

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Frida Ruderman
October 15, 2010
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a recorded interview with Frida Ruderman, conducted by Ina Navazelskis on October 15, 2010 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Cliffside Park, NJ and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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FRIDA RUDERMAN

October 15, 2010

Question: This is a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **Frida Ruderman**, on October 15th, 2010, in **Cliffside Park, New Jersey**. And I'd like to thank you, Mrs. **Ruderman**, for agreeing to meet with us, to talk with us today, and ask that you take your story from the very beginning. Tell us where you were born, when you were born, what was your birth name?

Answer: I was born in **Se-Serei**, which is **ser-ee-ay**.

Q: **Serei**. And where is **Serei**?

A: Yes, th – Lithuanian, **Serei**. I was born in February 26, 1925. I was a second child. I had a sister two and a half years older than I am. My father was a doctor. He was also born in se – **Serei**.

Q: **Serei**.

A: **Serei**, yes, but he studied in **Warsaw**, and finished his doctoral studies in **Tartu, Estonia**. It was a very famous university, and I have materials about it.

Q: Wow. And did he – in **Warsaw**, did he study in Polish, and then finish his studies in **Tartu** in Russian? Was that how he would have –

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A: I – I – I think so, I think so, because my mother was born in **Poland**, in **Pinsk**, which later becomes the **Soviet Union**, after –

Q: Okay.

A: – you know.

Q: So your mother was born in eastern **Poland**?

A: Yeah, and my – I have my mother's also, about her diploma, or whatever.

Q: What did she study?

A: She was a dentist.

Q: A dentist.

A: Yeah.

Q: So what is your father's name? What was your father's –

A: My father's name is **Layba**(ph).

Q: **Layba**(ph)

A: Yeah, and we were naming him **Lon**.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: **Lon Finkel**.

Q: **Finkel**

A: But because in **Lithuania** you know, the – it sounds **Finkeless**(ph).

Q: **Finkeless**(ph), there's always a – a Lithuanianized ending on the word –

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A: Yeah.

Q: – on the name.

A: And he was born, I have the year, 1,000 – just a moment – wa – this doesn't go to –

Q: No, this is fine.

A: No, one moment, between directories [**indecipherable**]

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Yeah. **Finkeless**(ph), so he was born in thousand 889.

Q: 1898, mm-hm.

A: Yes, in **Serei**.

Q: Mm-hm. Do you have the date?

A: Hm?

Q: Do you have the date he was born?

A: His date I have by memory.

Q: Okay.

A: That was twel – May 12th.

Q: May 12th.

A: For my f – mother I don't –

Q: Don't know the date of her birth.

A: No, but for my mother I know the year, one – one year later.

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Q: 1898 – '99?

A: Ni-Ni – '90. He was '89, and she was –

Q: Eighty-nine.

A: Eighty-nine.

Q: Eighty-nine.

A: One hundred – 1889.

Q: Okay, 1889.

A: And she was one hundred – 1890.

Q: Ninety was mother's birth.

A: Yeah, and her name was – maiden name was **Gotlieb**.

Q: **Gotlieb**.

A: Yeah, and the spelling is **g-o-t-l-i-e-b**.

Q: **G-o-t-l-i-e-b**.

A: Yeah.

Q: What was her first name?

A: Her first name, given name was **Minuha**(ph).

Q: **Minuha**(ph).

A: **Minuha**(ph), and maiden name **Gotlieb – Gotliebeiter**(ph).

Q: It would be in Lithuanian, what – but if she was born in **Poland** –

A: But she was – yeah?

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Q: – then how would it have been –

A: **Gotliebuvna**(ph), and it's very funny, the name and with a ji – g it is

Goona(ph) which is a bad word.

Q: Oh, is it really?

A: But in – I – I – I don't know exactly, but here she was **Gotliebeiter**, but she changed her name to **Finkel**(ph), and she was **Finkelena**(ph).

Q: **Finkelena**(ph), that's right.

A: Yeah.

Q: And your sister's name?

A: Hm?

Q: Your sister's name?

A: Sister na – sister's name **Etta**.

Q: **Etta**.

A: And she was born two and a half years, I – I don't have a date – the dates of her.

Q: So she would be 1922.

A: Yeah, I was 25, she was 22.

Q: Yeah, **Etta**, born in ni – did you have any other siblings?

A: No.

Q: No, there was two girls?

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A: You have two – two girls, yeah. And na – na – nothing more, we had only in the same **Serei** a first cousin, a boy and a girl too – also **Etta**. **Etta** is alive. She is in **Israel**, but in very bad conditions now, you know, she cannot talk. And so – **Lola** was killed with all **Serei**s(ph). And he was a little older, and he was also a – both **Etta**, my sister, and I – I – **Lola**, we named him, they were students in **Kaunas**, of the medical –

Q: Faculty?

A: Faculty, yeah.

Q: Your father, he was – was he **Serei**'s only doctor?

A: He was first only the one doctor.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And it was absolutely un – unbelievable, I cannot believe now how it was. We had sometimes very often at night –

Q: Mm-hm – a knock on the door.

A: Knock on the door, somebody came – not brought a patient, but came to take my father to 25 kilometers to a village.

Q: Yes.

A: And he was used to it. And now hearing so – hearing so – a lot about all that, you know, killings, he never – we never thought that something can happen, it was – it was coming back. But he was so – you know, organized

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that when – and we didn't have electricity in **Serei** at night, so immediately
my mother light on the –

Q: A candle?

A: – candles, and he knew where everything is, and in 10 minutes he was
ready. And if it was in the wintertime, they were coming with a very good,
you know, to put in –

Q: Yes.

A: – to make him war – feel warm.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And that was taking sometimes two, three, four hours, because it was far
away. And people liked him, and were saying, whatever Dr. **Finkel**(ph)
says, you can go to **Alytaus**, you can go to **Kaunas**, everybody will say the
same.

Q: So they trusted him.

A: Not because it's my father.

Q: No, but this is what the –

A: He was very devoted to his specialty, he liked the children, they all liked
them when they were meeting, and very often he cried if something
happened to a – to a patient.

Q: Patient, yeah.

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A: Yeah. I remember this very well.

Q: Can you – do you remember any particular instances of a patient not surviving, and he then took it very hard?

A: Not surviving, nobody survived.

Q: No, no, no, I'm talking – you said he cried –

A: Ah, yeah, that was **Fina(ph) Lipski** was her name, and she had heart problems. And he was taking a lot of care of her, but nothing could be done, and she died. It was a very, very – for my father it was like a tragedy.

Q: How – was she an older lady, was she a young child?

A: No, no, she was a little younger than my father was. She had a family, she had a daughter, I don't remember, unfortunately the name of her daughter. And she was a very nice lady, and she died, and that was, for all our family very –

Q: Hard.

A: – hard, yes.

Q: Were there –

A: Later, later, much later, a few years before the war, came another doctor who mostly was doing abortions, and working with women like a – you know, like a –

Q: A gynecologist?

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A: Mm-hm.

Q: I see.

A: But he was murdered next to his house.

Q: Also a Jewish doctor?

A: Yeah, a Jewish doctor –

Q: Jewish doctor.

A: – yes, Jewish doctor. No other doctors. And my father was very friendly with the owner of the **apatek**(ph).

Q: With the drugstore.

A: **Vaistinė**.

Q: Uh-huh, of the pharmacy.

A: Pharmacy, yes. Not the Jewish. With the men in the Catholic church –

Q: You mean with the priests, I mean –

A: Yeah.

Q: – the – the – the parish priest of the Catholic church?

A: Yeah, I have even photos.

Q: Wow.

A: And then there was a – a – a **vokiečių**.

Q: Oh, a German.

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A: A German also. I don't know how to name him. Him and his wife, they lived in **Serei**, they were also friends of my father, and they had a **kirche**(ph).

Q: They had a church.

A: Church, yes.

Q: Mm-hm. So they might have been Lutheran. Most – most Germans in that part of **Lithuania** and **Prussia** were Lutheran.

A: It was not – not – not a lot, but I remember very well this couple, and they are also, I think, on some of our photos.

Q: So your father was the doctor not only for the Jewish community, but for everybody.

A: Oh, for everybody, he was only the one. He was only the one. And when I came the first time back to **Lithuania** after the war, people were crying and remembering my father. And other were showing these – these –

Q: Teeth.

A: – teeth was done by your mother.

Q: Oh dear.

A: That was really – I understood the – and I will show you what a lady said in the article –

Q: Okay.

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A: – about my father.

Q: Okay. At this moment I'd like to – I'd like to ask about your mother. It sounds like you had a family, you know, three women, your mother, two girls. But your mother is also a professional, not just the mother, not just the housekeeper, but someone who had her own profession.

A: Yeah.

Q: Was – if your father was the town doctor, was she the town dentist?

A: Yeah, she was a town dentist, also the only one. And Father helped, if it was something very – some case what they had to –

Q: Extract a tooth?

A: Extract it, yeah. But I was very afraid because some people were coming, and they didn't want to use –

Q: Painkiller?

A: Yeah, to use a pain pill, not painkiller, but anesthesia.

Q: Anesthesia, mm-hm.

A: And then I was afraid that they will shou –

Q: Sho – hurt her, or they will shout?

A: Shout.

Q: Oh, they would shout, okay.

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A: So I was going from the main room, next to the main room was a mother's room, where the dentist, the father had his office, and then was a room for waiting. **Poczekina**(ph).

Q: **Poczekina**(ph), okay.

A: And then was the kitchen. I was closing all doors and going to the kitchen, and waiting –

Q: With your hee –

A: – til my mother will come and tell me it's over.

Q: So you have your fingers in your ears so you wouldn't have to hear the shouting.

A: Yeah. We had a lady who helped. She was cooking, but my mother was also cooking a lot, especially she liked to cook tol –

Q: Pe – cakes?

A: Cakes, yeah.

Q: Cakes, mm-hm.

A: She has a – her recipes a big book. And – and we had another woman who was bringing – we didn't have water [**indecipherable**] we didn't have – we had to bring water.

Q: You had no indoor plumbing –

A: Yeah.

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Q: – so you had to take it from a well.

A: Yeah. Not from the well, we had a – a – in the center of the plaza, which we named the plaza, well, there were some market – market plaza.

Q: Mm-hm, marketplace, mm-hm.

A: And we – marketplace – and we lived on the marketplace. There was a – you know, you have to get –

Q: A spigot, so that you can bring a bucket and it –

A: Bring a bucket, bring water.

Q: I see.

A: So another lady, who unfortunately her – her boyfriend put something in her eyes, so – some chemical, and she couldn't see well. It was very **[indecipherable]** to her. And she was bringing water, and she was bringing – we had all this in the back of our house, a lot of – of – t-to – you know, to make warm at home, so it was –

Q: Oh, you had a lot of – you had a lot of firewood – wood?

A: Firewood. It was –

Q: **Malkos, malkos.**

A: – wood, such big – yeah. And she was bringing, and she was turning on all our –

Q: Ovens?

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A: Ovens, yes. And the ovens were – from one side was the oven, open, they are putting it, and from other side it was **ceramical** –

Q: Yes.

A: You know?

Q: Yes, I know those ovens.

A: It was very comfortable –

Q: Tile ovens.

A: Tile, yeah.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: That was a few of them, because we had thr-three, and to five rooms, and a kitchen.

Q: So that's not small –

A: Yeah.

Q: – when you have that many. And you – so your parents worked from their home.

A: Yeah, they worked at home.

Q: Home, and your – the home was in the center of **Serei**. And you said your father was born there, but you didn't have any other relatives except these first cousins. Were –

A: Well, there was a brother, **Moishe** –

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Q: Moishe.

A: – Finkel(ph), yeah. He died about six years before the war from a – he had the brain tumor. And my father went with him for the operation, to **Tartu**, but unfortunately it was too late. They made the operation, but he was going down and down and he died. I think he died in '36.

