KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 1

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

Bob Silverthorne: Go to camera roll number 36, inter-

view with Miriam Gershwin. M--I--R--I--A--M,

G--E--R--S--H--W--I--N. Continue on sound roll 17.

(Cut)

SB: Do you want to stay up here or do you--

(Cut)

C: 36, marker 1.

SB: Miriam, tell me you name when you were born and

where you were born and when.

MG: My name Miriam Litenstein and I was born the 13th

of August in Maimal.

SB: And tell me a little bit about your family back-

ground and your early life.MG: We lived in Maimal. My

parents came there after the first World War. And to

my father was from Latvia and my mother from Lithuania.

My--both my parents had eh Rebilincal

backgrounds--generations and generations. I also had

and older brother, 20 half years older than I. His

name was Marcus and we grew up in very comfortable,

nice home. We were on--on the other dock side and we

went to school. We uh went to the high art of the

gymnasium. Uh for the girls we were separated. The

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 2

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

girls had one school. The boys had another school and

um my school was named Algustvictorialitsaum. And

there we lived until March, 1939. The date actually

when Hitler came to take our not only the town, it was

like a region. It was called Dismaminabeet. And

um--and then we fled. We went in the morning. My

mother and both kids uh we went to Lithuania and my dad

sta--stayed because he was the director of the big

textile factory and he had the keys. So he had to go

to open. The owners of the factory had come already

before to England. And the had called a British man

who was overseeing everything and when my dad came to

the factory, an hour or two or three later, Hitler

actually marched into Maimal. So the director took my

dad, with his car, with uh British flag and he brought

him over the border to Lithuania. And then after that,

my dad came to the stop that we had made that was in

Sholin. We had their electives. (Cough) There we

stayed uh few days and then we went to Poladesh because

my dad had his sisters there and cousins. And that's

where we stayed until uh nov--January, 1940. And then

we moved to Kovno. We would have stayed in Poladesh we

prob--I wouldn't have probably sit here now because

mostly all the Jewish population in whole Lithuania was

killed in all the small towns. And huhuh.

SB: And tell me in Kovno, what you remember when the

Germans came and also just before the

changes that you were made.

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 3

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

MG: Well for us, actually it was a big change because

we did--I mean I'm talking out for me an my brother.

We didn't know the Lithuanian language to good. So we

couldn't go to school. So I took a course in um typing

and bookkeeping and then also in 1940 uh eh 40, the

Russians occupied Lithuania. So I got a job and they

liqu--not they--they didn't liquidate. They um did all

the big factories and all the stores. They um, what do

you call that um, they organized it all together. So

and my dad was leading expert in textile, so he got me

a job in that um office where they work; um liquidating

all those books and uh supplies and um. So I worked

under a bookkeeper and um until the war broke out.

That was the 22nd of June and it didn't take them--it

took a day or two and the Germans were there. So we

stayed there and uh--you know at that time, still

pretty young, and I thought I didn't look too Jewish

but uh so I went out a little to see--to get some food

or things and but still when I stood in line, the

Germans or even the Lithuanian came and they took me

out for uh labor too clean uh--uh some um what is

it--soldiers lived or uh to do other work to clean the

streets or I don't know, they always found me. And

that's where how long and that's how we lived 'till

until we--we there was uh all took out in to the ghet-

to.

SB: Now in that time period where those times when you

got pulled out of line, were they humiliating you?

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 4

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

MG: Oh, absolutely, that was fault to work, to stay in

the street and to clean the street. And uh to shout uh

dirt at you or uh schwartz at seem very humiliating.

Also, they had to wait if a order

to wear the Jewish star on both uh--on the front and in

the back of your vermin garment and you couldn't walk

on the sidewalk. You had to walk uh in the street--not

close to the dirt. So that was also humiliating. Just

about everybody knew that you were and whoever passed

by uh--'Oh, you dirty Jew!' I also have to tell you

that the Lithuanian population were very mean. Before

the Germans even came, they had people already hundred

and hundred and hundreds of Jews by themselves.

SB: Did you see any of that or?

MG: Uh--sure! Because it was in the center of town or

it was once this one day I went out to look up my

brother's friend and there I saw that uh bodies on the

street. He lived in uh section where there were more

religious people--you know, with beards and those

special clothes what's a religious people wear. Those

were unfortunately the first ones who were very easily

picked out.

SB: And the sound of the war--I mean when the Germans

actually came, where were you and did you hear any-

thing--see anything?

MG: Well we were in our um apartment and we were afraid

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 5

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

to go out because we had to up already some very bad

stories about the Germans and how they dealt with the

Jews and we were really afraid so we stuck uh more to

the house. So--so if I said that I went check out the

little bit because I felt you know it because my moth-

er. At that time she wasn't very sure of herself to go

and uh. So uh--so I was the one who uh--who went out.

In fact I had an--an ant and a cousin

and the cousin was married and it there was also a

brother from I mean another cousin you know a male

cousin. And both my cousin and the husband from my

other cousin they were taken away. And when they were

taken away, my ant and the uh and duh her daughter and

the two children they came to live with us. And one

day, somebody rang in our bell and there was a Lithua-

nian soldier standing and he asked for my cousin--you

know--for Mrs.--Mrs. Fondbeck and when she came to the

door, he said, 'Come with me and you can see your

husband.' So she was afraid to go, so I went and hold

with her. And he took us to a courtyard and there we

really actually saw him. And he at that time said that

it's very bad and that he is together with our brother

but he doubted that we'll see each other again. And

then we went back and that's was we need two--we didn't

see them anymore. They were killed on the 7th fort.

SB: Okay.

MG: And then when we went into the ghetto, we all went

together. Um but we had separate--you know you could-

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 6

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

n't choose your apartment or where you wanted to

live--you were assigned. So we were assigned for one

place and my cousin and my uh ant and my cousin's two

little small children they were assigned to another

apartment. But we were always very close and we stuck

together.

