

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with William Kisielewski
November 8, 2008
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a recorded interview with William Kisielewski, conducted by Stephanie Blyskal on November 8, 2008 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Alexandria, VA 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.

WILLIAM KISIELEWSKI

November 8, 2008

Question: This is the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **William Kisielewski**, who is going to correct me if I'm wrong, conducted by **Stephanie Blyskal** on November 8th, 2008, in **Alexandria, Virginia**. Hello.

Answer: Hi, how are you?

Q: I'm well, how are you? Could you tell me when and where you were born?

A: I born in **Warsaw, Poland**, August the 31st, 1939, exactly one day before the **aktion** started.

Q: Yeah. And can you tell me a little bit about your family? What was your family like?

A: Well, I was a second grandchild of to – two large families. I mean, large – relatively large. There were four – four – four persons on each side. My father and two sisters and a – and a brother. And a widow grandma. And o – on my mother's side, there was my mother, a sister and two brothers, and his mother – her mother, as well. There we go. S – that's – I had – I – I – a sister who was six and a half years older than me, she born in 1933. And between us was another girl which – who bu – who passed away at the age of a year and a half. So I – I didn't learn about her much, okay, that's – and so, was a – was a big happiness, you know, first boy in the two families, but don't ask me what for.

Q: Mm-hm. What did your parents do for a living?

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A: Pardon me?

Q: What did your parents do for a living?

A: Well, my mother, she – her trade was to make ladies' hats. And she had her – th
– I think wa – the most select clientele in **Warsaw**, including the – the wife of the
prime minister and people like this. She was very well known, which was working
against her during that period of Nazis, and you know the persecution, so, you
know, it's good on one side, and depends what the times, can be working against.

Q: And what did your father do for a living?

A: He wa – he – he – he was a – a furrier, he cut furs. And he has a small store. That
was what he was doing for a living.

Q: Mm-hm. And was your family very religious?

A: No.

Q: No?

A: My mother family was very progressive, not religious at all. And on my father's
side they were a little bit more conservative, but no religious. I wouldn't call them
as **[indecipherable]** religious.

Q: Did you celebrate holidays, or –

A: Oh yes, we – I understand. I don't remember that, okay. I mean, they kept the –
the – the – the main holidays and, you know, Sabbath and things like that, you

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know? They didn't ate s – kosher, you know, the strictly **[indecipherable]**. So that mara – more or less has give you the idea.

Q: Mm-hm. And what was your sister's name?

A: **Sophie**.

Q: **Sophie**.

A: **Sophie**. And in the time of wa – when – when – you know, the w-war start and oh, the troubled times, **Sophie** was six and a half. And she – she remember, you know, the wealth and all the happiness pre – pre-war. So affect her much more than a – than affects me, because I was un – no conscience about my – my own existence

Q: Right.

A: **[indecipherable]** I did. On – on the age of two, two and a half already, or a little bit more, I don't know, 19 – 1942, when the first transport of people have been taken from the **Warsaw** ghetto to extermination camp, in that – in that transport went my family; my – my – my parent – my – o-on both sides, for the exception of the – my – my mother's brother, one of them have been killed. I don't know if that's by an accident or what, he be – was a fire on the roof in – in the ghetto. He went up to the roof, but never came back. He was 25. His name was **Ignatius**. And the youngest brother my – of my mother's, **Henry**. He was 18 and he – he took poison, he killed himself. But he was in the underground, the organization, had been

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caught, so in order to avoid, you know, further consequences, he did that. I –

Miriam, his younger sister, she had been taken to the – to the extermination camp with my – with my grandmother, who at that time was fifty – 52 years old. And my mother was a widow on the age – age of 30. 30? Thir – 31 - 32.

