

## Transcript:

Olga Borochina

A32

38m

Interviewer: What we are going to do is just say you know the process and...I don't know. I think it is easier if you translate or not.

Interpreter: She said she understand everything.

Interviewer: OK. If you have any questions, she can ask. We're going to talk a little bit about pre-war life.

Olga Borochina: My life.

Interviewer: Your life before the war. We're going to talk about...are you a ghetto survivor?

Olga Borochina: In the ghetto.

Interviewer: OK. We are going to talk about the ghetto. We are going to talk a little bit about what happened to your family. We are going to talk a little bit about liberation, and then we are going to talk about after the war. Tell me first what year you were born.

Olga Borochina: Yes. I was born in the city of [unintelligible 0:00:55.2], 1927.

Interviewer: 1927?

Olga Borochina: Yes. I was born in 1927 in [unintelligible 0:01:06.4]. My father was a doctor. My mother was a nurse. I live with my sister in [unintelligible 0:01:13.5]. In 1939, my father was...go to war of Finlandia, Finland.

[INTERRUPTION 0:01:31.2 TO 0:01:42.5]

Olga Borochina: And he was a military doctor. In 1941, when they begin this war. Very, very soon, maybe after three weeks, when Germany came in [unintelligible 0:01:56.6]. Very, very soon, beginning of the war, 1941.

Interviewer: Let's go back a few years.

Olga Borochina: OK.

Interviewer: You're from the Ukraine. Right?

Olga Borochina: Yes, from Ukraine. I lived in the city. I study in school. This is the city.

Interviewer: OK. A couple of the survivors we've interviewed from the Ukraine have said they remember not very much anti-Semitism in a lot of community where they lived. Was that your experience, too?

Olga Borochina: No. It is true. There was not anti-Semitism, no. Nobody.

Interviewer: When did you first encounter that there were problems?

Olga Borochina: When the Germans came to us--

Interviewer: That was the first time you ever--

Olga Borochina: Yes. I know.

Interviewer: Tell me about that day.

Olga Borochina: When we heard about this war has done...we know Jewish people in Poland, what this Germany made to Jewish people in Poland, we know about this. And we know we are Jewish, my father was in the war and I, my mother and my sister, we will go to Russia. You understand. To Moscow. But the train station, there are so many, many people go away.

Interpreter: They were not able to get on the train.

Olga Borochina: Did not able to get. Only two, three families. They ordered...again, the horse and buggy, and we put some clothes, but this wagon, it was five family, and we go to walk. You understand? But, we go in small city [unintelligible 0:04:44.9]. I can show the city. It is OK. After five days, then we go from [unintelligible 0:04:54.1] to the city, there are Germans come in the city.

Interpreter: Occupied.

Olga Borochina: Occupied. And we find it [unintelligible 0:05:05.5] the Germans go very, very soon, they go. When we came in the city, Germany, they began to kill the Jews. The old Jews with beards. The old rabbis from city with the beard, the religious would carry bread and salt. They were welcoming the Germans.

Interviewer: The rabbis were, why is that?

Olga Borochina: They thinking you go with bread. You have soft. You'll not kill.

Interpreter: They wanted to soften the people. They wanted to say they're welcoming them so they would not kill them.

Interviewer: How did the Germans respond?

Olga Borochina: They shaved their beard. They were putting them on the ground and they were eating dirt. [unintelligible 0:06:20.8] small city of [unintelligible 0:06:25.3]. You understand?

Interviewer: Do you remember seeing that?

Olga Borochina: Yes.

Interviewer: We didn't go out of the city. We look from the window. We look this. You understand?

Interpreter: We looked through the window.

Olga Borochina: We looked on the windows. And after this, two people, they killed.

Interviewer: What did you think was happening?

Olga Borochina: What a very silly question. We were Jewish. They were Germans.

Interviewer: You were children? You were children.

Olga Borochina: Children, no. It is Germany. They are thinking that Jewish are not people. The Jewish is--

Interviewer: As a child, though, what did you think was happening?

