

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Sophie Koper  
June 26, 2001  
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## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of a taped interview with Sophie Koper, conducted on June 26, 2001 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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**SOPHIE KOPER**  
**June 26, 2001**

Beginning Tape One

Answer: You are good interviewer. Though you didn't -- you didn't have much luck with Mr. Milosh.

Question: Oh, I thought I did. You didn't think so?

A: Oh, he kind of was hesitant sometimes, you know, to say something or not -- that was his fault, because he was kind of --

Question: Good morning, Sophie.

Answer: Good morning, how are you?

Q: I'm fine. Nice to see you here.

A: Nice to see you, really very nice. I -- I seen you several times.

Q: Yes.

A: I think maybe more than with Milosh and Novak.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Something else was [indecipherable]

Q: Really? Well, today we're going to do you. So tell me when and where you were born.

A: I was born in Moscow, on five -- on -- in May 14, '16.

Q: In 1916?

A: Right.

Q: Yes. And your name at the time of your birth was what?

A: It was Fanny -- F-a-n-n-y.

Q: Yes.

A: Margulis.

Q: And that's -- can you spell your last name?

A: I'm not sure there -- what the ending is. It's -- should be M-a-r-g-u-l-i-s, or e-i-s.

Q: Or e-i-s?

A: I mean i-e-s --

Q: i-e-s, right.

A: Yeah.

Q: And your father's name was Benjamin?

A: Benjamin, yeah.

Q: And your mother, Tatana? Was --

A: Tatiana.

Q: Tatiana.

A: Right.

Q: And w -- had they -- they had been living in Moscow when you were born?

A: At that time when I was born, yes, mm-hm.

Q: Yes. And they came from where?

A: From Warsaw.

Q: From Warsaw.

A: Warsaw. Th -- I don't know whether it was the beginning of the war, or that was a little bit later, and anyway they, for some reason they went to Moscow. And m-my mother's what -- what she was doing, what she -- what she was, a -- an medical person, and they allowed her to live in

Moscow, because at that time, under the Tsar, Jews were not a-allowed to live in Moscow, unless they were engineers, technicians and medical people.

Q: Uh-huh. And what was your mother at the time?

A: She was fercherka, which is a -- a -- more than registered nurse. I think they have now this kind of people who work with the physicians, surgeons and so on, and they're very close to -- they didn't graduate as -- as doctors, but they had --

Q: They had a lot of training.

A: Right, yeah.

Q: And your father, what was he doing? Do you know?

A: No, I know that in Warsaw he had the store, a haberdashery store.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I'm not sure.

Q: What are your earliest -- I know you were only there for a few years, but do you have memories from being in Moscow as a child?

A: Well, one memory which I am -- I am not so sure it's a really memory, because I was four or maybe five years old, that I was running through a corridor in the apartment, and knocking at that -- one of the doors, wanted to get in and crying, and somebody picked me up. And I -- later on I told my mother and she said, well you described this corridor, though I -- it was true, was long corridor, but I don't remember the rest.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: That's all, you know. It's the very early childhood, if I really remember that.

Q: Right, right. Do you remember the chaos of Moscow at the time of the revolution?

A: No, I don't think I -- I re-remember that, but later on I -- I m -- read and heard --

Q: Right.

A: -- that it was a very dangerous street. You shouldn't walk around. There is a very good book ab-about what was going on in Moscow at that time, by Jeromski, who was a writer, and -- and he wrote about the son and -- and -- and father who met ge -- ac -- accidentally that they were working together in a -- some kind of labor, slave labor or whatever. It wasn't slave labor because they were free to go. And she -- this guy who had gi-given him a place to live, told them, don't wander too much around Moscow, it's a very dangerous place. And it was. It was shooting innocent people [indecipherable] somebody brought out to uncover their name, and -- and they were just shooting around the city, yeah.

Q: Now, I understand that your father left Moscow to -- to try to get to Odessa.

A: Right.

Q: Do you re -- do -- did you remember his leaving?

A: No, not at all.

Q: No.

A: No, I don't.

Q: And what were you told -- I understand later that you were told that he was -- he went to Odessa for --

A: He was trying to get to Odessa, I don't know how, what and how, because trains were not riding th -- you know, there was no schedules or anything, just a train comes in the station and you get in and you ask where -- where is it going. It -- it was a complete chaos and he was trying to get to Odessa, but my mother's brother said that -- that they never seen him.

Q: Uh-huh. And so do you think that he left in 1918 or 1917, do you have any idea?

A: I think it probably -- se -- eight -- si -- 17 or 18.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I -- I have no idea, I can't say that.

Q: And then how long did you stay in Moscow after he had left, do you --

A: I think my mother decided to go back to Warsaw and she was looking for a way no -- down there. She probably found out about echelon. It used to be called echelon, this train. This was set up by -- I don't know, it ma -- it must be later than '18, because when Poland regained their status as -- as a -- as a country, they decided to help the Polish people to come back. And if you - - if you fi -- if you ever were a citizen of Poland, you could apply and look for a -- for a s -- town where it will stop. So probably my mother did that, find out where -- where it is. But before that, we went to Krasnodar, which is a town close to Caucasian mountains, where my grandparents on ma -- my mother's side lived. And we went there and stayed, I d -- don't know how long.

Q: Was that nice for you to be there?

A: I think it was nice, yes, it was v-very nice house with the verandas [indecipherable] and -- and there was a huge tree where our neighbor made for children to climb in, and there was a little house there, but they didn't let me go. I don't know, maybe once I was there, but was -- it was a joyful time.

Q: Yes.

A: And my grandfather passed at the time and we started our way back --

Q: To Warsaw.

A: -- to Warsaw.

Q: And your sister was born when?

A: She was born in Warsaw in 1910.

Q: So before your parents left for --

A: Right, oh yeah, yeah.

Q: -- for Moscow, obviously, right. Were you close with your sister?

A: Oh yes, very much. Well, you know how siblings are.

Q: Right. And you were six years younger --

A: Right, yeah.

Q: -- right, so it's a big -- it's a --

A: Well, this is later years, yeah.

Q: Right.

A: So --

Q: So you went to Warsaw.

A: Yes, we went to Warsaw by echelon, a train which stopped at Rostov. Rostov on -- on Don, which is dona in Polish, whatever. I keep forget -- Dniep -- no. I keep forgetting --

Q: [indecipherable]

A: -- the name of it in th -- in English.

Q: What is it in Polish?

A: The Dnieper.

Q: The Dnieper, yeah.

A: Right. And we had to cross the -- the sea from Odessa to Rostov, and the only thing I remember, I was sick on th --

Q: [indecipherable]

A: -- on this -- on the trip, yeah, that's all I remember [indecipherable]

Q: And what are you, about five or six at this point?

A: No, I probably was six or seven, yeah.



Q: Uh-huh.

A: And when we came to Poland I -- I didn't speak Polish yet, and I remember later -- later [indecipherable] in -- in school that was a poli -- teacher of Polish, and he reminded me all the time that I am -- that I am putting the -- the sentences in a way Russians put it. And -- and so it was kind of a long way. So we cou -- we came to Warsaw in '22, I think. '22 [indecipherable], and I went to school, and the school was co-educational, which was a big, big st-step forward.

Q: What was it called?

A: Co-educational.

Q: Co-educational, oh.

A: Right, right. Boys and girls together.

Q: Right.

A: Unthinkable. And we were there for a couple of years.

Q: Was this a private school?

A: It was a private school, yeah.

Q: So your mother had a fair amount of money to be able to do that?

A: No, she didn't, but she started to work, and I -- I really don't -- I don't know how she managed, yeah.

Q: Mm-hm. And your sister went to that same school as well?

A: Right, uh-huh.

Q: And were you -- you -- so you knew Polish fluently? You grew up knowing [indecipherable]

A: Right, and forget completely Russian.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I know sometimes when they speak, I -- I hear something I understand, but I forgot once the -  
- I think your losing language is very easy.

Q: Very easy.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. And at home you spoke Polish, so w-was there Yiddish spoken at home at all?

A: No.

Q: Nothing.

A: No, that was unreligious house, and --

Q: Totally non-religious. So did you learn about Judaism at all, or [indecipherable] much?

A: Well, I knew that I -- I -- that I am Jewish, but that's all. It's a [indecipherable] up to --

Q: Right.

A: -- yeah, up to -- up to here. I tried to go to synagogue but just couldn't catch it.

Q: Right. And does -- were you in a school that was mixed with Jewish students as well as  
Christian students --

A: Right.

Q: -- Catholic students?

A: Yeah, yeah, ri -- oh yes, yes. There were Catholic, say special classes for Catholics, and  
special classes for Jews.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah. But I mostly didn't go.

Q: You just left school. And they didn't say anything?

A: No, nothing.

Q: And how were the relations between the Jewish students at -- you, and the Catholic students, were they --

A: Very good.

Q: That was good?

A: Very good, yeah.

Q: So you didn't feel --

A: No --

Q: -- anti-Semitism?

A: -- not at all, not at all. That what I am saying, that I myself never felt anti-Semitism, but it used to be -- used to be for awhile in late 30's that the national party came to -- to power, and students in the university demanded a diff -- different places for -- for Jews to sit. But I -- I don't think it ever came th-through this. There were a lot of fights between s-students in the -- at the university, mm-hm.

Q: But before we get to the university years, tell me a little bit about growing up with a single mother, obviously, which I don't know that wasn't so typical at the time. It was --

A: No, it wasn't, and well, we had the -- a helper.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And she was helping with, y -- you know, the thing -- the house and keeping the house clean and -- and cooking, some cooking and my mother was away working. It wasn't hard, no, because my mother was a very loving mother.

Q: What was she like?

A: She was lovely. I am sorry I didn't bring this photo.

Q: We can show the photos later.

A: Right.

Q: Yes.

A: And so it wasn't harsh. I mean, we were not rich or anything, you know, that was far from there. But we were get -- getting along fine. And my grandmother -- I slept in the same room with my grandmother, and she collapsed and died of probably a heart attack.

Q: And when was that? That was later?

A: That was probably late 20's, I don't remember exactly, no.

Q: So your grandmother, who you -- who had lost her husband in Odessa, came with you to --

A: Right.

Q: I see.

A: She did, uh-huh. So --

Q: Did you like school?

A: I did and I didn't. You know how it is with -- later on I went to another school, and after that I went still to another school, Polish schools. And the last one I went was in different part of Warsaw, and it was kind of funny because the school was on a -- a high building, that was high probably at that time, it was nine floors or something like that, and the school was on eight and nine floor. And we had a different entrance because the tenants who lived in -- in the -- demanded that that will ha -- but sometimes we got out and come down the stairs of the tenants and rang the -- the -- yeah, what is it?

Q: Ring the bell?

A: Ring the bell, yeah. And one of the rang the bell was later on my very close friend here. That was her mother who opened the door, and we were already down.

Q: And why were you moving to so many schools? Why were you going to so many schools?

A: Well, the second school I went from [indecipherable] it was a science school more -- more. And th-that was more mathematical, physical, you know, and physics and so on and I wasn't doing too well. I mean, I was not very interested in.

Q: In science?

A: But the -- the next school was mer -- mor -- more ada -- I have adapted much better, yeah.

Q: Did you have very close friends when you were growing up, before you went to university?

A: Yes, well, I -- I can't recall, you know, any -- any really close friends, but I'm di -- you know, just colleagues, yeah. And --

Q: Did you go to the movies?

A: And go -- we were -- yeah, yes, we went to the movies, but had to take off my ar -- [indecipherable] kind of a [indecipherable] with the -- with the -- something on it, so we had to take this off and go to the movies. Sometimes we were caught that we shouldn't go.