Q: Did you have memories of him, do you have mem –

A: Yeah, I have photo, and I have memories, very good memories. Only one thing, it was very funny. He was afraid to look at the – at the – wait, **kukla**, how to say **kukla**?

Q: I don't know what **kukla** is.

A: You know **kukla**, that is when children like to play with small, made – like small child from –

Q: Oh, you mean they like to play with dolls, they like to play –

A: With dolls, yeah, with dolls.

Q: With dolls, okay.

A: He, for some reason couldn't look at the dolls, and we – we couldn't understand why it is, but that what was, and we didn't do it, because he was a very, very nice man, and he was the director of the bank, the only one bank in **Serei**.

Q: Okay.

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A: And he also had a business together with another man by a name **Slavatiski**(ph). They were bringing from another place, beer in the –

Q: In – in beer containers, I know the –

A: Containers –

Q: Yeah.

A: – and they put it in the bottles. So it was a business.

Q: I see.

A: And I have a very nice picture of their house, and it – on the first floor they had a saloon. On the second they had their apartment, and they had three rooms like m-m – hotel, you know. So that was their business. And on one picture it is shown advertisement that doctor, dentist **Finkelena**(ph), because they came later a little, came, and their – her address. She – you know –

Q: It's on the photo.

A: Yeah, that is on a photo **[indecipherable]**

Q: So that is her – where her dentist office is?

A: Yeah, denti –

Q: Okay, okay.

A: **Turgaus aikštė**.

Q: **Turgaus aikštė**, market square.

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A: Yeah, market square.

Q: Market square, yeah. So, how large was **Serei**? Was it a town, was it a village?

A: They write like a village very often. It was, you know, I am now a little surprised, because I have two monuments. One monument was done very soon after the end of the war, and all the years what we were knowing from **Moscow** to **Vilnius**, and then to **Serei** to this place, once a year definitely, in the summer, there was a monument. I have this monument and it was written that in this place was killed – were killed 100,900 people; men, women and children. They say by Nazis and the other collaborators.

Q: Local collaborators.

A: Yeah, local. And then they changed this monument. I didn't see the new one because we already couldn't go. And another lady, two ladies went from **Vilnius**, they are now in **Israel**, and they sent me the picture. But I never could read what is written. And somewhere I found, because I have materials of **Chana(ph) Slovatitsky(ph)**. She went – she came to **America** about – she was maybe 11 years old, because she had here a Uncle **[indecipherable]**, Dr. **[indecipherable]**. And he had to help her, she was – she had such a –

Q: Hunchback, or she wa –

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A: Yeah, she couldn't straighten out, and he helped her. And finally, I tried to see her. And I was in **Chicago**, because she lived in **Chicago**, but I saw in **Chicago** another **Serei** woman, a woman from **Serei**, and she was out of town, and I don't know why, maybe because she left very young, I was dreaming to see her, because she was my friend, despite the differences –

Q: Age.

A: Yes, I was older. But she didn't try, so I didn't see her. But she went to **Serei** later, and I have everything about her visit.

Q: Okay.

A: And there is a lot of new things, and there I saw what is written now.

Q: What is written now?

A: Now is written, first of all, not thousand, not 900, but 953, if I remember right.

Q: Okay.

A: And it says that that were Jews.

Q: Rather than just –

A: Jewish rather than the – maybe there was right, the first one, may there were some other people, I don't know.

Q: Yeah.

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A: I can't understand, and I even don't know who to ask why. Before we were going very often.

Q: I can see whether we can find out for you, as far as th-the – the research that's been done for that part, for **Serei** and the surrounding regions.

Usually by now there has been some sort of investigation to find out more detail.

A: The real numbers.

Q: The real numbers.

A: Maybe something changed.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean, there's 900 – 953, if I remember right, approximately, but at least two times less.

Q: Yes. But my question is, how large was the community before the war, the Jewish community in **Serei**? Was it a thousand people, was it several hundred?

A: Well, they were writing that it was 1900.

Q: No, no, no, I'm not talking about those who were murdered, I'm talking about the town before World War II, or the village before World War II, about how large was it? Was it a big village, was it a small village? Were

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there hundreds of people, were there thousands of people who lived in it?

Do you remember?

A: Th-Th – I – I don't remember simple I didn't come, but I have – I have materials where it shows that it was exactly, because everybody was murdered. Only seven people survived from **Serei**, seven.

Q: Seven.

A: I am in this number in **Serei**. My cousin **Etta**, that is also **Etta**, who is my father's brother's daughter –

Q: Yes.

A: – she was in **Vilnius**, and she survived. And then a few more, they were not in **Serei**, and only one who was this morning, the 22nd of June morning, because Nazis were in **Serei** in the morning of 22. And in **Alytaus** they were about two, three o'clock, so.

Q: In the afternoon?

A: The afternoon, yes.

Q: I see.

A: So one only because he had a motorcycle. And I talked to him.

Q: Okay.

A: I saw him one time.

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Q: So what you're explaining to me is that you're not sure about how many people there were – Jews there were in **Serei**. There could have been a 1,900 some, or it could have been this 900 figure.

A: Yeah, now it changed.

Q: Yeah, it could be one, it could be the other, but you know that only seven survived – survived.

A: Seven survived, yeah.

Q: Were there – was the cha – was the town mostly, or the village mostly Jewish, or were there Gentiles living there too?

A: The Gentiles lived mostly in the suburbs.

Q: In the surrounding area.

A: Yeah, and **Serei** had a long – the name even was long **[indecipherable]**

Q: Oh yeah.

A: Long –

Q: Street.

A: – street. It went from the upper, and it went to the very, very end, to the post office, and to the – the **Bratch – Bratchkovsky(ph)**? No, not

Bratchkovsky(ph) – Shellkovsky(ph) –

Q: **Shellkovsky(ph)**?

A: **Nyet**. N-No, no, no, no, no, no, no. I was there. Maybe we will find.

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Q: Okay.

A: And then the – the marketplace, and then small, small streets, where it was a synagogue and **close**. It is a place if ni – 10 people are there, they can also pray.

Q: I see.

A: **Cloise**(ph), we say.

Q: A cloister?

A: **Cloise**(ph) –

Q: A cloister.

A: No, in Yiddish it is **cloise**(ph).

Q: **Cloise**(ph).

A: But the synagogue I remember very well. My father had a special place over there. But he was so interested in the – his patient, that sometimes he was going. He was not religious.

Q: Well that was going to be one of my questions. Was yours – was your family a particularly religious family?

A: No, it was not a religious family, my father was not religious. My mother kept traditions, and she light on the candles Shabbat. But my father even didn't – no, he didn't eat matzoh at the –

Q: At Passover?

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A: – at Passover, yeah, because he didn't believe in a – no.

Q: Was he believe –

A: But he decided that he has to go, so he went for new year, and Yom Kippur, he went to the synagogue.

Q: I see.

A: Then what I do now?

Q: Would you say that they were more assimilated into a – a larger society that's not just Jewish, or would you say –

A: No, not the Jewish's because these people were close. The pharmacists, you know, they were close. But they had the Jewish friends, sometimes playing cards, and my father liked very much music, and sometimes they were going to **Kaunas**, to opera. **Kipras Petrauskas** was very famous there, you know.

Q: Yes, yes, yes, yes, I know of him.

A: And one time they took me, and that was **Verta**(ph). And my father told me that he listened "**Aida**" 28 times.

Q: Oh my goodness

A: Yeah.

Q: Oh my good –

A: And he was going fara – because money – he was a student at this time.

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Q: Yeah.

A: He was a very interesting person.

Q: Who? Excuse me –

A: Father.

Q: Your father, your father.

A: Yeah.

Q: Because I was confused whether you meant th – the others that you mentioned. How far was **Serei** from **Kaunas**?

A: **Serei** from **Kaunas**, it was about two hours by bus.

Q: Mm-hm. Did your father have a car?

A: **Alytaus** – yeah, he had a car. But he had also a – we had a neighbor who lived in our hou – we had a house, w-we don't live in this house. We lived in a house which belonged to a family who left for **South Africa**.

Q: Ah yes.

A: And I know the father by some reason they paid them ahead, and it was already like our house. But in our house was his **shaffur**(ph) –

Q: Chauffeur, mm-hm.

A: **Salvoukas**(ph).

Q: **Salvoukas**(ph).

A: **Salvoukas**(ph).

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Q: **Salvoukas**(ph).

A: Last name **Salvoukas**(ph).

Q: **Salvoukas**(ph), mm-hm.

A: And his wife, a very, very nice – and children they had. And they opened a meat – meat store.

Q: Mm-hm. A butcher shop.

A: Yeah, a butcher shop. And he was driving Father if Father had to go, because Father was driving very seldom.

Q: I see.

A: And unfortunately, a few days before the beginning of the war, maybe everything would be different, my father brought the car into **Alytaus** and left the car to fix.

Q: To be repaired.

A: Yeah. He took it back, but it was one day before the war, it was not, you know –

Q: Completely fixed?

A: – the car was fixed, but he had to work at it, he had to do a lot.

Q: And it who – was –

A: So he could a – they could a – anything at all.

Q: So they couldn't escape using the car?

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A: They couldn't escape using the car, yeah. But to me – I will now tell you a very interesting thing.

Q: Yeah.

A: When I was 15, I was with such feelings that why is – that is so, when it comes to a holiday, my mother gives me all good things to eat, to – and –

Q: To dress?

A: To dress, not for me. I was going to the poor people to bring them for the holiday. That was a **[indecipherable]** it was a – a person who makes whatever you need, the **schuster**(ph), who makes –

Q: Shoes.

A: Shoes, yeah.

Q: Shoes. So that would be a –

A: And – and fixes shoes. It was, like I say in Yiddish, a **Schneider**(ph), that it was –

Q: In Lithuanian it's **batsiuvys**.

A: What?

Q: In Lithuanian it's **batsiuvys**.

A: **Batsiulys**(ph).

Q: **Batsiuvys, batsiuvys**.

A: That is the one what makes –

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Q: Shoemaker.

A: Shoemaker.

Q: A shoemaker.

A: And the other who makes –

Q: A tailor.

A: A tailor, oh yeah, I forgot that, the tailor. And a tailor who earns a very little.

Q: Yeah.

A: And when I was coming to the then back home, I was all the time thinking why it is so, why they are poor, and we live so good? And these – at 16 I lived in **Alytaus**, and Father, Mother, they rented for us, for me and for **Etta**, they rented a –

Q: A room?

A: No, not a – not a apartment, but –

Q: A room?

A: A room, yeah –

Q: A room, mm-hm.

A: – I don't – also at the doctor. And we lived in the room, and this doctor's son was in the **Jugend Komsomol**. You know what is

Komsomol?

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Q: Yes, he was in the **Komsomol Jugend**, mm-hm, so the Communist Youth League.

A: And he – yeah. He feels that he can maybe to talk to me and try me to –

Q: Also bring in – bring you in.

A: Yeah. And that worked, and I started going at night to see the – no – a small – small group. And the **arishininkas(ph)**, **rishininkas(ph)** –

Q: **Arishninkas(ph)** would have been the

A: I think it's a Lithuanian word.

Q: It is a – a Lithuanian word.

A: Who's – is a name.

Q: – who brings – brings people – he was a – the person who – who is the connector between people.

A: Yeah. So, I was going to this, and when I was going home, they knew that I will be in the bus, and where I will be sitting, and somebody was coming a little earlier and putting some materials above my seat. And I had to give it to a boy in **Serei** who was a **schuster(ph)**.

Q: Who was a – a shoemaker.

A: Shoemaker, yes, a young, young man. And it was very difficult, because if somebody would see that, the doctor's daughter stops and does something with him, that wa – I at – my parents didn't know. They never

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talked to us politics. So, I did it, I came home, I put it that nobody sees it, and then I went to the Jewish school. And there were two organizations, **Maccabee**, I was **Maccabee**, and **HaPoel**.

