

Transcript:

Yakov and Raisa Kreymerman (w/interpreter)

A30-A31

29m

Interviewer: Were you together? Were you married in like...you were children in the ghetto, right?

Yakov: No.

Raisa: I was five and he was eight.

Interviewer: No, no. I mean were you together...I didn't mean married in the ghetto. I mean married in Ukraine.

Raisa: Ukraine, yeah.

Interpreter: They got married after the war.

Interviewer: After the war. Were you together in the ghetto?

Yakov: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: You were also in the ghetto?

Raisa: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK. We need to talk to her, too.

Interviewer: Let her know we are going to do a slight change. We're going to interview them both if that's OK, and I'll go double fast.

Interpreter: Oh, no. She said she was not in the ghetto.

Interviewer: Oh, not in the ghetto. OK. I was going to say we don't have your name. OK. Tell me a little bit about your life before the ghetto. I need information about your parents, your family.

Yakov: He was born April 15, 1933.

Interviewer: 1933. Ukraine.

Yakov: [Unintelligible 0:01:41.8], the same city. Ukraine.

Interviewer: Brothers and sisters?

Yakov: I had a brother and a sister.

Interviewer: Parents? What did your father do?

Yakov: He was a bookkeeper.

Interviewer: Bookkeeper. Mother stayed home?

Yakov: Homemaker.

Interviewer: Homemaker. She worked. Tell me the last two...I'll speak slow because I want to say a statement first. The last two survivors we interviewed from the Ukraine said they noticed no anti-Semitism before war. Was that also your experience?

Yakov: He was eight years old and he did not experience on himself.

Interviewer: Are there kids being mean to him or calling him names?

Yakov: I don't remember when the war started, but the war didn't come to our hometown. They were screaming, "Dirty Jew." As a child, he remembers that. Yes.

Interviewer: So, you do remember the anti-Semitism. Do you remember what your mom and dad had said to you about what was happening?

Yakov: The parents talk between them but they were not explaining. As an eight-year-old child, he did not felt. His father went to fight the war.

Interviewer: As a Russian soldier.

Interpreter: As a Russian soldier, yeah.

Yakov: And his sister went to fight the war.

Interviewer: Sister as a soldier?

Yakov: She was a nurse...as a nurse.

Interviewer: Was his father in the war as a soldier?

Yakov: He was a soldier. He went as far as Vienna, Austria, in Budapest, and then he got wounded in the war and he came back.

Interviewer: So, he did not liberate the camps. His father, actually, was not a liberator.

Yakov: No, he was not.

Interviewer: Could have been.

Interpreter: He could, of course.

Interviewer: He could have been. Tell me about life in the ghetto.

Yakov: My younger brother and I, we moved to [unintelligible 0:05:36.4], 30 km because my grandmother lived there, and we moved up, and the military was moving behind us, and this is where the army was moving through the city.

Interviewer: By July 1941, Poland was invaded, two, three years by now. Had you heard anything about what went on in [unintelligible 0:06:16.7]?

Yakov: No. We had no information.

Interviewer: Did you know anything about what was happening in Germany?

Interpreter: The way he explained, the only thing they heard what the German army, Hitler, attacked Russia, they absolutely cut out everybody outside world and the local people turned against them and the local people were kind of robbing and killing and stealing.

Interviewer: Survivors have said that they were more betrayed by their countrymen than by the Nazis.

Yakov: Local police in the ghetto and he was in the ghetto in [unintelligible 0:08:11.6]. He moved to [unintelligible 0:08:16.5] and this is where there was crime, the local policemen, they are the ones who were harming the Jews.

Interviewer: The local police, the non-Nazis.

Yakov: The Germans were just killing and the local were robbing and raping and everything.

Raisa: Sixteen miles away where her family was from, the Germans killed her family. Three hundred twenty-six people were killed in the massive grave. She was five years when all 326 people and immediate family, her parents...no grandparents.

Interpreter: He said you're starting something telling new story and we are running out of time. She was not in the ghetto.

Interviewer: That's OK. She still is a survivor. Tell him that we'll talk to him and if we have a few more minutes, we'll talk to his wife, if that's OK.

Interpreter: OK.

Interviewer: Tell me what you remember most about the ghetto.

Yakov: Hunger, cold, hunger, hunger. We were eating rotten potatoes and rotten vegetables. The city where they were staying in their grandmother's house, they were kicked out of the house and they moved into a farmhouse like a barn, in the ghetto, so they stayed in the barn, and the German soldiers stayed in the house. They were in the area but they were in a barn.

Interviewer: How did you get [unintelligible 0:11:21.1]?

Raisa: It's just because his grandfather was religious Jew. One of the soldiers grabbed one of her frying pan and put a piece of bacon and started frying the bacon on her pan. And just because she was trying to protect her property, she almost got shot, and just by--

Interviewer: This was his grandmother.

Interpreter: His grandmother.

Yakov: With war, we couldn't go to school.

Interviewer: Where did they get the food from?

Yakov: They were working in a farm and the mother was able to exchange. This is the food we were able to eat. He was working in a beauty salon sweeping the floors, and this is how he was getting his food, eight years old.

Interviewer: Is there anybody in the ghetto that you remember beside your family? Anybody that helped or did anything different?

Yakov: The people who just get out of the ghetto were shot and a lot of the people and women he remembered, people were killed because...of wired fence. If people were trying to get out, they were shot by the Germans.

Interviewer: Tell me about liberation.

Yakov: When the regular German army was moving out, a lot of people were shot on the list because when the German military were moving out, they were shooting people in the ghetto. That was 1944.

Interviewer: You were in the ghetto three years. Did your family survive?