Q: You mean, you were s -- you were going [indecipherable]

A: We were not allowed, yeah, to go in, yeah.

Q: Really? Why?

A: Well, because of the age, you know. We wanted to see the movies with Greta Garbo and si -- all those big -- and it was not allowed for a --

Q: Why, because these were romantic movies, and you were supposed to be too -- you were too young?

A: Right, yeah.

Q: But you went and you liked them?

A: Yeah, very much, of course.

Q: Yes.

A: And I collected the -- they had the postcard, they have the postcards of the [indecipherable] movie.

Q: And you collected those?

A: And I collected them.

Q: Movies were very popular, weren't they?

A: Oh yes, very much, very much.

Q: And did you listen to radio?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: And what was -- what was that like? What were -- was it a lot of news, or music or what was that like?

A: It was wa -- one and the other, a lot of news and then music, yeah. It's where we learned all this bombing coming, you know, that was not [indecipherable] it was, you know, when the war started, yeah.

Q: I see. Did you ever hear Janusz Korczak on the radio?

A: No, I didn't, but I knew about his -- about his school and his children, yes. No --

Q: Right.

A: -- I never heard him on the radio. Was he on the radio?

Q: I gather he was.

A: He was?

Q: Yes.

A: Oh.

Q: But it -- it may have been earlier, or if it was -- whatever reason, you didn't listen.

A: Right, yeah. Well, I was busy, of course, with school and --

Q: And how did you decide to go and study journalism? Why was that --

A: Well, I -- I used to like to write stories and things, but didn't come out anything out of it. I would still write, but --

Q: So when did you --

A: -- it's -- it's in the drawer.

Q: It's in the drawers --

A: Right.

Q: -- not ka --

A: Yeah.

Q: So when did you start university?

A: Let's see, 30 -- yeah, I ma -- ma -- mature in '33 -- '34 -- '35 probably, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh. And you went for how long, a couple of years?

A: Couple of years.

Q: And did you get the degree?

A: No, I didn't.

Q: You didn't?

A: I didn't. It was just a -- the war just --

Q: Started in '39.

A: -- you know, yeah.

Q: And how many years would you have --

A: And but I was also working as a -- as a secretary in meantime.

Q: So does that mean you were going part time to school? [indecipherable]

A: No, no, I was going full time, but I was still a -- a secretary for the afternoon, so -- yeah.

Q: So how many year -- if you had completed, how many years would it have taken to complete the degree?

A: Four years.

Q: Four years.

A: Right.

Q: And this is when you met Stefan Koper, yes?

A: Yes, I met him at the -- some kind of -- he was coming to school just -- he -- he was already a journalist.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But he was coming to school, to some meetings you know, [indecipherable] and so on, and so I met him there.

Q: So did you become friends then? [indecipherable]

A: No, not really, no. He invited me to a journalism b-ball, and not any close friend, no.

Q: Uh-huh. Okay.

A: But we knew each other.

Q: But you knew each other.

A: Yeah, uh-huh.

Q: Now, were you in a group of people that knew each other so you saw each other --

A: Yeah, it was a group, mm-hm, right.

Q: So did you see each other with some regularity?

A: No --

Q: No.

A: -- not especially, no. No, when they -- when the meeting was held, and then I was there.



Q: And what was it like in the university at this time, because the Nazis had taken over Germany in '33 [indecipherable]

A: Yeah, but this has nothing to do with -- with Poland, but there was a fertile ground for anti-Semitism there. There is no -- no doubt about it.

Q: So did you start feeling somewhat fearful or apprehensive?

A: No, I didn't, I -- I had no idea that -- you know, Polish people never showed it, exactly. There were newspapers on one side, and -- and on the other side, it's -- it was a democracy still, but the -- the national [indecipherable] there was [indecipherable] and str -- there were several factions, and the -- they were writing whatever they have in their mind, you know --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- it was a de-democratic [indecipherable]. But it -- it was a -- I think it was a fertile place to start some -- some of Hitler's ideas.

Q: Wh -- when you were going to school, were you asked to sit in the back, or told to sit in the back?

A: Oh no, no, no, no.

Q: It didn't happen?

A: No, never happened, no. What was addressing this, it was a -- in '36 or seven, there was some fight at the university. The -- the nationalists were against the -- the liberal ones, and they were just fighting among themselves and they wanted to have -- do some different -- different places to sit down. But I don't think it ever came to be.

Q: And you were at which university?

A: Warsaw University.

Q: Warsaw University.

A: But the -- the journalism was on a different place, not the -- not that the -- the building of university.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah.

Q: And your sister was studying at Warsaw University also?

A: She did, yeah.

Q: In di -- in journalism or not?

A: I don't remember what she was taking in there.

Q: Uh-huh. And you were living at home, both of you?

A: At home, yeah, both of us.

Q: Yes, and your mother is, of course, continuing to work.

A: Right, yeah.

Q: So, in 1939, when the Germans attacked Poland, is this a big surprise?

A: Not such a big surprise, but the -- well, the -- the government was telling us absolutely something entirely different. That we're strong and -- and that they have tanks made of, I don't know, cartons or whatever. I-It was unbelievable. We just couldn't believe that -- that's coming. And it came, first of September, 1939, and we heard the bombing coming closer and closer. And then it didn't take long. But of course, Warsaw was fighting through for another 20 days or something like that. And then they came -- they came marching the main street of Warsaw.

Q: And you remember that.

A: Right. But before that it was a kind of a -- a -- a week or 10 days that they were free, the -- and I remember with my sister that we were walking in Warsaw ruined -- n-not ruined the way it was ruined after the uprising, but it -- it was pretty badly damaged, and one thing I remember

very well, it's -- it's a dead horse on the street, you know. Some -- there were no dead people, so I saw the -- the horse there.

Q: Just the horse.

A: And --

Q: That must have been a big shock walking around under those circumstances.

A: Oh yeah, it was, but it was quiet, and pe -- people were shoot -- just going around, not knowing what's going to come. And then they -- they get -- got in, and they marched in. The -- in this thoroughfare of Warsaw.

Q: And did you go and look, or could you see it from your apartment [indecipherable]

A: No, no, nobody came out.

Q: Nobody came out.

A: Nobody, no, they were empty street.

Q: Mm.

A: Yes. So that was kind of a quiet two months, and everybody was waiting for orders -- what is -- what is going to happen to us. And it started to happen i-in early fall, October.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: That they -- they were just [indecipherable]

Q: The what? The --

A: [indecipherable] word for at -- not advertising, how they say, placard.

Q: Announcements?

A: A whats?

Q: Announcements?

A: Announcement, but n-not by radio, but by --

Q: Posters?

A: Posters, posters, that's right. That there is a typhus, and that they going to change the -- Warsaw, and the Jews have to come out and live at certain places. They didn't say exactly where, but later on they did say, and w-we thought, you know, that we will just stay at home, but we didn't. We were told to move inside the ghett -- the ghetto didn't exist --

Q: Right.

A: -- actually, at the time. And the wall didn't go up until we were already inside. And the wall usually was running through the half of the street. So we were looking for something and we couldn't find anyone. Then my -- our dentist, who lived inside of this perimeter where -- where we -- we could live too, offered us living quarters, so we decided to move there. It was a [indecipherable] complete [indecipherable]. It was 1940 October. And we moved whatever we could, just by hand, and by a little cart which my -- my d -- my daughter's husband found somewhere.

Q: You mean your sister's husband.

A: My -- my sister, what -- what'd I say, daughter?

Q: You said -- yeah.

A: I did -- never had a daughter. So, see how mixed up I am? Okay. Well --

Q: Let me ask you something.

A: Yeah?

Q: Are there rumors going around? What are people saying to each other w-with this -- wi --

A: Just rumors. Rumors and posters, that's all.

Q: Now, Chernyokov is made head of the Jewish --

A: Right, yeah --

Q: -- council in October, right?

A: -- he was, uh-huh, right.

Q: And what did you think of that?

A: Well, we thought it's probably wonderful, but we didn't know what's going on. I had the -- the first -- my ausweiss, which is a kind of a paper which shows that you are not ready for -- for deportation. It was from -- from Judenrat, yeah. And because the f -- a friend of mine -- my friend's father belonged to the -- to the [indecipherable], and so I got this ausweiss, which nothing was worth. I didn't work there.

Q: That was in the beginning?

A: That was in the beginning.

Q: And what was his name? Your friend's father's name?

A: Jelinski, right.

Q: And he was on the council with Chernyokov?

A: Right.

Q: Right. So was -- when you moved into the place, what was it -- what was it like?

A: Well, we moved into this dentist, Anika was her name, and she let us a very large living room, and facilities -- I mean in th -- in the kitchen, and then a very tiny room for my sister and her husband. And my mother le -- wasn't well at -- all of a sudden, because her first -- her first incident or ac -- or accident, happened when they bombarded Warsaw, and we were told by the - that we should hide behind -- inside of the houses, or inside of the gates of the houses. And she did that, and this other -- arg -- other group, too, and she saw a little who was crying, and she gave her a candy. And somebody remark, you shouldn't do that, cause there's spies now, you're not supposed to do it. And before she knew, a policeman came in and I -- I nof -- not arrested

her, but took her to -- to a -- the o -- office -- police office and charged her with something, but they -- he let her go. She was very upset about it. And since then she wasn't very well.

Q: Was this the Jewish police who picked her up?

A: Pardon?

Q: Jewish police who picked her up, or the --

A: There wasn't any Jewish police at that time --

Q: At that time.

A: -- no. The f -- the Judenrat started to form po-police and so on --

Q: Right.

A: -- on -- on demand from Gestapo and Germans.

Q: And did you think your mother was getting depressed, or she was getting physically ill?

A: Oh she -- no, she -- no, she wasn't well physically, and then depressed also, yeah.

Q: So how old would she have been by -- around this time, do you think, about?

A: How bo -- how what?

Q: How old do you think your mother was?

A: I don't know. Probably over 50, yeah.

Q: Over 50.

A: 50, yeah, or 56, I don't know.

Q: And how was your grandmother at this time?

A: I don't know.

Q: You don't know.

A: No.

Q: Does your sister get a -- get a special pass as well as you, when you [indecipherable]

A: Yes, she did, yeah, from Judenrat, yeah.

Q: But you're not working, cause there's -- there are no workshops set up, there's nothing --

A: No --

Q: -- set up.

A: -- there's nothing to do there. It was just because I knew the people there.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah. Well, actually, you know what Germans were doing, they were preparing us for all this what was coming, by depressing us, that we are much less regular people than -- then the -- the other folks.

Q: Did it work?

A: Yeah. I -- the -- that we are --

Q: Not as good.

A: -- not as good as -- as German people.

Q: And how did that make you feel?

A: Terrible, terrible. I -- at this time in 40's, and early '41, I used to go outside to our friends who never moved from their places, counting probably on the -- the -- that -- that they didn't know [indecipherable] leaving, or they -- they knew, but they didn't disclose that. And they prevailed until the uprising.

Q: Really?

A: I'm talking about not the uprising in ghetto --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- I'm talking about the German uprising --

Q: The Polish uprising in '44.

A: -- right, right.

Q: And you were able to go in and out of the ghetto before [indecipherable]

A: Yes, yes, there were possibility and I -- I went several times. Just [indecipherable] took off the -- the band on -- on your right hand and -- and went and it was won -- wonderful. It's a feeling like something very heavy [indecipherable].

Q: Was it dangerous for you to leave?

A: Not at thi --

Q: You --

A: -- this time, no.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: But you had a --

A: Unless a -- I would -- I don't know, I probably didn't look very much Jewish, or something. I didn't have any problem. But it wa -- didn't last very long, cause they closed this -- this courts. These were courts.

