







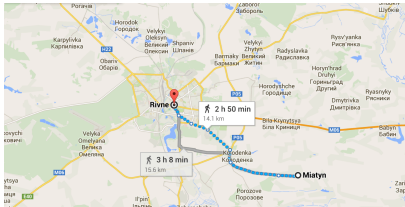
Return to Rivne: A Holocaust story
Two mothers and their daughters on the run. The family that took them in.

English		
00:37 Shelly: My name is Shelly Weiner, I never had a childhood, I never had a friend and I never had a toy.		
00:47 Raya: And, uhm, my name is Raya Kishnemer and my childhood was as bad as it could be. I never had friends, I never had toys, I didn't go to school before the war. The only friend and, uh, to play with is my cousin Shelly.		
01:16 Shelly: I was born in the city of Rovno. My father was a businessman, my mother had a grocery store that she ran from the bottom of our house, she...		

		
<p>had it set up and I had a very happy childhood before the war.</p>		
<p>My grandfather spoiled me terribly.</p>		
<p>He would take me to his house and put me on the table and I could do whatever I wanted: kick the dishes, dance; I do have those memories.</p>		
<p>Raya: I was born in Rovno too, but I lived in a village called Miatyn , which was, uh, five, six kilometers from Rovno. My parents had a little business in that village, uhm, they were producing lime and selling it. They did have livestock, which my mother was taking care of.</p>		
<p>My childhood was really nice, I had a lot of girlfriends, especially in the summer when the Roma would come into the woods, I would play with the Roma girls and</p>		

we did have a wonderful time living in that village.		
Shelly: My first memories of the Germans is as follows: They came into our town and immediately they started passing laws against – what Jews could and couldn't do. And one of the laws that they passed is that they wanted all the males, all the man to report for relocation work duty.		
My grandfather had a suspicion that this was not really where they were taking the men. So uh, he lived next door and he created a hiding place in my mother's place for all the men.		
He had seven sons and my mother had brothers and in-laws and all the men would spend the day there hiding and then they'd come out for the midday meal.		
Shelly: My cousin Raya and I would play outside in the yard and we were told that if we saw the Nazis, they were called Brownshirts, coming down the street, to come in and tell the adults.		
Shelly: And one day we were playing out there and we saw a jeep with four of these men, in the Brownshirt uniforms, stopping at our neighbors, we ran in and told the adults. All the men ran back to the hiding place, the women cleaned up but my uncle, Raya's father, remained.		
The next thing I remember is that these men burst in, they locked the door and they wouldn't let us leave that room and they proceeded to beat my uncle,		
Raya: And I was screaming seeing that beating of my father. So they threw us out of the room, and uhm, they, uh, squeezed me in between a wall and a kitchen		
Shelly: The next thing that happened is that my mother got us to the village of Miatyn		

<p>...this was after they had the massacre in Rovno and they killed 17500 Jews in three days and my entire family was killed in that massacre: my grandfather, my uncles, my aunts and my cousins.</p>		
<p>The only person that survived was my father, he was taken to Russia in the army.</p>		
<p>Raya: My mother had this premonition that something is going to happen in the city and she wanted to go back to the village.</p>		
<p>So, at the time the city was already surrounded by Germans. My mother, I and my father went to the outskirts of the city and my father decided to go back. For some reason he was very scared that the Germans will catch us.</p>		

<p>Raya: My mother knew a lot of wooden trails and she was trying to persuade my father that we can do it, we can get out of the city and get the village but he didn't want it.</p>		
<p>He, uh, the only thing he had is his passport, he gave it to her and le-and went back to the city. I and my mother by foot went through the woods and came to the village unharmed</p>		
<p>Raya: The passport is the only thing that I have of my father and this is the only memory that I have. His picture and his passport...</p>		
<p>Raya: The next day my mother decided to go to the city and see what's going on there. Where's my father, where is the whole family and she came there, nobody was there.</p>		
<p>And people were telling that all the Jews were taken out of the city to a little place called Sosenki and they were all killed.</p>		
<p>So my mother went to that place of killing, of the massacre and she saw that the Ukrainian police was there, the Germans were there. And people, especially the police, they were taking all the pricey possessions that the people brought over there, putting them on the wagons and taking home.</p>		

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Raya: So then she knew that all our family is killed. And uh, she was horrified and with that she came back to the village and told us the whole story, that now nobody is left but the four of us: Shelly, her mother, I, and, my mother.







pause



Shelly: Natalia and Nikinor Palashuk made a hiding place for us in their barn above- where they kept the straw and hay.



