

English Transcript of Sara Piatnica Testimonial (Part 2)

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.

Giovanna: And Sara, thinking about the beginning of the experience, because you've now told me a little bit. In one way or another did you all feel welcomed or well received in Uruguay at that time, or only somewhat?

Sara: By the family?

Giovanna: In general.

Sara: Ah, in general? Yes, of course. The government received us very well. We got our ID cards, then we got citizenship cards. But not by the family.

Giovanna: When you came, where did you live? In what part of Montevideo?

Sara: That uncle...

Giovanna: The one with the daughter?

Sara: No, the other one.

Giovanna: The other one. He placed us near his house. An old building. It's still standing.

Giovanna: In which neighborhood of Montevideo?

Sara: Libertad Street, in front of the Novelty Cinema. I am telling you exactly right. You can't get any more accurate than that.

Giovanna: Pocitos, Parque Rodó is close by, right?

Sara: Pocitos.

Giovanna: Pocitos.

Sara: Second floor, straight up. My mom didn't come down. Just like this. Second floor, a lot of stairs, no elevator. And it was one large room. It was divided up. A kitchen this small. And a bathroom this small too. Very bad.

Giovanna: There were six children and your mom?

Sara: We cried like crazy. "Why did you bring us here?" We cried again. "For what? If we could have gone to the United States, we would already be married and nicely settled in and everything."

Giovanna: Just to remind me, how old were you and your siblings when you came to Uruguay?

Sara: I'll tell you.

Giovanna: Of course.

Sara: If I was born in 1927...

Giovanna: And you arrived here in 1947. You were about 20 years old.

Sara: Like I said.

Giovanna: Of course. And you were the fourth.

Sara: Correct, the fourth.

Giovanna: So your sisters were older...

Sara: Yes, it's easy to calculate. What else was I going to tell you?

Giovanna: What was it like with the language? Because you were all grown up, right? When you arrived, how did it go with Spanish? How did it go, learning it? We didn't go anywhere. We learned from the street. We learned from where we worked.

Giovanna: Where did you work? You said you arrived and within the week you were working.

Sara: In a sewing factory, like I told you. With... How many were there? I don't remember. Four, five... I don't remember. ...Uruguayan

women. And they would teach me: "Finger. Nose. Tongue. This. That."

Giovanna: They taught you the words.

Sara: "Thread. Needle." They would point to things. But after, when I got married, when I had kids, with school, with the business... That's where I learned the language.

Giovanna: And at home with your mom and your siblings, you spoke in what language?

Sara: In Yiddish.

Giovanna: In Yiddish.

Sara: And, I put all my strength into it. Because I spoke Russian very well, from being there for so many years. I lost it all. Because we put all of our effort into learning the language. Reading every newspaper. Reading the crime report, those were nice and easy. But I'll tell you something very interesting. In 1967, my 15 year old daughter went to Israel for a year. 1967. During the Six-Days War. And I wrote the letters. I had a lot of patience. My husband was very intelligent, but you never knew where his mind was. And I have the letters to my neighbor Gladys. "But Sara, there isn't even a single error. Not one. Not a comma, or even an accent. You write better than someone right out of school." Very long letters. Sometimes it was 1 or 2 in the morning, and I wrote a letter. Because in those years, writing letters was what you did. In 1951.

Giovanna: Yes, of course. Sara, now you're telling me about learning Russian... So when you left Poland at about 12 years old...

Sara: When the war started. 1939.

Giovanna: Yes, of course. And you left to Russia. How long were you in Russia?

Sara: The Russians took us in 1940. Before the Germans attacked them. We lived there, then the war ended. Then in 1946... I don't remember the month or the time of year. We returned to Poland.

Giovanna: I don't know if you told me, what part of Russia were you in?

Sara: We were in Moscow, Kirov, and the Ural mountains. Next to... Oh my, what's it called? Siberia!

Giovanna: Siberia. And you said Kirov? Did I hear that right? You said Moscow, then Kirov, then Siberia.