Q: Mm-hm, what is **HaPoel**?

A: **HaPoel** is also a organization, but for people who are – they were going, talking a lot about **Israel**.

Q: Mm-hm, so it was more Zionist, mm-hm.

A: Yeah. And then I saw him in the hall of this, and I told him that I have to give him something. And we decided that he will come to our house, and our house had a **arc(ph)**. He will come to the **arc(ph)**. I-If nobody is around, I will go down and give him this material. So that was a few times.

Q: And this was –

A: And I got a commu – **[indecipherable]**

Q: Certificate?

A: Certificate. And this helped me very much when we went through the border, when we evacuated.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: We went through the border, through the former border between **Lithuania** and **Soviet Union**.

Q: Union. This helped you.

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A: It helped for all our 15 people on the truck.

Q: So I will – we'll come to this point, but right now I'm still trying to get a sense, before the war, of what kind of community you were ab – in, what were your relations to your parents, what – what are your memories of the place. This is what I'm trying to learn more about at this stage. And we will come to these other events you're talking to.

A: Okay. The relations to my parents were very good. My father was such a – he was sensitive. As an example I can tell you I was in **Kaunas** and they cut out my – you know, very often, children have to have an operation.

Q: Tonsils.

A: Yeah. And my voice changed. And when I came home, he put me – and I started crying because my voice was different, you know. More than my mother.

Q: Mm-hm. So he hugged you and he tried to comfort you.

A: Yeah to comfort me. And a second time I had **paratif(ph)**.

Q: I don't know what that is.

A: **Paratif(ph)**, that is [**indecipherable**], you don't know the –

Q: No, no.

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A: It's a bad, bad sickness, and I came home and he was sending tests to **Kaunas**, because not everything he could do. So when he was waiting for the answer, he was staying at the, you know, warm –

Q: Mm-hm, at the – at the oven, at the sort of –

A: Oven, and I was in bed, very close. I lost a lot of weight. And he was s – so that was he was crying. And then we found out that everything fine, but I lost a lot of – and I have to – had to learn to walk after this sickness, because I lost a lot of weight, and I was very –

Q: How old were you when that happened?

A: This time I was maybe 14. That was before I was in **Kom Jugend**.

Q: Yeah. And your mother, what was she like?

A: My mother was simple, a very good woman, a very good mother. We were a little sometimes afraid for the father, because he was more strong. He didn't like that I was like a boy. And I remember when one time something was here –

Q: On your forehead, yes.

A: Yeah, and I tried to –

Q: Hide it with your hair.

A: But he saw it, and he was very, very upset that I am –

Q: A tomboy.

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A: Yeah.

Q: A tomboy.

A: Yeah, very often it happens, and we said something to the mother, and don't tell Father, don't tell Father – despite he was so, you know, sensitive. But it had to be –

Q: So he had the authority in the family?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. And –

A: Yeah.

Q: And she sounds like she was a little softer.

A: She was softer, yeah, and my sister was – I was a good – I – I – I had a few sicknesses, but I was in the some – much better shape than my older sister. Her lungs were not too good. And for the summer, they took her to **Alytaus** because there was a very good forest, with a special – what is very good for the lungs, special –

Q: Maybe a –

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah.

A: [indecipherable]

Q: A forest – [speaks Lithuanian]

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A: **[speaks Lithuanian]**

Q: Your mother was there, mm-hm.

A: Many times, yeah, she was going to **Druskenikas**(ph) with her feet.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But mayb – I don't remember if I was at once – but that was **Alytaus**
and we were living in the forest in **Alytaus**.

Q: I wouldn't know the name.

A: But I forgot the name of the – why this forest was considered very good
for the lungs.

Q: Maybe because the air was pure, yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: It could be. What were – what were you – how would you look at the
relations with the non-Jews in the – in **Serei**? Was it mostly Lithuanians,
were there Poles there too? Were there –

A: There were Poles also. I know that our lady who was making something
for us –

Q: Mm-hm, clothes.

A: Clothes, yeah, she was Polish, and I was very, you know, I – I liked very
much to come and say **[speaks Polish]** – say some words in Polish, and I
know Polish. At the time when we went a lot here in **America**, over the

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[indecipherable] we were in **Poland**, and we stayed in the – we – we – we stayed in the – next to a very famous bank. And it was forbidden to be there, especially in the morning when they are coming and taking –

Q: The money fr –

A: – the money. But there was a man who was – he was not sleeping at night, and he had a small place for himself. He let us into this place, and we spend there the night. And it was so nice that he invited us to – for – for a dinner to his family. I had what to bring them, you know. My relations in the gymnasium, first I finish the Jewish prime school.

Q: Primary school. So there was a Jewish primary school in **Serei**.

A: Yeah, in **Serei** was a Jewish primary school. And when I finished, I went to the Lithuanian gymnasium in **Alytaus**. I had very good friends non-Jewish, and I had my best friend, a Jewish girl **Halla**(ph), and others. But I had a lot of non-Jewish, and the relations very good. I have photos, I will show. And I made copies and you can take all the copies and decide what you would like and what not, because –

Q: Okay.

A: Okay?

Q: Okay, I will show my colleague.

A: This is all up here.

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Q: Okay. So does this – so did you feel, or did your parents talk about any differences with – with the Gentiles, whether they were Lithuanian, whether they were German, whether they were Polish? They were not Jews, but were they good relations, or did they feel tha-that they had experiences of anti-Semitism? Was there any such discussion –

A: In **Serei**, not.

Q: Okay.

A: It was one, the son of – you know, in the – in the church there is the person who –

Q: Oh, the **vargonininkas**, the – the or –

A: **Vargonininkas**, yeah.

Q: – the – the organ player.

A: His son was a anti-Semite and he did a lot of bad things at the time of the war. But then he was in the forest and I don't know, he – he couldn't come back home. He was **[indecipherable]**

Q: But you're talking during the war.

A: Yes.

Q: I'm saying before the war.

A: Before the war. Before the war, the relations – I had a lot of friends in the gymnasium, Father had a lot of friends non-Jewish and Jewish. It was

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not – we didn't feel it in **Serei**. We knew about one or two, but relations were good.

Q: So in general it was a normal kind of place to –

A: Yeah –

Q: – to live.

A: – but, in gym – in the gymnasium, it were – was becoming worse because there was especially one lady who was very anti-Semitic, and my worst day in my life in the gymnasium was the day when the **Soviet Union** returned **Lithuania, Vilnius**. You know that?

Q: Yes.

A: You know this.

Q: Tell – tell us about this, though –

A: Yeah.

Q: – because others may not know of it.

A: Ge – going every day to the gymnasium, and getting up for the praying.

Q: Oh yeah.

A: I didn't know it –

Q: Yes.

A: – but I was standing up, and they were praying all, and in the end of this pray [**speaks Lithuanian**].

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Q: So they were saying, dear Lord, please return **Vilnius** to us.

A: Return **Vilnius**. And this was so for me also. I wanted so much to get **Vilnius** that the day when it was by [indecipherable], I was in a very high spirit. But when I came to the gymnasium, I saw that we were six girls, Jewish girls, that they are sitting – I saw something is going on. And it turned out that some of the Lithuanian girls, especially one was there, were saying that you are – you don't have your own – no, you – you don't have your own country, and you are I-like cosmopolitan, you know, and you – you are not happy like we are happy. Despite what to say about myself, for me it was a very nice day, but when I came and I saw it, everything turned out different. And it ended that this woman put – she went on the table, and she said again that you are – you are – you don't have your own, you are not patriotic, you are not happy, and you have to be killed. You and you and you and you, and she showed all six. That was the first day – yeah, I tell you this because it was.

Q: Yes, of course.

A: That was the first day, and what is interesting, I forgot, when I was in the group, I had to do something in the group.

Q: In the **Komsomol** group.

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A: The **Komsomol**, that they offered to try to involve two girls who were Polish. One [indecipherable] and [indecipherable].

Q: Okay.

A: And we tried – and I had a friend, **Halla**(ph), we both worked on it. We talked to them, and everything looked fine and they wanted – but when it came to a – t-to go to a –

Q: A meeting?

A: – meeting at night, they came and they say, we will always be – we will never in our life tell anybody. We will always be with these –

Q: Ideas.

A: – ideas. But, we cannot. So, we understood that they are not ready, and they were – they didn't participate in this all, and many girls didn't participate, because there was among them a lot of friends. And a – a small part – but when – when our teacher **Magnitskas**(ph) found out about it, he was very, very angry, and he talked about. He explained what – that it's un – impossible to say such things.

Q: Impossible to say what kind of things? I'm confused.

A: It seems that you have to be killed, you, you and you –

Q: Okay.

A: – to this lady.

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Q: I see.

A: And that was the first day –

Q: Well, I can imagine –

A: – during all my life in the gymnasium.

Q: Understandably.

A: Yeah, it was not everywhere there. A little bit bad became in the university. They were asking the Jews to sit on the les – last rows. That was my tol – my sister told me.

Q: I'd like to go back though, because we've – in some ways I'm not understanding at what point things took place; that is, within the larger context. When you – when you were growing up in **Serei**, in general, it seemed to be a normal situation.

A: Oh, absolutely.

Q: By the time you were in gymnasium, though, in – in **Alytaus**, was **Lithuania** still an independent country, or was it already not? Was th – had there already been a Soviet occupation?

A: Soviet occupation was one year before the war.

Q: And were you already in gymnasium then?

A: I was, yeah, I was in gymnasium from – I was in the last class.

Q: Of gymnasium.

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A: Of gymnasium, yes.

Q: I see.

A: And it had to be eight years gymnas – gymnasium, and they changed it to **distilietka**(ph), it means 10.

Q: 10 years.

A: Yeah, 10 years. But it was already, maybe it was '39, I think in '39 they returned **Vilnius**. So –

Q: Mm-hm. Well, this is what I want to ask is, do you have a memor –

A: That was the time close to the war.

Q: I see.

A: And we even had such, you know, we – we thought that maybe some of our guys were maybe connected a little bit, maybe they knew something.

Because the 21st June, we came to the gymnasium to get our diplomas.

Q: Yes.

A: We got only the diplomas, and the party had to be the next day, the 22nd.

Everything was bought already, everything prepared. But I felt a little bit, I don't know. Some guys talked. It was not – it was a little strange for us, we didn't understand what is going on.

Q: Who was talking and what were they saying?

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A: Lithuanian – they were not – they were talking about – among them. So, we got the diplomas and we went home. And my best friend, which was from l-la – l – oh, **Fima – Fimalebsen**(ph). He came together with me, he brought me home. I was renting.

Q: By home you mean to your room in **Alytaus**?

A: Room in **Alytaus**, yeah. And we said goodbye, and that's it. And I –

Q: Was he part of that group, that **Komsomol** group?

A: No, no, no, no, no, no.

Q: No, okay.

A: Only myself and my best friend, what I told you, the ...

Q: It's okay.

A: **Halla**(ph).

Q: **Halla**(ph), **Halla**(ph).

A: **Halla**(ph), yeah.

Q: Now, when the – when there had been the first Soviet, let's say occupation, before the war started, did your parents talk about this at all, and was there any discussion at home about what was going on?

A: No, it was discussions – I will tell you. It was discussions that it could be a more. And my mother knowing already at this time that I was in the **Kom Jugend Komsomol**.

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Q: So she knew.

A: She knew already and Father knew already in this time.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: She asked me if I m – she wanted me to write down the addresses of our relatives in **Moscow**. And I was saying, Mother, I remember. I remember that Uncle **Laza**(ph) lives [indecipherable] 17, and was apartment 22. Two – two times two.

Q: Okay.

