

English Transcript of Sara Piatnica Testimonial (Part 1)

Interviewee: Sara Piatnica de Drebiner (91)

Interviewed by: Dr. Giovanna Urdangarain, Dr. Rona Kaufman, and student assistant Riley Dolan

Interview conducted at Hogar Israelita Nursing Home in Montevideo, Uruguay in January of 2019.

Sara: There were six houses. Kolkhoz.

Giovanna: In Russia?

Sara: In Russia. Like an Israeli Kibbutz.

Giovanna: And your father died there? In Russia? **Sara:** Yes. In 1945. 47 years old.

Giovanna: Her dad was 47 when he died, actually in Russia from pneumonia.

Sara: August 15th.

Giovanna: In 1945.

Sara: It was already... After the war, we only later found out that the war had ended much earlier. But where we lived, in the Ural Mountains... We had been there. And it was too bad. He went out like a candle. I remember that. The young woman, the nurse, cried with us. She would say, "If we just had some penicillin..."

Giovanna: And the nurse was crying along with the family saying, "If Penicillin was available here, we would have treated him."

Sara: Aspirin neither.

Giovanna: There were not even aspirins there, in the place where they treated him.

Sara: My brother who passed away, my brother who passed away four months ago, who was in Israel since 1980. He came with us. He had four sons, the youngest son is a Rabbi, the oldest is a naval engineer. They're all professionals, and my brother got sick with leukemia.

Giovanna: One of her brothers was sick with Leukemia. **Sara:** 92 years old. He used to say... There were six of us.

Giovanna: He got Leukemia at 90? He got leukemia at 92? **Sara:** I don't understand.

Giovanna: Your brother, who you were telling me had leukemia.

Sara: Back in Israel.

Giovanna: Ah, in Israel. But as an adult, not as a child or as a teenager.

Sara: No, at ninety-two years old.

Giovanna: Ah, at 92 her brother got sick with Leukemia, in Israel.

Sara: He always said he got along better with me than with the other sisters. I was his favorite.

Giovanna: "We got along really well and he said I was his preferred sister, his favorite sister."

Sara: In every house there's... Like my mother used to say... "You have five fingers on a hand, every finger is different." Personality, the way of being and all that. We got along very well. I was in Israel five times.

Giovanna: She was five times in Israel.

Sara: I was also in Miami.

Giovanna: And Miami.

Sara: I can't complain about my life. Everything I went through, I can't complain. I'm here.

Giovanna: I'm here so I can't complain about my life.

Sara: I'm going to be 92 years old, I'm here and I say I want to live ten more years. There's time to... There's still time to rethink that.

Giovanna: She wants to live ten more years. She's almost 92 and she's here and she wants to live ten more years.

Rona: What year was she born?

Giovanna: What year were you born?

Sara: I was born in '27.

Giovanna: 1927.

Sara: 1927. June 15th.

Giovanna: July 15?

15th of July?

Sara: What?

Giovanna: July 15 or June 15?

Sara: June.

Giovanna: Ah, June. Of 1927.

Rona: And the name of her town?

Giovanna: The name of your town, your city. What was it? Sara: Brok Nad Bugiem.

Giovanna: Have you seen pictures online of what your city looks like today? Have they shown you?

Sara: I'll tell you in a moment. Brok Nad Bugiem. A beautiful city.

Giovanna: The name of her hometown.

Rona: There's six kids?

Giovanna: Yes, yeah.

Rona: And where was she in the...

Giovanna: Ah, you had six siblings and you were the second, third, or...?

Sara: The fourth.

Giovanna: Fourth.

Rona: Fourth, okay.

Sara: I had two older sisters. My brother, older than me. Then me. And I have a sister younger than me, who lives in Israel.

Giovanna: A younger sister who lives in Israel also, now. Sara: She's in Israel. I talked to her on the phone before I came here. We talked on the phone. She says, "Sara, where are you?" "What are you doing?" I say to her...

Giovanna: Her sister called her and said "What are you doing? Where are you?"

Sara: And I say "Look, I'm going to a hotel." "Later, when I come back, I'll tell you about it."

Giovanna: She told her "I'm going to a hotel. After I come back I will tell you."