SB: Tell me about moving into the ghetto.

MG: Well that was really not a big deal because we came

to Kovno and all of our stuff we had left

in Maimal. So too much we didn't have. So we rented

or we uh--uh little wagon and uh we took the other

fuel, beds what we had and uh our personal

belongings--clothes and--and that's how we went in a

few parts and that's how we went into the ghetto. And

it was uh site you know--what you--you saw on the

wagon--wagon after wagon--the whole street. And the

place where we went uh--uh it was called Slabotka and

at that time the didn't it wasn't paved. There were

cobblestones and that's how we move in to um.

SB: Okay we're just about to run out. We have to put

another roll of film.

(Cut)

BS: Go to sound roll 18. Camera roll 37. Miriam

Gershwin continued.

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 7

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

(Cut)

SB: Did you feel a certain safety after the ghetto got

formed or did everything turn upside down?

MG: Well, it turned upside down. First of all, I tell

you, we were also like strangers in that Jewish commu-

nity because we didn't know too many people. We came

from Maimal. We live only in Kovno like a year and at

that time it was also already the Russians were there

so nobody felt really very safe and uh not safe but you

didn't socialize too much because under the Russians,

you were always afraid to uh se--uh talk and can say

something so we really felt like strangers. We

didn't have too many and there was also no time to

socialize in the ghetto. You got up in the morning,

you went to work, you came back in the evening and uh

the only thing is that and that we realized later that

we were all together and we still had our own clothes

and if it rained as in next day, you could put on

something else. We in the camp you couldn't. So that

was uh but otherwise uh we really we didn't uh you

know--

SB: And at the beginning, there were Actions. Um did

you know about any before the Great Action?

MG: Oh sure, there was the one when they took out the

500 uh men and uh at that time I had uh I don't know if

you call it boyfriend or not but anyhow there was a boy

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 8

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

uh--you know--who I knew and uh I went out with him a

few times. And he was taken away in the 500. But you

know, when you live, and you always want to believe the

better part and at that time they said that they take

them to swap books. They wanted more or less like

people who are intelligent; that uh to read books and

to make a library and to do this and to do that. And

then when I worked--I mean I going to off now--but when

I worked at the commander from the ghetto, his father

once came over and he said you know, you're working ask

it might be he could know where he is or uh it might be

he could even bring him back or so I didn't ask him

directly but uh--uh the commander, he had like a bal-

let--you know he took care of this uh when there were

not in one place. Otherwise I mean I polished his

shoes and all that--that's while they were sitting.

But uh I asked him and then he came back and he

says--you know what he said? First of all, he came

back he said well what is he to you? So I said well

he's my fianc‚ because I wanted to uh. So then he

came back and he said--you know what he said?--that he

feels sorry for you. So you knew that they went down

already of the 500 men and boys. And um--

SB: Before we go to that job, let's talk about the

Great Action. Do you remember that?

MG: Oh sure I do because that is uh actually after my

job. Because that is when I saved my ant and my

uh--because we got a order that uh November so and

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 9

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

so--I--I don't the 28th, I think or uh October 28th we

should all assemble six o'clock in that one place. So

we all went and you know at that time, as I said, we

still had our clothes and because my dad was in textile

we were quite well dressed and we were--I have to say

it myself--we were quite--quite a very handsome family.

My dad and my mother and my brother--we were all good

looking and uh tall. So we were standing--my father

and my brother on the sides and we two, my mother and

I, in the middle. And in the back was my ant and my

cousin and her two small children. And when we went

through and that I really never forget--when we went

through, you know, whe we came closer to the German, he

was standing like this, you know and he said 'Right,

left, right, left' uh so he asked us, is that one

family and my dad said yes and he said 'Please,

straight ahead.' So we probably made because for a

German to say to a Jew, 'Please.' So we probably made

the impression on him too. And then--and then we so

went to the right, you know, all of a sudden my dad

turned around and he said you know this the taunt his

eyes and he uh ant Sara. So--and all of a sudden I see

and there was a group to the left and they were sur-

rounded by Lithuanian police and they were there, so in

a corner, I saw one for whom I had worked after the

commander, I worked for somebody else in that same

outfit. So I ran over and when he saw me running over,

he said, 'Miriam what happened to your family?' I

said, 'We are here but my ant is not with us.' He

said, 'Come with me.' He went with me in the group and

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 10

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

we took them out and I, I mean unfortunately, they

didn't survive but at that time I saved them.

SB: And um what happen to the people who went to the

bad side?

MG: To the bad the side they were overnight--they were

taking our uh ghetto was when we started was the ghet-

to. There was the small ghetto and the big ghetto. So

they were all taken. There were about 10,000 people.

They were taken to the small ghetto and during the

night they were taken to one of the forts and liquidat-

ed.

SB: Did you see any? Did you see them going up the

road to the fort?

MG: No, those we I--I didn't because mostly when trans-

ports came and they brought the Germans quite a lot

transport form Germany and from um em Austria but

mostly it was done during the night. Only once during

the--they brought them and probably they were delayed.

So they took them over during the--you know--in the

morning and our ghetto was surrounded with uh barbed

wire and had our own police. So when the police saw so

many people going, so they opened a little--you

know--the barbed wire and they said--I mean they could

say it to everybody but you know, a few, 'Come here.

Come in here. You will be safe.' But you know, the

Germans Jews says thought that to them nothing will

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 11

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

happen. They said oh no, we are going to --they men-

tioned some kinda of a camp and uh--and they didn't

come and they didn't come and they didn't come and

unfortunately the boy's killed.

SB: Did you--could you here machine guns from where you

were? Did you?

MG: No, but I'll tell you how we knew that they are

bringing people or that they have in Action. In the

ghetto, they use to come for lime. You know that white

stuff what I don't know it doesn't make you smell

bodies or uh they say it was uh you know in there

ghetto there was probably there was a pit from that.