Q: So, after the war started, what ha – what had happened to your family? Did they try to escape **Warsaw**, or –

A: No, when my mother – my mother – my mother before the war was always advising to leave to **South America**, because a cousin – my ma – my – my – my grandma cousin, first cousin was living in **Buenos Aires** and did well. So she – always like a possibility which my mother always considered in the thir – in the late 30s. But my – my father was too attached to, you know, position, he was – the business was going well, and you know. They thought the war – nothing will happen, you know, so he was optimistic. So they never fled away. And once the war started, like everybody else, we – we have to move into the ghetto. And the reason why my mom was not taken and myself, and my sister, we were the three survivors, is because we didn't live in the same place where my grandmothers live and the family. And me – my – my father, the older men of the family, he – he was there with – with the rest when they closed and they ah – they emptied the building and took everybody away. So, my mom was – when she said well – she was – she

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didn't – she didn't have any doubts that this is not for taking her to the working camps, that was for extermination. So she says, I am not waiting here for – for death, I am – I am running away. If I will be caught on the – on the run, at least I tried to do something for my life. So she – you know, was corruption, like everywhere else. So she – she paid the people to let us go, and they supposed to supply us with documents, array – Aryan documents on the other side. They – they didn't follow to do that, they send us a Gestapo. So, my mother was waiting and that took her a little bit more than she – sh-she – es – expect to take. So she was very am – you know, nervous and watching if the people are coming and bringing the document. And then sh-she showed me the Gestapo car coming. So from the – from the back of the building we run away, just in time. So s – as – close calls like this, we had a couple of them. Even when we was trying to leave **Poland** after the war, where the – the Iron Curtain was established by the Russians. So, in order to get out of **Poland** to the western **Germany** was a ri – also risking a life. But coming back to those times – so we – we left – we left the ghetto, and my mother remember from her young age that her father was taking the family to spend the summer to a place called **Sandomierz** on the south – on – a – a little bit south of **Warsaw** on the bank of the **Wisla** river. And so sh – in order to run from **Warsaw**, she went there with us. And that was a mistake, because in a small place, ou-ou-outside there is

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noticeable immediately. So, very, very short time after, we were on our way back to **Warsaw**. And of course those – those voyages cost money, and we – we didn't have too man – too much of it. So shortly after bri – getting back to **Warsaw**, her economical resources had been exhausted, and was not much to do, so she just present herself to a friend of her, made from school, from the elemental school, a Christian lady who was married to a policeman, also Polish. And she says, well, if you refuse to help me, I understand. It's a big risk. But if you can't, I have no one to call any more, you know. So – and she, she did so. She said, wait. She hold us all the day there until the fire – the husband comes from work, and then she spoke to him by herself. And he comes convince by her – his wife, to help us. And they advise – the plan when he – what he comes with was the following. My sister, she was a blonde with blue eyes, that's no problem. And – so she went to a – with – with – were nuns.

Q: The con – the convent?

A: Con-Convent.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: My mom, he brought her a false document, put her fa – photography in that, somebody who was deceased, more or less on the same age. The name was **Wovataska(ph) Janina(ph)**. And on these papers she should volunteer to work in

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Germany. And this way, according to him, she would survive. And I was the problem, being circumci – and he knew a place where he can take me, but the condition was, to take kids there – so the kids who have no one, the orphans, abandoned.

Q: Mm-hm. Mm, right.

A: So – because for security reasons, no visits, nobody coming, nobody know.

Q: Right.

A: So that – that was a condition for this. So he said to my mom, leave – the kids have t – the kid had to be left in the corner of the street where I am due, where I am there, it's – it's my – my place to work, no? And my mother couldn't do that. Well, she had – didn't have a heart to do that, so my poor sister have to di – do this for. So –

Q: And – and your sister was how old at this point?

A: She was – she was at that time, she was nine. So, she had to leave me in the corner and w – and, you know, just grab the first streetcar passing by, that what she did. And I almost get her in, because I started to screaming myself. My sister [indecipherable]. People start to surround me and the policeman comes and he took me, and [indecipherable] the people were, you know, that why [indecipherable] and the place called **Klarasebo**(ph) in the out-outskirts of

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Warsaw, not far from **Warsaw**, very close to **Wilarnow**, which is the – the – the – that was the – the summer palace of the k – the king of **Poland** in other times. And the convent where I went to, that was a Methodist, it's not Catholic, it was Methodist. So, being Protestants, you know, the Germans didn't bother them, they thou – they thought they are part of them –

Q: Right.