Q: Courts? [indecipherable]

A: Yeah. C-o-u-r-t.

Q: C-o-u-r-t.

A: Right.

Q: Yes.

A: C-o-u-r-t.

Q: So, as soon as you moved into this area that then became the -- the ghetto, the walled-in ghetto, were you put -- you had to put on an armband --



A: Right, mm-hm.

Q: And it was -- what was the color, do you remember?

A: White with blue, the David --

Q: So this must have been also extremely strange for you, and for everybody else.

A: I don't know. But you know, there was so many things around us which were terrible. First of all, the change of the living quarters. The -- the -- the surrounding, and you know, somebody's else house you live, and tha -- there was a lack of food. There was a -- our housekeeper, who used to come to our regular place where we used to live, and she brought some food from -- from reich. Reich was -- was anything which is -- which Germans occupied, it was called reich, r-e-i-c-h.

Q: Right.

A: And they were o-occupied [indecipherable] and -- and they -- it was m-more contact with other people, and here all of a sudden we're cut off of everything. And there was nothing to -- to live by.

Q: So this was the least of it, having the armband, it was not -- was not as [indecipherable]

A: The armband -- the armband worked only in -- in the ghetto. When you go out -- you couldn't go out with your armband. Out of the ghetto you couldn't go.

Q: Did -- did things change really immediately when you moved, so that there was much less food, water, electricity --

A: No wa -- there was water.

Q: There was water?

A: Yeah, yeah, for a long time, mm-hm. But food, yes, there were -- you know, the little boys were smuggling bread and all kinds of food. But when you paid the [indecipherable] which was the German, later on in the day, in -- lots of food came into ghetto by --

Q: They smuggled it.

A: You know, by -- yeah, mm-hm.

Q: And then, what were they [indecipherable]

A: Everything has been smuggled, yeah.

Q: And they would sell it sort of like a black market, they would sell it so they could get --

A: Yes, expensive, yeah.

Q: But you weren't working, your mother wasn't working, so how did you get food?

A: Well, we ha -- we had some money, and I -- wi -- we sold out a lot of th -- table sel -- silver and so on when we still were outside there, the ghetto, I went to -- to a market and sold out for whatever, flo-flour or what is -- oil or whatever.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: And how did you bring in the stuff that you bought?

A: Well, it wasn't ghetto at the time.

Q: Uh-huh, so it was still [indecipherable]

A: No, it was before, yeah.

Q: -- that was alright. Before the wall was put up.

A: Right, yeah.

Q: And did you go see your friends when you went out?

A: Yes, I went to my friends, I went to a friend very far away.

Q: And did they suggest --

A: Well, they -- they helped us a little bit, as much as they could, but not too much. We actually sold out everything before we went to ghetto, and we just lived day by day.

Q: Did you think when you left the ghetto, in order to sell out stuff, that at some point maybe you should [indecipherable]

A: I didn't go out of the ghetto to sell.

Q: I don't -- I know [indecipherable] yes, when you --

A: That was before that, yeah, yeah.

Q: -- when you moved into the area that became the ghetto.

A: Right.

Q: Did you ever think of staying outside of that area, or --

A: Well, yes I did, but I didn't see any possibility. My sister could go to Brazil before we went to ghetto, when somebody gave her papers.

Q: Really?

A: And -- but she didn't. It -- it wasn't that -- it wasn't yet so strong feeling that we can't get -- that we can't get through, you know, in -- in a few months, in a year. We got this bullet -- bulletin, a Polish bulletin that it will not last long an-and so on, and you know, this kind of things. But the real break-out was the Stalingrad offensive and that was much, much later.

Q: So tell -- let's go back. When -- when the -- when the wall is built, do you now have this feeling of what --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- this is not going to end so soon. Something --

A: Right, of course. And we lived with this dentist friend and she had her windows turned into the place where they checking it out, the ghetto, and I looked what was go -- what's going on. You know they s -- they were beating the small children with [indecipherable] and cutting the Jewish Hassidim, the beards, and laughing [indecipherable] all -- was right there.

Q: So it was just getting worse and worse?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you now begin to see dead bodies, or was that later?

A: Dead body was -- was later.

Q: It was later.

A: Yeah. Because they ev -- every -- every community, ev -- Jewish community which were left over, they were coming to Warsaw. It started to be, you know, not just wars -- Warsaw citizens, but everybody else. And from Germany and -- and even from abroad, yeah.

Q: So there's a huge number of people who come into a very, very small --

A: Place, yeah.

Q: -- area. There's almost 400,000 people --

A: Right.

Q: [indecipherable] becomes the ghetto.

A: Yeah.

Q: So this must have been awful.

A: Awful. In --

Q: Really chaotic --

A: -- in living quarters, yes.

Q: Yes.

A: The typhus really began at that time.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I had typhus, too.

Q: You did?

A: Yes. It was in '42, in -- in winter and all of a sudden I became very ill, and it -- there was a -- there wasn't an -- even doctors available, but a friend doctor came and gave me some whatever. I went through it with a very high fever, and if it -- it will become meningitis after the fever becomes really high. But I --

Q: But you got through it. So you were living with your mother, your grandmother, your sister, and your brother-in-law?

A: No, grandmother wa-wasn't alive.

Q: Your grandmother was gone.

A: Yeah. Grandmother was gone yeah, that was long time before.

Q: Before you moved?

A: Before we moved, yeah.

Q: I see.

A: Oh, much before we moved.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah, yeah. She lived until, I don't know, '36 or seven yeah.

Q: '36 -- '36. And is your brother-in-law working, your sister working, or is no one working?

A: Well, he was working. We -- i -- you can't -- you can't say that --

Q: Right.

A: -- he was working. There was no workplace as [indecipherable] can imagine.

Q: Right.

A: There was, you know, some kind of a trading. You -- you had this and I give you that and then you give me I don't know what, flour or -- or macaroni or whatever and -- and so on. Or you have contact with the outside, meaning the Polish, which I had, and -- and could sell something to friends and they will give you any money. But that was all in the beginning, in the beginning of the ghetto.

Q: Right. And do you remember these self-help organizations, house committees around Warsaw?

A: As far as I remember, it didn't -- it had nothing to do with me.

Q: So did y -- you didn't know about s -- any soup kitchens, or --

A: Well, they were organized, all those kind of things, but I was out of the area.

Q: You were out of that.

A: Yeah.

Q: I see. And what about -- I do know that there were lots of -- there were lots of cultural activities, some [indecipherable]

A: Yes, there was, mm-hm. I was once only --

Q: Once?

A: -- in a -- in some kind of a -- a garden, you know, put up as a -- as a kind of a café or whatever.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Yeah. But it was only once. And th -- well, a lot of it is in -- pianist is a -- di-did you read that? Yeah, well, he has a -- a different approach to that, yeah, but I didn't know. Well, it was -- you know, it was for people who really made money, and some did. And some had contact with

the Gestapo. They thought this will help them to -- to get out of the deportation. But a-at the last time, it did not.

Q: Mm. So as -- let's talk between 1940, in November, when -- when the ghetto -- when the ghetto really becomes enclosed, until before the deportations, what do you begin to think about the Judenrat at this time? Do you -- are you -- do you think they're doing a good job? Are you angry with them? Do you wonder what's --

A: About Judenrat?

Q: Yeah.

A: Well, it di -- you know, they -- they just couldn't do much. They were told one day they have to -- to send 10,000 Jewish men for work. And where would they find those 10,00 Jews?

Q: Right.

A: And it would -- was a -- a very bad job, I should say.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah, they -- they couldn't come out of it right. And once they were arrested, all of them, and there was a saying all over the ghetto that something bad is coming, and they were -- and they let them out in a couple of days. So we didn't know much about it, what was going on. We knew the [indecipherable] commando, which was in later years used to get people out of the houses, and march them to Umschlagplatz.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: That was a special unit, special German unit. And they -- they had also Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and -- and there -- that's what they help us, and dogs.

Q: And dogs. And did you think that the Judenrat had kind of a special privileges, that they got more food, or they were more --

A: Maybe they had easier to get food, but I don't think they were ever paid or -- or anything. I --

I have no i --

Q: [indecipherable] didn't know --

A: -- yeah, right.

Q: Right.

A: I -- I -- I knew only -- the demands were very well known, that they need more and more people to work.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah. And they -- the Judenrat couldn't handle it, it -- it was too -- too difficult to get 10,000 people to work one day, it was --

Q: Did you hear things about an underground movement, or the political movements in the ghetto?

A: Very late, yes I had, because my -- my daughter -- my sister husband, chi -- joined them for awhile -- as much as I know before I left ghetto.

Q: Was involved.

A: Was involved.

Q: And do you know with what group he was involved?

A: No, I don't, no. There were very -- as -- as far as I know, there were very few who really took part in the ghetto uprising and it was absolutely unbelievable what they have done. In the first day of the uprising, the Germans pulled out, it was such a strong --

Q: Right.

A: -- but of course later on it's -- it's [indecipherable] it was tragic.



Q: Right. But did you -- be-before the deportations, did you know that there were political groups talking about what they should do, or what they were capable of doing?

A: Yeah, well, not much, not much. That it -- it was chaotic at first, you know?

Q: Right.

A: But later on when they decided to -- to -- to do that, th-there was smuggling of -- of weapons and I heard about it, I knew that exists.

Q: Right. But that was not something that you were involved with?

A: No.

Q: When you were outside, di -- were th -- the puli -- the Catholics talking about underground or not?

A: Oh yes, yes, I heard through Stefan, uh-huh.

Q: And when did -- did -- when did you see Stefan for the first time after the occupation? Do you remember?

A: I came out through the courts --

Q: Yes.

A: -- and I walked the -- the main street of Warsaw, [indecipherable] Koska, and I s -- I seen him, but I didn't approach him. It was too dangerous at that time. But he saw me, and he approached me, and we went for coffee and he told me about his -- his marching o -- o -- the -- you know, because there were orders and six or seven September from radio, that all able men to carry weapons should go out toward the east.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And he and his colleagues left. And that was a walking march, cause they didn't have any cars, nothing --

Q: Right.

A: -- right, yeah. It was something somebody [indecipherable]. And he went to Lvov, which is Lviv now. [indecipherable]. And they found out there is no -- no army, nothing. So they turned around and heard that Warsaw is completely demolished. And so they came back and he found out that he has to move out of th -- of his apartment where he lived, cause this part of Warsaw was given to Gestapo and other officers.

Q: Uh-huh. So what was he -- when you met him, was he involved with --

A: Yes.

Q: -- the underground at this time?

A: Yeah, at -- at first he was -- he opened a little store or whatever in books, but he didn't -- he didn't succeed. So he -- he got -- he got -- he had the friend in the taxation department and she gave him a ausweiss to go to ghetto. And [indecipherable] the people with taxes. Of course, he didn't -- there wasn't anyone to whom he can give the taxes.

Q: So he was supposed to -- there were tax collectors?

A: Right.

Q: Right? There were also people collecting money for gas, for electricity, as far as I understand it.

A: I think so, but I don't -- don't recall that.

Q: So he was supposed to collect taxes for the Polish government?

A: He was supposed to -- yeah, mm-hm, right.

Q: And did he ever s --

A: Not Polish government --

Q: [indecipherable] whatever

A: -- yeah, yeah, right.

Q: Was -- did he succeed?

A: No, he didn't. He -- he just tried to get to the certain places, and there was nobody, or they changed their address, or they not living any more, yeah. So that was his job, and that's why he got the ausweiss, which let him go into the --

Q: Go in and out.