Olga Borochina: Child...I was 12 years old. It is not a child. Do you understand? We know what is German. We know about the Poland, what they make the Jewish in Poland. We know about this, but we were thinking maybe, maybe, maybe, maybe...and after these two people -- they killed. You see this very thing? Do you understand our feeling? And we were thinking that we will go back to [unintelligible 0:07:40.2], and I was with my mother, my sister and many people who came with these wagon to [unintelligible 0:07:49.2]. They lost this package, and every night they go back to [unintelligible 0:07:55.6]. At night, we go at night, and they will be sitting in the field. You understand? When you go this way, you cry in Ukraine. When you came early in the morning, they give some milk, they give some bread, and they help us. Five days, we go to [unintelligible 0:08:29.0] and we came in [unintelligible 0:08:30.0]. When we came in our home, our home was destroyed. We found nothing. Our home was empty. But, every Jewish family lost his home. Christian who lived in our city, they go in this empty home and they take away everything. And we came in [unintelligible 0:09:00.0] and we have nothing. After one week, maybe...after one week, we received—

Interpreter: It's like a memo.

Olga Borochina: Every Jewish must go. Star of David on their clothing, on their arm or on the chest. On every house, you also supposed to have the Star of David.

Interviewer: Did you comply?

Olga Borochina: This question. (laughs) No. They will kill.

Interviewer: No. We had some survivors that lived undercover. I was wondering if you had done that. You had actually lived as Jews.

Olga Borochina: No, we couldn't.

Interviewer: OK. You were 12 years old.

Olga Borochina: Yes, and my sister was two years old as me.

Interviewer: A couple of years.

Olga Borochina: Yes.

Interviewer: A couple of years older.

Olga Borochina: Yes, two years.

Interviewer: She was 14.

Olga Borochina: Yes. [unintelligible 0:10:27.6]. All the Jewish people must walk. We did not walk on the sidewalk. We were not allowed to walk on a sidewalk. We have to walk on the street. We were not allowed to look into any kind of stores [unintelligible 0:10:54.6].

Interviewer: And this was before the ghetto?

Olga Borochina: Before the ghetto. But it was Christian and Jewish, Christian and Jewish, Christian and Jewish and they must know who is Christian, who is Jewish.

Interviewer: How were your Christian neighbors treating you?

Olga Borochina: They changed.

Interviewer: Do you remember them being kinder before and they changed? Or, were they always a little distant?

Olga Borochina: They were protecting themselves, and they felt like if they will help the Jews, they would be exterminated as the Jews.

Interviewer: Were there any non-Christian neighbors that you remember...I mean, excuse me, non-Jewish neighbors that you remember that tried to help?

Olga Borochina: Yes.

Interviewer: Tell me about it.

Interpreter: These people...when they were built...created the ghetto everybody were moved out. They made a big wall in the middle of the city.

Olga Borochina: Not in the middle.

Interpreter: On a part, one-third of the city.

Olga Borochina: Yes.

Interpreter: On that side were the Jews. Oh, on the same territory were Russians and Jews.

Interviewer: You mean there were Russian Jews and Ukrainian Jews together.

Olga Borochina: No, no, no.

Interpreter: Russian, not Jews.

Olga Borochina: No, no. Christians.

Interviewer: OK. Christians.

Interpreter: Christians and non-Jewish. They were living in their house. They will not let the Jews in the house. So, since the non-Jews were living already in the houses and areas were occupied, the only places the Jews could stay is in the barn or farmhouses, horse houses.

Olga Borochina: It is best. It is best. You understand?

Interpreter: We were living in a farmhouse, in the barn with goats.

Interviewer: She looks at that as fortunate.

Olga Borochina: Of course. Of course because we didn't have a place to go. We had...it was a prison there. The Jews were occupying the prison. In the farmhouse where she lived with her grandparents, her mother and sister. Five people lived in the barn.

Interviewer: Where was your father?

Olga Borochina: In 1931 was father a doctor and he went to army, a doctor military.

Interpreter: Oh, her father was a military doctor.

Olga Borochina: And he was in this war, too.

Interpreter: Surgeon in military.

Interviewer: From 1931 through 1940.

Olga Borochina: No, from '39. It was Finlandia.

Interpreter: Oh, Finland. Well, the war in 1939 was the Finland War.

Olga Borochina: Russia beat Finland.

Interpreter: Russia beat Finland.

Olga Borochina: [unintelligible 0:15:12.3]. You remember this?

Interpreter: He died in the war.

