United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Cesare Ugianskis
February 18, 2013
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a recorded interview with Cesare Ugianskis, conducted by Ina Navazelskis on February 18, 2013 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Sherman Oaks, CA and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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CESARE UGIANSKIS
February 18, 2013

Question: This is a **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **Cesare Ugianskis**, on February 18, 2013, in **Sherman Oaks**, **California**. Thank you Mr. **Ugianskis** for agreeing to speak with us today. And we're going to start the interview at the very beginning, so I'm going to want to know about your childhood, your background. I'll start with those basic kinds of questions: when were you born, who were your parents, did you have siblings. And we go from there.

Answer: Okay, now you want me to tell that?

Q: Yes. **[technical interruption]**

A: My father was a Lithuanian army officer.

Q: What was his name?

A: **Juozapas**, or in English, **Joseph Ugianskis**. And he was sent to **Italy** to attend a cavalry school in **Pinerolo**, **Italy**. Of course my mother was with him because he spent several years there. And on November 18, 1929, I was born in **Italy**. Interesting enough, it was on Sunday, and they couldn't get ahold of any medical people, so my dad called his – the doctor, the veterinarian that he knew. And I was delivered in **Pinerolo**, **Italy** by a veterinarian. Anyway, when he was asked how difficult it was, his answer was, it's a hell of a lot smaller than a horse.

Q: It's unusual for two reasons: that a Lithuanian is born in **Italy**, and two, that he's delivered by a veterinarian.

A: Anyway, after the school, we returned to **Lithuania** and my father continued to serve in the Lithuanian army.

Q: That's his cavalry school. Did – how many years – do you remember how many years it lasted?

A: Well, I'm not exactly sure, but I would think probably sometime between '28 and '30.

Q: Okay. So, in 1930 you come back to **Lithuania**, and you probably have no memories of **Italy**.

A: Very foggy. In fact, when I visited **Pinerolo** some years ago, I recognized the place where I was being carried around.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. But that's all that I remembered about it.

Q: Okay. Were you the only child in the family?

A: No, I – my – my parents had six children. The oldest one died shortly after birth, then I was the next, **Cesare**, born in **Italy**. Then my brother **Roman**, who was born in **Lithuania**, in **Kaunas**. And then a sister was born, her name was **Ligeia**. And unfortunately she died from one of the diseases that was spreading around, maybe

typhus or something like that. Or diphtheria. Anyway, she died at the age of five. And then my brother **Joseph**, **Joe** was born in **Lithuania**. So he was 10 years younger than I. And then a year later or so my sister was born, **Grazina**. She, and we all ended up in the **United States**, as a family.

Q: Di – were you growing up, after you returned from **Italy** in **Kaunas**, in the capital city at the time?

A: No. At first we lived in **Alytus**, **Lithuania**, where my father was a cavalry officer. Only in 1939, we moved to **Kaunas**.

Q: Oh, so your early experiences are from **Alytus**.

A: That's right.

Q: Okay.

A: That's right.

Q: And your father, I then take it, was a professional military man.

A: That's right, he was a professional military man. Just one – one thing about this military career. He started out during World War II in the tsar's army.

Q: Oh, let's – let's start – let's go back a bit. Tell me about your father.

A: Okay.

Q: What kind of a person wa – where – when was he born, the date of his birth and his name, his kind of background and how he became a military man.

A: Okay, well, I think he was born in 19 – I'm sorry 1893. And there's a confusion about the date because it was at that time there was the old calendar, that was changed later. So I think his birthday is on the 18th of January in 19 – I mean, 1893.

Q: And he grew up in **Lithuania**?

A: In **Kaunas**, he grew up in **Kaunas**, and after they – **Lithuania** fought for its independence in 19 – 1819, he was a volunteer in that army.

Q: Oh, I'd like to step – still step back a bit. If he was born in 1893, then he would have been of draft age at what point, 17 - 18 years old in the middle of World War I?

A: Yes.

Q: So, you mentioned he was in the tsar's army, was he drafted into that army? Or did he –

A: Oh yes, he was, yes he was, yes.

Q: Okay. Did he used to tell you stories of his experiences?

A: No, no.

Q: Okay.

A: He never talked about his years that he served in the – in the fight for the Lithuanian independence. The – the only thing that I remember about it, that he was

given a – a medal which is called **Wikyas**(ph) **kryžius**. But essentially it's the same kind of thing that we have Medal of Honor.

Q: And what was that for?

A: It was for his bravery fighting in the – in the – with the Polish and Russian troops.

Q: Okay. So, from the tsar's army, after World War I ends, that's when **Lithuania** starts fighting for independence?

A: That's right.

Q: And he changes armies?

A: That's right, he changes armies.

Q: Okay, and he – okay.

A: He becomes an officer in the Lithuanian army, in the cavalry.

Q: I see.

A: That's how he ended up in **Italy**.

Q: So, did he have the title of **savanoris karys**, if he was fighting for Lithuanian independence?

A: I don't remember the title, but ti – the title that I think of is – was **savanoris** –

Q: Okay.

A: – volunteer, essentially.

Q: A volunteer, okay.

A: And then he – when the war was – I mean, **Lithuania** gained its independence, he ended up going to military school, and became an officer in the Lithuanian army.

Q: Okay.

A: And after that, he continued to serve.

Q: And your mother? Tell us a little bit about her. Where was she born, what was her name?

A: Okay, my mother was born in a small village along the **Nemunas** river, **Ploksciai**. Her father was a very successful lawyer in **Lithuania** and he had a large estate in that little town. And when I was on my way, they were in **Ploksciai**, in that little town and was delivered there, and th-they – they – I mean, she was born there. And I-I think she was born in **1906**, but I don't remember the date.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: And –

Q: Do you remember the estate? Do you remember the estate?

A: Oh, the estate, yes, I do remember the estate, because I was there, trying to get her back under the new **Lithuania**.

Q: Oh, I see. But when you were growing up, did you spend time on this estate?

A: I probably – I remember being there once or twice, with my mother, visiting there.

Q: I see. So, let's turn a little bit, and talk about your parents as – as people. What kind of personalities did they have?

A: Well, let me just finish about my mother.

Q: Okay.

A: Her name was **Krasauskita**(ph), which is derived from **Krasauskas**(ph). And she was fairly young when she got married to my father in 1926, I think.

Q: Okay.

A: And essentially my – my dad was a military fa – my – my family was a military family, so we moved around. And I remember living in the place called **Myampoli**(ph). That's where – the first place I remember I lived. Then I lived in **Alytus**, and then we moved to **Kaunas**. And when in 1940, when the Russians essentially occupied **Lithuania** and **Lithuania** became the Socialist Republic, my father was dra – transferred into the Red Army. So he became a lieutenant colonel in the Red Army.

Q: Well, here's – I have a question about that, and I'll ask it now, and then we'll go back a little bit to your –

A: Okay.

Q: – to your childhood. Things like that happened, but it sounds to me rather unusual, because many army officers, many professional military men were actually arrested by the Soviets. So how is it that he wasn't – not only not it – wasn't he arrested, but he becomes a military officer in the Soviet army?

A: Well, because he never was involved in politics.

Q: I see.

A: And his father was a policeman that was killed by the Germans during World War I. And so essentially, he came from a simple family, and he was born in a little town on – on – along the **Nemunas** river. And he spoke very good Russian, because he lived in **Russia** for years too, being – being – being in the service. So essentially, he wasn't arrested, but we found out that when – when the German occupied **Lithuania** in 1941, we found out that we are in a – the family was on a list to be deported to **Siberia** next week.

Q: Really?

A: Yes.

Q: So it didn't matter that he would have been a Soviet army officer?

A: That's right.

Q: Okay.

A: That's right. That's what I heard.

Q: Okay.

A: I mean, I didn't see any paper or anything, because at that time I was too young to decipher anything, I was essentially – in 1941 I was 11 years old.

Q: Yeah.

A: Or in 1940.

Q: So when – when you were growing up, and you moved around in different places, was there something that was different between – you felt was different between your family and other kids?

A: Yes, because we always have to make new friends. So it's just kind of different, but we – we adapted to that very quickly. It didn't really bother us. Because essentially we moved – we really moved with the army, you know, it wasn't like a new job or something. It was just o-officer being moved to a – getting another assignment.

Q: In a different place.

A: Yeah, in a different place, so we just –

Q: Were all of your friends Lithuanian when you were growing up?

A: Yes, I would say so. Yeah, come – well, not really. There were several ethnic Russians that lived in **Lithuania** that I befriended, yes.

Q: Okay, and did you – did you have any friends who were Jews, did you have any friends who were Germans, did you –

A: Yes, yes, we – our neighbors. The – my grandmother's neighbors were Lithuanian Jews. And –

Q: And your grandmother lived where?

A: I beg your pardon?

Q: Where did your grandmother live?

A: Oh, she lived in **Kaunas**.

Q: Okay.

A: And she was friends with them, and they had some children there and so I would – when I would visit my grandmother, I would play with them. And then, of course, they disappeared in 1941.

Q: Do you remember their names?

A: **Layba**(ph).

Q: **Layba**(ph)?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Do you remember their last name?

A: That's the last name.

Q: Oh, that's the last name was **Layba**(ph).

A: **Layba**(ph). I don't remember the first names.

Q: Okay, and were they boys or girls?

A: Boys.

Q: They were boys.

A: Yeah, they were boys.

Q: Yeah.

A: Two boys, as I remember.

Q: Was – was this your mother's mother or your father's mother?

A: My father's mother.

