

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Stanley Kiersnowski
June 20, 2014
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PREFACE

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STANLEY KIERSNOWSKI

June 20, 2014

Question: This is a **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **Stanley Kiersnowski**, on June 20th, 2014, in **Nutley, New Jersey**. And thank you Mr. **Kiersnowski** for agreeing to speak with us, for agreeing to tell your story and what your experiences were before and during and after World War II. I appreciate it.

Answer: Okay, you're welcome.

Q: I want to start by asking the basic questions. Could you tell me what your name was at birth, where you were born, and the date of your birth.

A: I was born **Stanislaw Kiersnowski**. Doctor baptized me, actually when he slapped me, he said another **Stanislaw [indecipherable]** because he knew my grandfather. I was born **[indecipherable]** in a clinic in **Wilno**, at that time it was **Poland**, on August 17, 1926.

Q: Okay.

A: And my mother was very happy because they couldn't exchange me, because I was the only boy in the whole clinic.

Q: She couldn't lose you.

A: No.

Q: She couldn't lose you. Were – did you have any brothers and sisters?

A: I have a sister, **Anna Kiersnowski**, but she was seven years older than I was.

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Q: So she – so you were the youngest child?

A: I – I was – th-there were two, and then when my mother had the miscarriage, and I didn't know about it til we were going to **India**. And an Indian colonel on the ship looked at her hand and he said, you had a miscarriage, you lost a boy.

Q: Oh my goodness, oh my goodness.

A: I hope you don't mind I say something like this, because –

Q: Oh no, no, I think it's wonderful. I think it's wonderful but it's – it's such a mystery, you know, that – that somebody would take a look on someone's hand and be able to tell.

A: Yeah. And he told me, never show your hand to anybody.

Q: Really?

A: That same colonel, he said – I don't know why, but he said no.

Q: Okay. Tell me about your mother a little bit. What kind of a person was she?

Who was her father?

A: Well, her mother –

Q: And mother.

A: – my mother was, I think, very intelligent, very intelligent woman, very brilliant. As I told you, she was – she came from very wealthy family. They had governess from **Ireland**, from eng – from **Germany** and from **France**. So there

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were five children, so they all spoke right away English, German, French and Polish. The boys were learning Russian, but the – the girls, three girls were not learning Russian. They were not allowed own – to speak Russian at home, because **Poland** was occupied. So, it was like resentment. But later on, of course, she learned Russian. And she understood Italian and she understood Spanish. From knowing those languages, when we came to **America** they often ask her when she was in a hospital, to be translator for the people that they couldn't communicate with, you know, so th-they could [**indecipherable**]

Q: So she – so she learned this –

A: At home.

Q: – at home, and at home was where? Where was her home?

A: Th-The home was in [**indecipherable**] and this was **Ru-Rudakow**(ph). It was very large estate, because it was 12,000 hectares. It was a very large estate over there. A lot of people were coming there. There was a big house, of course. It used to be this was **Horvath's**(ph) property, actually. My grandfather married a **Horvath** girl. They were of Hungarian origin. And not fu – far from there, they had a beautiful palace actually. My mother said everything was carved over there. It was right on the river [**indecipherable**] and in – and there's no sign of those buildings left, everything was completely destroyed.

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Q: So it was – she was – a-and came from a landed gentry family.

A: Oh yeah, she was very gentry.

Q: Very gentry.

A: You see, I found out here in **America** that when there were balls in – they had apartment houses they owned in **Kiev**, and they ha – owned a place i-in **Minsk**.

And this one woman here, she married later the richest man in **Poland**,

Boldanovitch(ph), and they were talking about their childhood. And she said

[indecipherable] whenever you came with your sister to the dance, all the men were bending in half to dance with you, because everybody knew your money. My mother told me that each one of them had hundred thousand rubles put in **Kiev** in the bank as dowry, and it was in – it was in gold, you know. It was a lot of money too, but it wasn't in **Switzerland** **[indecipherable]** the money.

Q: Yeah.

A: But the **[indecipherable]** grandfather put it in there, and the revolution came and that was the end of the gold.

Q: Oh dear, oh – so, in other words, that way of life that she was born into all changed with World War I and the end of the revolution.

A: Wi-With the revolution.

Q: The Russian – the **Bolshevik** revolution.

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A: You see, my mother always thought they had several cars over there, and one car was **Minerva** called. And when I came to **America** I work with very rich people in the brokerage, all of them are millionaires, and one I told him that my mother always talk about **Minerva**, oh it was car made in **Switzerland**, it was 25,000 in **America** before the first World War.

Q: Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh.

A: So you know, from that I got what they had because I only saw pictures of that place when I was small. But y-you know, they never bragged, they never bragged about anything and anything. They were t – we were told from childhood to be very helpful to people, to be nice to people, to be polite to everybody. If anybody needs help, you have to help them and everything. And then – then in life I learned something else too, that you have to keep your ground, and not let your people, you know step over you. Because some people, they **[indecipherable]** softness.

Q: That's right.

A: And – and they try to take advantage of you, but – a-and that was life. But they ni – I was never told you know, something like this. There used to be a crazy man that used to come to our house and he was eating in the kitchen and everything, and my father sat and talked always with him. Eventually, during the war he attacked a local **[indecipherable]** killed him. He – he was crazy, but my father used to spend

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time even with him when he came, wanted to talk. Well, talk to the person, you know.

Q: Yeah. So, did your mother, when the revolution happened, this is, you know, several years before your birth, was she already married, was she already living there –

A: They got married – I don't know on what day they got married exactly, but they got married, and they lived still in **Rudakow**(ph). And in **Rudakow**(ph) there was German army stationed over there. This was through first World War. And what happened was that eventually the German army went communistic, and the other side was communistic, and they all dropped their rifles and they said, why are we fighting? And the Germans dress my mother and my father as German soldiers and put them on the train to evacuate that, because they started killing all the **[indecipherable]** over there already, and especially the bourgeois, you know. So the Germans evacuated them, and my father said that the Russians were shooting at that German in train, and the machinists run away. And my grandfather was building **Trans-Siberian** railroad in **Russia**, and my father traveled the loco – locomotive, so my father went and he was running the train to **Poland** because they had nobody to run the train, they didn't know how to operate it. And my father said he was lucky that when he came to the Polish border – already **Poland** had a

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border, they stopped them. And they didn't like people coming from the east, but my father ask, who is the commanding officer there? And he – my father knew him when he said, tell him that it's me. So they let them go into **Poland**, because they could have turned them in, and there was big trouble, you know, people moving there and back.

Q: So your mother's estate and where she married your father was in what's today **Belarus**? It was a –

A: It – it – it was **Belarus - Minsk**, you know, there.

Q: Yeah.

A: But you didn't tell my mother, you see, we could have come to **America**, clearly, because she was born in **Russia**. But Americans would have given her a Russian visa right away to come to **America**, because there was no quota number from **Russia**, but my mother wouldn't let be put that she was born in **Russia**, because may be a Russian. So she refused to do it, and she said that she was born in **Rudakow(ph), Poland**. I can show her passport to you –

Q: Yeah.

A: – even, I have her passport. Because we resented – you see, we considered **Russia** inhuman land, because it's – the minute you cross – I am not talking about the Russian people, but the land is inhuman. When you go in there and you see,

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when you cross **Ural** mountains, you go for days and days, every now and then you see some sediment, they – where did they put coal, or something. And there's nothing but rivers, forests, everything's empty. People were all walking with mosquito nets on their face, million of mosquitos. Where they deported us there was a forest, we were asking Russians, how far does the forest go? Nobody knew. They just didn't know what it was, and they didn't know much about the world. In that village a lot of people never saw a plane. Some of them used to go to – to deliver, you know, by truck something, so they knew – they saw trains, but the children didn't see trains.

Q: So this is – you're talking about deep into the heart of **Siberia**.

A: **Si-Siberia**, yeah.

Q: And we'll get to that part of your story when – when you end up there with your family. I want to establish now, get – get a sense a little bit of your early life, and of the family that you were born into, both on the mother's side and on your father's side.

A: No, because wh-when my father and my grandfather was dead already, because he was building **Trans-Siberian** railroad, and he had ulcers operation in **Moscow**, and he went for recovery to **Yalta**, and he's buried in **Yalta** actually, he died over there. And –

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Q: Mm-hm. That would have been what year?

A: I could not tell you.

Q: 1890s though, or –

A: It's something – 18 something you know. My father was young still, it was before he met my mother, so he was young man. And m-m – well, with my mo – family, my grandfather was – everything [indecipherable] he was a banker, he was a shipbuilder, he was **organizator**(ph) of Polish **zi-ziemianin**. **Ziemianin** means people who possess land, you know –

Q: Okay.

A: – because –

Q: Landowners.

A: Landowner. Because you have to realize that in **Poland**, people look down on being a trader, on being something at your business like this. They like to have ownership and they were [indecipherable] you know, this was the part of people, they took part in the wars. The peasants didn't have to fight, but the Polish peasants were not slaves, but they didn't have to fight. And that's why so many Jews, cause [indecipherable] he had the girlfriend Jewish, and they brought a lot of Jewish people, and they open up **Poland** to the Jews, because they needed people in business and in everything, and a lot of Jewish people came to **Poland**. Actually, a

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mason showed me in **America** papers the Jews used to, 1600, how to come to **Poland**. It was shown that there was nothing, no towns or nothing. And a lot of Jews were immigrating to **Poland**, but –

Q: You're talking several hundred years ago.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: And they were coming in, you know, **K-Kazimierz Wielki**. He had the **stairka**(ph).

Q: Casti – so you're talking about **Casimir** the Great? **Casimir**(ph) the – yeah.

A: Yeah, yeah, this is long ago, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: And you see, I studied very little Polish history, I know, but the Jewish people were welcome in **Poland** because you know, some people say, well, you persecuted us. I said, why did you come? Nobody ask you. You were invited to come, but surely, to open the trade. And – and that was it. Very often we were told by Jewish people even in **Wilno**, you own the street, we own the houses, you know, so that was the – all the businesses, if you went to stores or something, like we used to go and buy clothes, and everything was in – most in Jewish stores, you know. Later on they started making cooperatives in **Poland**, so – like we had to sell

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a cow or a horse or a grain; everything will be always sold to Jewish people. But generally before the war, they started making trading organization, and you know, the – and that was different. But the – but the thing was, you know, who knows? By now everybody's so mixed up over there, nobody knows who's who. Like you knew history.

Q: Right.

A: My – my – I think it was my grandfather's father, he was punished by the tsar for rebelling against the tsar. So he was sent for 12 years of **katorga(ph)**.

Katorga(ph), I don't know what – you know what **katorga(ph)** is?

Q: Yeah, go – it's – it's **[indecipherable]**

A: He was chained to a wheelbarrow for 12 years in a mine. And when they release him, he was sent – he wasn't allowed to return to **Poland**, so he went to **Kaupas(ph)**. And my father told me that he married a – this miserable **harrick(ph)**, wh-who was a Tartar or something like this, you know, from there.

[indecipherable] supposedly, who's princess or something, because he had money you know, when he was released already. And then he came back to **Poland**, and they – I had very dark complexion. My father said that this is he – that he is dark complexion, I, my sister, from that – from her. And they called me in **Poland**, **Togo(ph)**, my grandfather called me **Togo(ph)** because he knew a Japanese

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admiral, and it was **Tojo**(ph). And he said because I had slanted eyes. And my experience in life was, when I was in American army, they send me to **Tokyo** first. And when I was in **Tokyo** I went to Japanese stores, and the Japanese right away puts chairs for me in the store, brings the tea or something to drink. I said, why do you do it? Because you're no gook, you're not a foreigner. I said, why? Your eyes.

Q: Oh my.

A: And the Japanese saw it right away, they have – you slanted eyes, and they treated me very differently from Americans. And when I told them that I'm Polish, well, they loved Polish people because Polish people hated the Russians. And this was after the Korean war, and you know, when Russians marched and took kore – up north, **Japan**, well they never released it, and they said that was the reason the Japanese surrendered so fast in second World War. It wasn't only atomic weapons, but the Russians invaded already, **Japan**. And they were petrified that **Russia** will take all of **Japan**. And Japanese from first World War, they hate them.

Q: My goodness. All of –

A: I [indecipherable] too much.

Q: No, no, but it's – it's – it's so many threads, and they're very interesting, all of them. But let's go back to your father, and I want to just establish one thing; when you speak of the grandfather you knew, it's your mother's father, is that correct?

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A: Mother's father.

Q: Your – your – your grandfather whom you did not know was your father's father.

A: I only had a picture of him, but I don't know him, I didn't know him.

Q: Yeah.

A: He died when my father was young, you know.

Q: So tell me – tell me about the **Kiersnowski** family, about your father's side, and were they as – as wealthy as your mother's side, or how –

A: Well, **Kiersnowski**, he – he – I'll tell the story of **Kiersnowski** family was, there were a lot of [indecipherable] they were exceptionally wealthy, you know, for that family. And they used to send, if somebody was in trouble, to **Oxford** Un-
Un-Universities and everything. They were known, but they were all educated, and they were engineers, lawyers, everything, and they had lands, too, property land. In **Druskieniki**, my father's family had villas, quite a number of villas over there.

And they sold it, and for – for marks, and the marks collapse. He didn't sell it, he was mad at his – how brothers and sisters, that they sold it without his knowledge, my father said. He never wanted to go and see, even.

Q: Yeah.

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A: Now, you know, same with us, we were in **Wilno** and we went, and I saw our barn only. And I told the fellow turn around, I don't want to see that. It brings too much memory. I could go and see my house. My **Francesca** was there, we were in – and the fellow says, well, it's a big barn. I says yeah, it's a very big barn. And I always remember that barn, there was a big storm before the war, and the wind tore the whole roof off, and we had to pay a lot of money to rebuild the roof on it, and the Polish government put a new tax on us for the new roof, instead of giving us a tax reduction.

Q: Yeah, insult to injury.

A: In-Insult to injury.

Q: So –

A: So – so my father couldn't go to schools. I told you, my father had **wilchi(ph)** **bilet**. He was in school and he cut out the border of **Russia** – of **Poland** from **Russia** during the geography lesson. And that was the end of his education, they wouldn't let him go, obviously. So he didn't go. But if you talk –

Q: Excuse me, excuse me. They didn't let him g – means – was he thrown out of school?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah?

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A: They call it **wilchi**(ph) **bilet**, a wolf's ticket they used to give, and that was the end of your education in **Russia**, so you had to go somewhere overseas to study, you know? A-And – or – or something, but – but not in **Russia**. But from – but my father traveled a lot about **Russia**, his father was building a siber – in this **Trans-Siberian** railroad, my fo – his g – my grandfather took him to f – to hunt for polar bear in **Russia**. And – and they went up north, and his father said to him **[indecipherable]** you shoot, and you fall down. And – and the polar bear was coming at them. And then he shot, but my father says, of course I missed, I hit him in the paw. And his father shot him in between the eyes, and my father said that was my end of hunting, because the bear sat down and with the other paw grabbed snow and applied it to his forehead. And my father said, I would never hunt again in my life.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: He says it's awful because it was just like a human being, you know? And my father said, I will never hunt again. So he had very good time. He was known as **[indecipherable]** that he was everywhere, you know, my father. He was going to operas, he was going everywhere, and somewhere he met my mother. And my

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father was a beautiful voice, because this other [indecipherable] **Kiersnowski** who was in **London**, his father was singing in **La Scala** opera, and my father, they wanted him to come to **America**, actually. He had this, how do you call it, complete hearing, you know, very few people have it. He could go with Polish actors and they would be in two different rooms, and they would go nobody knows and they said, who's singing in this room? They couldn't tell them apart, my father could imitate so perfectly, voices of other people. He could hear a tune, he would sit down and play it on the piano.

Q: Well, what you're describing is somebody who, if I put it bluntly, didn't need to earn a living. He had –

A: No.

Q: – he had – okay.

A: No, no.

Q: So that by the time you were born, was he – was he earning a living in some way?

A: Well, we were –

Q: Or was he do –

A: He – he work for a while. He work – my father, for a while worked in northeast [indecipherable] out there, what was the name of the place? [indecipherable] This

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was on the border of **Russia**, and they were trying to help the little farmers in villages. They used to have very, very long fields. So they were trying to make them square, you know, for them. And my mother said it was so much trouble because they were coming with the bags of gold, giving a bag of gold to give in this piece, not that piece and everything. And my mother said, I am not going to take any gold from you. He had to evaluate what the land was. You know, he knew the land. So it approximately the same field and everything, but instead of him plowing two kilometers field, he would be plowing just few hundred yards, you know. So he was doing –

Q: So was this a certain kind of Polish refor – land reform?

A: Yeah, Polish land reform.

Q: Because this – land reform.

A: And he work with that. And we rented our property out and it became a disaster, so we came back there and my father came back and we had that farm, you know.

Q: So tell me about that farm. Tell me about where you were born, the house you grew up in. What was the – what was the area like and so on.

A: Oh, beautiful. There were forests around. There were deers and there were hare everywhere. Not rabbits, you know, but big hares [**indecipherable**]. Oh, and there were a lot of woods, our place was called **Wochunay**(ph).

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Q: Wochunay(ph)?

A: The **wilki**, it was, there were a lot of wolves over there. I remember one time I was coming back from **Wilno** and I was walking and it was late in the evening and I saw the – a wolves eyes in the forest, and I got so scared I started screaming and whistling loud. And we had [**indecipherable**] ducks at home [**indecipherable**] how, how, and all our ducks started running and the wolves ran away.

Q: Wow.

A: But it was – it was – it was a beautiful life. You see, I was born with a heart. When I went to school in **Poland**, they put us in front of the machine when we were small, and they looked at our lungs. A-And they saw my heart that I was in the wrong position, so I was not allowed to ride on the bicycle, I was not allowed to take exercises. They said they – by 21 my heart will come to normal position, that it happens in children. We had a very good doctor, **Salzman(ph)**. He was taking care of **Pilsudski, Marshall Pilsudski** too, you know.

Q: Oh wow.

A: Well, we had connections everywhere. So he was taking – my mother wanted me to go to cadet school, they said, they'll never accept you with this heart problem, because I should never be in the army, they said, with that problem. So,

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but I could ski, and I loved to ski up, and behind the horses in the winter, you know?

Q: Cross country skiing.

A: And cross country ski. We had the hills in fer – in back of our property. I made the jumping thing and I used to jump. But I was very small. I told you, I didn't grow til I was fif – 16 - 17, and they call me **[indecipherable]** always in that I will never grow. My grandfather was petrified. My father used to say, don't worry, I was the same way. I was so small and I was dark, and in school there was war in **Abyssinia**.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: You know?

Q: That's right.

A: And **[indecipherable]** was there, and they carried me on the chairs in school and they made me necklace that I am, you know, the king and everything. And they pinch me while they carry me on the chair in schools. And my mother finally took me and put me in a private school. But over there they told me that you never get tuberculosis, because you have very, extremely large lungs, you know, in that school. And – but I – I – I couldn't do a lot of things that other children were doing. They didn't let me, you know, I stunk exercises.

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Q: So you first – you were first in school in a public school and then –

A: Public school.

Q: – and then changed to a private school.

A: Well, my – I had appendicitis operation, and I was put on the stage in school during the prayer and they told nobody to push me or anything. And my mother was coming to school, and there was a bunch of guys pulling me on the stairs by the legs. That did it, my mother took me out the school. And you see, I was from a farm, as my uncle, and I wasn't living in **Wilno**. So the people from **Wilno**, the kids, they didn't like me, tha – because I was from the country, you see? People are very clannish, immediately clannish. So they didn't like me. And I remember one time, one guy was giving me so much trouble. And you know those furnaces to heat the house with –

Q: Right.

A: – hermetic things they were big iron things that you tied, and –

Q: Right.

A: – and he started to – accusing me, and I grabbed him by the neck and I started hitting his head into that iron. Thank God there was some guy and they stopped me, I could have killed the guy. I was pretty strong you know about things –

Q: About how old were you when that happened?

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A: Ten.

Q: And this was in public school?

A: In public school, and that's my mother transferred me to [indecipherable] to public – to private school, and there were only 13 of us, and all 13 of us survived the war. Now only one lives in **Warsaw** and I am in **America**. We talk every week with him, I talk with him.

Q: Oh my gosh.

A: The other – the other 11 died already. One boy died last year.

Q: From that private school. But I want to stay with the public school. In that public school, were there any Jewish kids?

A: Of course.