Sara: Siberia, yes. Then you told me about the friend you had in Russia...

Sara: I have the picture at my house.

Giovanna: Ah, next year we're returning, and maybe we can visit you.

Sara: We'll see. To get to my house, they have to take me.

Giovanna: Of course. Not right now. And what about your memories from living in Russia? Very good.

Giovanna: Even with the hard work?

Sara: In spite of everything, of not having food, of being cold, of not having clothes... Sometimes we had underwear, or an old pair of pants without underwear... We were young, we didn't have a bathroom at home. When we wanted to go to the bathroom, we would go out half a block away, always with a sister, or with two sisters. They would cover the other one. And then the other one would go. We lived like this for a long time.

Giovanna: And your dad, when he passed away from congestion, as you told me, when he got sick. How long had he been in Russia with you? Most of the time?

Sara: Of course. The majority of the time. Because he died on August 15, 1945. I remember that perfectly. The war was over. Over there, we didn't know yet.

Giovanna: Of course.

Sara: When we returned...

Giovanna: You were told.

Sara: We found out that... Well, when Wanda Wasilewska, the Pole, did the paperwork... No.

Giovanna: The signing of an agreement?

Sara: There it is. The agreement. When she made the agreement with Russia that she wanted all Polish citizens to return from Russia. There we learned that the war was over.

Giovanna: That it was over.

Sara: And my father was no longer with us.

Giovanna: He could not come back to you.

Sara: No. And there, in the town we were in, the truth is we got by pretty well. I'll speak for myself. I got by very well. Because the main person... How do you say it in Spanish? In Russian it's 'nachal'nik.'

Giovanna: The mayor?

Sara: The boss.

Giovanna: The boss.

Sara: He liked me a lot. A lot. He eventually gave me the best job. So that I wouldn't have to carry the bags on my back. 50 kilos, for about a block. He gave me a nice job so I could stay seated. So that others would bring the bags that they put on the scale. And I would weigh it and write down what I weighed. I spent a long time doing that. I don't even remember anymore. He liked me a lot. There was a whole desk with him and two or three other people. The truth is... In Spanish you'd say he was very nice, always smiling, He had no malice or anything like that. And that's something you have to achieve.

Giovanna: Your siblings?

Sara: I did that on purpose. I'm like that.

Giovanna: While you were in Russia, did your siblings and your mom do the same thing for work? Were they close? Did you live together?

Sara: My mother did not work. She, because she had all of us, didn't work. And the siblings, more or less each one had their own job. We didn't work together. And before the middle of winter came, everybody went out to the forest to gather... What do you

call it? The firewood and those things from the trees.

Giovanna: The little cones?

Sara: From the trees.

Giovanna: Pinecones?

Sara: Pinecones, that's what I couldn't think of. I can never remember those pinecones. Those dry well.

Giovanna: Of course, it can be used as...

Sara: What a great fire they made. And my father had made a little kitchen in the corner. He was very handy, very handy. he made beds so he didn't sleep on the He made us beds so that we didn't sleep on the floor, from planks. He would put... [Russian term] How do you say? [Russian term] Straw.

Giovanna: To make it softer. And where they lived was...? Sara: And with sacks. We slept in twos, in threes, up, down, everything.

Sara: And was it a big space?

Giovanna: Was it a little house that had been assigned to you when they arrived in Russia?

Sara: Look, it was not very big. But we made due. They didn't kill us and they didn't beat us. With everything we had seen up to that point, and here we were... I don't know.

Giovanna: What do you remember from Poland, from when you had to leave?

Sara: What?

Giovanna: What did you all remember about what happened in Poland before you left?

Sara: Darling, the school treated us very badly. The priests, they were devils. I still wish them the worst. Later when the Nazis came in, we really knew... I was just a girl, you know?

Giovanna: Of course.

Sara: Almost 12 years old. But in Russia, we kept going over it

again and again.