So when we saw those wagons going with the lime, we

knew something will happen. All in the ghetto or they

bring uh us--uh you know somebody from another country

to be killed.

SB: And now tell me how you came to work for that

officer?

MG: What--when the ghetto was closed, a couple of days

later, they came and they looked for silver and gold.

And so they went from house to house. And it so hap-

pened that the commander probably must have come, you

know, like faith, to our house and when he heard us

talking German between my parents and us children. He

called me out and he said, 'Do you want to work for

me?' And I said, 'Well, I have to.' So he said, you

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 12

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

know, he said, 'Don't worry I won't go uh to bed with

you because that's forbidden.' And he came with two

big dogs. So he so I said to h--'Yeah, okay.' So he

said, 'Okay, come along.' So he took me right away

with his car and he took me out of the ghetto, into his

apartment and he introduced me to his Milay and he said

from now on , I mean--he'll be your--you'll be respon-

sible to him, you know and he'll tell you what to do.

And he wrote uh note that I can go by myself to the

ghetto from his house an in the morning, from the

ghetto to his house. So I actually was the first one

who had such a uh note that I am allowed to work by

myself because mostly when people went to work, they

all went in a big group like a brigade, you know,

Brigaded--use to call--it was called. And I was only

one to uh have that uh and the first one. I mean

later, some other people also got uh jobs individually.

But I was the first one of the Kovno ghetto, to have

that uh piece of paper. In fact, when I came back, you

know those things, now you remember when I ca--yeah and

then that day we--no I went back by myself, and my

parents they probably thought that they would never see

me again. So when I walked in to ghetto by myself and

as I said people didn't know me because we--we were uh

not familiar with uh people. So I heard from time to

time, when I was walking uh, people saying, 'Oh you

know, a German, he took a young girl. Who knows what

will happen to her.' And uh so when but when I came

home and my parents, you know, they couldn't get over

I'm a kind can uh.

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 13

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

SB: We have to put another roll of film on here.

BS: Camera roll 38 is up. Slate 3 is up.

C: Mark. 3 marker.

SB: Tell me a little more about that commander. Did he

like you?

MG: He probably did because one day, he cames--he's--he

came and you know, he went into the ghetto and whatever

he liked--whatever he saw, he took. One day, he comes

he says, 'You know, the day I brought a present from

Maria.' And what did he bring me? A yellow star--what

we had to where but it was very--it was done by an

artist. It was really beautifully done on the wire uh

ring an with yellow--actually with gold and in the

middle, this star and it was really very pretty and he

brought it to me with a pin to put on. Also the uh his

ballet was very good to me. First of all I had to eat

myself there and he always sat and ate with me togeth-

er. And in the evening, he made sure that I always

brought something home for the family to eat. And at

that time, that was a big--big thing. And I can't tell

you--should really have so many good years still. How

my mother divided the food among uh some friends or

some neighbors and I mean my ant and my cousins were

sure they uh but there were a few neighbors and my dad

at that time worked at that time worked on the um

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 14

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

airport and my mother always made sure he had an extra

sandwich with if he worked with somebody that he

shouldn't see that he is eating well and uh the other

one not because, first of all, there was no refrigera-

tion where you can keep it and second we always knew

that tomorrow I bring again in something. So that was

a big help for us.

SB: And did he one time tell you that he would like to

shoot you and what did he mean?

MG: Now that was his ballet. He said to me one day, he

said, 'You know, Miriam, I would like to shoot you.'

And I said, 'Why? What did I do to you?' And I see

that we are quite friendly.

You know, among ourselves. He said, 'Well, I don't want

you to suffer--I'd hit you right in the heart.'

SB: Tell me--um, can we cut for just a second? I come

back--

(Cut)

C: Marker, 4 marker.

SB: Miriam, can you tell me what the workshops were in

the ghetto. I don't know about the ghetto. I don't

know about the workshops.

MG: Oh sure, they uh--they took uh and that was a very

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 15

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

good thing because a big hunk of uh the population were

occupied with that. They had all different depart-

ments. There was a shoe department what made the boots

for the Germans. There was a uh wash--uh laundry where

they caught their clothes. There was--they even made

toys for what they call to be sent back to Germany or

uh and a lot of people were occupied. And you know it

was good for the people to work because if you didn't

work and they had a selection, the first ones who

always were selected were the ones who didn't have a

job. And not everybody could out of the ghetto to work

places. There were not so many demands. So uh in fact

later on, when I got married, and uh the com--uh the

commander they all change they didn't stay too long. A

different group took over. Uh, I also worked in the

Vercstaten. I worked in the toy department. We made

toys for wood and uh stuffed uh dolls you know like

that uh um rag dolls.

SB: Can you just tell me what day to day life was like

in the Ghetto. After--after the great action.

After--in that period when the ghetto just sort of

operated as ghetto.

MG: What daily life was like I said before, you got up

in the morning, you went to work, and you came back and

you were glad to have come back to uh and I mean you

more or less the Jews were very inventive. They took

the fences and they had then wood for you know, for the

winter. And uh we also had our own clothes at that

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 16

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

time and they took those clothes along to the work

places out of the ghetto and they exchanged it--the

Lithuanian people use to come with butter and uh

margarine and potatoes and sometimes even some meat and

they exchanged it. Flour and then they brought it

back. So we had a little more uh to eat then later on

when we went to the concentration camps. So but other-

wise, there was we even had uh they--the Germans organ-

ized all the um musicians and we had a uh from time to

time a concert. And we Jews alone, we organized a

school for the little children that they were occupied

that they shouldn't run around, until they had the

Children's Action and they took away all the children.