Q: Okay. And how many – I mean, I take it that you spoke Lithuanian at home?

A: Oh yes, we did.

Q: Okay. Did you remember your parents talking about – you say your father wasn't very political, but do you remember your parents talking about history or politics, or what was going on in the world?

A: Well, some of it, but not – not anything that I remember as a – as an outstanding thing. My father was pretty adept at getting along with the government.

Q: Yeah?

A: So –

Q: What does that mean?

A: Well, he didn't participate in – in – in any cliques, and was – was a fair guy, and – and his underlings always loved him because he was very fair, he was tolerant person.

Q: What kind of a person was he personality-wise?

A: Well, he was pretty straightforward, but pretty strict, as an officer.

Q: Was he? Yeah?

A: And when he said something to do, you did it.

Q: Was there military precision in the house?

A: No.

Q: No?

A: No, my mother was the family's boss in the house.

Q: Oh really?

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah. And was she strict too?

A: No, she was actually very easygoing. Occasionally, you know, she kind of pretended she was beating us, you know, and she just kind of went past the face, you know, past the rear end, you know, and that was about it. No, she was very gentle.

Q: Oh. Did – was your family religious?

A: Not that much. My mother was more than my father. But I don't remember going to church very often with them.

Q: Mm-hm. What was the religion?

A: Catholics.

Q: Okay.

A: My – say one – one thing about my mother. Many years later, when I – when we were here in the **United States**, my mother, and in fact her sister too, told me that in my mother's family, in – there was a Jew that married a Lithuanian women. And in fact, that was a big **[indecipherable]** secret on the German occupation.

Q: Really?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you know who the – who the family member was that that person married?

A: No, it had to be three or four generations back.

Q: I see. So the family itself, **Krasauskas**(ph) family was concerned that they may be targeted –

A: That's right.

Q: – because there had been a Jewish relative.

A: That's right, because there was a Jewish relative, and so nobody talked about it, and people that knew didn't bring it up anywhere.

Q: I see. Even though it could have been in the ni – in the 19th century.

A: That's right. So anyway –

Q: Okay. Do you recall any kinds of – any kind of talk about Jews being different than other people, when you were growing up?

A: Oh yes, you know, all Lithuanians considered Jews different people.

Q: Okay.

A: They still do.

Q: Okay, what do you remember from your childhood? What kind of – what kind of views were there?

A: Well, as I say, my father was not very – he's a very tolerant, you know, he –

Q: I'm not talking about your parents, and your family, but growing up in an atmosphere, you know.

A: Oh – oh – oh, well it's essentially re-really anti-Semitic judgment.

Q: Yeah.

A: That Jews, you know, take ad – take advantage of s – of – of Lithuanians. That was sort of an idea that was spread. I think in fact th-they – the Lithuanians were very tolerant, because in 1300s, Jews came to **Lithuania** because they were being evicted from **England** and **Germany** and **Austria**. And they came to **Poland**, **Lithuania**, because at that time Lithuanians themselves were – weren't Christians.

Very tolerant, they were pagans, you know. And so th – **Lithuania** lived with those Jews until u – udi – unification with **Poland**, in – I think in 1500s. And that's when Jesuits come in, and they the ones that spread all those bad stories about the Jews.

Q: And what were some of those bad stories?

A: Oh, about Jews taking the kids, rolling them in a barrel full of nails and using their b – they blood to – to make matzo.

Q: Those were the sorts of things that you'd hear growing up?

A: That's right, that's right.

Q: Okay.

A: And that they were stealing things from people, you know, they were really bad people. Of course, all it was, jealousy, because Jews were organized well, they were well educated. And there were – of course there were poor Jews too, but – but – but lot of them were – were well educated people. In fact, you know, there were restrictions, you know, in the professions, like **[indecipherable]** get in. For example, they couldn't own land.

Q: Really?

A: They weren't allowed to own land.

Q: In independent **Lithuania**?

A: At first, yes.

Q: At first.

A: And then later, yes.

Q: And later they were allowed.

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah, mm-hm.

A: But at first, no. And in general, it was idea that the Jews in general were taking advantage of people, so you had to be careful of them. That was sort of negative I remember.

Q: Mm-hm. Do you –

A: On the other hand, on the other hand, there were good Jews that were friends of my parents, you know.

Q: So that your parents socialized with different – different groups of people, not just –

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Oh yeah. Oh yeah, when – when he was growing up, there was Jewish people who were living there next door to them. So –

Q: Did your parents talk about their friends who were different nationalities much, or is it just you knew them, this was – this was this person, this was that person, and so on?

A: I'm not sure how to answer that, but my parents essentially weren't very anti-Semitic in many ways, I would say. They were very tolerant and they would just shrug it off.

Q: I see.

A: And I don't remember really my mother or father badmouthing Jews.

Q: Did – do you have memories of going to school before the war?

A: Beg your pardon?

Q: Do you have memories of going to school before the war?

A: I did?

Q: Yes.

A: Oh yes, I remember starting grammar school in 1936. I was, I guess six years old or seven years old – six – six years old, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Interesting enough, one of the people that I went to school, that – that started school there in **Alytus**, lives here in **Los Angeles**.

Q: No kidding.

A: Yes. He was an officer's son, too.

Q: Really?

A: Yes.

Q: And are you still friends?

A: Oh yeah. We see them all the time.

Q: That's unusual.

A: His name is **Pasulas**(ph).

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Oh yes.

Q: So, I mean that is unusual, you know, from –

A: Yes. Well, there's another person that lives here in **Los Angeles** that I went to grammar school when we moved to **Kaunas**.

Q: And they're here too?

A: And he lives here too. And there's another friend of mine that I went to – I mean, I start to go to high school in 1941, probably, we started together. And in fact, when w – when – when – when we lived in **Germany**, **DP** camps, we met up again and we finished high school together in **Germany**.

Q: And they're here too.

A: And he's here too.

Q: How different paths come together.

A: It's – that's right.

Q: Yeah. So, did your – in your family, did you talk much about what was going on in **Germany** in the 1930s, or what was going on in the **Soviet Union**?

A: You know, I just remember badmouthing **Soviet Union**, but I don't remember badmouthing **Germany**.

Q: I see. When did politics, or when did these larger events kind of impact your own lives?

A: Well, the first time it was in 1939, when the Russians occupied – ni – 1940, when the Russians occupied **Lithuania**.

Q: Do you remember where you were at the time?

A: Oh sure, I was in **Kaunas**.

Q: Okay. What did you see?

A: We just moved to **Kaunas** from **Alytus**.

Q: I see.

A: And I remember people walking around you know, some for it, some against it, you know. And there were a lot of communists out on the streets, celebrating the liberation from the **Smetona**, fascist ruler.

Q: And that's the wording that was used at the time?

A: Yes.

Q: And what did your parents think of **Smetona**?

A: I never remember hearing anything about –

Q: Okay.

A: – about them saying anything about it.

Q: Well, that would fit, because you say your father wasn't very political.

A: Yeah, I don't ever remember him mentioning anything about that –

Q: Okay.

A: – the government being or – or being bad, good, or what. He was an officer, that's the way he looked at it.

Q: And, so you saw these people out on the streets, you saw the demonstrations. Is there anything else that you saw?

A: Well, saw the Russian soldiers, and the – and was interesting, you know, that I remember one of the soldiers told them that, yeah, they had oranges in **Russia** too, they made them in a factory in **Kiev**.

Q: So the soldiers was – were – was explaining how that – you could have oranges.

A: That's right.

Q: Yeah.

A: That's right. So I remember them very be – being surprised to see what we had.

Q: Yeah.

A: In fact, what happens, there was a re – of – anti-aircraft artillery group in – just a half a mile from our house. And what they did, we had a house with upstairs, ru – sleeping rooms, they moved a – a political officer into our house.

Q: Really?

A: Yes.

Q: And what was he like?

A: He was a friendly guy.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. Don't remember anything bad about him.

Q: Did he get – try to get to know you?

A: No.

Q: As a family?

A: No, we just said hello, you know.

Q: Okay.

A: I was just a kid saying hello to them. They were younger people, you know, and the – what mo – they were married, you know, he – he and his wife.

Q: Well, people were generally scared of political officers.

A: No, I don't think so. We – we had them living there and we never scared of them.

Q: And what about your dad and mom, did they say anything about it?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: No, I don't remember anything, objecting to anything. They just said oh, go ahead and move in, yeah

Q: So, what happened to your father and – and his profession, he was a Lithuanian cavalry officer in the Lithuanian army.

A: Yes.

Q: What happened to him afterwards –

A: Well, he became a Red Army officer.

Q: Did he change uniform?

A: Of course.

Q: Did you see him in his new uniform?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Oh yeah. He lived in **Vilnius**.

Q: I – how was that?

A: Well, because the 26th corps of the Russian army was – became – be-became – the Lithuanian army became 26th corps of Russian army and they were stationed in **Vilnius**, so that's how he ended up living in **Vilnius**.

Q: Mm-hm. Would he come back on the weekends or something?

A: Occasionally, yeah, he used to come back.

Q: Uh-huh. And did life change for other people in **Kaunas** after the Soviet occupation, that you remember?

A: You know, I remember people were worrying about food supplies and sugar and so on, because they were afraid that the Russian soldiers were buying things up and shipping home. And so there was talk about the fact that there may be food shortages, you know, and that – and now we won't have any bananas, you know, and all that. I kind of remember tho – that talk. So it was repe – pretty much recognizing that **Russia** was not a – a – a wealthy place, or a good place to live.

Q: How did school life change?