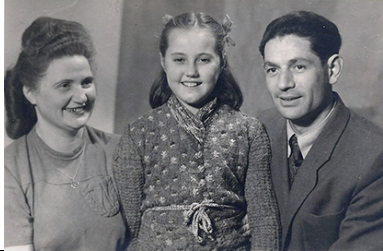

<p>I remember standing there and watching them put it on the uhm, space where they kept that and they filled that up until they left a small space for the four of us to sit down, to lie down but we couldn't really stand up. We were at the back of the barn where they have some eaves that you can look out. That was the only light that we had and the only air that we had</p>		
<p>And as a little girl I would <u><i>stand by that and look at the yard and</i></u> tell my mother "please, please, please let me go out and play with the chicken and uh the kitty cats. They can walk around there but I can't."</p>		
<p>Raya: The people that hid us, I was a little older than Shelly so I have more memories. Natalia and her husband, this family, they had five children. They had one girl and four sons.</p>		
<p>cut</p>		



<p>Shelly: The only thing I know about Netalia and Nikanor is that he would be the one, well they took turns bringing us the food and, --- our biggest problem were the rats and the mice and the lice. So, uh, we had a blanket. Once a month she took our clothes and we wrapped in the blankets. And they were rough blankets. And she would put them in the oven to kill the lice.</p>		
<p>Shelly: The thing that I remember about the hiding in the barn was that Raya and I would play with the straw. We would make animals out of the straw, we would make dolls, those were the only toys we had and our mothers would tell us stories. That is how we passed the time away. That I can remember.</p>		
<p>Shelly: All together I think we were in the barn maybe 20 months.</p>		
<p>Shelly: I think the scariest night of my life was, when Nikanor came up and told our mothers that they were coming for us. They knew we were there. And, uh, that we should come down. Well, our mothers said, could we have a little time to say goodbye to each other.</p>		



		
<p>And to this day, I don't know what possessed us, but Raya and I, I guess I was 5 and she was 6 at the time, started crying and begging our mothers not to go quietly.</p>		
<p>That we should run into the woods, we knew that there was a backdoor to the barn and somehow our mothers agreed to do it and that is what we did.</p>		
<p>Raya: From the woods, at daytime, we were hiding in the fields. Uh, it was very hot. We had no food, no water, the sun was unbelievably hot and this is where we sat for three days. All we could eat, is, uh the raw grain from the rye. And then, the uh Nikanor was calling on us. So, he actually didn't know where we are.</p> <p>But he was calling on us and we heard him and we came back to the house, to the bunker actually.</p>		

<p>Raya They built an underground bunker to hide their grain there and mainly to hide their daughter that was a young girl and at that time they would take the young girls to Germany.</p>		
<p>So, they placed us in that bunker underground and their daughter would stay with us from time to time when they would have raids.</p> <p>Raya: The bunker was a dark, damp place. All they had there was straw that we were laying down on. Rats and mice were in thousands running around. – We didn't have almost no food, just, just a little bit to uh keep us alive.</p>		
<p>My mother was very sick at the time and she was begging for food all the time. And I remember my cousin Shelly, she would, she wouldn't eat her little piece of bread and gave it to my mother.</p>		
<p>Shelly: I didn't know that Raya!</p>		
<p>Raya: Yeah, my mother told me that I wouldn't give her that uh piece of bread but you would.</p>		
<p>Shelly: Now I understand why she liked me so much.</p>		
<p>Raya: (Laughs) She told me that.</p>		