Giovanna: Of course.

Sara: Because it was the only thing we had left to repeat, to not forget. We were very rich, as I've told you.

Giovanna: Yes. But the Poles and the Germans took everything. We came out with nothing, with nothing, just like that, empty-handed.

Giovanna: At your school, for example...

Sara: In Poland?

Giovanna: Yes.

Giovanna: You were telling me about the priests, so it was a Catholic school?

Sara: No, no, no.

Giovanna: No, we are talking about the community.

Sara: Yes, yes.

Giovanna: The priests in the town.

Sara: But the teachers and the students in general treated us badly. The principal... I've never forgotten this. I already repeated it once when I was asked about it. She was a principal... How do you say it in Spanish? From these times. To say that she was not so vindictive. When she rang the bell to leave, she called all the Jewish children, there weren't too many, and she took us to her desk, she sat us down and talked to us to keep us busy, so that the others would leave before us. Because they would throw stones at us. They would pull our hair. I don't know all of the things they did to us.

Giovanna: In your city, how much of the population was Jewish?

Sara: Quite a lot, quite a lot. Yes

Giovanna: A lot.

Giovanna: But not in your school. In the school you went to, there were few Jewish children, correct?

Sara: Depending on the grade.

Giovanna: Depending on the grade. I think Rona wants to ask

me something.

Rona: I don't know...

Giovanna: She's talking about school. I asked her about her experience in school in her hometown in Poland and so she's talking about that.

Rona: I don't know if this is too much of a leap, but can you ask her if they knew what was happening in concentration camps and with other Jews? How much they knew.

Giovanna: So Rona asks me if you knew at that time what was going on with other Jews and about the existence of the concentration camps.

Sara: No, we did not know.

Giovanna: "No, we didn't know."

Sara: We only found out later.

Giovanna: "Later, we found out."

Sara: Next to our town, not far away, were Majdanek and Treblinka.

Giovanna: They later found out about those places.

Sara: It was only later, when we returned from Russia.

Giovanna: When they returned from Russia...

Sara: When we came back from Russia to Lodz, which was the center of the Jews. It was only there that we learned that next to Brok Nad Bugiem, to my town, where I was born, were Majdanek and Treblinka.

Giovanna: So her city, it's close to those places, but they found out after they came back, that that was going on there.

Rona: When they went to Russia was that very dangerous?

Giovanna: In Russia or in Poland? How was the situation in Poland?

Rona: The move from Poland to Russia.

Giovanna: She asks if when you went from Poland to Russia, if the journey itself was dangerous, if you felt it was dangerous.

Sara: Well, as children, for us it was like, "This is the way it is."

Giovanna: It was what had to be done.

Sara: Exactly. "This is it." If someone needed to go to the bathroom or do something else, they just did it. It was thrown out of the window or just done right there. And generally when...

Giovanna: How did you travel from Poland to Russia?

Sara: In wagons for horses.

Giovanna: But you knew that you had to leave Poland, that that was what had to be done. Did you have that information? No?

Sara: No. We were taken. No one went alone because, because we were forced. The night before, they knocked on our doors with their rifles. The Russians.

Giovanna: So the Russians came to the town where they were living. They were knocking on the door, the night before. Giovanna: The night before the arrival of the...

Sara: No. It was like this, wait a little bit. It was just like any other night. Maybe in the morning, I don't even remember how it all went. They knocked on the door so that we'd open it. And they said that we were counterrevolutionaries. Russia felt that the Germans were going to attack them. And we had been born elsewhere.

Giovanna: Where had you been born?

Sara: In Brok Nad Bugiem.

Giovanna: So where were you when they knocked? Sara: Near Bialystok. A small town called Tykocin. A Nobel prize winner was from there. What was his name? Oy yoy yoy. I'll remember one day.

Giovanna: I'm going to write that down, that's the city of where...

Sara: Tykocin. Tyko-cin.