A: Well, we start to study Russian.

Q: Okay.

A: One of the classes we had to attend was Russian.

Q: Were there any other kinds of courses that you had to take?

A: Well, I'm sure they changed history courses, you know, and stuff like that, but I don't really remember much about the changes, I just remember getting a book and that's it. A history book and a social studies.

Q: Okay. Let's go on then. What happened after – after this occupation? What kind of events took place?

A: Well, you know, one morning we woke up and heard planes above and some explosions. And that was a – I think June 22nd of 1941, when the Germans attacked.

Q: Was this unexpected?

A: Oh yeah, nobody expected it, I don't think so.

Q: Okay, so it was a surprise.

A: Oh, it was a big surprise.

Q: How did everybody react?

A: Well, my father deserted, essentially. When the Russians retreated to **Russia** with the army, my father stayed in **Lithuania**. And so –

Q: Had – and had he spoken at home anything about his views of the Red Army or his views of – of being transferred into it, or anything like that?

A: No, I don't remember anything – anything bad or good.

Q: Okay, so he stayed silent.

A: That's right, he was just taken – stayed – he stayed silent.

Q: Okay.

A: He didn't express his views, political views.

Q: Okay.

A: That's why he survived longer than many of the others.

Q: And nevertheless, one could perhaps make the assumption that he spoke with his feet, in that he didn't use them, he stayed put.

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah, he just – he just wo – he was a survivor, political survivor.

Q: Okay.

A: By not getting involved.

Q: Okay. And so when they retreated, he did not?

A: That's right.

Q: And what happened after that?

A: Well, interesting. He got a job in **Vilnius** as a commander of the famous prison in – in – in lithu – in **Vilnius**.

Q: Okay, what's the prison name?

A: **Lukiškės, Luki – Lukiškės kalėjimas**.

Q: So he was the director, or –

A: That's right, he became the director of that, and so what happens, they started in bringing in Jews in there, and they came out – and shooting. My father came home

one weekend we – and we noticed he was talking to people. And he said, I'm going back to **Vilnius** and I'm going to resign. And some of his friends said, well you do that, they're gonna send you to – to – with the Jews. He said, we'll see. He came back, spoke to the German supervisor, told him that his family was in **Kaunas**, and he had a nice job, could he leave. And the German released him.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: Cause he said, I'm not going to participate in – in executions of Jewish people.

Q: And you remember him saying such things at home?

A: Oh yes. I remember him saying it later, you know. It – at that time he didn't say anything, it was only later he told us, you know, what – what his view was. And so anyway – so – so he got a job as a saw mill director on the river **Nemunas**.

Q: I see.

A: And so he –

Q: Not a military job at all.

A: No, no, so he – he was in charge of a sawmill that they never did anything with the sawmills. He became a director. He was distributing woods – wood and so on because everything was rationed. And s – and so he stayed, so he stayed on the job until Russians were coming back, until 1944 when we left **Lithuania** in August of 1944.

Q: You mentioned earlier, that when the German arrived, he found out, or you f – your family found out that they had been on the lists to be deported.

A: Yes.

Q: How did that happen?

A: I don't know. Somebody showed him a – a list in – in one of the – the administration – government administration buildings in **Kaunas**.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: That's – that's how – how we found out, that somebody pointed out to him that there was – that our li – name was on the list.

Q: I see. And he came home and he told your mom and you about that?

A: Oh no.

Q: No?

A: Oh no.

Q: He didn't tell your mom?

A: He – oh, oh, yeah, he – he – when he found out, I me-mean, on the Germans, oh yeah, he told us.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Oh yeah, he told us that, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: So anyway, so he – he ended up being director there and he had a lot of friends, and I remember going to a lot of drinking parties with him. That's one thing about Lithuanians, you know, they were drinking heavily, and today they're still considered the largest consumer of liquor in the European nations.

Q: No, really?

A: Per capita, yes.

Q: In the European – what a distinction.

A: Have the largest suicide rates in European nation and the largest consumption of alcohol among the **European U-U-Union** faish – people.

Q: Well, those are rather sad statistics.

A: That's right.

Q: Yeah. What was happening to the Jews? Did you, as an 11 year old notice anything going on in **Kaunas** when you were there?

A: Oh sure, you know, we – first thing we saw was that they were ki – pu – putting them – making them wear Star of **David**, yellow Star of **Davids** on back and the – in the back, on the front. And then, all of a sudden, they – they – they moved out a whole bunch of blue collar – let's – it's really a slum, on – on the other side of riv – **Neris** river in – in – in **Kaunas**, and moved them into ghettos.

Q: Okay, so they – they – what had been a former slum, became a ghetto?

A: That's right.

Q: What was it called?

A: **Vilijampole Slobodka**.

Q: **Viliam – Vilijampole Slobodka**, so –

A: Yeah, **Slobodka**.

Q: Uh-huh. Had you ever been there before it became a ghetto?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: And clearly, after it became –

A: We knew – we knew that **Vilijampole** was actually south side of **Chicago**.

Q: I see. I see. And did you see people being transported into the ghetto?

A: I don't remember.

Q: What about the – the neighbors that you said you played with?

A: Well, they just walked out of their house with suitcases, and that was it.

Q: Did you see this?

A: Yes.

Q: Did they wave goodbye?

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah. We – we all said goodbye, you know, and we were afraid, you know, that – that something is going to happen to them.

Q: And –

A: And then – and then sooner or later, we found out that they were killing the Jews.

Q: We'll get to that point.

A: It's – yeah, okay.

Q: But at – but at the beginning, did they – what was their demeanor when they left the house? This was your grandmother's neighbors, right?

A: That's right.

Q: And the **Layba**(ph) family. Did they – did you exchange any words? Did you have any conversations?

A: No, we just said goodbye.

Q: Okay.

A: We just said goodbye, because I wasn't there.

Q: Oh, I see. Who was there?

A: It was my grandmother that said goodbye to them, so I don't know what happened, but –

Q: Did she – did she tell you what she was thinking or feeling after she did? I mean, did she report about it at all?

A: You know, I don't remember much talk about it.

Q: Okay.

A: I just remember that they were forced to go to ghetto. That's – that's about all I remember about them.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: They just sort of disappeared.

Q: And were there any Jewish kids in school?

A: Not with me.

Q: Okay, what was your school that you were going to? What was it called?

A: Okay, I was going to one of the top high schools at that time in – in – in **Lithuania**, in **Kaunas**. It's called **Aušros** gymnasium, was really the top ranked school. And one of the reasons I got in there is because my mother's sister's husband was a director.

Q: **Platus**(ph).

A: That's right.

Q: Yeah.

A: That's right.

Q: And was there any talk in the school of – of these things that was hap – that were happening?

A: No, I don't remember.

Q: Okay.

A: I don't remember.

Q: Had there been any talk in the school when the Soviets came by?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, we just kept quiet. In fact, our father told us not to make any comments about the government and so on. So we just didn't participate in. Even if anybody was doing it, I don't – I –

Q: You didn't join.

A: – I'm sure I just walked away.

Q: Okay.

A: We just – essentially we just tolerated whatever was going around us.

Q: After th – then let's go back to that part where you're talking about the Jews are in the ghetto, which is the south side of **Chicago** equivalent, and what happened after that?

A: Well, they essentially ghetto, stay there, you know, and they kept on killing them – bringing people there and then shooting them in the nine foo – for – **Ninth Fort**.

Q: How did you find out about this?

A: Oh, everybody knew about that.

Q: How – yes, but do you recall that it was conversation at home, were people in the street telling you, or –

A: No, we – at our home we didn't talk much about it.

Q: Okay.

A: But we knew that was going on. And as I say, you know, my father's rules, no one can get involved with this.

Q: Okay. And –

A: Essentially, y-you know, there was a lot of opinions that I – I kind of recall, ab – among people that – that kind of said, well, the Jews are getting what they deserve. There were – some people were doing – saying that. But we were jus – stayed out of it.

Q: And do you remember what you thought at the time when you would hear things like this?

A: Beg your pardon?

Q: Do you remember what you thought at the time when you would hear things like this?

A: No, I don't remember really much.

Q: Okay.

A: I don't remember much.

Q: Okay.

A: I just remember, you know, these stories that – that – that my grandmother kept on telling me, you know, that the Jews used his blood you know, and they make matzo and th – and many other things. I don't remember any particular story, but – but there were stories that were spread. And I think – my – my own opinion is that all this started when **Lithuania** united with **Poland** and Jesuits came in.

Q: I remember you mentioning that, yeah.

A: I think this is where it all started.

Q: But when did you come to that conclusion? When did you come to that kind of interpretation of things?

A: I think when I was already here in the **United States**, probably.

Q: Okay.

A: When I was more – I knew more about it.

Q: Okay. So tell us what happened after that. So here's the city, there's the ghetto. Everybody knows that people are being shot, that Jews are being shot.

A: Yes.

Q: What goes on with your life?

A: Oh, just go to school, you know, and go on life. My father was running the mill, and life is good.

Q: Sort of.

Q2: Can I let your wife in?

A: So –

Q: Excuse me? Oh yeah, sure.

A: So anyway –

Q: So you stopped – you stopped the interview?

Q2: I can't, I – I didn't.

Q: Oh, okay.

Q2: She – she was just waving because she wanted to come in.

Q: Oh, okay.

Q2: I'll stop it right now. **[break]**

A: Oh I'm sure there were a lot of them that felt – felt that way.

Q: A lot of people.

A: Yeah.