Shelly: I don't... I totally don't under- I don't remember that Ed, at all.		
Raya: You, you shared your bread with her.		
Shelly: What I remember from that is the darkness, the dampness and the rats.		
Raya: The entertainment of the rats (laughs).		
Raya: The Germans set up a gun on top of our bunkers and they were shooting, the uh, the Russians and Russians were shooting straight to the Germans. We were afraid that we will die if a shell will land on top of our bunker. Thanks God, nothing of that happened and after the Germans retreated we were able to leave that bunker.		
Pause		
And the, uh, Nikanor took our mothers on a wagon and took them to Rovno and I and Shelly we stayed I the village, still in that house until our mothers would know if it's safe to take us back to Rovno.		
Shelly: Nikanor came and he took us out of the home underground and put us on his wagon and covered us with straw and drove us to Rovno.		
The -, it was a sunny day, there was snow on the ground, and it was blinding. We couldn't see anything because we had been in the darkness for so long. And, um, that was our first day that I remember. Feeling the coldness, it was February I believe, and seeing the open space.		
Shelly: But the war was not over. The Germans were bombing our city, Rovno, very frequently. And Raya and I would sit, look for the formations actually of the planes to see when there would be a raid, a bombing raid.		
The bombing was so terrible that our mothers decided to take us out of Rovno and moved us to a smaller town. The night after we left, a bomb fell on our house and		

destroyed it totally.		
pause		
Shelly: In 1945, May, the war was over. Stalin made a decree. Anybody who was a Polish citizen could go to Poland.		
So we got to Poland and my mother and her brother opened up a restaurant and I stayed with a gypsy lady. One day there was a knock on the door and it was my father. He had survived the war, gone back to Rovno, found out where we were and came to get us.		
Shelly: From Poland, my mother and father and I made our way to the America zone in Germany. There we were placed in DP camps, displaced person camps - people without a country.		
		
We were there for three years and eventually my father's family brought us to the United States. I came here in 1949, on Columbus Day.		
pause		
Raya: In 1945 when Shelly and my aunt Eva went to Poland, I and my mother stayed in a little town called Korets.		

<p>My mother was working as a photographer there.</p>			
<p>We lived in that little town til 1956, I went to school there, had some friends, life wasn't that bad. My mother was married to a man that lost his family during the war.</p>			
<p>But he had a brother who was in St. Petersburg and he decided that we should move to St. Petersburg and so we did. That was in 1957 or 58.</p>			
<p>Shelly: After 1945 we had no idea, no connection with Raya and her mother because they were not in Rovno, we didn't know where they were until in the late 60s when my mother was walking, went to Israel for a visit, and was walking on the streets in Tel Aviv. A man recognized her and he came over to her and said: "I know where your sister is, I just saw her."</p>			
<p>Shelly: In 1974 I went to St. Petersburg where Raya was living at the time with her husband Anatoly and her son Genia and my aunt Sonia. And it was the first time I saw them since we had left in 1945.</p>			

<p>I had no idea what to expect but immediately I recognized them as family. Memories came back to all of us and then we told them if they ever wanted to leave, we would help them get to the Unites States.</p>		
<p>Raya: In 1974 when Shelly and her mother came to visit us, I just couldn't believe it's them.</p>		
<p>That not everybody is killed and uhm, all, all the memories came back.</p>		
<p>Shelly: In 2013, Raya and I went to back to Miatin because we were in touch with the farmer's grandson and he knew the story. I didn't know what my emotions would be when we got there.</p>		
<p>But when we came to the farm and we saw the barn where we were hidden. And I was totally in disbelief that this could really have happened in that space and that time, but I knew that it did.</p>		

I knew that that's where we were. But it seemed so small and so, I just couldn't understand how two little girls could've survived in that place.



Shelly: The house we walked in, we recognized it immediately.



The thing that we talked about right away was what remembered from the hiding. And It wasn't that we were hungry, it was that we were hot and cold. Winter and summer.



And, for me it was a very good way to kind of close a part of my life and to be there with Raya that experienced the same exact thing as I did.



Raya: Going back to the hiding place in 2013 was very, very emotional.



The people that hid us passed the way a long time ago, nobody was there, but the hiding, the hiding place was still there and it was the same way exactly as we left it in 1945.






The only person that lived there is a daughter-in-law of the people that hid us, at the time that we were hiding she did not know anything about us.




But her son, her grandchildren and she they were very, very happy to see us.



		
		
<p>Shelly: I have often wondered how the Palaschuk family had such strength and bravery to do what they did.</p>		
<p>To hide us, four people, when they knew that the punishment would be death for them and their children and all their property would be confiscated.</p>		
<p>I am not sure how I would react in the same situation. I don't think that many of us know how we would react.</p>		

		
<p>But I do know that they were extremely brave and caring to do what they did, to put up with the fear, the deprivation and everything that was going on around them.</p>	