Giovanna: Tykocin? And that's where you were living when you had to leave. When you left Poland, you were in Tykocin.

Sara: Yes. We were there for about a year, more or less.

Giovanna: And there you had the family business you were telling me about?

Sara: No. That man who received a Nobel prize for Jewish literature... What's his name?

Giovanna: I'll search for his name online and I'll tell you tomorrow. Nobel prize for Jewish literature. Recently?

Sara: No. I don't remember when it was.

Giovanna: I'll look for the info and tell you tomorrow.

Sara: A niece of his or something was the girlfriend of one of my mom's brothers. Buraj, a great man. He played the violin and sang beautifully. I still remember that well. He went to cross the border like we did, when Poland was divided. He tried to cross into Russia, and they killed him there. He never arrived. And we were already in Tykocin. Yes.

Giovanna: On the Russian side.

Sara: Bashevis Singer, now I remember.

Giovanna: That's his name?

Sara: Yes. Write it down. Bashevis Singer.

Rona: Oh, Isaac Bashevis Singer. Yes. The writer?

Giovanna: Yes. She knows who he is.

Sara: Did you see how I remembered?

Giovanna: The city where he is from, is this one, Tykocin.

Rona: Okay.

Giovanna: We need to check the spelling. They were living there for the last year before they went to Russia. Her family was there.

Sara: They received us very well.

Giovanna: That town?

Sara: Yes, they did. Like we were part of the family.

Giovanna: Who are we talking about? The family of...

Sara: The family of Bashevis Singer. They welcomed us...

Giovanna: Ah, his family welcomed her family in this city.

Rona: His great niece was one of my teachers when I was a student.

Giovanna: The great niece of this writer was her teacher. Of literature?

Rona: Literature. Her name was Brett Singer.

Giovanna: That's the name of the great niece.

Sara: What a small world we live in.

Giovanna: "The world is small."

Sara: I don't remember everything perfectly, I was just a child. I remember too much, I think. What happened was, we would always repeat everything at home. That's why I remember. Otherwise, I wouldn't. What else was I going to say?

Giovanna: I wanted to ask you...

Sara: Of course.

Giovanna: You were in Tykocin for a year. Sara: Tykocin.

Giovanna: And the family business that you told me about, that had been in your hometown?

Sara: Wait a moment, whose family business?

Giovanna: Your parents' family business. That was

in... Sara: Brok Nad Bugiem.

Giovanna: And why did you move to Tykocin?

Sara: Darling, Brok Nad Bugiem was completely burned

down. Giovanna: And from there you went to Tykocin.

Sara: Everything was burned.

Giovanna: Of course.

Sara: So when Poland was divided by the Germans and the Russians, my dad rented a covered wagon. And he took us toward the Russian side. We didn't get to Tykocin right away. Because Tykocin wasn't next to it. We didn't get to Bialystok either. Bialystok was farther north. We didn't have money or anything. I know that we crossed the line.

Giovanna: The border.

Sara: We crossed. Our lives were mostly secure. Then we learned that my mom's brother went to cross the border, and they killed him right there. He wasn't able to cross. [name], he was a great man. I remember my uncles. My mom's brothers. She had two more brothers, and a sister. She lived in another city next to Brok Nad Bugiem. Look, I don't even want to remember the babies. Wow. It's to cry about, not to talk about. Well, afterwards I'm not very sure. I know that they gathered us up, to take us to Tykocin. My mom knew that Bashevis Singer lived there. They were connected somehow with her brother.

Giovanna: Because you mom knew that family?

Sara: She didn't know them.

Giovanna: She didn't. But she knew there was someone... Sara: The brother that was killed, when he was trying to cross. My mom knew because she was an adult. So that's where we went. My father wasn't there. Because he died in 1945.

Giovanna: Yes, you said that.