But up to then, they uh--and you know once you are

alive and you always hope that it might be tomorrow or

the next day or the next day it'll be over and as I

said before we were still with our families. I even

got married in the ghetto so there was romance and uh

everything. You know, I mean more or less I wouldn't

say a perfect normal life because you were always that

tomorrow, they have an Action and you'll be the next

one. But uh when the morning started and you were

still alive and this oh another day will come.SB: Um,

tell me again about workshops--I sorry--but there was

big plane when you told me--

MG: Oh, the workshops were uh and they were very good

for the ghetto because if people were occupied and they

had where to go because if you didn't have any jobs if

you not everybody could go out of the ghetto to the

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 17

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

working places because there wasn't so much demand. So

we made there. There was laundry to wash the soldiers

who ever they brought the laundry. There was also a

repair shop for the human forms to repair it. There

was uh a shoemakers were there. They made uh the boots

for they uh soldiers. We even made toys. They had

different kinds of departments.

SB: But basically to serve the Germans?

MG: Oh ya. Sure we could not bring our laundry there

or our shoes or uh no. It was only because it was

supervised. And they came uh we rarely even knew when

an inspection would come.

SB: Tell me about the Jewish Police--the ghetto police.

MG: The ghetto police they had it very tough because on

one side they--I mean they were commanded to work with

the Germans. On the other side, they wanted to help

the Jews. So in general, they were all very nice.

There were a few you know, what you'd find all over who

wanted to be holier than the Pope but in general they

were nice and they warned the people and

uh it was I mean we all really say looked out for each

other because we were all in the same boat. And we

knew that if we'll be destroyed--we'll be destroyed

every--all of us; if you were a policeman or if you

were not a policeman you would have the faith. And it

so happens that sometimes the policemen went first.

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 18

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

SB: Why?

MG: Well it because they might be they knew a little

bit more or uh they were involved in something. So

they were shot uh before the others.

SB: And uh spiritual life, religion?

MG: Uh, religion was you know, if you were

religious--you were religious. For instance my mother,

after her last day, she didn't touch any meat. For us

she cooked because she felt that we need the strength.

But she didn't and I mean our meat consisted of dead

horse meat and sometimes if you were lucky, when you

brought from eh out of the ghetto, you brought uh lard

or some um ham, you know. But you know, the Jewish

religion does not allow. So she didn't touch not even

a morsel of that. But for us children and my father

she felt that we go to because she did not go to work,

she stayed home. So she felt that we needed it more

and she cooked for us and we ate it. (SB says some-

thing but is barely picked up by microphone) And later

my mother in law was the same thing.

SB: We have to put another roll on.

(Cut)

BS: Wentworth Films. Kovno Ghetto Project. Continua-

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 19

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

tion of interview with Miriam Gerchwin. Sound roll 19.

Camera roll 39 at the head.

(Cut)

C: 39 marker 5. Mark.

SB: Um, tell me a little bat about--a bit about the

ghetto council.

MG: The ghetto council were consisted of six I think or

seven men. They were all lawyers or doctors. In fact,

the Dr. Elkis; he was from the same town as my mother.

And whenever there was some problems or my mother had

something that was think was Dr. Elkis. And they were

also un--you know they were under big pressure but they

still were helping us and they looked out more for the

Jews than and a few times they had only I think big

arguments with the Germans. But uh they did not, you

know, comply to the other orders of the other because

uh nobody as I said we were all under the same rule and

they didn't look out like to save themselves and to uh

give the other people, you know, not a chance. So in

general it was okay. It was hard you know like for to

send to work because not all the work places were good

ones. So how do you, if somebody go the better what he

could exchange the things for better things and some

were note the Lithuanian were none of the Lithuanian

people came to exchange uh but uh in general, it worked

out very well. And I think there was not too many what

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 20

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

were against Udenhat.

SB: Did they have terribly difficult choices--did they

have to prepare lists for the order?

MG: They had to prepare lists and that was part--they

also didn't always and In fact in 1943, they were

suppose to give a certain amount I don't--I forgot, you

know, how many; were supposed to be delivered and they

didn't give out so many, so at the end, the Germans

went and whoever they grabbed the grabbed, so they In

fact that's when my mother went away and my husband's

whole family--his mother, his two married sisters with

their children.

SB: So they had to choose people for selections and

they didn't necessarily know what was going to happen

or did they?

MG: No they didn't because they were always told that

they are going to work. So, you know, so it was up to

more or less sometimes they probably (Coughs) choose

single people. Sometimes they choose people young and

people but in general mostly also they ask also for

volunteers and a lot even volunteered because they

thought that it might be there it'd be better. Because

you really didn't know. And a lot of times it really

worked out that you were sent to labor camps. There

was Felianchaianchance. There was a big uh group and

there was another big group and they worked uh like uh

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 21

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

from the ghetto. And later they were also brought to

Studto for, you know, to the concentration camps. So

you were never sure it that is a selection for death an

for work.

SB: Tell me about the Kinder Action.

MG: The Kinder Action--that was when the people had

gone to work in the morning, all of a sudden came into

the ghetto a lot of buses with there windows painted

black and the Germans went--with the Lithuanian help-

ers--because they didn't go any place with out them

because they did the dirty work. And a lot of times

the German did the Jew but, you know, they always had

the helpers. And they went from house to house and

when they found children, they took them. There was one

man--he didn't want to give his daughter, so they took

him too. And there was another lady. She was even a

gentile and she married a Jew and she opted to into the

ghetto with her husband and their two children. And

when they came and at that time she even said she said,

'You know, my brothers are on the front fighting for

you and you want to take me and my children?' But that

didn't mean anything. She was unfortunately taken away

with the with the children.

SB: What did you see of that? You--you were at work

right?

MG: No, I was at that time, in the ghetto. And I was

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 22

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

there and we saw that the people were running on the

street and In fact my cousin who had two children, we

hid them. And luck had it they didn't find them and

they were saved. The little girl was about 8 or 9 and

the little boy was might be 5.SB: Tell me about the

grief, the sadness.