A: And my aunt lives also to the 21st floor, and 21 is a special number when people play cards. So I remembered. And I went back to **Alytaus**, and the next day when we had to have the party. So the parents and the students, whatever happened to them, I have to – I have to go.

Q: I see, so it was they were frightened that if the war comes, the message to you was, go east.

A: Go, go.

Q: Go east.

A: Yeah, go.

Q: And what about your sister?

A: My sister, she was absolutely far from all this, and it happened that she had between exams – it was a time of exams – she had a few free days, and

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she came home. If she wouldn't come home, maybe she would survive, because from **Kauna**, some people survived.

Q: So she was already at university in **Kaunas**, was in **Kauna**, mm-hm.

A: She was in the university in **Kauna**, yeah, for three years already because she was three years older than – two and a half than I am, and I had finished exactly this time. So she was home.

Q: And had your – well, how did your parents find out, because you wanted to keep it secret from them, about –

A: No, but it wa – I – I got already the –

Q: Certificate.

A: Certificate, and that wa – because I try – I started when I was five, f – 15. And this I was already 16 with a half.

Q: Mm-hm, 16 and a half, okay.

A: And they – yeah, they knew it. They knew it already.

Q: Were they upset by this, or were they supportive, or –

A: It was not time to be upset, it was time to tell what to do, and –

Q: I see. I see this last –

A: And not – it was a feeling that war is coming.

Q: Coming.

A: Yeah. Not – because **Hitler** was going, you know –

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Q: Of course.

A: – marching and my mother had in – her parents were killed –

Q: In **Poland**?

A: – in **Pinsk**, and I had – and we had in **Poland** a very famous uncle. I think I even told you, I have a lot of materials about him.

Q: What was his name?

A: Dr. **Ishwar(ph) Wodzlik(ph)**. And he was a member of the
[indecipherable]

Q: Yeah, of the Polish **[indecipherable]**

A: Yeah, Polish **[indecipherable]**, yeah. And when it started, he went to
Pinsk, and they – the Soviets –

Q: Grabbed him.

A: – grabbed him, they send him out to very far away.

Q: So – probably **Siberia**.

A: And I had a aunt in **Moscow**, which was very energetic, and she had a
appointment with **Beria**.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: You know this?

Q: **Lavrentiy Beria**.

A: **Lavrentiy Beria**, yeah.

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Q: Who was the Soviet Secret Police, yes, mm-hm.

A: And he said – he told her that he died on the way, but it turned out that they shoot him. Because after the end of the war, one other person who knew him well, came and told my aunt that he was shot. So no – and his – his wife and daughter was sent to **Kazakhstan**, to **Kochetayev**, the place where I was. Later, I will come to it.

Q: Okay.

A: And his son was later in the ghetto in **Warsaw** and my aunt was sending him –

Q: Packages.

A: – packages, yeah, helped him. But he died in there.

Q: But it –

A: He participate in the up –

Q: Uprising.

A: – uprising, yes.

Q: And he died there.

A: Yes, yes, yes. But his daughter, who was in – in **Kochetayev**, and wife, they came back after the war, they were released, and they went to **Israel**. But now they are already [indecipherable] but I saw them in **Israel**. I saw [indecipherable]

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Q: But in 1930 – in 1941, as the war is about to happen, you don't know a lot of this, you know some of it, but a lot you must have found out later, yes?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes. But your mother already knew that things were not well in **Poland** because her family was in **Poland**.

A: Yeah.

Q: And she got some news from it, yeah? Do y – what is it that your mother knew at the time?

A: She was afraid that I will – if I will stay I will be shot the first day. That what she was afraid.

Q: Yeah.

A: And we saw what is going on and – and can you imagine, I think I told you this, I didn't believe. Four years of the war I was listening that all the Jews are killed, killed, killed, I couldn't imagine that this could be done by humans. But –

Q: It – it was.

A: It was.

Q: So, once they i – they tell you to memorize your uncle and your aunt's addresses in **Moscow**, you return to **Alytaus**, yes?

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A: I – yeah, I returned to **Alytaus**.

Q: And then what happened?

A: And then on the 22nd, like I told you, the 21st we got the diplomas.

Q: And the 22nd's supposed to be –

A: And the 22nd we had to go in the evening to the party. And I'll show you one thing, simple, one moment. This is – this is my dress for the party.

Q: It's beautiful.

A: And this dress helped me in my life in **Siberia**.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: I was giving girls who were better [**indecipherable**] and here is written by my mother, she said that I found it here in – in **Moscow**. **Malachay**(ph) **a doch**(ph) **Frida**. My – not older, but –

Q: Younger.

A: – younger daughter **Frida**, she is 15 and eight months old.

Q: Oh, how beautiful. How beautiful. You look so happy there.

A: Yeah.

Q: And what – it's a very pretty dress. It's a very pretty dress.

A: [**indecipherable**] special for this. And this dress helped me later.

Q: Okay, so you are supposed to go to this party in the evening of the 22nd of June.

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A: Yeah, but in the morning of the 22nd, the bombs started very early, and we didn't know what to do. First, we met with my friend, because his town, **Leipalingis**, is a little bit after **Serei**.

Q: So, **Leipalingis**, yes.

A: **Leipalingis**, yeah.

Q: Yes.

A: And with **[indecipherable] laipun(ph)**.

Q: **Laipun(ph)**, okay.

A: Yeah. And there were – he had a sister and a few – a – a – a big family. All gone. He al-alone escaped. And we didn't know if we can go to war – **Serei**, simple go. And our – there were the – who was trying to keep order.

Q: Okay.

A: He was telling us **kinder**, you know, you – you – you –

Q: Children.

A: – cannot go, because the Nazis are so close, you will be shot on the way to **Serei**. You have to go through the bridge to the other part of **Alytaus**.

Alytaus has two parts, before the bridge and after the bridge. So –

Q: And **Alytaus** was also close to the German border, from what I remember.

A: Also close, but **Serei** closer.

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Q: I see, I see.

A: **Serei** closer, and **Serei** is a – Nazis were maybe 10 in the morning. And in **Alytaus** they came about two, three o'clock.

Q: In the afternoon.

A: Yeah. So we went through the – w-we did what he said us.

Q: And who was this person who told you?

A: This was a – h-h-he was – oh my – hard to say. **Machalnik**(ph). I – I cannot now remember, but he was a – the head of not police, not police head, but something – another organization, who when he tried to – maybe it was his initiative, because he was standing and telling where who has to go.

Q: Okay.

A: And I knew his two sisters, they were on our, but I – **Z-Z-Zi-Zinya**(ph) was his last name, I think, **Zinya**(ph). Maybe if I will remember, I will write you what I forgot.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: Maybe because I a little nervous.

Q: It's okay, it's okay.

A: Okay. Because sometimes I remember this very well.

Q: It's okay. It's perfectly **[indecipherable]**

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A: And what he said, what he said, we decided to do.

Q: Okay.

A: And we went through the bridge, and a little more til we came to the suburb, because we already could listen to the bombs, it was bombed all the time. And we came to a house what they had – we could sit down in front of – you know, like an open space. We were there. The people who owned the house were not too happy, because – and when some other people wanted also to stop, they said no, that is too much. They will see that it's a lot of people and they can –

Q: Shoot.

A: Shoot, yeah. So we were sitting there, not knowing what to do. And at this time, our neighbor, **Ralph Hasanowich**(ph) – **Hasanowiches**(ph), he passed and he said **k-kinder**, no.

Q: Children.

A: Children, yeah. Wa-Wa – what are you here? I have, he said, a truck, but I went and I got my mother from **Birshtonas**.

Q: Mm-hm, **Birshtonas**.

A: His mother – his mother had problems with her feet. And she is already a little farther from here at a person who lives here and has a farm, and they

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know him. But I have to find my father, and the father is with a – you know, with two **pferds**?

Q: Ah, horses.

A: Yeah, hor – yeah. And he – an-and I will take you. And we went with him, and we found the father and we came to the family. They left a lot of things, because if they wouldn't leave they wouldn't have space in there.

We were all on the – it was a –

Q: You were inside a truck.

A: Yeah, inside was he and his mother next to him, and we all were outside, and there was 15 people. And we understood that we have to start going.

Q: East.

A: Because we saw that **Alytaus** in flames, and we were sure that **Alytaus** is already with Nazis. So, we started going. We spend one night outside, not far from **Vilnius**. Simple on the –

Q: On the ground.

A: – the ground. And when we saw that we will be **[indecipherable]** we thought oh, we will come to **Vilnius** and then we will decide what's – what will be next. **Vilnius** was burn. **V-Vilnius** was in fire.

Q: In flames, mm-hm.

A: Yeah. And then we decided maybe **Minsk, Belarus**.

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Q: That's right.

A: But when we came closer to – and at this time, you know, very often it was the bombs, and we had to go –

Q: Into the – right. Into the –

A: And I was ot – laying down with my – I was putting something about the head [**indecipherable**] not now, not now, not now, maybe it will – and – and then, when we came close to **Minsk, Minsk** was already also in –

Q: Flames.

A: – flames, yes.

Q: Were the roads full, as you were – as you were driving east, were the roads full, or were they empty?

A: No, the roads were full, because the Soviet – the Soviet army was trying to leave.

Q: Okay.

A: And at this time we stopped, because we didn't have gas. No gas. What we had, something in case if we have to commit suicide; that has the daughter of the driver.

Q: I see. What was that, do you remember?

A: Hm?

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Q: What was it that you had in case to – to commit suicide? Was it cyanide?

A: I – I – I don't – maybe. I don't remember what, but we were – that made us a little bit – because it was absolutely, for us, awful that in this situation, to stay til they will come.

Q: Yeah.

A: But next to us was a – a tank, a tank. And the **tankist** was – the tank was –

Q: **Kaput.**

A: **Kaput.**

Q: **Kaput.** It was –

A: And he told us that he will give us gas. And they had to ffff –

Q: Oh, they had to suck it out of the tank.

A: Suck it out of the tank. They did it, they did it, they did it. And at that time, before we found him, I was staying on the **chausser**(ph).

Q: On the – on the street?

A: On the s – not – not the street.

Q: The boulevard then, **chaussee** in ger –

A: **Chaussee**, yeah, route.

Q: Uh-huh.

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A: And asking [**speaks Russian**] in Russian [**speaks Russian**]. But the – the army was trying to go as far as possible, they didn't stop, because one of the was always standing outside of the – next to the chauffeur and telling he to go faster and faster. They were taking out their families, also.

Q: Of course.

A: So they were going very fast. So, we got the gas, and I didn't have more to stay and ask about [**speaks Russian**] in Russian [**speaks Russian**].

Q: You were asking all those who were passing by –

A: Who were – who were parth – yeah, who were passing by and nobody stopped, nobody stopped. But the person from tank [**indecipherable**] we had something to eat, so they gave the **tankist** what to eat, because he was very –

Q: Hungry.

A: – hungry, yeah, and he gave us the gas, and we went ahead til

Smolensk. Smolensk, that is not far from **Minsk**, and it's a very good –

Q: Road?

A: – road, directly to **Moscow**.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: **Smolensk**. But in **Smolensk** they took us to a – a **shalon**(ph).

Q: To a train.

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A: To a train, yeah. And because we were the first evacuees, people were meeting us at stations and bringing bread, because we didn't have.

Q: So you had nobody che – check your papers, nobody check your documents?

A: No, they checked. I showed my **Kom Jugend**, this –

Q: This **Komsomol** –

A: **Komsomol** they checked, and –

Q: The certificate.

A: – these helped.

Q: I see.

A: Because they – but at the same time, when they saw my friend, and the chauffeur, they both had leather –

Q: Coats? Jackets?

A: Yeah, mi – jackets.

Q: Yes.

A: Leather jackets. And the leather jackets, they look – you know, they thought maybe they are Nazis. So they started to talk, and I interrupted them and I told them this is our friends, and I showed them again my **Komsomol**.