Sara: "When I come back I'll tell you everything." Because I came here- I'm going to tell you why I came here. It turns out that...

Giovanna: Oh, when you came to the nursing home. When she came to the home, when she moved to this place, she said, "I'm going to a hotel."

Sara: I said hotel, I didn't say nursing home.

Giovanna: Exactly. "I said hotel."

Sara: Listen, I'm going to tell you why I came here. Because, thanks to God, you know I'm doing well. I know how to walk. I still know what I'm doing. A few years ago, not many.... They examined my bones because I have insurance. They put you on the table like this. They lift your legs up. Do you know what my results were?

Giovanna: No.

Sara: "A very young older woman."

Giovanna: So they did a screening, right?

Of her bones. And the statement from the doctor was, "An elderly woman, very young."

**Sara: The doctor said "I read it and read it."
She couldn't believe it.**

**Giovanna: The doctor was reading the
results and couldn't believe it.**

Sara: She's retiring this year. She's the same age as my daughter. 68 years old. She tells me: "But you are the only one." "Of all the exams throughout my career, you're the only one."

Giovanna: The doctor is about to retire and keeps telling her, "You are the only person I know who has this."

Sara: But you know what happens?

Giovanna: What?

Sara: I always worked.

Giovanna: "But I always worked."

Sara: I went up and down the stairs

Giovanna: "I was always moving, going up and down the stairs."

Sara: Always, up until now.

I wring out the rags better than a 20-year-old girl.

Giovanna: I don't know how to explain that in English, but when you are cleaning and you are doing this...

Rona: Wringing something out?

Giovanna: Yeah, she says she does that better than a 20-year-old woman.

Sara: I'll tell you one thing. The people here, they have light clothing. All this. They send their laundry to be washed. I do it myself and I put it in front of the window that has sun. They know, when you see Sara's clothes, the T-shirt, the... Everything.

Giovanna: They say that to be washed, to the laundry machine, she does it herself. And she hangs it, and they know when they see it: "That's Sara's clothes."

Sara: I brought two very good bars of soap. At home I use 'Skip' which has a great smell for the machine, for the sheets, for towels. The truth is I like to do these things. I don't paint my nails. I don't paint them at all, look. But I use the...

Giovanna: The file.

Sara: The file, so they don't grow out to here. Wow, I don't know what I was originally saying.

Giovanna: She said: "I don't put..."

Riley: Nail Polish

Giovanna: Yeah. "I don't paint my nails or anything." Now she's saying: "Where was I going with this?"

Sara: I'm going to tell you one thing, my dear, there are very few people left. Very few people, and those that had the numbers on their arms and everything, they're almost gone. There may be one or two here, I don't know. But of those that I know, of my friends, of the amount that was there, now there's barely any.

Giovanna: Of course.

Sara: There are so few, and there are less and less. And the worst thing is that I did the paperwork to be able to receive a pension every month. And they denied me. Do you know why? Let me tell you. In '74, before my son went to Canada, to the United States, because he first went to Canada, they sent me to Argentina to do a health examination. And with my health...

Giovanna: It was very good.

Sara: They said I was stronger than the rest. And they rejected me.

Giovanna: And the pension was from the government of Israel or from the government of Poland?

Sara: No. It seemed like something out of Germany. Germany together with Israel. I don't remember. But, the Poles? I hope they no longer exist. If an earthquake happens to them, I'm going to be happy. Because they deserve the worst. Well, and they rejected me and they didn't give me anything. But I didn't stay calm. Have you heard of Ana Vinocur?

Giovanna: Yes, someone mentioned her yesterday, yes. And I was also going to write her name because is it with a 'U' or with an 'O'?

Sara: She wrote a book.

Giovanna: Yes, Rachel told us about Ana's book.

Sara: Her daughter follows the subject of the Holocaust. But she's a young girl. She follows the mother's work. **Giovanna:** Yes.

Sara: But it has nothing to do with her.

Giovanna: No.

Sara: She grew up here.

Giovanna: Yes, yes.

Sara: Montevideo. Vinocur.

Giovanna: Yes.

Sara: And she, Ana Vinocur, Rita's mother, the one who is here now, her name is Rita. She was determined to help me get something. Because...

