

Could you tell us your name, date of birth and where you are from?

I come from Lviv Oblast, Stryi Rayon, the village of Zhulyn.

I was a young girl of 15.

My name is Kateryna Chaban.

I came to my brother.

I didn't like it, I was crying.

My brother said, if you continue crying, we'll send you back home.

At that time there was also a boy from our village in X. He was older. He knew that I arrived, and he wrote to me asking if I would like to go to X?

And I wrote to him that I would like that. So I came to X?

There were no Ukrainian organizations there, no church, but there was a strong working organization.

And this guy took me to a voice trial at once.

And afterwards I was performing on the stage, singing and dancing Ukrainian dances, etc.

I got married there. A Kozak We have been living there up to 1941. In 1941 I came to Victoria.

I would like to ask you what year you come to Canada?

1929

And what was the reason that you left?

There was no reason.

My brother remembered me when I was a baby.

He wrote a letter to my mom, asking: 'How 's our little beauty?'

At that time I was already going to school. And I wrote a couple of words to him saying: 'I am not small anymore, I am big.'

He wrote to me and asked if I would like to come.

He wrote that he ate white bread and there was no dark bread. And I said yes, I would like that.

And he sent me a ship card and took me to Canada.

Which year did your brother....

It was a voluntary decision to leave. And my mother didn't want to let me go.

But my older sister said:" Let her go, let her eat white bread!".

There was actually no reason to leave.

Here I had no problems.

My husband had a job.

We came to Victoria.

What education did you obtain? At which school did you learn?

6 grades

It was under the Polish, correct?

Yes, yes

Can you remember if there was any kind of discrimination of Ukrainians?

Not in our village. In our village everything was in Ukrainian.

Later there were two or three Polish households, and there were Polish children at school.

Then we had one or two lessons of Polish.

Later my sister wrote to me that people could be arrested by Polish gendarmes for singing Ukrainian songs in the street and put in prison.

Did your relatives at that time call themselves Ukrainians or Russians?

I think they said Russians.

They were Catholics, Greek Catholics, correct?

What was your father's job?

My father was the chairman, then the deputy chairman of the community, the government.

My mother was a usual housewife. There were workers working for our family.

My father died and my mother remained with three children. I was the youngest. So I went.

Your brother came to Canada before you. What job did he find here?

He came to Saskatchewan, ...Ontario. He married in Canada.

He had turned to Orthodox Christianity.

And he asked me if I had turned to the Orthodox Christianity.

My mother and father were Greek Catholics, me too. If you have changed your religion it's your business.

Did your brother marry a Canadian or Ukrainian girl?

He married a Ukrainian girl and he speaks only Ukrainian until now.

So, your brother sent you a ship card. Which way did you go from Ukraine? Did you go via ...or Danzig?

Via Gdansk.

Then from Gdansk to London on a big ship. London - Halifax- Montreal. Then to Saskatchewan.

Did you go alone?

Yes.

I had two suitcases.

There was an agent who came and helped me. Some agents came to my brother asking if he could maintain me. I was taken care of during my journey.

What were your first impressions of Halifax after your village when you travelled by train in Canada?

I wanted to return to Ukraine.

Really? Why?

I was sad.

How did you cross the ocean? How was it? Were there a lot of people? Was the ship clean?

The ship was clean.

Many people were sick.

I was young, I was not sick and I did not sit in the room.

I could go and bring them something.

They thanked me and wished that God would give me a good fate.

Then you went from Halifax to Saskatchewan through Montreal by train, correct?

Then your brother...

He came. I do not know him, he does not know me.

The conductor says: it's time to pack your things. So I packed my suitcase. They opened the door.

And I see a boy and a horse sleigh.

I did not want to go.

Because I was told not to go with strangers.

Then he says: "Come on, come on, my little sister! I am your brother!" Then he started crying and I started crying. So we both cried, embraced. And he carried me on that sleigh.

I was crying all the way, almost an hour. It looked like Siberia, there was snow everywhere. I was crying for an hour. I thought: "Back at home I was singing and dancing with the girls. What I will be doing here? Sitting at home?"

Did you plan to remain in Canada when you were leaving Ukraine?

I was missing my friends and mom.
I had 5 dollars which my mother gave me.
So I was sad, and he saw that.
He said: "In autumn I will sell my wheat and send you back home.
In autumn I came to...Halifax.

How did this guy know that you had come? Did you write to him?

He was at my brother's before that. And my brother said: "My youngest sister is coming to Canada."
And he says: "Please let me know when she comes."
And my brother wrote to him that I had come.
So then he started writing to me. I did not know him. He did not know me. He said he knew my elder sister. There were 12 of us, and I was the youngest.
So he asked me if I would like to go to X.
"There is a big hotel. A lot of our girls work there. You can get a job. I will try to help you".
So I went there.
When I came there, the lady boss said I could not work, since I was a child. I started crying. They started explaining to me that she does not want to hire me, because I am too young. And I said to them: "Just tell her I will do anything she tells me."
I thought to myself: "Where do I go now?"
I left my brother. The guy sent me a ticket, and I did not tell my brother that I was leaving. So he told the lady boss that I would do anything if she gave me a job. And she saw that I was crying, so finally she said: "Ok, I will hire her for a one month probation period." I was working so hard trying to please her, so that she would not fire me. The other girls earned 25 dollars. And she gave me a cheque for 30 dollars. When the girls heard about it they asked me to show the cheque and then they went to the owner asking: "How can it be? She has just started!"
And the owner said: "If you work like her, you will also be paid as much."