A: – right? Mas – or were more affinity. The woman who look after us, after the kids inside, were all Jewish womens. Yeah, for security reasons, you know, so that's no – nobody would denounce, you know. Were personally interested, right? In that's time I had two years and two months in that time, when I get separate from my mom. And in – in 1946 in – in April – no, in April of you – April, end of April, my mom found us, my sister and me, in a – and a ga – in a – in a Jewish orphanage. That was after the war, in **Otwock**. And that's 30 kilometers southeast of **Warsaw**, on the eastern bank of the – of the river. In 1945, when the Germans start to retreat, obviously my sister said something which guides the people who are trying to put the families together, because they knew about this organization, and – and in no time I have been bring fr – brought from that place to – to the place where my sister was. But I was not the only kid, so m-many of them, so I think they was just putting the Jew – Jewish kids together. So maybe my – my sister didn't say tha – nothing, I

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don't know. So, we were taken to **Otwock**. And well, I survived this way, and I s – when my mom comes, I was just re – convalescing from, I don't know, one of those, you know, kids things, measles or something like that. So I – I was separate from the rest of the kids, in order to avoid possible, you know –

Q: Contamination, right.

A: – epidemics, yeah, right, right. So the lady who was looking after me, her name was **Dora**, she – she ask me to **[indecipherable]** that's the – this Polish version of my name, yeah. Said, do you know what – who is this lady? And I wa – I look on her, I remember I **[indecipherable]** a moment, no, and I said, well, that's my mom. And my da – my mother start to cry.

Q: It's okay, take your time.

A: Crazy. Said, what happened to her, what's wrong with her? I couldn't understand why she's crying, you know? Well, I was too small to measure the time and emotions and things like that. And th – since then my life changed. So, after that we tried to escape from **Poland**, and we managed to do that. My mom was a very brave woman, you know. Brave, have guts more than one man – man who would like to have it. And so we – we escaped from **Poland**, three – four of us. Was my – the three of, my mother, my sister, me, plus a young woman, she was 24 at that time, **Maryla**(ph) – I don't recall her last name now, from **Wroclaw**. She joined because

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she was a daughter of an officer who was a s – immediate superior to my father av – my – my – my mother comes back to **Poland**, she was remarried.

Q: Right.

A: And she remarried a Polish man who was in the service, in the – when the – when the troops occupied **Germany**, defeat **Germany**, had been occupied by the alliances, so he was part of the – of the occupation troop. And he was in the – in **RAF in England**, the Polish squadron, and so the – she remarried him. He was a very, very good man, he was a excellent stepfather for me. Stepfather sounds bad, was a good father, I mean. And – but he was not Jewish, he was Christian, so I didn't live – grow in the Jewish environment with its relations and everything else, I have been deprived from that, all this.

Q: Let me –

A: In 1946, in oc – in octo – October, he had been transfer to **England**, and with him, of course, the family. So – and also they say, was the kind of person, he says, well, we are – if we're going to be a family, one family, let's have one surname, so he adopt us both. My daughter – my sister and me. And in October of the same year, we were in o – already in **England**, was an entirely different life. And we stay in **England** until 1949, and my parents decide for **Argentina**. So we emigrate to **Argentina** in 1949. So the – wha – first, second and third grade, I made it in

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England, and through grade four I went, i-in sp – in Spanish in **Buenos Aires**.

Well, and I studied in Spanish and I lived there until I reached the age of 38. Of course, I get married in the meantime to a Italian girl, a schoolmate, my schoolmate, and we had four wonderful daughters. I lost my wife 10 years ago.

Q: I'm sorry.

A: And I have six grandchildren. And when this congress had a place in – in – in **Toronto**, completely by chance, somebody who I knew who was living in the – in massa – who lives in **Massachusetts**, called me by phone and said, oh listen, on so and so date, I – I'm going to – we are going to be in **Toronto**, herself and her husband. So we will like invite you for a dinner Friday with us. And maybe you're daughter and your s-son-in-law can join us. So I said, well, I'm answering by myself because I am no – I have no commitment, will be a pleasure, and about them I have to find out, I don't know. They may be coming to something else –

Q: Right.