Giovanna: Yes.

Sara: We met here, we were friends, she got married, she lived in Goes, more or less.

But it was no use. We sent a thousand letters.

Giovanna: And all of that is...

Sara: To the United States, we sent them. I still have an envelope at home with the addresses. They asked for papers. How am I going to have papers? Nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing. And they always rejected me. One day they sent me a letter that said that only once they will send me x-amount. But it was very well underlined.

Giovanna: "One time only."

Sara: "Only once" because it was bothering them so much.

Sara: I'll tell you, the Jews from Germany or... A lot of people made those papers, very simply.

Giovanna: Yes.

Sara: With lawyers, with all that. And you had to pay for that. My husband said, "I don't want a single peso of theirs and I don't want anything to do with that." "And don't go and I don't want anything to do with it." My husband wouldn't let me go, but I still went. It's because I said, "It's never bad to have that as support. Whether it's 500, whatever the amount is, it's going to be good for something." A lot of people, that weren't even there, that were here during the time of the war... But they made the papers very well, and they received money and a lot of it. I know about it.

Giovanna: Jewish people who had come before the war?

Sara: Before the war, but they knew how to do it. They went to lawyers, they paid very well, they made them some fake papers, very clear, and some were getting up to \$1,000 a month. But listen to me, life was always like that. And it's like that to this day. Whoever knows how to work the system... Whoever manages to do that...

Giovanna: Yeah.

Sara: My husband didn't even let me go, I went anyway. And one guy who was a German Jew, he jumped from the ninth floor. Yes, here in Montevideo I think. What was his name? Sometime in the 1950s. I talked to him. I would go everywhere. I was not ashamed. The thing is that I told the truth.

Giovanna: Of course.

Sara: I wasn't with the Nazis, no numbers or anything. We escaped to Russia, but I still deserved the pension. Because I lost all my youth working from sunrise to sunset, with nothing. It was 40 degrees below zero. It didn't matter, it didn't matter. If you didn't pay them... You know what I mean, right?

Giovanna: Yes.

Sara: ...then you would not get anything. As my mother used to say, "You have to put oil down so you go faster. If you put nothing down, you get nowhere." That's how it happened. My husband wanted nothing to do with them.

Giovanna: And that, again, was the governments of Germany and Israel?

Sara: Yes, look...

Giovanna: ...that gave compensation to the survivors?

Sara: Yes. And in Israel, everyone receives it. Giovanna: Of course.

Sara: I know... A sister-in-law of mine, she was born in Uruguay. It turns out that she... She already passed away. Her name was Sonia, my name was Sara, and I often signed my name using my husband's last name. Drebiner.

Giovanna: What was your husband's last name? Sara: Drebiner.

Giovanna: Where did you meet your husband? Sara: Here.

Giovanna: In Uruguay.

Because I came as a girl.

Giovanna: Of course. She was very young, she was a young woman when she came.

Rona: How old?

Giovanna: How old were you when you arrived in Uruguay?

Sara: I was about 20 years old.

Giovanna: Almost 20.

Sara: Almost 20 years. That week I went to work.

Giovanna: One week after she was here she started working.

Sara: Within a week, I was the first one in the house to work. The first with a pair of underwear, without anything. You have to eat, you have to pay rent. And my mom, when we collected everything every Friday, she would say, "This to pay rent, for food, and to buy clothes for one of you." And every week, a different person.

Giovanna: So you left Poland at about 12-years-old? Sara: What?

Giovanna: You left Poland at about 12?

Sara: Yes.

Giovanna: And from there to Russia?

Sara: When the war began.

Rona: She was in Russia for eight years or did she return to Poland after the war?

Giovanna: And you returned to Poland after the war or you came directly here from Russia?

Sara: No, my dear. I had to return.

Giovanna: "We had to go back" she said.

Sara: Because Wanda Wasilewska made a pact with Russia.

Giovanna: "There was a pact with Russia, between Poland-"

Sara: So that Russia would return all the Polish citizens. Giovanna: "So that Russia would return all the Polish citizens."

Sara: And we had to return.

Giovanna: Okay.