Sara: The 15th of August. The war had ended a little earlier. The war ended in January or February or March. Something like that. So we went to Tykocin, my mother and us, the children. We were very well received there. No complaints. Very well. They gave us a place, a

place to put our heads. And there the Jewish community, one gave us a knife. The other one gave us a plate. The other one gave us a spoon, a pillow. They even gave us a basin, but what did we do with it? We didn't use it with a toilet. We used it as a little pot to eat with. You don't know how important that basin was. Because from there, from Tykocin, we made the trip to Vladivostok, to Siberia. And everybody wanted to eat in it. And we took care of it as if it was a treasure. It was a white basin. I remember it so clearly. Not very big. But everyone wanted to use it because we never used it as a toilet. I think that basin came back from Russia to Poland. My mother took care of it, with all her efforts. It was enameled. That's what I remember, white. Well, what else was I going to tell you?

Giovanna: What do you remember about your arrival in Russia? Because of course, you were very young.

Sara: Of course, for us it was.. How do I put this? It was all an adventure. A little girl of 12, 13 years old, I grew a little bit. It was an adventure.

Giovanna: Do you remember how your parents felt in that moment? Because for you it was an adventure, because you were children and young adults. But do you remember anything about how your parents talked to you, why you had to leave?

Sara: I don't remember what they talked about. That was their thing.
Giovanna: Of course.

Sara: So as not to make us bitter. And I don't know, we were trying to make the best of it. And I don't know how to tell you exactly, but where we were in Vladivostok, they gathered all the Jews, mainly Jews. Because there were about 30 wagons that came from Tykocin, from Poland. And the 30 wagons, cattle wagons.

Giovanna: Yes, yes. For cattle.

Sara: Not a bench to sit on. Nothing. People who were fainting and elderly people that... Well, there was everything. But we survived. When we stayed there in Vladivostok... I don't remember how many days we stayed there. But from there, five or six families went off to other places. We went to Siberia. A lot of people went to the south, they had a better time than us. Better in the sense that they were not in that cold, primarily. And secondly, relating to family. Because

in that world that we lived in, there were parents who ate their children's food. And there were children who ate the parents' food. My mom was very organized. We used to receive... I'll show you on my hand. A little piece of black bread, wet like stale food. My mother would cut it in two. She would take them out. "Today we eat this, and this we have to keep. We don't know if we're going to get anything tomorrow." It was put in a thin piece of cloth and stored in the ceiling. To let it dry. We stored it. But not everyone did that.

Giovanna: Can we get you a glass of water?

Sara: Yes.

Giovanna: A little bit of water. Do you remember when you knew you were going to Uruguay? Do you remember when the news came?

Sara: Wait a moment. When we arrived in Lodz from Russia... We saw that Poland was the same as before, They killed the Jews, took everything from the Jews. And everybody was emigrating, to Cuba, to Venezuela, to Uruguay, to Argentina, as long as you could leave Poland. We, the youngest children, were taken to France. We were in France for eight months. My brother, me, and my younger sister. My mother with the other two sisters, because they were older, they stayed in Poland. Eventually, they brought them too. While we waited in France.

Giovanna: And that was about eight months?

Sara: Eight months, yes.

Giovanna: Where in France were you?

Sara: I'll tell you.

Giovanna: Pardon me.

Sara: Next to the Bastille. We walked all over in France. You know me enough to know that there was no place we were not in. And they had to let us in, without paying. Sitting next to the stage, everywhere. We were a little group of girls like me. One, two, three young boys. We went, we didn't have a ticket or anything, but they had to let us in. There was always one who knew how to speak Yiddish. Because Spanish and Russian weren't useful.

Giovanna: Of course. We went to Versailles, yes ma'am. I didn't miss a thing.

Giovanna: Aren't you hot, Sara?

Sara: What?

Giovanna: Aren't you hot now?

Sara: That doesn't matter. We went to Versailles, not all of us. We went to the Eiffel Tower, we went to the Arc de Triomphe. Where weren't we? We were at the Folies Bergère theater. They wouldn't let us in. I said, "We're coming in, you don't want..."

Giovanna: Why didn't they let you in?