A: -- yeah. So he visited his friends, his Jewish friends, and he dow -- he visited us too, and he brought sardines from Portugal, and soap.

Q: And soap.

A: Which was a very important thing. Kind of a -- is kind of a large --

Q: Large soap?

A: Is kind -- yeah.

Q: So how often did he come into the ghetto, do you remember?

A: Well, oh once a week or --

Q: Really?

A: -- something, yeah.

Q: So you would see him once a week?

A: Right. And he -- he told me finally in October -- think it was October, '42 or some -- that his ausweiss is running out and if I want to come out to his apartment, I am welcome.

Q: And what did you think?

A: I didn't think anything about it. Well, you know, it -- it -- well, going back it's so difficult. It's so difficult to -- to know what I'd been thinking each time, after each catastrophe. It -- it's very hard to thi -- maybe I didn't think at all.

Q: Maybe you just passed it by.

A: Right.

Q: [indecipherable] he said it -- uh-huh. Were you becoming close friends at this point, were you be -- o-or not?

A: W-We were -- we were friends, yeah.

Q: You were friends.

A: Or re -- I know -- I knew some people who lived with him --

Q: Yes.

A: -- and that was the connection, it was -- he -- he had a -- a [indecipherable] who was Finkelstein actually. And they had the an-antique store in Warsaw -- I mean, before the war, and she lived there and another couple, a Polish couple live. The apartment was large --

Q: Right.

A: -- as -- for the -- for the Steins.

Q: For the Steins, right.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: I think what we'll do is we'll --

A: Okay.

Q: -- stop the tape at this moment --

A: Right.

Q: -- and continue in a few minutes.

A: Yeah. This was one --

End of Tape One

Beginning Tape Two

Q: Okay. Let's talk about when you actually have a job in the Tebbins shop. It -- when did -- how did --

A: Yeah, was a -- was a job.

Q: Yes.

A: It was a job for ausweiss, you know.

Q: When you got the special pass.

A: Right. And I don't remember, I just went there and was told that I -- I can work there. And they were sewing the camouflage outside, the camouflage an-and the white part was underneath so they could, you know, in snow -- in snow, it doesn't show. And I didn't know how to sew on that, you know, sewing machine. So I was -- hadn't finished some of the thing. And th-the hours were terrible, because it was -- I don't remember, from eight to -- to one or two o-or from four to -- to 12 o'clock at night. And we were fall asleep, of course, all of us. And we got food there, and they brought it in large kettle with soup, which wasn't soup [indecipherable]. There was some -- some food at the very end, so it was lucky, you know, to get the --

Q: You mean at the bottom of the pot.

A: At the bottom of the p -- yeah.

Q: I see. So did you try to wait the [indecipherable]

A: Well, some did, of course, yes. But -- and there was bread, I think to the na -- probably now it's a very -- very much looked after, this kind of bread which was dark -- black and you had all - all seven grains, or eight grains, whatever.

Q: Yeah.

A: And -- and th -- I worked there, but th-the first time which I got into this big walk, you know, through the Warsaw to deportation that -- I wasn't at Tebbins, I was at home, whatever I want -- went to look for some -- something, I don't remember what. And I was swept out with this large crowd which was filling in both sidewalks and the middle of the road, they were just going people with children, with -- with bundles of -- of -- of food -- not food, I don't know what, and that -- and we were going toward Meeska, toward the Umschlagplatz and the gates were closed when the took out the people from the -- from the houses, they closed the gates. You know, that's kind of gates what you come at 11 o'clock that used to be, and you had to wake up the -- the guy who takes care of the -- an-and give him 20 cents or whatever because you came late. So they were -- they were closed tight --

Q: You mean, outside -- the outside gates --

A: -- outside, right, yeah.

Q: -- of the house, yeah.

A: Because the houses were -- they had that -- the gate was open over there, and you come in and walk to the right or to the left or further down where it's called Pardvuka, which was a larger part [indecipherable] something like that, where the housekeepers were -- were cleaning the rugs from upstairs. A-And -- but one of -- if wi -- I recognized one of the policemen that I knew him, and he recognized me, and he showed me on the way to Umschlagplatz that one of the gates is a little bit open, not completely shut, and I followed that. Came out of the crowd and I thought well, I've nothing to lose, and sneak in the -- the -- the gate. And there was a lot of people there, and we waited for a couple of hours until everything calmed down, and the people who were hiding in -- in the apartments, they came out and they told us how to go to -- to different streets.

But the streets, you know, they -- the houses were cut like alleys so you can go through one street to another without coming out on the main street.

Q: I see.

A: And so I went home and they couldn't believe that I -- I am still there.

Q: So they were frightened because they saw all these people and they knew you were in the street.

A: Oh they -- they knew nobody -- nobody came out of it, and so they were very happy about it.

Q: What did -- what did you know about these deportations at this time?

A: Oh, we know a lot, but we thought, you know, Judenrat helping to that. That this is all some lies. Those are young boys who just fled, you know, the [indecipherable] and -- and th-that's not true, it's -- but we started to believe that is something wrong at the end of the line. But a lot of people did believe.

Q: So in -- in '42, when the deportations begin, you've heard stuff about Treblinka?

A: Even before that.

Q: E-Even before.

A: Not trebli -- not a name --

Q: Yes.

A: -- th-th-there were other names. There was Sobibor and there were -- th-there were -- that wasn't the only trebli --

Q: Right.

A: Treblinka was the one which took so many lives. That was the -- the end. There was no -- nobody, you know, nobody a-as far as I know nobody escaped from Treblinka.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: I don't know, do you?

Q: Well, there was an escape later. There [indecipherable]

A: Yeah, maybe yeah. Because some were left to l -- sort out the -- whatever th-the others left.

Q: Right, right.

A: Yeah. But --

Q: So what did you be -- do you remember what you believed? After -- at the attack on Russia, there's a lot of killing that goes on.

A: Right.

Q: Right? That the Germans are killing. Do you hear about those killings as the Germans are attacking Russia in '41?

A: Oh yeah, we knew about it, yeah.

Q: You do? And what did --

A: Cause we -- we had this bulletin from [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: Who -- who brought in the -- the bulletins.

Q: Right.

A: And we knew what was go-going on in the world, and it's -- it was getting, you know, better, and -- but who knew when it will end? We -- we t -- we thought at first, you know, when we lived outside the ghetto, that this will last half a year, a year --

Q: Right.

A: -- but not five.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.



Q: Right.

A: Well, w-we -- we just didn't -- I -- we didn't have time to think about it, you know? I-It -- it was struggling every day. Every day you need food, you need -- your mother is not well. It -- it wasn't the -- the only -- when we got this news, it was far away, and nobody cares. Nobody cared. There was a time which I later found out, that Americans and English knew everything what is going on. So -- not only through Karski, there were many other people who -- who came and -- and w-were telling what was going on, not only with Jews, but with Poles. And nobody could believe that they're taking those people and just putting them under gas. At -- at first they were just r -- large vans, which we've heard about it. No -- nobody believed it. It was -- it was impossible to believe. So everybody thought, you know, where are we going? But later on, it started to dawn on us that this is the end, and everybody who could -- there was building of hide-a-way kind of things. You have a stove and you -- behind the stove there is a room there, and the -- so i -- you put the stove at -- at the -- at the entrance, and there was nobody there. So these people survived. How they survived, it was terrible, because I was in one of those ones, and I was told that there were small children with us, and the parents knew if we hear somebody coming [indecipherable] or SS, or what -- whatever, that we ca -- we just have to smother the child. Yes. And since then, when I went to one of those because I was not at home, I was going out, and there was an alarm that Ukrainians are coming, and I didn't go an -- any more to these hiding places, yeah.

Q: To this -- uh-huh.

A: But there was a lot of these hiding places, and I think until they -- they -- the up -- uprising in ghetto, that a lot of people were safe this way. Oh, I -- of course, I -- I don't know. A lot of people outside the ghettos w-were saved to the --

Q: Right.

A: -- until the Polish uprising.

Q: Let me go back a little bit, to the work. How -- do you remember about how many people were working in that shop?

A: Well, I don't remember exactly, but in my room there were probably 40.

Q: 14?

A: 40.

Q: 40.

A: 40.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But th-there were other rooms, you know, where they were working. Actually, they -- I must say on behalf of Tebbins that he was giving those ausweiss rather knowingly, that those people don't know how to sew.

Q: Uh-huh. Including you.

A: Including me, yeah.

Q: So nobody trained you on the machines?

A: No, I -- no, I started to -- to use the machine when I was out of there, yeah. So that was --

Q: Was there -- were there Germans -- German officials in the shop?

A: No, no --

Q: No.

A: -- nobody, nobody. When the -- that -- that was kind of a relief, that was nobody there except the supervisors. One was called Jan -- Jahn -- Jan -- H -- J-a-h-n. And when I was liberated already outside in Quakenbrick where we li -- used to live for awhile at the -- with the Polish

press, I saw a man on the street and I thought it was Jahn, and I told Stefan, he said, oh, you have ideas. I saw him another time, and I was so sure that it was Jahn, but Stefan said no, that's probably not. I gave up. You give up on -- on the lot of things. When we were at the -- under the bureau [indecipherable] under the British and we occupied as part of Germany, we got the print shop for our -- our newspaper. And the -- the owner of the print shop was coming to those journalists, and telling them, I never was a Nazi, I never -- never had anything to do with them, and [indecipherable] a-anything, he would say. And they were listening just, you know. Nothing -- nothing happened to any of those people, and he was a Nazi, there is no -- but there were a lot of them who had to join the -- the -- the party, because of their living. He had very nice print shop and -- and he wanted to keep it, yeah.

Q: Wer -- were you able -- did you get something other than soup so that you -- some food that you were able to bring back to your mother and your sister and brother-in-law, or not?

A: N-No, no.

Q: You couldn't. And of course there was no pay, there was no -- it -- the only thing you got was food.

A: No, that that I seen. I didn't.

Q: How long did you work there?

A: That's -- you know, it's difficult for me to say, I -- I -- I do-don't know.

Q: Months? Years?

A: I -- until -- right -- well, maybe a few months. Until the moment when the -- the second Umschlagplatz happened to me, and then I stopped working, and the only food it was -- which was smuggled and w-we bought, and it was pretty bad.

Q: So the first time you escaped deportation, you were just -- you-you're just sort of swept along on the street. You never get to the Umschlagplatz.

A: No, I didn't.

Q: Right. So that was probably July, do you think, '42?

A: That was July '42.

Q: The first -- the first wave of --

A: Right.

Q: -- the deportations.

A: 20 - something, 25<sup>th</sup>.

Q: Right, right.

A: It was a -- a crowd which is difficult to explain. We were walking one by one, and the children didn't cry. It was quiet.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. Nobody tried to escape. We were paralyzed. I-It was a unbelievable scene, just those dogs marching, an-and there weren't too many Gestapo people, they called -- those are special forces -- were special forces I heard, at home. And at -- that what you struck by the absolutely paralyzed people walking. It's -- it's unbelievable, I -- it -- it -- the -- the way I -- I -- I looked at this Jewish policeman, I thought I know him, and he kind of made it -- eye contact to me, and I thought he showed me with his eyes the -- the next gate, which was how -- and that was it.

Q: So how do you explain the fact that you were not paralyzed?

A: Well, I don't know. Some people were not, you know. Some people made their way probably in other gates. I -- I have no idea.

Q: I guess it's surprising that you would say it was so quiet. I would have expected --

A: It was quiet.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. Maybe a -- a whimper of a -- the child or something li --

Q: But not much.

A: -- but no, no, no. The same was the second time when I was at Umschlagplatz.

Q: So now --

A: Nobody said anything.