A: – maybe they can. And that's – really, that what happens, they couldn't attend, so I went by myself. So we – we tal – we talk about different things and finally comes a topic, what brought you to **Toronto**? And so she mentioned that she is coming to a congress of the hidden children [indecipherable] hidden children of [indecipherable]. What is this? She said, oh, you know, the kids, you know, were

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hidden and – you know, on the Christian houses or here and there, and they – and the – in the churches. Say, I fit perfectly to this category. So – so I get interested, and that was my first attendance, no re – with no registration, because I learned the – the same day, or very – very same day about.

Q: Right.

A: Next day was starting day, the – the congress. So I went there. I met lots of people, different people from different places, and I learn about some – I – I meet some people who were in **Otwock** at the same time I were. Of course, now I – now I remember the [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: Because I was in the youngest group. But some – some of the people I met, they do remember my sister, who was seven years older than me.

Q: Right.

A: And so after that, I re – I was very excited about that, and I called my nephew. Okay, I have to tell you my sister passed away very young, on the age of 46, that was in 1979. So, I called my – my nephew, and I mention to him that I – because I knew always [indecipherable] he was very curious about where he is coming from and whatever, but his story [indecipherable] story. But, you know, my sister as well, she didn't have a chance – she was never in the Jewish environment. She

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married to a very nice person, but he was a Christian from the – from **Pomerania**.

That's the northern part of **Poland**, right on the sea, on the **Baltic**. A very handsome, nice fellow, so they were – were okay, but the – the tr – all the tradition and everything what could be, have been lost. So, somehow we were lost for the Jewish community, right? But my s – nephew always was curious about that, and that was something which, for obvious reasons, my sister didn't talk about that.

Q: Right.

A: Because she was hidden, her br – her origin, as my mother did. As long my mother lived, I never mention my origin. I respect her will because listen, I don't know what she went through, what she passed, what make her decide to take this – to decide that. So I were – I were no one to challenge her decision, so I accept it like this. Once – once before, she was still alive, I come to the dilemma, what shall I do? If I shall say to my kids that I am Jewish or not? And that was – ma – ma – my – my – my daughter was like – my older daughter was like 10 years old, and the next one was almost nine. And my mother says, you know, this is something, it's a big question. I'm not in position to tell you what to do. And after, you know, a – a pause, she said, if you want to save them – to save them suffering, don't say it.

Q: Wow.

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A: That was what she told me. But I – I – I – I – you know, I kept thinking about it, and finally I told the decision to say it, because in [indecipherable] maybe by ignorance, some of our – my kids be in the environment where they will come to be a – maybe anti-Semitic or something like this. That's what'll be the worst thing what could happen to me right now. So I said that, and that was the time when my – my wife learned about my [indecipherable]. And I said, well, don't – you don't have to worry about, because according to the Christian religion, I am a Christian, never mind how – how my person is. I have been Christian, I still am Christian. But I don't want to deny it, where I'm coming from, and it's nice to be able to say the truth. So that's was years ago, and then once more – I had contact with Jews in my trade, because I was in the fur business. And I'd just been exporting fur from **Argentina to Europe** [indecipherable] when I matured to do that, before I was a furrier, then I come to be a wholesaler, and then I come to be an exporter. But the people who I knew and I was dealing with almost on the daily basis, most of them were Jews. Some of them, they come to be very close friends of mine. People much older, 30 years older than me. So they – they – they – they lived this period of the Holocaust entirely differently than I did. They were from – 16 - 17, you know, young people, or 30 –

Q: Right.

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A: – when you – when I born. So – and sh – well, make – always, you know, exchanging point of view ideas and histories and so in – and that was something which was eating me up, you know, because on the one side I were so close to them, and I want to be one of them. And that was the Polisher, because I speak very good Polish, and I never learned to speak Yiddish, unfortunately, so well, that's life. I lived the way I could.

Q: Right.