MG: Well, uh when the people came back from uh work and

they didn't find their children, I mean, I don't have

to tell you what that means. Um, I mean it's bad

enough you know sometimes if you lose a child but to

work so hard and come back and then don't find them so

you could only hear crying and crying and not even

crying, you know, shouting eh from grief and uh hitting

their heads on walls and uh that was uh and that went

on for quite a few days.

SB: Tell me about how your niece and nephew were--where

they were hiding.

MG: We had built a little--not with the whole house

where we lived--had built in the yard to go down stairs

and then uh in the ground there and that was supposed

to be like for the whole house. So we took them down

there and it so happens they didn't find them, you

know. I mean few children were uh some were and in

attics. Some were in double wall. So a few children

were saved but uh it was like uh not even a fraction of

the people what's of the children that they took. But

uh at that time we were lucky. We had the children.

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 23

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

SB: And um tell me about other hiding places besides

that one--sort of in general.

MG: Well, if people dug out from underneath their

uh--uh houses you know. So uh some dug under the fence

to go to the gentile side. You know whoever uh had the

means. Also we really didn't know because those things

were not publicized.SB: And was the ghetto very differ-

ent at the end than it had been earlier.

MG: Absolutely, because once the children were away,

first of all, you didn't have the school anymore. You

didn't also hear some children I mean, you know, chil-

dren are children when it was calm. They run around,

they talk, they sing, and the mood from all the people

were very--very low. We also knew the little bit what

was going on with the war. And we also always felt

that we won't see it. That before the war will fin-

ished we'll be...so the mood after each selection and

after each eh months and after each thing that was

probably when we heard that the Germans were defeated

there in Russia. For us it was not like a joy. For us

it was always well soon our time will come to be de-

stroyed and killed.

SB: Um, was the ghetto getting smaller?

MG: Yeah, because some people went into hiding, some

people went to the Partisans, and with the selections,

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 24

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

it was always getting smaller and smaller.

SB: So by the end, about how many people were there, do

you know?

MG: I really don't know.

SB: Um, I think we're about to run out and I don't have

a short question. Oh, tell me about the trading for

butter.MG: Well, that was, you know, you when you went

and you got and you were so happy, you got piece of

butter and what will that mean when you come back to

the ghetto and present it to your family. And then when

you opened it, there was mashed the potatoes in and it

was a coating of butter or margarine uh so that was a

big disappointment because you gave away a lot of

things and a lot of good things because when the Rus-

sians came, people who had money bought a lot of things

because we knew that the Russians that means the money

they only nationalize. So they uh--to even though they

had good clothes and good sheets and good baby clothes

and if you gave away to us, it didn't mean anything

because we didn't use those baby clothes and we didn't

use those sheets and uh so we uh came home and found

there are mashed potatoes in and it was like in a pound

to uh you know you were so happy that you would give

your children and your family a big treat with the

butter but it wasn't meant to be.

SB: We have to put another roll on.

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 25

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

(Cut)

BS: Camera roll 40 is up. Slate 6 is up.

SB: Another question about the Kinder Action: did some

parents choose to go with there children?

MG: Oh sure. I mean not too many parent were around

because mostly they were working. But

for instance there was one man uh and he was a police-

man in the ghetto and he did get his child and he went

alone. It was uh Mr. Bohk. And a few others who were

there for sure they quite a few were taken, you know,

all their uh parents.

SB: Do you know what happened to the children?

MG: I mean eh whatever was said that they were taken

and gassed uh I mean I really don't know, you know, no

witnesses are there to report. But uh nobody came back

and that's what it's why so uh the imagination is

there.

SB: The hiding place--did you spend some time in the

hiding place?

MG: Yes we did. When the ghetto was liquidated, we all

went into that same hiding place--the whole house, you

know where we lived. And it was terrible. And the

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 26

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

children--the few children who were like my cousin's

children at the time we lived already at the same

house. Um because when as soon as the ghetto got a way

smaller and smaller, they closed off parts. So when my

mother was taken away and my husband's family, we all

went together with my dad and my brother and my cousin

and my ant and the children--we all lived together. So

and the children were really good because they were

told that they shouldn't--that they should hardly

breath you know, not a sound out of them. But the air

was so stuffy and I really--I could breath. So I said

you know, whatever will happen to me, I going out. So

my husband and my dad came along and I was pleading

with my brother to come also. And he said no he said,

'Whatever will happen, I'm staying here and don't I'm

not moving.' And unfortunately I'm he got because when

we taken away from the ghetto, the ghetto was already

burning and they all perished. So and I'm sure that if

he would have come with us, he probably would have been

alive.

SB: Describe--

MG: Because my dad survived and my husband survived and

he would have probably survived too.

SB: Tell me what that hiding place was like inside.

MG: Well--eh--uh we didn't even see. It was dark and

we had there provided uh a few pails of water to drink

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 27

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

and uh I don't know if we had bread or water--I really

don't remember. I only remember the water and from

time to time, you know, uh it was a pass a few drops

for each one. And we stayed there like--I think I

stayed there like about maybe two days and I couldn't

take it anymore. And uh I said at that time, I asked

my ant and my cousin also to come. And my cousin said,

'Look, where will I go with my old mother and my two

small children. I don't have a chance! Where will I

go?' So she stayed and my brother didn't go. He also

opted to stay.

SB: Was it hot in there?

MG: Terrible hot. We were uh practically naked you

know because it was a small whole and it

wasn't no walls and uh nothing--you know a hole in

ground. But is was a under--I mean there was a shed on

top--so under the floor they had dug out the men. I

don't know how many were there 30--40--50 people. 30

for sure. I mean because you know when we when you

started to run, and somebody else from the other neigh-

borhood came, you couldn't tell him he can't come in.

You had to let him in too. So I'm sure there were a

few still who didn't belong to our house.

SB: And so when you came out, describe what you saw and

how long it took before you were deported.

