

Halyna Huba

My mother's sister's oldest daughter, Varvarka, came and told us that six children had died within six weeks. They didn't know what to do anymore and came to us for help, but we didn't have anything. So they returned home. We didn't know what had happened to them for a long time. In the summer, father took a train to see them, to find out what had happened. When he came home he said that Uncle Fedir died after the children had died. They buried him in their own garden. They also didn't go to the collective farm and they were also persecuted for not joining. So my aunt, her daughter and her oldest son, Prokip, dug a grave in the garden and buried the children. When their father died, they couldn't carry him to the grave. It took them three weeks to carry him there. This is very hard. When my father came home, he said that he had covered up the grave.

You couldn't save yourself by collecting stalks, because there were guards, and whoever was caught with those stalks were either shot on the spot or, if it was a child, the beaten terribly. Sometimes the child didn't even make it home afterwards. Older people were scared because they knew they would be punished. When my sister came home later in the summer, she told me that of her village of fifteen hundred, she thought that only one third survived. They had dug big pits and brought the dead there. My sister said that some children who were still alive were thrown in there, because the pit that they dug was kept open for a long time, and they collected the dead and threw them in, and when the pit was full, they covered it up.

It was not easy to live through. We never had a youth. Our youth went God knows where. We lived through everything we shouldn't have lived through. The Communist system made us the worst slaves in the world. We were guilty, we just didn't know of what, of what sins. Simply because we were called Ukrainians. This was not so easy, but somehow God granted us that we survived. I want to say that maybe this will help, that there are still people who will explain what we had to live through.