A: And at this stage of my life, since they to – the when – since, I think was 2001 or 2002, when this pi – this – this congress and wa – in **Toronto** has place. So when I call my – my – my nephew, and I told him that I met people from the place I have been in **Poland**, in the orphanage, and I mention the place, **Otwock**, say well, you know, I – looking through the papers, Mommy ple – papers, I find the pho – a – a picture, a photo, and on the – on the reverse says, something written, in **Otwock**, 1945. Said, can I have this picture or the copy of it? Copy it on both sides. And he did so an-and – and send it to me immediately. Very diligent, cause I spoke to him Thursday and Monday I had the photo in **Toronto**. And he lives in **San Francisco**, so for a freight express, immediately. And, in the photograph it was three young girls, and two little boys, one of them were myself, and – and **bres** to another boy like this, sitting the front, and three girls standing in the back. So also, after the

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congress in **Toronto**, some of the people I met there, they invite me to have a tea in the house, that's all, to get closer. And one of the ladies, who is 10 years older than me, she is almost 80, she is eight – 79. Very nice person. I was in her house, made a mention about this photography and I brought that with me, the copy. And she say, one – one second. She went, and she brought the album, and had the same photography made, because the one who was making the photos was her brother, her older brother. He – he was a, you know, he was an amateur, he likes to make photos, and he was the one who make this photo. So in – so she says, you know, this one, **Vanda**, I don't recall the last names. [indecipherable] I don't – I don't recall – is living in **Tel Aviv**, and this other one, also **Vanda**, lives in – in **Jerusalem**. She is not passing a very good moment in her life because she is – no – she is 70, she is overweight, she's depressed, blah, blah [indecipherable]. Maybe I have to go there and cheer her up, I said, just making a joke, big joke, okay. So, and say, but you know who is living there is this person, **Kornblum**(ph) his last name [indecipherable] he is very much involved in keeping the – the – the people who were in this orphanage together, you know, and following who is living where, having the phone number to get in touch, and he also pub – publish a boo – a little book, memories of the young – a young boy's memories, of his period of time on – during the war. And he is a very nice person, you can approach him, and he will be

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an excellent guide for you when you go there. An-And me – so I never had been in **Israel** before, and that was something which I own on myself. Actually, we were s – we were planning to go with my wife, in – in the year 2000, but she passed away in 1999 in April. So I didn't go, and after that I didn't felt like to go, you know.

Q: Right.

A: So, a – a couple years later, I called this person to – to **Tel Aviv**, and so okay, should I speak to you – you in English, or in Polish, what i – how do you feel more comfortable? So, either way. So we start to speak Polish, and I say, well, I am – I – I introduce myself. Say, oh, **Sophie's** brother. This touch my heart. Somebody – excuse me – who remember my – my late sister so well. That was in January the 12th, and then February the 12th, I were in **Tel Aviv**. I met him, his wife. They were classmates, **Sophie's** classma – classmates, so they knew each other –

Q: Right.

A: – very well. My feeling seems – the congress in – in **Toronto** was very lucrative [indecipherable] I should call it like that. But a-also was emotional because I – I met people who I knew these people exist maybe – may exist, but I didn't know how they are, where they are, right? And then – but brought me back to the family. And when I met blum – **Kornblum**(ph), and his wife, we agreed to meet in the morning for breakfast together in the hotel where I were standing. I didn't know

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him and he didn't know me, but I imagine that must be the person, and he was.

Very pleasant. His wife was a little darling. And we stopped to talk at nine o'clock on the morning, was 12, lunchtime already, we were sti – still talking. So, you know, memories, things, what we do since, and what happened to my sister, you know. We – when she – he knew that she was living to – to **Britain**, to **London**, and av – nothing else, so – anyway, for me was to find, like us finding old family who I left many, many – lost many, many years ago. And 1966, in **Buenos Aires**, on the – on the platform, you know, waiting for a subway – was a station where combined two different lines.

Q: Right.

A: So it always is full because you know, people change, it's a mixture, in – interchange place. I saw – and – and – an-and – and – in a – how do you say, in a tremendous amount of people, I saw face, a woman's face, and I felt – touched my heart, you know. Say, I know her, but you know, something very deep. I know her from much, might be from very, very long time ago. I didn't know, I couldn't remember, I was trying to remember, because the way impressed me, the fact I saw her. So in – in the meantime, I was trying to get closer to her.

Q: Right.