Q: But I'm talking about your family. Do you think your family was such, we don't have any views, or it was, we have them, but it's too dangerous to talk about them?

A: You know, my – my answer for that is I-I'm ignorant of the view.

Q: Okay.

A: I really don't remember what view I heard.

Q: Okay, okay. Okay. Did your brothers – oh, you were the oldest, yes?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes. So your – your – your siblings were probably too young to understand what was going on.

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah, they – my – the two years younger brother, he understood it. In fact, he's – e-even today, he remembers more than I do.

Q: Really?

A: Oh yes. The two years make a big difference. But he's – he's always had a better memory.

Q: Okay. And I guess then, we'll take a break for right now.

A: Okay.

Q: Becau – and we'll have lunch. And we'll come back to the parts where you did see things.

A: Okay.

Q: Okay? We'll come back to that after lunch.

A: Okay.

Q: Okay, yeah.

[break]

Q: This is a continuation of our interview on February 18th, 2013, with Mr. **Cesare Ugianskis**. And when we broke off before, we were talking about 1941 – 1942 in **Kaunas**, you had heard of – you had s – heard of neighbors of your grandmother's who were Jews, who were brought to **Vilijampole Slobodka**, to what became the ghetto. You found out soon thereafter that Jews were being taken an-and shot at various places around the city. Can you tell us a little bit about the geography of **Kaunas**, and what were the old forts that were there, that ended up being execution places?

A: Well, I'll tell you what I know, or at least I think I know. **Kaunas** was a city in **Lithuania** that was populated by Lithuanians, and about 30 percent, I believe, at one time, was Jewish.

Q: Okay.

A: And my parents – my – my p – my father's parents lived in **Kaunas**, my grandfather – my – my grandfather was a police officer. And in 1918 or so, when he

was arrested by the Germans, he was killed in a **POW** camp. So I never met him or her – or – or saw him. And after that, what can I say? We moved to **Kaunas**, because my father was transferred from **Alytus** to **Kaunas** in 1939. And soon after we arrived in 1940, Russians came in.

Q: Well, what I'd like to do if you – if you have memories of this, or knowledge of this, **Kaunas**, from what I – or **Kovno**, as it is known in Yiddish, is ringed, or th – around the city is ringed by a series of forts. That's not usual for most European cities.

A: That's right.

Q: Can you tell us about which – what was the historical basis of these forts?

A: Well, it was done by **Catherine the Great**.

Q: Okay, so tell us about these forts.

A: Well, all I know about it is the fact that there are about, I think, 12 of them surrounding **Kaunas**. That's essentially when – when – when I was alive, some of them had certain – certain uses. Like the fort where we lived, fort five was storage. There are a lot of – military storage, workers –

Q: What did – what did a fort look like? I mean, sometimes people will imagine a fort as being an entire complex where people even live in it. What were these forts? Were they like towers, or were they like –

A: No, they – they're – interesting enough, they were level ground.

Q: They were on level ground.

A: Level ground, and they had water surrounding them, th-they had a – whatever you call that.

Q: A moat? A moat?

A: Yes, a moat surrounding it. And inside they had the quarters and they had weapons, artillery and so on. But I don't think that very many people lived there. There lived, surrounding the fort, they had – they had buildings, and the fort that I remember was fort number four, fort number five, fort number nine. These are the three forts that I remember because they're connected with – with the history in some ways, for me.

Q: Okay, is it possible to give – **[interruption]**

A: So, the other forts, I don't know what they were used for, but number – and – and that's right, and there was number six, I think, that was used as a prison. Number nine –

Q: You told me before the ole – before the war.

A: Before the war, yeah.

Q: Before World War II.

A: In fact, in fact, they never were used for military purposes, because –

Q: So **Catherine the Great** had built them.

A: They built them, they were just – sat there, because nobody attacked **Kaunas**, nobody needed them. And so it was really probably a great waste of – of – of tsar's money to build them, but they build them, and as I say, when I was living in **Lithuania** they were used as prisons and storage u – places. And –

Q: About how big would these forts be?

A: Beg your pardon?

Q: About how big would these complexes be, these fort complexes?

A: O-Okay, let me see, how ca – how to describe it? Well, it's probably – diameter on it probably was ha-half a kilometer, 500 meters or so.

Q: Okay.

A: And they – they – they had these build-ups, you know, in – in-inside, you know, in and out. The kind of stuff, you know, that would protect from somebody firing at you.

Q: Were they underground? Were they underground, too? Did they –

A: Yeah, there was some underground stuff, yes, yes.

Q: Were they tall?

A: No, they weren't tall, no.

Q: Were they – were they brick?

A: No, they were – had some – they had some above, you know, they – but – but they weren't very tall.

Q: The materials that they were built from, was it brick, was it stone?

A: They had brick, brick and cement, yeah. And – and ce – and iron. Iron was – was one of the things that they were using there. The gates, and – e-entrance to the fort, at – at – at least the number four and five had this huge steel wall, steel fence that they opened ev – to get in and ge – get out.

Q: Could you see through that steel fence, or was it –

A: Oh yeah, no, you could see right through it, you could see the bild – the building. In fact, there were some quarters there and storage places, right – right after the entrance, so they could come in with the vehicles, unload them, you know, and so on. But then, the rest of it was all in and out, you know, it was just – just a lot of ins – for – for mounting weapons, for looking through, you know. And even when I think about it now, I'm not sure what – what they would have done with them, even if they were attacked.

Q: Okay. Well, being built by **Catherine the Great** would have been that they had been around for a couple of hundred years already, and the weaponry was – was of a different kind.

A: That's right. That's right, exactly. So anyway, so that's what I remember about those forts. And the one that I'm most acquainted is number five, because we lived about 200 feet from – 200 meters from – from the fort.

Q: Okay.

A: My father had a house built there on a five hectare land, it's like 15 acres. And so we used to go and play there.

Q: At the fort?

A: At the fort.

Q: Okay, were you allowed inside?

A: Oh, we – kids, you know, could get in anywhere.

Q: Okay.

A: So – so we'd go in there and at one time when – when – in 1941, when Germans attacked **Russia**, we went in there and there was th – there was a food storage there. And I remember loading ourselves up with cans of – of vegetables and goods, you know, food, because there was – full of it there. And people – whole neighborhood, you know, was coming in and going out with – with goodies.

Q: Was this – this had been – had it been during the Soviet occupation, that is, they had stored canned goods there?

A: That's right.

Q: And as they were retreating, people came in?

A: That's right, they left it all, and so –

Q: They left it all.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And so the ge – before the Germans could – could even take care of it, people were already in there and taking things out.

Q: Cleaning it out.

A: Yeah, including me.

Q: Yeah. Were these forts always under some sort of governmental or municipal control?

A: Oh yes, all the time, yes.

Q: Okay, so they've never been privatized?

A: No, they just – I'm not sure if the other forts were wide open like the fifth one was. Fourth one, of course, was always kind of closed up because they always had the – I think something going on, you know, with – with prisons or something like that. But –

Q: How could they be used as prisons? Did they have –

A: Well, they had quarters, you know, for housing soldiers.

Q: I see.

A: And so – so that's what they did, you know, they used the quarters as prison. And fort number nine and I think six, were prisons. And – and then in the end actually, number five, this is where the most of the Jews were killed.

Q: In fort number five?

A: Nine.

Q: In fort number nine.

A: Number nine. This is where most of the Jews were killed. And then some of them were killed in number five – number four.

Q: Okay, tell me about that. About those that – that you knew of and saw.

A: Okay, well, you know, as I mentioned earlier, my father was a director of a – of a sawmill, which was on a river in the – in the – **Kaunas**. And I can –

Q: We can look at that, mm-hm.

A: – show you here.

Q: Okay.

A: So –

Q: We're going to show the map of **Kaunas** to begin with.

A: Yes.

Q: Right here is a small map of the **Kaunas** city and region. Can you see that?

Q2: Do you want us to shoot quality inserts later, and then you just talk?

Q: Let's just do this now, and maybe we'll do that later, but – but for right now – can you see it? Okay, so this is how the river bends, and forts are around the various perim – the perimeter of the city. Now, the next printout that we're going to look at is – what river is this?

A: This is **Nemunas**.

Q: That's the **Nemunas**, or **Nemun**(ph) river.

A: **Nemo**(ph) – **Nemo**(ph) or **Nemun**(ph).

Q: Yeah, **Nemun**(ph) river.

Q2: Can you back up a little so your – your audio – I'm hearing you better.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: Number five is where I lived and number four, this is where we – where they were using as a prison.

Q: So this is number four? Oh n – this is actually, you have 14 and 15.

A: No, four and five.

Q2: It's an **X** and a –

Q: It's an **X** and a – and a **I V**.

A: Oh, I'm sorry, that's – I – just making location.

Q: Okay, so that's just location.

A: The **X** is location.

Q: And that's fort number four and then fort number five. And you lived near fort number five.

A: That's right, I lived near fort number five.

Q: Have you got that?

A: And we were probably about a mile or so apart.

Q: Okay, and then here –

A: That's the same map.

Q: Okay, **Kaunas**.

A: Yeah.

Q: Is the same map.

A: Yeah.

Q: And then what's the dif – what's the last one? That's much – close up.

A: And here is a closer look. This is where my father's sawmill was, and this is where the fort was.

Q: Okay, that's – so here is a close-up of fort number four, the edge of the river, where Mr. **Ugianskis'** – where the circle is in pencil is where his father's sawmill was, and the circle of number four is where the fort was. Got that? Okay, so tell us what – what did – what was going on there at fort number four?

