

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Adam Starkopf
June 14, 1999
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audio taped interview with Adam Starkopf, conducted by Gary Covino on June 14, 1999 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Deerfield, Illinois and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

Interview with Adam Starkopf
June 14, 1999

Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: -- Holocaust Memorial Museum, Jeff and Toby Herr collection. This is an interview with Adam Starkopf, conducted by Gary Covino, on June 14th, 1999, in Deerfield, Illinois. This is a follow up interview to a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum videotaped interview conducted with Adam Starkopf, on May 24th, 1990. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum gratefully acknowledges Jeff and Toby Herr for making this interview possible. This is tape number one, side A. Could you just start by saying your name and where we are today?

Answer: Yeah, yes, okay. It's -- My name is Adam Starkopf. I was born, raised, and educated in Warsaw, Poland, also the capital of Poland. And my parents -- I had one brother, four years older. I was born in 1914, he was born in 1910. My parents were -- not because I am their son -- their son, but the most wonderful people, but my mother was not very well in the last years before the war, didn't feel good in general, had high blood pressure, you know. We used to think that she's a very old woman, in those days she was only 54, or 53, you know, at the -- in the war. Anyway, I was married after graduating Warsaw University. I was 22 years old when I was married, in 1936. My wife was [indecipherable] Warsaw University [indecipherable] she was -- she was my age. And so, you can imagine we were married in 1936. Actually now, May 31st would be 63 years. My wife died March eight. Now, when the war broke out, September first, 1939, and the

Germans, you know, Nazi Germany attacked Poland, they were bombing Poland day and night. I was that time 25 years old already, and my wife, because we were married three years before the war, in 1936. And actually, it was such a sudden war, you know, they called it a blitzkrieg, you know, that's [indecipherable] nobody expected it. And there I was expected, you know, I was expecting to be recruited into the army. Now, unfortunately, the Polish government, the army, they didn't have not only enough uniforms to -- for recruiting young people with military age, but they also didn't have even -- they didn't have any arms, and few days after the war started, in the beginning of September, the Polish government, including the president, escaped to Romania, was neighboring -- neighboring with Poland. But, on September -- September the fourth, over the radios, there were announcements that all military age men should leave Warsaw, and recruit in a certain city near the Russian border, in the eastern part -- eastern part of Poland. And it was about 120 miles away from Warsaw, and we should walk, you know, and report there [indecipherable]. Now, we were day and na -- na -- two nights were discussing this with, you know, my -- my in-laws, and my parents, and my -- now wa -- a-and we decided, you know, with my neighbors Warsaw, and we decided that I -- I said, "I have to fight them. Wi -- I have to leave." And I -- September the sixth, 1939, six days after the war started, I left at five o'clock in the morning, my wife, my mother prepared me few things to take with me only, you know, to carry. And I left at -- they walk with me to the -- to the end of, you know, the near -- actually walk

over with me, you know, all the way up to the -- we have a river [indecipherable] divided at -- suburb of Warsaw. So they walk with me up to that suburb, you see? And then -- And then I just embraced them, and sa -- my wife was crying, my -- my wife was crying, my mother tried to feel -- make her feel better, tried to smile, you know, he will be okay. And they walk away. And when I looked back after them, I saw how my wife, you know, gently taking [indecipherable] bracing my wife, and walking away. Now, what can I tell you? The walking was undescrivable, the marching to the highways. They were bombing -- the planes were over our heads, almost. And so far the not -- even from machine guns, they were, you know, sh-shooting to the -- there was a lot of people, you know, thou -- hundreds, and hundreds, and hundreds of people, and -- and some vans with ho-horses. Anyway, we were running away from the highways into the field houses, you know, trying to escape from it. It took us over nine days to walk this 115 - 117 miles, can you imagine? Now I, not far already from theles city, I was wounded. A piece of shrapnel from one of the bombs hit my f -- right foot. And in the field, you know, there was some, you know pe -- pe -- not ambulances, but there was some still f -- y-you know, army pl -- da -- vents, and so on. Anyway, they cut off in the -- without anesthetic, my toe had to be chopped off in my right foot, and I had only four toes, and that hole, like, you know, in my foot -- in the right foot.

Q: Wh-Which toe did they cut off?

A: The -- The se -- The second toe, like this. The second from the -- the right toe from the -- from the large toe, the second toe. But it didn't mean a thing to me, you know, and I just -- I was pretty strong to -- to take it, and we walked farther, and we came to a city of Kleck, K-l-e-c-k-, and this city was very close to the Russian border. And the first night, we were sleeping in a very clean barn. It was the -- really the first night that we peacefully could sleep, of course, in our clothes, you know, torn clothes, whatever it was. Well, you know they -- when they cut off my toe, you know, they took a piece of my shirt, you know, cut off for band -- to bandage it. And then we -- So -- But when we sleep in there, we woke up at five o'clock in the morning. We heard some noises outside, you know, tanks coming, trucks, and so on. We ran out, the Russian army was coming in. Now, I want you also to mention that some of the boys that left from our building, my age, some were much younger even, together with me, some of them went back. They couldn't -- you know, they just said -- decided no, we will not make it. And because a lot of the -- were killed people too, you know, on the highways. So they said we -- they -- we'll go back, and they left us. And the -- I went with just few that I knew. Anyway -- And this was the Russian army. You -- You know about the problems that in -- in that time actually. I thought it [indecipherable] when I saw the Russian, you know, th-the -- the Russian trucks and tanks, I was happy, first I thought they come as our allies. But then I found out that they are allies of Germany, and they divided to this -- to this -- to -- they decided with -- you know Stalin and Hitler signed a non-aggression pact, you see.

And what they did, they divided Poland into two zones. The western part of Poland occupied by Germany, and the eastern part of Poland was occupied by -- by Russia, Soviet Russia.

Q: But you didn't know about the pact between Hitler and Stalin before this, huh?

A: Before I didn't know nothing, but I found out there. Yeah -- No, before I nothing -- it's never [indecipherable] to the country, I thought that it will be now close to the Russian border, even if we'll not be recruited, at least we'll be safer there. Anyway, I, as a young boy I remember it even that once you are under Russian occupation, or something, it's not easy to get away from this country. So, I was scared that I will not be able to see my family again, so I decided to escape from there. And I perf -- I met a Polish peasant, you know, who had the rowboat, because the divided -- now, the division between -- th-the border between the eastern and -- and the -- and the western part of Poland, was the river Bug, B-u-g. Bouk, we pronounce it in Polish, and -- you see. So anyway, I decided to escape, I -- I didn't have money enough, I gave him my watch -- to the peasant, and for this he took me in a rowboat over the river, and we somehow were able to omit, you know, the border patrols, the Russian and German border patrol, and I took a train back to Warsaw. And when I arrive in Warsaw, I can tell you one thing, I was just amazed, because I -- I hardly could -- could recognize it, you know, some building, they're so completely you know already, you know [indecipherable] and in German, cars and trucks and Germans, all over, all over everywhere. I was running towards our

building and it -- it's a miracle how our building was not destroyed, in one piece, and I met the janitor of our building. It was a four story building. In those days, you know, in Poland, not like here, you know sky -- you know sky rise buildings, this -- the -- the tall rise building was seven story building. And anyway, I met the janitor, ask him how -- in the -- right at the gate, "Tell me, how -- how is my family, how"-- "Oh, everybody except your mother, your mother is dead." I was shocked, and I run upstairs, you know, we had no elevator, you know run upstairs to the third floor, open the door, you could see my wife, my parents, and my in-laws, were very happy to -- to see me, and crying, told me what happened. You see, during the bombing of Warsaw, everyone was instructed to run into -- you know, the buildings had cellars, you see? So everybody was running down into the cellars to avoid the bombs, you see?, and she was there, my mother, one night when they were bombing Warsaw. And some of the boys that left with us, and came back, they were say -- telling people that oh, we're so glad that we came back because none of the others, probably, is alive. And my mother turned in to my wife, and my father, and said, "Oh my God, if Adam is not alive, I will not live." And she got a stroke, right there. She got high -- very high blood pressure, you know, yungbe -- even before the war. And she got right there, in the -- and that's how I found out that she died. Now, I also didn't mention my -- to you -- my wife had parents, father and mother, and a brother. The brother was only 19 years old, graduated Warsaw. He graduated Hebrew high

school, you know, and just was going the first year to the university. Very bright, very nice, handsome boy. Now, what my wife did, you see --

Q: Let me just -- Let me just stop for a second, ask you a couple of questions, if that's okay.

A: Yeah, oh yeah.

Q: Because we're interested in getting a little more of your family backgrounds.

A: Yeah.

Q: So, we'll pick up the story, but let's go back to before the war.

A: Okay.

Q: Yeah. Could you tell me -- you mentioned your brother?

A: Yeah.

Q: Could you tell me his name? Was he --

A: Yeah.

Q: W -- Did you have any other brothers or sisters, or that was --

A: Never, just one brother. Now, you see, my family was -- let me put it this way, my wife's family was very religious. Not Orthodox, but they were religious, observing, you know, and so far that my mother-in-law wouldn't ride a streetcar on Saturdays even, you know what I mean. They were religious. They were not fanatics, but you know, they were very relig -- my family was on the Conservative side, but they were very Zionist, always thinking about Palestine, you know, and so on, and my brother, too. Now, my

brother wanted very badly to go to Palestine, and in 1933, the British -- you know, when the British occupied Palestine, they wouldn't [indecipherable] and that was [indecipherable] to get the entry visa. He organized, in 1933, a -- in Warsaw was a Zion - - Jewish support organization, they call it Maccabi, M-a-c-c-a-b-i, Maccabi. And this organization -- you know, he organized a motorcycle trip in 1933, Warsaw, Tel-Aviv, Warsaw, that they will go there, you know, for sporting goods -- events, and they got visas. There was 12 men on motorcycles, you see? Some of them in double, you know? And they left in 1933 from Warsaw, took them almost three months to travel, and they were there -- arrived there -- I have pictures that I can later give you, and to show you, you know, of th -- then -- [indecipherable] from a newspaper that I got, that I took it over. Now, anyway, he remained in -- of course he was in Palestine, he was -- all the time, and then he joined the underground for -- you know, organization they call the Hagannah, and all -- was fighting there. And they why he -- until -- he was there all the time, and when Israel was established in 1948, of course, he was there already, you know, and he got married there, he got children, and so on. He had two -- two daughters, and had grandchildren, too.

