**LINE FIVE: THE INTERNAL PASSPORT**

**The Soviet Jewish Oral History Project of the Women's Auxiliary**

**of the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago**

**STAN KHAZAN**

**Electrical Engineer**

BIRTH: 1953, Romny, Ukraine

SPOUSE: Eleonora Kogan Khazan

April 28, 1959, Kiev

Married, 1979, Kiev

CHILDREN: Julia, 1982, Kiev

PARENTS: David Khazan, August 23, 1927

Sofia Jashinsky Khaan, October 29, 1931

SIBLINGS:

MATERNAL GRANDPARENTS:

PATERNAL GRANDPARENTS:

JEWISH ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS (IF GIVEN):

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

WOMEN'S AUXILIARY JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTERS OF CHICAGO

NAME: **STAN KHAZAN**

DATE: July 11, 1990

INTERVIEWERS: Margot Hirsch and Saralyn Levine

Elenora Khazan also present. Her comments are in­cluded.

I am thirty-seven years old. In Russia I intended both elementary and high school, and then came college. Five years of college, that is the usual term. I have a Bachelors Degree in Electrical Engineering. In Russia I was an Electri­cal Engineer, here Electrical Designer. Not as high a level here.

I make design projects for nuclear project stations. Some kind of paperwork and wiring design and design of electrical devices; how to use them.

My father's name is David and my mother is Sofia. Before she was married, my mother's last name was Jashinsky. My father was born on August 23, 1927. My mother's birthday is October 29, 1931. I was their only child.

I did not belong to any religious kind of group in Russia. Here, I do not belong to a synagogue but we attend some Jewish holiday services.

I was born in a little Ukrainian city, Romny, and I lived there for one year and then our family moved to Lvov, a big town. I lived for a long time in Lvov.

In Romny, we lived together in one apartment with my grandfather and grandmother and my mother's sister. We were all in two rooms. I remember the apartment because they are still living in it. We used to visit my grandparents every year after we moved to Lvov.

Maybe I can remember a little of my life before school years. I remember a little about the winter in Romny. Around the apartment it was very cold and in the room there was a special heater which burned coal. It was warm in the room. They cooked on this heater. Romny is a little town and people in little towns don't move very often, so I remember all my neighbors from when I was a child, and they are the same ones when I grew up.

I spent a lot of time in Romny when I was small. It was difficult for my parents to be with me when I was little, because my father worked and my mother worked, and they didn't like that I changed Kindergarten. So a lot of time I spent in Romny with my grandmother and grandfather. I knew them both very well but they have died now, a few years ago.

It is difficult to talk about the neighborhood where we lived in Lvov. We lived in big houses. Most of the apart­ments in Lvov are not such as in America. In every apartment building is many floors. It was a four floor apartment house. I had friends and very often we played together. I think there were good friends but, by the way, when I said my name in Russian it was "Slava." This was maybe a Polish name, maybe Ukrainian but not Jewish. I was not the only Slava on our street and when they wanted to call me or one of the others, I was "Slava-*zhid*." I played mostly with non-Jews. I had only one Jewish friend and he was a little older.

So all my friends were very Ukrainian, Polish and a little Russian. All the Jewish families were scattered around every where. They were not living close together. This made very mixed feelings for me. Mostly I felt comfort­able with my friends but I remember, and my mother remembers, when I once said, "Mother, I don't want to be a Jew." I said it once. Sometimes I had problems. They threw stones at me. Mostly we shared a common place as children but some­times I remember one case when I was alone and all my com­panions threw stones at me. I did not understand why nobody helped me.

My grandparents lived -. I don't know about my grand-father, maybe he lived all his life in Romny. But it seems to me my grandmother lived in a little village not too far from Romny. At that time, people married others from the same area.

My grandmother did not work, not for her whole life. My grand­father was a beautician. He worked with women and men. He was very famous. I remember, at the time of the war, my grand­father was a soldier in 1942 and he lost his leg. He was demobi­lized from the army he continued to be a beautician in Romny and I remember that many women liked to go to him.

My grandparents did not try to teach me any Jewish traditions. I remember my cousins, they are older than I, and they knew something more about this. They could understand when someone spoke in Yiddish. I can say that my grandparents talked in Yiddish when they didn't want me to understand.

I knew that I was a Jew. I couldn't not know it. When I told my mother I didn't want to be a Jew she explained to me that you can't be ashamed that you are a Jew. Just as some people are something else. You should be careful when you are in company with other people, because you can have some problems if they know that you are a Jew. So my parents and grandparents tried to keep me away from Judaism so that I would have less problems.

I don't know what their parents were like, not where they lived or what they did for a living. There was a separate Jewish cemetery in Romny and every year we would go. There are no graves there for my great-grandparents. Maybe they are in another place.

When I started elementary school it was in Lvov. I didn't feel anything there about being a Jew or being differ­ent from others. Maybe Anti-Semitism is more popular among the Ukrainian people. But in the community where I lived it was a Russian community because it was a community for military brass and soldiers. The school was a Russian school, and I was all right there.