A: Okay, well, at one – this is during the summer now, so we're loose, on summer vacation. And so for nothing better to do, we used to come and visit my father in the – in the sawmill, and go in swimming in the river. And so along the river one time, I – coming in from – toward us, along the river **Nemunas**, we saw this – this huge crowd moving. And we said, well, let's take a look what it is. So wen – we went up there, and what it was, it was actually most people were ha – we-wearing the yellow **David** star, meaning that they were Jews. And they were young people and young – and – and small children, and ladies and – and men, older men mostly. And they were marching towards **[indecipherable]** towards number four fort. So we decided to follow them, and so we saw them move this huge crowd into the fort. And then we kind of cut behind there and we stood on the outside edge of the moat, and we could see inside. And we saw this – these people in a single row, moving in, and throwing in their belongings in a pile.

Q: So, in other words, outside of the fort, there was an elevation that was even higher than the – than the walls of the fort itself?

A: That's right, a little bit higher, yes.

Q: And you could stand on that and – and look in?

A: Outside?

Q: Yeah.

A: No, no, that was lower, that – the – the – where we were standing was lower. There were higher places in the fort itself.

Q: Okay.

A: But we were looking down in the fort from the moat.

Q: I see, okay.

A: And so we were looking down in the fort, and we could see this single row of people going and throwing in whatever they were carrying with them, you know. And –

Q: Were they undressing?

A: Well, I don't really think they were undressing there, I think they undressed later. But – but they were throwing in their goods there. And then they marched in there and after awhile, we started hearing gunfire, you know, and we realized what was going on, they were shooting them. And all of a sudden we saw this guard tar – running toward us, you know, coming toward us. So we realized that they don't want us here. So we started running and they kept on yelling stop, and we just took off. And of course, you know, being younger and faster, just took off and knew – we knew where we were going, they didn't. And so we escaped. But – but that's when we realized that that's what it was, you know, this is – probably – I guess this i – this was probably early August of 1941.

Q: Okay.

A: And then, you know, we sort of heard that there were some more shootings there after that, but not very much. But there were continuous shooting apparently going on in fort number nine. I mean, we heard about it. We couldn't hear, but we heard about it. Well anyway, what happened then was that, let's see, about 1944, about February, the Germans got a whole bunch of Russian war pr – prisoners of war, and they were starting to dig up – that's what we heard from other people, I didn't see it – that they were digging up the bodies, putting them in piles and setting them on fire. Well, what I remember about that was that when the wind was downwin – we were – lived downwind, we got this horrible smell of human bodies burned – burning.

Q: So – so was it the si – entire city was covered with this wind?

A: No, no, no, just – just toward our for – toward – toward us **[indecipherable]** the fifth fort.

Q: And did you – and you knew that that's what it was?

A: Oh sure. We heard about it from people. Here is – here's where – where we were, okay?

Q: Okay. Let's – let's turn the paper a little bit like this, okay?

A: Okay. Here is where we were, okay?

Q: Right, at the bend of that river at the bottom.

A: And the fort is right here, okay? And the fifth fort is right here. So when the wind would come this way, we would get the smell – the smoke, actually.

Q: Where was the ninth fort? Show us with your finger where the ninth fort was.

A: Oh.

Q: The one where the burning body –

A: The ninth fort – ninth fort is here.

Q: I see, so it's to the northeast – northwest, excuse me.

A: Yeah, northwest, it's – it's – it's – yeah, it's northwest.

Q: Let's tur – yeah, let's turn the page so it's around there, can you get that?

A: Yeah, yeah, so the nor – fort – number nine f-fort – fort number nine is there.

Q: Is someplace right – right here, you said?

A: Right there, yeah.

Q: Okay. Right there would be where fort number nine was, and as the bodies were being burned, they were –

A: No, not in nine, in fort number for – for – four being burned.

Q: Oh, I see, they were burned in fort number four as well.

A: Oh, that's what I mean, that's what we witnessed.

Q: Oh, I see, I see.

A: What we witnessed was at – what was happening in number four.

Q: Okay. I understood that, but I also know that in 1944 –

A: Yes, right.

Q: – there were bodies being burned everywhere.

A: Well, that's right, but – but – but they were burning them in a – number four fort and we were getting the wind.

Q: I got it.

A: Because we – they were here and we lived here.

Q: Got it.

A: And so the – the wind would come right down toward us, you know, and I never forget that smell. It's just incredible. So that's my experience with – with watching people led to execution. I – I – we didn't see the actual shooting because it was inside the fort.

Q: What did you see through, did you see through the gateway? Or through windows?

A: No, no, we were standing on the – on the outside on the moat and looking in.

Q: So, but in through what? Was it an open area?

A: It's an open area in the fort.

Q: Ah.

A: See, they marched them in, then they walked through some tunnel, and they came in through this open area, and they marched them through this open area to the other side. And this is where they were killing those people, on the other side.

Q: I see. Did you hear screams?

A: Beg your pardon?

Q: Did you hear anybody scream?

A: No, no, no, we were too far from that.

Q: I see.

A: Beth – but we could hear the firing. We couldn't see the actual execution, but we saw people going in, you know, in a – in a single row, throwing in their things and just marching in there.

Q: And you saw children as well?

A: Oh yeah, there were children and then women, and then – then old men, mostly.

Q: Do you – I mean, would you have any recollection about how large a group of people this might have been?

A: Well, it was thousands, probably.

Q: Really?

A: Oh yeah. I – I do – I – I don't know, I would guess at least a thousand or – or more.

Q: In that one group?

A: In that one group, right.

Q: Were they – I mean, as they were being marched in, were – did – did they have people guarding them?

A: Oh yeah, they had the – in fact, the guards were Lithuanian and Ukrainian **[indecipherable]** army.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. The guy that came after us was a Ukrainian guy.

Q: How did you know?

A: Well, because the uniform.

Q: Okay.

A: They had different uniform than Lithuanians.

Q: What kind of u – what kind of uniform was it? How did it look?

A: Well, the Ukrainian, if I remember, was light – lighter color than Lithuanian. Lithuanian was dark green, and the Ukrainian uniforms were lighter greenish or bluish, as I remember it.

Q: Wa – okay, the dark green of the Lithuanians, was that the normal army uniform from independent **Lithuania**?

A: Yeah, I think so. Well, it was the normal Russian uniform.

Q: I see.

A: The – the color.

Q: Okay. So it would have been that they were wearing old Russian, Soviet uniforms during this time?

A: No, no, no, no, no, no. I thought we were talking about the Russian p-prisoners of war. Oh no, no, the guys that were marching there were Lithuanian Ukrainians.

Q: Right. And so, what color u – what kind of uniforms were the guards who were herding the people towards the fort, what –

A: Okay, **[indecipherable]** army I said had light color uniform and Lithuanians had a darker uniform.

Q: Okay, but was the uniform a German issued uniform?

A: Oh, I'm sure it was German – German created.

Q: I see.

A: Or German by – created by German orders, because during the fort – between '41 and '44, the Germans had organized battalions an-and regiments out of the Latvians and – and – and – and Estonians. And they had **SS [indecipherable]**. Lithuanians didn't agree to that. They were called **savisagorse**(ph), self-defense force.

Q: Right.

A: And – and that's the way it was, you know, and so the self-defense force was – was participating in the – in executions and – and they were all over the place, you know.

Q: I guess what I'm trying to find out is whether or not, as members of the self-defense battalion, whether they were wearing the uniforms from independent **Lithuania**.

A: No, no, no.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: No, no, they were wearing something modified.

Q: Did you, as kids, after this, did you talk about it amongst yourselves? Did you tell your parents what it was that you saw?

A: Oh yeah, we told our parents, you know, and no, I don't remember talking much about it. I just don't remember mu-much talk.

Q: Did you – was that the one time you saw live people go in and know that they are being killed during the war?

A: That's right. That's the only place, the only time I saw it.

Q: So, did you ever see any other people during the German occupation be shot or killed?

A: No.

Q: Did you see any corpses on the roads?

A: I don't remember, no.

Q: Okay.

A: No, I don't think so.

Q: Okay.

A: I don't think so. I think we stayed away from all those. See, we lived on the outskirts, number four – five fort is on the outskirt of **Kaunas** and it was pretty empty there. You know, there was a couple of – like I want to say five homes probably, around where I lived, you know, and so nobody went by there.

Q: How did life progress for your family during these occupation years, between '41 and '44?

A: Well, actually wasn't as bad as it could have, because my father had a good job, and he provided money to buy food for us on the black market. So we – we wou – my mother would go to **Shaunshai**(ph), to the black market there and buy food for the money my father had.

Q: Well, you had a pretty big family.

A: Well, yeah. So we actually, I m – I must admit, I think we lived, during the 1941 through '44, I'd say we lived better than average, for sure. My family.

Q: Okay. Uh-huh. What started happening about '44?

A: Okay, well, all of a sudden, you know, we – front kept on advancing, you know. On the radio we could hear that the – that the Russians were now at the **Ukraine** and Russians were now in **Belarus**, you know. And then we could – started to hear the echoes of the – of the weapons, you know, the cannons. We could hear cannons firing and exploding. And so, my father realized that there's no way for us to stay because essentially he's a deserter from the Red Army. So what can we do? So my father fou-found some friends in the self-defense force, who issued him some sort of a paper that – that would allow us to go through the border into **Germany**.

Q: So, was this the same self-defense force that had been taking – was this the same self-defense force –

A: Yes.

Q: – that would have taken part in these executions?

A: Oh yes, oh yes, the same – same people.