Q: Really. So how -- how did it happen that you were at the Umschlagplatz the second time?

Would that have been in July again, or wa -- August [indecipherable]

A: No, no, it was -- no, it was later, it was September probably --

Q: September?

A: -- yeah. And I was walking, y-you know, to get some money or food, I don't know what. I went to Paviar Street, and all of a sudden I see a rush of people, but not as big, not as large as the previous one, the July one. And I was caught in it, and I walked with them. A young woman walked with me and we exchanged some words, but not much. And we went to a barrack which was -- I don't know what it was before, you know, because it's -- was kind of remod with table and -- and chairs. And the chairs were made of steel, you know, the kind of -- something like what we use now when a lot of people come. And we found a place and we sit down and waited for the train.

Q: So you're at the Umschlagplatz you think?

A: Pardon?

Q: You're at the Umschlagplatz?

A: Right.

Q: And you're waiting.

A: And outside there was no -- no Germans inside, or maybe they were at the doors, but outside the -- were Ukrainians with dogs. And that was it, it was kind of quiet, nobody talked unless whispered to somebody. And I noticed that some people are going around and behind me, going to something which is open, and stairs are leading. And I talked to my companion, I said, I think there is something there. And she said, yes I know. How do you know? Somebody probably escape, but she said Ukrainians come later and shoot the people who are hiding. So there is no way. I said, well let's try. And she tells -- she said no, I don't want to because I still hope that I'll find my family. I didn't say it -- anything. And she took money out of her -- you know, the -- the -- there used to be [indecipherable] which is -- they were different kind of -- there were no tights, but they were draw -- you know, yo-you draw from your corset and tie your --

Q: [indecipherable]

A: -- your -- yeah --

Q: Your -- your stockings.

A: Right.

Q: Yeah.

A: And she -- she -- I said, I am going. And she took out money out of, you know, her stocking, and gave it to me. I turned around and you know that -- these iron chairs were noisy, so I tried not to make noise. I got up and sl-slinked down, and went dis -- up the stairs.

Q: So did you go on the floor? So you didn't stand up?

A: I -- I almost didn't stand up. I was just crouching, li-like this, and I walk.

Q: Right.

A: When I went the stairs, they were dark and when I came up, it -- it was a -- a door to some kind of a attic or -- or I don't know what it was, and wa -- there were some furniture, sa -- some things were lying down, but it was completely dark. And I went there and I -- I just sit down on the floor. And it was quiet, very quiet. I think I -- my heart was, of course, pounding. It stopped pounding after maybe I don't know, half an hour or so. And I probably fell asleep, because what I heard the next, it was [indecipherable] of these chairs and steps and later on schnell, schnell, the Ukrainians with the dogs, and it -- it took quite awhile. And I felt that people are around me, yeah.

Q: But you didn't see anybody?

A: No, I didn't see, because it was dark.

Q: Right.

A: I don't know, they -- it was a stockroom, so some kind of a -- a -- and then I heard the train and the doors closing down. And we waited. I think we all fell asleep probably. Kind of a early morning, we heard voices. One vo-voice, or two maybe, and they said, just stay where you are, don't move. And we -- we thought what is -- but in Polish, not [indecipherable] and we thought, wa -- what is it? And came there, either they were dressed like medical people or they -- they put it on, I -- I have no idea. And they let us out and took us to the hospital. Gave us some tea and something, and show us the way to ghetto.

Q: So the room that you were in w -- led into the hospital that was right next door?

A: Oh, no, it wasn't very next door, but there wa -- probably was close. They had the -- some kind of part in. Maybe they made the -- some kind of opening in the --

Q: In the wall?

A: In the -- no, it wasn't the wall. I-It was -- th-the long fence, whatever.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah. Th-This kind of a --

Q: So how --

A: I don't know whether it was electracized, I don't --

Q: Really?

A: -- I had -- I -- I can't tell you because I have no idea.

Q: So nobody came upstairs? The Ukrainians didn't come upstairs and look at the group?

A: Oh, they did.

Q: They did?

A: They did.

Q: And they saw --

A: They looked in, and they left. I heard the -- her-heard them.

Q: With dogs?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: They came without dogs.

A: Without dogs.

Q: Because the dogs certainly would have smelled you.

A: Just the we -- with the weapons. But they didn't, not this time.

Q: Now, do you have --



A: What ma -- what my friends, you know, wa -- walking friend, told me that they come and shoot whatever, you know. But they didn't, no. I seen them putting their weapons inside and looking, but they left.

Q: They didn't. And you didn't want to say to your friend, but you're going to get killed and -- from this train? Remember when your friend said, I don't want to go because I'll get shot?

A: Yeah.

Q: Right? You didn't say to her, but everybody's going to get killed on this train

[indecipherable]

A: No, I don't remember.

Q: You don't remember. Do you have any idea how the people from the hospital knew that all of you were there?

A: Oh, they knew.

Q: They knew?

A: They knew because they -- they done several times that, you know?

Q: I see, I see. So about how many of you do you think were in that room?

A: I think were 10 or something, or maybe 11 --

Q: So a very small number.

A: -- I don't know, I think I can't s-say exact -- yes, because I seen them going, yeah.

Q: And this was September of '42?

A: Right.

Q: So it's the end of the big deportations in '42. Do you -- did you then go back to your apartment where -- where your family was?

A: Yeah. Again they couldn't believe it.

Q: They must have been really shocked.

A: Yeah.

Q: Now how come they were not taken?

A: My mother was -- was hiding.

Q: She was hiding.

A: Did -- didn't go out at all.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah.

Q: And your sister also?

A: And my sister and my brother-in-law, I think they were working at Shute's or something.

Q: So they were working at Shute's, I see.

A: Yeah.

Q: And there was some protection if you were in those shops at that point, yes? Or not?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, no.

Q: Do you have any recollection of the suicide of Chernyenko? [indecipherable]

A: Oh, by the way, I didn't tell you how I got into second crowd, did I?

Q: In the what? In the --

A: In -- in the second, when I went to Umschlagplatz.

Q: No.

A: No, I wasn't on the street. I was at Tebbins, and Tebbins came in and told us to go down, all of us, and set up four in each row, and we went. We thought it's, you know, showing the ausweiss, but it wasn't, and they took us together with the other people.

Q: To the Umschlagplatz.

A: Right.

Q: I see. So they were getting rid of people from the --

A: Right.

Q: -- [indecipherable].

A: That's where I remember Jan, from -- remember?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: He was the one who was telling right, left, left, right.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you remember the -- hearing about Chernyenko committing suicide in '42?

A: Yes.

Q: And what did you think?

A: Oh, I don't remember what I thought.

Q: Yeah. How did you hear about it, do you know? Do you remember? You don't remember.

A: No, it was always some kind of [indecipherable] working -- working gossip of the --

Q: Rumors.

A: Right.

Q: Uh-huh. So you go back to the apartment but there's no work any more. Or are you go -- do you -- there's no going back to Tebbin's?

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Or is there?

A: No.

Q: No. So it's now September of 1942, and step -- yes --

A: I think it was '42, yeah --

Q: -- September, October. September, October.

A: -- right, yeah.

Q: Now Stefan has already said to you that he would be willing to take you into his apartment.

A: Yes.

Q: But you don't -- you don't go until January, is that right?

A: No, I think it was early February, yeah.

Q: Early February.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: So what do you do between? Now the ghetto is much smaller.

A: Yeah.

Q: And [indecipherable] works.

A: It was terrible, it was -- started to -- later on in October and November, started to freeze. And

I don't know, I don't remember.

Q: Do you remember eating?

A: Hm, I probably ate something, yeah. But it was difficult. I la -- I know.

Q: So you don't have any --

A: I had my brother-in-law, I think he brought some food, yeah.

Q: And how is your mother?

A: She was getting weaker, just getting up to -- to go to the restroom. And I been thinking what's going to happen when everything freeze, and you can see that people are doing whatever they need, and will freeze.

Q: Did you ever get depressed?

A: I probably was depressed, I don't know.

Q: Is it -- is it -- it's hard to remember what the feelings were, I guess, hm?

A: Well, the feelings, what I was doing, I --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- don't remember.

Q: You don't remember.

A: I remember only that after the big clean-up deportation, that three of us, my sister and brother-in-law -- oh, he's not a brother-in-law.

Q: Brother-in-law.

A: Right.

Q: Right.

A: Brother-in-law. We went to, cause it was one big apartment, and there were rooms, occupied by different people, and we went to one of those rooms, and there was nobody there, and things were f -- thrown, you know, and looked like somebody was trying to [indecipherable] something. And there was food on the table, and we just left that and we thought maybe they will come back, but they didn't. So --

Q: So did you -- did you go into that place, or you stayed where you were?

A: No, no, we didn't.

Q: You didn't.

A: No.

Q: So how is it that you finally decided to leave [indecipherable]

A: Well, i-it -- Stefan came in in I think October or November, I don't remember, and said that his ausweis is running out, and he said that they are trying to make a -- a come through -- karmeleetska [indecipherable] street, which will be a -- the tunnel, and people could es-escape, that my relations, and my relatives will be able to go through that. And he said, as of you, you are welcome to my apartment. And -- and that was it, I didn't hear from him any more. Oh, and he told me how to get out, and I got out.

Q: But how did you make that decision, since you hadn't been able to make that decision before? You're still with your family, so you must be feeling some obligation towards them.

A: Yes, I did. But they were kind of -- of idea that somehow they will get out, you know, through -- through this -- well, it was terrible, I-I can't talk about it, not even now.

Q: I see. Really? So you left through that hidi -- that -- that tunnel? Is that how you got out of [indecipherable]

A: No, no, this tunnel has not -- never been built.

Q: Uh-huh. So then, how did you get out?

A: Well, there were other places you can get out. It was a -- a hole in the wall and the -- somebody was keeping this always closed up, but at certain moment they open up and let people out.

Q: Were you -- you were not recognizably Jewish, you didn't look Jewish, but you certainly must have looked like you had lived in the ghetto when you left.

A: Oh, of course I did.

Q: So were you worried that somebody was going to stop you and arrest you?

A: Well no, it was very funny because it started to snow when wi -- I waited at this [indecipherable], the housekeeper who -- who done this for money. When he let me out, there was su -- suddenly the rushka, you know what's the rushka? The rushka is a horse driven --

Q: Uh-huh. Carriage?

A: Carr -- you know how they --

Q: Yes.

A: -- with the -- with the [indecipherable] and was snowing, and I got in and told him the address, and he took me there. I don't know whether Stefan arranged it. Was all of a sudden, you know, on empty street because it started to get dark and we're supposed to be at home. And that's the way I came out.

Q: And where was his apartment?

A: In the -- in the -- downtown.

Q: And what is it called, Sliska?

A: Shliska, right.

Q: Shliska.

A: How do you know that? Where did you get that?

Q: I think you gave it to -- you gave some information to some people.

A: I did?

Q: Yeah, to Miles, who did an interview with you.

A: Oh, that's right, yeah, to Miles.

Q: It was 12 Shniska Street?

A: Right, yeah.

Q: And had you ever been there before? Had you seen that before?

A: No, no, I didn't, because they -- he had to move from the street which he used to live before the war --

Q: Oh, I see, this was --

A: -- and they gave him an apartment --

Q: I see.

A: -- which was occupied before by Jews.

Q: Right. So did you know the people -- there were some people who were already hiding.

A: Yeah, they were there. No -- not -- not s -- all of them hiding, no.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Some just lived there, because large apartment that -- and you have to rent it. And there was Dr. Jeshelsky there with his wife and a little girl. And was Bronka [indecipherable] Finkelstein, who never went to ghetto.

Q: Oh, she was the one who never went?