MG: What when we came out we opted to go to the little

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 28

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

Verchstaten--you know where they uh--and there we even

met up with a few of our friends. And there we stayed

until the Germans came and they said and they said that

they have uh the trucks ready and we should move. And

they put us on trucks and they took us to the railroad

station.

SB: And when did you see the ghetto burning?

MG: Well when we were on the docks. They went already

to each house and they started to shoot and they start-

ed to burn because they knew that people were hiding

and some even came out running. You know also be very

poorly dressed because I'm sure in each hiding place it

was the same situation like in ours so people started

to undress their clothes and some were caught and some

probably were shot. Because we heard--we heard shots

too. So some were killed on the spot and uh.SB: Um,

es--but you made your way from the hiding place to the

Verchstaten--

MG: Ya.

SB: Safely--

MG: Ya.

SB: You sort of sneaked there or?

MG: Well we did probably at night, you know, in the,

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 29

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

when it was dark and uh the ghetto was not uh miles and

miles. It probably was a couple of blocks. So we went

one after the other and we were three people; my fa-

ther, my husband and I. So slowly slows down till we

made it.

SB: And um you were married in the ghetto and did you

get pregnant in the ghetto?

MG: Yes I was--I was pregnant twice and I had to have

an abortions because that was the law.

SB: And how did you arrange that? Was it?--

MG: Oh there were doctors at the was the Germans In

fact one of the doctors he was in prison and they

released him because he was an--an Obnistritian and

they needed him and uh that was you know, that was his

job.

SB: And um can you tell me how different it was in a

concentration camp from the move the ghetto?

MG: Uh huh. First of all, we didn't have any

clean--our clothes. We also didn't have our families.

For instance I was, as I said before, I didn't know too

many people ya? So I was really alone like skunk.

Some had a mother, a brother, eh a sister, a sister in

law--eh I was all alone and uh you know and so you

shared to her with a friend--with a--uh it was uh and

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 30

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

there I mean--there you didn't have anything. You had

you dress and you coat. You also didn't have, you know

what not a piece of soap--not a comb--not a piece of

toilet paper even. I mean nothing. I didn't even have

any shoes until the end of November; until they brought

um--um the wooden shoes. And they were very bad be-

cause you know and up in the north when you have snow,

you have snow. So it was very and the snow use to uh

be on the wood and it was very hard to walk. You

walked like this, you know, and sometimes. And if you

didn't walk with your 4 in a row or 3 in a row you got

hurt. You got hit by the German. We also lived in

little scout tents where you couldn't walk in like you

walk through a door. You had to crawl like uh a dog.

There were ten people; ten women to uh tent. And the

tents were already from the rain and from the snow and

there were not even water proof. So in the mornings,

our heads were frozen to the tent--you know to the

material. You also didn't have any clothing. If it

rained and you came back, there was no way of taking

off you clothes and drying it. So you went to sleep

with the wet clothes and in the morning you went back

to work with the same wet clothes until it finally

dried on you.SB: Okay, I think we've got everything. I

think we're all most out--

(Cut)

MG: --by myself--

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 31

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

SB: Are you rolling? Bob?

MG: While I was walking by myself, from the ghe--from

the my job to the ghetto one day, I saw that a woman

was walking next to me on the street because I was

walking in the gutter. And she motioned to me and then

she came close by and she said that she had some let-

ters for people in the ghetto from the ghetto from Vena

and if I would take them. And I took them and I

brought them to the ghetto and there were a few for

instance what for instance that's how I met again my

husband because I had known him from before. And one

of the letters was addressed to his sister but I didn't

admit that I know that that was his sister but we had

friends by that same name. So I thought that that was

for our friends. So my mother took the letters to the

Dr. Elkis because he was a friend and you know and I

had the letters. But I said you know for a few, what I

know, I would like to deliver them myself. And that

woman had said that if I come , I don't remember in a

day or two, she'd be there and if people want to send

letters back, she would take them back. So I went,

thinking that that we are friends, the Bloombergs and

my husband answered and I said I have a uh letter for

Dr. Bloomberg. And he said, 'Yeah, come in that's my

brother in law.' It was uh somebody else you know and

that's how I we met him and we started to home and in

two weeks we were married.

SB: In two weeks?

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 32

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

MG: Well, what you know, my husband died a year and a

half ago and the Rabbi came, you know, to ask some

questions and there were a lot of people in the house.

And he asked me how I met my husband so when I told him

this story and I said two weeks. All the people said,

'Two weeks and you got married?' I said, 'You know

what and it worked for 53 years. You got married here

and in a year, you are getting divorce. And you know

each other you know for so long--you are engaged for a

few years and uh so we were married like 53 years.

Man: Did--did you have to get married in secret?

MG: Oh yeah, sure. But you see in the ghetto, once you

were in the ghetto and when you're armed, you did what

you wanted to do. We held for the holidays we had

services--In fact my husband, he was lawyer but was a

tori and there when the lawyers went to court, the had

uh robes and the first year for the high holidays, my

husband gave the robe to a theater and he was singing,

you know. It was a robe, like uh in Roman times.

SB: Okay, we can get room tone.

(Cut)BS: Go to sound roll 20. Camera roll 41.

C: Mark, 7 mark.

SB: Okay.

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 33

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

MG: You want to ask me the question or?

SB: Which one do you want to start with?

MG: Well, let's start with the festivities, ya?

SB: Okay, so tell me what the festivities were?

MG: Well when we got married, cause of my husband he

had a lot of friends and he knew a lot of people and

also because I had saved my uncle--my ant and cousin--

they at that time said, 'Listen, when you get married,'

but not thinking that I'd get married in the ghetto,

'we'll really go to town.' So when we decided to get

married in the ghetto and I mean you wanted to have a

little something so first of all I had still my dresses

what were made to order before the war. And uh my

sister in law had uh like probably a little veil or

what. So anyhow I was a nice bride. And the food

consisted of--they took potatoes and they took out the

inside and they made it like the felta fish with the

spices and then they cooked it back with onions and

somebody had gone and I think my husband even went to

uh brigade because he was, you know, like a bridegroom.