Q: Okay, and –

A: But Jewish kids were mostly in Jewish schools. **Wilno** had Jewish schools, Jewish universities, Jewish everything. It was a big cultural center of Judaism. You know, in **Poland** there were what, three and a half million Jews, supposedly. That was 10 percent of Polish population. So it was a great – what – what remain of Judaism. A lot of it was saved be – by being in **Poland**. The only thing, the Jews didn't understand what pogrom was. Pogrom was when the Cossacks from **Ukraine** were beating, but they were beating everybody. They were beating Jews,

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they were beating us. There were – supposedly the tsar of **Russia** used Jews as tax collectors, so Russians wouldn't like the Jews for being tax collectors. You know, there's such a messy, this world always, the more you look at it, the worse it gets. That's my opinion from my experience.

Q: Well, when you were a kid going to school, did all those – did those things play out in the classroom, or play out outside of the classroom?

A: Oh, we played outside. We were – no, but we had gymnastics in **Poland**. Oh, there were lines to climb, you know, there were a thing, you jump over the horses –

Q: Oh no, but what I me – what I meant by play out, I meant, did these issues of clannishes – clannishness and you know, kids being either from wealthy parents or from poor parents, or Jewish kids, or –

A: No, it wasn't – it wasn't that, it was – no, it wasn't that. It was what region you come from.

Q: Okay.

A: You see, when they played, you know, in **Wilno** you saw there are courtyards.

Q: Yes, right.

A: So if a child from this courtyard were to come to play on this courtyard, they told him, go and play in your own courtyard, leave our courtyard alone. People are so clannish that –

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Q: So it's territorial.

A: Territorial almost, you know, and that exists everywhere that you go, and is between the nations. Now that I'm old, I realize it. I remember that when all – later on from **India**, I was sent to **Africa**, to **Uganda**, to a camp – Polish refugee camp. And the boys who are there, from **India** that came, and they said to me, you know, we can't even go to a dance. This – Ugandan [indecipherable] won't accept us, they call us. They call us Indians, and they don't want us. They were there maybe four or five years in that camp, and we just came over. And I remember I came over and I met a very [indecipherable] girl, you know, and I went over there, and some of the guys from **India** went over there, and I learned to fight pretty well in **India**. And I asked them, who is the leader of those boys? And they told me, well I dance, and I hit him so hard dancing polka, that he fell down. I stood over him, I said, do you want more, or no? And he said no. And our boys got up and they could already dance and play. But this is the clannishness of people. They were considering themselves African and we were Indians already to them.

Q: And you're already Pole – and your always – you were all Poles.

A: And we were all Poles or from **Russia**. But you see, this is clannishness, this is unbelievable in people. I notice it everywhere. Everywhere I notice it, clannish. Look at when I was drafted into American army. There were five Jewish guys, and

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there were three Ukrainians, and we all stuck together, we were – we were the best of friends, all the time, because we were from **Poland** and from **Ukraine**, so we're from that region, and in American army. We felt that we have to protect ourselves from those dumb Americans, who choose to step on our feet, you know. It's right away, and it was, you know – I told you about this Jewish fellow, **Jakubovic**(ph) **[indecipherable]**. He was in the American army, and he was in the barrack. He spent the whole war in a concentration camp in **Germany**. And he used to wake up at night and scream. I went to Americans, explaining, please do something for this guy. He spent – well, Americans didn't understand what it's all about. Finally, I got to the rabbi. In the army there are various religions, you know –

Q: Right.

A: – people, and I got to a rabbi, went to a rabbi, and I told him, I said, this is criminal what they're doing to these guys. He wakes up and he thinks, in the middle of the night that he's in German concentration camp. And they moved him right away, the rabbi put him in a separate room, and no more training, military training, he was taken care of the hot water for us. And bu-but – we – we – but people just don't understand, people don't understand other people in this world. Very often a lot of misunderstandings are befall that.

Q: Well –

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A: And there are – and then there are a lot of very bad people. I wish they would get rid of them early, when they start only. But how do you know that they are going to be bad [indecipherable]

Q: That's true, you don't know. You don't know.

A: This is [indecipherable] **Jesus Christ** parables, you read about it, that there is a good tree and a bad tree. And a good tree will give good fruits, and a bad tree will give you nothing. And the same thing with people. You get some people that will be mean, and hurt a lot of people and everything, and there are people who will help you.

Q: Let's go back to **Wilno**. I want you to paint a picture for me, of what did this city in northeast **Poland** look like? What kind of a city, how would you describe it?

A: What?

Q: **Wilno**. How – how would you describe it? The city

A: Well, **Wilno** was a Lithuanian city.

Q: Okay.

A: And when **Jagiello** married the Polish queen –

Q: And who was **Jagiello**, and who was this Polish queen?

A: **Jagiello** was the Lithuanian king.

Q: And this is –

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A: And he married Polish Queen **Jadwiga**, and – because they had a lot of trouble with **[indecipherable]** well, they were really knights, you know, they – who were –

Q: Crusaders.

A: What?

Q: You mean the Crusaders?

A: Yeah, Crusaders.

Q: So we're talking history now, we're talking 500 years ago.

A: Oh yeah, we're talking – so **Wilno** was a Lithuanian city, and even in the whole story how – who was it, **[indecipherable]** or somebody had the dream with the wolf and everything that they say, and build the castle and everything, and eventually got **[indecipherable]** somehow, in a big way. And you had **[indecipherable]** Prince **Rageev**(ph) **[indecipherable]** and there were only **[indecipherable]** might as well be in a Lithuanian family, because **wich** – most of the families that were Lithuanian were ending in **wich**, **Kaskaiwich**(ph), you know.

Q: Mm-hm. So when you would walk down the main street in **Wilno** as a child, what do you remember seeing? What kind of people were on the streets?

A: Oh, they were – part of the town was Polish, and part of the town was Jewish, there were so many Jews over there, Hassidim and everything. And there – and

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there were no more people, there were very few Lith-Lithuanians. There were almost no Lithuanians in **Wilno**. And mo-mo-mostly Polish.

Q: Did you have – did you have interactions with – with any of the Jewish people there when you were growing up?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: In the courtyard where I lived there was a kosher butcher even, and he had sons. And he used to take a bladder, and he used to hang bladder and drying it out, you know. I don't know [**indecipherable**] and he was doing something. So we used to steal those, with his children, and we used to tie it to the cat's tail, and cat's tail was running like crazy because it was rattle and making so much noise. And you know, we were going together, we were all playing together. W-We had no friction that I remember of. I told you that I was dark and I was very often taken as Jewish. When my mother used to go to stores, they used to say **on za nasza**, he's from ours, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: The Jewish people thought that I was Jewish. But –

Q: What language did they speak, usually?

A: What?

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Q: What language did they speak?

A: Oh God, Yi-Yiddis-Yiddish.

Q: Did you understand any?

A: No, no, no, no way, I didn't understand it, but they spoke Yiddish. Do you know of a Jewish writer, what's his name, **Singer**?

Q: Y-Yeah, **Is-Isaac Bashevis Singer**, yeah.

A: And those books, you know, I read his books in Polish translated from Yiddish. I love them, they're hilarious.

Q: Yeah.

A: Very funny, he's very – he's in **Israel** ti – I think. But he – he in – does books in Polish translation. He brought the beauty, I say, or I don't know what it is, of Yiddish language, because it's very nice, he's very funny in a way. But it is a nice language, but I don't know it. When I came to **Palestine**, you could speak Polish everywhere, you know. The restaurants, there were villages on, there were kibbutz already, they had, you know, those collective farms over there. Girls used to bring us flowers in when we were marching. One girl I always remember, she had red, red shorts. Oh boy, was she pretty. I always tell **Francesca** about, yeah.

Q: So – so the picture that I'm getting is that you were born into a well-to-do family, that your mother had come over –

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A: W-Well-to-do family which already lost a lot, but who will stay comfortab – but because of the taxes – remember, after the 1920 war, when we came back – I wasn't born yet, but when my mother went west –

Q: From **Minsk** [indecipherable]

A: No, no, she went west to **Poseland**(ph) and she was stayed in **Horvath's** house, you know, where her brother was married, with my sister. My sister was just born, 1919 she was born.

Q: Okay.

A: And **Andy**(ph) was born, so they were together. And – and she – th-they had a boy and my mother had my sister. And when they came back, there were no windows, there were no doors, there were no [indecipherable] there was nothing. You had to start everything from the beginning. It would [phone ringing]

Q: Okay. All right, childhood was –

A: Oh, child was – was very happy. I was a sickly child. You see, one time there was big rain, and we had meadows, and the workers were cutting grass on the meadows, but there was water. And I had the teacher at home teaching me, I think four grades, first grades I was at home and we had a teacher, private teacher. And my father said, it's beautiful day, we go over there. And we went over there. And there were so many snails in the grass, and I started picking them. And I put my

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hands to here and here and here in the water. Well, what happened, I got a little blister here, I got a little blister here, I got a little blister here. My mother took me to the hospital in **Wilno**. In **Wilno** they punctured them. The next thing, I got a hundred blisters, spread up. And we were going to go – go into **Charnabore**(ph), and you know, that was three kilometers to go to **Wilno**. And there was **Leznakow**(ph), he had the store with the groceries, with everything. And he said, there is a famous doctor, Jewish doctor from **Warsaw** here on – for vacation. So he says, go over to him. And I went to him. He said, who the hell punctured those things? They didn't know what they were doing. You cannot – he's getting gangrene here, and under the arms already, gangrene is starting. So he gave some medications and there's heat over here, bottles, we got water and everything lined, and I have to keep my hands and legs up. And this lasted for several weeks, you know. So I constantly had something. Either I had appendicitis, or I had that. I had this boil in my ear, I had boil in my throat too, you know. And I – tha-that was a lot of trouble, so I wouldn't go almost anywhere. My sister used to go, but they kept me more or less at home. But I was very happy because I had a hundred rabbits and I had my pigeons and I had everything. And I was happy, and I had the **Linden** tree, and I had a house in the tree, and there was – **Francesca** knows, it wasn't far I – well, maybe half a kilometer was a railroad station from us, on the top, and there

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was a boy there, he was my friend, and we were making a dir – from wood, we were making trains and everything. I wasn't allowed to play with him, because he spoke very bad Polish. It was so funny, one time I came to him, and there was a fellow that was a miner in **America**. Polish were in coal mines, and he bought himself a farm and he married a young girl. And he bought his son very nice skis. And this fellow [**indecipherable**] he went and he stole his skis. And this man came to get the skis back. And his father was beating th – him with the belt like hell. And we go out from the house, and I said, why did your father beat you so much, because you stole? No, no, no, that I don't know how to steal, that's why he was beating me. So you see, my mother didn't want me to play –

Q: Right.

A: – but we used to go to the river. There was a river maybe a kilometer away from there, there were a lot of snakes in there, you had to wear boots. And we used to go fishing there, and I used to catch little fish, and eat them. Oh, I loved fried little fish, you know. I – I all re – all remember that, it was so nice. Then one time there was, in another place there was a fellow, they had the drugstore in **Wilno**, and he went to school with me. And suddenly, a big carriage was going by. And he says, look at that carriage, and I stopped the carriage, it was my grandfather carriage.

Q: Oh my gosh.

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A: And we got into it, and the car – they drove us around, you know, he drove us all around. And when I came back to school, this fellow say, did I have a ride in a – **la carrozza**(ph), you know, and everything. Then, I tell you, they came, poor children, Polish boys. There was a scout camp for small Polish boys, and ah – there must have been about a hundred of them, and they came to us to get straw, so they could make **shiniki**(ph), you know, to sleep, and what they would – can give them some food. So we gave them some potatoes, some meat and everything to help. And they invited me there for a week, and I was there. And not far from there was a camp from **[indecipherable]** I ge – I get the name. Oh God almighty, that was in **Prussia**, on the border of **Prussia**.

Q: Oh yeah, mm-hm.

A: And they were from there, the Polish. But they were big scouts, and they made the big campfire. They were staying with one parish, where the priest had the thing. And we went over there. Then they tried to kidnap us, but we defended. But then all those boys said, we want to make campfire big too. And I said, well let's go. We were across from my grandfather's f-forest. So I said, come on kids, let's go and – with me, and they all went, which was private property. So we all went, and they were picking everything, mushrooms and fruits and wood, you know, and they was bringing and going back, bringing more and finally the forester caught us. And the

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forester said, what are you doing here, you know. And I said, I'm grandfather – this is my grandfather's land, so I give them permission. So I came to my grandfather couple of days later and he says, boy, you pull your authority. He says, you don't get away, he told them – they says, like my thing, and I give them the permission.

Q: Yeah.

A: So, you know, it was great thing with the other kids, you know, that they could do things that others could do and I – I opened up for them the forest, so – you know, in the forest there are a lot of things –

Q: Of course, of course.

A: – growing, so they were so happy.

Q: So it sounds –

A: Those were – those were mostly poor children –

Q: Yeah.

A: – from the town.

Q: It sounds like a pretty idyllic childhood.

A: Oh, a beautiful –

Q: Tell –

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A: I had beautiful childhood. You see, the day my childhood ended, when the Russians walked in, and I realized that my parents cannot protect me. To this day, it stays in my mind.

Q: Tell me about that day.

A: To this day, that realization that now I have no protection. There's somebody over us that can do us harm.

Q: Tell me about that day. What happened?

A: I don't know. I just realized the Russians came to our property. They asked for a gun, my father had a ra – gun, and when he walked out the Russians got scared because he was carrying the [indecipherable] to give it to them. Because they would have taken us to **Siberia** if they found weapons, you know. And it – and I realized that now is the end of that life. I – I realized it completely. And then later, when we were being taken, which I told you before –

Q: But we were gonna talk about it again.

A: Yeah, you will talk about, but you see, this was the realization. Remember, I was 13 years old, I was small and everything, and all of a sudden I realized that everything's gone. It's not mine – where – where they take the land away from you. They left us, I think, with 30 acres or something like that, a small field. I – my father lost his hand, I had to do the plowing, I had to do the sowing, I had to ca –

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they say, cut, you know. I had to feed the cows, my sister was milking the cows. We couldn't have workers, our workers actually were bandits it turned out. There were seven sons and we had the family, and when their – it broke out, they went – there were a lot of bandits there, because there was no Polish police, there was no Russian police, and people started robbing. And they – I played with the boy, there was one, he was the youngest son over there in that family. And his brother was cleaning his gun and he shot through a wall and ripped out the stomach of that boy, and that boy died. And they took him to **Felcher**(ph), you know, the closest help, but there was nothing that can be done. I remember that boy died. So you know, all of a sudden, things started going all wrong, you know, all wrong.

Q: Did you da – when the Russians came, had there been, even before that, was there any talk of – of what was going on in **Europe** and what was **Poland** going to do, and –

A: Oh, my family, of course, they were talking all the time, a-all the time.

Q: What kind of talks was it? What kind of things were being discussed?

A: Well, we heard **Hitler** screaming on the radio all the time, you know, when he was shouting and everything. And wi – **Russia** we knew, we were afraid of **Russia** because we had a lot of local communists. There were Polish communists, there were Jewish communists, you know, over there, a lot of – I mean, Jews were

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communists, a lot of Poles were communists. Some people had all of sudden money, and you knew that it must be coming from **Russia**, because **Russia** was exporting car loads, I understand of gold for propaganda and everything. So you heard about it. There was police trouble, my mother went to governor [indecipherable] he later became president of – of **Poland** in **London**, and he told me well, it's probably a [indecipherable] I don't know how – what you say [indecipherable] that at police station we consider very suspicious that they are pro-**Bolshevik**, you know, but we cannot do anything to them, we have to prove it, you know.

Q: Well, what was – what was the incident that brought your mother to go to him? What happened that she wanted to go –

A: Well, you had trouble, I don't know, like was some friction you know, in – in everything. You n – you know th-this is what, if you could like, Jewish people used to come from **Warsaw** for vacation, like that doctor. They were stupid, they, instead of talking to a peasant, with a little store or something, a **prusha**(ph) **panna**(ph), you know, and something like this, they s – they used to say **glupi**, like stupid, to them. Eventually they started pulling knives out, you know, because they got insulted. It's the same thing the way the British treated people in **Africa**, you know, they were calling them, hey boy do this, hey boy, do that. It's the same

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thing, you know. And you don't do it to people. You have to treat everybody with respect. That's what I was told by my parents, that you treat everybody with respect, never give them a reason, you know, to be mean to you.

Q: So, when this changed, did you understand? I mean, there was – it was – you were hearing **Hitler** screaming, but it was the Russians who were coming in. Why?

A: Well [indecipherable]

Q: Did you know about it at the time?

A: No, I don't think we knew. We – we knew later what happened, but I don't know why **Hitler** was afraid to allow – to a-attack **Poland** alone. While **Pilsudski** was alive, we knew he wouldn't do it. When **Pilsudski** died, they said, well, **Hitler** is not scared of **Pilsudski** any more. He – he had a mental block because he beat the hell out of them, too, out of the Germans. So we knew that there was bad, but we didn't know about – there was talk, and there was strange –

Q: Who was pa – let's say – tell us, who was **Pilsudski**?

A: What?

Q: Who was **Pilsudski**?

A: **Pilsudski** was the Marshall of **Poland**.

Q: And he died when?

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A: H-He died in, what was it, '36 - '37 he died. And I remember we didn't like him too much, we didn't like his politics, but they said now is big trouble because he – we – they knew that **Hitler** had his – you know superstitious or something, and then he – I si – I know now, you know, **Litvinov** was thrown out because he was Jewish, and they put **Molotov** and – **Molotov** and **Ribbentrop** decided to attack together. So first the Germans attacked, then the Russians. But you see, you hear about **Poland** so much, but you don't realize that after the campaign, **Hitler** in **Poland**, for almost for a year he had to regroup his armies and everything, and then he went after **England**, **Belgium** and everything. He almost didn't make war. He couldn't attack anybody. They say his losses in **Poland** were tremendous.

Q: Truly?

A: Because **Poland** had anti-tank weapon, and we wanted to make call – call in, you know, reserves all. And **England** and **France** said don't do it, because it will provoke **Hitler**, so then don't do it. So its mobilization started two days before **Hitler** attacked. And **Hitler** attacked accusing **Poland** that Polish troops went and attacked the radio station in **Germany**, and that's what he told the Germans, that he sends the army over there, and they came. But they couldn't even distribute the weapon, because **Poland** had something like a bazooka to destroy tank, and it was there, where they found it, **Germany** suffered tremendous losses, because those

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tanks weren't good, they had to start redesigning the tanks, because they were destroying them. But –

Q: So **Germany** was attacking from the west.

A: The west.

Q: And – and –

A: And about two weeks later, **Russia** came from the east. And **Russia** came, I'm telling you, they had strings on their horses. They came with the tanks that – with the lamp post and the tank would burn, but they kept coming and coming and coming. There were so many Russians that came over. I'll tell you something better. To **Patesha**(ph), to my grandfather's house, some Russian soldiers came over and they said [speaks foreign language here] **Pani**(ph), you know, when are you going to come back? They were from that region over there, and they –

Q: From where your mother was born?

A: From where my mother, and they came over there and they were asking **Pani**(ph), when are wa – when are you going to come back, **Pani**(ph)?

Q: And that's a – a ti – a term of respect.

A: And those were Russians soldiers.

Q: Yes, a term of respect saying, when are you going to come back and –

A: Yeah. Never over there –

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Q: Back to **Belarus**.

A: – because they were better off. They were living better off there. **Russia** was something – because they didn't know about the west, you know. **K-Karl Marx** and **Lenin** and **Trotsky**, they all promise people everything. They said we will be paradise. And when you live in **Siberia**, in the remote areas, I told you, those people didn't know anything.

Q: Yeah.

A: They didn't know, they thought – **Francesca** has a brother-in-law, a Russian from **Crimea**, he married. And he says, wa – we lived there, but we didn't see anything better. We thought everybody lives like that.

Q: Okay. So, you see the soldiers come in, you see that your father has to give a gun up, the one weapon, and you realize that your family, your parents cannot protect you any more. Did they ever have conversations with you about what all this meant, about what all these si – all these political things?

A: I don't know, we probably had, but I cannot tell you. Then **Stalin** gave **Wilno** to Lithuanians, and we were in Lithuanian region. So I was living in grandmother's house in **Wilno**, and I was going to gymnasium. So –

Q: So that's in the center of town?

A: So that was a very good period for us again, you see? Very good period.

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Q: How did it change? How did life change when it –

A: Well, it was normal.