Sara: But then in Poland, just like always, we couldn't be there. And they were killing the Jews. We went to a very big city, Lodz. I don't know if you know it.

Giovanna: Yes. I don't remember how to spell it, but yes.

Sara: Lodz

Giovanna: Lodz. L-O...

Sara: We were there for six months. So the youngest of us... The Jewish agency sent my brother, me, and my younger sister to France.

Sara: Lodz. A very large city.

Giovanna: Very large, yes.

Sara: It was a Jewish city practically.

Giovanna: "It was almost a Jewish town."

Rona: It was a ghetto, it was a ghetto.

Giovanna: Ah okay.

Sara: And there's another thing... Think of the age I was when we went back. We were in a square where all the survivors from all over the place were gathering.

Giovanna: There was this giant...

Sara: Listen, listen, listen. And we were there too. Giovanna: Of course.

Sara: All of a sudden, a gentleman, he's there talking and we're there too. And I tell him, "Tell me sir, are you such-and-such? Are you the brother of...?" I don't even remember now.

Giovanna: Of someone you knew?

Sara: Yes. Of a friend of mine.

Sara: "Yes, I am. And who are you? How did you recognize me after the entire war has happened?" I couldn't believe it was actually him. And I recognized him after so many years. Before, I was just a girl. And here I was already a young lady. I was a young lady that my mother had to tie up. Because... Well we're not going to talk about it. My mom always told me: "Be careful, you have to be careful because you're the fourth one. The oldest has to get married first. Then the other. Your brother has to wait. And then you." And the truth is that I... Many times I have to entertain myself because, my husband was very smart.

Giovanna: "My husband was very intelligent."

Sara: I learned a lot with him.

Giovanna: "I learned a lot with him."

Sara: He was 12 years older than me.

Giovanna: "He was 12 years older than me."

Sara: I was a young woman.

Rona: Was he Jewish?

Giovanna: Was he Jewish?

Sara: Yes.

Giovanna: You gave me his name, you wrote down the last name, right?

Sara: Yes. Drebiner

Giovanna: Drebiner. And his first name, what was it?

Sara: It's a pretty difficult name, Jewish. Yerachmiel. Giovanna: That was the first name.

Sara: But in Spanish they called him Ramón. Ramoncito.

Sara: That's what he was called.

Giovanna: They called him Ramón in Uruguay. Which obviously not... Because her... So, how do you pronounce his original name?

Sara: Yerachmiel. That's an uncommon name. Giovanna: There are few people with that first name.

Rona: Where was he from?

Giovanna: Where was he from?

Sara: From Poland.

Giovanna: Ah, Poland too.

Sara: Also from Poland. Very religious parents. Giovanna: Very religious, his family.

Sara: Very religious, the mother and father. There were six siblings.

Giovanna: There were also six children.

Sara: They loved me very much. When he took me home the first time, the father-in-law, the mother-in-law, they were at the table, an oval table like this. The father-in-law says, "Listen, where did you get these two rhinestones?"

Sara: I used to have eyes that...

Giovanna: I used to have They told me, "Sarah, just look, because when you look, you're already talking. You don't have to even speak."

Giovanna: She was very expressive with her eyes so Rona: When did her husband leave Poland? Giovanna: When did your husband leave Poland?

Sara: What?

Giovanna: When did your husband leave Poland?

Sara: Ah, he came before the war.

Giovanna: Before the war.

Sara: In '30.

Giovanna: '30. 1930.

Rona: And with his whole family?

Giovanna: With his whole family?

Sara: With the father.

Giovanna: With his father.

Sara: They worked to buy the tickets.

Giovanna: They worked to make money for the tickets.

Sara: They brought over the mother and the other siblings. Giovanna: And then the mother with the rest of the family.

Sara: Before the war.

Rona: And why Uruguay?

Giovanna: And why did they choose to come to Uruguay? Sara: What?

Giovanna: Why did they want to come to Uruguay?

Sara: Because here they let them in.

Giovanna: Because it was possible to come here, Uruguay was welcoming.

Sara: And It was the most peaceful country at that time. In Argentina, it was horrible.

Giovanna: Argentina was not in a very good situation, and Uruguay was...