Q: What was his name?

A: His name was Henry Starkopf.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: The same name.

Q: When he went on this trip -- on this motorcycle trip --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- did he know in advance that the whole point of this was for him not to come back?

Was this his gimmick?

A: Onl-Only for this reason, yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: That's why he organized it.

Q: Did all the other people on the trip stay?

A: Yeah, everyone, yeah. This was a group of all the people, -- you know, all his friends that were all Zionists, you see, and they -- they -- that's -- they decided this way they would remain there. And of course, he was hoping that in the future, maybe there will be the thing -- you know changing like [indecipherable] Zionist, and then maybe the family will come there, and so on, you know? But he didn't na -- come over -- he didn't -- that was only the purpose, to go -- but they -- be -- you know, for the British, you know, because of the visas to receive, they mark it down that this is only Warsaw, Tel-Aviv, Warsaw, go back. But none of -- they went underground. None of them -- all -- not officially, you know, they couldn't remain there. They were underground, all of them.

Q: What -- Before he went on the trip --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- so he has this planned, to do this?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Did he ask you parents permission? Did you talk about it in the family?

A: N-No. We discuss it, of course, but you know, my parent didn't oppose it. You know, he was that time, in 1933, he was -- he bor -- he was born in 1910, I in 1914. He was 23 years old, you know, and also very educated boy, and -- but that's was his dream, you know, he was a very Zion -- you know, Zionist, you know, and so on. So that's who I -- he decided, you know, to -- to do it. Now, my -- my wife's br-brother, who was 19 years old already, you know, was Zio-Zionist -- always was dreaming also about Palestine. So what my wife did, you see, when I left that -- that night, the sixth of September, she went -- next day she went to her parents, and she said, "Look, A-Adam went in because he want to be recruited and fight, you know, th-the Germans. I think you," -- his na -- my bro -- her ga -- her brother's name was Ben -- Benjamin, you -- Ben. She said, "I think Ben, maybe you should do the same thing. Go with Adam, maybe you'll be recruited." And he left with another man -- with another young friend, whose family was also living in our building, happened to be, and they relatives in that particular town, in eastern part of Poland, also. The town Rowne, R-o-w-n-e, but the o was the -- like a comma above it, tas -- in Polish, you know, they call it u, like u, Rowne. Now, anyway, now I will tell you , because it was [indecipherable] very unusual thing, you see. So anyway, we -- when I came back, and her parent -- my -- I found out about my mother, and her parents were, you know, sh-shocked, and what happened to Ben, you know, where is Ben? How --

Maybe you can --. So I told them, "Look, I know the people, the family of this boy that went with them together. So don't worry. We will go there, we will tr -- go through the -- you know [indecipherable] and we'll see what we can -- you know, to -- to the border we'd smuggle through, and see we can find him." And my wife with me together, we left Warsaw, and we found some peasants, you know, that also took us, you know, through the -- all kinds of places where, you know, wasn't so easy to get through. It's a very long story, you know, I -- I wrote about it in the book. Anyway, and -- but I -- yeah, I have to mention to you that together with us, also, my wife has a girlfriend that was in school with her together, and she married a young man who was with us in school, too, but he studied medicine, he was a young doctor. And we escaped together -- I mean, not escape, went together, you know, and they decided to go all together, to -- not to be, you know, they wanted to escape from Warsaw. So they joined us, and we left together, pola -- Warsaw. And when we went -- were going to that particular city that I told you that the relatives of this boyfriend that went together with my brother-in-law, I found out that -- you know, I had the address, and in order to go to Rowne, I had to go through certain town, you know, where with -- it has there -- my friend said, "I would like to s -- as long as we're passing by this town, I want to take," -- you know, it wasn't a taxi they took, you know, how you call it, you know, with a horse, you know?

Q: Like a carriage?

A: A carriage. [indecipherable] A carriage with a -- you know? And we went to the hospital to find out how -- you know, how he can get a, let's say, position in the hospital. He wanted to get some information. So after he got the information, I said, "Now let's go take the train, and we'll go to the -- to the boyfriend's family, find out where they are." And we took the train from there, and went to the city where they supposed to, you know, meet the fa -- the family's supposed to be there, of this boyfriend. And over there, when he saw the boyfriend was there, oh, he's -- good to see you, now what happened? I said, "Where is Ben?" He said, "I tell you where is Ben." Ben, on the way, he got -- he got sick, and he -- and he got sick and he develop typhus fever, and he's in the hospital in Koval, in -- in the town that we were in the hospital. We were there, can you imagine? I said, "Oh my God, what -- what a coincidence. And I was there with my friend, and he was in that hospital." I said, "We going there -- back right now." So I left my wife, you know, we were in the other town there, and I and he took a train and went back to the hospital. And we -- when we came to the hospital, went right away to the office, and I ask, I am so and so -- you know, my name, "I am looking for Ben Miller." The whole -- maiden name was Miller, Ben Miller. And said, "Oh, my God, how fortunate. He died half an hour ago." They told me. His heart failed, and he couldn't make it. You can imagine how I -- but, I said, "Let's make it sure. I want to see the body." So they took me to the morgue downstairs. I look at him like a -- like a skeleton [indecipherable] recognize him, and they brought me his little belongings, I mean nothing, what -- he had

there nothing [indecipherable], but they ha -- he had a ring that my mother-in-law gave him, her wedding ring. She said, "Look, this is a gold wedding ring, in case if you need to exchange it for bread, you know, give it." This of -- That's the reason she gave him the ring, for -- you know, if you need it, it's to pay for bread or something, give it this. Anyway, and they gave me this thing, can you imagine? Now, what I did, because he was a Zionist, I told his fr -- the friend that -- that was alive, I said, "Listen, you write a letter to us." I told him where it would be there, in that part of let -- another town with my wife. Write a letter and tell that all -- that he is so sorry that he -- we missed Ben, but Ben smuggled himself through the border to Romania, from there he intends to go to Palestine. And he wrote the letter to us, you know? I set up the letter, you know, not to tell my wife about it.

Q: Mm.

A: Now, but, in Polish language, when you wrote the letter -- when you wrote about someone that he died, you write always capit -- let's say if you write he -- he died, you write capital he, you see?

Q: Hm. Both letters --

A: Just --

Q: -- capital, or just the first letter?

A: No, just the first letter, you know, just the first l --

Q: Uh-huh. So if someone is dead --

A: -- yeah, I -- in other words, a -- it's a -- you have to write -- you know, if a -- it's a -- after the whole -- the whole -- not the sentence, but the word d -- d -- in capitals, you know. And he -- he did it, he didn't realize it, probably. And my wife --

Q: He -- He did what, he --

A: He wrote -- He wrote the letter --

Q: And so he made it with the capital on it?

A: -- and -- and -- and well something about he was in -- in capital letters. And in the beginning my wife didn't pay attention, but later on, she said, "Oh, you know what? Tell me the truth." And that's how I had to tell her. So we decided to bring back -- to come -- to go back. We went back again to -- to -- again through the borders, you know? And I was describing in my book how the weather was in January, 1940. It was -- I'm sorry, it was December, and you know -- 1939, and the snow was up to our knees. But anyway, we walked all the time through, and we came back to Warsaw. And then, of course, we told my in-laws and my father, that he is probably on the way to Palestine. And even -- They never, until the day that they went to the concentration camp, they never knew that he is -- you know, that he is dead. Now -- And then, we're supposed to settle, you know, whatever it was, you know, to settle down, you know, under the conditions there were in Warsaw. But, in 1940 -- this was -- I -- s -- I told you there was [indiscipherable] 1939. In 1940, Hitler decided in order to lift -- lift -- see, they used to have the conferences in Germany, I understood -- I found out, and they decided to annihilate all the Jews from the

wer -- western Europe. Now, you know that to have a very easy access to those people, he had to concentrate it, you see, in certain spots. So, he established ghettos, and in s -- in Warsaw, which was the capital of Poland, was the largest ghetto. Now, what he did, you see, he took wat section of Warsaw, and any person -- and ki -- family that was not Jewish, they were forced to move out from there, but they were allowed to take all their belongings, everything. Now, Jewish people that lived out of that section, were forced to get into that ghetto section, but they were not allowed to carry nothing with them, just the way they were standing. And we were forced, those people that happened to live in that ar-area, like -- like we, and my in-laws, everyone was forced to take several people into the apartments. Like, let's say i -- on the average apartment was two bedroom apartment, one bedroom apartment, they had to have at least six more people, seven people, to take everybody. There were rations, one and a kilogra -- one and a half kilogram of bread every [indecipherable] day, and so on, for a family, and it was terrible. Now, what happened, they built a wall between 10 - 11 feet high w -- brick walls around the ghetto, and on top of the wall there were barb wires, you know, cemented into the top of the wall, of the brick wall, so people couldn't jump over it, you know. And there were ghettos, there were several ghettos -- several gates in the ghetto, and they were guarded by the Gestapo, which is the -- the Nazi military police. Now, we -- what I was doing, try just to help my father, my in-laws, and my wife, I looked like a typical Polish guy when I was young. I was blonde, you know, blue eye. I looked like a very good Polish boy.