They let him do more exchanging than the others. So he

brought back some flour and uh so my ant she made even

uh cream puffs. I don't know if there were filling but

there were like a cream puffs. You cooked and uh. And

then from the peels of the potatoes, we made pancakes.

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 34

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

They were washed and--and that was done, not only for

festi--for festivities--that was really our ma--some-

times our main dish. You wash them and then you chop

them up and you put them in little flour and you baked

them or you, if had a little oil, you fried them and

that was the pancakes. And um I don't know if he even

had I think a chicken or something but anyhow it was a

very nice uh, you know, celebration and that was our

wedding.

SB: Who were some of the guests and how many people

came?

MG: The guest were, as I said, we didn't have family.

It was only my ant and my uh cousin and the two chil-

dren. My husband had two married sisters and his

mother. And the rest were his friends. His uh um

because he was very outgoing person and he liked to

have people around himself and eh to be uh, you know

uh, like the Santa and to talk to everybody and uh so

uh all his fraternity brothers came and all uh the

people he knew. And uh we had a Rabbi and uh it was

you know, like according to the uh--to the Jewish law.

In fact, after the war, my grandfather, who was a

Rabbi, and who had come to Palestine, at that time when

we started to correspond when he that we are alive and

uh. So the first question in his letter was who was

the Rabbi who married us because for him that was the

most important thing as uh religious man. So we wrote

to him, at that time, who it was and it was by Muasis a

Video Tape No.\_\_\_\_ Camera Roll No. \_\_\_\_ Sound Roll No. \_\_\_\_

KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 35

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

Pole that it was legit.SB: And now we have to backtrack

a bit and tell me about the woman who approached you in

the streets, so we can learn how you me your husband.

MG: Oh, okay, so she approached me in the street with

the letters.

SB: Just uh you have to back up a little.

MG: Oh because you don't have that?

SB: Don't have it.

MG: Oh okay. One day while I was walking from work to

the ghetto, I was walking in the gutters and a wom--and

I saw that a woman is going and she is looking at me

and she is like keeping up steps--you know with me the

same uh eh so and so I looked at her and then she

motioned me I should come closer and she came closer to

the curb and she said that she has some letters from

Jewish people from the ghetto in Vena; if I would take

it to the ghetto and she said that uh she would

bring--she would be there in 2 or 3 days and if there

are replies, she would bring them back. So I took the

letters and I went back and I gave it to my mother and

we looked at them and uh my mother is um the biggest

bulk she took to the Dr. Elkis, who was our uh eldest

uh man--you know, our elder, from the Udenrout because,

as I said before, she was connected with them. And a

few I kept because a few I thought I knew them because

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 36

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

it was addressed to a Dr. Bloomberg and we had

friends--Dr. Bloomberg who came not from Maimal but

from the region of Maimal and we knew them very well.

So I said you know, the few what I know, I would like

to deliver myself. So I took that letter and I ask

where the Dr. Bloomberg lives and they told me and the

white uh what was it called? I forgot what it was

called. And this and the white blocks, so I went there

and I knocked at the door and my husband opened--my

husband-to-be opened the door and I had known him from

before from Pointavesh where we came out of Maimal when

we went to Pointavesh. So I said I have a letter for

Dr. Bloomberg. He said, 'Yes, come in that's my broth-

er in law.' So I right away knew that it was not that

same Dr. Bloomberg what I thought he was but anyhow I

delivered that letter and that's how--first a friend-

ship and then later (laughing) the courtship started

and we got married in 2 weeks. But after the war, when

we were liberated by the Russians in January of '45 and

the war was still going on, so we figured that we--so

then we were from the whole camp, when were about 700

women. About 20 were sent to a hospital and I was

among the 20. So after that when we stayed there and I

mean the Russians themselves--they didn't have any food

and they didn't have any food for us. So we were

lingering around and then they said that they sent us

back to Lithuania. So and we ourselves wanted to go

because that's where we came from and we wanted to go

back there. We didn't know who--that was already some

after the war--you know, who survived and who will come

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 37

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

back and uh and we started going back to Lithuania and

we we through Poland and at that time, you couldn't go

with uh terrain like you go in now, you buy a ticket

and you go. You went to the railroad station and

whenever you saw a train, and you felt that it's going

north, you jumped on it and you uh went to anther town

or another town; always closer, closer. So on one--in

one town we stayed on the railroad and a few people in

Polish uniforms came by and they were talking and at

that time, uh Poland was still very antisemitic and

they were talking a little Polish and they

asked us, 'Are you from Metchstek Aumha?' And Metch-

steka in Poland means a town and Aumha is the Hebrew

word for the Jewish people. So we knew they were Jews

so we knodded our heads so they said we should come

down and then when we came down, the started to talk to

us in Jewish and they said, 'What are you doing,' 'Who

are you?' and uh. So we said we are uh refugees, we

survived the camps and now we want to go back to Lith-

uania. So the guys said, 'Do you know if somebody is

alive from your family. And we said, 'No.' He said,

'Please don't go back. It's a very large door in but a

very small one out. Stay in Poland and if you hear

that somebody of the family is there, they always let

you in, the Russians.' So we took their advice and we

went to a bigger town to Lebline and stayed there and

at that time also, we didn't have anything to eat and

still wore our clothes from the camps because we didn't

have anything. So we went to the market and we

sold--somebody gave us uh some uh yarn to sell so we

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 38

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

had a few pennies there to buy uh a small piece of

bread. And if we didn't have it, we didn't have it.