Sara: For the Jewish people.

Giovanna: For the Jewish people.

Sara: I just recently read an article that I didn't know.

Giovanna: "I just recently read an article. I didn't know this."

Sara: So many of the predecessors of Perón... And Perón was very bad, very bad. It was only in the last few years that he got a little bit better, but this last...

Giovanna: Did they just not accept the Jewish people that arrived or...?

Sara: Where?

Giovanna: In Argentina. Did they not accept them at all or when they arrived they treated them badly?

Sara: Look, to tell the truth, nobody wants

Jews, because Jews stand out right away. We came here, I... When we lived in the other neighborhood, not in this one where I live now, they told me, "Sara, you came

here with nothing, look at everything you have." So I would say back, "But look how you live and look how I live. I work, and you don't really. And I save. Instead of buying two, I buy one. And I save more for tomorrow, because I have to have my house because I'm going to move out of here, and you don't care that you live in a tenement."

Giovanna: This was at the beginning of your time here? Sara: In the beginning, yes. I was not afraid to tell them the truth. In half Spanish, because I learned Spanish here.

Giovanna: So Sara, we have some questions about that first stage.

Sara: Of course, I'll answer whatever.

Giovanna: But, the first thing I wanted to ask you...

Sara: Ask me anything and I'll tell you the whole truth. I am a person that doesn't know how to lie, my husband taught me that. Because when I came after the war I was green as an olive, like a green olive.

Giovanna: "When I came to Uruguay after the war, I was green as an olive. And I learned many things from my husband."

Rona: Did she come alone, or with her family? Giovanna: Did you come to Uruguay alone? No. Sara: No, with my mom and my siblings.

Giovanna: With her mother and siblings.

Sara: But look, everyone has their own personality. They are not all the same.

Giovanna: "Everybody is different."

Sara: Everyone is different. I learned to be the way that I am and tell the truth. You can see it in my eyes.

Giovanna: "I always tell the truth because you can see it in my eyes."

Sara: I don't know how to say misleading things. That's how I am. Besides, you can ask me the same thing a thousand times and I'll respond the same way a thousand times. What do you remember about your life in Poland before you went to Russia?

Sara: Of course. Look, in Poland we, I'm talking about us, we really didn't know... My parents, and me least of all. It was known that something was going to happen. I remember my mom saying that with the things that you see, something ugly is coming. But, nobody imagined what was actually coming. I remember we had an uncle

in a bigger city, We have an uncle in a bigger city. He came to Poland.

Giovanna: Where was he?

Sara: In Ostrów Mazowiecka. A bigger city.

Giovanna: Yes.

Sara: He said to my father "Look..." In Spanish my father's name was Marcos. That's why my oldest son is named Marcos.

Giovanna: Marcos.

Sara: With all of my siblings' children, the oldest male, they all have the name Marcos.

Giovanna: They are all named Marcos.

Sara: So he would say to him...

Giovanna: How was his name pronounced in Polish, or in Yiddish?

Sara: My dad's name?

Giovanna: Yes.

Sara: I really don't know, to tell you the truth. We spoke Yiddish in the house. My mom used to call him... I really don't remember.

Giovanna: Sara, what year did you come to Uruguay with your mom and your siblings?

Sara: In the year 1947.

Giovanna: In '47.

Sara: 1947, the 4th of September.

Sara: Write that down.

Giovanna: September 4, 1947.

Sara: '47. Yes.

Giovanna: You already told me but I want to ask again.

Sara: Of course.

Giovanna: Why Uruguay?

Sara: Well, that's a good question. Because there were two uncles here who were my father's brothers. My father was already gone.

Giovanna: I see.

Sara: They were checking after the war to see if there were survivors. They found my mother, with her children. There still were survivors. So they got in touch and started to bring us here. But the truth is they did a very bad job.

Giovanna: Why?

Sara: There we go. That's the question. Because we were already young ladies, and they had to deal with us differently.

Sara: Look, I had a few suitors, young men. I was fond of them and many of them always liked me. But I had nothing. They wanted marriage, at the very least. To furnish a home, at first, they washed their hands of it. They didn't help us at all. All they did was put us in a second floor apartment with no elevator. My mom couldn't get down. My mom was very worn out from the war. We were young, so we went up and down to bring...