Yeah, there was an ordinance that time, in -- in Warsaw, that every Jewish person has to wear a white arm band, on his right arm, with a Jewish star of David, from material, you know, piece of material. Anyone that caught without it, would be shot right away, or imprisoned. Now, what I was doing, I had some connections with the i -- with some Polish friends on the other side of Warsaw ghetto, so I was -- I got a spot in one of the -- spot far away from the -- from the gates. You see, I was pulling out -- I broke some few bricks, taking off my arm band, I smuggled out myself into the other side, where I could bring a little bit some better nourishment for my family. Then, in 1940, in May, my wife walk over to me, crying. "Adam, you will not believe me, I am pregnant." Now, I have to mention to you -- you -- you know -- you know, I'm told you before, we're married three years before the war, and like more parents, you know, her parents, my parents were dreaming about a grandchild, but we were told that my wife can never have children. Some -- You know, some woman that -- she can never have children. The doctors were -- to-told us, many doctors. Because for three year -- three years before the war -- it was already almost three and a half years, you know, and there I would never bring a child, with my wife, into a world like this. But, knowing that she never can have children, you know, that is different story. So, anyway, we decided we wanted to have abortion. We want to do something not to bring the child, but in those days you listened to your parents, you know, even if you were married. And my in-laws, and my father said oh no, you have to have a child, and you -- every child has -- anyway, in 1941 in January, my --

the child was born on a table like this table, a wooden table, you know? And without a doctor's help, just a neighbor helped to deliver her. And my wife was very sick also that time, had all kind of other sicknesses, you know. But anyway, she delivered a little baby girl. And I somehow -- what I saw what they were doing to chil --

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Adam Starkopf. This is tape number one, side B.

A: -- you listened to your parents, you know, even if you were married. And my in-laws, and my father said oh no, you have to have a child, and you -- every child has -- anyway, in 1941 in January, my -- the child was born on a table like this table, a wooden table, you know? And without a doctor's help, just a neighbor helped to deliver her. And my wife was very sick also that time, had all kind of other sicknesses, you know. But anyway, she delivered a little baby girl. And I somehow -- what I saw what they were doing to children in ghetto, I p-p-pledged that I would see to it that they wouldn't put a finger on this child. You know, just I -- I'll do everything. And then, what started, you know, I was going back and out, you know, for the child also bring a little milk, or something, to feed her, you know, and -- and in -- I was caught by [indecipherable] on the way back, I was caught by the Gestapo, and I was imprisoned, and you know, the conditions in those prisons that time were terrible, of course. You had to -- Now, not a

single criminal in Warsaw ghetto was in prison. Doctors, lawyers, accountants, you know, business people, but all Jewish people were in prison. Now, my father met a Polish policeman, of German descent. You see, there were just like in United States, somebody may be American citizen that has grandfather or great-grandfather was German. So, they call it [indecipherable] of German descent. We had this man of German descent, and he found out that he had some connection. He all -- called up to him, he said, "Look, I don't have any cash, but we have a beautiful bedroom set in hiding by Polish friends, that we gave the set to our children when they were married. We will give you the bedroom set if you to -- see to it to release me from prison. And he did. But he work out, you know. It was a deal that he -- he -- he -- he knew probably somebody there. Anyway, they release me from the prison, and we -- when I came back, of course how happy they were, but later again, at night, they came and they took me back. Now, what he did, undoubted -- that's -- that's the way we -- we assumed they -- I'm sure, he probably told them, "Look, I can get my bedroom set if you let him out. Later, you ca -- any time you want to, you can get him back." They came at night, at -- at -- at our apartment, knock at the door, and took me back to prison. I was in prison that time, let me tell you this way, 26 men in one cell. You can't imagine the conditions. In the morning, at five o'clock, the door would open, the two German Gestapo men, with the German Shepherd. When they were pointing a finger at one of the prisoners, s -- and say Juda, which means in German language Jew, the German Shepherd was trained to jump at this Juda, you know, and to

tear him apart. Every second cell they were like this, every second, they open, you know, and they were killing, like murdering three or four ki -- men, and then later replacing them, so always 26. But then, this was already 1942, and I found a -- i-i -- in -- in -- in June, I found out that they liquidate -- liquidating the Warsaw ghetto. Liquidating it means they are going to take the people into concentration camp. Now, in order to have again access to all those people, they surrounded first old age homes, nursing homes, hospitals, some orphanages, or whatever, you know, they got children in, and also prisoners. Anyone in relatively good health was taken -- loaded into trucks, taken to the cattle cars, -- you know, trains, and taken to the concentration camp, Treblinka concentration camp was -- I call the destruction camp, was about 80 or 90 miles away from Warsaw. 1,000,000 Jews were ki -- destroyed there. Now, anyone that was -- let's say children, or teenagers, or people older that were not, you know, in -- in the best health, they were taking to Jewish cemetery, which was outside of the Warsaw ghetto, was too big to be in ghetto, and they were executed there, and thrown into mass graves. The mass graves that time, had approximately 300 - 350 bodies, each grave. And the -- Some of the children were half -- not yet dead after they shoot, you know, or a little breathing, or so, they still were thrown into the graves. Now, when they surrounded the prison, we're all -- open the doors, wi -- every one of us had to go down to the courtyard, you know, out and loaded -- tol -- they would load us into the trucks. And there was tremendous chaos als-also that time, there was just hundreds and hundreds, you know, of

the -- anyway, I was able to escape from the prison, together with few other men. We had no prison uniforms, just to -- you know, just old clothes to -- I ran home, you can imagine how my wife, and my parents, and in-laws, how they saw me. My father, [indecipherable] my in-laws, how they saw me, how happy they were. And I told them, look, what they were doing to children, what I saw, and so on, I -- you are not go -- I -- I am going to do -- work out something. I had connections with some people from the Polish underground. I work out forged documents that were Polish people. My wife, the baby and I are Roman Catholics. She also was blonde, looks like Polish. And the -- the -- the ka -- you know, the documents that we had, the forged documents, the stamp, swastika, I took a potato, a regular potato, cut out the potato, made a stamp out of it, you know? To make the first -- the swastika pi -- stamp. And that's was our document. If they would look closely, that -- at it, they probably would realize, but you know, ju-just to have it. Anyway, and I arrange an escape, how I arrange the escape. Our child was that time -- this was -- we planned everything, after everything was organized, I planned, you know, the place, far -- to far -- about seven -- 80 miles away from Warsaws, everything. It took us, you know, close, you know, all t-the June and July. And I plan, on July 31st, 1942, I plan the escape. Now, a friend of mine, a young doctor that was there also wun, he injected her, put her to sleep, the baby. She was about one and a half years old at the time.

Q: Do you know what he gave her?

A: Injection, to put to sleep.

Q: But you don't know what it was?

A: No, I wouldn't know, and I didn't care. He said, "I will put her to sleep." So he injected her, put her to sleep. We put her in a casket. My wife -- Men couldn't do it, men couldn't be -- wouldn't be allowed to follow. My wife followed the funeral -- I mean, funeral, it was just a van with the horse, you know, and the horseman, and the -- and -- and the casket on top. She put on a piece of black material, she put on [indecipherable] on her head, and she walk aw -- and she went through. When she went -- came to the gate, the Gestapo gate, they wanted she -- they sh -- that they -- the horseman should open the ga -- the casket, to see, maybe some smuggling going on, or something. But my wife said to -- to the man, that she died from typhus fever. You see, in -- in ghetto, because of the conditions, very bad con -- the -- thousands and thousands of people died from typhus fever. So my wife said -- and so here -- wu -- th-those -- those be -- they were like, you know, th-they were very brave with harmless people, with children, with it, but they were scared of -- to death of contagious diseases, so he moved away from it, from the casket, and she went through to the cemetery. The gravediggers wanted to pick up the baby, throw in the mass grave. My wife screamed out, "She's alive, don't touch her." They can't believe their eyes, they couldn't believe it. But you see, here again, I thought everything in advance. On Jewish cemeteries, in Poland, on Jewi -- only Jewish gravediggers were working. Not others, like here, let's say or so, you see? So, like here,

when my wife was buried, in Shalom Memorial Park, here in Chicago, you know, in the suburb of Chicago, three months ago, you know, there were not -- not Jewish gravediggers. Now, we got [indecipherable] they -- I wasn't afraid of any betrayal. So they -- anyway, they took out the baby, with my wife, and they too -- put them in a room, where before the war they used to wash the bodies, prepare for regular, you know, burials, you know, normal funerals, and they were waiting for me over there. In the evening, I again, like always, slipped out to the other side, and I went to the cemetery, met her at close to 10 o'clock in the evening, with the baby. Now, with -- you see, the Jewish cemetery had -- they were -- adjoining Polish cemetery, and Tartar cemetery, there were brick walls in between. I made -- work out with the Tartar cemetery -- Tartar cemetery -- cemetery, the caretaker that I will knock at the wall with a stone, and he will drop a stepladder, and we will go on the other side, and we gave him something for it, you know. And would go out, and we'll be on the other -- and then we'll escape. And I knock at the wall with a stone, he let out the stepladder, went on the other side, and took a streetcar to a place where we slept the first night -- nobody would suspect that we are such, you know, idiots. We slept in a building where -- si -- there was -- the building was, I think, six or seven story, I don't remember, but up to the third floor, there was Gestapo po -- railroad police, above the regular apartments. And we slept there one night. The man that wa -- he was a member of Polish underground, but he didn't know that we are Jewish, and we slept the first night there. In the morning we took a train, at seven

o'clock, six o'clock in the morning, a train, and this was -- I prepared a place, about 75 - 80 miles away from Warsaw, where I would -- there was a lumber yard. I would work in the lumber yard as a laborer there, and then, my wife with the baby would be there, I would took a room, and --from a peasant -- p -- the pe -- the Polish peasants, the tiny little room, you know, with the w -- iron stove -- stove with the pipe, and it -- one bed. Three of us would sleep in the one bed. Now, it's a -- it's a -- a wooden -- you know, s-story -- it's a one story house, small. Now, I prepared there a very ground -- very deep cellar for my father and my in-laws, they could not be in the open, you know, as Gentile people. So I prepared a -- a spot, a very low do -- very deep cellar. They would be, during the day, in the cellar there, in hiding. At night, we'd take them out, feed them, and they would go back to the cellar. And after three days, I went to get my father and my in-laws. After three days, when I came there, unfortunately, was fire, and most of the buildings were on the fire, I couldn't get even to our building. And my father and my in-laws were taken away into a concentration camp. So actually, none from our families, both families, nobody alive.

Q: Let me -- Let me just stop you here for a second --

A: Yeah, yes, yes, yes.

Q: -- to go back and, actually I want to check one thing. If I can ask, I just wanted to go back and make sure we got --

A: Yes, yeah, yeah.

Q: -- on the record, the names of your parents, and what type of work did they do, and their background --

A: Before? Before the war you mean?

Q: -- that all be -- all before the war, yeah.

A: My father was a businessman. My wife [indecipherable] in those days, wives didn't work.