Q: Okay.

A: So anyway, so they took us to **Dresden**, **Germany**. But my father was supposed to go back, and become a commander in the f – some town or something. But, on the way there, Russians occupied **Lithuania**, so he came back, and we ended up working in a factory, **Seidel Naumann** factory that you – before the war used to make sewing machines, right now was making pieces for – for military purposes. In

fact, I was, at that time, you know, 14 years old, and I was working in a factory with a machine, that were parts being made together for – for the submarines.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, that's – and so anyway – and then we got bombed out.

Q: While you were in **Dresden**?

A: Yeah. And we got bombed out and then we moved to a little town outside **Dresden**, **Dippoldiswalde**.

Q: How is it – what was it called?

A: **Dip-Dippoldiswalde**.

Q: **Portiswilder**?

A: **Di-Dippoldiswalde**.

Q: **Dippoldiswalde**, mm-hm.

A: Yeah. Which is closer to the Czech border.

Q: Tell us a little bit about the bombing of **Dresden**. You were in the middle of the town, or was the factory on the side?

A: No, we were on the outside – on the side.

Q: Okay.

A: Oh, the buildings were destroyed.

Q: Oh, so –

A: The factory, oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: Your factory was destroyed.

A: Oh yeah, our buildings are destroyed, so that's why we had to move out to somewhere else. And so my father found a job as a – as a **hofmeister**.

Q: What's a **hofmeister**?

A: The – the guy responsible for – for the upkeep of the yard.

Q: Upkeep of what kind of a yard?

A: Factory yard.

Q: A factory yard.

A: Ye-Ye – yeah, right. You see, they – they were making also some sort of military parts. And I got a job there as a – as a apprentice in – in their apprentice school, metalworking apprentice school. And so we were working there until we – again we heard the guns firing around, you know, and we started going toward **Germany**, trying to go south, you know, to – to get to – to the western forces, because my father didn't want to get overrun by the Russians, you know.

Q: Okay. I want to stop just a little bit.

A: Okay.

Q: Did you see any part of the bombing of **Dresden**? Did you see any part of the bombing of **Dresden**?

A: Oh yeah, I saw –

Q: Tell us what you saw.

A: I came back to **Dresden** about – I would say about two weeks after the – the huge bombings. And in fact, my brother and I. And we walked down to the center of the town. And there was this pile, you know, covered up with burlaps, you know, and – and we thought, what the hell is this? So we went to take a look. It was a pile probably six meters high, so – so like 18 feet or so, of bodies. Dead bodies. Burned bodies, but dead bodies, just a pile.

Q: And nothing was being done, they were being burned, or –

A: Well, they were just sitting there, they were – obviously they got collected, but no – but you know, they were probably digging out other people too, you know. But that's what we saw. And we walked around, and we just couldn't believe you know, all those beautiful buildings, they're all gone, you know, in the center of – of **Dresden**. And so we of course came back – came back to **Dippoldiswalde** the same day.

Q: But I – again I want to stay with this a bit. You were still on the outskirts of **Dresden** as it was being bombed?

A: Yes.

Q: What – were you in a house, were you in a cellar?

A: No, I – no, no, I was in a plant.

Q: And it was being bombed, that plant.

A: Yes, yes. And the building above us collapsed, but lucky for us, it didn't break through down to the basement. So we were able to walk out after the building collapsed, but didn't collapse into the basement. And so we came out of the basement when the fire was burning around.

Q: And was it only the workers of the factory who were there, or whole families?

A: Well most – my – my – my mother was there, she was injured. As a matter of fact, my mother was somewhere else because we were at work, so we were somewhere else. And so we came home in the day, we couldn't find our mother. So, few days later we started looking for her. And so we walked in on one of the nearer hospitals and sure enough we found her in hallway. She already had gangrene set in on her leg, but luckily not far enough, and we got the doctors to take care of her so – so sh – they didn't have to amputate her leg or anything, so she survived the bombing. She's the only one in our family that was hurt during the World War II.

Q: And it was at the bombing of dre – **Dresden**?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: You survived – you survived the bombing.

Q: And your brothers and sisters also?

A: Oh yeah, they were with mother, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Because you know, I was – i-in **Dresden** I was 14 years old. So my younger brother was four years old, my younger sister was three years old. So they were with the mother, but somehow they got back to the camp, you know, where we were – th-the barracks, where we were stationed.

[break]

A: – mother was gone and we couldn't quite get out of these kids what happened to mom.

Q: Okay.

A: They took her away, you know. That's about all they could tell us.

Q: Okay. So you must have been frightened until you found her.

A: Oh, it was.

Q: Yeah.

A: It was. So finally we found – found her and – and lucky for us, you know, she – she survived, and – and so that's the part that I remember vividly. And then, of course, when we were living in **Dippoldiswalde**, nobody was bombing us there.

But a couple of times we actually had the planes, American planes flying over in the daytime and strafing them, you know, from the air fr – shooting at – on the ground.

Q: Right.

A: In fact, one time I – I – I was on the road when they were running out shooting, and I thought they probably shooting at me, but they didn't. Probably saw it was a kid, you know, so the guy didn't shoot me.

Q: Yeah. And so –

A: And then my father, he was ahead of me f – because somehow we separated, he was ahead of me, and he went into the doorway. And when they were firing, you could see the bullet hits right around there where he stood, but – but it wouldn't hit him because he was in a doorway, so he didn't get hit. We were a lucky family.

Q: Yeah.

A: So anyway, so then we started hearing the shooting outside the **Dippoldiswalde**, and we decided to get out.

Q: Okay.

A: Because we – again, we didn't want to fall in the Russians. So we walked into **Czechoslovakia**.

Q: You – the whole family walked?

A: Yes, we had the little cart, so we had some grain, some food you know, some grain and sugar, and stuff like that. And we walked for two weeks from che – from – to **Czechoslovakia**, all the way to the American zone. And when we got to American zone, the American soldiers stopped the traffic. They wouldn't let people go across the bridge. And my father said, this is something screwy. He walked off the road, talked to a farmer, and asked him was there another way to get to – get out of here. He said yes, take this d-dirt road here, walk up, you know, two kilometers, turn left and you'll walk into the road that goes right into **Germany**. So my father says, we're not going to wait and listen to these Americans. So we walked, we get to the border and we see a soldier guard, American guard walking around. My father looked around, he says, let's go, he won't bother us, he's talking to a girl. Sure enough, we walked, he just kind of – I don't know if he even saw us, probably he didn't. And we just walked in and sure enough, that night Americans withdrew from **Czechoslovakia** and Russians took over.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: So I keep on saying, you know, we were the luckiest family in World War II, to survive things like that. So anyway, so we ended up in little town called **Selb**, lived there for a month or two, then moved to a little town called **[indecipherable]** town

called **Hof**. Stayed there for a couple of months and then we moved to **Würzburg**, **Germany**. And we spent – in **Würzburg** we spent from 1944 til about 1948 ef –

Q: So when you were in **Würzburg**, the war was still going on?

A: Oh no, no, no. Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, that – that's right, yeah, yeah, we – we were in – the war was still on, oh yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, the war ended in May, and so we ended up – essentially, I think war stopped really, when we were en route.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, I think that's what happened, yeah, the war was stopped when we were en route. And so we got out in the American zone, and that's where we spent the next five years, you know, '40 – '45 to – well, '44 to '45 – '45, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: To '49.

Q: And what kind of – what happened in – in – in these years? Did you settle in one place, you know, that is, when you were in **Würzburg**, or were you moved around?

A: We lived in a displaced person camp.

Q: I see.

A: And we were fed there, and we had a high school there, so I went to school there.

Q: Was it a German high school?

A: I – I finished high school in **Germany**, in Lithuanian high school.

Q: So, was this a Lithuanian displaced persons camp?

A: This was mostly Lithuanians. There was Latvians a – one building Latvians and three buildings Lithuanians. And a hospital. It was a former military camp in **Würzburg**.

Q: What did your father do during these years?

A: My father found out that Americans – soldiers, had a warehouse and they needed some workers. So he went there and applied for a job, and they gave him a job. So he started working for the Americans in – in the warehouse. And then Americans started organizing guard companies. And my father told the Americans he was an officer, and so they appointed him as a commander of a Lithuanian company.

Q: Okay.

A: That ended up guarding Nazi prisoners in **Schwaibishmint**(ph) with Lithuanians under Americans. They were dressed up in American uniforms, I can show you a picture. And – and then, what happened when the guarding stopped, they established a engineering company. And so my father became a c – a company

commander for an engineering company that was responsible for putting bridges across the **Rhine**.

Q: Oh my goodness. Oh my goodness. So – but let's stop with the – let's go back a little bit to the time he was a guard of – of Nazi criminals, is that what –

A: Yes.

Q: – what you said? So did he talk about this when he came home and told you –

A: No, because he lived som – separately. We were living in **Würzburg** and he was in **Schwaibishmint**(ph), which is quite a ways apart.

Q: Okay. Did he eventually tell you what – who he was guarding and what kind of people they were?

A: Oh yeah, oh sure, we knew that.

Q: So, what kind of mem – what kind of stories did he say – did he tell?

A: Well, he didn't say may – much of it at all, you know, they were just guarding the war prisoners, you know, they didn't do anything else, you know, just stand guard around. They were – they weren't interrogating them or doing anything. They were just guarding the –

Q: The perimeter?

A: The – yeah, the p-per – per – per – per – periphery. And – and then when that was over they – they appointed him commander of engineering company.