But in high school --

When we lived in Lvov my mother was home before I left for school. She worked some years but not all the time. When I studied in elementary school, my mother did not work until I was in third grade. Then I went to school and back by myself because then I knew my way and the area.

My father was a worker. I don't know how to explain his occupation. He was a steel worker. He worked on a machine that did something - a machinist. My mother sewed things at first, a tailor, then she changed her profession and she was a quality control person in a factory for television sets.

The situation of education in Russia is different than here. Our children have some homework. So I played with my friends and did my homework. I did some things for our home. I remember it was at the time of Khrushchev and it was a time of food shortage. It was unusual before this. But sixteen years ago it was very bad in the country. There was no bread and I would come home from school and then I would stay in line for a long time to get bread and butter. And then my parents would take my place in line. I would stay in line for two hours or more.

Then I remember Khrushchev was discharged and the U.S.S.R. bought bread in Canada. They changed gold for bread and things were better so I lost my job of standing in line!

I remember my grandmother sent us, at the time of Purim, it was my grandfather's birthday and my grandmother sent us this special Jewish food. Hamantaschen. They didn't cele­brate Jewish holidays but every year she made this special food. That I remember. Maybe when she was a child she did celebrate the holidays.

We would have political holidays and we would have a day off. We would meet with relatives and talk together. Not really a celebration. Russian families often discussed politics. My parents criticized the government regime, just about every one, but when I was younger I was against this criticism. I said this was not a good idea because if they make mistakes, it is the fault of the times. I believed in the system, but they did not. This is the way Russian education works. Communist ideas are the best ideas in the world. Capitalism is the worst thing for people. The whole party line.

No one in my family belonged to the Communist Party. They wanted my father to become a Communist because he was a worker. It is an interesting system in Russia, if you are a Communist you get some privileges. You get to be a supervisor and you can get a better salary and promotions and apartments. But not everybody can be a Communist, only a quarter, I don't know how to put it. Only a certain percentage of engineers, or other positions could be a party member. It is very difficult for a Jew to be a party member because they feel Jews were not reliable party members.

I didn't understand many things that happened to me back then. I didn't understand this seriously until I entered my college. High school was mostly all right, I had some incidents. I had some problemss with my math teacher. She always gave me the worst grades even though my papers were correct.

She knew I was Jewish because everybody fills out an application when you attend school or even Kindergarten and every class has a big notebook with all the data about all the pupils. Being Jewish is put in under nationality.

In college, we have exams before we can become a student in the university. There is a competition to be ac­cepted. And they have a quota for Jewish students. This is illegal because the law says that all nationalities should be repre­sented, everybody should have equal rights. In my town, Lvov, it may have been worse than in other Ukrainian towns. There was more Anti-Semitism. I know that it was something special when a Jew entered into medical college in Lvov or to the university. Mostly they were Ukrainian colleges. Before World War II, the population of Lvov was approximately one-third Jewish. After the war there were lot of Jews, but when the Jews started to emigrate, a lot of the Jews from Lvov emigrated. When I was a child, I remember there was a place in Lvov where you could meet with Jews. Now the only place you can meet Jews in Lvov is the Jewish cemetery.

When I left my high school I was interested in History but I understood that I did not have a chance to be a histori­an because it is a political subject and it is difficult to enter this program. Then I understood many things at this time and I became in opposition to official history and the official way of explain­ing many subjects. I understood that I could not be a historian because I would have to be untruth­ful. Most of them knew that it was not accurate, it was more like propaganda.

Maybe in tenth grade I understood many of these things because I began to listen to the Voice of America, I began to discuss some things with my friends and with older people. Maybe it seems strange to you but our teacher of social subjects was a very interesting woman. She was young woman and a progressive woman, very smart. She gave us some unofficial information and we began to think. She told us about Soltshynitsen. I didn't know about him until her lessons. She explained to us maybe not all the truth but something to think over. She was Russian.

I was not a fanatic. I believed in my ideas and I had some arguments. When she proposed me another argument and I compared the arguments, it was not a surprise for me. It was not that one day I was a communist and the next day I was anti-communist. It was step by step, one stage to another.

I think some of my friends also grew in this way. We began then to discuss politics among ourselves.

(Were you ever drafted, Stan, like Afghanistan? Or how do they draft into the Army?)

I was drafted at the time of the Institute. I had a military course. In college, yes. I had military officer's position. In this case, I wasn't drafted but every two years I should go to military camp and have some training. Just like your reserve years. This training was to last until I was thirty-six and forty, nobody is sure yet. (He partici­pated in this camp training maybe three or four times during our marriage.- Elen) (If you were still in Russia, you would still be going?) Yes.

I worked at this time and my wife was a student, this was two years after I completed the five years of engineering college. I worked for four years in Lvov after college and I had frequent business trips, mostly to other Ukrainian towns, power stations, etc.

We met at a party. I had a cousin in Kiev, I visited her for a weekend. It was about a year after we met that we decided to get married. We could only meet when I had a trip to her town. It was important to me that I marry a Jewish woman. I understood that I would not be happy with a Russian girl. Because most of the Russian girls, they may not be anti-Semitic, but Jewish families have some different atti­tudes.