Q: Yeah.

A: My father was a businessman.

Q: What was his name?

A: Max Starkopf. And my wife -- my mother was Mary, but you know, in Polish Mary parts -- you know, that's -- in Jewish Miriam, but you know, it's still Mary Starkopf. And my in-laws, mil -- their last name was Miller, and my father-in-law was Aaron, A-a-r-o-n. And my wi -- my -- his wife was the same as my wife -- as my mother, the same names, the first name.

Q: Mm-hm. And what -- what kind of business did your father have?

A: My father?

Q: Yeah, what kind of business?

A: He was in business, he was, you know, have leather -- leather goods place, and he was representing some companies, also, you know. He was traveling a lot, this kind of

[indecipherable]. We were not -- let's put it this way, we were not poor people, not very rich people, average families, but nice families, we got nice comfortable life and so on.

Q: Did you have much when you were young?

A: Yeah.

Q: You know, way before the war? Did you have much contact with Polish people who were not Jews, or did the Jews pretty much stay with each other?

A: I had contact, I had, because when I was s -- in high school, there were Polish boys together with me too, we got a lot of friends, and you know, so -- and we were, you know, there was always a little anti-Semitism there too, you probably heard about it, but we -- we were never, you know, affected by it, you know, in general. But I would -- if you want to know, there were look tha -- like all over the world, there all kind of people, you see of the same na -- the same nationality even, you know. And [indecipherable] religion, [indecipherable] look, there were some Polish people, there's -- you see, there was an ordinance, that anyone that is hiding a Jew, if the Ge-Germans will find it, they would be executed together with the Jews, the whole family. There were some, they were risking their lives. There was a pro -- a Dr. Chizevitch in Warsaw. He, in his apartment, broke a wall to other room, and put an artificial wall, they build special artificial wall that wouldn't recognize it's another room, you know? And had a special way he made it. And he was hiding the dean of the medical school, Jewish Dr. Beck, B-e-c-k, and his wife and two children. And he saved their lives. Now, you can imagine he was in that room in his

apartment. If they would -- he risking -- he was risking his life, and he was risking you know, th-the -- the whole family's life. And yet, he did it. And there were many like this. There was one Polish -- a younger man with a wife, they got no children, he was hiding, there was a somew -- not far from Warsaw, in a little town, they was hiding in the attic six people, family, grandmother and so on, six people. But there wa -- th-there was -- it came to a point that already, you know, they run out of money, also, p-pay them to, the wife of this man said, "Look, no use to risk any more our life, let's give them up." He took out a gun, he said, "If you give them up, I kill you, then myself, but I will never give them up." And he saved them. Later I -- after the war, I saw to it that he got a big job in the government. But, you see, there was some like this, many, many like this. But yet, there were -- yo -- I told you about this doctor, the Jewish doctor, my friend that we escaped together with th -- when -- that he went to the hospital to get the job? You remember I told you that he was in the -- what my brother-in-law died. Now they settled here with his wife in a town in -- in eastern part of Poland, and there was a Polish boy, 17 or 16 years old, the son of a Polish peasant, who was very sick and needed an operation. He operated on, and he saved his life. And the father of this boy called the Gestapo, here is a Jewish doctor, pretends to be Polish. You -- You -- But this -- those are not human beings, you can't b -- you can't blame all the Polish people for it, because there are all kind of people in this world, you see what I mean? But th -- so I am not this kind of a person that I would sc -- you know, blame a fr -- it was just individua -- individual thing,

there were all kind. I would say the intelligent people, and not only I mean educated, but th -- illiterate intelligent people, Polish people, they couldn't help maybe, but they would never do a thing like this. But those who were illiterate peasants, you know, illiterate people, th-they were -- they were dangerous. But otherwise, not. But anyway, now you had more question, or --

Q: Well, yeah, I -- I'm also wondering, you -- you talked earlier about -- also I should just say here in passing, that a lot of what we're talking about, and the stories, and you saving your daughter, and all that --

A: Yeah.

Q: If people want more detail on all that --

A: Yes.

Q: -- those are in your --

A: I come to it.

Q: -- they're in your video interview --

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: -- which is on file at the Holocaust museum --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- so there's more information there, for people who want to look. And also in your book.

A: Yeah.

Q: But I -- I did want to ask you this, because I was wondering one thing.

A: Yeah.

Q: When the war started, and then when you made that walk, you were going to go enlist to fight.

A: Yeah, y-yeah.

Q: I'm wondering, did you think much, what were you fighting as? Were you -- Did you go because you considered yourself a Pole, and you wanted to defend Poland? Or you wanted to fight the Germans beca -- did you know what the Germans were doing with the Jews? How did you --

A: No, no, no, no, no. I heard about it, already, but I was -- no, I was going there -- there to -- to defend Poland, yeah. That was my normal idea, to defend Poland, of course. This was the idea. But, you know -- any other question, and then I'll tell you -- shall I go on?

Q: Well, so you con -- you considered yourself a Pole, then?

A: Yeah, actually, I -- yeah, I was, but you know, even -- we -- as I told you, we were Zionists, we were [indecipherable] but we're not fanatics, you know, and -- normal people. And, later on, when we were on Polish papers, you see, and we live -- I work in a lumber yard. I work in a lumber yard -- you want me to go on?

Q: Yeah, sure.

A: So, you know, anyway, when I came t -- first of all, when I came back, I found out that my in-laws, and my father, you know, were taken to concentration camp. I told you I

went there to get them, I came back, told my -- I had to tell my wife about it. You can fi -
- riz -- realize how she felt about it, but we decided one thing, we're going to live for no
other reason, to save the child. Do everything in our power to save the child, both of us.
And we did it, we worked. My wife was going every week to church on Sundays. At
night, in the evening, before we're going to sleep you know, she used to, very loud at the
wall, pray for the night, so the neighbor, you know, the one that we ri -- renting the room
from, she would hear it, you see? And that's -- nobody would suspect us, you see, that we
are Jewish. And, of course, we were raising the child, and we were very, very poor that --
I mean, I was working, I was getting rations in the lumber yard, as a laborer, nothing. But
that was -- we were going through all kind of different times, and I also had to watch, you
see, very carefully, you know, that shouldn't sometime recognize, or something like this.
There was one -- one boy that was a clerk there, not a laborer like I, was v -- 18 years old.
Very delicate, very gentle, good looking, and a blonde boy, and he always
[indecipherable] he saw me to -- picking up a big piece of lumber, let's say, you know, to
put away, he said, "Mr. Podalski," -- I was already in comparison old man, I was in my --
you know, 20's, he said, "Let me help you." And I said to my wife many times when I
was coming to the -- where I -- walking distance from the lumber yard, I said, "You
know, there is working one boy, I am very suspicious about him, he is too delicate, he is
too gentle. He's ats -- I don't know, he's not an average," you know. And I want -- I said,
"I'm going to find out." And I walk over one day to him, I said, "Look, Wally, how about

to go with me Sunday to the church?" I didn't go like my wife was going, I didn't, but you know, I said Sunday to the church. He says, "Okay, why not?" And the church was about three kilometers away from the lumberyard, you have to walk on the highways, and on bo -- on the highway, on both sides of the highway were forests -- woods were. I walked with him, I said to him, "You know, Wally," -- in Polish, of course, "what would -- wis t -- what should we do if some Jewish people were hiding in the woods, would run out and attack us?" He said, "Mr. Podalski, I don't think there are any, but if they are, they are happy they will li -- that they are left alone. They're trying to be in hiding. They wouldn't torture, they wouldn't hurt us." I said, "Wally, I am Jewish, how about are you?" And he embraced me, he started to cry, the boy. He was Jewish, too. He was [indecipherable]. I wri -- I wrote about him, and that whole story, in my book, you know. So, you know, he was Jewish, too, he was killed later. Anyway, we -- so we had all kind our tol -- our dow -- our daughter while we were there. One day, she devel -- she got sick, she got very high fever, and my wife went with her by train to Warsaw, to the children's hospital, to check with the doctors. They check her, they said, "Oh my God, she has tuberculosis." And the only way we could save her would have -- she has a hole in her lung, the left lung. The only way we could help, if you could have gold injections, so we could, you know, cover the -- with the gold injections, the -- the hole in the lung, and she would be saved -- you know, got rid of the bi -- tuberculosis. We didn't -- We couldn't -- We wouldn't have a penny, we couldn't dream about gold injections. But then we had an

idea. We had a very close friend, a Greek, Stamatios Kokinikis. He used to have in Warsaw, a factory of Halivah, you know, making. It was business, very good. And I used to -- I was an accountant. My wife graduated law school. I -- You know, and I, like a -- you know, like here, you know, accountant si -- let's say, you know, public, or a peer -- a regular accountant. Anyway, and I was taking care of his books, so my wife went to him. And I -- Later I found out that he was arrested few times even, because he was helping Jewish people. But he had connections with the Italian embassy in Warsaw, because Italy -- Hitler and Mussolini were allies. So he said -- My wife told him about the gold injections. He said, "Don't worry, I get it for you." And he got it through the Italian consulate. He got injections and he gave it, he save our child. And when she was in the hospital, his -- he had a maid, a Polish woman, who knew about it. She used to come to the hospital to bring her goo -- you know, some good food and things, you know, to -- to give the child, you know, the -- well, you know, she a Polish woman, you see, she was doing it for her. So, anyway, and then sh -- when she was later okay, our daughter, and there were times when we -- you know, were s -- were scared all the time, because we still had to watch ourselves and so on, but somehow, you know, we're through -- the whole t-time, or like this, and nobody could recognize us, you know. But one day, when the -- the Jewish boy was killed, you see, i -- had -- I write a -- i-i-in the book about his family, and how they were -- why they were killed, and so on, but you know, we were scared that they may [indecipherable] because they knew that I was close already, you

know, always with the boy -- go nice with the boy, and that I was -- his parents were there, living not far. So anyway, I put our daughter in a sanitorium, because you know, to -- altogether that she should be, you know, well taken care of, and so on. And we were watching, and so on, and one day -- and I f -- the -- the Germans trucks surrounded the -- the lumber yard, looking -- I di -- that time I found out, looking for his fa -- the boy's parents. Now, what I found out -- not for his, but they looking for the more Jews there. What I found out anyway, that his father -- you see, they were from a different city, not from Warsaw, and he -- they were very well-to-do people, very well off, he had a big factory, and so on. But his father in the -- they all pretend, three of them also, that they are, you know, Polish. But his father, in order to operate with the peasants, that they -- together he was making -- they were making whiskey, you know, in many -- the some -- in the villages some, you know, home made whiskey, and he was with them. And -- And I understood that -- that something came out that he probably was in there drunk, or something, that they suspe -- you know, that they called the Gestapo, that we think that they are Jewish people. And they came one night there, and they killed him, and th -- th -- the -- the parents. But after this, you know, we were already shaken, we were very scared. So one day, there was a man working in the -- a laborer, but he was working in the room where they had all kind of things there, you know, in the lumberyard, but anyway, a Polish man, and he came over there to our little room that we lived there, and he said, "You know, I had to get drunk to tell you, because I didn't have never spoke to you.