Sara: We were very young, there you saw nudity and I told them, "Look, it doesn't matter. We will sit there on the floor, you can rest your mouth and we will too. And we're going to watch because we're never coming back."

Giovanna: And you knew that your time in France was

limited? Sara: Yes.

Giovanna: Ah, why? Had they told you it was just a short period?

Sara: No, no, no. We didn't know if eight months, or 12, or 15. We knew that after being there, we had to leave. To here. They later took us to Port Bordeaux and from there on a... What do you call it? For cargo.

Giovanna: A cargo ship.

Sara: A cargo ship.

Giovanna: Did you come directly to Uruguay?

Sara: Yes ma'am. And well, there ends another chapter.

Giovanna: What did you think of Uruguay? What ideas, what did you have in mind when they said Uruguay?

Sara: Nothing, nothing. We knew nothing. If we knew how it is and how it was going to be...

Giovanna: You wouldn't have come?

Sara: No, no. We would not have come

Giovanna: Had she known what was Uruguay, they wouldn't have come.

Sara: We wouldn't have come. It's the truth.

Giovanna: Yes, I believe you.

Sara: We thought it was going to be a different thing entirely.

Giovanna: What did you expect? What idea did you have?

Sara: I don't know what we expected.

Giovanna: But not how it turned out. What did you find when you arrived? What made an impression on you?

Sara: Everything was horrible. When we arrived to the port, we had been waiting. It was already horrible for us. Everything was old and ugly. We were accustomed to other things. And later when they took us and placed us in a home...

Giovanna: And we're talking about... Ah, you told me. 1947. Sara: The baguette, this, that... We went to the market the first time. Now it's a beautiful market that they renovated. Over on José L. Terra. It was a market, with fruits and vegetables. Yes, yes. The people gave them to us.

Giovanna: The food. The fruits and vegetables.

Sara: Yes. They weren't the best, but my mom cleaned them. She cut off the bad parts, she cooked them, and we had food. I'm not ashamed to tell you. It was like that. We worked, and on the weekends we rode the trolley. They didn't charge us either. Because we didn't speak Spanish, we could only make gestures. They took us, and the market was full of fruits and vegetables. How do you say it? Heaping mounds.

Giovanna: Yes. In piles, mounds of produce.

Sara: Choosing, like beggars. It's the truth.

Giovanna: Did people know...

Sara: Choosing the best, taking it home, choosing once again... My

mom worked, but didn't leave the house. While we went out to work during the week, she would clean everything. She peeled everything, she cleaned up the inside, the outside, she chopped them up... And that's how the first time went.

Giovanna: So you say that when you got the port, you first saw the old and ugly city. But when people didn't charge you to ride the trolley, for example, that was because they recognized that you were Jews that had just escaped the war?

Sara: Yes.

Giovanna: People knew, in general.

Sara: Because in those years, many immigrants were arriving. A lot. Many stayed, like we did. Many left.

Giovanna: Where did they go? Do you know?

Sara: I don't know where they went. Many went to Venezuela, and to the south to Colombia, to here, to there. Many people suddenly had family members elsewhere, and so they left. And those who were wealthier went elsewhere.

Giovanna: Of the people that came with you on the cargo ship, did you stay in contact with any of them in Montevideo?

Sara: Of course, of course. I even saw them when they passed away. There was one family that was from the same hometown. But not the parents, the parents had passed away. The father was killed when they burned our city. We were running through the streets, and we saw him bleeding in the street. I don't know what happened to the mother. I don't remember. And I'll tell you something. One of them... One of them died only a few years ago. He and I really liked each other. But nothing ever became of it, because neither one of us had anything. Nothing to start off with. We both were just surviving.

Giovanna: But you still maintained the relationship with that family after years of being here?

Sara: Yes, yes. The Jews don't celebrate New Year's Eve.

Giovanna: No, I mean after so many years, you still knew them, you

still talked with them...