Q: Mm-hm, your cer – yeah.

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A: Yeah, and then th – so, everything went good, but it could be bad also, if

I wouldn't –

Q: Have had it.

A: – have had it, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: And then we were in the **shalon**(ph) and they gave us br-bread, and I remember how I – I – I started to be very hungry. And we went a long way, a long way in the – a **shalon**(ph), to the **Saratovskaya Oblast**. There is a –

Q: Region.

A: – on the **Volga. Saratov**.

Q: **Saratov, Saratov**.

A: But **Oblast** is **Saratov** –

Q: Region.

A: Region.

Q: Yes.

A: And in **Saratov** region was a farm called **Hoss**(ph).

Q: Uh-huh, a collective card – a collective farm.

A: You know, collective farm, yeah, by the name [**indecipherable**]

Stanislavsky – first of all **Saratovskaya Oblast. Stanislavsky**

Ryonn(ph), that is a little more detailed.

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Q: Right, smaller.

A: Yeah, and **[speaks foreign language]** I – I am not sure, but I think that it was the **kolkhoz**, the name of the **kolkhoz** was the 20th **[indecipherable]** is when – when they – it was a very famous **siest**(ph) of the **Kom** party.

Q: Oh, 20th car – party congress? No, it couldn't have been that, that happened in 1956. The 20th party congress –

A: Yeah, but they – they could name it. It was the name –

Q: They could name it even before – even before it happens?

A: Ah, you say the 20th was –

Q: The 20th party congress was – was **Khrushchev** denouncing **Stalin** in 1956.

A: Yeah, so it was another –

Q: Another 20.

A: – another one.

Q: Yeah.

A: But it was such a name.

Q: Okay, okay. Doesn't matter, one of those.

A: **[indecipherable]** one of those, yeah.

Q: One of those.

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A: And I – and there were the wife and son and daughter of my mother's brother, who lived in **Moscow**. But I decided to – I – I wrote, I wrote and they got my letter, and I wrote to my aunt, who was alone, and I wrote to my uncle. And he was on the front, and they were evacuated to this place, **Kochetayev**, that is **Kazakhstan**.

Q: I see, **Kochetayev**.

A: Yeah, but that was later.

Q: Okay.

A: I came to the **kolkhoz** –

Q: To the collective farm.

A: To the collective farm, and I worked there.

Q: I want to ask at this point –

A: And also **Fima**(ph) was with me to there, also.

Q: Up to that point, **Fima**(ph) your friend from –

A: Yeah, we went together, and he was also working in the –

Q: Was he your boyfriend?

A: No, no.

Q: He was just a friend.

A: We didn't – he went – now, what does it mean boyfriend?

Q: Oh.

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A: And my main thought was to come home being a virgin.

Q: Oh, to **Serei**.

A: But it was not to home to come, and my husband is my first, and that's it. That was in my – from Father, it came from Mother, I don't know what. I don't care now, absolutely do it different, looking at this. But that was happened, so –

Q: That's how it was in those days.

A: It was the first and the last.

Q: I'd like to ask you, from **Alytaus** to the – the collective farm in **Saratov** – **Saratov**, how many days, how long did it take to get from **Alytaus** to there? Was it a week, was it two de – weeks, was it –

A: No, I – I – I think that – I would like to remember how many nights we spend. We spend one night and we [indecipherable] that was before, when we [indecipherable] at the name of – on – on – on the –

Q: On the way?

A: On the way, yeah, but we slept in the truck. And then we slept before the second night, before **Vilnius**. And then another night before **Minsk**.

Q: Mm-hm, so that's three already.

A: Three already. No, and then I don't remember how many days we – we are going by the train to **Saratov**.

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Q: Do you think by July you were already there?

A: You know, I will – I think I will find, because I wrote a letter to my relatives, I am the daughter of your –

Q: From **Saratov** is where you wrote the letter?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Because on the way, I didn't.

Q: Okay.

A: On the way I didn't. I didn't know where I will be.

Q: Okay.

A: So from **Saratov** I wrote, and it didn't go straight for some reason, and **Moscow** was also everything very – it – it – it didn't come soon. But when it came, I got a telegram – telegram?

Q: Telegram.

A: Yeah, that – the wife and children of my uncle are in –

Q: **Kazakhstan**.

A: **Kazakhstan** and **Kochetayev**, and that I would like – they would like to know if I can come to this place. And also they gave me where my aunt is, she was also evacuated from **Moscow**. And the aunt was alone, and she

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considered me as she found a child, you know, she was very good to me. I could just say –

Q: So did you join your aunt?

A: Huh?

Q: You join –

A: No, no. Sh – I – I couldn't, I was in the collective farm.

Q: Oh, so you couldn't leave it if you wanted to.

A: I couldn't leave it, and I even didn't know how to do it, but f – in the collective farm, **Fima**(ph) was with – also with me, and I worked at the collective farm, and I even worked with – not with **pferds** but with other –

Q: With horses?

A: [**indecipherable**] you have to say them, I forgot the name of this.

Q: Right, are they – are – they're not don – they're not horses, are they donkeys?

A: Maybe donkeys.

Q: Yeah, they're – they're a little stubborn and they're smaller than a horse.

A: Smaller, yeah.

Q: Yeah. I wouldn't know.

A: Yeah.

Q: I wouldn't know.

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A: And I was taking the – from the field, the –

Q: The hay? Or what? **Baruski(ph)**

A: By a conveyor it was coming, what later goes for bread.

Q: The wheat.

A: The wheat.

Q: The wheat.

A: And bringing this to the special place.

Q: I see.

A: With this what not **[indecipherable]**

Q: The dock.

A: Yeah, and I knew how to manage with them, yeah. And sometimes I had to come and take out, you know, bad – when it is something –

Q: The wheat's not very good –

A: **[indecipherable]**

Q: Yeah.

A: – what is not needed, so I had to do this. People were very nice. Very often when I was going, through the window, they were giving me something. But I started at that place with my aunt, and it was not convenient because they had two rooms. And in such conditions, I understood that I have to order something, to rent something.

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Q: I-I'm confused, excuse me, you were – you were in the collective farm in **Saratov**, and then you're talking about your aunt who – was she also th –

A: Yeah, but I – I am not yet there.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: I am sorry. In the collective far – but I wanted to go.

Q: Okay.

A: I wanted to go, and the collective farm helped me. They gave me a soldier, which was – what I was doing in there – in-in – I am still not in **Kochetayev**, they gave me a soldier which I have to bring to **Semipalatinsk**. And **Semipalatinsk** is if you go to the west, and then to the south, and there is a – it-it was a ri-right – rehabilitation or something like this, and bring this soldier to the rehabilitation. So, I got the ticket, I didn't pay for it, and on the way back I stopped in **Nowosibirsk**. And there in **Nowosibirsk** was evacuated, the **Mo-Moscow** University, building university.

Q: I see.

A: I was also – I – I wanted to be an engineer.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And from other – from **Leningrad** and from another city. And there we were in that place of **Nowosibirsk** building engine –

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Q: [indecipherable]

A: – institute, or whatever it is. So, they took me, despite my Russian was bad.

Q: I was going to ask. You were saying before [speaks Russian] give us gasoline, give us gasoline. Was your Russian at that point – did you speak much when you were still in **Lithuania**? How did you learn it?

A: No, I learned – first of all, I told you that my parents spoke Russian, and I had –

Q: But only when they didn't want you to understand.

A: Yeah, but later one year, one year, when it became already the **Soviet Union**, we were studying.

Q: I see, I see.

A: And comparing to others, I had – I knew a lot of poems.

Q: I see.

A: I didn't understand the meaning, but I could –

Q: Recite them.

A: Yeah.

Q: So how many languages – when you were 15 years old and – or 16 and a half, when you had finished the gymnasium, how many languages did you speak?

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A: Jewish –

Q: Yiddish.

A: Yiddish, yes, Yiddish, Lithuanian, wis – I studied German, I studied French in the gymnasium, no English.

Q: No English.

A: No English. And Latin.

Q: And Latin?

A: Yeah.

Q: So, Russian –

A: The gymnasium – no Russian, only one year.

Q: Okay, so what – what –

A: But it – it came to me easy.

Q: I see.

A: It came easy, Russian, you know?

Q: Yeah.

A: Despite when I was already on the first course of the university in **Nowosibirsk**, there was an exam, and they talked about **[indecipherable]** **materiale(ph)**. It means materials which are for the top of a house.

Q: Uh-huh, okay.

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A: And I didn't know what is **[indecipherable]** I remember

[indecipherable]

Q: You – you –

A: A poem, and in the poem it says the word **crovla**(ph), and I understood what it is. But I could ask somebody. At least before the beginning of the – that was in the summer, and it was not the beginning of the course, first course. But there was a group, and I was participating in the group that was for Russians that didn't finish the 10 years –

Q: I see.

A: – nine years. And they put – they made a **dictante**(ph). **Dictante**(ph)

Q: Is a – i – they – you had to do a composition, or you had to write something.

A: Write there – saying what to write and we have to write. And the woman who dictated, then when it was all done, she said, oh, you two – two sisters of Russian girls, who finished nine classes of the 10 year course, they made more mistakes than **Frida Finkelita**(ph). I was **Finkelita**(ph).

Q: You were **Finkelita**(ph)?

A: Yeah.

Q: Even in **Russia**?

A: In **Russia** I was **Finkelita**(ph), yes.

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Q: Yeah, **lita**. So tell me, at that point – well, not at that point, I want to go back, and I want to ask a question that may sound very, very naïve, but it's coming from what I'm trying to gather from your story. The war will happen. Your parents are frightened for you because you belong to the **Komsomol** and you could be shot in the first days, clearly. But did they fear something for themselves? Did they fear that there would be some – do you think that they were afraid that something would happen to them? They certainly may not have liked the Nazis, but did they think there was some danger for them?

A: I am sure they thought it was danger. She knew what was going on another, it was not the first – they knew what is going on in **Poland**, they knew what is going on in the other places, but at the same time, unfortunately, I was not in touch, I couldn't find out anything. But I don't – didn't believe, so maybe they had hope. But very soon, you know, when they were already put to death, September '41, 10 and 11. The 10th were the men, and the 11th, women and children. September. So it was only 22nd June, July, August, September, four months.

Q: Four months.

A: Yeah, and they were all put in a school, but it is not a school, it is a school to become – to have a specialty. And in this school –

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Q: A vocational school, probably.

A: You know, you could become a – work in a **amatų mokykla**.

Q: Yeah, so oh **amatų maku**(ph) – **amatų maku**(ph) –

A: Oh my God, I'm forgetting that I can say Lithuanian.

Q: – fa – Lithuanian, yes, yes. **Amatų**, it's vocational school, vocational school.

A: My – yeah, my father was there the doctor.

Q: I see.

A: He was taking care of the students.

Q: I see.

A: And then it became the place where they were holding them for a few days, and after this, they marched – and the **amatų mokykla** was in the – at the end of the –

Q: Town.

A: – town. So they had to march along all the town and about two, three miles more to the forest. And here, I have said how my father was –

Q: Killed.

A: They were killed over there, but how he looked when he marched with this column, he was in a bloody, scared and –

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Q: I wanted to ask, when you were in **Saratov**, and then you were in **Nowosibirsk**, clearly you must have been thinking of what's going back on – back in – home in **Serei**.

A: Yeah.

Q: Were you trying to get in touch with your parents, with your family, or was there no way –

A: No way, no way.

Q: No way.

A: Absolutely no way. The only one thing, I believed that the humans cannot do such a thing.

Q: Well, were you hearing already things about what was going on there, or not?

A: No, I didn't hear anything about **Serei**, especially because **Serei** is –

Q: Small place.

A: – small place. But I was hearing that they are killing. Killing and there were camps, and there were the – you know, I have a friend who was in **Vilnius** ghetto.