Somebody here asked whether you are also Jewish. And I wouldn't like this should happen to you, what happened to the [indecipherable] -- to the other one." Listen to this. And he said, "But my wife said to me, 'You see, it's all your fault, especially that there was that.'" She says, "Y-You trying to, as a Polish officer, you're trying to do everything, you know, for the [indecipherable] and th-th-then they call you here, they think that you are Jewish." You know what I mean? She just made it so that -- and he said, "Oh my God, I am so -- I love you," he said, "I," -- you know, changed completely. And [indecipherable] but we already scared. And then there was occasion I wrote about in the book, I left the [indecipherable] and got the job in another place on the railroad, you know, and somehow we survived like this, that in 1944, in August, were liberated by the Russian army. And you know that i-i-in '41, they started -- they became enemies, you know, Russia and Germany, in 1941. So, for two years they were allies, and later they were enemies. So that's what it was, and they were liberated that time. And so you go on farther, what you want more?

Q: O-O-Okay. Let me just, again, we'll pick up the story again, but I actually had another question from before the war --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- which is, you went to the university?

A: Yeah.

Q: Which university did you go to, what did you study?

A: W-Warsaw. Accounting and Business Administration.

Q: Mm-hm. You know, one thing I've noticed throughout your entire story is you and your wife both, but it seems like often you were the -- the planner.

A: Yeah.

Q: You had a lot of plans, and schemes, and you were very clever in how you would come up with these various scenarios and plans, and -- and it seems like there was a lot of meticulous planning on, you had to know people's schedules.

A: Yeah.

Q: You had to know all kinds of things that --

End of Tape One, Side B

Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: -- continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Adam Starkopf. This is tape number two, side A. -- noticed throughout your entire story is you and your wife both, but it seems like often you were the -- the planner.

A: Yeah.

Q: You had a lot of plans, and schemes, and you were very clever in how you would come up with these various scenarios and plans, and -- and it seems like there was a lot of meticulous planning on, you had to know people's schedules.

A: Yeah.

Q: You had to know all kinds of things that --

A: That's -- yeah.

Q: -- customs, the way they operated.

A: Yeah. Wel --

Q: Are you just a very clever person, or why -- why did that --

A: I don't know how [indecipherable] that's -- I -- I couldn't tell you about it, fi -- because I -- I don't know. I am not bragging about it, you know. But one thing was certain, that the child meant so much to us -- everything, not so much, that we decided, and you know, sometime -- was time we were hungry, but she was first. If we got a big apple, I peeled the apple, I cut it up, I gave the pieces of apple to the baby, and my wife and I were just eating the -- the skin, or so, you know what I mean. And also, I very, very

-- we're very -- th-that's -- we lived only -- we said we are going to live for one reason, to save the child. And that's how we did it.

Q: And her name was -- her name?

A: I-I-In Polish, it was Jasia, the Polish name. Jaisa, it means J-a-s-i-a. You know, that's Polish name, but here it's Joanne.

Q: Joanne.

A: She is a grandmother already now.

Q: Mm-hm. Oh. So the -- the -- the Russians come, and y -- and you're liberated, and then what happens?

A: When they were liberated, you see, I -- there was -- they -- they f -- you know, they organized a Polish -- establish a Polish government.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: You know? Polish Communistic government.

Q: Right, right.

A: And there was an occasion I joined the government. I joined the government, and I was wor -- y-you know, and after a certain time, I really rose to a very high position there. But being that this was Communistic government, and so on, and I wanted to get out. First of all, the only man survived from the whole family -- from both families, was my brother in Palestine. So, I was dreaming to go to him, you see?

Q: You were -- I'm -- I'm sorry, I didn't --

A: I was dreaming to go to my brother.

Q: In Palestine?

A: Of course, it was -- it was 1945. 1944 we liberated, in 1945, they organized the new Polish government. But, you know, it was impossible, so anyway, one day we decided to leave the -- Poland. You know, I didn't want to be the Communistic government. And I decided with my wife and the baby that we escape. And we escape from Warsaw to another city. You know, left Warsaw to ano -- not to escape to, you know, like -- like we -- before, but you know, we just decided to leave it. I didn't tell anybody wi -- the -- the government about it, you know. We went to another city, where we had friends there, and -- that survived, and we stayed there for awhile, fi -- not too long, and from there, we went to -- we escaped to Czechoslovakia, and to Germany, to the American zone. And there we -- in those days they established DP camps, Displaced Person camps, for refugees, you know, that -- [indecipherable] had any hopes any more. So we went to a DP camp, not far from Munich in Germany. And in the DP camp we had a little -- little place -- room in the basement, up a -- like, you know? And we were there, and I was hoping that I will be able to go to Palestine with my wife and baby, to my brother. But, it -- it was Palestine, you know, that there were no way -- we couldn't -- and to s -- so they -- they used to take -- there was, you know, there was i -- they call it, I think the illegal, you know, brigade, and they would set on taking people, you know, coming, taking some

Zionists, and so on, to Palestine. And in those days, some people were -- they were taking some people. They wanted once to take my wife and the baby, but not a man.

Q: Was this the Bricha?

A: Bricha.

Q: Yeah.

A: So, you know about it. It was Bricha, you see. So I -- They wanted to take my wife and the baby. You see, I tell you the story. Actually, I never wanted, because it was nothing. I was, when I was in the government, I was smuggling out [indecipherable] you mentioned the one Bricha, so I say I can tell you. You see, I was smuggling out the most prominent Zionist in sucha -- in Warsaw. I was smuggling out -- they were in Russian ambulances, they were -- tho -- they're going to Czechoslovakia. From there, the boys on Bricha were picking them up. My superior officer was a Jewish man, Kratko his name was. A za -- Communist. He found out about it, and he called the military police to arrest me. A Jewish m -- you see what I mean? He called the military and they -- they -- but they tipped me off, and the man -- I had a car to my disposition, that I -- to my disposal, and the car [indecipherable] and that how we escape, we throw away the keys, and we escape from Warsaw. I ha -- I fa -- later I found out from some fa -- prince they wanted later move to the U-United States that they heard that there -- there were -- you see, when there was a -- the -- the Communistic government, I could never get it back to Poland,

you know? They were looking for me for awhile. Anyway, and that's how we esc --
that's why we escape to the DP camp. But --

Q: So th -- So that's why you left?

A: That's why we left.

Q: If -- If that hadn't have happened, if your superior had not tried to have you arrested --

A: Then, I would remain there. I would remain there, because probably later, I was hoping it would change from a Communistic to a regular government, the Russian army will move, and then I was hoping legally to -- I'll be able someday to get to -- to my brother. But I wanted to remain there, yes, of course. But -- Bu -- Because of this, you know, I had to escape.

Q: Let me -- Let me ask you one thing, though. There have been many accounts, and some of the people, survivors that I've interviewed, who were from Poland --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- ha-have all talked about how after the war, the Germans were gone, but many of the Poles were still attacking and killing Jews, there were pogroms.

A: I n -- I never --

Q: Did you hear about any of this, or --

A: I never heard about it even.

Q: Mm.

A: Not only that I -- It was, I think once I heard the one town [indecipherable] was there, but nothing, n-nothing pa -- Warsaw, no, absolutely not. I only escaped for this reason. And this Jewish man, Zigmund Kratko, you see, and he was the one. So I -- And we were in the DP camp, and they wanted to take my wife and the baby, but I saved them from the war, I didn't want to let them go away from me, you know, because during the -- you know, when we were -- you know, on the Polish paper it's on, I didn't -- once it -- it -- there was someth -- sometime in -- there were times when you [indecipherable] a little bit were scared, you know? So one of my Polish friends that knew about it, one that helped me even with the documents, he said to me, "You know what, I can take Pella," which is my wife, he says, "It's all," -- he says, "Sofia." You know, she was -- Polish name is Sofia that time, "and I can -- she can be as a maid with some Polish, you know, family, and she could survive there, and don't worry about it, and then you can take," -- I said, "I would not let her off my eyes for one moment." You see, and I wouldn't. Now, when -- So from there, later on, I was thinking that someday we'll be able to go to Palestine. But one day, the woman that was in charge, you know, was -- you know, was all -- you know, there in -- in the DP camp, walk over to us. She was an American woman, you know, a volunteer there. And she said, "Pe -- Adam and Pella," they were th -- our names, "would you like to go to United States?" I said, "No, I don't like, I -- my brother's in Palestine." She said, "Look, you can always go there if you la -- later from there." He said, "I can get an affidavit for you, I will make an affidavit for you, you can leave just right away." And

that's how -- that's why we here in the United States. And then, of course, I was in touch with my brother, but my brother, when Israel was established, you know, 1948, we came -- arrive in United States in 1946. In 1946 we arrived here, in May.

Q: Let me ask you the -- the DP camp you're in --

A: Yeah.

Q: What was the name of the camp?

A: Feldifing, that's the name. Fel -- The ca -- The DP camp in Feldifing. Feldifing was the town.

Q: How did you get out of Communist Poland, into the American sector of Germany?