I was washing the floor with wide wooden boards with soap and brush. And the lady boss was watching me.

Did you know English?

No

Which hotel was it?

It was X Hotel

Were there many Ukrainians working there?

There were a lot of girls working there.

What was the name of the guy who sent you the ticket?

He still lives in X.

Polunychka.

So he sent you the ticket and you came. Where did you live? Did you live with him?

There were rooms in the hotel, and I shared a room with another Ukrainian girl.

So I worked there.

This guy, he worked in the Ukrainian Labour Temple. Was there a large labour temple and community?

Yes, there was a big community. It was the second biggest after Winnipeg.

I got used to it and did not want to leave.

I knew everyone here.

Arts, festivals. And I obtained certificates in Winnipeg.

Then a Labour Temple was opened in Victoria. We were the first to come to Victoria from Halifax. Then people started coming after us. They stayed with us for 1-2 months until they bought their houses. They also organized a Labour Temple here.

I also played in the Royal Theatre and won first place. It was a drama Festival for the whole week.

What was the reason that you moved to Victoria?

Everything was closing. There were no jobs. And my second husband (I first married a Kozak). He died. And I married a Rutich. And he read somewhere that there was a laundry in Victoria, and they needed workers. And he went alone. I came later with two children.

I cannot say that there is a big Ukrainian community in Victoria now. Were there previously more people?

Many people came and many died.

Who else was there? What other Ukrainians?

There was no labour temple at that time.

Then it was organized.

100 families came.

When was it?

In 1941.

During World War II, in 1939 - 1941 the government closed labour temples in Canada. Were you there at that time?

No, it was after me.
My brother was in jail.
He was arrested.
He was a teacher.
The one in Edmonton (?).

But it did not have any impact on you, did it?

No.

Did anything similar happen in Victoria?

No.

You did not suffer from government actions, like deportation or persecution in the 30-th, did you?

Maybe later, when I left already.
In the 30-th many workers were deported, who were not Canadian citizens.
In 1932-1934.

Families or singles?

Singles were deported.
I knew them personally.

I worked in the Soup Kitchen.
The Ukrainian Labour Temple organized it.
They called me a couple of times a week to help.

Where did they take the money to organize the Soup Kitchen?

They had their own hall. There were concerts every week and dances on Saturdays.
Thus the money came.

I am also interested in social life. You say that there was entertainment every Saturday. Where is that social life today?

There were lots of young people.
There were lots of performances.
The youth leaves. They leave the organizations.
Those who came from Ukraine get old and die.
Now it is very difficult to gather people for a choir or a performance.
Earlier it was easy.

How many people were there in the Community Labour Temple?

About 50-60.

Were they families or singles?

There were families and also singles.

Was it for leisure?

No, people worked there.
There was laundry...

I know that it was a working organization which advocated the Soviet Union and adhered to its position. Being a member of such an organization, what was your attitude towards it? Were you interested in the political element of this organization?

I was not interested in politics, I was interested in the arts. I liked it and I was interested in it. I did not understand politics, I never spoke or thought about it. Only the arts.

People said that the Temple were communists.

It is not true. Everyone could not be communists.

Before becoming a communist people underwent a serious check as to whether they could be communists.

I was not a communist. The Ukrainian Labor Temple had its own governance.

There was no external governance.

There were voices against the Soviet Union against Soviet Ukraine. You must have heard about it...Why did you leave the Labour temple?

Many new people came.

I left because I did not know those people.

Do you think there were many people like you that got used to this organization?

There were a lot of such people.

But they were interested in arts, singing.

During the first years of existence of the Orthodox and Catholic communities people stayed with the Labor Temple.

We went there to have a look.

We did not participate.

I was told that there were conflicts and even fights in big cities like Saskatchewan and Winnipeg. Were such things also happening in Victoria?

I do not know about Victoria.

I do not remember.

They rented Union Hall, Royal Theatre.

Now there is an association.

They organize dinners once or twice a year to collect money for the Ukrainian Labor Temple.

So you came here with your husband in 1941. Which job did he find here?

He worked a lot.

First he found a job in the airport. **Then he moved to.... He was coughing due to dust and the doctor told him to leave it (because of a hazard to lungs). Then he moved to ... and worked there for 2 or 3 years.**

Did many Ukrainians work on such jobs during those years? Was there a big community during the war?

Initially no. More people were coming later.
Why did people come? Many jobs closed.
Many people went East.

They knew you were there...

I wrote to my acquaintances.

Was there any discrimination of Ukrainians in Victoria during the war?

When I was coming after my husband wrote to me that he made the downpayment for the house.

A Ukrainian woman met me in the street and said: "Oh, I heard you are going to Victoria".
I say: "Yes".

She says: "What is your husband doing there? Do you know that he cannot go out in the street without a tie there?"

I say: "I do not know. I had not been there. My husband did not tell me anything like that".

I had a sty in my eyes. She said: "Do you think they will let you in with that eye?"

I said: "I am not going to Europe, I am going to Canada. I am not going to cross any borders".

"I guess they will send you back."

After that everyone was surprised. And they started coming.

As I said, 50 or more people passed through our house. They stayed a month or two until they found their houses.

Were there any separate Ukrainian settlements in Victoria like in other places?

There was never a big community in Victoria.

Would you like to add anything?

Was there a Ukrainian school?

Two of my children went to school there. They learned Ukrainian, dance, music, violin, and mandolin.

Why do you think the working movement disappeared?

My son married an English girl. They will not come to this organization.

Old people will not come. It just dissolved.