A: Yeah, she was the one. And later on she -- Stefan arranged for her an apartment at the same house and she moved to this apartment. And then wer -- then came the uprising in ghetto, and telephone from my sister that they are going to -- with Tebbins [indecipherable] and that was the last time I heard from her.

Q: So phones still worked up through the uprising --

A: At this time, yeah.

Q: -- in '43?

A: Right. I don't know where she called me --

Q: Yeah.



A: -- but at that time we didn't have a phone. She called from somewhere.

Q: And did you ever find out what had happened?

A: Of course.

Q: And wa -- th -- were they -- were they taken to where she said?

A: Yes. They shot them, all of them.

Q: And you found that out much later, or did you find that out while you were --

A: No, I -- I found out pretty soon.

Q: Pretty soon.

A: Yeah.

Q: So that must have been very hard on you.

A: Right.

Q: So you're hiding out for more than a year?

A: Mm.

Q: Your -- and when do you become Sophie Yablunska? Soon?

A: Yeah, after a few months.

Q: So when -- when you come into the apartment, how -- do you -- do you soon become very close to Stefan? I mean, does --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- so -- so that you become --

A: Right, a couple.

Q: A couple.

A: Right.

Q: Right. And had you thought about this before, or was this so -- surprise, sort of --

A: No, it wasn't a surprise.

Q: It wasn't a surprise. But this was -- this had not been happening, or -- or when you saw each other in the ghetto, did you both realize that there were strong feelings between --

A: Yeah, well there were strong feelings, yeah.

Q: Yeah. He was in the underground at this point --

A: Mm.

Q: -- so when you become Sophie Yablunska, do you now start working with him in some [indecipherable]

A: Yeah, I helped, mm-hm, whatever I --

Q: And what were you doing?

A: Well, to -- to place the bulletin -- information bulletin to people around the -- where I had the addresses.

Q: Were you ever worried that somebody would denounce you?

A: Yes.

Q: And did it --

A: And we had guests, uh-huh, who came in for money.

Q: You had guests?

A: Yeah.

Q: Who came in for --

A: Guests.

Q: Guests, who were looking. And what happened?

A: And asking for other addresses.

Q: I see.

A: But nothing happened when we [indecipherable]. At that time I went for a couple of months to -- to Stefan's parent in a different place, but nothing happened.

Q: And his --

A: Or -- or once we had to run through the kitchen entrance, run away from the same kind of people.

Q: And you -- you --

A: Yeah, well --

Q: -- you ran out of the apartment, or di -- yes.

A: Ran out of, yeah.

Q: Quite a life, huh?

A: Until -- until --

Q: Until the uprising.

A: -- the uprising.

Q: And how -- how is the situation now in -- in -- how different from being in the ghetto? Did you have food, and you had [indecipherable]

A: Oh, we had the food. It was not too much, but we had food. And I cooked and well, as --

Q: Were you a -- were you a good cook?

A: Yeah. I don't know, no.

Q: No.

A: Not yet, not yet, because Stefan always reminds me when he came and potatoes were boiling and I was asking my mother, mom, ho-how much salt, do I put salt? So it was a --

Q: So your living conditions were actually much better together?

A: Oh yes, yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: Of course, yeah.

Q: Did -- did you find it, I don't know, disturbing or odd that the difference between the ghetto situation and the rest of occupied Warsaw was so different?

A: Yeah, well, it was different, yes, it was different, but th -- they suffered a lot, too, and all of a sudden, you know, comes a German outfit and rounds up several blocks and takes out people from trams and take them to -- to Germany to work, or just shoot them for no reason. And some who were taking part in underground were taken out and you know, they -- they were shooting them or taking them to a concentration camp. So they suffered, yeah --

Q: And -- but what --

A: -- a lot.

Q: -- di -- I imagine --

A: I mean, in regular circumstances, Poles suffered a lot. But you can't compare to what was happening in ghettos. There is no comparison.

Q: Right. And do you think that the -- the Polish ca -- the Catholics that you were meeting, the non-Jews that you were meeting understood that there was such a [indecipherable]

A: Oh yes, oh yes. The one I met, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Well, there were others who will come and ask for money and -- and other addresses where a -- where Jews live [indecipherable] you know, it's -- it's a -- it's always a -- and it was also on the Poles side, if you find a Gestapo or SS or whatever, they find the house where Jews are hidden, they would shoot everybody or take everybody to a concentration camp.

Q: Right.

A: So it was -- it was quite a decision to take Jews in, especially men.

Q: Why especially men?

A: Well, they were circumcised.

Q: Oh, oh, taking in Jewish men, uh-huh, I see what you mean, yes, right. So they could be easily found out. So do you think more women were -- were saved in these circumstances than men --

A: I don't know.

Q: -- because it was less dangerous?

A: Probably.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Probably. Well, men usually, at the ghetto situation in the beginning and later, they choose to go east.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And that was a good idea. That -- thi -- it doesn't mean that they didn't wind up in a gulag.

Q: Right.

A: You know, for different reasons. But there is a -- was a much higher chance for them to stay alive.

Q: Mm-hm. So did you know about the plans for the uprising --

A: Yes, yes.

Q: -- in [indecipherable] you did?

A: Yeah. We knew.

Q: And was --

A: And Stefan left at four o'clock, the first of August. But, well, it -- it was also a terrible time, terrible time, especially at the end when the uprising went down.

Q: Yes, cause it was [indecipherable]

A: Well, we had to wait for the Red Cross to -- to make sure that we are -- be treated as -- not as bandits, but as fighters.

Q: As POW -- you mean as soldiers.

A: Right, right.

Q: So the Red Cross came in?

A: Oh, Red Cross came in, yeah, uh-huh.

Q: And so Stefan is taken as a prisoner of war?

A: Right, and me too.

Q: And you too?

A: Right. I was working at the hospital at that time. I started to work when the uprising started, and I stayed there, and we were taken.

Q: Well, what were you doing in the hospital?

A: Oh, I -- helping.

Q: Just helping the --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- yeah.

A: Y-You know, the nurse -- there was few nurses.

Q: Mm.

A: Few, very few nurses who could be, you know, taking care of the wounds, or -- or things like that. But -- and that was the only thing I've been doing.

Q: Hm. And so the Germans actually respected the -- the Red Cross [indecipherable]

A: The finally day there, yeah, respected and -- well, it was -- you know, it was quiet all of a sudden. [indecipherable] Warsaw came out and we went also to the house which we lived in. And the only thi -- we -- he was a reporter for the uprising and wrote, also. And we hide it -- his films and his -- some things which were valuable.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And his portrait. He had a portrait done, 30's or something, still hanging.

Q: Really?

A: And we came to it in the late 60's. A friend of -- of the house which we left that in her basement, and she wrote to us that she has it, do you want it?

Q: Oh, wow.

A: So we did. It was all in holes and Stefan took it into basement. So Peter and I, we took it out and I started walking -- Connecticut was at that time famous for the small art stores and I went from one to another and they said no, no. And all of a sudden a -- an -- an older man said, you know, I know a -- a painter who painted the way this [indecipherable] this portrait and she did a good job, and --

Q: And filled in the holes.

A: -- it's hanging.

Q: Huh. So you -- he's taken somewhere, and you were -- you were taking -- taken to Zalfine?

A: Zalfine.

Q: Zalfine.

A: Yeah. We didn't know where we are going.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because they put us in those -- you know, they -- this kind of -- what did they call this? The --

Q: A wagon?

A: A wagon, yeah. And we didn't know where we were going. So -- and once in awhile they would open up that, and a crowd of people were coming with vegetables and all kinds of -- of goodies.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, and --

Q: Are you on a train or on a truck?

A: On a train.

Q: On a train.

A: On a train, yeah.

Q: I see, okay.

A: And we were asking them, where are we going? And he said, you going the right direction. I mean, it's not southeast, but you going -- not southeast, southwest.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But you going west.

Q: Right.

A: So we knew that we were not going to Auschwitz.

Q: Right. Were they -- did they treat you with s -- a certain kind of respect because you were fighters, or were they brutal to you, the Germans?

A: No, they were -- they w -- those were all the Germans who -- would took care of the train.

And the same was the -- at the camp too. There was one accident. They warn us that we have to [indecipherable] the -- the windows, taking care by hanging the -- the blankets or something, and



one blanket fell, half of it, and the guard from the camp shoot, and shot a li -- a young girl from our -- yeah. And there was -- after that, you know, they were a -- apologizing and all that.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, they did, uh-huh.

Q: I guess they thought the war was ending [indecipherable]

A: Yeah, but this girl was shot. She was maybe 20.

Q: Oh.

A: That was ac -- this accident and then we had bombardment, a lot of it. Americans came at night and the English came, you know.

Q: And they were bombarding the -- the camp, or were they --

A: No, not the camp --

Q: -- [indecipherable] the train?

A: -- but close by, yeah, very close by, yeah. Dresno.

Q: And -- and what was it like in the camp?

A: Well, it was hunger, and that was it. But at Christmastime we got Red Cross packages, right. One package like that was for four people, and there were cigarettes and some sweets, goodies. And we divided it, who smoked took the cigarettes and -- and so on, we divided that too, yeah.

Q: Was it as bad as the ghetto?

A: Oh, no.

Q: No?

A: No. We felt safe.

Q: You felt safe?

A: Right. Was no [indecipherable] commander, a-and s-sudden deportation and all that, that -- that was out of the question.

Q: So there w -- people were not being shot, people weren't --

A: No, no.

Q: So that was not -- it was not -- I see.

A: No, it was camp for the POW.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: Right. And were you separated by nationality in the camp?

A: No. N-No, it -- i-it was in a sense, yes, you're right. It -- it was a Polish camp and a Russian camp.

Q: I see.

A: And I think I s-said before about our doctor who was so wonderful, and --

Q: What was his name?

A: -- and saved -- Ben Kofski.

Q: Ben Kofski.

A: I can write for you how --

Q: Mm-hm?

A: Ben [indecipherable] wonderful man.

Q: And was he from Warsaw, or from another part of --

A: Oh, from Warsaw [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah. And did you know him from before?

A: No, I didn't know him.

Q: No. And -- and did other people have fairly good treatment or you don't know how it was in the other sections of the --

A: In this s -- this Russian section was very bad.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: We came at the end, actually, and they were just died of hunger and tuberculosis. And only the one who were going out of the camp, working for Germans, you know, for the out -- you know, to do things, were, you know, who were able to repair something or do any kind of work.

Q: So the Russians were treated the worst?

A: Oh yes, yes.

Q: Did -- were you fearful about Stefan?

A: I -- I knew where he went.

Q: Oh, you did?

A: Yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: He went to Affloc, Grossburn.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: It's in Germany, but later on I didn't know any more.

Q: Right. Now, when you are s -- liberated, you are disappointed that the Russians have come, and --

A: Very much.

Q: -- not the Americans, yes.

A: Very much, yeah. Well, they came, you know, and they opened a food storage of Nazis.

There were a few Nazis killed and I -- I don't know what they were before they came. I think

probably some Russians did that. And -- and they came and they opened the storage with rice and who knows what, and started to feed us. It wasn't a good idea because we were not prepared for that, yeah.

Q: Did you get sick?

A: Well, a little bit, yeah.

Q: But then the Russians said that if you are Polish you have to go back to Poland.

A: Right.

Q: And you didn't want to do that.

A: No.

Q: And a number of you didn't want to do that.

A: No.

Q: And so you escaped?

A: Right. At the gate --

Q: You're very -- you're very brave.