Q: And s –

A: So you see, my father served in the tsar's army, in the Lithuanian army, the in Red Army, in the Lithuanian self-defense force for a month, and – and American army.

Q: Not many people could say that.

A: He was quite a guy.

Q: By this point was he talking more about what his experiences had been and his views had been during the time th – you know, i-in **Lithuania** when the war started, or not so much?

A: No, hardly anybody ever talked about that much.

Q: Okay.

A: You know, that's a sa – that's an experience that you want to forget.

Q: And so, even afterwards, when you were in the **United States**, did any of these conversations take place?

A: Not much.

Q: Not much.

A: Not much.

Q: Why do you think there was this reticence?

A: I don't know. I don't know. I – I think it's people, they don't want to talk about bad times. I don't know, it just sim – das – didn't seem to do it, you know, didn't seem to worry about it.

Q: Okay.

A: Just the life just went on.

Q: Did you hear of other episodes like the one you witnessed? Did anybody ever tell you about other episodes of – you know, like you witnessed at the – at the fourth fort?

A: Well, I'll tell you about one episode. My mother and I – this is now 1941 – my mother and I were walking in the middle of s – **Kaunas** city, and we walked up there across the street, and there is a – a German Gestapo guy and a Lithuanian policeman.

Q: Okay.

A: And they stopped us. And the Lithuanian guard asked my mother why she didn't have her **David** star on.

Q: Really?

A: Well, look at my mother, she looks a little Jewish, doesn't she?

Q: I haven't seen, let's look at the picture. Let's look at – let's look at the photograph of your parents.

A: So he decided that she had to be Jewish, you know. And so she pushed up – lucky for her she had a passport with her which said that she was Lithuanian and Catholic.

Q: Okay, let's hold this up.

A: This is when they got married.

Q: And that's what year?

A: 1926, I think.

Q: Okay.

A: So – so I must admit that, no matter what you think of your father, now when I look back, I think he was a very, very cunning man. He understood the – the situation, and he was a survivalist. He knew how to survive.

Q: And his entire family, too.

A: That's right.

Q: Had to save his family, too.

A: That's right. Yeah, he – he was quite a man. And he came to the **United States**, he got a job in a store – in a – in a factory making furniture. And while he was working there, he decided he wanted to buy a house in **Grand Rapids**, **Michigan**. Well, he went to – to look at one house and he said, well, we'd like to buy it. And

the guy says, can you afford it? And my father, well **[indecipherable]** how much I make. The guy said, I'll give you a job in my factory for more, so you can pay this.

Q: Really?

A: So my father got a job in the – in a company that was making – if you remember or seen some of these brass plates that people ha – hu – used to hang in the 50s in their kitchens?

Q: Don't know about it.

A: There used to be brass plates. Well, the guy was making those kind of things, and my father was in a quality control. He worked until he was sev – he was 19 sev – he 78 years old.

Q: Until he was 78, wow.

A: And – and the reason he quit because he – they discovered he had cancer. He died four years later.

Q: Wow. That's quite a stamina.

A: It is.

Q: You know.

A: Remarkable.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: A survivalist you know.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Not only that, in 1938, **Lithuania** had their so-called Lithuanian nat – **Lietuvos tautinis olimpinio**, the Lithuanian National Olympics. My father, using horses, won two gold medals and one silver.

Q: Wow.

A: In equestrian ma – events.

Q: Because he had been a cavalry officer and he knew about horses.

A: That's right. That's right. That's right. A remarkable man.

Q: It certainly sounds that way. It certainly sounds that way.

A: But he was strict.

Q: Was he?

A: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. When he said something, you did it.

Q: When did you – when did you start finding out more – because there was this reticence, when did you start finding out more about what had gone on during World War II when you were a child, and putting together these – these dots?

A: Well, it – it started – by – by that time I was in – in the **United States**, I think.

Q: Okay.

A: When I started reading about it, hearing about it, you know, and then connecting to what I saw to what they were talking about. So essentially I started to connect things, probably after I came to the **United States**.

Q: As a – as a teenager, as a young adult?

A: Well, I was 20 years old when I came to the **United States**.

Q: You were 20 years old. Okay. Was – what wer – what are these topics, is it about the Holocaust, about what happened to the Jews, or the overall war experience?

A: No, we never talked much about the Holocaust or Jews.

Q: Okay.

A: No, my – my family never discussed it. And it just – it just – as I say, you know, we just stayed away from these subjects.

Q: When did it start becoming of interest for you?

A: Well, it became of interest to me after I came here to the **United States** and I started reading about it and I found out that my mother had some Jewish roots. And I got interested in the Jewish history and I started reading it. And – and in fact, I'm just reading a book now, written by an American lady who spent 10 years studying Lithuanian Jews, their history and what happened during the Holocaust in particular.

Q: What the name of the book, do you remember? Oh, it's okay, just describe it for us.

A: I can't think of the name of it right now.

Q: Okay.

A: But I have it on the – can't think of the a – the name of the author or – but it's – it's – hm, go into the room there if you want to, and see – see if you can see a brown book.

Q: Well, I'll – I'll do that after we have our interview, and bring it back.

A: Okay, okay.

Q: Did you get married in the **United States**?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay, tell me a little bit about your – the family that you created together.

A: Well, I married a Lithuanian girl from **Chicago**. And we were married for about 37 years, and then she just one day departed. Just left me a note, and that was it. And we had one daughter, who went to **UCLA**, got a Bachelor's degree there, and then got Master's degree in connectic – **Connecticut –** kinesthesiology. That's the study of human body. And then ended up at medical school at **Northwestern** and became interventional radiologist.

Q: Wow. Wow. What was your profession?

A: I was an engineer, electrical engineer. I worked for **Hughes Aircraft** for 29 years.

Q: Okay. You mentioned earlier, before we had our interview, that your former in-laws also had had some experience with having witnessed some parts of the Holocaust in **Lithuania**.

A: Well, they part – essentially participated in a part of Holocaust.

Q: Okay, tell us about that.

A: Okay, my father-in-law **Darsha**(ph) **Starkus** told me the story.

Q: Okay.

A: He and a guy by the name of **Belkinus**(ph) went to medical school together. And the **Belkinus**(ph) was a Jew. And so then, by coincidence, they – he – Dr. **Starkus** ended up as a district doctor of this small district in – in **Lithuania**, around **Diletus**(ph).

Q: Okay.

A: And it turned out to be **Belkin**(ph) ended up there too. And they used to get together occasionally. Well, one day, when they started pe – pushing people into the ghettos, my father-in-law, Dr. **Starkus** was going to work, and he saw Dr. **Belkin**(ph) with his wife and a daughter, with suitcases going towards the railroad station. He said, where you going? Well, **Vilijampole**. He said, you know what's

going on there, don't go. He says, where can I go? Come with me. He took the family to his sister-in-law house and put them up there. In the meantime, as a doctor of that district, he became friends with a German – with a German commander of the town, or of the district. And he used to come occasionally to visit and for dinner. Well, one day he came in, you know, and he says, I've got to leave early today because we have to go to south side of **Aytus** to arrest Jews that are people housing.

Q: No kidding.

A: So the German one way, the father-in-law the other, ran over to that sister-in-law's house, put the people in a car and drove them to another place, and then the following day he found a place to put them with a f – some of his acquaintance that had a farm next to th – to – to the woods – to the fl – you know. And apparently they built a double wall somewhere where they could hide if somebody came. And Dr. **Belkin**(ph) and his wife stayed there, but the d-daughter, they couldn't keep her there. So Dr. **Starkus** arranged with a priest to give him a birth certificate of – of a dead girl as hers. And he put up with – with – with an older lady, a friend of his, or a – someone he knew. And that's how they survived the war.

Q: So the whole **Belkin**(ph) family –

A: The whole **Belkin**(ph) family survived. And the little girl was – was – was christened to be a Christian – Catholic, by the lady. Anyway, they had a little hard

time – well, of course, and then the Russians came. And of course Dr. **Belkin**(ph) and his wife survived and their little daughter survived. And the little – they had the little trouble getting the girl back because the woman didn't want to give her up, after three years or so.

Q: You get attached.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Anyway, so then, of course, it worked out fine and –

Q: Do you know if they stayed in **Lithuania**, the **Belkin**(ph) family?

A: Well, when the lady that – the lady that housed them in **Alytus**, Dr. **Starkus'** sister-in-law died, and I went to her funeral there and Mrs. **Belkin**(ph) was there, I think Dr. **Belkin**(ph) by then was dead. And she died shortly after that, I think. Her daughter, the young lady, still survives and she lives in **Vilnius**.

Q: Does she?

A: And she's married, you know, lives in **Vilnius**, has her own family.

Q: And she still lives in **Lithuania**?

A: Yeah. That's the last I heard.

Q: Okay. Now the funeral that you're talking about, what year was that funeral? Was that –

A: ’92 - ’93.

Q: Okay. So the **Belkins**(ph), the elder **Belkins**(ph) had still been alive until ’92 and ’93?

A: Some – somewhere around there, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: But he wasn’t at the funeral, but s – but his wife was there.

Q: Okay.

A: So I saw her and met her.

Q: Okay.

A: Just said hello and that was about it.

Q: Okay. Did she know of your connection?

A: No, I don’t think so. I’m not sure. I kind of doubt it.

Q: Okay, okay. And –

A: I kind of doubt it.

Q: – did anybody – Mr. **Starkus**, what happened with him?

A: Well, Dr. **Starkus** – after we got married, Dr. **Starkus** retired at the age of some – 70 something and moved to **Santa Monica**, and lived here until he died in the early 90s.