A: Oh, I told you that I ran awa -- I went to the -- I -- I went to the other city, cit -- Lodz - - L-o-d-z. You see, the dis -- with some -- there were friends living all there, and then when we decided to escape, you go right away, I was, you know, planned to escape. You know, I escape fr-from there in a Russian ambulance from there. I had connections, you know, through the -- in a Russian ambulance, to Czechoslovakia. From Czechoslovakia, we went to the American zone, Warsaw. It's -- It's -- It's a -- It's again long story, but it's nothing that it's you know -- we didn't risk anything.

Q: Right. So the camp was named --

A: Feldifing, that's was ca -- the ca -- the DP camp. Displaced Person camp.

Q: Mm-hm. How long were you there?

A: We arrived there in 1945, in November -- I th -- in October, and we left in 1946, you know, in May. Over a year.

Q: But until the person in the camp offered you a chance to come to United States, you'd never had any notion to come here?

A: Not here, no, no. Not here. Alth -- I -- I knew -- you see, I -- I had family here. I mean, the fa -- I didn't know them. My father's brother, in 19 fi -- 05 -- in 1905 immigrated to United States, and he was in New York, and settled in Chicago, and my father used to correspond with him all as I was growing up. As I -- All the time, and sending pictures of him, all the pictures, you know, including later our wedding. In fact, when we escaped from the ghetto, we didn't have with us one picture, purposely, I didn't want any. But all my pictures for the book and all this, from my uncle here. You see? So we came to sh -- so we were -- when we decided to -- we did what the woman advised us that made the affidavit for us, and we came to -- into -- when we were in New York, you know, going through the customs, our child -- this was 19 -- this was 1946, so she was already -- she was almost five years old, you know, four and a half years old. So she started, "Mommy, Daddy, are they shooting people here? Are there people's," -- You know, because she already, you know, knew a little bit. And my wife said, "Darling no, don't worry. This a free country, nobody will torture us," and so on. And then she tells to me, my wife, crying, she says, "I can't believe it, that we are here together, three of us. I -- I pinch myself, but it's true." I said, "You see, I told you that never give up, there is always time

to die. Never,” -- because there were times she wanted to give up, you know. I said, “Never give up, there’s always time to die.” And that’s why my first book that I wrote was, “There is Always Time To Die,” the title of the book.

Q: Mm-hm. How did you come over to United States, on a -- on a ship, I imagine?

A: We came on a -- a -- a navy transport ship. Navy transport ship, and there were quite a few refugees on this ship. We arrive in shi -- and then you see and they had telephones there, and I approach somebody there g -- to ti -- they have telephones from all over the United States, you know, books, and they -- Jacob Starkopf in Chicago. The only difference they Starkopf f-f instead w -- I spelled -- in Poland we’re p-f at the end, Starkopf. Here, they have Starkoff, f-f at the end, and he was -- so that’s why we came to Chicago.

Q: Mm-hm. But your ship landed in New York?

A: We landed in New York.

Q: Do you remember coming into the harbor the -- the day you actually -- the ship actually came into the harbor?

A: Oh, th -- May -- May 23rd, 1946, yeah. We were penniless, we were penniless [indecipherable]

Q: What did you -- As you were coming into the harbor, what did you see? Did you see the Statue of Liberty, and all that? Where -- Was it dark, or light out, or --

A: No, it -- daytime, yeah. We saw Statue of Liberty, you know, yes, but we didn't know much about those things, it's, you know, just -- so that's how we started, and you know, it --

Q: S-So did you come very quickly from New York to Chicago?

A: After a few days, yeah.

Q: And what did you do once you got here?

A: Of course, you know, I met the family, but what did I do here? I just tried to get a job, and I -- I knew very little English, very little. I -- I knew a lit -- I thought that I know, but actually, you know, over there I thought I know English, but when ca-came, I didn't. But I learned pretty quickly, and I started to work. I started to work in -- in the -- in -- in different places, from one to the other, and then --

Q: What -- What type of jobs?

A: In the office, but nothing special, you know, nothing --

Q: As an accountant, or --

A: No, no, not a -- as an accountant, in the beginning, no. But, we met, you see, it's a long story again, you see, how I started my business. It's a -- you know, in the DP camp, we were with the -- we met a man, became very friendly with a man that lost his wife and three children -- from a different city, not from Warsaw. He lost his wife, and he survived from Auschwitz concentration camp. He was alone. So we told him that when we come, you know, later, when we were leaving, I said, "We'll be in touch with you." When I

came here, we met there, through my -- through my uncle back here, because he had a little store -- this was a man who doesn't know -- Jewish man, who hardly knew how to sign his name, very plain guy. But he was pretty well off. He was in some kind of construction business, and so on. Very nice person. He was hel -- He was always giving to -- try to help us through a little bit. And I ask him, "Could you make an affidavit for a man that I befriended?" And told him about the man there, and he made an affidavit for him. He's the one, Martin Fox, F-o-x. He made it -- He arrived here, and he stayed with us, and my wife with me. And we got one r -- little room, you know, but anyway, we were together, manage with him. And then we had -- we're here, we met Warsaw friend who was at the university with us, very fine guy. He was here with his wife. Both were from ou -- survived Auschwitz concentration camp. And here, she became pregnant, his wife, when they were already here. And while she was delivering the baby, she died. Can you imagine, going through an -- everything, then she died? So, I was working that time, in the stockyard here, in the office. I couldn't go to the funeral, but my wife, with this -- our friend, went to the chapel, to the funeral, of our friend's wife. And as they were sitting in the chapel, and then passing by and this Martin is our friend, jumps out, "Ralph, I didn't know that you alive." They were both in -- in -- in Auschwitz. This one was alive, and this one was alive. And this one was single -- single - - one man. And so you know -- so my wife talked to him, too, of course, and she -- I ask him to come to us, and we became friendly. He was from a different city. Ralph Bell, his

name was, b -- here it was Bell, over there it was a different name, Bello, he change. Anyway, he was in con -- he was in concentration camp, he lost a wife and a child. And he was survive in concentration camp. And then -- so we became very fr -- you know, we're friends. But then one day, I saved 15 dollars to buy a tricycle for my wi -- for my daughter, a tricycle. So my wife went with my friend, he didn't work yet, and I was working, and she went with him, on Roosevelt Road, here in Chicago to buy a tr -- the tricycle, there was a store, you know, had sporting goods, toys and bicycles, and he went there to buy the bicycle for the 15 dollars. And in the windows -- in the window, there were footballs and basketballs, leather balls. So this friend of ours said to the man, to the owner of the store, who was Jewish -- so he said to the man, "You know, I was in the leather goods, I know how to sew on the special machine, pur -- Puritan machine, leather. Maybe you can get me a job." So here was a company in Chicago, Dubow, D -- D-u-b-o-w, sporting goods company. He gave him the j -- He called them, and he gave him a job. And he worked there, and after a few months he came to us, to the -- and I became friendly also with this man that we met that you know, lost his wife and baby. And he was alone. And he came, and he said, "Listen, I work for the leather company, how about to start business, to make leather footballs, and basketballs?" And that's how we started the business. We didn't have a penny, we didn't have any money. I went to the American National Bank with my friend, with this one that we met here, and ask for a loan for 3,000 dollars. So he said, "What do you have for a collateral?" We didn't know what it

means, collateral, even -- anyway, he said to -- "I'll let you know." And he let us know, and he ga -- they gave us, and we started a business. And we started business, the three of us, and we're doing, you know, manufacturing, footballs, and basketballs. But then later, we switched to import.

Q: Mm-hm. What was the name of -- of your --

A: Trio Sporting, Trio Sporting was manufacturing company.

Q: Trio?

A: Tr -- T-r-i-o, because three of us, you see?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But la -- But after f-f-few years, we parted with the other -- with the guy that I brought here, because he married here, he married here, and he remar -- this one, too -- they both remarry -- married, but this one married a terrible woman, you know, and he got sick, anyway, and she was mixing him up, and he died, anyway. And I -- I made with this one, I was 35 years in business with him, when we decided to retire.

Q: When --

A: [indecipherable] were in import business, I was traveling to the Orient. I even speak a little Japanese.

Q: And -- And so that remained your business, always, this --

A: Here? Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: I was in this business for many years.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But we became very active in the community, you see, and I was in Israel many times, you know, my brother died in 1965, he got a heart attack, he died there. But his -- he has two daughters, and got the grandchil -- we very close with them.

Q: Mm-hm. Did your wife work once she got over here, or did she stay at home?

A: She -- She -- She did work here, also, as an -- as an accoun -- as an accountant for America National Bank, even.

Q: In Chicago?

A: In Chicago. And when he -- when she wanted to le -- the -- the vice-president of America National Bank called me, "Adam, persuade her to remain. She's terrific."

Q: Mm-hm.

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Did you -- So did you, your family, live in the city in Chicago? Did you have an apartment, a house?

A: We had -- w -- first we had an apartment, you know, though they were changing very often. Later we moved to Skokie, we were living in Skokie for quite a few years, and then we moved to -- on Lakeshore Drive, in the city, downtown, we lived. We had a place -- a condominium apartment for many years, 29 years there, I think. But then we decided -- my daughter -- our daughter, of course, got married, and had two children, a boy and a

girl. And they -- they both married, too, already, you know, the grandson and granddaughter, and they have children, we're great-grandparents, because we have -- you know, they have both a little boy and a girl, a little boy and a girl. And they live in Highland Park, and Buffalo Grove, which are two suburbs right through, 10 minutes away from us. So we decided to move, and we moved here. But one day our granddaughter walk over to us, and she said, "Grandpa, Grandma, I remembered what you were telling us about your grandparents, and how you were for them, and they were later in -- your grandfather was with us -- with your parents, and so on, [indecipherable]. We are going to move," she said, "to [indecipherable] to -- there is a new area here, they call it Forsheridan, 10 minutes away from here, you know? So anyway," she says, "we want to be together," she said, and we should move with them. It was when my wife yet was alive, even. So anyway, to make the story short, I'm going too, at the end of July. This place is almost sold, and we will s-sell it very soon, be -- it will go through, the sale, and then I with her together are buying a building, a very big house in the Forsheridan, and I will -- my granddaughter, and her husband and the children there.

Q: So you're all going to live together in the house?