So we were 3 women and one woman had a daughter. And

we were all from the same camp. So we were 4. So one

day some men came--they went to Lithuania, who had

given away their children to gentile people and they

wanted to collect them. And when they heard that you

know my name they said, 'Oh, you know, your husband and

your father, they are both alive and they are in the

American zone.' Because they were all in Dakaw and

they were liberated by the Americans. So what--can

imagine that we were very happy. And for the other

women, they also said that her husband is alive and for

the next one, they said her husband was killed but eh

the brother in law was alive. So we decided we go to

Germany already and that is a story by itself. So also

at that time, you couldn't go uh so we use to live in

the train station and whenever we saw a um--a train, we

went on it and one town we met up with 2 German men. I

mean they were Jewish. So we use to sit and talk and

we use to converse in German. So all of a sudden we

were arrested as spies so but the soldiers were drunk

and in the morning a different group parent came and we

explained we are Jews, so they let us go. So finally

we came, we treaded and treaded and that was, as I

said, I was liberated in January, and that was July, we

came finally to Berlin. And in Berlin, that was divid-

ed into 4 zones: British, the Russian, the French and

the American. And by that time people traveled already

back and forth to look for relatives and for uh. So

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 39

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

one day, I'm standing there and a man sees me and he

says, 'You are alive. You are supposed to be dead.'

And he tells me this story that my husband got a letter

from some officer friends who he was with them. And

their children were in Palestine and they belonged to

the British brigade and they found him and they came

for him, to take him back to Palestine. And they

brought a let--a letter from his wife and she wrote

there that she has investigated from people what she

knew their faith and everything is more or less hundred

percent because whatever she felt it was not really

true, she didn't put in the list and she writes to my

husband--they both wrote--the man and his wife--that we

are sorry to tell you that your wife Miriam died and we

don't have any words for you and her father but on the

other hand, you know how we were close to death and you

have to see to pull yourself together and then she

wrote in that same letter: but I also have good news

for you that your bo--your sisters both survived and

I'm sure you'll hear from them. So that was Friday

night that my husband got that letter. So they decided

they'll make a service and you know we had a prayer

what we said after the dead like we say it for 11

months. So in between m--some of my husband's friends

had gone to also to Germany to look for people and

going going going they ended up to France and there

they found a friend of mine who knew with who I was

together who knew that I was alive. They also

found--my husband had a sister in France who before the

war.

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 40

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Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

They also found that the sister is alive. Her husband

and both the children were alive. My husband's cousin

were alive there. So they came home that same time

when my husband and my father got up and they wanted to

say the prayer. So all of a sudden that they opened

the door, and they say, 'What are you doing? Don't say

it because your wife is alive.' So then my husband had

2 informations. One, I was dead and she wrote with

such authority that she--like she didn't make a mis-

take. So he didn't know what to expect. So finally he

thought that he would go eh to Germany, to look for me.

Some was on Poland, I mean, because that girl uh in

France, who had given the information, she had said

that she had left me in Poland. So my husband thought

that he would go and look for me. Well I came, and I

as I said, I heard that on the rode so finally we made

our uh trip and, you know, we went from town to town

and from uh finally we came to Munich and it was curfew

at that time still for the personnel--the Americans

they could walk to 9 and uh we, you know, the plain

people only to 8. We were more or less one of the

first women. We came in August. So when we came to

the ya and those people who I met, they told me exactly

where my husband was and they also said when you come

to Munich, you go to that and that place. There is--it

was a Duochy museum. There is a Jewish community and

they take you because my husband was not directly in

Munich. He was in a hospital--he was uh--uh managing a

hospital from the peace. So we came there and the last

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 41

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

trip we rode on a coal truck in Sevain. So we

looked--can you imagine how we looked? So anyhow when

we came to that, you know, where the Jewish community

was, there were people around us everybody--all mostly

the Lithuanian Jews. Did you see my mother? Did you

see my papa? Did you see my wife? Did you see my

child? Did you--you know, everybody wanted to know.

But so whoever we knew we told them and uh. So

then--so then one guy came and he said, 'Look, it's

now--I can not take you where you husband lives because

it's curfew, so he gave us a room in there--in that

Duochy Museum where the community was and he said,

'Tomorrow morning, I'm coming and I'm taking you to--to

your husband. So we were sitting in the room and

somebody knocked at the door and an American soldier

walked in and he said, 'You know, I saw you women and I

saw the commotion, could I come in, could I get some

information from you. So he came in and you know, I

new a little English and he knew a little Jewish so

between we could converse. And then he said to me he

said also to the other woman. He said, 'Do you have

anybody? Can I do something for you? Do you have

anybody in the states? And uh.' And I said, 'Yes, I

have a cousin.' He said, 'You know, write a few

words.' And I sent it. I didn't know the address. I

only knew the town and the name. So I wrote up Rabbi

Bezique, Baltimore. And I wrote that I'm alive and my

dad is alive and I got married in between and my hus-

band is alive. And you know, she got that card, my

cousin in Baltimore. And then in the morning the other

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KOVNO GHETTO EXHIBIT Interview w/MIRIAM GERSHWIN page 42

Interviewed (5-6-97) by Sandra W. Bradley

Wentworth Films, Inc. 9400 Kendale Rd, Potomac, MD 20854 TIMECODE NOTES:

guy came and he took me out and when we came to that

little town and he knew exactly, you know, where my

husband lived and uh, he said you know, you stay in the

car; it was early in the morning, I'll go up. So he

went up and he knocked at the door and my husband came

out. And he said, 'What are you doing here so early?'

He said, 'Oh we at the meeting. And uh we figured we'd

come by and see you. Come down.' I see my husband

said, 'I'm in my pajamas, how can I come down?' 'Come

down he said.' Oh but, you know, I was sitting in the

car and I couldn't sit in the car, so I went slowly out

of the car and I went up the steps and where my husband

opened the door I so happy. And as I said I was liber-

ated by the Russians in January. And I came to my

Husband the 13th of August and that was actually the

first time when I really act well.

SB: Thank you.

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