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A: And I close – I came to – and I – I decide, in this fraction of time, that I must know her from my childhood. Because I have good memory, I play chess, so I – I exercise my head – memory all the time, you know.

Q: Right.

A: And I couldn't remember where I know her from. So when I get close to her, I approach her in Polish, and she gets scared, and that, so I apologize in Spanish, of course. I didn't meant to – to – to – and, but she respond in Polish, says, who are you? So I say, well, I have my **stepsfather** surname. Well, what was your original name? So I told her, it didn't meant nothing to her. So she said, where you were during the war? When I mention where I were during the war, she embraced me. She asked me who – who else survive. So – and this lady happens to be one of the ladies who look after us in this orphanage where I were, when I was a very little, small boy.

Q: Right.

A: So the – the three pictures of my childhood, which I have and I possess, have been given to me by her, in 1966 in **Buenos Aires, Argentina**.

Q: Wow.

A: The next Sunday after this encounter, I visit her with my mother. It's a very, very emotional. She lost all her family, and she marry – she remarried to a man who

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also lost all his family. So they met – they le – and they lived together in **Buenos Aires**, in a good positions, he was in the – in the diamond business and doing well. So they lived in the very, very nice sector of the city. And well, that's it.

Q: I want to ask you –

A: Sure.

Q: I want to – I want to go back a little. What – what is the first thing you remember, what is the first memory you have of – of being in a place, or be – or seeing a person. Is there something –

A: No, the first pla – the first – well, many things – well, I'm not going into details, because it's – it's –

Q: Mm-hm, right.

A: This is a conversation only I had with my mom, and I a – a – she said to me, you cannot remember that, you were too small. And that is in **Sandomierz**. **Sandomierz** is a composed word. **San** is a [indecipherable] of a river, and **domierz** is – means when it's reaching to. So it's a river who reach – is reaching another river.

Q: Right.

A: Getting into **Wisla**. So that's the name of the place.

Q: Right.

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A: And I remember, you know, a countryside road with the trees on both side, and the kind of trees in the – in the carriage, which we were on, with horses pulling it. But you know, this carriage is like a la – **ladders** on each side to – to – to carry, how to say, crops. So we were sitting there, and I remember my – my sister was doing something to me which I – makes me bad – feel bad, you know, on the – in the back of my mo – mo – my – my mother. And I was mentioning that to my mom, and she said, you cannot remember that, that's only two years old. So this is one thing. The many others, I don't remember them, but through – have been told many times. I mil – I made them my memories, but really they not.

Q: Right.

A: So when we were coming back on the boat from there to **Warsaw**, so I was a two years old kid, a little bit over two years, walking well, and I was still drinking my mother's milk. And so was a little bit of a shame maybe, for some people. My mom ma – my mom didn't want to deprive me of this, because she didn't have anything else to give me.

Q: Right.

A: So, I ha – I always carrying a little bench, and sitting my mom there and then pulling out the breast, you know. So, this is something which I don't remember.

Q: Right.

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A: I have been told. And then in one occasion in – in **Warsaw**, crossing the – one of the bridges **[indecipherable]** point always have a guard there, or – a German guard. So I – I ca – I approach the German soldier and say to give him – give me his sword. And – and he give me an orange, he give me an orange, and I didn't know what is it, because I **[indecipherable]** before the war, so I didn't –

Q: Right.

A: – I di – I didn't know oranges. My sister was so eager to get her hands on it. So this is something which I don't remember, but I have been told.

Q: Right.

A: And the –

Q: Do you remember the day the war ended? Do you remember being, for lack of a better term, liberated?

A: No.

Q: What – do you remember anything that was going on in the orphanage at the time **[indecipherable]**

A: No, I remember – I – I remember some action, which have been taken at the place where the orphanage was. So because the a – th-the front was moving, so for security reasons we have been evacuated, all the kids, all the people from the

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convent. And when, through this, we – because we never went out, we were always there, right.

Q: Right.

A: Had us on the – on th – no – no mountain, but we're beyond the elevation. And I remember the – the – the – the – the – how you call it, I don't know, the

[indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: Going down. Sorry my English is not as good, huh?