Q: Okay, normal.

A: It was normal life, except you didn't want to get in the mess somewhere with **[indecipherable]** who hated Poles, if you came in somewhere, and there was somebody living, and somebody else was living, they said **[speaks foreign language here]** Polish pigs don't live here. **Siaulisi(ph)**. They were Lithuanian, but they had hated li-like **[indecipherable]**

Q: **Siaulisi(ph)** were they like –

A: **Siauliai**.

Q: Okay, were th – who – can you explain who they were, these **Siaulisi(ph)**?

A: I – I cannot tell you, it was a party of people, Lithuanian, you know, it was a party. They were against Poles, against everything. They used to come in even to the cathedral to beat up the people when they were singing –

Q: Hymns.

A: **[indecipherable]** return **Poland** to us, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: It was trouble, but otherwise it was all right. Police was fantastic. We had a – wa – carriage stolen before the war, and Lithuanians, when they came, policeman

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came and he told us that – and my father told them, you know, they were asking, anything stolen? Yeah, my father said, before the war. In about two weeks, they had it. They took my father there and they said, here is your carriage. One day we woke up and we had about 60 or 70 chickens, you know?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And we come in and there are no chickens, everything was stolen. By evening, Lithuanian police had it. They were very effective, and they were very effective with thieves, because they got scared, because the Lithuanian police used to put wet sheets and beat the hell out of the people. And they said, you know, across the kidneys and everything. So they found out that stealing doesn't pay. And the Polish rule is like in **America** you do. When – when the – and you know how it is with stealing; if you steal a loaf of bread, you're a thief. If you steal a million dollars, well, you defrauded somebody. But if you steal 10 million dollars, or 20 million, ah kleptomania, he's sick. Tha-That's the law in **America**, you don't go to jail. Let stockholders pay, like in **America**.

Q: Yeah. So –

A: I – that is unbelievable. And then, you know, this came and then there – the period went very fast. We had that thing in **Wilno** then, the [indecipherable] **Kiersnowski**, that was mine [indecipherable] he came first and he opened a

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nightclub, who – called [**indecipherable**]. So there was freedom, you know. And then his wife [**indecipherable**] cross, in the winter she got very hard time crossing the river. They came over and they said –

Q: They came from where?

A: From **Warsaw**.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And oh, what's her name? Oh God, I was thinking, oh well, the famous Polish, this girl singer. She was Jewish. She married Count **Iscaris(ph)** and he, my cousin was writing songs for her, you know, for the show and everything, so it was very successful. And then I don't know how they got permission to go to **Vladivostok**, to **Japan**. She had connections with **gemeinde**. And then I met her father finally, in **America** when they came here in the show. They were – all the Jews in **New York** were there, writing in that show. It was itwee – and it was – it was good life o – at that period, and then all of a sudden, I remember they came, and they arrested us, and we were taking, and people were kneeling down along the road, and praying for us –

Q: Who is they?

A: – when they saw us being taken in a carriage, you know?

Q: Who came, who took you?

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A: Polish people, the rus – well, there was one Jewish **NKVD** officer, a Polish communist and two Russian soldiers. And they came early in the morning, they knocked on the doors, you know, and th – and they told us to pack. But I told you about my sister before, my sister was packed, because she had dreams that the man comes here to prepare your things, you're going to go for a long trip. She already had that thing that happened in **Russia** with her, but she was packed. And then th – they – th-they took us to – to the station, and in **Charnibor(ph)**, my mother's sister came with her husband and two daughters, and they brought our grandmother, and she was an old, old woman. She had a broken hip, and he – we begged the Russians not to take them, and they finally let her stay in **Poland**. And – and **Korfs(ph)** were there, and then –

Q: What was there?

A: **Korf(ph)** too, Baron **Korf(ph)** was there too, brought in there. And then they put us in trucks and they took us to **Nowa Vileka(ph)** and in **Nowa Vileka(ph)** they separated the men. My father got what, 10 years or 12 years they told him in gulag, and – and – and they got it, and we never saw them again. Well, I know that my father died, I have everything. The other ones were thrown out from the railroad, because they were on the railroads when they die in cars, so they just opened the door and they threw the bodies into the tundra somewhere, I don't know.

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Q: That's after it's all left – after –

A: [indecipherable] yeah.

Q: Yeah. So at that point when you're at **Nowa Vileka(ph)**, and from what I understand, that is a train station in a small suburb of **Wilno**, isn't it? **Nowa Vileka(ph)** is a –

A: **Nowa Vileka(ph)**, I cannot tell you.

Q: Is a small village.

A: I don't remember that – well it's a – it's a railroad station.

Q: Yeah.

A: It's small. It's a small thing, but there were trains over there, and that's where they took us, not to **Wilno**, but to **Nowa Vileka(ph)**, in the trucks, and that's where they separated, and that was the place where my father told me, when they were taking him away, **Stasch(ph)**, I am not going to survive **Russia**, I'm going to die. From now on, you're responsible for your mother and sister, promise me that. You take care, you survive **Russia**. I will not survive. And his last words were, when I was – I told you [speaks Polish], remember, **Russia** doesn't like tears. Don't ever, ever show a Russian that you're afraid. And he was so right, later on in life I found out, because when they arrested me I told them, what the hell can you do to me? I said, you took my father away, you took me to **Siberia**, we're hungry, we have no

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heat, we have nothing. What do you do? I told the **NKVD** officer, just take and shoot me if you want. He says, go home. And they had me for stealing, you know, and the other two went to jail.

Q: We'll come to that incident, we'll come to that incident. So the last time you see your father is at this **Nowa Vileka**(ph) train station.

A: That's was – I don't know whether it was 14 or 15, I think it was 14 or 15 –

Q: Of what?

A: – of June.

Q: Of June, in 1941.

A: Seven-Seventy-three years ago.

Q: Yeah. We're – this interview's taking place on June 20th, so we've just passed that anniversary.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: We were locked up a day – the train was a small car. There were – this was a small cattle train. There were four little windows about this size, you know, and they put boards two layers of boards like this, on one side and on the other side. So we were lying, but you had to lie on the side, because you couldn't lie on your back, there was no room. And sitting was a disaster. And they cut a little hole in the

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floor for you to go and relieve yourself, as a toilet. But somehow, the people had some blankets, so they put some strings around and they put blanket around, so you had privacy. Only twice they allowed us to – off the train, for in three weeks that we were going. Let me tell you, you – you never – you never know the stor – the sight of people, who when after weeks of sitting, lock, and not being able to walk, get out. Everybody had to go to the bathroom immediately. And everybody squatted, nobody cared where; women, men, everybody squatted and – a-a-and that was the life.

Q: It sounds awful. What was it li – yeah, I interrupted you as you were saying people, as you were being taken, were kneeling on the street, you know, kneeling on the road as you were being arrested.

A: Who – wha –

Q: You said people were kneeling on the road.

A: Yeah, and praying for us, in – i-in [indecipherable]. They were praying for us, there was, you know, they were – all knew what's happening to us. You know, deportation to **Siberia** was known for a long time with the tsars and everything. So they knew that they want us exterminated over there, and then they'll probably never see us again.

Q: And that would be because you were rich, or because you were Polish?

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A: Yeah, Polish, rich, there were some Jews taken too. There were some Jews not taken. In this car where we were, there was one Jewish nurse. I don't know, she was very nice girl, and maybe she saved my life, I'll tell you, because I got mumps, and Russian doctor, they open the door, and they gave me in a glass – I don't know, it was enclosed glass here, there was medication. And they – he told us to give **ookoe(ph)** give me an injection, and they closed the door and he walked out. And she was a hospital nurse and she says, I have syringe. So she brought it, she took it and she gave me injection for that, you know. Whether it help or not, I don't know. Maybe I would have been all right. But she was – she was the only Jewish person in our car, you know. And goo – who knows ho-ho – who they took? They took prostitutes too. They took prostitutes too, they later had problem with them in **India** and everywhere. Women, you know, you can't tell what the hell they were doing, they were all crazy. They wanted to take all the people who had property, destroy them, but they also want to destroy everybody else. It's madness. This world is mad. Every day, the older I get, the more I see it. I told after the second World War that somehow it will stabilize. Look what's going on now.

Q: When you were in that tra – did you stay in the train station for a long time, or did the trains move out immediately?

A: I cannot tell you, I don't remember, you know.

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Q: Okay.

A: We went, and we started going, and I – I didn't know geography that well, but the Polish people, they're older, they knew the railroad station that we were going. And once a day or – or something, they used to open the door and they took four men with buckets to bring in some food, and they used to give us bread. But that bread was so bad that if you threw it against the wall it would stick to the wall. It was like thing – w-we – we took some food with us from **Poland**, thank God, you know, we had some – well, little food, and – but then, along the railroads, the Russians were standing, begging for food. What did they expect? People that are being deported to **Russia**, they were still standing with their hands outstretched, many station. And they had Russian soldiers, and we didn't have enough water, it was hot. And I was asking Russians – soldiers, you know **[indecipherable]** kettle. I used to open the win – this – the window was open and I used to – and you – there were two Russians, I told you that before, a-a – on the side, they wouldn't give me the water. But the minute there was only one Russian soldier on that side of the train, he would grab the kettle, run and bring me water. They were so petrified of each other, that they were afraid to – to – to give us anything.

Q: But – but it also shows that – that once they – once that fear is –

A: Gone.

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Q: – is gone, then it –

A: – people become human.

Q: Yeah.

A: People be-become human. We had a friend there, and he was German, he was a tank officer, and he lived, and he was with the **Korfs** and with [indecipherable] you know, families connected. And he was so nice, and then just before the war he got an order to return to **Germany**, to his unit. So we knew that something was cooking, you know, we were expecting that something will happen. And he was crying, he didn't want to go to **Germany**. And then, after the war, they learned that he was killed in the last day of the wars, when **Berlin** fell, he was killed [indecipherable] I remember; tall, blonde, handsome fellow, and he was there.

You remember people you know, you remember so many people, and – because you were meeting so many people. But you have to remember, I was 13 - 14, and what did I know, you know, I didn't know much, except that I helped quite a lot as a child, at the parties, at meetings. My uncle was a senator, you know, so I heard a lot about politics always, and my grandfather was involved in parties, you know, political parties and everything. So we heard a lot of what was going on.

Q: Tell me, why did your family not particularly like **Pilsudski's** politics? It's just an interesting –

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A: I couldn't tell you.

Q: You wouldn't know why.

A: I couldn't tell you. I think one of the thing was that he once blew a train and sold the money. Or da – it was Russian money, or Austrian money, I don't know, but the family was talking that that's stealing. That that's im-improper, you cannot steal. You know, I – they were talking about it. **Pilsudski** had a very hard life because his sister used to come and sit in my grandfather's house. On the deck there were flowers. Oh, it was so beautiful over there, You cannot imagine how many flowers, agave, you know, was growing, and everything. Palms, little. And sh-she was talking and she was saying that you know, when you are in the government like my brother is, they print special papers for him. He cannot even get the news. I can tell you what's going on in the country, but they – other groups, you know, they surround you. They are like plague, you don't know. You have advisors, I guess in every government it's the same thing, you know, they – th-they – they – they do everything. But she was saying that it's a famous building in **Warsaw, dom bez kantow**. **Kant** means a corner, but it also means without cheating. So they said when they were building this building, they came to **Pilsudski** and said, well, build one building **bez kantow**. Build one building without cheating, you know. And they cut off the corner, it's said to this day you

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can go on computer and you write **dom bez kantow** and they show it in **Warsaw**, the home. And this became famous **dom bez kantow**. So you know, it's not easy to be a ruler.

Q: No, no.

A: Because you don't know what influences you, or what goes on. I tell you, the Russian people that we met, a lot of them were very, very nice, you know? But when we went south in **Siberia**, there were Mongols, but over there it became much worse, because the people were hungry already.

Q: We're gonna get to that part. I still want to be on the train right now. So when you were on the train, did you ever get any announcement, or any paper, or anything from those people who arrested you, as to why you were being deported and where you were being taken?

A: No, no, they didn't talk to us.

Q: So you didn't know. In other words, people knew the –

A: Oh, we knew why, because the tsars used to do it. They – once you go to **Siberia** you saw all kinds of people, Germans, Ukrainians, they used to call [indecipherable], Tartars from **Crimea** they were deporting over there. They were deporting people for years. This is one procedure in **Russia**, take people and send them to **Siberia**, it's empty. You know, you were going for days on, and you hardly

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saw a little station, where they only had water and maybe some coal for the railroad, and the train. It was a – it's like a no man's land, you go and go and there's nothing. It's a disaster. And then, in some places they build like **[indecipherable]** the soil was very good, you know. But this was funny. I'll tell you something; we were there, I never saw a rabbit, I never saw a fox, I never saw any animal alive or dead. Whether they ate them when they were starving, when there was starvation in the **[indecipherable]** you know, or – or what, I don't know. Because I was fr – with a friend **Fruzhinski(ph)** later in **India** and he was working in sulfur mine and there was a lot of gold. And the mine, being broken, pressed his chest in. He couldn't be in the army, you know, he had a hole – hole in there. And he said that that mine, all the Russians were laughing because Americans came in the 30s, engineers, and they developed that mine. And he said, how stupid Americans are. Don't – Russians were saying, don't they know how secretive Russians are? Of course they had an accident and they buried them over there. Once the mine was open **[indecipherable]** **America** the worst place in **Russia**, gold mine, and the worst concentration camp, where if you lasted two years you were lucky, they – you froze, it's na – close to **Alaska**. That was be – opened up with American help. How about **[indecipherable]**, the city **Volga(ph)**? **Volga(ph)** was built by all this – a fort. So you know, **America** did all the business they could,

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and they say **Russia** was starving its people, selling its food and trying to get machinery and everything from **America**. And **America** did business with them, capitalists, what do they care? They don't care whether hundred million people died. To hell, as long as I make my million, that's my opinion. I don't know whether I should say that, but as long as you can make money, it's all right. You see, brokerage houses, when I started, were private companies, they were partnership. And if they were doing business, they were very, very afraid. If they made something wrong, it was their pocket. And then they allowed them to become corporation. So now people who run corporation can steal, make themselves rich, and if they get punish, who pays the stockholder? The stockholders are punished, and they lose the money.

Q: Different system.

A: Ju-Ju-Just look at American history now. They make a mistake

[indecipherable]

Q: Yeah. Where did you finally land? When you, you know, went for three weeks on the train –

A: Yeah.

Q: – where did it stop?

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A: Well, it's first – the big station was, when we stopped, **Nowosibirsk**. It's right in the middle of **Siberia**, I think, it [**indecipherable**]. Then they turned south, to **Barnaul**, and then we went to **Rubtsovsk**. **Gorbachev's** wife was born over there in **Rubtsovsk**.

Q: **Raisa**, uh-huh.

A: And then from there we went by carriage to the village where we were. And as I told you, we were very lucky that we were not sent to collective farm, or some mine, or bri – bricklayers place where they make. But we were in a village. The people were very nice to us. The **NKVD** didn't bother us. The only thing the bastards did to us, they came to our house, and my sister hid everything in the stove, in ashes; pictures that we had, and papers. And my aunt was afraid, and – my mother's sister, she was stupid, she told them about it and they took all our pictures of my father, of the youth, you know, we had a lot of pictures from **Poland**, album. And they took everywhere, and they took all the coffee books. We had those coffee book with watermarks. When they saw watermark, ration **NKVD**, they never saw it, they say [**speaks foreign language here**] we're German spies, right away they said, because you have watermarks on paper. So they think this is for sending messages. They never saw anything like this. They were very poor. You know, when Russians march into **Poland** we used to ask them, oranges [**indecipherable**]

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oranges? And they said, oh yeah, we have factories, they make them. That was the standard answer. They didn't know what it was. Because I never saw sugar in **Russia** once. No, I saw one Russian woman – officer, having a piece of sugar, she was eating it with water. But that was the only time I saw sugar. I never saw sugar in **Russia**. So it was – it was in – inhuman land, it was inhuman country, and I think it is to this day. They said [indecipherable] there was Radio **Moscow** here, I was listening and they were talking, men all drinking, smoking. Trains you cannot travel. There are no roads to drive on, you know. And that was – that report is from **Moscow** saying. You know, that – it was – it was bad.

Q: When you were – when you were first taken to **Nowosibirsk**, then you were diverted by train to **Barnaul** is that it?

A: Yeah, it was same train there, and –

Q: The same train?

A: – I tell you, I was petrified when I saw **Nowosibirsk**. I never saw such a tremendous station, and there were loudspeakers talking all the time and everything. And I never saw anything so big, it was tremendous. And then they turned around, and we went south, you know, to **Barnaul**. Then I saw much more of southern **Russia** when we were released already.

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Q: Oh, we'll – we'll get there, we'll get there. So in **Barnaul** then you're – the same train goes to –

A: Yeah, all the way. It was the same train all the way.

Q: To ruda – what was it called?

A: Wait – wait. **Nowosibirsk, Barnaul. Rubtsovsk.**

Q: **Rubtsovsk.**

A: **Rubtsovsk.**

Q: And then you said you were taken by car from **Rubtsovsk**?

A: Not by car, by carriage, horse carriage. There was a little carriage, you know –

Q: Okay.

A: – like you saw them in **Lithuania** with –

Q: Yeah.

A: – the horse, and we had to walk most of the way because our suitcases were there. It was – I don't know, it was 30 - 40 [indecipherable] what is it, miles? I don't know, it was pretty far a whole day. And we came to that village, and si – there was an empty house with two rooms. There was – in one room there was a stove, and there was a little like place where they did something, so there was wood on building. So we used to take that wood and burn in the stove. You cou – were not allowed to go to forest and bring any forest, because this is government. I told

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you how, one time I went to pick up **szyszki** – how do you call it? From pine trees, you know, corns.

Q: Yeah, the cones.

A: And we were – we were using them –

Q: Okay, you were using –

A: – from – **[phone ringing]**

Q: Okay, cut. **[tape break]** Yes, all right, so you were saying, you went in the forest and you got these pine cones.

A: Yeah. And the Russians, they all ran away, and I didn't run away. And the forest man comes, and he said **kudova(ph)**, from where you are? And I said, I'm from **Poland**, you know **ya polak(ph)**. And he says, why didn't you run away, to me, you know, **[speaks foreign language]** Because you were stealing government pines, and you cannot steal government pines. And if you – next time, you run, because otherwise I'll go to jail for not arresting you. The Russians were all running away, and he told me, you have to run. And then he says **[speaks foreign language]** I – also, you're from **Poland**, let's sit down and talk. Wha – what's – how life is in **Poland**, tell me. They were so curious that you **[indecipherable]** there was nobody around us, you know –

Q: Yeah.

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A: – but he pleaded with me, next time if you come to take the pines –

Q: Pine cones.

A: – take the pines, but run like a crazy when I come, because they'll arrest me, and I'll go to jail. Then I told you about kerosene.

Q: Okay.

A: I went – well, no, I have to start that a little different story. This is another story. When the Russian woman with the daughter came to us already in that little house, and she ask whether my sister has any dresses to sell because the daughter is getting married, and she would like to have a nice dress.

Q: Okay.

A: And my sister says, well, I can sell you one dress. And – and the girl was there, you know, they measured my sister. Okay, I'll re-sew it a little, I'll correct it for you. And she – the minute she left, neighbors of ours in those buildings came and said, watch out. He is the chief communist for the whole area. Top communist, that's his wife. Be very careful what you do with them. They are big communists. And then she came few days later, she picked up the dress and she took my mother and sister to their house. And listen the story about their house. They walk in, they had bars on the doors and on the windows, they were so afraid. And he told my mother, my family, before the revolution was fairly well-off. And I decided that I

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won't raise my family in poverty. So I joined the party and I became a communist and I am the head of this district. And he was very nice, and he said look, probably the Germans will come here. We – we won't be able to withstand their – Russian – a-a-a – the German army. And, can you protect us from Germans? And my mother said well, if Germans come here, they might shoot me first and then you.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, as a communist. And – my mother said no. And then he ask what I'm doing, you know, and his son was working in a place where there were repairing metal [indecipherable] tractors, combines and everything. And he was bringing water. So when his son went to school, they gave me that job. And once a day you got food over there, so you know, what a privilege it was in that place. And we didn't have kerosene for lamp. And I came to him once, he was sitting – he was the manager of the whole place, and I said to him [speaks foreign language here] because in Russian it's kerosene, too, and I made mistake, in Polish we say **nafta**(ph), in Russian – so he said [speaks foreign language] Well, and he told me that I cannot give it to you. This is government. I'll go and get arrested. Then he says, quiet, but over there there is a woman which [indecipherable] some equipment. You go to her with the bottle where nobody sees, and she will give you kerosene in a bottle. But don't let anybody see it, and run away quickly, and you

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will have kerosene for the lamp at home. And then he locked the door, and he says, where were you li – where were you living? And well, we're deported here, and he started talking with me, and he was the guy who told me he couldn't believe that we had farms, that we had property. Nobody has property. And then we tell him to **America** and he says, can you amer – can you imagine those strikes in **America**? People rather die than work in **America**. They go on strike, because see in **Russia**, if you went on a strike, they would have killed you. So here was – they were reading in **America** – in their Russian papers about the strikes in **America**. That's how they were interpreting, that those people were so poor that they'd rather die.