A: Oh, I don't know. Not any more. The gate was practu -- practically open, you know, sometimes there was a si -- th-the Russian soldiers stood. But many times they gave it to Polish men to take care of the gate. So I joined the -- a part of -- now this is it, a part of the two women and two Belgians, men.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: They had the -- something wi-with their hands, how do you call this?

Q: An armba -- a --

A: Yeah, well, they were wounded, but --

Q: Oh, you mean bandages?

A: Bandages.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah. And we decided to -- to go. I went to this guy who was guarding the gate and I told him that we will probably leave early in the morning, really early. He said go ahead [indecipherable] early. And -- because he had the -- to take care of the gate. And we left, and we walked and walked and walked, I don't remember how long, to Elba river -- river, there was the -- the frontier of --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: -- at the time and we -- I think that we walked about four days. I don't know how many kilometers it was, I had to look at the map, still couldn't figure out how long it was.

Q: It was a long walk.

A: I-It was a long one. We -- we just took, you know, break for the night and it -- everything was empty and things were trashed out because I think the Russians already took care of the -- of the better things and left it there, yeah. There were chicken wandering around, but no sign of -- of Germans, who used to live there. So we came to Elba river, and there on one side were the Russians, on the other side were -- were Americans. And the Russians read what the Belgians gave them, whatever they had and -- and they just said --

Q: To go.

A: To go.

Q: Hm.

A: So we went to Americans.

Q: And I think we need to stop the tape, it's almost --

A: Yeah. Okay.

End of Tape Two

Beginning Tape Three

Q: Okay.

A: A lot of [indecipherable]

Q: Yes. I --

A: It wasn't before so -- that so strong.

Q: What?

A: What?

Q: The light? The light feels stronger to you? It's the same.

A: Right now, I don't know, it --

Q: It's the same.

A: Probably sitting too long.

Q: Tell me something. When you left the camp and escaped --

A: Uh-huh?

Q: -- how did you know where to go?

A: Well, we're going to Americans.

Q: I'm sorry, we have to [indecipherable]. Okay?

A: See, we -- we ge --

Q: So how did you -- what do you mean you knew where you were going? You lo -- you leave a  
ca -- this -- this camp, and you knew what direction?

A: Yeah, we had a map, yeah.

Q: Oh, you had a --

A: Oh yeah, sure.

Q: -- that's what I was wondering, yeah.

A: Yes, yeah. Yeah, the Belgians, they had a map, yeah.

Q: Right. And the Belgians, when they showed the papers to the Russians, what was on these papers?

A: They didn't know what it is.

Q: They didn't?

A: Russians didn't know.

Q: They didn't know.

A: No. Is it --

Q: They just said go, they didn't care.

A: No.

Q: So you were pleased. You went to the --

A: Yeah, we were supposed to be French or whatever.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah, it's [indecipherable] and they were impressed by that, so -- and they didn't say anything.

Q: Right. And you didn't want to go back to Poland, why?

A: Pardon?

Q: Why didn't you want to go back to Poland?

A: Well, it was Communism, Stalin. And for Stefan nothing to do there.

Q: Right.

A: We found out in -- in meantime, you know, we were in Germany, and some colleagues came to Berlin and Stefan went there and -- and talked to them and they said oh, you should come, Stefan, you should come back, it's a lot of work, it's wonderful and so on. And when they -- they



left for a minute, they -- the wife of one of them said, Stefan, don't come back. So, we knew. We knew what is coming, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh. So, you're at Northeim, right?

A: Right.

Q: And what is that -- what is that like? That's in the American zone.

A: They -- that's in a -- yeah, that was in American zone. It was a town, I don't know -- don't remember what it looked like.

Q: And where were you staying?

A: I was staying in a -- a -- a kind of a camp which sorted out people, you know, where they go, what -- what they want to do, or advertise in the papers. There were certain paper -- papers which were names of people who -- who are looking for someone.

Q: Right.

A: And that -- that's -- that was the way they found each other.

Q: Is that how Stefan found you?

A: Right, uh-huh.

Q: So he knew to come because he had seen this list?

A: Yes, that's right.

Q: I see.

A: You see, the -- the a -- they had -- yeah.

Q: So when did you really feel liberated, do you think?

A: I really don't know, you know. So many years passed, so many things happened that I -- I just can't say when.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Well I -- I felt liberated already in Quakenbrück, you know, when we settled to a German house. And we paid them [indecipherable]

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And I found out from Stefan that he pays, said are you out of your wits? And he said no, we live here, we have to pay. And we lived upstairs and they lived downstairs. Well, we just didn't do anything to them. We were kind to them. But, you know, I don't know, every German, they -- they went through certain bad times, the -- the bombardment and -- and -- and this whole Hitler idea, that not everybody was with it, but they went along with him. They went along from the beginning and they stayed -- I understand that Germany is entirely different now.

Q: Mm-hm. So did you hate them?

A: No, I didn't. These particular people I -- I --

Q: Yes.

A: -- I was connected with?

Q: With the other Germans that you met?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, we -- we had a hotel. We had the -- we had several places people married and -- who lived in -- in the houses, and also a hotel where -- where single people lived. And that's where we ate, and the owner of this hotel, a woman, was so kind and yeah. Fr-Frau Koper and I was the one who was commanding them, and -- but it was nothing [indecipherable]

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Yeah.

Q: Let me ask you something, when -- do you remember the -- the day that -- that Stefan came into Northeim, when you saw him after this --

A: Oh, it was wonderful.

Q: Yeah.

A: Wonderful, really.

Q: Did you know he was coming, or did he surprise you?

A: Yes, he let me know.

Q: He did, he let you know.

A: Yeah, right. Was coming with a -- with a colleague, another man.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: You know those lorries, and he came with a lorry, but we actually drove the Jeeps. They were wonderful cars, yeah.

Q: And how long did you stay in Northeim?

A: Not very long, no. Don't remember, maybe a we -- I don't remember this at all.

Q: And why Quakenbrück? Why did you --

A: Oh, Quakenbrück because there was a Polish press there, yeah. And the -- the first armored Polish division was in charge of this whole area.

Q: I see.

A: And they took -- I [indecipherable] because they had a print shop there, and so they stayed there.

Q: And Stefan was already writing. He was -- he was --

A: Right, mm-hm.

Q: And did you think about writing, too?

A: I did sometimes, yeah, mm-hm, some --

Q: Did you actually do it?

A: -- funny things, yeah.

Q: Funny things?

A: Right.

Q: Yes? Like what?

A: Oh, you know, about colleagues there and things like that, yeah, but nothing serious.

Q: So was there a newspaper that came out in Quakenbrück?

A: Oh yes, yeah.

Q: Yes.

A: A Polish newspaper.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: A Polish newspaper, a daily and a 10 day literary [indecipherable] and what -- what else was going on? And the [indecipherable] the national party had a -- a paper, too. Everybody had a paper.

Q: Everybody had a --

A: Yeah. Well, no, actually, it's three papers were [indecipherable] printed.

Q: And who did Stefan write for?

A: For a Polish -- how to -- Polish Soldier's Daily, yeah.

Q: Polish Soldier's Daily. And what kind of articles did he write?

A: Who, me?

Q: No, he write.

A: Oh he?

Q: Stefan.

A: He wr-wrote news, you know, they had the what do you call this, the news coming from the tape?

Q: Oh, the ticker tape.

A: Ticker tape, that.

Q: So he wrote stories off of the ticker tape [indecipherable]

A: Right, yeah. Everything around the world, yeah.

Q: And you wrote this --

A: It is a pr-pretty good established paper.

Q: Uh-huh. And you wrote some funny things?

A: Sometimes, yeah, about colleagues, yeah.

Q: So what did you -- how did you spend your day in Quakenbrück?

A: How I spend my day? Well, I guess -- before Peter was born, right?

Q: Yes, before -- yes, I knew it would change if Peter was born.

A: Yeah, right, yeah. When Peter was born I had a maid from Masoulia place --

Q: From Missouri?

A: Ma-Masoulia, no, it's -- it's a place north of -- north in Poland where they speak both languages, German and -- and Polish, and -- and she was mixing that up with -- and she was a nice woman, and she worked for me. It's difficult to say what. Nothing special.

Q: Did you work?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, no --

Q: No, just --

A: -- not at that time.

Q: -- Stefan worked.

A: Relaxing.

Q: You relaxed.

A: Yeah.

Q: So this was good.

A: Right.

Q: Did you catch up on sleep?

A: Yeah, I think so, yeah.

Q: Were you tired after all of this in some --

A: I think I was undernourished and then I started to nourish myself. And that where I -- I didn't bring this photo of Polish press, all of us outside, it's too late. But it -- no, I didn't do anything, which was very nice, yeah. Didn't you have a time when you didn't do anything?

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes.

A: Well.

Q: No, it's very nice not to do something.

A: Right, yeah.

Q: Right. Did you start reading?

A: Yes, I read some -- you know, I read the press --

Q: Yes.

A: -- and I read some books, yeah.

Q: Now, did they have any --

A: I started -- ri -- I know what I did, very diligently. It was learning English, and a de -- I -- I found a German girl who was kind of supervising me. That's what I was doing. And then I went to England.

Q: But wait. Peter's born about at --

A: Peter, th -- '47.

Q: -- is 1947, right?

A: Right. So we get married --

Q: Right.

A: In Meppin.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah, and the -- Peter came, and there was -- there was a lot of work.

Q: There was a lot of work.

A: I don't know, I da -- I don't understand it how people have six children. Well, I'm sorry I didn't have two at least, but six?

Q: Right.

A: How many children you have?

Q: I don't have any.

A: You don't?

Q: No.

A: Well, I -- I can't say, you know, you have one it's not enough, it should be an-another one to -  
-

Q: It's [indecipherable], uh-huh.

A: -- to, you know, to get some [indecipherable] sibling.

Q: And you moved to England fairly soon after that?

A: And then we moved to England in '47 -- '47, winter, yeah.

Q: And is that because Stefan got a job to go to England, or you just decided?

A: No, no, it was a -- a kind of a special camp they went to get ready for si -- civilian life.

Q: I see.

A: And he was there for half a year, and I was with a friend of mine from Warsaw in  
Bournemouth.

Q: And you -- so you lived apart for that few months?

A: No, he was coming --

Q: No, going back and forth?

A: -- weekends, yeah. And I lived in Bournemouth with my dear friend, and it happened to be  
my schoolmate, and let -- she was a couple of years older and we found ourselves wo -- another  
friend who lived in England, [indecipherable]. So I lived with her and her little girl, and she  
found a job in London, so she was in London most of the week, she was happy that I am there  
for the children.

Q: Right. So then you had two children sort of, at that time --

A: Right, yeah --

Q: -- that you're taking care of two children.

A: -- two children. And she is still in Santa Barbara, living.



Q: Yes?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you learn English before you got to England, did you know enough English?

A: Very little, very little. Less than now. Sometimes I speak not perfect, but -- but quite good English, and sometimes I l -- I -- I lost it today.

Q: No, you [indecipherable]

A: I don't have -- I don't have the how to say the hold on -- on the language which I -- the words which I want to say, escape me. But just the -- the plain talking, it's -- it's alright, you know.

Q: Did you like being in England?

A: Yes, but it was a hard life after war. Everything was ra-rationed. I remember eggs were coming from -- from Poland and they were not e-eatable. And you get just only so much meat a - a month, or something like that. And we went -- when we were living in England -- oh, we bought a house, and we were renting the upstairs and living downstairs. And it -- it -- it was a kind of -- quite shortcomings, a lot of shortcomings. For instance, when we left -- when we were supposed to leave England, I saved my meat coupons so we s -- we could make a party for our friends, and then -- so we didn't eat -- eat -- didn't use the coupon. And Peter at that time was -- oh, and bacon, was no bacon. And I remember that we saved the bacon for Peter [indecipherable] that was impossible now to -- to save such a thing. Well, anyway, that -- it -- it -- but -- but it was, you know, pleasant.