A: So we live together in the house, but I have separate, like I -- that's a two st -- that's a house, not apartment, and two story. I will be -- my den, and my bedroom, and so on, downstairs, and they s -- the steps upstairs. Very ni -- beautiful apartment -- house, I mean, big house, yeah.

Q: Now, when your daughter was very young, you had sort of a strange situation. She didn't know that she was Jewish, right?

A: [indecipherable] not, and we had very hard time to persuade her that she is Jewish later.

Q: And she actually would -- I believe in your videotape, you said that -- or maybe your wife told the story about how occasionally your own daughter would say anti-Semitic things.

A: Yes. I give you an example. Then, maybe, I don't remember when I said it, you see, for example, sometime, you know, she was a baby, three and a half years old yet, in the lumberyard [indecipherable]. She was walking, she came with a piece of branch on her shoulder, piece of branch, you know, just from a --

Q: From a tree?

A: -- from a tree. I said, "Jasia, [indecipherable] what -- what you doing?" In Polish, you know, "Why do you have that?" "I'm going to hunt for Jews." She heard those things, you see? Hunt for Jews. That's why I told this boy -- when I told you that -- I tol -- I said, what we do, the Jewish people are somewhere in the woods, you see? So she said, "I'm going hunting for the Jews." So she didn't know, and she had hard time later, too. And there were certain things that she was growing up, you know, affected her, li -- she was --

Q: So she -- But she was picking this up from what, other Polish people around her, other children?

A: That's it, exactly, yeah, yes, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh. I -- I mean, this is in a period where -- where you have -- you and your wife have gone through, you know --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- incredible turmoil to guard her, to save her.

A: Yeah, absolutely.

Q: And now here's your own daughter coming and saying these sort of things. I mean, the minute that she said that --

A: Yeah.

Q: What -- What must have you -- you know --

A: I di --

Q: -- what -- what must you have felt in your heart?

A: You -- Y -- I -- It's hard to display -- to explain. You can realize what we had in our heart, especially my wife, as a woman. Of course, we were very sad about it, but we had to pretend to -- you know, it's -- there were times that I was writing post cards f -- you know, mailing from Warsaw to us, that people should think that we have families, you know? So we had to pretend many things, and she didn't. But she -- she couldn't get used to -- but she had certain things -- she was here already, when she was -- sh -- because she was in the -- she was in a sanitorium where were run by nuns.

Q: Your daughter?

A: Yeah, Warsaw for awhile. At that time, they were -- she -- she said to -- she told us that sometime they [indecipherable], "If you don't behave yourself at night, you'll be -- if you -- if you don't behave yourself," there were all kinds of people, "the Jewish pe -- will pick you up."

Q: The nuns would say this?

A: If you don't [indecipherable], if you don't behave yourself at night, a Jew will pick you up. She was very -- She couldn't -- If she saw a -- a woman with, you know, a -- in a gown, you know, like the nuns, she was scared to -- even here, she was affected. She was in the hospital, she was very sick, she was in Rochester, in Minnesota, you know, where the Mayo Clinic? And she was there in the hospital. And they put a sign on her door in the room, that nurses in th -- in nun's uniforms cannot go in there, because she was affected. But then she changed. She cha -- After we -- you know, later on, to a point that she -- she said i -- over there, that she's very sorry, because when we -- w -- I don't remember what it was, I think was a lot of flowers and other thing that we -- I was in business, you know, that she received in the hospital there. I think it was Saint Mary Hospital, something like this. And so, when she was released, she took all this to the chapel, to the cat -- to the -- to the cattle of -- ch-chapel that was there, on the same floor, or something, in the hospital. And she gave everything there, and she [indecipherable] -- she's different now, you know, but this was when she was very young, before she was married.

Q: How old was she when you told her that she was Jewish?

A: Oh, when tell her? When we were liberated. So we were liberated in 19 for -- 1944 in August, she was born in 1941. She was three years old. She couldn't understand, a three years old child.

Q: Mm-hm. And -- But was that very difficult, or --

A: Oh, it was very difficult, of course, but we had to watch for her, and we [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah. When did you write your book, and why did you do it?

A: Ah no, I -- I wanted to write a book, but you see, what I did when I arrive -- we arrive here, I was writing, just making notes in Polish, because I knew that later on I would forget, you know? So I was writing whatever -- you know, everything I remember, I was writing in Polish. And then, later on, my daughter translated it, you know, and anyway, and we met somebody that, you know -- you know, was helping me, and I wrote this book, and in 1981 was published. But now, three years ago, the book was re-published by New York University Press. They -- Sony Press. They, on their own, I didn't know nothing about it [indecipherable] a woman that is like you know, she's doing something with publishing, and she met with -- through my daughter, you know, and sh -- anyway, and they -- so they re-publish the book, the same book I did, they cli -- but they changed the title, "Will to Live."

Q: And the original title was?

A: "There is Always Time To Die." So, "Will to Live," you see? And this book was published three years ago, and thi -- thi -- identical the same book, you see? And all the proceeds from the book, first and second, all the proceeds went to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I never got a -- would take a penny for it.

Q: Mm-hm. You know, it's -- for a lot of Holocaust survivors --

A: I can give you the book if you want it.

Q: Oh, that'd be nice.

A: We'll -- yeah, we'll --

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Adam Starkopf. This is tape number two, side B.

A: So, "Will to Live," you see? And this book was published three years ago, and thi -- thi -- identical the same book, you see? And all the proceeds from the book, first and second, all the proceeds went to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I never got a -- would take a penny for it.

Q: Mm-hm. You know, it's -- for a lot of Holocaust survivors --

A: I can give you the book if you want it.

Q: Oh, that'd be nice.

A: We'll -- yeah, we'll lit -- we'll give you --

Q: I've read some chapters from it, it's very well written.

A: I give it to you. I have it, I will give it to you.

Q: You know, many -- it's -- it's an issue for many Holocaust survivors and their children, about whether they would talk to them about what happened during the war, or not.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: A lot of -- lot of survivors --

A: Yeah, can't talk about it.

Q: -- for a long time, would not talk about it.

A: Yeah.

Q: What about you and your wife?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: Did you talk about it, or not talk about it?

A: I will tell you. You see, my partner, this Ralph Bell, died in April. He was about my age. He never talk about it. Of course, he remarried, had children here, you know. But, he lost a wife and a baby. But, he nev -- he couldn't talk about those things. I t -- My wife wouldn't like to talk about it either. I mean, she could mention, but not like -- our daughter couldn't completely, you see, couldn't hear about it. She co -- right away started to cry, you see? But I can talk, and I am here to help the Holocaust Memorial Foundation

of Illinois and Chicago. They have like a mini-museum over there in Skokie. And they have sko -- like tomorrow, tomorrow morning at 9:45, I ca -- two school buses there in the morning. I speak at ni -- at 9:45 in the morning. I speak to the -- I speak to them about, you know, the Holocaust. I speak to them w-why I am doing it, because I don't -- they should never go through the same thing. And I am telling them I have the information what's going on in United States, with the Ku Klux Klan, with the Aryan Nation, you know, and -- and the neo-Nazis and Skinheads, and so on. And I am telling them that should not happen to anyone, because [indecipherable] the Aryan Nation in Portland, Oregon, Richard Butler, who is the chairman of the organization, at one of their meetings, he said, "I will not take off my robe, until the day when the last nigger and Jew with be executed in United States." And they -- somebody from that organization killed a Jewish radio talk man in Denver, Colorado.

Q: You me -- Alan Berg?

A: Alan Berg. You see, you know about it.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Alan Berg was killed by them.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So you see, those things are, and I s -- so we co -- my daughter never could talk about it, when sometimes she went with me, and I spoke in schools. That's not in the [indecipherable] foundation, but in schools, she would wa-walk out from the cla -- from

the room. She wouldn't listen. But one day -- You know, for the Holocaust Museum in Washington, you know, they -- we had here, like parlor meetings, fundraising things, in Chicago. You know, the Chicago chapter, in Highland Park here, they have their office. And one day, she had a meeting -- parlor meeting, and General Levine, who was a Jewish doc -- man, who was a general during the war, and he was with the army, American army, and he was with one of the units that liberated one of the -- I don't remember, Auschwitz, or Buchenwald, one of the concentration camps. And he was the speaker there. My daughter called next day -- it was quite few years ago. She said, "Mom and Dad, that General Levine spoke, and he had tears in his eyes when he talk about when he liberated the -- liberate the camps. From now on, I am not any more hiding. I can talk about it, too." So --

Q: When did you start speaking in schools? Was that a long time ago?

A: When they were establish here, they were establish about 10 - 11 years ago.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: No, you see, the governor of unite -- of sh -- of Illinois -- I show you, I got a picture with him here -- the governor of Illinois, s -- you know, signed a bill, that was I think in 1980 -- n-no, I'm sorry, 19 -- in 1990. In 1990 or 1991, you know, nine or eight years ago. Signed a bill which became a -- you know, that all the -- that they -- all the high sch -- all schools, elementary schools, and high schools, have to have courses on the Holocaust. And this became like a law, you know? So, the Holocaust Foundation here

has two educational chairmen. One is professor -- Jewish -- professor of that Roosevelt University, he's still a professor, the other [indecipherable] University, he's still a professor. And they are, you know, the -- the -- they have leavin meetings with the board of -- bo-board of education in Chicago, and they -- they teaching these teachers, instructing, they have classes with them, how to teach Holocaust. And see, it's then -- we speak to the di -- I'm not the only one, we are speakers [indecipherable] and many speaks [indecipherable]

Q: Why do you think you were -- you know, your daughter didn't want to talk about it at all, your wife didn't like talking about it, but you, you were writing notes down so that you wouldn't forget anything, and you would --

A: That time I wrote notes, yeah.

Q: [indecipherable]. Why -- Why do you think that you were that way? Why -- Why were you different, any idea?

A: I -- I tell you the truth, I never thought of it, I never think of it. I show you -- I have here my two first books laying here, because my daughter wrote it, and I wrote it to my wife, and [indecipherable] I show it to you, you know. I don't know, I -- I am -- I s -- different. That's why I still, at the age of 85, I still drive, I still go on, and -- and I'm active, you know, very active for [indecipherable] organizations here.

Q: Did you ever go back to Europe, to Poland, or any of these places?