Q: Yeah, they'd rather die.

A: Because in **Russia** there were too main newspapers. I think I told you there was **Pravda** [indecipherable]. **Pravda** is the truth, [indecipherable] is news. And the Russians were saying the problem with our papers is that in truth there is no news, and in the news there is no truth. That's what the Russians were saying. They were laughing, but they didn't know. They just didn't know anything.

Q: When you got there, did they put your mother and your sister to work?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: What did they have to do?

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A: Well, first we were digging cellars, and we were very nice. Every time we took a shower – and me too – and every time we threw a shower we said, hundred Russians on the German front, you know, and – and the – and – a-and then they switched us to forests, and to work in the forest. And there were – I don't know where the other Poles came, you know, they were engineers and everything. They had no idea how to cut the tree down. I had to teach them, because I grew up on a farm and I saw how – how workers were cutting the tree, and which way the tree falls and every – they had no idea. I had to teach them, you know, I used to walk around, big – big guy, I had big shoes. I had big shoes because Germans shot up a train not far from our home, and the next thing we had [indecipherable] soldiers wore big shoes, and their shoes were long. And oh God, in **Russia**, when I had the ax, I hit it, the shoe, I thought I cut off my fingers – my toes, but the shoe was much too large, so I didn't cut off my legs. But I thought – was afraid that I cut off. They had very good steel. Oh, the steel was fantastic, the axes and everything. You see, we had to make so many two yards long, like – like two meters long, maybe meter wide, like this, and maybe a meter high. Wood, we had to cut it in pieces, and put it. And every day we had to – we had a norm, how many we had to do. So, we figured very fast way, cut wood in small pieces, and on the ends we put small

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pieces, then everything is empty inside, and we cover with the logs on top, and the Russian –

Q: And there's the norm.

A: – and the Russian was wondering that we could make a couple of norms in a day in this way. But we were cheating. And they came, they counted and they went and they were happy. And there was plenty of [indecipherable] cucumber woman, she was always bringing us cucumbers to eat, you know, she had cucumbers. And people were very nice, they were trying to help us. And –

Q: So you didn't – there wasn't anybody that you experienced who – who was cruel, or –

A: No.

Q: – or was tough, or was –

A: Absolutely no, no.

Q: Okay. Were you hungry?

A: What?

Q: Were you hungry?

A: Not there. Not there.

Q: Okay.

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A: Well, I told you about my sister, she came over there and she started telling fortune. And the next thing, the Russians were coming from all sides. One thing – you know, I was laughing always at it. You know, I was small, to me it was funny. But she used to lay cards and look at them, and she said, I don't see cards, I see something else. And one time there was a woman that came over and she said that her husband is in jail, and do you know when he will come out and everything? And my sister told him – and there were other Russian women – my sister said, **vrosh**(ph), you lie. Why? Your husband is a pilot. And she says no, no, he's in jail, I'm telling you. She says no, he's a pilot. One day he's here in **Russia** and one day he's over there. He must be a pilot, he's all over **Russia**. She says yeah, he's a pilot. You know? There was this other case that a Russian woman ran into our house, this little house that we had. She opened the window and she went ptoo, ptoo, ptoo, you know, and she ran out, closed the door and ran out. And few weeks later my sister got an abscess in her throat. And she – they took her to hospital, they gave her tubes, they fed her through the tubes. And she came back after a couple of weeks. And then again, same thing happened. And then this old Russian woman came, and she says **Ganichka**(ph) she says, doctors won't cure you, this is Siberian curse fell on you. These doctors don't know how to remove it. I will remove it and it will go away, don't worry. And my sister was to go again to the hospital, because

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the abscess is started. And she says, well you are Catholic, maybe you don't want it. So she took linen piece of cloth, she put some ashes into it, and dipped it in sunflower oil, and she prayed over that. And she made three balls, and she told my sister, rub your neck once, then after an hour rub it again and throw it behind you and tell time. Next morning there was no sign of abscesses. And this woman was a tragic story, because she had the son in the army, and she was always asking how her son is, and she used to come with friends. And my sister, one day, almost broke. Her son is dead, sh-she see in the cards that her son is dead. She couldn't tell her that. But she told her friends; don't say anything, but her son is dead. About week later, or in 10 days, she comes over to my sister and she says, **Ganichka**(ph), I saved your life, I did everything I could for you. How could you do it to me? If you told me that my son is dead, it would have been all right, but I got a m-message from the government that my son died, and all my friends told me that you told him that he died, how could you do this to me? You see how difficult it is in life? My sister didn't have the heart to tell her that her son was dead.

Q: Yeah.

A: There were a lot of Jewish women who were coming, because not far from there was a resort, with salt water lake, and from there, from **Moscow** they flew, the Jewish women with children. And they used to come – we couldn't go over there,

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because we would have to get permission from police. We couldn't go anywhere from that village, we're not allowed to go anywhere, where you had to get permission from the village. But they used to come to us and they used to come to tell fortune. And another thing was that there was a policeman, and he came to my sister, and she says, oh, you're getting married tomorrow. And he says, how do you know? Well, I see it in the cards. But today [indecipherable] to have a party. And she says, no drinking, and no fighting. If you drink, you fight, and you be arrested. And next day, he was in jail. He got into a fight. But my sister told him that. So, you know, Russians trusted her, and that's why they were always fr-from our home, you know, they always gave us two eggs, or they gave us some milk, or they gave us some bread they brought us. And you know, so we were getting food from them, from **Hanya's**(ph) telling fortunes, and telling. And then the Russians told her to stop working, because she was getting sick very often. Sh – my sister [indecipherable]. So they told her – they relieved her of all the work. They said, you don't work, only your mother and your brother work.

Q: Tell me about your father. Did you have any news of where he was at the time, or what had happened to him, or where his train had gone?

A: No, nothing. We didn't know anything.

Q: Okay.

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A: I finally learn what happen to my father when I was in **Palestine** already.

Q: That's **[indecipherable]** yeah.

A: My mother met a priest somewhere, and somebody said **Kiersnowski**. She was in some **aktion**, you know, in – when we were already free. And when she said to my mother, did you have a husband without the hand, you know. And my mother said yes. Well, I buried your husband. So that's how my mother first found out. But in that place where he was – died, there was his half-brother, and he was an officer in Polish army. And that's why I have a picture of his grave.

Q: I see. I see.

A: And – and we have death certificate that way. But we didn't know – I didn't know probably for close to two years. And in – the Russians told us not to move south with the Polish troops that were going, and – but we went. And all way there on **Ferraba**(ph). where we were on this – on – on the river, and s – we were starving, and Polish army was sending women and men, trying to pick up the children. So my sister was very sick and the woman came over and my mother gave me to her. And we went to another place, over there, who was starving, we slept on the rain and everything. That's where I found turtles to eat, finally.

[indecipherable] And – and – but in the beginning we slept by the river on stones, and then we went – they told us one day from there that we are going to **Iran**. We

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didn't know what **Iran** was, I didn't know where **Teheran** was, but I was sick. I was, and **Pushkoski**(ph);

was friend of mine, and they send us to the train to pick up some bread. I never forget, we tied quickly the bed – bread and wu – instead of carrying bread, we're pushing it into our pants, you see, because we're afraid that we'll be hungry tomorrow. So we were stashing it, and we had bread. And then we went, and we were coming back, and we went t-too far up over there, and I met a woman, and I said, is my mother and sister alive? They said yes. And I wanted to jump on that train and go out to them. But [indecipherable] there is no way that they can feed me. So I went to – on that train, and they took us to [indecipherable] on **Caspian** Sea, and they put us on an oil tanker to go to **Potlevy**(ph) in **Iran**.

Q: Okay, we're going to stop at that point because we've jumped ahead in our story a little bit. I want to find out more. After your – you know, when you're in this village, and you and your mother work, and your sister is telling fortunes and getting – you know, she's getting sick and – and then is relieved from having to work like you and your mother, I want to find out what happens then. How do things develop, and how long it is that you stay there. So let's talk about that –

A: Okay.

Q: – and then we'll come – we'll come to this –

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A: I cannot give you days, you know.

Q: I understand.

A: I don't remember. But it wasn't too long after, you know, we were there several months over there, and then we were on collective farm working. And on collective farm it was a riot, because they had **wopsha(ph)**. So you got water mixed with flour to eat, and they had bread they gave you, and they had **chemerchki(ph)**, sunflower –

Q: Okay.

A: – seeds, so you could eat. And I remember we were picking – what the hell we were picking? Peas, I think. And the Russian girls were absolutely crazy. They were sitting there and I was sitting separately from them, and those Russian girls were picking that. And they said [**speaks foreign language**] boy, come over here. And I said, I don't want to come. They used to say, don't be afraid, we won't bite it off, you know. There were no men, they were all in the army. Women were going desperate.

Q: Don't tell me that that's what – really?

A: Yeah. Women were desperate. There were – there was a girl which – **Marusha(ph)**, which used to give us our bread, couple of slices of bread a day. She told me always, if you come for a night, I will give you more and more. They were

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– they were desperate, you know, to get, and the hell, I was a small boy, you know.

I told you, I didn't grow. And I was afraid of the women.

Q: Poor guy.

A: But it was something. So anyway, where was I now?

Q: You were collective farm. You were –

A: Yeah, in co – the carriage came in and they told us to go – get in and we're going to **NKVD**. And we came to **NKVD** and **NKVD** said, well, you are free now.

Q: That's the [indecipherable]

A: That was the contract which **Sikorski**, **Stalin** and everything were going to form Polish army, and there will be trains going south in **Siberia** and they will organize Polish army over there. So if you want to go, go. We would advise you not to go because there will be starvation over there. We have food over there. But we didn't listen, and you know –

Q: Well, here's an interesting thing. You are deported in mid-June 1941.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And it's one week later that Nazi **Germany** attacks the **Soviet Union**, and breaks the **Molotov-Ribbentrop** pact by attacking. So you're not even at the camps yet, when –

A: Oh, no.

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Q: – when this attack comes. Did you find out about this?

A: Oh yeah. It was in every – on every station, they had the picture of the [indecipherable] German, with the big tail and big nails like this, all over **Russia**. It appeared on every railroad station. That's why we – that's how we found out that the war broke out, because they came with those pictures. And believe me, some of the people over there were asking us deep in **Siberia** whether the Germans really looked like that. And later on, a lot of Germans from **Volga** River were taken by **Stalin** and sent to **Siberia**, too.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because during **Catherine the Great**, a lot of Germans were settled over there. So the – they took them over to **Siberia**.

Q: And so, you were already imprisoned when Nazi **Germany** –

A: Yeah.

Q: – attacks the **Soviet Union**. And –

A: And you know what our biggest problem was then?

Q: What?

A: **America**.

Q: Why?

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A: Between the Russian. Whose side are they going to be on? You know, are they going to be on the side of the allies like **Russia** and **England** and **France**, and – or are they going to be on the side of **Germany**? Nobody was sure. And then, thank God when we heard, okay, Japanese bombed **Pearl Harbor** and the news came. Now Japanese solved the problem. They said now **America** will have to go to war.

Q: So, in other words, the question –

A: That's what the –

Q: – the question was, what side will **America** be on?

A: Yeah. Because you know, like **Kennedy's** father, he wanted to be on German side, you know, a lot of Americans, they didn't want to be in a war. The war – the draft in **America** started one day before **Pearl Harbor**. Americans didn't want to go to war, they were only selling weapons and recession ended, depression in **America** ended, because they started selling weapon, and **America** came out because of that war from depression. **America** was in awful depression. People in the office told me they used to bring food to people, and often they used to enter apartments in **New York** and people were dead already from starvation. They told me this was awful starvation in **America** too, during the depression.

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Q: So wi – so in **Russia**, while you were deep in **Siberia**, you knew that the war had broken out, but when the – you go to the secret police offices, the **NKVD**, and they tell you you are free.

A: Yeah.

Q: Was that a shock?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you believe them?

A: We knew there was a war, so we thought that there is [**indecipherable**] because the news was coming that there was Polish contacts already with Russian government and everything. So you – you knew –

Q: Okay.

A: – that something was going on, just like about **Katyn** forest. There was a news in **Poland** that nobody knew what happened, but you see, at a period, no more letters were coming from there, and nobody knew what happened. So the Poles suspected that they were killed, but nobody could say. And then Germans came in there, and when the Germans came, **America** and **England** said that it was made by the German, **Katyn** forest, and that the Germans killed, because they couldn't insult Uncle **Joe**. Because they were afraid that Uncle **Joe** will go back and join

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with **Germany** again, maybe. You know, this was very complicated, I think. We were afraid of many things. People didn't know.

Q: So when – when you hear from the secret police that you are free, and they advise you not to leave that area, this is now near that village of – how did you call it? The rebo –

A: **Nowia** – **Nowia**(ph) **Angorivka**(ph) the village was. **Nowia**(ph) **Angorivka**(ph) the village was.

Q: Yeah.

A: And they – they – they – they were, you know, the only thing they did to us **[indecipherable]** over there, they took our – our pictures and all our papers, you know, they took every – all the memories of **Poland**, you know, where we were – were without pictures, without anything. But they didn't punish us, nobody did anything to us over there. It is – it's the south, this problem started, because there was starvation over there, there was –

Q: Okay. So let's le – excuse me, let's start here. So you – you decide to leave anyway –

A: Yeah.

Q: – you – three of you. And you b – all three of you start to go south?

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A: Well, we went to **Rubtsovsk** back, and the train came, and we got on a train with Polish soldiers and we started moving south –

Q: Okay.

A: – you see, to where the Polish army was going to be [**indecipherable**]. But the Russians took us to **Amudalia(ph)** river, and they put the civilians there, and the army soldiers they moved to **Guzari(ph)** where already Polish army was being trained.

Q: And you were with the civilians?

A: They were alre – they were already – they were already there, Poles and a lot of Jewish soldiers, Polish were there, and you know, they were all – everybody with Polish citizenship was released. So the Jews were released too. So th-they were in Polish army, and then they all got down to the Middle East, you know, we came to –

Q: So what happened – so you were apart – with the civilian group?

A: Civilian group, yeah.

Q: Okay. What happened to you guys? What happened with you and your mother and your sister when you –

A: Well, well, when we came to there, they gave us – they call it white houses, you know, to live in. They left us there. You see, they wanted to send us down

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Amudalia(ph) river, we would have died. But this [indecipherable] 80 men and he could resist the Russian police and everything, and –

Q: You – we have to – no, excuse me, I'm confused.

A: They were – they were putting us on the boat already.

Q: Who is they?

A: The Russians.

Q: Okay.

A: They were putting us on the Russians and he came over with [indecipherable] guy, and he unloaded the b-boats, and they said the rush – he told the Russians, you want to have a fight, we'll have a fight. And the Russians backed out, you see?

Russians are funny people, but they backed out. But of course, there were 80 men, and in **Russia** most of the men were drafted, you know, everywhere.

Q: All right, but I'm confused. And I'm confused because the – the – the juncture that I understand is that the military men are separated from the women, and they go off to the – where the Polish units are –

A: Yeah.

Q: – and eventually they get to **Palestine** and – and are trained to fight. The civilians are – are left behind, and the Russians want to put them on a boat down the river, why? Why? Which river, and in a different direction?

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A: To kill them.

Q: Par – to kill them?

A: Because I saw a lot of people being brought back from there, and on barges there were nothing but dead bodies coming back from south, from the desert, and we – we were the first transport that could stop the Russians and send us [indecipherable] they stopped the Russians from doing it.

Q: So now, let me te – let me ask –

A: And then we are in a little –

Q: Wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. When you say they're sent down the river, is that actually to be shot, or to starve to death?

A: I don't know.

Q: Okay.

A: But they was – Russians didn't shoot.

Q: Okay.

A: They mostly made you in such a miserable place, because I knew one guy that was there, where I talked, and he said I used to walk around over there looking where I could kill a man to eat him.

Q: I see, and this is in the desert; down that river, into the desert.

A: They were hungry.

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Q: All right. So this fellow comes by with the 80 soldiers. What is his name?

A: **Pischek**(ph), I think his name was.

Q: **Pischek**(ph).

A: **Pischek**(ph), something like that.

Q: And was he a military person?

A: Well, he was in Polish army, but he said that he was an officer, and he wasn't an officer, but somewhere he got officers [**indecipherable**] –

Q: I see.

A: – you see.

Q: And he had a – he just had a group of 80 men?

A: Eighty men, and he – he was rough, and for – he used to walk to **NKVD** offices with those men, you know, and scare the bejesus out of them, because there would be 10 or something officers, and he comes with 80 men, and he tells them, you better give us food or else, you know, and –

Q: Unbelievable.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Okay.

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A: And they were scared of him. And then we were on that – and then we were left on that churchyard, that's where we're really starving, that's where I had double pneumonia, that's where people were dying like flies over there.

Q: Is this on the si – y-you were moved to someplace else?

A: N-No, that was – we were on that train, and the train took – the soldiers they took further, but they left us over there, the Russians, in – in that place, in that town.

Q: And it's called?

A: That was called **Farraba**(ph).

Q: **Farraba**(ph).

A: **Farraba**(ph). On the other side is church of – my mother told me that it was beautiful old town, and **Farraba**(ph) wasn't that nice. Can you imagine, there was a huge river there, and I think now, there must have been fish in there, but nobody had the string to catch them. There must have been food there in the river, but nobody was fishing. I remember some soldiers were there, sometimes sitting – and I remember soldiers sitting by the water, and they were killing lice. And one soldier says, oh, you are from this region of **Russia**. He says, oh, how do you know that I'm from there? The kind of lice that you have on you. People were covered with

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lice, because when you are starve, you're weak. I don't know why lice get to people like crazy. That was a big curse, you know.

Q: And so when you were in this chu – this –

A: **Farraba**(ph).

Q: **Farraba**(ph), and across was a place called cher – I forgot –

A: **Cher Joan**.

Q: **Cher Joan**. And that's where you got sick?

A: I got sick in **Farraba**(ph) –

Q: Okay.

A: – and they took me to the hospital, and that's where the Jewish women were. I don't know, they were from **Moscow** with children, I told you.

Q: Yeah.

A: Thirteen of us in the evening, three in the morning only left. And they had food. They were commissar's wife somewhere in **Moscow**, or something, and they had food and everything, and they fed me. If they didn't feed me in the hospital, I would have died, because there was no food. I was – I – I was there in the hospital and I was covered with bedbugs and everything. It was filthy. And the Russians were nice doctors, they tried to do something, there was a woman doctor. But they didn't have anything, and they didn't have food. You know, I remember there was

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one dog running around that place, and everybody was trying to catch him, but nobody could catch the dog. So, you know, and it was various; sometimes we got onions, so for a couple of weeks we ate onions. Then we went, something else we got, you know. Whatever we came, we cooked. But somebody caught that dog somewhere and brought us some meat after I had pneumonia. And we were cooking and cooking that meat, I didn't want to eat it. I didn't want to eat the dog, but they made me eat it, and I think that's what I regain strength. Because I couldn't walk, I was so weak. There was a step, I couldn't stand on the step, arise myself. It was – it was – it was **koszmar** in Polish, we say, you know, this is –

Q: It was a nightmare.

A: A nightmare, nightmare, period, you know. People were dying. Can you imagine being in a room in a hospital and 10 kids die at one night. You just become inhuman, you start losing humanity, you know, when you live under those condition. Because there was no – there was no help. And eventually my mother gave me – and there were about seven or eight of us from that place, Polish children, my mother gave me to take me to Polish army, because they promise that they will give us food. And we were writing, and we had special Russian document, and we were going with Russian soldiers. And we were being fed well, let me tell you. Russian transports were – were arranged, soldiers. The train comes,

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you stop at some station, you go inside, there's a big building, you get the tray, you get your food, you eat. You put your tray, you walk out, you get on a train and you go again. And the next train come. It was unbelievable. And the Russians were all looking at us kids walking in there, the **[speaks foreign language here]** and what kind of a –

Q: What kind of orders do you have?