Q: Mm-hm. But this is – I'm still trying to get a sense of what you knew at the time. Not what one could find out later, but what, for example, did the

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radio say? What did the newspapers write? Did you ha – was there any news of what was going on then?

A: I – I was reading, but I – I am saying again I couldn't believe, but it became a very difficult time for me, you know what? I was going, for example, the time when it is already close, to find out when it goes to the end. I was going – let's say my – my aunt, I lived with my aunt.

Q: Mm-hm, in **Nowosibirsk**.

A: No –

Q: Oh, I'm sorry.

A: – that time I already came to **Moscow**.

Q: I'm confused. Okay.

A: Yeah, in **Nowosibirsk** I got of work at the **komatata**(ph). You know what is **komotata**(ph)?

Q: Have no idea.

A: No? **Komotata**(ph), that is I have to – at night I was going – we were in the basement, and are living there about seven, eight students. And the place was divided with – with white [**speaks Lithuanian**] divided with material things.

Q: Was like a white curtain, or a white –

A: Curtain –

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Q: Yeah, okay.

A: – curtain, whatever they had.

Q: Some sort of –

A: Yeah.

Q: – some sort of divider

A: So, we were three people here, and four people there, and four more.

And among the four was one mother, because there was a lady with a mother.

Q: Okay.

A: And we were very hungry, hungry. We didn't have to eat enough, and we decided that there was the professor, they had a garden. And we decided that if we take one **kopūstai, kopūstai** –

Q: Oh, cabbage.

A: Cabbage, one cabbage one night, even not every day, nothing will happen. So we were taking this and having the cabbage. And then we were trying to get a little bit of potatoes. E-Everywhere was potatoes owners, and we decided that one, only one time to take from each house.

Q: Mm-hm, something.

A: Yeah. So we were theft.

Q: You were thieves, yeah.

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A: Thieves.

Q: But you were – but you were hungry.

A: We were hungry. And then in the morning, we were sending one of us, we didn't have wood, we were cold over there.

Q: Yeah.

A: Many times I had here you know –

Q: Blue?

A: Yeah.

Q: Mm-hm, on your cheeks, yeah.

A: We were sending somebody to the – we had a special place to eat, because we had a cart. But it was – the soup was water, so we were sending one, giving all the clothes, warm clothes, and we were bringing a big buck –

Q: Bucket.

A: – bucket with soup, and because it is big, so in the – it was a little bit.

And then we were eating this, and taking the – from the professor's a little bit, and by some way, we survived. And then there was in – in

Nowosibirsk, a – lithua – **Lithuania** had a person who was taking care of Lithuanian evacuees.

Q: Okay.

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A: But that was **Nowosibirsk**. I got in touch with him and he made me like his secretary, but only I was far away. And I had to talk to other people, and he gave me, not shoes, but you know, for winter –

Q: Boots? Some sort of boots?

A: Some sort of boot, but they are from material, you know?

Q: I know what you mean, they were this felt kind of – how is it said in Russian, the –

A: **[indecipherable]** so far away I-I don't remember how **[indecipherable]** says. But it's not leather?

Q: No, no, I know – it's sort of like these felt kind of boots.

A: No, no, no. But it helped me very much, it's helped me very much. And I was in touch with others evacuees, asking what they need. I worked a little bit. But it's a pity I forgot his name.

Q: It happens.

A: Because then when I came back to **Moscow** and he was in **Moscow**, was the Lithuanian **[indecipherable]**

Q: Rep-Representation, yeah.

A: Representation, yeah. And I think that he came back also, and I saw him a few times. He made a lot good things for me. **[indecipherable]** I don't remember his name. So – and then it came a time when the institute started

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to think about coming back to **Moscow**. And I went with the institute back to **Moscow**.

Q: And then you met your aunt?

A: And then I met my aunt, and I lived with my aunt.

Q: And she had no news of your family?

A: No, absolutely not.

Q: And I'm going back and repeating my question. You were saying you did not believe what was written in the newspapers, so that means something was written in the newspapers during the war about what was going on.

A: Yeah, and by radio all the time –

Q: And by radio, oh –

A: – that killing, killing, killing and killing.

Q: Okay. And why did –

A: Killing Jews.

Q: Okay, and why didn't you believe it? Oh, they were saying they were killing Jews, not Soviet citizens?

A: No, Jews.

Q: Jews, uh-huh.

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A: Yeah. I couldn't bel – I – I wouldn't say that I don't beli – didn't believe at all.

Q: Okay.

A: But I couldn't imagine, and I – very often I read – I'm reading now that people couldn't imagine –

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: – that this could be done.

Q: Okay. And was the – was any part of it that you didn't believe the Soviet press, or you did believe the Soviet press in general?

A: I did believe in general, but my – I – I – I –

Q: Your mind couldn't imagine that such a thing – okay.

A: My mind couldn't imagine that this could be done. But what had happened with me, I all the time was – that was a bad thing. I was – let's say I was coming from the sixth floor, my aunt lived on the sixth floor. No elevator. When I was g-going back, if I will meet somebody on the way, that's okay, if I will not meet, that is bad. I am going to the **tramvajai**, you know what is **tramvajai**?

Q: To the trolley bo – yeah, the trams.

A: Yeah, to go to the university, to the –

Q: Correct.

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A: I see he is coming. If I will catch him, fine; if not, bad. All the time I was in this ci – in such a **[indecipherable]** that is very bad.

Q: I don't understand. If you would meet the tram, if the tram would be coming, or if the person –

A: No, simple, simple this – that was my own – I was all the time thinking what will be when it end the war, I will find my parents, or not.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: Only this was my –

Q: I see.

A: I was thinking, they are dead, or they are alive. So I started to think if I will catch the train that is good, or **[indecipherable]** each time, something.

Q: In other words, you played a mind game with yourself.

A: Yeah.

Q: If you catch the tram, it means your parents are alive.

A: Yeah.

Q: If you don't catch the tram, that's not good.

A: Yeah.

Q: That sort of thing.

A: And many, many these kind of things.

Q: I see.

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A: You know, if I go upstairs and I don't see anybody going down, it's good. But if somebody goes –

Q: It's bad.

A: – that bad. That can make you, you know –

Q: Crazy, yeah. But of course, you didn't know. You had no –

A: I didn't know, no. And I came to **Moscow**, to my aunt, and she lived in one room in a – an apartment which had another room where there lived another lady, a researcher. And another lady lived with my aunt in one room, so I was the third one. And this lady, she was a nurse, but she was helping the one, which is the researcher, she was better off, and she could pay her. She was making for her – oh, she was like a helper, you know? But she's – she's – she spends the nights in our room. So it was a room, here is a aunt, here is this lady, and here I am. But relations were good, and in the same apartment, in the same, were an apartment for a family, a family of four or five. Father, mother, two children and a grandmother. And in the kitchen, everybody had his own place –

Q: Yes.

A: – you know. And one bathroom, and one toilet.

Q: So that's for everybody.

A: For everybody, yes. So I lived there a few years til I got married.

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Q: Did you get married –

A: Because I worked – I worked very close to the place where my – my – my aunt lived. But what happened at this time, unfortunately, that the family of my uncle, they were used that the aunt takes care of them. And here she gave all her energy –

Q: To you.

A: – to me, yes. And a little bit it had an influence, you know.

Q: That – that they didn't get the energy that you were getting, the attention.

A: Yeah. And one time very – it was a very not good thing, the daughter of my uncle, the daughter of my uncle, she owed her money. And when my aunt says that you have to return, I will better give you another time. Why you are not returning? She said, take it out from my – what you are going to leave me. Can you imagine? And my aunt become very, very angry, and they didn't have relations, and she put everything on my name. That was a – a – how much could she have, she was a **buhalteris**.

Q: She was a – a – ac – an accountant in some way –

A: Accountant, yeah, an accountant.

Q: – a bookkeeper.

A: Bookkeeper, yeah

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Q: Bookkeeper

A: Bookkeeper. And she died at 75. I lived 10 years more already.

Q: So, you're in **Moscow** and you're living with your aunt, and you're wondering what's happened to your parents. What happened – how did the war end for you? Were you already married by then?

A: Just a moment now, the – the war ended in '45 –

Q: Correct.

A: – and I got married '52.

Q: Ah, I see. So in 1945 –

A: 1945, it was a day when it was a very big party, but I still didn't know exactly. So this day I remember, I will remember all my life. But unfortunately, very soon, I got a letter first from my – from the chef – chauffeur –

Q: Ah, from your father's –

A: **Salvoukas**(ph), **Salvoukas**(ph)

Q: **Sa-Salvoukas**(ph), okay.

A: Yeah, that I cannot tell you nothing good.

Q: He wrote you that?

A: Yeah, and additional, I got a letter from my good friend who survived the ghetto. And she lives in **Boston** now, but she lived very long in

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Lithuania. She came later, a month later than I to **America**. She – and I am in touch with her. Why I didn't write in her without talking to her that maybe she would like to be [indecipherable]

Q: You mentioned her to me, yes, yes.

A: Yeah, because her husband is now in the nursing home, but not simple nursing home, a little bit with mental.

Q: And – oh, maybe alz –

A: So I wanted first to talk to her.

Q: Yes, of course.

A: But because I was so –

Q: Busy, yeah.

A: I have it in mind

Q: Okay.

A: And if yes, I will tell you.

Q: Okay, you let me know.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Good, good. Now, she was in the **Vilnius** ghetto, **Vilna** ghetto, or –

A: I think **Vilnius** ghetto, but she left it, she –

Q: She ran away.

A: She ran away, yes.

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Q: Okay.

A: And she is very in touch with **Vilna**, with the people who work in the museum, because she is – she has friends over there.

Q: Okay.

A: And very often she was sending me some, in Lithuanian, newspapers.

Q: Okay.

A: Small newspapers in Lithuanian.

Q: Okay. So she knew about what happened to your parents, or your – what happened to **Serei**.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes. And she found you in **Moscow** –

A: She wrote it to me, I didn't go to the univers – to my college or university this day and –

Q: So what did she write?

A: – unbelievable

Q: What did she write?

A: She wrote that they were killed together with all **Serei**, with all the people, all the shtetl.

Q: So that means that from stel – **Salvoukas**(ph) and from her –

A: **Mira**(ph), yeah.

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Q: – from **Mira**(ph) –

A: But very soon we went.

Q: I see.

A: But that we went the first time already with **Arkady**, because I was all the time told that, don't go. There are a lot of i-in the forest and they can kill you, because they are the ones which are afraid now –

Q: To come back.

A: – that they will – to come back in the cities. So – and they can – and we had a few cases, such cases, that people were killed. So I understood that I have to wait a little. And when I got married, we went together with my husband. We went first to **Vilnius**, and my friend still were there. So we went together with him, first to **Leipalingis**, and then to **Serei**, and we saw the first time the memorial. And at this time, we even found some pieces of some – what is going on with me, what is going on?

Q: Nothing, everything's fine. You found something –

A: You know, if take off all this from the finger, what left?

Q: You found some bones you mean?

A: Bones.

Q: You found some bones, you found some skeleton bones.

A: Yeah.

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Q: Still around th –

A: Later they made the mar – a-and they made around small, not high. You will see everything, I have it.

Q: And did they – did you talk to people then about what happened specifically to your family?

A: Yeah, we – we found a teacher who spend with us some hours, and he cried when he told us how it was, all the details how it happened. That three days they were holding them in the **amatų mokykla**.

Q: In the vocational school?

A: Yeah, and that was a Lithuanian person, a Lithuanian teacher. So I spoke to him Lithuanian, and I later –

Q: Translated for **Arkady**.

A: – translated for **Arkady**, yeah. And he told everything how it was, and they were very, very upset. And you know, even now they are writing that they will never forget it, and th – you know, different people. And wi – when we came to the house of **Salvoukas**(ph), his wife, only what she could say, she were – our – I-I forgot to tell that our house was bombed and gone in [indecipherable]

Q: The one they lived in, or the one that your parents rented?