A: To Poland, no. When there was Communistic government, I couldn't, and later on we couldn't, because you know, first of all my wife was sick for quite a few years. She was very weak, and she was sick, it's affected her more -- much more than me, you know, everything. Anyway, but she was already sick, so we didn't go. And my daughter is still dreaming to go, not that -- to Poland itself, but to follow the -- the way she was saved, you know? To see the cemetery and so on. And I told her that now, one day maybe we'll do it.

Q: And you have grandchildren?

A: I have two -- I have two -- two gra -- I have a granddaughter and grandson. They both have -- They married, and they both have children, girls, one and the other, six years old girl, and then my grandson has a boy who is now -- fi -- a month ago was one year old, and my granddaughter only four months old, a gir -- a boy. So they all have a boy and a girl, you know.

Q: What are the names of your grandchildren?

A: The names are after -- you see, the -- the b -- the boy, my grandson's boy, has my father's name, Max. My granddaughter's boy has my brother-in-law -- my wi -- my wife's parent -- my wife's brother's name, Ben. And the girls have from -- again also from grandmothers, you know, and so on.

Q: Mm-hm. And then the -- I guess the children of your brother, who was in Israel --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- what are their names?

A: We are in touch with them all the time.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: All the time, in contact. They came to the weddings here, and we were there, and we are contact. I talk to them a few times a week over the phone, yeah.

Q: What are their names?

A: Th-Their name was th -- because th -- one -- one -- one married -- the one Bimka. B like in boy, i-m-k-a, you know? And the other one is -- is -- th -- it's -- it's Kelog, like Kella. You know, it's Hebrew [indecipherable] names [indecipherable]. But the girls are very fluently speaking English, and very nice.

Q: Did you ever visit Israel, or not?

A: Oh, many times.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah, many times. I went to my brother's funeral, too, with my wife. There are many times we visit Israel. And I will probably with my daughter, we'll probably go in -- in the beginning of October, I go to Israel for a few days, we have international conference. I am very active in the Israeli Red Cross. This [indecipherable] you know, I was very active there [indecipherable] from here, there you know, and very active in it, vice president, and anyway, so we have international -- international conference there. So, I am going the beginning of October, but at the end of October, I go with my daughter for

three weeks, with the family. But we are in touch all the time. And my -- you know, grand-niece, because now my niece was his daughter, but my grand-nieces, they did the [indecipherable]. One of them, the oldest one is living in Houston, Texas now, she is working for the Israeli consulate in Houston, now. So she's in Houston. And we are with her all the time. She comes here to my daughter, my granddaughter goes there. We are in touch all the time.

Q: And your daughter, what is her married name? What is --

A: Br-Brainin, like a brain in. B-r-a -- you know, B-r-a-i-n-i-n, Brainin, Joanne Brainin. Her husband's Gary Brainin.

Q: Mm-hm. And where are they?

A: They live 10 minutes away from here, yeah.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: Highland Park.

Q: In your video interview with the museum, you and your wife mentioned something called penny project.

A: Oh.

Q: Why don't you tell us about that?

A: My o -- That was my wife's idea, that she had when they were building, and you know, when it -- it was beca -- the Holocaust Museum in Washington. She had an idea, being that a Jewish life wasn't worth a penny, and 6,000,000 Jews were killed, let's

collect 6,000,000 pennies in memory of the 6,000,000 Jews. So we were interviewed by the newspapers, and by Chicago Tribune, and Times, and associated pr -- whatever, we interviewed by everyb -- all over written about it. But you should see the hate letters I got.

Q: Oh really?

A: Yeah. You filthy Jewish pimp. We will finish you and Simon Wiesenthal.

Q: Hm.

A: All kind of letters.

Q: With the -- When you --

A: They were in the papers, our names, so they looked up probably, you know, check the addresses, telephone books.

Q: When you got letters like that --

A: But this was --

Q: -- did it have any effect on you?

A: No.

Q: You didn't care?

A: No, ju-just the thing that I am just as I told you. I am very active in it, and as long as -- until I be able to -- to -- you know, do it, physically, I will speak to the children, and tell - - I will te -- I am telling them, I have photographs, you see? My wife and I are members

of Klan watch. Klan watch is an organization in Montgomery, Alabama, Southern Poverty Law Center, you heard about it maybe.

Q: Right.

A: The chairman is Deets, D-e-e-t-s.

Q: Morris Deets.

A: Morris Deets, yeah. See, so we get from them all the information, all the bulletins, and so on, papers. And then we also have -- from -- we got pictures of like FBI agent, you know, discovered arms, and swastikas, you know, photographs I have with swastikas and arms, and so on with the [indecipherable]. So we have it, you know, right here.

Q: But when you would get some publicity, and then get this hate mail, did the hate mail upset you?

A: No.

Q: No?

A: No, no.

Q: What about your wife, did it upset her?

A: No, no, you know, she was concerned about it, but not -- so you know, that's what it is.

Q: Were -- Were you all living in Skokie in the period where the Nazis were trying to march?

A: No at that time I was living downtown, yeah. But I know the story, you know. And the mayor of Skokie, we became very friendly with him later on, you know, when -- I -- I'll show you some pictures here, and they're all in the den, on the walls with -- so, and li -- I'm very active for many, many years with those things, but I always said that to me, nothing w -- is more precious than a child, and what they were doing to children, you know, just unbelievable, unbelievable. My -- My cousin, my mother's sister's boy was 12 years old. They put him on this great big -- tied him with a very heavy rope to a truck, and dragged him in the back of -- dr-dragged him for few -- 15 - 10 feet, right away he was full of blood, dead. And many children like this, they were killed, in ghetto.

Q: Mm-hm. Did -- With the penny project --

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you -- The notion was to get 6,000,000 pennies?

A: Yeah, we -- we [indecipherable] we sent it. I think we sent almost everything, probably everything.

Q: So you collected 6,000,000 pennies?

A: Yeah, we were doing it, you see, we were getting pennies from people, you know, all over. There was one woman, not Jewish, she was -- I -- when we lite -- lake -- we live downtown, and the doorbell called me, and there was a big, big, you know, box of pennies, and a ba -- and a cake for us, left in the [indecipherable], and the name of the woman, you know? And we -- we -- I am sending her always Christmas cards, she is

sending us cards, also. She is American woman, not Jewish. And we're getting pennies from all over. We're getting there, we -- but what I will do it, I didn't sa -- I was not shipping the pennies, I was going to the bank, and they were, you know, changing the -- they were count -- you know, they had machines to count them, and they would give me checks, and the checks I was sending to them.

Q: And where would you send the checks?

A: To you, to Washington, to the Holocaust.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm. What about -- Do you -- I know you -- your family was very Zionist.

A: Yeah.

Q: And you were -- you were -- you were , too. Di -- Were you religious at all? I mean, the question I have is --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- having lived through the Holocaust, and -- and seen some of what you saw --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- did it change your notion about God, or did you wonder -- start to wonder if there was a God, or --

A: No, no, no, it didn't change. You see, in ghetto, my father's neighbor was an Orthodox Jewish family, next door neighbors. So my father sometimes said to him, "Mr.," I -- I don't I even remember the name, I think [indecipherable] "tell me, where is God? How

can we -- How can this?" So he said, "Look, we sinned, so we're paying for it." So my father used to say, "Yes, let's say we si -- you say we sinned, but the babies, the children didn't have a chance to sin." You know, there was no answer, that's some, but no, I didn't pay attention to those things.

Q: Did you ever think much, or try to figure out, you know, what meaning there could be to this, why it could have happened, or you just didn't reflect on it that way, or --

A: No, this -- you know, let's put it this way. The fact that we s -- I saved my daughter, and my wife, that we saved -- I saved both of them, and this absolutely did -- that was the main thing for me, nothing else counted. And right now, too, I am for her, only she -- I believe that -- I -- I live for her.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Because she's very, very -- she loved my wife, and me, she cries, she terrible, she's -- she doesn't sleep nights, even now.

Q: Do you ever have dreams about the war?

A: You know, no, no. My wife, I think she had nightmares sometime about, you know, her family, her brother, or this, but I never had any dreams about the war, no.

Q: So you're a practical guy.

A: I don't know, whatever you want to call it, but that's -- that's what I, you know.

Q: Uh-huh. So, I mean, when the -- when your wife would have these nightmares, did you know it? Did she tell you?

A: Oh yeah, of course, yeah.

Q: Would she wake up and --

A: Yeah, she told me, yeah, of course.

Q: Yeah.

A: So we discuss it, you know, nothing -- we're married, in May 31st, was 63 years.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. So, that's how it is.

Q: Anything else about th-the -- the years you spent in -- in -- in the United States, and your life here, that we haven't talked about, that you'd like to mention, or bring up, or --

A: No, nothing else actually.

Q: Did you write any other books?

A: No.

Q: Just that one book.

A: Just this one, but the one was changed, I -- I will give you the new one.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah. But, I -- no, you know, so just -- nothing else. I just very active, I -- you see, I am ver -- I am active all the time. If I wouldn't be active, like when my daughter said, "I am glad that you -- that you are active, because otherwise, what would you do?" You know, and this way, you know, if I am being active, you know, I think helps me to -- you know, to -- after she died, you know --

Q: Right.

A: So, I will before, too, and now too, the same way. So when are you getting married [indecipherable] fiancée?

Q: Oh, well we don't want to -- I don't know if the -- the historians will be that interested in it. Maybe we'll talk about it when the tape is over.

A: Yeah.

Q: But, in September.

A: Oh.

Q: Actually on the -- on the -- a little town on the Maine seacoast. We found a nice place, we're going to do it there. We were talking before the interview about my --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- my upcoming plans. So that's it, I think, for all of my questions. Is there anything else you want to add or say before we turn the machine off?

A: Nothing else, actually, really.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I said what I want to say.

Q: Okay. Well, thanks for taking the time and doing the interview.

A: That's okay, I -- I'm -- I'm glad you came here, and I'll show you around here, if you want.

Q: Okay. All right, well thanks again.

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A: Yeah. Okay, I thank you, too. But I just now -- I don't know, at my age --

Q: You want to stand up. This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Adam Starkopf.

End of Tape Two, Side B

Conclusion of Interview

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