A: Yeah, orders, exactly, you know **[indecipherable]**

Q: Yeah.

A: That was funny. And then we came over there, and over there there were already soldiers, you know, and everything. But it was tough over there.

Q: What were – what place was this?

A: That – **Guzarai(ph)**.

Q: **Guzarai(ph)**

A: A lot of people died over there. My sister later came over there too, there was, you know, they were taken to **Guzarai(ph)** too, and **Guzarai(ph)** was awful thing. And then we went to a – a collective farm **[indecipherable]** there were Muslims living over there, and they were very superstitious, and they even eat turtles, thank God. That's why the turtles kept me alive. I told you, there – there is a girl that was in **Russia [indecipherable]** and she has **[indecipherable]** turtles

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Q: Does she really?

A: She keeps it as a souvenir.

Q: And so this – this is the s – part where you meet up with the Polish army?

A: Yeah, with the Polish army, and the Polish army – and then when I was in that collective farm, it was a village **Kirchen(ph) Batash(ph)**. They told us that we're going to **Iran**. I didn't know where the hell **Iran** was, I didn't know what **Teheran** is. You know, I had a friend, and we were both sick, we had diarrhea, but we told them we don't have diarrhea. In the evening they told us to bring bread, so we stacked all the bread in the pants to make sure that we'll have something to eat. You know what a great thing it is when you are hungry, and you got bread?

Q: Yeah.

A: But I – I omitted something –

Q: Okay.

A: – about the dreams t-to say. I say those things, I don't know why, but when – before I got pneumonia in **Russia**, I was dreaming that I have mouth full of bread and I couldn't eat it. I couldn't swallow it. And about two, three days later I had pneumonia and I was in a hospital. Then I came to **Teheran**, and we finally got to **Teheran**, and we were running around and everything, and I got the dream. And my friend **Pushkoski** that was with me in **Russia**, I told him, you know, I probably

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go to hospital. Why? He says, I had the dream, I was eating bread, and I couldn't swallow it. I had bread in my mouth, and I couldn't. Well, two days later I had typhoid. I – I get all red stains, you know, [indecipherable]. And then I came to **Palestine**. Now I'm jumping.

Q: Yeah.

A: And we were there, oh, oh, everything, playing and everything. Everybody was happy, and I got the dream, and I told boys, you know, something's going to happen to me. Why? I had the dream that I'm eating bread and I cannot swallow it. Next day amoebic dysentery.

Q: So, it's sort of like the same dream – dream –

A: The same dream that I cannot swallow the bread. I don't know. I'm saying it because I cannot explain it.

Q: Yeah.

A: But the same dream that I got in the – well, it was awful. I was praying to die over there. God [indecipherable] that was so painful. Because typhus you were mostly unconscious, ma – and this, how do you call it?

Q: Pneumonia?

A: Pneumonia I was mostly unconscious, but over there I was conscious. Oh, God, did we suffer.

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Q: At this point, I think we'll take a break.

A: Okay.

Q: Because we're almost out of **Russia**, and then when we resume, we'll talk about how you left **Russia** specifically, and then what happened to your life after that.

A: Okay, okay.

Q: Thank you.

End of File One

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Beginning File Two

Q: So, there was something I wanted to ask you before – before I forget. And that was, when your father le – when you last saw your father at the train station in **Wilno**, in nov –

A: **Nowa Vileka**(ph)

Q: **Nowa Vileka**(ph), and he said to you, never show your tears.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: You started to relate a story to me later where that came into great value for you, that is, you followed his advice. Tell me about that incident, when you were in trouble, and could have gotten into more trouble, and what happened then.

A: Well, my father exactly told me [**speaks foreign language**] **Russia** doesn't show – like tears, never show them you're afraid, and you'll be all right. And when we were in **Ferraba**(ph), we di-didn't have any coal or anything, to heat the house. And next to the railroad, there was a lot of coal lying, old coal, you know, but it was par – powder, so it was useless. But if you dug in it, you could get pieces of coal. So it was very cold, my – my s – my sister was sick. We had the little place, you know, where to make fire in the room. And I was there, and there was, I think, a Russian woman or a Russian boy and a Mongol woman, I don't remember how

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many, you know. There were three of us, we were digging, digging, and suddenly, police came, you know, and –

Q: The police came, yeah.

A: – they – they grabbed us. So I took the bag from the bottom, and I threw all the coal out on the ground, they didn't. And they took us to police station, and in police station they put us against the wall, and stand here. And we didn't know why we had to stand. And I was standing, standing, and after the while – they had a sofa there, and magazine – I said, I want to see magazines. They said **[speaks foreign language]**, you have dirty hands. And I had a little fur coat, you know, from **[indecipherable]**. I clean my hands, and I said, my hands are clean. So they gave me a magazine to look. I couldn't read Russian, but I was looking at the pictures, you know. And then I told them, well, you know, it's very uncomfortable standing against the wall and looking at the magazine, I want to sit down. And they said, sit down. And then came the chief of police, whatever he was, I don't know what, he was **NKVD** probably. And he started screaming, and he screams at me, where do you live? I say **biale domy**. So what do you – just because you live in white houses, you think you can steal? I said well, I need heat and I don't have heat. And he started screaming at me like hell. And I looked at him and I said **[speaks foreign language]** I don't know where my father is, you took my father away. We

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have no food, we have no heat, my sister is sick. You took us to **Siberia**, I don't know where I am and everything. You shoot me! And he looked at me like stupid man, and he say, go home. And those two went to jail. And he told me – and this was what my father told me, don't show them that you are afraid. I told him, that's – you want to shoot me, shoot me. You cannot do anything to me any more. Says, go home.

Q: And you were how old at that point?

A: About 14. I told them that and then – nothing. And my father always told me – I remember Cuban fiasco, when **Khrushchev** came with the rockets here, remember?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And at my desk in research department, I had writers and I – I had **Dow Jones** tape. And that was how we were getting all the news during the day.

Q: Right.

A: Be-Because I needed to read all the time everything, check it, because I was in research. And a bunch of Americans, partners came, and they were all millionaires, you know. And they were reading there, and what will happen with all that stuff. And I was sitting on my desk, you know, I put the – on the leg, and I said, now I saw everything, but I never thought I would see a bunch of American millionaires

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afraid of a Russian peasant. They walked away like you cannot imagine. I told – I told them, I never thought I would see a bunch of American millionaires scared of a Russian peasant. Because **Khrushchev** was a very nice man. You know how he got found out?

Q: How?

A: I don't know. He and **Eisenhower** hit it off very well, **Khrushchev** and **Eisenhower**, they were both grandfathers, and si – gri – they were going to go to **Paris**, and meet in **Paris** later on, and start talking about breaking up e-everything. And the trouble was that **Eisenhower** gave order to the army not to fly **U-2** planes over **Russia**, because we were flying **U-2** planes, you know, over **Russia**, and **Eisenhower** ordered to stop before that flight. Now, what happened in **Russia**, I don't know, but the American army has some excuse to do something in case something happens, and they flew over **Russia**, and of course the Russians – **Eisenhower** was told by **America** that Russians can shoot **U-2** any time they want. That's not [indecipherable] they have the rocket, and they shot **U-2** with this pilot **Power**, American **Power**. Now, he was supposed to blow himself up, but he didn't. And **Eisenhower** said, we are not flying over **Russia**. And all of a sudden **Russia** shows them **Power**, and they show them **U-2** plane. And in **Russia**, they broke off talking, and **Khrushchev** couldn't meet with **Eisenhower** any more. And the

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whole [indecipherable] breakthrough with **Russia**, with **Khrushchev** was finished. Both by Russian military, because they didn't want peace, and American military, because they send **U-2**. So, you know, you cannot trust anybody.

Q: Right.

A: You cannot trust anybody, because the – **Kennedy** fix the – this, see, but it was very simple. He withdrew Russian – American rockets and bombs from **Turkey**, and **Khrushchev** withdrew them from this – from **Cuba**, and everything was settled.

Q: Yeah, yeah. Let's go back to – let's go back to **Fera** – **Ferraba**(ph), is that where you were arrested by this **NKVD** – oh no, by the police, for stealing.

A: I don't know whether this was **NKVD** or police –

Q: Yeah.

A: – but stealing, you know, stealing government coal. And that was not coal actually, powder –

Q: No, it was just powder.

A: – but – but they let me go because they noticed that I'm not afraid.

Q: Yeah. Were you already released by then, or were you still in –

A: No, we were released already.

Q: You were released already.

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A: We were already released.

Q: Okay.

A: That was after we came from that village, you know?

Q: Yeah.

A: And they – and I was released, but you see, you could – thi-this was so important, I think later on, when we were traveling with those 80 Polish soldiers –

Q: Yeah.

A: – and this Polish guy that said that he's –

Q: An officer.

A: – this officer, and he showed them he was not afraid, and they backed down every time, every time, they backed down. They never made a friend, you know, something to restrict him, or something. They were afraid. They load people on the boats to send them on **Amu Darya** river, he goes and unloads the boats

[indecipherable]

Q: Yeah.

A: And they – they backed out. So it's a – it's a very funny psychology of that country.

Q: It is, it is. Let's go further, about you are now – you are now taken. Your mother gives you up to –

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A: Army.

Q: – army, so that you are then taken separately from them.

A: Yeah, because they – they said that they will feed us, you know. They were driving raise the children. Everywhere, all over the world they were trying to save children, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: And we were over there, and they gave us some food, and everything.

Q: And this is this man with the 80 soldiers, I forget his name.

A: Oh, I don't know what happened to him.

Q: Okay.

A: He – he went after that from **Ferraba**(ph), where we were. They didn't send any more people on the boats, and I don't know what happened. I understand that he was tried later –

Q: I see.

A: – for something, I don't know.

Q: Okay.

A: But the –

Q: By the Soviets?

A: No, by the Polish authorities –

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Q: Oh, I see.

A: – for pretending that he's an officer. That's stupidity. You see how stupid people are? He was pretending to be an officer, and he wasn't an officer. Supposedly he took some money somewhere. Who knows, you know, you don't know.

Q: Yeah.

A: But it was something. But it was lucky that eventually we were taken to **Teheran**.

Q: Okay, so tell me about that ver – that journey. After you say goodbye to your mother and your sister and you're taken by the Polish military –

A: Yeah, and then –

Q: – how do you get to **Teheran**?

A: And eventually they came to us, I was in that village, and I was there **[indecipherable]** I was with mine boy **Puskotski**(ph), I remember his name, we were – and they came and they said, if you are not sick, you can go to **Teheran**.

Well, I would go anywhere if they told me, you know, just to get –

Q: Right.

A: – the hell out from that place.

Q: Yeah.

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A: So we went and they send us to bring food supplies, I put –

Q: The bread.

A: – bread in my pants, hiding as much as I could. And then they put us on the train. And we came to ma – **Paklevy(ph)**. It took two days to cross **Novotsk(ph)**. There was very little water, lines and lines of people to get water, you know. And some Polish soldiers are troopers, and they told us, bring some vodka for us. But I never went, but they were giving – and the Russians told us, if we catch anybody entering on the ship with Russian money, you go back to **Siberia**. So you know, there were bags filled in, and there were two kinds of rubles. There were ordinary rubles and **Chervonsa**. **Chervonsa** were the money that could use in **Iran**, actually buy something.

Q: So in other words, it was convertible. It was convertible currency.

A: Yeah, yeah, it must have been convertible. You see, I don't understand at that time, but I must have had some, because when we came to over there, to **Paklevy(ph)**, they were talking in Russian a lot. You know, the Persians knew how to speak Russians, and they were selling **varennye yaytsa**, boiled eggs. But **varennye** to us in Polish it says like crow's eggs, because those eggs were so small, but they were cooked. So we were – I and **Puskotski(ph)**, we were throwing out the whites and we were only eating the yellow one, to plug up for diarrhea, because

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we were running to the toilet all the time, you know. But on that ship when we were, I told you, we were on the front and the whole front of the ship, there were Polish Jews. And there was no water, and they only gave us herrings to eat [indecipherable]. So we were all day lining with little cups, because there was one faucet by the captain's, you know, deck, and we were carrying water to those people, it was awful. And once we came there, they threw at us, dates. Po-Polish soldiers were on [indecipherable] and they came – the ship was too big to go out, and there was a storm. So they came – I didn't want to eat dates ever, you know, after that, because we ate so many dates, we were hungry. And then they took us off that ship, and the next day [indecipherable] I don't remember what happened, they drove us to tur – to **Paklevy**(ph), and I saw stores with meat, with bread, with everything. I was sure it's propaganda. I said, it's impossible. I wouldn't – I couldn't believe that somebody has bread and food and meat in this store. We didn't believe it, you know? It's – you get so brainwashed, you know, it's so easy. And then they shaved us, they cut our hair and I don't know what the hell they did with us. The next day they put us in the trucks and we went south –

Q: Who is they?

A: – toward **Teheran**.

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Q: Yeah. Who is they at this point? Was it Polish authorities, was it British authorities?

A: I – they were mixed up. They were Poles, they were British, they tried to get the lice –

Q: I see.

A: – away from us, you know, because from **Russia** we came with lice, so they were shaving us and everything. So everybody looked like no hair or anything. I – I fell up. We went to **[indecipherable]** place for one night. Next time and next thing was **Teheran**. And over there I was going at night, and I fell down and it was toilets that were overflowing. And I was in those Russian quilted suits, you know, I had. So stink was unbelievable, and two ladies came to me in Polish, and they say **[speaks foreign language]** You're so poor, you know. They didn't know that I was a boy.

Q: Yeah.

A: And next day they put us in, and we came to **Teheran** and I went to that camp. And in that camp they took all our clothes away, and the British were **[indecipherable]** they were burning shoes, wa – everything that he had, blankets. And we found with this boy, that in a toilet, there was a fence and there was a hole. So we started selling blankets and everything to the peasants, and they were giving

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us money. You know, I don't know how much, but one Polish officer came and we ask him whether he could go outside of that camp and bring us some fruits. And he said, boys, it costs money. They say, how much do you want? His eyes almost rolled over how much. But then I had that stupid dream again, with the bread.

Q: Yeah.

A: The next day I went to the hospital. Of course, I don't know what happened to my money. Nobody knew what my name was, and how long I was in the hospital, I don't know [indecipherable]

Q: Did you have any documents at all? Any papers with you?

A: Nothing. We – from **Russia** we came with absolutely nothing. Some people had some papers, we had nothing. I didn't have anything. Because, you see, in **Wilno**, **Nowa Vileka**(ph), they took all our documents, so whatever we had Polish, and they confiscated. When we came to **Siber-Siberia** over there, they started screaming at us [speaks foreign language], where are you documents, and you – you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: You lying and everything, and the **NKVD** wanted our documents, and we said, you took it all in **Poland** already. We don't have any documents. And I remember how they were cursing [indecipherable] how much, you know. You understand it,

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you know. Th-They curse something awful, fuck you God's mother and things like this, you know. And this – there was a Polish guy with us, and he started cursing at those Russians the same way. And they say **[speaks foreign language]** Friend, why are you cursing? And they made him an accountant in the village. You see the result? **[foreign language]** Th-Th-Th-They're peculiar people. A-A-And that was it.

Q: So – and – but then how – when you were released, didn't you get any kind of documents –

A: Nothing. Nothing.

Q: – being released? Nothing?

A: Nothing. Nobody gave us anything, nothing. It was – it – when we came to **Karachi** –

Q: Yeah.

A: – we – I went to American consulate, and over there we made something like birthdays –

Q: Right.

A: – you know, we had the birth certificate, and we applied for visa to come to **America**, in **Karachi**.

Q: So that means in **Karachi** you –

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A: A-And then –

Q: – you – you – you gave information so that you could get a birth certificate issued?

A: To American you know how tall it is –

Q: Right.

A: – my mother took us. My – you see the – we had a different situation because my mother could communicate with anybody, you know? So she could communicate with the English, she could communicate with French, she could talk Lady [indecipherable] the governor's wife over there in the province. She was making Polish bibles for us, I still have them, over there. And my sister was correcting, because the Indian was setting the thing for printing.

Q: The type, mm-hm.

A: And she she used to invite us, you know. Well, my God, it was palaces where the British live, like governor. In the desert, she had garments and beautiful things and servant. The British live like kings, you know. But that's why, of the English language, that's why my mother asked the British to put me in English school, and they send me to Ca-Catholic school in **Karachi**, and I was studying over there right away, starting to learn English. So, and late –

Q: But we're – we're getting ahead of our story.

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A: Hm?

Q: We're getting a little ahead of our story. Let's go back to **Parlevy**(ph), I believe you said it was?

A: **Paklevy**(ph), yeah.

Q: **Paklevy**(ph), and then you got si – you had the dream, and then you got sick?

A: Well, we were – we were by – by – oh my God, if I tell you, traveling in **Iran** in those mountains, my cousin told me that when they were traveling through those mountains from **Paklevy**(ph) to **Teheran**, they closed all the windows somewhere, because people were afraid. You are way, way up on the mountain. You look straight down and you see buses and trucks and everything, destroyed, lying, cars that fell down. Nobody bothered to fix it even. You know, nobody looked for it. It was a scary like hell. And you know, Persians used to smoke hashish or something, too, and they were driving with their legs often, and when they were coming to a turn, they didn't slow down, but they used to blow the horn. So it was a harrowing experience, you were scared like hell going with them.

Q: So you were going on a bus?

A: No, it was a truck.

Q: No, on a truck, it was a truck.

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A: A truck. Yeah, but what you saw, you know, everything down there, it was military trucks, what Persians were driving them. It was – and sometimes you stopped somewhere, and there would be a place, like a coffee place, and they had donkeys walking, and beautiful carpets lying, and this – donkeys over there, and the horses over there, and [indecipherable] walking everything. But beautiful Persian rugs, you know, lying over there. And you could have tea, you know, and everything, if you wanted something. Of course, most of us didn't have any money.

Q: Well, so was this after you got better? I mean, you – when you – yeah.

A: No, no, this was on the way – on the way to **Teheran**. In **Teheran** in two days –

Q: Is when you tried –

A: – I came down with typhoid.

Q: I see.

A: With that thing, I don't know how long I was there, and nobody knew who I was, and I think when I became conscious, I saw that some boys are getting some money. So I asked them, what was it? They said, we joined the Polish

[indecipherable] there was like army school

Q: Okay.

A: – [indecipherable] that's for children. So I told them I joined it too, so they started giving me – I don't know what it was, some peanuts, you know? And they

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didn't know what to do with me. So they loaded me with the – with some boys, and they said, you going to **Palestine**. But they didn't know my name, and my mother, when she came, she couldn't find me anywhere when she came over there. And it was very nice, we were driving – this road wasn't so bad, going that way. The only thing, the minute we left **Iran**, we came to desert already, and Polish army surrounded us, guards around us, and they said, boys, you don't go anywhere. Two of you were already kidnapped by the people over here. So you – you don't go anywhere, just stay over there, because it's a very dangerous place. That was **Iraq**. And he told us, you don't move anywhere, we are going to be guarded by soldiers. And they guarded us like hell til they brought us to **Palestine**.

Q: Mm-hm. And then –

A: We went through **Baghdad**, I remember, and then we came to **Palestine** and in **Palestine** the Jews were throwing apples and grape – not apples, but oranges, grapefruits at us and everything. And they spoke Polish everywhere, and they brought us to **Bashkeet(ph)** the camp, where was for the boys. And we were in that **Bashkeet(ph)**, they had the school over there.

Q: What was the name of the place?

A: **Bashkeet(ph)**.

Q: **Bashkeet(ph)**?

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A: It's right next to **Gedera**. **Gedera** is a – a town that is on the map –

Q: Okay.

A: – i-in **Israel**. It was right to **Gedera**. And there, there were several hills we had. And one hill – on each hill the British built already this how do you call it? Showers and things like this. And over there felt that there was a Arab village. And we were ordered with a stick to guard that property, so nobody can come there. And they were standing there, and we're standing at – one boy was standing guard over there, and couple of Arabs were coming on a donkey, and he tried to stop them with a bamboo stick. Well, they stabbed him, and the next boy that was, he saw it, so he screamed. So it went – my God, there were about 1200, I think, of us, because they used to say that it is the battalion [**indecipherable**] 1,200. And we all grabbed stones and we started running towards the Arabs. And from the Arab village, Arabs started running. And – but the camp commander called **Gedera**, and from **Gedera** came **tanketki**, you know, the open tanks –

Q: Right.