Yakov: After my father was wounded during the war and he came back [unintelligible 0:15:06.3]. We didn't hear anything for five years until 1945 and then my sister came back.

Interviewer: And where was your sister?

Yakov: She lives in Beersheba.

Interviewer: [unintelligible 0:15:29.5]

Interpreter: She was in a train, hospital in a train, moving...the nurse.

Interviewer: She was on like a mobile M.A.S.H. unit.

Yakov: She is 10 years. She is 10 years older than he is.

Interviewer: And she was a nurse during the war, so she was never in the ghetto.

Interpreter: No.

Yakov: She was able to go back to university and finish college after the war and she was working as a teacher.

Interviewer: Where did you go after liberation?

Yakov: We went back home [unintelligible 0:16:31.4].

Interviewer: Was your home intact?

Yakov: No. It was empty. Everything was destroyed.

Interviewer: Destroyed by the German soldiers?

Yakov: Both, locals and the Germans. No, no Germans.

Interviewer: Did his family sustain any beatings?

Yakov: Very bad.

Interviewer: Very bad beatings.

Yakov: Yes. My mother was bruised up, abused.

Interviewer: By soldiers, by guards.

Yakov: The local police.

Interviewer: The local police were worse to you than the Nazis. Is that what you were saying?

Yakov: The Germans were not abusive. Germans were killing. The local were abusive.

Interviewer: Were they abusive before the war broke out?

Yakov: They were smiling and were very nice.

Interpreter: What they were trying to say it was not everybody was bad. Some people were bad before and after and during.

Interviewer: When your grandchildren, your twin girls will grow and ask you what happened, when they get older and ask you what happened, what do you tell them?

Yakov: They already asked the question. They already came and asked questions and he was already explaining to them what happened during that time. They wanted to know.

Interviewer: How do you explain the hate? The evil?

Yakov: This is very difficult?

Interviewer: How do you explain the hatred?

Yakov: That's very nice. I'm teaching them love and the goodness of the heart, not hate. That's nice.

Interviewer: Do they wonder about the evil?

Yakov: They went back to school and, evidently part of the homework, explaining what kind of problems their grandparents had during the holocaust. This is synagogue, Jewish synagogue. They're twins but they are in different classes and different grades. Just because they are twins, they separated them.

Interviewer: What do you want people to know about what happened?

Yakov: He doesn't not want for people to experience the things what they experienced in their life and he want peace in the world.

Interviewer: Would you like to add anything?

Yakov: His brother died in Tel Aviv last year, and his sister lives in Beersheba.

Interviewer: How did his brother died?

Yakov: Heart attack.

Interviewer: Would you like to add anything else?

Yakov: She got older...during the war, she got some injuries, and now she is with a walker. His sister. He wants for people to love each other and he want peace in the world. He wants for people to be happy and satisfied. He has four grand babies, four granddaughters. Two live in New York and two in Memphis.

Interpreter: Which part of New York?

Yakov: Queens, New York.

Male: That's where I was born. Queens.

Interpreter: Queens, New York.

Interviewer: Could we take a few minutes and speak to your wife?

Yakov: Yeah, you're more than welcome.

Interviewer: Tell me first what is your full name.

Raisa: Raisa. R-A-I-S-A.

Interpreter: I am very close with her brother but I never met her. When she said [unintelligible 0:23:29.4], I was very surprised.

Interviewer: Could we talk for a couple of minutes and take your portrait?

Interpreter: She said yes.

Interviewer: Tell me a little about...you were not in the ghetto. Tell me about your family. What happened?

Raisa: Her father went to fight the war as a soldier.

Interviewer: Where is she from?

Raisa: [Unintelligible 0:24:06.9]. They were neighbors.

Interviewer: Ukraine.

Yakov: Ukraine, yeah.

Raisa: She was able to move, get on a train, she and her mother. Her brother was two years old, so she, her mother and her brother went to Syberia and so she didn't have any problems.

Interviewer: So, your mother and your brother, and her, went to Syberia, the rest of her family.

Raisa: Yes. The rest of the mothers, the family, stayed.

Interviewer: What year did she leave for Syberia.

Raisa: 1941.

Interviewer: In 1941. How did you get to Syberia? How were you able to leave?

Interpreter: By train.

Interviewer: No. How was she able to get papers to leave? Does she remember?

Interpreter: No. It's the same. You get in a train and go.

Interviewer: She can go. So, she missed the ghetto.

Interpreter: She missed the ghetto.

Raisa: It was a beautiful place.

Interpreter: I have a question about that, and I guess, I could I ask you.

Interviewer: How come everyone didn't go to Syberia then?

Raisa: Because they were not able to get any kind of transportation. They were getting in a horse and buggy. And train, it took us three months to get there.

Interviewer: Three months to get to Syberia.

Interpreter: To get to Syberia before they arrive.

Interviewer: She was how old at this time? What year were you born?

Raisa: Five years.

Interviewer: She was born in 1936. Where was your father?

Raisa: He actually went to Berlin.

Interviewer: He went to Berlin because--

Interpreter: No, no, with the military. He liberated Berlin.

Interviewer: Her father liberated Berlin. Her father was Jewish Russian soldier who liberated Berlin. Did he liberate any camps in Germany?

Raisa: No. He was a soldier in the military. He never went to concentration camps. No. Just regular military.

Interviewer: When?

Raisa: 1945 to the end of the war, he was in Germany.

Interviewer: So, he was in the service while you were in Syberia? Was any of your family taken to a camp?

Raisa: But all of her family...all of her family, everyone of her relatives were shot by the Germans.

Interviewer: In the ghetto.

Raisa: In the ghetto.

Interviewer: The only survivors were you, your mother, father and brother.

[INTERRUPTION 0:28:28.9 TO 0:28:36.3]