Q: No, it's good.

A: And – and that – you know, the memories of a kid, a small kid, this

[indecipherable] was huge space, you know. And I – I went to visit it, and I'd find the place in 1992. And, well the **[indecipherable]** was there. The space was not as big I – I imagined it, or I reme – I recall it. So when – when we were – when we were evacuated, I don't know what station, what – what train station was this, but I remember a station and on the, you know, ho-how do you call it, on the –

Q: Platform?

A: Yeah, platform, yes, were many corpse in the white, you know – you know, it was sheets or something like. The – mi – mainly of Germans who were coming back from the west – from the east front, and dying in the trains, wounded people

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who couldn't make it home back – back home, are dying. So, that's – I re – I remember that because we had to walk, and their – they were like this, so don't step on them. For a small kid who has to be – make a big, you know, step, you know, was hard for me, I was –

Q: Yeah.

A: – I was small. Well, my – my – my [indecipherable] slow down because of the lack of – of food. In **Warsaw** the – I s – always remember is the hunger.

Q: Yeah.

A: I was terribly hungry. I was eating those little apples, wild apples. They are very green and very red, half and half. But if you put something like this in your mouth, are so – no – no – no – no bitter, but like – like – like lemon, but much –

Q: Sour?

A: Oh, sour, terribly sour. I don't know how I could eat it, but that is the only thing I got, so I ate it. And those things were bringing dysentery problems, terrible, too, and I survived them all. And I recall being very smalls there, that sometime the kids need to feel like to move the bowel, and they have nothing in it, so they – they – the intestine was going out. And the ladies help us, pushing it back. And we being so small, like four years, or four years and a half, we learned. So was not so many women to look after us.

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Q: Right.

A: So we help each other when that occurs. We knew we have to push it back –

Q: Right.

A: – into the other. So those things, I didn't felt like it's something terrible. When we talking in the normal circumstances, it's terrible.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah. But in those times was the most natural thing.

Q: Right.

A: You know.

Q: Like when you were o – when you were on this train platform and you saw all the bodies wrapped in sheets –

A: Yeah.

Q: – did that even – did it frighten you?

A: Impress me? No.

Q: Did it – it – nothing?

A: No.

Q: It was just part of life?

A: Yeah, it was just – we – that was the dead people, but that was every day, you know, and – but I didn't feel fear, I was too small.

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Q: Right.

A: So the sense of fear, that was unfamiliar to me, was very familiar to my daw – sister, and to my mom. That's why, you know, when my mother took the decision to remarry, to the person [indecipherable] say well, she was one of the many Jews who didn't want to be Jew.

Q: Right.

A: It was like a punishment to be a Jew, you know? And she was a young woman, she was only 35 when she remarried. And she was an attractive woman. The – her new husband was three years older than she was. So she was expecting to have a normal life –

Q: Right.

A: – you know? And the answer she gave me when I ask her if I should tell or no my dot – my daughters, gives me an idea, a remote idea what she could happen to – us to.

Q: Right.

A: In order to – you know, to feel like this. I – I'm sorry because I didn't – when was the time to ask, I didn't, you know, because I know – I don't know much about my – my histor – family history before and all this, who knew maybe a little bit more, or sure more than me, was my sister, but we didn't talk about those things.

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Q: No.

A: She hide under her [indecipherable] the same way my mother, that she learned to do that. And for me, I didn't care.

Q: Right.

A: You know? And during the time I were living in **England**, with other Polish families which mainly were anti-Semitic, with or with no reason, I wouldn't major – I – I would be able to – how anti-Semitic [indecipherable] they will be just discriminating, or they will be hating the Jews. I don't know that. But I am – the way I have been raise, you know, was a very, very important thing to – to keep my private parts, don't show it.

Q: Right.

A: Don't – don't pee when the other kids are peeing, you know, things like that. So this – those are – were kind of, you know, limitations of normal life, which I were not – I were of wh-why –

Q: Right.

A: I just accepted like a mandatory thing, that's it.

Q: Right. And they never worried about that at the – at the orphanage, or they – they kept everybody out, cause – were they worried about you being discovered as

–

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A: Where?