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A: The one which ma – our parents rented, and the other one, everything, because we saw when we came only everything burn, fire. And they moved to the very end of the city, very close to the – like I told you, the **kirche(ph)** –

Q: That's right, the church.

A: – the **amatų mokykla** –

Q: The vocational school.

A: But ama – yeah, **amatų mokykla** is a little farther. And this is the end of the **langergast(ph)**. And there is the – there the name is – I have a – a photo, I am standing in this house where they lived, the time til they were brought to the **amatų mokykla**. That is simple a family who was giving us milk, they had always a cow, and they were bringing milk, and they let Father and Mother and **Etta** to live with them, but it was not a long time, very soon they were taken. So I have the house where they lived a tre – few months.

Q: Ah, so they were – so, in other words there was no ghetto really in – in **Serei**? People – the place was bombed, and your parents had no place to live, so they went here –

A: Yeah.

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Q: – to this form – chauffeur, former chauffeur, and then when they were taken away to the vocational school, they were held there for three days, you said?

A: Yeah.

Q: And then they were brought to be shot.

A: Yeah, and it was only – it was on the 10th and 11th September.

Q: Did you remember what you were doing on the 10th or 11th of September? Did you go back in your mind and try and figure out where you were?

A: No, oh, I – I – I know that very often, what **Hanna(ph) Slovatitsky(ph)** writes in her – that she cannot remember what she did this day.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: I cannot say that I – I – I remember it.

Q: What did they – what were some of the things that they told you about your parents during that time?

A: The wife of **Salvoukas(ph)** said she tried, because they couldn't go out, and they couldn't buy something, so she tried to – by some way, she was telling us, she was buying eggs and bringing them to this –

Q: Yes.

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A: – place, and trying to help with – but it was also dangerous, but she did. She told me this and she cried, because she couldn't imagine – a lot of good people, you know, a lot of good people. And when I read now about the woman who says she will never forget how she saw my father in the beginning of the –

Q: Column.

A: – column, yes, in – with – with blood, and she could see that he was beaten. She says it. And I got this paper. Unfortunately, it's in Russian written, but this piece I translated. So, I can give it to you.

Q: When you got it, did you – did someone recognize it and send you that article, knowing it was about your father, or did you open the paper one day and there you read it yourself?

A: No, no, my [indecipherable] my uncle's daughter, she read it, because we didn't pay a lot of attention to Russian papers, because we had to – we worked, and we had to read English, to know better English.

Q: You're talking about now here, you're in the **United States**, yes.

A: Yeah, in the **United States**. And she sent me this paper.

Q: And so this is th – she sent you this paper –

A: And she called my husband, and she read it to him, and he says, the first time he says, don't tell it to **Frida**. But she was very surprised, that what I

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had to know. And she called me, and I found out, and I was very upset that **Arkady** told her let – let – let not tell **Frida**.

Q: Yeah. Well, he probably wanted to protect you.

A: Mm, he wanted to protect –

Q: To protect, yes.

A: – yeah, but it's not the case. I have to know. I am watching everything, all Holocaust movies. I am always watching them, and I – because I have to – at least I have to feel a little. I have very often, as older I become, as more I have the feeling of guiltiness that I was not with them, and I didn't have to go through this all. It's very difficult to imagine my sister, my father, my mother, how they were – how it was all – and I was not there.

Q: But I am sure that for your father and for your mother and your sister, it was easier for them, knowing that you were not there, and that maybe you survived. That – that for them it would have been harder to see both of their children in that situation.

A: Yeah. It would be good to be a very believing, and believe that we will see someday.

Q: Are you a believer?

A: Huh?

Q: Are you a believer?

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A: I don't know, after what is going on all these years. After the Holocaust and it is still so bad everywhere, with the hating of Jews, I don't know why, because I know where – I know bad people. For me the nice thing is a p – a person has to be good from bad. And now in **Europe** and everywhere. I don't know why.

Q: That I – at that point you mentioned – you mentioned your – **Salvoukas's(ph)** wife, and that she was a good person and that she cared. But I want to bring up the other person you told me about earlier, who was the organist's son, who you said participated. What did you find out about him?

A: He – oh, I – I don't know if he was – I – I will ask, maybe **Mira(ph)** knows. But at least he couldn't come back and he had to – to pay for this. But how it came out, I don't know.

Q: So, but what did he do? What do you know that he – what were you told that he did?

A: What he did, he helped to kill.

Q: Uh-huh. Were there others in the town –

A: They di – yeah, there were, who helped to kill. They came to **Salvoukas(ph)**. They asked everybody, but **Salvoukas(ph)** refused. And he

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said, the only – but he was also afraid, you know, the only thing what I can give you is my – no, the **pferd**.

Q: Oh, the horse.

A: The horse, right, **pferd, pferd** is –

Q: **Pferd** is the German word for horse, and so probably also the Yiddish word for horse.

A: Yeah, a **pferd**. The horse.

Q: And so, did you find out whether they were – in **Serei**, was it Germans who shot, or was it Lithuanians who shot? Do you know who it was, did anybody tell you? In Lithuan – in **Serei**.

A: Yeah.

Q: – when everybody was shot, did anybody tell you who did the killing?

A: Who did the killing, they – everywhere they write collaborators, Lithuanian. But I didn't know who, exactly. What I remember is the son what I told you, and others I don't know. I don't know.

Q: Yeah.

A: What – you know, who live there, it was very difficult to come to this place, and nobody came back to live, nobody.

Q: Of course, of course.

A: And there the cemetery –

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Q: How often were you there, to **Serei**? You said –

A: Once a year, in the summer.

Q: From that first time –

A: Yeah.

Q: – from that first time it was once a year until you left?

A: Every year until I left, then in '88, we went to **Moscow** and from **Moscow** we went to **Vilnius**, and from **Vilnius** we went to **Serei**. And since then I haven't been there, because – I wanted very much, very much, but unfortunately, my medical –

Q: Situation?

A: Situation doesn't – I cannot now go. That's a pity, but – you know, I would like very much to show you, you know –

Q: That's – let's see some of those things that you wanted to show me.

A: Yeah, funny – funny things, this is another, absolutely nothing to do with it, but I would like to show you how we were – with that I – I liked to put my vacations.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: Yeah, and here – okay, so **humay(ph) Palanga**.

Q: **Palanga**, yes, of course.

A: You know **Palanga**, yeah, **Palanga** [speaks foreign language here]

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Q: So I see in 1951 you were in **Palanga**.

A: **Palanga**, and then you will see parlan – **Palanga** –

Q: Again in '58.

A: – in '58. **Hosta(ph) Palanga [indecipherable]**

Q: Mm-hm, that's right.

A: **[indecipherable]** And then **Palanga ulitsa(ph) naringos(ph)**.

Q: **Naringos(ph)**, that's right, all –

A: And then **Palanga ulitsa(ph) gestuccio(ph)**, and **Palanga sanitori(ph)**
jovairdra(ph).

Q: So you were there in all those years?

A: Yeah, and then **Palanga ulitsa(ph) salamayanaris(ph)**, and then
Palanga ulitsa(oh) uritas(ph).

Q: Oh yeah.

A: And **Palanga** – and then **[indecipherable]**

Q: So **Palanga** is in **Lithuania**?

A: So was **Nida, Nida**.

Q: And **Nida** is in **Lithuania**?

A: And **Nida** was already the time when we were – '78 we went to
America.

Q: So that was close.

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A: And **Nida** was before – oh, **Nida** is such a nice place.

Q: It's pretty.

A: And we were a little already nervous, because we were already put our documents, and we were afraid somebody can know about it, so it was not – but **Nida**, that was something special.

Q: Well, how did you feel? I mean, i-it's – it's a – a very direct question, but did your feeling about **Lithuania** change because of – of your parents and the massacres and everything that happened there?

A: No, I – because, you know, I – my feelings to **Lithuania** are not bad. Not bad, despite the – what happened. But at the same time, I know – I knew a lot of guys and girls who were so nice and so good. So, I understand that that is everywhere this way. And **Mira(ph)** was telling me about the ones who are still there. One is a very famous doctor, a very good guy, and one excellent guy was – he is also there. And I went to the – 35 years, this is all photos, I went to **Alytaus**, when it was 35 years since we finished –

Q: Your gymnasium.

A: – gymnasium, yes. And I was there with mi – **Mira(ph)** was there, and **Fima(ph)**, my friend, and my husband went with me. And we spend there with all our – with all the teachers.

Q: But what about that lady who said that terrible thing?

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A: I have no idea where she is. I even don't –

Q: But she wasn't there?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, no.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: I – I cannot imagine to see her.

Q: I would find that –

A: I think that she – I think that she understood that she cannot come to
such a – generally I don't know what happened, because I –

Q: You left, you left.

A: I didn't want –

Q: Yeah

A: – because others were different

Q: Interesting.

A: And she was the main who tried to do it, so –

Q: A main instigator, yeah. So I see all of these hotel, all of these vacations
that we're taking –

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A: Yeah, **Palanga** wi – will ah – this is no **Palanga** [indecipherable] we got [indecipherable] place, and we were there – no, and then already **Nida** and –

Q: Then –

A: – I left, 23 of March.

Q: March.

A: We went from **Moscow** [indecipherable] is **Vienna** a –

Q: And then you went to **Vienna** on the –

A: To **Vienna** and then from **Vienna** and then we came to **America**.

Q: **America**. What are some of the other things you'd like to show me, and I'd like to see?

A: Yeah, yeah, I would like very much – first I – I would like to show you this. If you would say that you would like to have it, I will make a copy and send it to you.

Q: A believing Jew. The selected writings of **Milton Steinberg**. Yes, very much, very much.

A: I will definitely send it to you. **Ella** will make a copy.

Q: Okay, okay.

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A: Because that is his – he wanted to talk to me, but he called and we didn't. His son is now the **Long Island** University, he is – I [indecipherable] and I also keep it.

Q: Okay. So this is someone else, **Milton Steinberg**, who is from **Serei**, and si – his son is **David Steinberg** –

A: Yeah.

Q: – who is at **Long Island** University. How interesting. Okay, so they also come from **Serei**.

A: Yeah.

Q: Your father's family, was it buried in the cemetery? Your grandfather and grandmother –

A: Yeah, the cemetery is a little – what I found is only my grandmother's – these also in – in – in the photos.

Q: Mm-hm. Let's see those photos.

A: Grandmother.

Q: Let's see.

A: Just a moment. What I can start from –

Q: I will say now officially, this concludes our interview with **Frida Ruderman**, on October 15th, 2010. And what we are going to do right now

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is look at some photos, and have some comments about those photos. So the official part of our interview is done.

A: This is my family.

Q: This is your family. Your father –

A: And very close to the – that was maybe a year before.

Q: Oh.

A: This is not – this is also copies, and I have the – this is – this man came from the **United State**. I have here a uncle, Father's brother. He is already gone, unfortunately, very soon after our coming. And he came to **Serei** and we made a photo with him. So that's my father, that's me, that is my mother, that is my sister **Etta**.

Q: Oh, you're such pretty girls.

A: Yeah, and that is the brother of my father, who died.

Q: Who died, yes.

A: That is his son, who was killed.

Q: Yes.

A: So she was killed and he was killed, and she is in **Israel**, but already in a bad shape. And this is a couple who is a first cousin of Father, but they survived, they **[indecipherable]** and they could go, but they are both already not – they are – they died both, but their son lives in **Vilnius**.

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Q: Okay, yes, I think that this would be a lovely photo, and this photo, too.

Tell me about the dress. You were going to tell me about the dress and what was special about it, and we forgot to mention –

A: Ah, that helped me because they liked – the girls liked so much the dress, that if they had to go somewhere, they were –

Q: Asking to borrow it.