Olga Borochina: He was killed.

Interpreter: What year did he die?

Olga Borochina: She doesn't have any information. She knows after the war, they were notified that he was killed.

Interviewer: She was living with her sister and her mother.

Olga Borochina: Yes, mother and father and grandmother and grandfather.

Interviewer: Help me understand this again. She was in the farmhouse with her mother.

Interpreter: Grandparents, the mother, the sister and her.

Olga Borochina: Yes.

Interviewer: And her. OK.

Interpreter: It was a very cold winter. We didn't have any heat. I don't know. Like the Indian would have in their...like a pipe was going out through the window.

Olga Borochina: In the window.

Interviewer: Like a wood burning stove?

Interpreter: That's very difficult to translate. Actually, waste what they could find, they burned, just to produce heat.

Interviewer: OK. That's OK. That was good.

Interpreter: Good enough?

Interviewer: Yeah, very good. This was in the ghetto?

Interpreter: In the ghetto, in a barn. Inside of the building was snow [unintelligible 0:17:41.9] and the grandparents froze to death. She said it was very difficult and my grandparents froze to death and nothing, the younger people, could do to save them. Eight o'clock in the morning, the people were supposed to go out to go to work, to clean up the snow and the people who froze during the night were taken out to the gate, and in the morning, the horse and buggy would drive by and pick up the dead who were lying on the ground by the gate. This is a disease and I don't even in English language doesn't exist. This is the disease what people get when they have too many lice, head lice. I don't know if a disease like this even exists in English language because they didn't have any soap and the living condition was unbelievable, and people were dying because they didn't have any running water. They were bringing water with buckets.

Interviewer: And this is what people had? It's what other people had?

Interpreter: Everybody had, lice, because they shared pillows. They shared clothes.

Interviewer: Everybody had the disease? That's what I'm asking.

Interpreter: Oh, no, no. People who had the disease died.

Interviewer: Is she saying that what her grandparents died of?

Interpreter: Some other people would die from disease. They were just starved to death and froze to death. Three years. Her mom and her sister worked.

Interviewer: What did they do?

Interpreter: They were washing the police station. They were cleaning up cafeterias. [Unintelligible 0:20:38.6] in this job they were able to get their food and they would be able to take the potato peels and were able to bring, go home, for the rest of the family to eat. It was very difficult. Also, was the

fear of taken away to concentration camp and just because they were away from the main street, they were able to survive and this is how they survived, stayed away from concentration camps

Interviewer: She stayed in the camp all day. She didn't work. What did you do during the day?

Interpreter: People work like farmer markets. She was able to carry water and buckets and for that people were exchanging food, vegetables, and she was able to pick up farms and gardens and help people out and this is how. A mill...she was working in a mill.

Olga Borochnina: Not working. I go to mill and ask people give me some corn.

Interpreter: Soup...she was going to the mill and also begging for people to give her some food and she was taken at home and this is how she was making. Her mom swelled up from hunger. Her feet were swollen. Before the liberation, they had a rumor. A van with a gas chamber was coming and will kill the survivors. They dig a hole and they sit in a hole waiting for the liberation because they didn't know if this was a rumor or the truth, and this is how they got liberated. This is how the liberation goes.

Interviewer: Tell me about liberation day.

Interpreter: This is what she was talking about.

Interviewer: Oh, this is actually on the day?

Interpreter: On the day of the liberation. They sat in a hole for three days.

Interviewer: For three days. So, they've heard the rumor that the Russians were coming. They dug a hole because they were afraid of the mobile extermination units. So, at the same time, they heard that there was liberation because of the liberation there were the mobile gas chambers. OK. I got all this right.

Interpreter: And then when she heard the bombing, this is when they got out from the holes.

Interviewer: Because they knew they were safe.

Interpreter: The military was moving.

Interviewer: Tell me about when you realized that you were free.

Interpreter: We got out from the hole. We went to look for the places we used to live to find a place to live. The place where we used to live was occupied.

Interpreter: Occupied by the Russians, but we also had a place. We were very starved. This is a place like an office with the military where people whose family members in military could go for help, and she and her sister were put in the hospital for two weeks.

Interviewer: What about your mother?

Interpreter: She was with them. Nobody were able to give them their age because of the level of starvation.

