I’ll put him in the hospital.” “No, they’ll tie him to the bench and they’ll do it.” I said, “Forget it.” I wrote to my uncle here, to my aunts. They say, “Listen, you wait such a long time. Wait a little longer.” When I came here my uncle took him to the hospital, and he circumcised him. And then they have to take [unclear]. He couldn’t pass the water too good.

LF: So that’s the story?

LK: Yes, this is the story.

LF: Well I thank you very much.

LK: This is one part of the story. Who can tell you everything?

LF: Yes. Well, I know it was painful for you to relive this and...

LK: Not, no...

LF: To talk about it.

LK: [unclear] Some people say, “You’re lucky. You’re alive.” I say, “Something when, sometime when I look back,” I say, “was it worth it? Not worth it?” I really don’t know. You see, after the war, I couldn’t enjoy life. I couldn’t enjoy life. See, to me was a big thing, you know, the people what--I can’t associate. I don’t want it. I have nothing in common. With people I have in common, I can associate. But I don’t have enough money in my pocket.

LF: [chuckles]

LK: And my best friend was a good book. Look in my whole, all the family was--when we still was in Bradley Beach, and my aunt gave, and my uncle, I don’t know what was gave a present. And he put a $100, he put down payment on a television. We don’t have no television. Then my aunt said, “Just never mention to Mimi, Mimi be jealous.” Mimi you have everything under the sun. I don’t know what she has to be jealous. She’s a sick girl--it’s another thing. She had beautiful mother. She got a nervous breakdown when she just got married. You don’t see Mimi all the time.

LF: I haven’t seen her for many, many, many years.

LK: After she got married the mother make her a big--she has a wonderful husband. They don’t make them like that anymore.

LF: Well let’s turn this tape off.

LK: Tape off.

LF: Yes.

LK: She has a wonderful...

*LOLA KRAUSE [1-1-]*

*From the collection of the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive*

*LOLA KRAUSE [1-2-]*