A: – with machine guns, and across the desert we saw the Polish soldiers going like hell at those Arabs, a day's run back to their village right away. Otherwise, probably a lot of us would have gotten killed. But it was dangerous, it was a dangerous place. You had to be very careful. There were some – so finally Arab

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boys used to come and feel your pockets. And if you were going somewhere on the finger, the truck would slow down and you grab, and you had to jump in the truck. So while you were jumping, once you hold the truck, you couldn't let go, because you would fall down, and they emptied your pockets, steal everything. But o-over there it was nice because everybody s-spoke Polish, you know, everywhere. But one time in –

Q: What was the purpose of this camp, and what were the kinds of activities you did there?

A: Oh, we – well, school.

Q: Okay.

A: And we had wonderful professors, because the schools mostly were Polish university professors from **Poland** that were deported to **Russia** and instead of putting them in the army regular, they brought them to that school. Because there was first grade, second, third, fourth, you know. It was gymnasium.

Q: But here's a question I've got; tell me if I'm wrong in this, my assumption, from what I had read, is that when **Sikorski** made this agreement with **Stalin** in 1941, that the deportees from **Poland**, who had been deported both from **Poland** in 1940, and from the **Wilno** region, which was then **Lithuania** in 1941, were released. And so Polish deportees across the **Soviet Union**, and throughout all of the gulags, were

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now free. However, only those who could have military activity, that is, those who were young men who were fit to fight, would be allowed to leave the **Soviet Union**.

A: Oh no, everybody.

Q: So that is women and children could leave as well?

A: Women and children, everybody could leave **Russia**.

Q: Okay.

A: Everybody was allowed to leave. This was thing, but then when **Katyn** murder came in, nobody could leave already.

Q: Oh, I see. So, until the – until the Germans unearthed –

A: Unearthed that **Katyn** –

Q: **Katyn** –

A: – and they announce it, **America**, and **England** said it was done by the Germans, and **Stalin** [indecipherable] the exploitation, and he had Polish Jewish fellow who was a general, what was his – and he formed communist army in **Poland**, and that was another army over there. And they went all the way to **Berlin**, too, with Russian army.

Q: Okay.

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A: They organized Polish soldiers, and they put them into that army. Wha-What was called? **Ziemirski**(ph) I think was **[indecipherable]**

Q: So then he's –

A: – but he – he was a communist, that fellow. They knew that he was, but he was a general in Polish army, and he commanded that army, and he got Poles into Battle of **Lenino**, and Poles were slaughtered by the Germans over there. But they were –

Q: The Battle of **Lenino**?

A: **Lenino**, somewhere in **Russia**, and a lot of Poles were slaughtered, but they went all the way to **Berlin**, because I have seen pictures from **Poland**, of Polish, with Polish flag on bra – on **Brandenburg** back gate, Polish flags were hanging over there, too.

Q: Well, so this – what did you say his name was? Zhir – general –

A: Wait, wait, let me tell you. You see, this is something. **Ziemirski**(ph), I think, **Ziemirski**(ph).

Q: **Ziemirski**(ph). So that means that if you had been a deportee to the **Soviet Union**, and then you are released, and you didn't make it out of the **Soviet Union** before the news about **Katyn** broke.

A: Mm-hm.

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Q: So you are still released from the gulags, but on this case –

A: Oh, it was very tricky. Let me tell you what happened, because I met some –

Q: Okay.

A: – people, I cannot talk about. But I know of the people who I knew. The Russians told them, either you take Russian citizenship, or we send you back to gulag.

Q: Okay.

A: You see, after it, they were already released, they said [**indecipherable**]. So the people who took Russian passports were later not allowed to go back to **Poland**. They didn't want them to go back to **Poland**. It was very difficult, and the rest – and they put a lot into the army. The people were willing to go into Polish army, soldiers, of course, you know, because they prefer that then something else.

Q: So, in other words, they could have been – this is what I was getting to.

A: Yeah, but –

Q: Some of these could have gone into that General **Ziemirski's** army who had come from the gulags themselves.

A: Yeah.

Q: Is that so?

A: Well –

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Q: Okay. There was – let's say you're a Polish deportee, like you were from **Wilno** or – or some other region of the **Molotov-Ribbentrop** pact area, and you're released in 1941, or the news comes in 1941 that you can be released. You are released, and then with the German advances, the **Katyn** massacre is discovered, and the border closes to **Iran** and you no longer can go –

A: No, **Stalin** said no more. He – he –

Q: **Stalin** says no more.

A: – broke off relation with Polish government in **London** right away, **Stalin**.

Q: Okay, so –

A: Because the Poles said, you did it. There were Americans brought, the Germans shot them, they knew it, but the Americans were petrified of losing **Russia**, because they were – they did the – 90 percent of fighting with the Germans –

Q: Right.

A: – you know, so –

Q: So here's – so here's my question; if you were then free, but no longer in the gulags, as a former deportee, and you're a Polish citizen, you then have the option of joining this new Polish army.

A: Polish army.

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Q: And so it could be that – that many former gulag prisoners were in that army. Is that so?

A: Let me tell you something. From what I understand, **Poland** had the fifth largest army during the second World War. What was under rations, and what was in **England**. In **England** were about 200,000 Poles. Pilots with parachute troops, tanks and everything, under British command. And then there was another part of the army over on the Russian side. So the Poles fought everywhere. They were bleeding like crazy for – for [indecipherable] for yours and for ours, what turned out it was for yours only, not for ours.

Q: Yeah. So – okay. How is it that your mother made it out, and your sister?

A: They must have left – I left very early, you know –

Q: Okay.

A: – and – and they were a little later, because they eventually came to that place where I was in **Guzari**(ph), and from there, they went to **Teheran**.

Q: Okay.

A: In **Teheran**, my mother spoke English, so she was interpreter, and then there was governor of southeastern **Iran**, came over to Polish embassy, and he said, I want to westernize my house. Can you give me somebody who speaks French and English and try to [indecipherable] westernize my home, because his wife spoke

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only English. And my mother was sent there. She said, she gets in a car, he bought them beautiful suits and everything, you know, employed them. And they get in the car, and there are machine guns lying, and everything, there are two cars. You know, my mother said, what is this? Why, we're going through the mountains, there are bandits over there. So my mother says, well what – what do you mean? What happens? Well, whoever shoots better, wins. If they shoot at us, we will shoot back at them. And this was traveling to **Teheran** through the mountains. And eventually they went to **Zahedan**, and they were there in **Zahedan**, and there was there a Persian general **Kava(ph) Kavushek(ph)**, who spoke very well Russian. And they helped them, you know, eventually to go back. My mother said it was impossible to do. He was giving one direction, she was giving another direction. They have a dinner ready, she goes and she prays Muslim prayers for two hours, they cannot serve it. My mother said they – she gave up, and she went back to **Teheran**. And in **Teheran** she was working all the time, taking transports to southern pers – t-to southern **Persia**, you know, to go to **Africa**, or to **Australia** or somewhere. And they were busy all the time.

Q: And you, in the meanwhile were in **Palestine**.

A: I was in **Palestine** and I was writing letters to all the camps that I hear that Polish people are. And my mother was writing letters, and we hit. I got a letter, and

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my – and my mother's let – and my letter came to my mother. And in school they knew who I was already, because the name, and she was writing for **Stanislav Kiersnowski**, and I got a letter and I found out that my mother and my sister is alive, that they are in **Teheran**. That took a long time, I cannot tell you how long it was, and then my mother wrote to the camp commander a letter, telling him that my father died in **Russia**. She didn't write it to me. And that letter – censor was – mixed up the letters, sent a letter to me, one to the camp commander. And the letter with the – my father's death came to me in the letter, because all the letter was censored during the war. So somehow the letters got transferred, and then I found out my father is dead. I knew very little, you know. I came to a company commander. I even have his picture here, in the – in the company where I was, because it was – you know, but this was for boys. And I told him that my father died, and he said, I was with your father, my God **[indecipherable]** I don't know whether you know any Polish **[indecipherable]** you know?

Q: No.

A: **[indecipherable]** was like very happy fellow. He says, you know, your father kept us all alive because he kept singing all the time. He was joking all the time, and he said, one trouble was – and this is sad for me to tell. There was – first a Russian commander was in that camp. They told me – everybody told me that my

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father had no hand, so he couldn't work, so they made him a night watchman. And a Jewish man came to be the camp commander, and he was the son of a bitch, he removed my father from rations, from food. He said **[speaks foreign language]**, you don't work, you don't eat. So my father was living on what other soldiers were bringing him, pieces of potatoes, pieces of bread, and things like this. And my father was always saying that in life you can't deny two things; that you'll be in jail, and you die – you will be a beggar. And he was like a beggar at the end. But they said that he used to sing so beautifully. He kept our spirits up, your father. And here was, you know, the com-company commander.

Q: So tell me, how was it that he died?

A: Hm?

Q: What age – how did he die? What – what happened to your father?

A: I don't know whether he died of typhus, or – or whether he got poisoned, because he *vrai* – if he ate mutton meat, he would have been dead if they didn't know what to do.

Q: Okay, cause he was allergic to it.

A: Because he used to stiffen up.

Q: Okay.

A: He used to completely –

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Q: He couldn't eat lamb.

A: He couldn't eat lamb, he was so allergic to it, that – and he died, so th – in papers it's written that he had typhus, you know, but they said that he died very fast. When you think of all of these – all the things it could have been, and turned out opposite.

Q: Yeah.

A: And then when we found about **Teheran** and everything, oh my God, the conferences. When no Polish people wanted to believe my mother about, because Polish people didn't know about **Teheran** conference, what was in there.

Q: So how did your mother know?

A: Well, she – she went in there, and spoke English, and American intelligence officer in that hotel came to my mother, where are you going after the war? And my mother said well, I hope we are going return to **Poland**. He says, you can't. **Stalin** a-and [indecipherable] just made a deal, **Poland** goes to **Russia**. So better go somewhere else. And so we told all the Polish people what's going on, none of them wanted to believe it. But it from – my mother got it from an officer. I told you that the difference was that she knew languages, she could contact people. I remember when she came in **Karachi** she said she came to the camp, and she went to see the camp commander, and he was sitting with his legs on the table, and my

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mother walked in. When I walk in a room, please take your feet down and put them on the floor, she told the British camp commander. And she had guts.

Q: She had guts.

A: From then on, he was so polite, and he right away knew that he has to do something else with her other thing. But you couldn't do much with the Polish people, because they were all talking about democracy. There was an old woman, friend of ours, and we had only a bench, a table and a bed, you know. And she – my mother went to ask him for a chair for her, easy chair, you know, to sit down. Well, he got my – for that woman **Parneechee(ph) Lesker(ph)**, a easy chair. My God, there was almost a riot in the camp by Polish people. What is this? What is this? We're a democracy and you give somebody an easy chair to sit. They were jealous.

Q: Yeah.

A: And they were so jealous when we were traveling first class wherever we were going, when – on the ship, you know, because of being an interpreter. And then when we were coming in to **India**, when we were, there was a horseman, British Indian colonel. And my mother ask him why do you serve in British army? And he says, well, we have to learn how to fight. Otherwise, the British never get out from **India**. He says, we are going to war to learn how to fight. Ah, that was something.

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Q: So, okay. Let's go back then and try a little bit chronologically. You're in the camp, and you learn of your father's death through this misdirected letter that didn't get to the camp commandant. And your mother finds out where you were. How do you meet?

A: Well, my mother knew General **Anders**(ph), the commander of Polish troops in the Middle East, because he used to come to **Rudakow**(ph) when she was young.

Q: Oh my.

A: And for practice over there on – on the – on the farming, you know, they had this huge farm and he came there twice. So my mother wrote a letter to him, whether it's better to leave me in this military school, high school in **Palestine**, or to go to civilian life. And he never answer my mother, but the order came from him, to put me on medical commission, discharge me and send me to **Teheran**. So they discharged me and they send me to **Teheran**. And I came, and finally I met my mother, and I was shocked. I was so shocked, because when I was in **Russia**, I was like this, and I looked at my mother and my sister like this. And I came back from **Palestine**, I look, here's my mother and here's my sister. I grew up so much. I was so shaken up, because my mother wasn't big, and my sister wasn't big, and I remember them so much bigger than I. And with all this to think, you know, what

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was it, about two year, a year and a half period, I grew up so much. I was so shocked when I saw that my mother is so small.

Q: So it had been about a year and a half since you had seen her?

A: Yeah, year and a half or two years. I cannot really tell you exactly.

Q: Okay.

A: I'm mixed up with the dates.

Q: That's okay. That's okay.

A: Mm. And then – and then once we came to **India**, when I went to –

Q: So when you – hang on. You're in **Teheran** then.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And what was your next move and where did you go with – with everybody, that is, your mother –

A: Well, the next move was to **Karachi**.

Q: Okay.

A: To **India**, to – you see, **America** wouldn't take any Poles.

Q: Okay.

A: **Mexico** took some Polish children, and the British send the people who were coming, they send them to **Australia**, they send them to **New Zealand**. They send them some to **Canada** when – even **Mexico** took some, but **America** didn't take

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one person. It's the same thing they did to the Jews. Jews came out, right, one ship went to **Cuba**.

Q: The **Saint Louis**, yes.

A: One ship went to this **Dominican Republic** and the other one came back to there, and they were all killed over there.

Q: Yeah, that's the **Saint Louis**, yes.

A: You know that story.

Q: Yes, yes. So –

A: So the – so the same was to us.

Q: Okay.

A: **America** won't let him. Quota number you had to get. So we applied in quota number – it was in '43, I think – and we applied in **Karachi** for quota number for **America**, and I went to school in **Karachi** and started learning English. I had a wonderful time in **Karachi**. I met British fellows, and there was American Red Cross and American police, and they used to give me magazines, and I used to sell magazines to Indian storekeepers, you know, and they – I always get money, I could rent a bicycle for myself, and I used to go and eat over there. And the American soldiers were nice, you know. I tell you, over there, there was a very unpleasant experience that stays with me to this day.

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Q: And what's that?

A: Outside of that Red Cross over there, a group of American officers were standing, and there was an Indian fellow telling them fortune, and he says, well, your wife is called – I will write it for you, I cannot pronounce it. And he would write the name of the wife. You know, he never knew the soldiers, it was amazing. And then you know, he was telling them how their children are and everything, this Indian fellow. And then one soldier, officer said, please tell me my fortune. And he said, I won't talk to you. And he says, talk to me, tell me. He says, no, I won't talk to you. Don't ask me anything. Please don't ask me. Just leave me alone. And this American said please. Another soldier said, what's the matter? Tell him. Well, he said, are you going to **Burma** tomorrow? Yes. And you will be killed the next day. He was a pilot. He says, you are a pilot and you will be killed the next day. You want to know, I'll tell you now. Can you imagine how that man felt? And this I remember to this day, this Indian fellow said, I don't want to tell you – and he says, all of a sudden, are you going to **Burma** today? He says yeah. He says, tomorrow you will be killed, as a pilot. And to – it – it was so shocking to me, you know.

Q: It must have been. It must have –

A: We were be – we were being warned in **India** never to be bad to a beggar, never to mistreat somebody on the street, because they can curse you, and nobody can

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help you. And they were warning us, be very careful in **India**. Don't – don't ever annoy people in any way. He may be a beggar for you, but they have powers. I don't know, th-they said it, you know, **yogi**, and everything that they do. I saw a yogi buried in – in a grave, the next day they have to wake him up, he didn't breathe. There were two doctors, American and British checking him, and they pronounced him dead. His heartbeat was so slow that they couldn't detect it. So –

Q: Wow. And did he wake up the next day?

A: Oh yeah. They dug out him from there. He was in a coffin, put in a grave, and next day they open up, and there was a man who has to wake him up. I'll tell you, he was amazing. He took an umbrella and on every stick of umbrella that comes out, there was a different color ball. And they were spinning it like this, so you know all the balls went flying. And they say, which ball do you want to shoot? And he took **[indecipherable]** and a ball. And you said the red one, and the red ball would be shot off, in that **[indecipherable]**. It's amazing – amazing concentration that those people had. They had the stick, metal stick put on a table, and his eyes were tight in this case, and they spun it around and they hit the metal piece, you know, tha – tha – and it was vibrating. And he turned around and he aimed the arrow and he hit it. Just **[indecipherable]**

Q: It's just like a to-totally different world that you ended up in.

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A: Oh yeah, oh yeah. It's a different one.

Q: So, in **Karachi**, you ended u – you started going to school?

A: Yeah.

Q: And this was what kind of a school? This was an English school?

A: This was Franciscan fathers.

Q: Okay.

A: They were mostly Belgian. They were very nice. They were fantastic priests, I'll tell you. They had trouble with us, because we couldn't communicate with them.

But thank God they had **[indecipherable]** they had a Russian Cossack who spoke French, and he was teaching French. He ran away after Russian revolution to **Burma**, and then he crossed to **India**. And there quite a number of Russians living in **Karachi** from that time, from the revolution time.

Q: Revolution time.

A: That ran away, and they were living there. And we met him, and this professor, he – when we had trouble, we communicated through him to tell the school, and the school would – told him what to tell us. **[indecipherable]** we called him. And he used to take us to Muslim restaurants. We couldn't go to a Muslim restaurant in – there were Indian restaurants, and there were Chinese, a lot of Chinese restaurants were all over the place. And Muslim, he knew Muslims, and we – he

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took us couple of times to fantastic restaurants, and they were Mu-Muslim restaurants, but I wouldn't be able to go without him, but he was friend with those Muslims, so they let us in, they didn't want us otherwise come in there. This –

Q: So what was your – what was your mother doing, and what was your sister doing during this time?

A: Well, can I go back a little?

Q: Sure.

A: My cousin found out that we were in **Russia** from my cousin who went from **Wilno** to **America** through **Japan** and everything and he came to [indecipherable] he told them that we were deported to **Russia**. And then we found through mail – we didn't have her address, how we found her, I don't know. And [indecipherable] went to **Madera**(ph) school in – for very rich girls in **America**. She was in orphanage in **America**, my cousin, and a very rich man, Uncle [indecipherable] his house was next to **Edison** in **Llewellyn Park**. There is a park, completely fenced in, you cannot go in there. And – and he had a daughter, there was something wrong, and he wanted a girl, and she was a beautiful girl. So he took her as a companion for his daughter, and she went to school. And then she, when she finished that school, she wa – finished **Pratt** Institute, and she was making bed jackets. And she met one of the girls walking on the street from that

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school, from **Madera**(ph) school. And she says where's your husband? Her husband was Polish, **Kawalski**(ph). And he said, in **Karachi**. Oh my God, I've got family in **Karachi**. What does he do? He's in charge of all the offices, restaurants and everything in Far East. So, he came to our camp, and he took my sister, and he ask him to be a cashier, her, in American military camp. And they were paying her, and they took my mother to where they were repairing planes. They were bringing a lot of planes from **Burma**. They also were assembling planes and sending them to **Russia**. **Russia** used to fly to **Himalaya** to pick up the planes. And the hangars, would you know – would you want – guess what the hangars were, they were tremendous.

Q: Tell me.

A: [indecipherable] by the Germans for zeppelin.

Q: Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh. In **Karachi**?

A: In **Karachi**. There were two [indecipherable] those hangars. And my mother working in the secret section, everything was secret. And she says, those dumb Americans. I come in the morning, all the papers from the drawers are lying all over the floor, top secret papers, everything's lying on the floor, everybody can look at it. They are very messy, you know, they – they – you know, you – you – you – you'd think they wouldn't do something, that's why my cousin, who fought

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in **Italy, Monte Cassino** and everything, he said they were petrified of Americans, of friendly fire. They constantly were bombing, because his outfit was hit. He had the side blown up, he was six months in **Italy** in the hospital. He said only two fellows from his outfit survive American bombing. Instead of bombing Germans, they were bombing Polish position. And, you know, everybody was afraid of friendly fire, he said, next to Americans. They're irresponsible. I remember on the day I was drafted into the army, they gave us rifles. And you know, you don't pull the trigger in the rifle, you don't fool around. American soldiers were running, poof, poof, poof, playing cowboys, pointing at each other and pulling the triggers. And you know, every now and then a bullet came out, and – and guys were being killed. They were like children. I was petrified. I was petrified wa – we had barrack and the rifles were all at night put in in line and there was a chain pulled. And you know, somebody didn't take a bullet out. And one guy was pulling every trigger and shooting off. Upstairs, thank God, the fellow wasn't in bed because it went through his bed and through his pillow, the bullet went. And idiot was pulling triggers, he thought it was a game. They were very –

Q: So this i – this is when you were drafted in for – in the **U.S.** Army for the Korean War?