My father said to me that it is better to have a Jewish girl because they have some experience. They gave me some examples about Russian and Jewish young women and young men had problems. He said to me that Jewish people keep together.

We were married in Kiev. Almost the whole family came. There was nothing Jewish about the wedding. We were married in the Palace of Marriages. We had strudel at the wedding party. This is only a Jewish food in Russia. We also had Gefilte fish. The first day we had a party in a res­taurant, the second day we had a party at home.

After we were married, I moved to Kiev. This was four years after I finished the institute. At first I had the same job because I was stationed (with my work) close to Kiev, for about one year, and then this project budget was finished. Another reason to change my job was that in Russia they have records about where everybody lives. My records said I lived in Lvov, so I could not live in Kiev legally. Not more than one or two months and we needed an apartment. So I changed the record in my passport because we were married and I changed my residence to Kiev. It was not easy, but eventu­ally I got a job in Kiev. I started to look for a job before I left the job in Lvov but until I finally found one, it was a very hard time.

We lived with Eleonora's parents for a little time. But her grandmother had a one room apartment. We did what they call a family change. We moved into her grandmother's apartment and she moved in with Eleonora's parents. It was very lucky. All of our friends were envious! It is not very easy to do this. For example her grandmother said that she needed to move because she was very old and needed to move in with her daughter.

Eleonora was still in college at this time. I had made good money at my previous job and on the long business assignments the pay was better. The first job I got in Kiev was with a little company that made adjustments of equipment in different plants and it was some engineering position. It was a little bit different; more as a worker and not engineer­ing. So then I had to do my engineering with my hands. In Russia, engineer is not too prestigious a position. Politi­cians there cannot understand the importance of having highly educated people.

We were married in 1979 and we came to America in 1989. We tried to leave Russia in 1979. Before we got married we had a long talk and we both agreed that we should both emigrate. Eleonora's family had an invitation to go to Israel. But we needed an additional invitation for me to go. She would not leave without me. We asked all our friends and relatives to try to get another invitation for me. If we had gotten one, we might have left for Israel in 1979.

We did receive one, but too late. They had inter­rupted emigration permits. It was closed in October. Brezhnev was in charge and they stopped it. This was before Afghanistan, but there was some political reason for it.

It was a very hard time to find a job then, partic­ularly for all Jews, because everyone was afraid the Jews would leave and they would question the employers.

We were married for three years before Julia was born.

Every boss has to be a communist and, you see, in Russia, we have three bosses. Questions are decided not only by the boss on the job, but a second side is the professional union, and third side is the party committee. And everybody should be a communist and if anyone should leave the country from this place of employment then it means trouble for them because they could lose their job or their position. Ten years ago this was a reality.

There was more than one reason that we wanted to leave. We were opposed to the regime, we had no kind of freedom. We felt that the society was "sick". I felt some experience in anti-semitism when I was trying to find a job. There are many examples. You read in newspaper an advertise­ment that they need some kind of position and you call them and they ask you to come to an inter­view. You go for the interview and they ask you to show the passport. You show them the passport and they say, "Good-bye." Right now. Some of them were so polite they would say they just hired someone yesterday. But others just say they don't need you. But the head of Personnel Department is a kind of KGB department altogether. He said to me that there was no position in his company but he knew another head of a Personnel Department at another company and I will call them and you can go direct to them. He gave me the address and I go to this address and I show them my documents and they would say, "Sorry, we don't need you."

When I was studying at college I met with professors that I had some problems with. Because I saw my colleagues had an exam and what was their knowledge and what my knowledge and then I saw our grades and they did not compare.

After 1979, we thought we would forget about emigration. It was our luck, maybe, that we had just started to apply, we didn't sell any furniture or anything else. When we heard later that the emigration was open again, we applied with our old invitation. Everybody applied to go to Israel. Then they could change their mind when you are out of Russia.

When we applied this time, it took about nine months. Now it was very different situation in Russia. It is much better than ten years ago. First, nobody can fire you for wanting to emigrate. My supervisor, when he knew that I had applied to emigrate said to me, "Good luck."

There were really no changes when we leave our country. We could say things more openly. But first we think that there will be some kind of change but then we saw that while it will be one communist party in this country there will be no great changes. Because what they want is only to improve their power, to improve the communist system. They understand they should let people have more freedom to talk, but not to do. They try to control the situation so that there will be no changes.

It was worse for Jews because there is more freedom for people, they didn't have it before and they didn't understand what it means. They think that freedom means that you can do everything, you aren't responsible for anything. You feel anti-Semitism? you can say it freely! If they said this before only in their families now they say it on the street.

The anti-Semitism among the Ukraine is sort of Jewish knowledge. It really isn't documented. But everyone feels that it is better to enter the institute in Kazan, in Russia, than in the Ukraine, in Kiev, for example. A lot of Jews in the Ukraine have a high education but did not get it in the Ukraine, in their native town. Everyone knows which are the best institutes or colleges to enter.