A: Borrow it, and I was – they were giving me – when I didn't have – I was not still in touch with the man in **Nowosibirsk** who helped the Lithuanians. I didn't have shoes, warm shoes, they were giving me shoes to wear, something to wear.

Q: I see, so this is when you're in **Nowosibirsk** –

A: In **Nowosibirsk**.

Q: – and is this the dr – this is the dress you wore when you ran from **Lithuania**?

A: This – yeah, I –

Q: So, did you have any other clothes?

A: – I – no, but I had it with me.

Q: I see.

A: Because the next day I didn't have anything, everything was sent home already.

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Q: So, was this –

A: So this was because I had to, in the evening of the day of the beginning of the war, I had to go to the party.

Q: So you left **Lithuania** with your party dress on?

A: On me, no –

Q: No, but you had it with you.

A: – something – yeah, but I had it with me, yeah

Q: You – with you, I see, I see.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Oh, this is simply the class.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And here –

Q: Class picture.

A: Yeah. And here is – one moment here –

Q: Is this the gymnasium?

A: Yeah, **Alytau** – **Alytaus** gymnasium.

Q: **Alytaus** gymnasium.

A: And I think that here is – oh, this is my sister **Etta**.

Q: **Etta**, okay.

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A: Yeah. And this is what you can see. This is **[indecipherable]** the one what we wanted to –

Q: Recruit, recruit.

A: Yeah, and where is other – a-a-and this is **Derwinskyter(ph)**.

Q: You said they were Polish, but those sound like very Lithuanian names.

A: Lithuanian names?

Q: Yeah, they – you said these girls were Polish –

A: Yeah, they are Polish.

Q: Polish, but the names sound –

A: **Zigma(ph) – Zigma(ph) Chapolkaytita(ph)**, I don't know.

Q: Okay.

A: And this is **Ona(ph) Derwinskyter(ph)**.

Q: Okay.

A: And this is my friend who died in the first days. She was – that is

Halla(ph).

Q: **Halla(ph)**, your best friend.

A: Yeah, best friend **Boekshitskyter(ph)**.

Q: **Boekshitskyter(ph)**.

A: **Halla(ph) Boekshitskyter(ph)**. And this is a very nice, very good relations with this girl, **Oushileeta(ph)**, **Janie Oushileeta(ph)** and very nice

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looking. And very close I was also with – but we're not – that's me, and that is **Rushenskyter(ph)**. This is now in **Vilnius**. And this is **Pangornis(ph)**, I think. But I remember a little – oh, you see here, **Derwinskyter(ph)**, and this is **Amelia(ph)** **Baltoskonita(ph)**. Now this is a very good friend of mine.

Q: Mm-hm. And this is yourself.

A: Yeah.

Q: Beautiful, beautiful. And this is in 1939 in **Alytaus**. You're beautiful.

A: And this is **Usolita(ph)**, the one which is here in top, on top.

Q: Yeah, this one.

A: And this is **Baltoskonita(ph)**, **Amelia(ph)**. **Baltoskonita(ph)**. Now, she is not here, but this one –

Q: [speaks Lithuanian] E-Etta?

A: **Emma**.

Q: **Emma**. And in send – in 19-fift – '46, a picture from your school days, okay.

A: Yeah. And here is our class, but also very [indecipherable] maybe the first or the second. I-I-I am here, and this is **Boekshitskyter(ph)**, is **Halla(ph)**, and this is **Xena(ph)**, a daughter of a mus – musical teacher.

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And I don't see other Jewish girls here. It was in the end, when the other girls turned out and said to – you and you and you, we were six.

Q: Alytaus gymnasia. [speaks Lithuanian] Shukienna(ph) –

A: Shukienna(ph).

Q: Shukienna(ph).

A: Oh I remember her very well, Shukienna(ph), here she is. And they – it was at the – they were giving when they were ending – they – they were ending and they were giving the key –

Q: Right.

A: – to the next.

Q: Ah, to the next –

A: Yeah, that was – and here is –

Q: That's a school picture as well.

A: Yeah. And here is Lolek(ph), I think, this one. I think so.

Q: And let's see what this says now. This looks like it's –

A: This is a old one.

Q: Yeah.

A: Where it says, in this place in '41 [indecipherable]

Q: September [speaks Lithuanian]

A: [speaks Lithuanian]

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Q: I'm going to translate it.

A: But now is different.

Q: Okay, I'll translate this for the tape. This is a photo of the original monument that was cons-constructed in Soviet times, and it said on its plaque, in this place in '41 – in September 1941, the **Hitler** in – the **Hitler** [indecipherable] occupants and their bourgeois nationalists and – and bourgeois nationalists murdered 1900 wen – men, women and children from the **Serei** town, and its surrounding region.

A: Yeah

Q: Okay.

A: I will give you, here I have all copies for you.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: On simple – on paper.

Q: You know what it could be, the difference, is it says here, **Serei** town and the –

A: **Appealingcue**(ph).

Q: – the **appealingcue**(ph) –

A: And then maybe without **appealingcue**(ph).

Q: **Appeeling**(ph), it could be without appee –

A: It could be, yeah, it could be.

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Q: Yeah.

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah, so this is translated from –

A: Yeah, in this place I translated. Or here, we are on the – see, **Alytaus**,
June '76, 35 years after ending gymnasium.

Q: Oh wow. Oh wow. Look at all these people.

A: That's me.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: That is **Mira**(ph), who is in **Boston**, to whom maybe I will –

Q: She will ta – okay.

A: And this is, he is now in **Israel**, that is my friend, with whom I spend the
first time of – and you know, when I went to –

Q: The first time of what?

A: – to **Kochetayev**, we went there of the morning together, we were put
together on the – we were together even in the farm.

Q: Is this **Fima**(ph)?

A: **Fima**(ph).

Q: Oh, this is **Fima**(ph), who you mentioned, okay.

A: That is **Fima**(ph).

Q: Okay.

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A: But then when I went to **Kochetayev** too, he was not dressed enough, he was afraid, and he went to **Tashkent**. And we kept in touch all the time.

Q: I see, I see. And are any of the pictures of the girls who were in the other photographs in here too? No?

A: Wha-What?

Q: Y-You have in here, you have these – these girls here, are they in here too?

A: If they came. Just a moment. Maybe not everybody came. There are some, but I don't see here **Derwinskyter**(ph) – I don't see some of them.

Derwinskyter. Little.

Q: Let's see from here. Maybe not, maybe not.

A: Not everybody came, but many I saw and it was very nice to see them.

What this is, I think this is **Rozenskyter**. And here –

Q: She is.

A: She is.

Q: So it is, so it is.

A: And here we made a – the same day we made this picture
[indecipherable] with us, so that's him. And this is the new one.

Q: The new one, but it's not very clear.

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A: It's not clear, but in the material of **Hanela(ph) Slovatitsky(ph)**, which I will make a copy for you.

Q: Okay.

A: Because it's interesting written. This is written and it is already 953, I cannot see if – here is the number.

Q: No, it's not clear.

A: Impossible.

Q: It's not clear. The photo is blurred.

A: These two women, these two women, they are still alive. I don't know if this baby – for the last two weeks, I talk to **Israel** very often, th – talk to them. They are **Sereia(ph)**, from **Serei**, and they went to see the new and send it to me.

Q: I see.

A: This is the house in which my parents lived the time, the four months before they were taken to the **amatų mokykla**.

Q: I see, before they were taken to the vocational school.

A: Yeah. This is a new, and this is a old one.

Q: Ah yes, I see.

A: And this is a very interesting – this is my –

Q: Oh, I see, yes.

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A: You see?

Q: It says hotel, **viešbutis**.

A: **Viešbutis**.

Q: And then it says **Finkelo(ph)**.

A: Yeah, finke –

Q: Somebody **[indecipherable]**

A: – the brother – the brother of – who died.

Q: Yes.

A: That was on his name.

Q: So it's –

A: He was **Moishe M**.

Q: **Moishe M**.

A: I don't see if it is **M**.

Q: It could be, but it's not clear. One would have to m-make it a larger picture.

A: Yeah. And then – can you read what is here **[indecipherable]**

Q: Let me try, because my eyesight also isn't good, but let's see. It says

[speaks Lithuanian] Finkelina(ph), I – and I can't read this, so this means the dentist, Mrs. **Finkelos(ph) – Finkelina(ph) –**

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A: **Finkelina**(ph), that she came, because that was the time when they came back to **Serei**.

Q: I see.

A: And they put a advertisement –

Q: A little – of just –

A: – that she is a **[indecipherable]** not **[indecipherable]**

Q: We – if we were to make this larger, we'd see – and who are these people who are on the front stoops?

A: I think that – I – I cannot recognize them, but I think that one of them is the son who died, who was killed.

Q: Yeah.

A: And this – in '88, we visited **Moscow**.

Q: And then you went to **Lithuania**.

A: And then we went to **Lithuania**, and we went – that is **Serei**, the church.

And this is –

Q: Mm-hm. The church, or the synagogue?

A: No, that is the church.

Q: It's the church, okay.

A: Yeah. The synagogue, I have the synagogue, but the synagogue is where – that is a church. And is very close to the **ri-rinkos gat** – plaza.

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Q: In the **turgaus gat** – yeah, the – the market square.

A: **Turgaus gat** – yeah. That's me, and that is my best friend, he died already. But he wanted to be buried in the place in **Alytaus** where all the people were –

Q: Killed?

A: – who were killed, yeah, and he did it.

Q: Oh, did they?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I have a special envelope with his – when he was buried.

Q: Oh my.

A: Yeah.

Q: And this is your daughter?

A: That is his daughter.

Q: Daughter, I see.

A: His daughter, and that is the wife of **Fima(ph)**, and this is the one who took me to the **Kom** –

Q: Ah, the one who recruited you to the **Komsomol**.

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: What's his name?

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A: **David. Davide**(ph), and last name I forgot. I knew his father and mother, we were on one – one – when we were – went by the truck, they were on the truck.

Q: Oh, I see, okay.

A: They're now gone, but he is in **Israel. Kavarski**(ph).

Q: **Karvarski**(ph).

A: Yeah.

Q: **David Kavarski**(ph).

A: **David Kavarski**(ph).

Q: Very interesting.

A: Oh here [**indecipherable**] to see the [**indecipherable**]. That is my – my sister when she was a girl.

Q: Oh, she was so pretty

A: Yeah. And that's me.

Q: As children.

A: Now can – can you understand why?

Q: Of course.

A: No, nobody can understand. That's me.

Q: And who's this? This is you.

A: Me, yeah.

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Q: I would sa – I – these are lovely pictures, lovely pictures.

A: I'll give you all this.

Q: And this is th – here, right here, what's this? Ah, these are copies?

A: Yeah.

Q: Copies, okay.

A: Ah this we were coming, what – how it looks generally. This is without the memorial –

Q: Yes.

A: – somewhere, but we were sitting, myself and my cousin who is in **Israel** now, like I told you already, in –

Q: Bad shape.

A: – in bad shape, yeah. This I am in **Serei**, and this I am in **Serei**.

Q: And this is – it looks like it's in the 60s, yeah, '66 – 1966.

A: **Serei, Serei, Serei**. Oh, this is everything.

Q: And yet, you went every single year.

A: And you know that I am on the internet.

Q: Are you? Okay.

A: Yeah, somebody put – but there is one mistake, they put that my grandmother's date of her birth, or date of when she died with a mistake

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and I went – wanted so much to fix it. I still – it stays like not done, but it's in my list.

Q: Yes, okay, okay. More of **Serei** in 1966. There's open fields, and village.

A: Yeah, this is all – all – all – all – all the same, all the sa – oh, that's how it looks. And the other girl, who was later, she says that our cemetery is – looks like the best. Oh, you can't –

Q: Thank you very much, I'll take a look at this.

Conclusion of Interview