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A: Yeah, the Korean War. There were – you were very – and the American soldiers, when we were going to **Korea**, they were all crying. I said, what are you crying for? Oh, we'll be all dead. There was no morale at all, you know? They were all crying and I remember in **Korea** when we went, they put us into a barrack made from cans, you know, and barbed wire around, and it stunk like hell because Koreans were hanging octopus and everything to dry on the barbed wire. So thank God I had some other cologne, so I used to put on that cologne when I had to walk over there. But at night it was the funniest thing, we are talking, and there was a black guy who just came back from **Japan**. And you see gunpowder in his face, you know. And he said, man, I'm telling you – this black guy says – man, we were sure dying, white fellows and black fellows. We were all dying like brothers, I'm telling you, man, we were all dying. And those guys probably were shitting in their pants because they just came from **America**. And then somebody walked in and he – he says something, and somebody says, you from **Texas**? Yeah, oh. And they met, you know, and they were already happy that two guys met from **Texas**. But it was very depressing, you know, because those soldiers, they were – they – they were not prepared.

Q: They were frightened.

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A: When you saw – they were all 18 - 19 year old boys – when you saw Turkish army, they were all 40 or 30 year. You saw English soldiers, they were all 30 - 40 something. You t – you had from **Abyssinia** soldiers, you did **[indecipherable]** over there, they all wanted to die, because they swore to **[indecipherable]** you know, the king that they would die. But you saw all those professional armies, but American army was –

Q: A draft army.

A: – y-young boys, you know, from the draft. And I was in 1500 division in basic training, and we had to do everything on the run, because the general that run, he lost a division because they couldn't run from the Chinese. He said, I'll train our – my division there couldn't run.

Q: You mean from the Chinese, or from the North Koreans?

A: From the Chinese.

Q: Yeah?

A: Because you know, the Chinese came, the Chinese then came, it was in the war, they were volunteers from **China**, the Chinese that came, and that's how I wound up in **Korea**, because the first pilots over there were all Russian, in **Korea**. And then they put Chinese, but they requested 34 interpreters in **China** of – to **Japan**, because they thought **Russia** was going into the war over there, too.

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Q: [phone ringing] I see, let's break for – for the tel – [break]

A: – that reporter –

Q: Yeah.

A: – went to **Karachi**, and he was Jewish, and he was killed.

Q: Yes, **Daniel Pearl**.

A: And over – over here, they made a big noise over here. Well, what the hell was he doing there? You don't go to **Karachi** and walk in a – in a town, because you'll get killed for sure, or they'll throw a night – night pot on you in the morning, on your head. You know, they used to live in the – those apartment houses, right, and you better walk close to the street, because they will – you know what I mean by night pot.

Q: Yeah.

A: They were throwing everything out the window.

Q: Let's go back to **Karachi** now.

A: Okay.

Q: So your mother is working for the Americans?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Your sister is working for –

A: Americans –

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Q: – a gentleman, American named **Kawalski**(ph) in – in his restaurant?

A: Yeah, in – in those restaurants, yeah.

Q: And as an a – as a cashier?

A: Cashier. Well, she could make so much money, you cannot imagine. But we were honest, you know, and he ask, please, be honest. Because you can steal there. We don't want that for some Indian working or something. Because officers were coming from all over the world. One would fly in from **Africa**, another one from **England**. They were pilots all. These were coming from **Burma**. And everybody has different money. And they came to restaurant to eat, and they had to pay, and they were giving her different money.

Q: Different currency.

A: So she was getting dollars for the ones that were coming from **America**. So she could put in place of the dollars, the rupees and go and get three times for the same price for that money, for the dollars, in town, you know, on black market. They ask me, and my sister said there was so much going over there. They burn my sister, she was so mad they didn't pay for the clothes. They were washing the floor with kerosene or something, and it set fire, and she had her clothes burned, everything. Americans never paid her. And she burned her shoes, she says she ran away. And the worst experience that she had was when an American soldier – she was

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extremely popular, you know – she was going out with everybody. They only wanted to go with the white girl, you know, to restaurant. And one day they told her that a soldier is coming, and – which will be awful, please don't get scared. He was in **Burma** and they burned his face in – in a plane –

Q: Okay.

A: – it was completely burned. And my sister said, I steel myself. And he walked in, eye – eyes gone, you know, this –

Q: Right.

A: – burned, lips gone, awful. All face burned completely. He was going back to **States**. And my sister, like nothing, you know, took the money from him, and everything, and ask him, would you like to go with me to town tonight? And he said, yes, okay, you have a date. We're going to **Karachi** for to – for tonight. So you know, i-it was something to cheer him up.

Q: Yes.

A: She said, would you like to have a date with me tonight? And she was very pretty at the time. And she went with him, you know, just to cheer him up.

Q: So each of you had – said – had enormous experiences and adventures in **Karachi**.

A: Yeah, oh yeah.

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Q: How long did you stay there?

A: When we came in **Karachi** – oh, I can go to school [indecipherable]

Q: That's okay.

A: We came there sometimes in '43, I think, or 40 – '43 or '44. And then '45, I went to school in **Bombay**. So it must be around '43 - '44 and then I went to school still in three months in English school. That was beautiful, but grades were very bad and people didn't teach properly. I took advantage of them.

Q: How did you do that?

A: Well, that was Anglican church school. And in **India** if you were Catholic, and you were sent to Anglican school, the people who send you were excommunicated. And they send me to that school, and I came over and it was eighth grade. But I only was three months, and I passed exams for three grades, for ei-eighth grade, you see, because I – I went from seven to eight, but only for three months. And I figured out I don't want to start eighth grade from the beginning, I had to start it from the beginning. So I went to a priest, and I told him, you know, I'm a Catholic, and they put me in a Protestant school, I – oh, the priest something, and I called Polish people in **Bombay**, I knew them, and I said look, I don't want to be in that school. Put me to **Bombay**. So they transferred me to Jesuit school. When I came to Jesuit school, they said, which class did you finish? I said, I finish eighth grade, I

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want to go to the ninth grade. And I only was three months. So I asked them to give me help with math, to teach me math a little, and everything. And there – there was Father **Beech**(ph), he was fantastic. Father **Beech**(ph) spent every night with me in his cell, locked up and teaching me English, helping me. He made me buy **[indecipherable] Orczy's** book, "**A Scarlet Pimpernel**," and she – he made me write all the words, and memorize all the words. I remember part of it to this day. We seek him here, we seek him there, those Frenchies seeks him everywhere. Is he in heaven, is he in hell, this damn elusive pimpernel? You see how I remember? There is an opera like that.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: But – a-and I was learning, and finally Father **Beech**(ph) told me that **Stanley – Stanislaus**, you can – we will let you go before final exam, **Cambridge** exam, I think you'll pass it. I got **PF** in English, partly fail, but the rest **[indecipherable]** I did very good in geography. They said that I took second place in **India** in geography and in that exam, **Cambridge** exam. In religion I was very good, in math. In drawing, I failed, almost. I me – I mistook what they wanted us to paint, you know? I was to paint a design in a circle and I – I subdivided the circle, so I got zero for it. But I passed it, and my certificate sank; coming back the ship sank, but I got letter from **Cambridge**, you know, telling that I passed it. And that was –

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Q: What hap –

A: – but let me tell you of fa – Father **Beech**(ph).

Q: Okay.

A: One time they tell me that Father **Beech**(ph) – did I tell you that already –

Q: How do you spell his name?

A: – that Father **Beech**(ph) was sunburned, he went on vacation and he's very badly sunburned. So I go to his cell, and I knock on the door. Who's there?

Stanislaus. Oh, come on in, come on in. I walk into the car – to the thing and the fan standing and blowing on him, and he has just a little piece of cloth over here, and I see nude women on his arm, on his leg, on his chest and everything, and he's a priest. And I said, Father, what is this? He says, I was a merchant marine in **India**, and they send me – I was engaged to get married, and they send me to merchant marine school in **England**. And when I came back, she married somebody else, I said to hell with it, I became a priest. I got so mad I became a priest. But, he said, when I was merchant marine, that's what we did.

Q: He had all these tattoos.

A: Tattoos of women.

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Q: Oh my gosh. Was his – did you – I want to make sure I spell his name right, **b-e-e-c-h**, like Father **Beech**(ph), like a beach on the ocean? Is that how you pronounce his name, or you spell it?

A: I have somewhere a letter from him, but I don't remember – I may have, in the school, maybe his name.

Q: Okay.

A: I – I – I – but he was Father **Beech**(ph). Anyway, that was **b-e-e-c-h**, I think it was, sounding beach. He was – oh, he was the nicest – he was one of the people that influenced me more in my life than you can imagine.

Q: In what way?

A: In every way. The sacrifice. He didn't have to do it, you know. We slept on the third floor, the priests were on the second floor. On the first floor, I – we ate, or something. And sometimes, in the evening – and there were bathrooms on the first floor, so sometimes at night we woke up, and I would go down. They always had a monk watching us in the school – in the corridor, so there would be no monkey sexual business or anything like this.

Q: Right.

A: Then I would be walking, and I see Father **Beech**(ph) walking with praying. So I come to him, hi, Father. Oh, he say, **Stanislaus**. Would you like to have a drink?

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Yeah. So, I said okay. He takes me and they take whatever drink they were drinking. You know, but I mean alcohol.

Q: Right.

A: And we would sit and talk and he would have a drink and everything. And then I was in **Africa** and while I was in **Africa** I wrote him a story how we went hunting, and how the lions surrounded, and he wrote to me he was so proud of my English. And he wrote that we have a new principal in school. And he says, he's making so many changes, that if changes are progress, then we are progressing by leaps and bounds. I never forget he wrote to me. And – and he said th – th-the man is whipping himself, you know.

Q: Oh.

A: They were very nice, they were very nice Fathers. That was a very, very good school. I understand it's one of the best schools in **India**. You can go on computer and write **Saint Mary's School, Bombay**, and then come – **Reuben Metter**(ph) comes from there, he's graduate from that school, too –

Q: Amazing.

A: – from **Saint Mary's School in Bombay**. They were very nice. **Bombay** was dangerous too, but **Bombay** had beautiful hanging gardens, swimming pool, touch my heart. I was only once eating ice cream, I had no money [**indecipherable**] and

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on every bench in **Bombay** was written, presented by General **Courva(ph)**. And in Polish, you know what **courva(ph)** means. So we were laughing.

Q: Yeah.

A: It was a very, very strange experience being there.

Q: Were your mother and sister still in **Karachi**?

A: No, they were in **Kwanapur(ph)** they were in southern **India** already, they – they put them.

Q: Okay.

A: And my mother was teaching over there. I don't know what my sister was doing. He was mostly sick though.

Q: Oh, right.

A: She had asthma, she was very sick and eventually from **Karachi** in '46, she went to **America**. She got her visa early, because from **Karachi** they sent our visas – Americans to **Bombay**, and of course they lost it. And – and they then told us that we have to wait seven years for another –

Q: They lost it becau –

A: [indecipherable]

Q: – why did – how did they lau – lose it?

A: Americans. They lose everything.

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Q: Okay, okay.

A: Yeah, I – I – I don't trust Americans.

Q: Well, you mentioned that there was a boat, a ship going across the ocean that – where something sank, like your – your cerifi –

A: Oh, that was my school certificate.

Q: I see.

A: That was different. But this was – this was overland.

Q: Okay.

A: **Karachi** and **Bombay**, it was in [indecipherable] they send it, and they lost my mother application for visa and ma – and mine, you know, for quota number. And when my sister came here, there was Catholic relief and there was a Polish fellow writing to immigration office, all the time explaining to them that my sister got the visa and we were together in **Karachi**, and we were together applying and developing birth certificates because we had nothing. So we had some people testifying who we are. And then one day telephone rings, and some very big shot in immigration office calls up, I'm so sorry, we make the mistake. When I found out the record, I saw that there were other papers that you were – all three were in – in, and they lost the papers. We're sending right away to **Nairobi** non-preference visa

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number for my mother and my sister. And so in '48 we came, otherwise we would have to wait God knows how long.

Q: So in other words, your – you're in **Bombay**, and your sister gets a visa in 1946 to come here.

A: Yeah.

Q: But you and your mother – how – why did –

A: No, we were sent to **Africa**. **India** got independence in '47, and they send us to **Uganda**, then they send us to **Kenya**. They s – they told us that from '46 we have to wait seven years for a quota number, Polish quota number to come here. My mother didn't want to say that she was born in **Russia**, and she could come under – Russian quota number was empty. And my mother wouldn't say that she was born in **Russia**, she was born in **Poland** and that's it. And there was no **Poland** at the time.

Q: Yeah.

A: And she could have gone right away. And I'll tell you, Americans wanted to smuggle me.

Q: Really?

A: Oh yeah.

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Q: [phone ringing] Let's cut. [break] All right, and we were at the point where – where you were going to be going – aha, you got a call from immigration authorities, American immigration authorities that a mistake had been made.

A: Yeah.

Q: And –

A: My sister got it, and the non-preference visa number is being sent to us. So then we were already in **Tanganyika**, so – **Tanzania**, you know.

Q: Right.

A: So we went by bus to **Nairobi**. And let me tell you, my mother and I went to sit with the driver in front, and the rest of the bus was black. But if you went on the train in **India**, if you were white, you had a car. If you were an Indian, you got another car, and the rest of the people were on the – on the train, black people, you know, separate.

Q: Right.

A: There was segregation like hell. But we were going on that train –

Q: You're talking about **India**, but **Nairobi** is –

A: In **Nairobi** –

Q: Yeah.

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A: In – we were going to **Nairobi**. And let me tell you, that bus stopped somewhere, and the natives went to eat, because they didn't call them na – anything else. And we said we want to eat, we'll go with you. No, no, no, you have to go to restaurant. You should have seen the place, you could have fainted. A whole part of the road was only lined up with ivory standing, a driveway. Then we came and there were cages with birds, tropical birds. Then we come and the English fellow who owns this place in the bush, asks us to go and take a shower and refresh yourself. Then i-if they bring the food, you know, and all the natives are dressed in fancy hats and everything. And then after a while, the horn starts blowing. The bus already came for us, and we said we have to go. Don't pay any attention, enjoy yourself, have a good time while we're here, you know?

Completely re-respect. And then that bus continued, we came to **Nairobi**. **Nairobi** was a dangerous town even then, because in **Nairobi**, **Mau Mau** was starting over there, but in **Nairobi** they told us that the white woman, during the day can go with the gun anywhere she goes, but at night she has to have a man with a gun to protect her too, because is dangerous, they like to attack. It's now trouble starting over there too, I see, in **Africa**. But there was **Mau Mau**. And anyway, we were –

Q: So you got to the American consul –

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A: We went to the American embassy to get our visas. So we came over there, and in – and they gave us our visas, they couldn't sell it to anybody. You see, a lot of visas were being sold to Jewish organizations. It – it was Polish quota number, they would sell it to anybody they wanted to, because they want money. So we –

Q: They being whom? The American officials?

A: What?

Q: Who was doing the selling?

A: American officials.

Q: Okay.

A: We all knew it.

Q: Okay.

A: In **Israel** they had to close American consulate because they were selling Arab visas. And I'll tell you, over there, they – th-they ga – they got the visa and they don't want to give it to us. So we say what – what are you doing? Well, we are going to give it to **[indecipherable]** international refugee organization. But we can order – we had 1200 dollars that my sister, was working as a governess here, and she send this to **Africa**. So we can buy ship straight to go to **America**. No, you have to go on that ship. So from **Nairobi** they send us to **Venice** on this ship. But they didn't give us the visa – they gave it, but it said it will cost you pros – please

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give us 600 dollars. And this was [indecipherable] ship, it was – there was no fee for it. So we come later from ve – **Venice**, we go to **Milano**, and the British commander comes, and they said, what are you doing here? And they said why?

[indecipherable]

Q: Who's they? Who is they?

A: – American visa, you not a refugee. I said no, but we don't have it. Well, where is your visa? I said, look at our package over there. He goes, finds our visa. He says, what happened? Well, they – they gave it to **IRO**. Don't tell me they made you pay for it? Son of a guns. We said yes, 600 dollars. Well, they stole it. So you know, there was more monkey business going than you ever can imagine.

Q: Okay. Okay, so use – it was – there was a market in these visas.

A: Yeah.

Q: And – and you were supposed to get it just for free, as – as your

[indecipherable] numbers

A: [indecipherable] the visa, but for what they took the money, I don't know. But give us 600 dollars. And all we had to get was once the visa and we could go to **Mombasa** and book a passage to **America**, like my sister, book a passage from **Bombay**, straight to **San Francisco**.

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Q: So what – you were in **Venice**, and then how did you get to the **United States** from **Venice**?

A: Oh, from **Venice** they send us with refugees. We were still on the refugee ship, but they send us to **Milano**, and from **Milano** they ca – the English command – the camp commander – it was refugee camp, he called **Genoa**, he booked us a cheap hotel in **Genoa**, and on [indecipherable] ship – Italian ship, he booked us a passage, and we had enough money we came to **America** with 30 dollars.

Q: Oh my gosh.

A: From two – from 1200, and we came to **America**. And it was winter, and the idiots in the harbor, a-all the American citizens were first and then people with – and this, and it was so cold, December 28, and they opened my mother's paper, fine, and American doctors look, oh, you have **TB**, you won't be allowed to go to **America**, you go to **Ellis Island**. And my mother said, how is it possible, you checked my lungs there, the doctors checked. Well, it's – and finally some other doctor came in, American and he looked at it. Who said you have **TB**? Those are scars from tuberculos – from this – from pneumonia. And he says, you clear, you can go. And we had no warm clothes. You know why? When we came from **Africa**, we were on the ship, but we had all our clothes in the baggage. And we

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came to **Venice** – and we came to **Venice** and they took all our suitcases, you know, the – a lot of people were like transit, you know –

Q: Yes.

A: – we were in transit through **Italy** going. So they said, who of you has anything that is not allowed? Cigarettes, alcohol and things like that. And everybody said no. There was a Jewish guy, Polish, and he said he had a son, who's opera singer, and you know, the son of a gun's, custom officials went straight to his suitcases, they opened it, there was nothing but cigarettes. They sealed all our – these suitcases, and they said, when you leave **Italy**, you get them. And we finally got them in **New York**, our suitcases. So we had no warm clothes.

Q: Wow.

A: Because like, we were from **Africa**.

Q: Right. So tell me – so you remember the date you came here, it was December 28th.

A: December 28, 1948.

Q: And you came into **New York** harbor?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Okay. And then, was your sister already here?

A: My sister was here. She wa –

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Q: And she met you there? She met you there, at the –

A: Oh yeah, yeah, of course, and my cousin was there. We finally got out late in the evening, and then my sister was working then for my cousin, making bed jacket, my cousin was making bed jackets. She had a good business. She [indecipherable] fantastic materials, you know why? Because my cousin was [indecipherable] she married an Irish fellow, and she was doing all the material was Jewish, materials for making bed jackets for women, she was manufacturing bed jackets. And it was very difficult to get material. But when they saw my sister and she came all sunburned from **Africa**, they were sure she was Jewish, they gave her so much material, my cousin, to make bed jackets, she made a lot of money. They thought she was Jewish. And –

Q: So here's – here's my next question. I mean, I want to go back and fill in some of the blanks that at least come to mind, of your story that I know from before, and we didn't – we didn't talk about. And they happen to be of the more tragic events. You mentioned that you had cousins who had married into the hungari – i-i-into a wealthy Hungarian family called **Horvath**(ph).

A: Yeah.

Q: And that they had a villa in **Poznan**.

A: In **Poznan**.

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Q: Yes.

A: Close to **Poznan**.

Q: Yes. And then at some point you said that there was a wedding.

A: This – his daughter was getting married in **Poland**, and –

Q: So, and – okay, so this – let's establish first, the cousin was your cousin or your mother's cousin?

A: No, well, it was my mother's brother daughter –

Q: Okay.

A: – who was getting married, so it's my cousin.

Q: Your cousin, mm-hm.