Giovanna: How old was your mother? Do you remember? ...when you all arrived in Uruguay.

Sara: My mom died a bit past 60 years old. She died young. She suffered a lot from the war, which is understandable. We as kids, as young people, we took things differently. Even barefoot, when they played the accordion and everything, We went to go dance. Barefoot! And my mom was at the door, watching, so that they wouldn't do anything to us. My mom always said, "The woman has to always take care of herself." The man bathes himself, he's like a glass, he's always new.

Giovanna: She never remarried after your father passed away?

Sara: My mom? No. No. And that's how things happened. And my uncles...

Giovanna: And your uncles were older than your dad? **Sara:** I'm not exactly sure.

Giovanna: But they had come to Uruguay before?

Sara: Of course. They came in '30. '29, '30, '32, '33. Something like that. Before the war.

Giovanna: So, when you went from Poland to Russia, your uncles...?

Sara: They were already in Uruguay.

Giovanna: Do you know how they heard about the possibility of coming to Uruguay at that time?

Sara: Who?

Giovanna: Your uncles.

Sara: Of course.

Giovanna: Was there talk in Poland that Uruguay was receiving Jewish people?

Sara: They asked the Jewish agency who had survived, and we were on the list.

Giovanna: I see. They found out from here.

Sara: Exactly.

Giovanna: And they were able to communicate with you and bring you over. Did they already have families here when you arrived?

Sara: Of course, married, and young children. One uncle had a daughter that was already a young woman. We had... How do you say it in Spanish? Well, we were prettier, more acceptable. And they were angry about that too. My uncle only had a daughter. The wife passed away very young.

Giovanna: And they got married in Poland or did they marry Jewish women here in Uruguay?

Sara: No. They came to Uruguay married. No children yet, but married. My dad's brother with his wife.

Giovanna: And they had their children here or did they already come with the children?

Sara: No. The daughter was born here, I think. Wait, no. In Poland. Yes, in Poland. Because they were in my house before they left and the baby was in our house. But she behaved very badly with us, very badly. They gave us nothing. Nothing, nothing, nothing. They didn't help us with anything. And we said to them: "Why did you bring us here?

We could have gone to Israel, if not North America." That's where they wanted to take us. We were such fresh and pretty young ladies that they wanted to take us to Bnei Akiva.

Giovanna: But Israel could not have been a thing yet, right? Sara: Yes.

Sara: They went to fight for it. Because Israel only later became independent.

Giovanna: Of course. But in between there was the process of...

Sara: Exactly. But we could have gone to the United States.

Giovanna: Did you know anyone who had gone to the U.S.?

Sara: Yes, we knew people. My friends. They didn't have anybody. They stayed alive, like we did. But they didn't have anybody. They went to the U.S. Later I figured out... My mom, my family, we figured out that it worked out well for them. They married rich people, religious people. They took care of them.

Giovanna: The community that received them?

Sara: Exactly. They took good care of them. And we cried a lot. But we didn't even have a single cent to put toward buying a ticket.

Giovanna: To move there...

Sara: To be able to move there, yes. Because at that time, you could enter without...

Giovanna: Without a Visa, without anything like that.

Sara: Exactly. Look, darling. Here, we struggled a lot. My sisters... One married a guy that was no-good. The other died too young. My brother also struggled a lot. He would come home from work with his legs all chaffed from walking all day. All sweaty. He would lay down and apply talcum powder so that he could work the next day. He married a great young lady. From a cooperative, a Jewish woman.

Giovanna: All the siblings married Jewish people living in Uruguay?

Sara: Yes, yes. A very nice wedding, her parents did a great job. All that. He had four sons that are all now in Israel. The youngest is a Rabbi. I told you about him at the start. And well, my mom was happy, more or less. She got us situated.

Giovanna: Were you all adults when your mom died?

Sara: Of course.

Giovanna: Married and grown up.

Sara: Married and with kids. Absolutely. But in my mind, I couldn't complain because I married someone very intelligent. A great man, with a great family. They received me very well. But always poor.

Giovanna: How did you meet your husband?