Interviewer: Couldn't give their age?

Interpreter: You know, they look much younger because of starvation and under nourishment for that many years.

Interviewer: Right. So, no one could guess how old they were.

Interpreter: Not developed, I guess.

Interviewer: How long were they in the hospital?

Interpreter: Two weeks.

Olga Borochina: Two weeks. There were very many people must be going to the hospital. [unintelligible 0:27:19.9].

Interpreter: We didn't have anything, and we started looking for...we found chair and a table.

Interviewer: I know you said their home was occupied. Did they finally leave?

Interpreter: No. They found a place.

Interviewer: They got their home again.

Interpreter: No, they never got...no.

Olga Borochina: Home...there were people, Christian people.

Interpreter: They occupied so they didn't—

Olga Borochina: It is not my home. In Russia, nobody have owned a home. Every home, it was--

Interpreter: The live in apartments, government-owned apartments.

Interviewer: So they found a home.

Interpreter: An apartment.

Interviewer: An apartment.

Olga Borochina: An apartment.

Interviewer: And then what happened. Tell me after the...how were you able to get money? Did your mom go back to work?

Olga Borochina: Yes. No.

Interpreter: We never had a hospital. The hospital was destroyed.

Interviewer:

Olga Borochina: The hospital, it is only...

Interpreter: She was trying to explain what in her mind, it's just that the hospital is for military. Clinics for...so, in United States, a hospital is a hospital. It's a military hospital or regular hospital. They started to look for the father. They were notified in the mail that he was killed. This is when the government started paying them for the years of service in his death. We didn't go to school. We didn't study during the time, so we went back to school.

Interpreter: No. Before the war, we didn't know anti-Semitism existed.

Olga Borochina: No, after this war...

Interviewer: What brought her into America?

Interpreter: They came to United States 10 years ago. The lady who was here with her husband--

Interviewer: Raisa.

Interpreter: They are relatives.

Interviewer: Were they in the same ghetto?

Interpreter: They are relatives.

Interviewer: Was she in the ghetto with her family?

Olga Borochina: In 1951, I made it.

Interpreter: No.

Interviewer: You came to America. You came to Memphis 10 years ago.

Olga Borochina: I worked as a doctor.

Interpreter: She was working as a doctor.

Olga Borochina: Twenty-four years.

Interviewer: What kind of doctor?

Olga Borochina: Internist.

Interpreter: Internal.

Olga Borochina: I was home doctor. I have 2,000 people. It was my part of city and I was a doctor. I was a good doctor. I have a organ for a good doctor, but I have a nurse with me. It was a nurse. This nurse is a Christian. I was a Jewish. In [unintelligible 0:33:22.5] begin anti-Semitism and in my city began anti-Semitism. You understand? My children want to go to America. They were good engineers and they cannot find a good work. When you must have a good work, you must be a communist. A Jewish cannot be communist. A Jewish cannot be a communist, no. When you are not communist, you'll not receive a good work. You have very small salary. It is a very big problem this house, this apartment. The children are married.

Interviewer: Does she talk to her children or grandchildren about what happened?

Olga Borochina: What I receive is letter from...yes, they know everything.

Interpreter: How many grandchildren you have?

Olga Borochina: Two, two. [unintelligible 0:35:16.2] I must have \$500. It is very expensive for me.

Interviewer: Are you going to go?

Olga Borochina: No. This \$500, I must spend from this. It is not free. When is this going to be free?

[unintelligible 0:35:32.4]

Interpreter: Washington DC? All right.

Interviewer: When you think about what happened, what do you want people to know?

Interpreter: The most important is peace. I don't want a war. The difference between the Muslims and Christians, and Jews will always exist but people have to believe in God and follow God's rules and believe Him.

Interviewer: Did you believe God helped you in the ghetto?

Olga Borochina: Yes. Everybody has gotten your heart. When you believe, He helps you, but you do not believe, he will not help you.

Interpreter: Did you wonder where He was when you were in the ghetto?

Interviewer: She said she became religious in United States.

Olga Borochina: Nobody...from Russian people, nobody in my age be religious.

Interviewer: That's not true, but I'm just an interpreter.

Interviewer: OK. Is there anything you'd like to add?

Interviewer: She said that's it.