Q: Do you –

A: Oh no, late 90s, I guess.

Q: Late 90s.

A: Yeah, late 90s, yeah. And then his wife survived for another two years, died in **Hawaii**, and they're buried here in **Los Angeles**.

Q: Do you know whether or not they were ever recognized by **Yad Vashem**, as being Righteous Amongst Gentiles?

A: You know, I used to go to some meetings, you know, and I met a Jewish fellow who was part of the organization here, the Holocaust or whatever you call it, here in **Los Angeles**.

Q: The **Museum of Tolerance**?

A: Yeah, something, you know, he was member of that. And I kind of told him the story, so he wanted to talk to Dr. **Starkus**. Dr. **Starkus** refused. He didn't want to talk about it.

Q: Really?

A: You know, there are some things that happened, I think when the Russians came and liberated **Lithuania** from the Germans. But Dr. **Belkin**(ph) became a doctor in **Alytus** in – in the prison there. And the lady that I'm talking about that – that housed these – these people, her husband was arrested and shot there. And they were all upset, you know, that he didn't help him. They think he didn't help him,

my opinion is he could not help them. But anyway – and so that kind of broke up the friendship.

Q: I see.

A: Because he participated in the – in the execution of – of daw – of **Byerchus**(ph).

Q: What was the name of the family?

A: **Byerchus**(ph).

Q: **Byerchus**(ph)?

A: Yeah.

Q: **Byerchus**(ph).

A: **Byerchus**(ph), he was – he was caught by the Russians in a bunker –

Q: Okay.

A: – in **Lithuania**, he was a partisan.

Q: Okay.

A: And so somebody, you know, squealed on them, and th – and the Russians found them and essentially took him in and killed him.

Q: Yeah.

A: So.

Q: It's complicated.

A: That's right.

Q: It's complicated.

A: So I think that sort of put some friction there, between the families.

Q: I see.

A: And I think – I personally think it's unjustified, because there is nothing he could have done.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: But that's – that's the story there.

Q: Is –

A: That's what I know.

Q: Yes, I understand. Is there anything else that you would like to add to what we've spoken about, about these events, these historical events? You know, what kind of inter – why your interest was piqued and maybe other people's wasn't?

A: Well, I don't know. I think the fact that when I found out that there was a Jewish connection in my family, I – I got interested, you know, and tried to track it and I couldn't get anywhere, in **Lithuania**. You know, because the documents were kept very poorly and so on, and – and so, no I couldn't track anything down. But, in general, I got interested in it, and the more I read, the more interested I got, you know, to find out what – what went on. And so I – I – I read quite a few books, you know, and – and in fact I just finished, some time ago, a book about a thousand

pages which is a diary of a Jewish lawyer that survived all these wars, and ended up in **Israel** and then depa – and then become internationally known as a la-lawyer and so on. Well, he wrote – he preserved most of his diary from those days in **Kaunas** ghetto.

Q: Do you remember his name?

A: No.

Q: Did you read it in English or in Lithuanian?

A: In English, in English, it's a big book, and I can't even – I think it just says diary something.

Q: Diary of the **Kovno** ghetto.

A: I can find out what was **[indecipherable]** But anyway –

Q: Does the name **Tory** mean anything to you?

A: Beg pardon?

Q: Does the name **Tory** mean any –

A: Yes! That's it.

Q: **Avraham Tory**.

A: That's right. That's it, that's the guy, that's his diary.

Q: What did you learn from that diary that you hadn't known before?

A: Well, I learned what – what happened, how the life went on there. Because, you know, we didn't see it, you know. Things went on **[indecipherable]** inside, you know, and – and we see ok – you know, like we used to see was groups of Jews being escorted from one place to another. That's about all we saw, you know, in yellow stars. And as I say, you know, my mother got stopped because she looked Jewish **[indecipherable]** they wanted to know where her star was. So –

Q: Why do you think some people are interested in this in **Lithuania** and other peoples aren't?

A: I don't know. I don't know. I just became interested, you know, and the more I read, the more interested I got. And so essentially – a little while back **[indecipherable]** published a little review of a book by this woman, and I just started reading it.

Q: I think it must be **Ellen Cassedy's** book.

A: Yes.

Q: Yes.

A: Yes, yes, it is. That's right, that's what I have.

Q: It's called, "**We Are Here**."

A: Yeah, I started reading it.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Yeah, so anyway, and that **[indecipherable]** diary, I gave it to a friend of mine, so he is reading it.

Q: Here in the Lithuanian community?

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah, **Remus**(ph) **Kaminskas**(ph), yeah. He is reading it. I think that's who I gave it to, yeah, I think it's **Remus**(ph). So anyway – so that's why – how I developed interest you know, in – in following genocide, and then especially Lithuanian.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: And being quite aware, in **Lithuania** of – of mo – mo – the opinion that people spread about the Jews, you know, that's a – and I think it was primarily jealousy, because Jews, you know, well organized people, they helped each other, opened up businesses, were successful. And by golly, you know, people said well, you know, Jews are taking it over. Well, sure they taking over. Why? Because they work and – and – and – and create, and get educated.

Q: What would you want – what would you want young Lithuanians in **Lithuania** to know about what went on there?

A: Well, I think that somebody could create a – a – a seminars or something about it, but – but I'm not sure that it would work.

Q: Why?

A: Well, you know, I guess now is there's some guilt in among the Lithuanians, you know. Because let's face it, you know where the Holocaust started?

Q: Where?

A: **Lithuania**.

Q: Really?

A: Read the – read that **Cassedy's** book.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: That's what it tells you.

Q: Okay.

A: That's where it all started.

Q: Why do you think it started in **Lithuania**?

A: Well, because they started executing people first, even before the Poles did. That's why.

Q: I don't know that Poles executed Jews. I think it was just that concentration camps were in **Poland**.

A: Well, I don't know, I don't know. It's probably Germans with – with other help.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: I think there was a battalion of Lithuanians that participated in that.

Q: In – in **Poland**?

A: Well, I'm not sure in **Poland**, but I know in **Lithuania**.

Q: Oh yes, oh yeah, uh-huh.

A: Yeah, I don't know about **Poland**, no I don't know about **Poland**. But – but essentially, years ago, it was haven for the pole – for the Jews to come, because people were tolerated. And then it became anti-Semitic place because there were so many of them there, and they were – and they were keeping themselves, you know, as a separate class, and then hatred developed. Or I should say, you know, misunderstanding or whatever you want to call, developed between the two groups, because essentially, Jew was not Lithuanian, he was Jew. He just lived here. That's the way they looked.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know? Even today they think they look the same way.

Q: So, I'll – I'll repeat the question a bit of a different way. If you were sitting here with a 16 or a 17 year old Lithuanian kid who's now growing up on the streets and in the places where all of these things happened, what would you want to tell them? Because you were an 11 year old kid when it was happening?

A: Well, I would ask him if he's interested to hear about it.

Q: Okay.

A: And it he isn't, I wouldn't tell him anything. You know, how can you tell somebody that doesn't want to listen?

Q: That's true. That's true.

A: So.

Q: What do you think we need to do in order to have people want to listen?

A: Well, you know, I think there's a process in **Lithuania** gaining – getting people to – to understand the – th-the – the unity of people to understand the relationship among the people, because **[indecipherable]** way, part of the Euro – European usa – union. People are interchanging, people are all mixing. And I think that's assimilation process. And I think that's – that's gonna help. You know, **Lithuania's** losing people to immigration. The number of Lithuanian pop-population has decreased.

Q: That's true.

A: I think it's around 500,000 people have left, out of three million.

Q: That's a lot.

A: That's a lot

Q: That's a lot, yeah.

A: That's a lot.

Q: Mr. **Ugianskis**, thank you very much –

A: Okay.

Q: – for talking with us today –

A: Oh sure.

Q: – for this interview.

A: Now remember one thing, what I told you is what I remember when I was 11 years old.

Q: We know. We know. And if sa – if I wo – someone asked me what do I remember when I was 11 years old, it would not be easy for me to recall. So I – I understand. But clearly some of these – some of these things, particularly what you witnessed at the fort, are of such – of such a tragedy and, you know, import that at – that's the sort of thing that stays with you.

A: Well, people are beginning to ignore and forget it. You know, people don't like to remember bad things.

Q: Yeah. But it's part of what it – it's part of what happened.

A: You know. For example, I don't want to recall th-the time my wife left me.

Q: Of course, of course.

A: Thank God I have very good relationship with my daughter. You know, she has been a good scholar, you know. When she went to the nice public school here, she was valedictorian of her class. When she went to university, she got all **As** – mostly

As, you know, I think her gra – grade point average when she graduate from **UCLA** was 3.5.

Q: That's pretty impressive.

A: I was higher. I had 3.6 when I graduated from **Michigan State**.

Q: That's also impressive, yeah.

A: So – so I have a good life, you know. I married **Mary** now and sh – we are very happy. Been married now for what, 15 years? And she is helping me now when I'm in trouble.

Q: Yeah.

A: I remember one thing, that she promised to do that at the altar.

Q: Yeah? I'm glad to hear it.

A: Okay?

Q: Okay. Well, thank you very much again.

A: Sure. My pleasure.

Q: We appreciate it, that you took the time to speak with us.

A: Okay, okay.

Q: Right. This concludes –

A: You know, my memory may not be all perfect, so –

Q: Nobody's is, nobody's is. And this concludes our interview – the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **Cesare Ugianskis** on February 18th, 2013. Thank you.

Conclusion of Interview