A: And she was getting married, and what happened that it was during the war. We were at that time in **Teheran**. And what's interesting in that story is that they – there was a neighbor who was a **Volksdeutsche**, and he supposed [indecipherable] **SS** drunk, or something, and he told them that it's underground and they came and they killed everybody. Only the young couple got out, and the priest, you know? But the story, beside that – I'll give you a picture of that, but the story behind it is that I was in **Teheran**. And next day on **BBC**, they were announcing that murder and speaking of my mother's brother and everybody. So, you know, they say that – Americans say, we didn't know what was going on in **Poland**. How come the next

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day a murder of Senator **Stanislav [indecipherable]** was on **BBC** broadcast and I hear – heard it in **Teheran**. So you know, in **Teheran** I was in a hospital, I had malaria and my sister was in the hospital. And we quickly run because they used to copy everything, and publish like a little newspaper, British news, you know, in Polish. So, we run quickly and say, please don't give it to our mother. We – we have to tell her ourselves, and we told her slowly that you were all – that they were all killed over there.

Q: So tell me – tell me again, it was that they had a vi – they were going to have a wedding party.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And your uncle, the – your brother – your mother's brother was there, his daughter was getting married.

A: Yeah.

Q: And there was a neighbor and he was a **Volksdeutsche**, that is a German –

A: This was – they were in a big estate –

Q: Okay.

A: – their wedding – marriage **[indecipherable]** the name of – of it is – sometimes you can get it on computer, the picture of their house and everything, you – even had the grave of them that **[indecipherable]**

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Q: Okay.

A: – and ri-right now we change. And he supposedly get the Germans, because Polish army went and killed him, and his children, and his wife, in the day of the –

Q: Oh – you – okay, who was the **Volksdeutsche** person, how – tell me a little bit about this, the back story of what happened.

A: Well, the **Volksdeutsche** were Germans who were living in **Poland**.

Q: Okay.

A: And they were living for centuries, and some, they refuse to say that they're Germans.

Q: Okay.

A: But he pri – right away was a **Volksdeutsche** – German person, you know, he not Polish person.

Q: So he was a neighbor of your uncle's?

A: And there was a neighbor over there, and he wanted that property, that he would get that property there [**indecipherable**]. So he got those **SS** supposedly drunk, they said. And they came over there, and they came couple of times, and they came at night and they shot everybody.

Q: So everyone who was in the wedding party?

A: Everybody was shot.

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Q: Bride and groom?

A: No, bride and groom and the priest lived. They went to take pictures, and I think, and she lived. He – her husband was later killed in **Warsaw** uprising again, you know.

Q: The groom.

A: The groom was killed later in **Warsaw** uprising. And the – but it was, you know, it was so big that it was or – I was listening about this –

Q: Of course.

A: – next day in **Teheran**. So how come they didn't know what was going on about extermination camps? They knew everything. They didn't want to do anything about. They didn't give a damn that people were being slaughtered.

Q: That's – that – I wanted to – I wanted to get this incident recorded and – and known about. And now let's talk – you say that this neighbor, who had been the **Volksdeutsche**, who wanted the property, that the Polish army – what happened –

A: They we – they were surrounded by the Germans.

Q: Right.

A: There were Germans staying. What happened, I don't know, because I wasn't there. But I understand that Polish army had a trial. Polish army never killed a German without the trial.

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Q: Okay.

A: So there was a trial, and there was a verdict, and this is the first time that they killed a woman and children, they said here, two children. First they killed the wife and the children, and then he came later. That's what I heard, and that's what I was told. And they killed underground surrounded his place, and they killed all of them.

Q: So that would have been the **Armia Krajowa**?

A: **Armia Krajowa**.

Q: **Krajowa**. The Home Army.

A: That – that was revenge.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, there was, in **Warsaw** there was a – I read about it, there was a very bad governor, German, and they send him a coffin once, with the wording that he will be assassinated. And in the middle of **Warsaw** he was riding in a car and there were cars on the side, poo, poo, poo and he was killed.

Q: He was gone.

A: And they executed him. But he was given a verdict, that for atrocities that he commits, he will be killed, too. And they killed him.

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Q: And now I want to – so that's one incident. And now you just mentioned, at one of the points where we had a break, that you had a relative who was the ambassador to which country?

A: **Germany. Ronniker(ph).**

Q: **Ronniker(ph).**

A: **Ronniker(ph).**

Q: And he wa – hi – and he – what kind of relation was he to you?

A: Look, don't ask me. I'll tell you the relation he wasn't – when I met him in **America**, I didn't know him in **Poland**, I had to – to call him Uncle **Wilko(ph)**. He wanted me to call him **Wilko(ph)** and my mother. Who he was married, don't ask me too much. I met him, he was an old man already. Oh, I could tell you the story about him you could not believe. He was tried at the end of the war in **Kraków**. **Hitler** sent his personal interpreter **Schmidt**, and he was o-o-over there, and he was sentenced to death.

Q: By –

A: Germans.

Q: He was a ger – Germans –

A: By Germans, yeah.

Q: – were sending – okay.

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A: So – but he knew a lot of Germans, you know, people that were in **Poland**, and that they had to be in the army because otherwise they would be dead anyway. So anyway, he said, I was waiting for my execution. Now this is all hearsay because I don't know, this is what he told me. And he said, one time, all of a sudden, Germans come in very elegant uniforms with white gloves, and they take me out from the cell. And I said well, they're going to execute me in style. He says, we come out, there's a car, they put me in a car and we drive out. I said, where am I going? They're going to kill me in the forest, or where? He comes and he says there's a table, and there are German generals sitting. And they say Mr.

Ronniker(ph), we want you to go to **Warsaw**, make [indecipherable] who is the head on the underground army, talk to him, not to make uprising in **Warsaw**, because we will devastate **Warsaw** and we'll kill everybody. And we want to – you to talk to him. Then you have to contact underground army, **Armia Krajowa** to contact Polish government in **London**. We are going to fly you to **Portugal**, and then from **Portugal** let the British pick you up, and we want to talk, to stop the war, not to let Russians go into **Poland** so much, and into **Germany**. Of course, [indecipherable] didn't see him, and **England** refused to see him.

Q: **Ronniker**(ph), your –

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A: Well, you know why? **Yalta** [indecipherable] they made the deals. Germans didn't know, obviously about this.

Q: So tell me, why was he sentenced to death by the Germans?

A: Oh, they can sentence anybody. They – probably he was operating in **Poland** and everything, you know. He was saving people. He said that – he – he told me that one time he was in **Lwów**, and the orphanages in town had no food. And he said, I knew the governor of that province from **Germany** when I was ambassador. And he said in the German [indecipherable] says, I have no food. I cannot – we need food for our army. What can I do for you? He says, I can give you some cars. You go to the villages. And if the villagers give you food, you can bring in and give it to the children, to feed them. And he said, I'll make some cars available so you can go in the countryside and look for food to feed your children. You know, they were reasonable people, too. They said, we do – we don't have food. Because he told them that the orphan, she has no food in **Lwów**. And he said well – and he said [indecipherable]

Q: So what was his role then in – in **Poland** during the war? If he had once been ambassador to **Germany** for – from **Poland** –

A: Yeah. Well, I tell you what, I cannot tell you what, but he was – there was **RGO**. That was an organization in **Poland** called **RGO**. And they got money from

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Hoover, President **Hoover**. He knew President **Hoover**, obviously, and President **Hoover** gave him the money.

Q: This would be in the early 30s.

A: Oh, that was – yeah, early 30s.

Q: Okay.

A: First World War, you know, and after first World War and everything, maybe he knew him from there, I don't know, he told me, you know, he was an old man, but he told me those stories.

Q: Can you – okay. Cut – cut for a second.

A: My life, and what I heard, you know.

Q: Yeah. I guess I just –

A: I-I really don't know how he was related to me.

Q: Okay.

A: [**indecipherable**] the writer of this I knew, that he was [**indecipherable**] you know, but – and how he was connected. But him I didn't know, but I had to – he told me I had to call him **Wilko**(ph), so it's an uncle.

Q: Okay.

A: And he s – he was related through some wedding, or to something.

Q: Okay. Can we cut? Can we cut?

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A: You are still young, and you don't –

Q: Oh, don't I like that, ha, ha. I'm on the other side of 50, let me tell you.

A: Yeah, that's all right, you don't look 50. People who are nice to me –

Q: I'm closer to 60.

A: People who – some people tell me, why you don't look so old, you look like 70.

I said thank you.

Q: Yeah.

A: But 70, I could s – **[break]**

Q: Okay, so my interest was, why I have a question about Mr. **Ronniker**(ph) is this, if he was a pre-war diplomat to **Germany** from **Poland**, how is it that he even had any position at all during the war years in **Poland**?

A: Because of **Hoover**.

Q: Ah, I see.

A: **America**.

Q: You think that helped?

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah. Well look, Germans were funny people, you know.

But Germans respect class, Germans respect some things, you know, and everything. And **Ronniker**(ph) could be German **[indecipherable]** it's almost German name, **Ronniker**(ph). So –

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Q: So – and then, if – if it was a **Hoover** connection, tell me what was that connection between him and **Herbert Hoover**.

A: If I knew, I could tell you. But he knew him from first World War, because I think after the first World War, **Hoover** sent money to newly resurrected **Poland**, and somehow he must have been involved in that money. Because I remember that my father became a mayor of a small town where my sister was born. Actually – wait, what's its name, you see – and over there, my father received money to give to people who have trouble. So my father knew some Polish people. He didn't know the Jewish community well, and he went to a rabbi. And my father said to a rabbi, give me the name of the Jewish people that need financially help, because we got some money from the government, and we can help. And – and the rabbi gave him the names, and my father said, well, I know this fellow, he needs help, this guy. And the rabbi said no, they are healthy, they can work. Only give to them that are sick. Don't give to the people that are we – healthy, because they will stop working. My father was always telling me. So, you know, there was some help for people –

Q: Arranged through this Mr. –

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A: – arranged by the government and it could have been some help from **America**.

You see, **America** wanted to give **Poland** this **Marshall Plan**, but **Stalin** refused to have **Marshall Plan**.

Q: Mm-hm, that's afterwards. Now, when you're talking about the help that your father got from the government and from **Ronniker(ph)**, you're talking first World War.

A: The first World War.

Q: After the first World War.

A: After the first World War, there was help, and then was **Marshall Plan**, and **Marshall Plan** was run by a Polish member of Federal Reserve of amer – in **America**. And he used to come and help us [indecipherable] he used to teach us, you know.

Q: Okay.

A: And nobody – Americans couldn't believe that I, going to **NYU**, I'm talking to Federal Reserve fellow. And he told me that **Marshall Plan** was made to rebuild quickly **England, Japan, France, Germany**, so we can trade wi – again. Give the money to rebuild those countries to trade, and that's what he – h-he told us.

Q: Okay, so aft – during the second World War, Mr. **Ronniker(ph)** is still in a position – some kind of position of authority.

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A: Some kind of position of authority, in **Poland**.

Q: In **Poland**.

A: He's not in the Polish government –

Q: No.

A: – you see, but he is **RGO**, or this was something called like help to the people –

Q: Okay.

A: – because he got money from **Hoover**.

Q: And now was this **RGO** a Polish underground organization?

A: No, wa –

Q: Was this a German municipal organization?

A: There was no German, there was nothing, it was Polish thing that he operated.

Q: Okay.

A: And he traveled. He said the worst thing was like he said, underground in **Poland**. That was crazy. They would shoot the German somewhere, and then the whole village gets killed. He was telling me, you know, a lot of stupid things are being done. Why the hell shoot a German somewhere, where for pleasure or something, and then the Germans come and they – and kill a lot of people. Now – now they say that **Warsaw** uprising, nobody wants to take responsibility who started it. Because **London** says, we didn't give the orders, nobody wants to, you

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know, what [**indecipherable**] whole population of **Warsaw** was evacuated and killed and everything. And the – now they say that a lot of it was done from **Russia**, that **Russia** was broadcasting to Poles all the time to rise up against **Germany**. Well, **America** did that with **Hungary**. They were telling to Free **Europe**, to Hungarians to make a revolution. And when they made a revolution over there, you remember the Hungarian revolution? What was this thing – **Foster Dallas** said, that's an internal Russian affair. So the Russians went in there and finished that revolution.

Q: Going back to Mr. **Ronniker**(ph). You mentioned during one time when we were not filming, that after the war somebody said at a party when they found out that you should – that whoever was there should get on their knees.

A: Got the – got on their knees and started kissing his hands, because –

Q: Who? Who said that? Who se –

A: She – her mother.

Q: Who's her – who is the person? Wha –

A: I don't know, there was a Polish woman –

Q: Okay.

A: – who was from **Poland**, and she found out that this is **Ronniker**(ph), and she says to her daughter, on your knees and start killing.

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Q: Kissing, kissing.

A: Because the Germans had us all lined up to be killed, and he came and he talked to the Germans, and they let us go. You see, so he had influence with the Germans in some way. How, I don't know.

Q: Okay.

A: Maybe because they knew of his connection, and they must have known who he was. **Hitler** wouldn't send his interpreter, **Schmidt** to his trial in **Kraków**, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: And – and – and – and that's what he told us, and I – maybe he was lying, but I doubt it.

Q: Okay.

A: I was – he was an old man, and he se –

Q: Well, it sounds like there's quite a story.

A: [**indecipherable**] finally run away, because you know Russian right away sentenced him to death, too. And he ran away from **Poland** and he eventually came to **America**.

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Q: Well, it sounds like quite a story, and that there probably isn't a lot – a lot to his story, but you ha – you only learned the fragments of it, and so can only tell us fragments of it.

A: Yeah, I can only tell what he told me.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: This is what he told me, this is his story. You see, there were so many things going on over there that nobody knew, that what was going on, who was what, you know? I – it's awful, but ee – the people don't learn to stop killing each other.

Those African tribes and in British. Did you ever see **Kuwait** on the map?

Q: Yeah.

A: When **Churchill** was drunk, as usual, they was – they were dividing after the first World War. So **Churchill** drew a line like this, you know, one line like this, one – they cross, and they are like this. So you know what this is? Here is **Kuwait**, you know what this is? No man's land. Between **Iraq** and **Saudi Arabia**, this big piece of the lines that cross like this, it's – on the atlas if you look, it's no man's land, you know? And this used to be a part of, once upon a time, of **Iraq**. And – and amer – English designed the state, and they made a lot of everything. And all those countries that are now fighting in **Africa**, they conquered the – different tribes were living, and they put different tribes together, and they all hate each

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other, and they are all fighting. Th-Th-Th-The world is crazy. They did a lot of bad.

And when you are – when I think of the Spanish war, they did it in **South**

America, killing, slaving, everything. A-Americans came, British

[indecipherable] Indians, who are savages, let's kill all the Indians, you know.

Q: It's a kind of sad note, and – to end our interview on, but I'd like to ask you – I mean, I think we could sit and we could talk about many things, two or three times over, but I – I want to kind of sum up our conversation today, and our interview today and d – how – how would you think some – when someone will listen to your story that has so many facets to it, that has both beautiful memories of where you grew up and how you grew up, and then great, I'd say terror and fear, and i – and poverty, after the deportation. And yet, you see, you have so much variety in it; what would you want people to understand, from what you went through? What would you want them to understand from your life?

A: Well, I'll tell you something, always expect that something better will come.

When you get old, you lose it already, you know, but when you young, you look and you strive, you know. Like I went to **NYU** six years at night. But I was – I knew I was getting somewhere. There were people telling me, you stupid going to school. I said, oh yes, I'm stupid. I had a girlfriend, very nice, and she told me, you stupid going to **NYU**. I said, well, but I'm going to study, and I'm going to finish

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this school. And you know, there were a lot of things in life, and you always look for something. And I had one big objective, that I had my father who told me, take care of your mother and your sister. And I took care of them. My sister died in 2001, you know, and to the last day I always took care of her, and I did everything that I could to help my sister, my mother. And you know, my cousin, responsibility for that. And also, in my life, it was funny, but I took care of other people. I was – we were drafted into American army, and there was a Ukrainian fellow sleeping about me, and he started complaining that he has stomachache. So I said, give me your knee. I pulled his knee, oh, appendicitis. So I ran to the company headquarters and I said, get me an ambulance quickly, we have to take this fellow for operation. They told me, who do you know, what do you know, you think you stupid or something, he's goldbricking. So I went back, I waited 15 - 20 minutes, I came back. You know, we're going to sue you if he dies. He may die soon. They called ambulance, straight from the barrack on the operating table, it was appendicitis. There was a fellow in **Korea**, and he used to stand and burn his legs, and I realized that he was so depressed, that he didn't pain, because we had those **Coleman** stoves. So, how to help him? He had very thick glasses. So I said, put your thick glasses right next to your bag, and in the morning step on them and crush them. And he crushed them. Doctors didn't pay attention, nobody. They send him to

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Japan, and of course he was sent back home. He was a mental case, you know.

Look at my wife. She conks out on me on the lawn, and I give **CPR** and I don't know what the hell I do, but she's alive.

Q: And you're talking about **Francesca** your wife?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes, okay. And –

A: But – but you know, you have things in life, and I like to give people help. Not everybody likes help. She objects to me when I talk to my cousin, but I try to help them. They argue with me, you know. But I have more knowledge about certain things than they have, and I try to give it to them. What they re – they refuse it, they fight it, but eventually they'll take it. Eventually they'll take it. You try to tell people, this is what's important in life, this is what you do. And you know, a lot of people gave up, a lot of people give up. We saw this – I tell you, I saw one thing; Jewish people give up very fast. They break down. We saw them breaking down more than we were breaking down, you know. I really saw that in my Jewish people. I don't know why.

Q: Where –

A: I'm talking about **Russia**.

Q: Okay.

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A: They were weaker, I think. They were – somehow they didn't have the consistency or something, and we – because we saw them covered with lice, standing in line. Often we were trying to get the lice off; they didn't. And I understand that once a doctor walked through a hospital and – with a group of student doctors, and he asked them, which of these patients is the most sick, you know, the sickest person. So one fellow said, well he – this one has this disease, this one has this disease, this one has this disease. And the doctor said, you are all wrong. Look at him. There's a fly walking on his face, and he reacts already. He gave up. He's the sickest. And you know, people, if they – if they react, you know – and I was lucky that I had a mother that could help me so much, you know, she helped me so, so much.

Q: In what way?

A: In every way. With the English language, and with the getting me to the schools, you know. I wouldn't be able, by myself to get. But for her, knowing the English, knowing the French, they recognize right away that she was of a different class. The English respect the class very much, so you know, they were conscious, and they saw it right away. And then I took advant – and I made a lot of friends. In life, I made a lot of friends. I tell you like in **Karachi**, we were – there was a club for British soldiers and diving and everything. I got to know the Canadian fellow who

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was running. We used to steal Indian boats and go sailing, the two of us together. And then we'd steal cookies and everything. And one time, maybe I told you that, I told in Polish school that I take some boys, and they went with me over there. So in Polish school they didn't like me because I was go-going to this, to – in the school.

Q: Cause you were miss – yeah.

A: So they loaded a bus or truck of children and they went over there, and they told that we let them into that club. Of course, they threw them out. But the guys with me came, and they could swim and eat and everything, because I knew this fellow. You know, so I made contact. I told you in American Red Cross I made contacts with those soldiers, and I have everything. So I always had some money, you know, for these things. Then I ran photography, and I started making money on photography. You constantly had to figure out something. When I came to **America** I had no money, so I took a course in radio and television, I started learning how to do. And you know, and then I didn't finish it because I went to **Korea**. But I le – I learned so much about electricity that – you have to ask people, and you have to talk to people so much, because you learn something from everybody. Everybody teaches you something. Sickneses. If you sick, learn from them what are the symptoms, what you have and everything, so you know, and you can tell somebody too, and you can help, you know. You cannot rely always on a

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doctor only, because s-sometimes you know you have to know a lot of things, and the more you can learn in life, the better for you in life. And I think that's what interests me. The – only now, I have the seat [indecipherable] and I cannot do anything, and I say, and I –

Q: Well, you di – you've done something amazing. You have – you have told us about your story, and it is a multi-fascinated – faceted, fascinating story, and it's a true gift to give to us. So I thank you for it.

A: Okay. W-Wait, I'll go and bring you some pizza.

Q: Wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. I have to formally end. This ends the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. stan – **Stanley Kiersnowski** on June 20th, 2014. Thank you, again.

A: Thank you, thank you.

Q: All right.

End of File Two

Conclusion of Interview

Interview with Stanley Kiersnowski
June 20, 2014