Sara: Yes, yes. Until recently, when I learned about Issac [inaudible name], who was the last one. I saw him a while ago, it was a joy. It was always a joy to see each other. Because I was a young girl...

Giovanna: And he was a son from that family? He was from your generation?

Sara: Yes, yes. He was much older than me. He was a Yiddish teacher. That's it. They knew that we were here. We got together with them. That's it. They knew that we were here. We got together with them. They also had family here. A brother or two that came before the war. Life was like that. And of the people that came here to Uruguay from our city, I don't know if anyone is left. I don't know. If my older sister were here, she also knew a little more than me...

Giovanna: Of course.

Sara: Because she was older. But I don't think so, I don't think so. There's me, because my sisters already died. My brother died in Israel. My younger sister is left. Me, here. And others from Brok Nad Bugiem? I don't know, I don't know.

Giovanna: Sara, when you say that you began to work, I don't know if I understood you correctly, but you told me that there were only Uruguayans in the sewing factory.

Sara: Yes.

Giovanna: You were the only Jew?

Sara: Yes.

Giovanna: How did you learn about that place?

Sara: A good question. The owners were Jewish. And in that time we got the newspapers Unzer Frait, Die Presse, another one that was more religious. And when we arrived, they called us... There was a name, I think. They would put ads in the newspapers. And people like me, the young women... What woman doesn't know how to sew? I was very precise. I sewed very well, very well, everything. Everything I do, the soup I make, I do it well. What I don't know how to do, I don't know.

Giovanna: They knew you were coming?

Sara: Of course. And there was a workshop, not far from where I lived. And so I went there. They hired me right away, I talked to the owner, to the man and the lady. What a great cook that lady was. Now I remember the soup she used to make. Sometimes I would ask them about it to learn how to make it. She would tell me, "The parsley comes last." I remember that perfectly. Remember...

Giovanna: She was the wife of the gentleman, the owner of the workshop?

Sara: Yes, the wife, yes.

Giovanna: And where were they from?

Sara: Oh, I don't know.

Giovanna: But were they from Poland?

Sara: Yes. Yes, they were from Poland, yes. Tailors from Poland, because the Poles in Uruguay were mostly tailors. Tailors, shoemakers, that kind of people. And well, I worked until 1950 when I got married.

Giovanna: About three years. And where in Montevideo was the workshop? What neighborhood?

Sara: Near Goes. And there were quite a few. And I left to get paid 20 pesos more elsewhere. I switched immediately.

Giovanna: You changed jobs a lot in those three years?

Sara: Yes.

Giovanna: Did you always work with people from the Jewish community, or not always?

Sara: Once, the last time, I worked with a local. He had a workshop, and I didn't know Spanish. I knew that he was looking for a girl to do the sewing by hand. We understood each other without speaking, he would leave me in the workshop with the key locked inside, no one could enter anymore. When he came, he would knock on the door and I would see that it was him and I would open the door.

Giovanna: And you worked alone? You were the only one?

Sara: I didn't even go to the bathroom, because I often wanted to. I didn't even go to the bathroom, I was sitting there, sewing everything by hand. He was astonished at how I did things, even the buttonholes, they were done by hand. It was men's tailoring.

Giovanna: And you worked alone in this workshop?

Sara: Yes, alone.

He went to the cafe.

Giovanna: But I mean, there were no other people working in other areas?

Sara: No, no. He went to the cafe.

He would drink there, like all locals. Drinking coffee. He left the work to me. He showed me what I had to do and I did it. I got paid a lot more. And well, I don't know. Until what times when and what... That I don't know.

Giovanna: And you commuted. How long did it take, for example, to get to Goes from where you lived?

Sara: I got lost only once.

Giovanna: Because it's far away. Goes is far.

Sara: I never forgot that. My mom was sitting in bed waiting for every child to come home. I would work an extra hour so I wouldn't have to work Saturdays.

Thank you to Sara Piatnica de Drebiner and Hogar Israelita