Q: At the orphanage, at the convent?

A: Well, no, because we were not exposed to nobody else, only to the few ladies who were to – looking after us.

Q: Right.

A: Always the same, the same environment, the same place, not going out, nobody saw us.

Q: So it wasn't an issue.

A: Yeah, tha – like in a – yeah, like be in jail.

Q: You no – you never –

A: Nah.

Q: You never went outside at all. Di – you don't remember going outside at all during this –

A: No, outside, yeah, and it was – it was a backyard –

Q: Okay.

A: – where the kids played, but that was all.

Q: That was all. And so when you've – when you've come to these conferences and met other people that were in the same place that you were, do they remember the ladies who took care of them as well? Do you have conversations about them?

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A: No, I didn't – I didn't find no one from the first place where I were at. I find people from **Otwock**, was the – on the second place.

Q: Right.

A: Where I had been taken in 1945. So, those people are the ones who I met, not from the – before.

Q: You – so you haven't found anybody –

A: From the other place, nobody.

Q: No. Do you remember how many kids were in – were there with you? No.

A: I don't know. A few.

Q: But you felt safe there. Did you – you felt – I mean, you probably weren't happy in the technical sense, or did you – you just didn't know any better, or any different.

A: Of course I didn't know any better.

Q: Right.

A: The only thing was missing to me was the warmness of the caring person who loves me. I was – I was like a little animal. No, really, I mean it, you know. I – if I da – da – somebody told me something which I don't like, I – I – I spit on him, or kick him, or – or you know, no manners at all. The biggest offense we can inflict one to the other is, are you a dirty Jew? We are all Jews. And things like that, so you know, it's – I was too small really, to – to be conscientious and – in the hour of

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the situation I was living. Maybe the fact of being unconscious about it, saved me, protect me.

Q: Yeah.

A: So –

Q: Was there any kind of schooling going on, were you being read books, were you drawing – I mean, what did you do – what did – do you remember what an average day –

A: Well, drawing, yes, yes, drawing, yes I did, because – and I draw well, since I was a kid, and one of my daughters does the same. And I remember, made a beautiful cloud with a huge, long hat on it. And o – in the very end, when I finish it [indecipherable] I – I improve it by making a – big breasts, you know? Two big tits on it, really, yeah. You know, but it's interesting because you know, I mean, as – as a grow up person, you know, you analyze what that means.

Q: Right.

A: And – but of course, what – that was the be – th-the – the most rewarding thing which I remember from my childhood. And then when – when my mom comes back, **Dora**, I think she mentioned something of that to my mother. And consequently of that [indecipherable] they called the relation of the – of the trip,

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and she was embarrassed because I [indecipherable]. So, everything have an explanation –

Q: Right, right.

A: – a logic explanation, yes it did. But you know, since [indecipherable] thank you for tonight, because I am alive, and the life have been – after – have been generous to me, you know, five – four incredible daughters. Really, I mean it [indecipherable] good students, sharp girls, good looking girls, you know. They are professional [indecipherable] they are married to good boys, they choose properly. And I always told them, married is a possibility, shouldn't be a necessity. And try to be good [indecipherable] on your own person, because then you will be more demanding when it comes to the – to the partnership for the rest of your life.

Q: Right.

A: So – and it's okay.

Q: That's fantastic. Is there anything else you – you want to say, you want to add?

A: No, no, I thank you for your time.

Q: Thank you for your time.

A: It's a – it's a story.

Q: It's a very interesting story. I thank you for sharing it with us.

A: Pardon me?

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Q: I thank your for sharing it with us.

A: Thank you.

Q: Okay. One more thing. Is there time?

A: There was a time – I did have a time to start to wr-write my memories, many times. I read a lot, you know, and there happens to be a demanding, as a reader. So I didn't want to write something which will be, you know, they say, technically not good, or whatever. So, that's why I abandon it, at least 10 or more times. I write to a point, then I say, well, now I have to start from the scratch, it's not – it's not the way. It's – that's not –

Q: Well –

A: At least leave something documenting.

Q: Yes. And we – we thank you very much.

A: Thank you.

Q: This concludes the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview.

Conclusion of Interview

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