Sara: Very good question. Two families, that knew me or knew somebody... I don't know exactly. The two families told him... Because they knew him too. They told him

that they knew a young woman that he would like. Because he was very picky. I was very pretty, very pretty. I didn't talk much. I didn't know how to talk. In Russia I didn't learn how to talk or anything. I didn't even learn how to drink a glass of water. So, without knowing about the other one, both families told him about me. So they organized a meeting, a 'Shidduch.' Listen, listen. We saw each other, and then he never left. He came to visit me. He rang the buzzer from below. He came up, I came down. He took me to the pastry shop. Then on the weekend he took me home, so that he wouldn't lose me. I would say, "Mom, I had other aspirations." It's true what I'm saying! And my mom said, "Look... You're going to have a good family. You will be with good people. You will be alright. As time passes, things will..."

Giovanna: Things will work out.

Sara: "Things will arrange themselves. One thing compensates for the other." I understood my mother. My mom wanted the best for us. But, the youthful spirit, which I had, which I really had... I was the first dancer to win in a competition. With Tango and Waltz. It wasn't. But I accepted because I was tired of working. I woke up every morning at 6.

Giovanna: How old were you when you got married? Sara: I got married at about 23 years old.

Giovanna: 23.

Sara: Yes. In 1950, I got married. And I don't know. Do you know what happened? At that time, not having a father and our mother, who was always there,...

Giovanna: With six children?

Sara: Yes. ...making the food, trying to do so much with so little. We didn't even have a water heater for bathing. Look, with a tiny portable stove, we didn't have a stove. We were very tired of our life.

Giovanna: Of the sacrifice.

Sara: So in the end, we accepted it.

Giovanna: Can I go a little bit back in the history and ask you a question?

Sara: Yes. Of course.

Giovanna: Well, you told me that your uncles looked for you on the list of survivors, and learned that you all had survived. Correct?

Sara: Yes.

Giovanna: And they helped you come here. Did they help with the expenses to get you to Uruguay?

Sara: The Jewish agency did everything.

Giovanna: Here or there?

Sara: I do not know.

Giovanna: They made it possible for you to travel. Sara: Yes.

Giovanna: So when you came, for example, did they help pay for the tickets?

Sara: I don't know. But we didn't pay anything because we didn't have anything.

Giovanna: Of course. Someone helped you.

Sara: I know that the Jewish agency did it. I know. Then, when we first stepped foot here, everything froze.

Giovanna: So these three brothers of your father's came alone, as you were telling me, before the war, to Uruguay. And your father at that time, why didn't he come to Uruguay?

Sara: We were very rich in Poland.

Giovanna: Ah, I see.

Sara: Very rich. We had a business, about half a block, very big, very large. My mom was a savvy businesswoman. I remember that well. We had a Matzah factory, for Pesach. We made all the Matzah for Poland, we even exported to Germany. There was another factory... No, it wasn't a factory. My father was dedicated to buying cereals. Seeds, I used to say. There was a shed and once a week they came from abroad, the Poles, and they bought it for little or nothing, and they left it there, and then it was exported. We had a lot of money. I even think my father had gold coins and all that. But that all became nothing. Because when the Germans came in, the next day, there was nothing left. We left with the clothes on our backs, so that, that doesn't count.

Giovanna: And those uncles, your father's brothers, at that time in Poland, what did they do? Did they work?

Sara: Before leaving for the Americas?

Giovanna: Yes.

Sara: Look, I know what one of them had. He had a mill. I remember it as if it was today. He was the most... What's the word? The most informed, let's say. Politics, he knew what was going to happen. The others didn't know anything at all. They knew the

Jewish holiday and all that, nothing more. He left before the war. He left in '37.

Giovanna: Straight here?

Sara: Here, yes.

Giovanna: '27?

Sara: Yes. He got papers for the wife and the baby. And she passed away very soon after.

Giovanna: After arriving in Uruguay?

Sara: Yes. From cancer. She was a beautiful lady. I remember. Her name was Luisa. Jewish. And the baby was born. Chaike, her name was Chaike. In Spanish, Clara they called her.

Thank you to Sara Piatnica de Drebiner and Hogar Israelita