Q: Tell me when -- when was it that you found out the extent of the murder of the Jews by the -- by the Germans? Was it soon after the war, or much later --

A: Not soon --

Q: Not soon.

A: -- not soon, no, no. Really, the extent of what happened, I found out here, when we were here already. Actually, after around '55, or --

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. When they start to -- you know, it was very slow coming to th-they were talking about this, survivors, and they were talking about opening the camps, which were -- but i-it was just news, and that's all. There was no -- no larger insight of what really happened.

Q: Did people ask you what happened to you?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: Did you want to talk about it?

A: No, I never wanted.

Q: You never?

A: No.

Q: You still don't.

A: I still don't. This is the only one, and I hope it's not going to spread to the -- everybody. But i-it's very hard to me. First of all, I feel guilty that I left my family, am still guilty. And I just don't like to talk about it.

Q: Is it -- is -- is that -- is -- that's the event that is the hardest for you, right. Do you think it's important that people know what people like you went through, and --

A: Well, probably is, but you know, I'm not the only one who is open to tin -- t-telling. My Polish friends don't know much about it, they -- they know that I am Jewish, but that's all. They -- I don't think they want to listen to that. And I don't want to talk --

Q: [indecipherable] talk about, right.

A: -- which is just wonderful.

Q: Are these Polish friends who were born in Poland, or they were born here?

A: Oh yes, they were born in Poland and some of them I knew before they -- no, s --

Q: Before the war.

A: -- that they are not alive. Oh yes, I -- I -- I know them, I -- I know Novak --

Q: So that --

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: Milosh not so well, but Novak very well, and I think they -- they just guess it, or something like that.

Q: So, when you were with these folks, you never talked about the war?

A: About the ghetto?

Q: About the ghetto.

A: Well, they know everything.

Q: They know.

A: They know, sure. Not about me.

Q: Not about you.

A: Yeah. But of course they know.

Q: So Novak never said, what was your experience since he was living there and he --

A: Yeah, I'm not so close to Novak [indecipherable] we just greet each other --

Q: Uh-huh, right, right.

A: -- and th-that's all. But no, I just don't want to talk about it. It's hurting.

Q: Yeah.

A: Badly.

Q: So how come you agreed to -- to be interviewed?

A: Well, your friend.

Q: Elizabeth? She was --

A: She was very -- yeah, she was started with a lit -- we-well I -- when I -- I talked to Mr. Kaye -  
-

Q: Yeah.

A: I think she probably heard something, I don't know. But Mr. Kaye wrote me a letter saying that this is [indecipherable] and send me a letter that were very satisfactory but they want to see you. And then I thought, well, we'll find out, and hi -- what's her name, hidel --

Q: Elizabeth.

A: Elizabeth.

Q: Yes.

A: Elizabeth started to call me, and she has a very, very nice voice.

Q: Yes.

A: And I thought, she is so nice, you know? And I -- I -- I didn't want to, and finally I did.

Q: Now, do -- your son knows your story, however, Peter.

A: Peter knows the story that this, this, this happened, but he di -- he is not very keen about knowing about the details. But I am leaving something for him.

Q: You are? What -- something you've written?

A: Well, he did -- he di -- date -- he doesn't do that knowledge [indecipherable] but, you know, busy, and this and that going on, but generally he does know, yeah.

Q: So you've written an auto -- a -- a kind of memoir of your life?

A: No, not finished, no.

Q: Not finished, but you are writing.

A: Yeah.

Q: You don't want to say that you do, because it --

A: Yeah, no, no, it's a -- it's in Polish and --

Q: Uh-huh. Are you more comfortable in Polish than you are in English?

A: Oh yes, I am, yes, yes --

Q: [indecipherable] yeah.

A: -- yeah. But now I mixed, you know, and th -- all of a sudden I know a word in -- in Polish, and couldn't find it in English --

Q: Right.

A: -- and -- and it -- getting older.

Q: Have you been back to Poland --

A: Oh yes, mm-hm.

Q: -- a number of times? And how do you find th -- is it difficult -- was it difficult for you to go back to Poland?

A: Well, no, it wasn't difficult, and I didn't find my Warsaw from before.

Q: It's a -- it's a different place, yeah.

A: It was a bu -- very nice town, beautiful.

Q: And it's not --

A: Oh no, no. Has been demolished completely. When everybody left, the Germans came and put this fire -- I don't know, that has special name for it, fire throwers, you know, to burn

everything. They burned completely the -- the only places which I recognized, because ghetto was completely down, is th -- are the -- the important arteries like [indecipherable] Lazienki, the beautiful park where the Chopin's -- oh, now I know in Polish and don't know in the -- statue is - - yeah, where they have concert and so on. This -- this -- this is the same, but the Americans, for some reason, demolished one of the lovely, beautiful [indecipherable] house, and put an ugly thing, ugly.

Q: Really?

A: Modern, you know, the under -- the kind which you see in [indecipherable]. I don't know why they did it. Well, anyway, all those big arteries are the same as they used to be, but the rest is completely demolished, and it was Stalinist repla -- la -- di -- replaced with Stalinist architecture.

Q: Right.

A: So --

Q: Did you -- when you went back to Poland, did you visit camps, or you didn't? Auschwitz, Treblinka, Sobibor --

A: Yeah, I went to Auschwitz, yeah. Treblinka is not -- doesn't exist, or -- I don't know.

Q: There's a -- there's a memorial there, there's memorial stones --

A: Oh maybe there is a memorial.

Q: But you did go to Auschwitz?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: With Stefan?

A: No, I was by myself.

Q: By yourself?

A: Right.

Q: Why did you do that?

A: Why did I go to Auschwitz?

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't know. I just went. Some people don't go there, you know? Yeah.

Q: Right, right. Have you been to the Holocaust Museum in Washington?

A: Oh yes, yes.

Q: Yes?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: And you've been to the exhibition?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: What did you think?

A: Were very good.

Q: Yeah?

A: Once only.

Q: It's enough.

A: I guess for everybody, I don't know. The schoolchildren, they come and enjoy it or what -- what -- what do they think?

Q: Well --

A: What do the schoolchildren think about it?

Q: I think it depends. I think it depends how much they studied before, how serious they are. If they're too young, who knows? But they -- clearly a lot of them get very affected by it.

A: Really?

Q: That's important.

A: Uh-huh.

Q: I hope.

A: If they could believe it.

Q: Yes, I think, yeah. It's hard to believe it, isn't it, even for you?

A: Yeah, it is.

Q: Mm. Did you enjoy living in the United States?

A: Yes, very much.

Q: Yeah.

A: I worked, and I am retired, and I worked from '64 to '94, 30 years.

Q: Really?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Doing what? What were you working at?

A: Should I say it?

Q: I don't know.

A: Well, if you were going to show this to everybody, then I don't know, maybe I shouldn't.

Was CIA.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah, there was a -- there is -- still is a school for -- you know, for languages.

Q: Right. So you taught languages?

A: Yeah.

Q: Right.

A: I taught Polish, mm-hm.

Q: That must have been interesting.



A: Yes, it was, yeah, mm-hm, very interesting, yeah.

Q: And your husband was working for USIA?

A: USIA, yeah.

Q: And writing.

A: He wrote -- yeah, he was a editor of a magazine, America, which it's not distributed here. It is -- was going only to Poland. They had the same edition in Russian and I think Arabic.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But I don't think it exists any more now.

Q: And when you taught these classes, were they small classes?

A: They were small classes, yeah.

Q: And very intense, or over six months or a year or something? What was it --

A: A year.

Q: A year, so --

A: A year.

Q: -- people would have to study for a year.

A: Nine months, yeah, uh-huh.

Q: Were you trained to teach, or did you just figure it out?

A: I figure it out when we lived in Monterey, because Stefan was teaching in Monterey, and he never taught --

Q: Right.

A: -- [indecipherable] you know, but if you know the language well, then --

Q: You can figure out.

A: Oh yeah, sure, yeah.

Q: And did you enjoy doing that?

A: Very much.

Q: Yeah.

A: Very much, very-- very intelligent people, they had -- they well trained and young, they were very thankful for -- for the --

Q: Right.

A: -- now, the classes were small.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah. Because of the language, you know, that, and I don't know whether it exists any more or not.

Q: Mm-hm. And Peter, Peter, your son?

A: Peter is in TV, and once he does well, and then another one he doesn't.

Q: He doesn't. Is he a producer?

A: He is a producer, he is a writer and producer.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah. Writing num -- number one. He writes for -- oh, he wrote a movie he hopes to make. And he writes for a history channel, and -- and planet and he used to work for "America's Most Wanted," for awhile, but he hated this going there and working, wife over there, and then --

Q: Are you close with your son?

A: Pardon?

Q: Are you close? [indecipherable]

A: Oh yes, yes, yeah.

Q: But you now have a sort of a daughter because you have a daughter-in-law, yes?

A: I have a daughter-in-law. She is nice.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah. She is Italian. She likes what -- oh, this lasagna.

Q: Lasagna, of course, and pasta.

A: Right.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you?

A: No --

Q: No?

A: -- not very much, no. Once in awhile, but not --

Q: But not so -- not so --

A: -- not as a menu. Not as a steady menu.

Q: Well, before we look at -- we only have a few pictures of yours which we'd like to show, is there anything you'd like to say?

A: Well, I like to say thank you very much for everybody. It was very, very nice, and I hope that not too many people will be interested in it.

Q: That's -- that's not our hope. I think we have different, some -- somewhat conflicting purposes here.

A: Oh really?

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah.

Q: But I thank you very much for taking the time.

A: How conflicted?

Q: Oh, not very conflicted, but we hope a lot of people will look at your interview.

A: Fine. Well --

Q: So I thank you for taking the time and being willing to talk about --

A: Yeah, I hope they find it interesting.

Q: I'm sure they will.

A: With my English.

Q: Right. Thank you.

A: Okay. Was very nice to talk to you, really. And I -- I mentioned already that I seen you?

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. So it's good, I was a bit familiar to you.

A: Right.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: We can -- we can stop now, thank you. So Sophie, who is this good looking gentleman here?

A: This is Stefan. Stefan in his office.

Q: And about what -- what time of -- what year do you think?

A: I think it -- it probably was late 70's.

Q: That's --

A: Or maybe -- maybe it -- half of the 70's, right, cause he retired in -- don't remember.

Q: And this was at the u -- USIA?

A: At USIA, yes, at the corner of Pennsylvania and 18<sup>th</sup> Street. It doesn't exi -- the building doesn't exist.

Q: And what about this picture?

A: This is -- this is a couple of couples who are at Santa Monica, California, and that was a -- a little -- not a little, quite large coffee shop where we ate. Stefan liked that, he didn't like to go to big restaurants. So that's -- we are here.

Q: And when do you think that was?

A: And that was late 70's.

Q: And this picture?

A: This picture is in Israel when the sign of Stefan appears.

Q: And this is at Yad Vashem, yes?

A: Yad Vashem. It's ou -- outside, outside, yeah. I -- I -- I told you was -- that was very well done there. The -- the whole Yad Vashem --

Q: Right.

A: -- the building and --

Q: And Stefan --

A: -- the -- and the flame.

Q: -- Stefan was honored as a Righteous --

A: Right, yeah.

Q: -- Christian. As one of the Righteous in --

A: Right.

Q: Yes.

A: It's not -- he -- it wasn't only me. We had friends who were, you know, hiding for a few days and -- and we had two little girls for a week before they went to [indecipherable] to their places where they were hiding.

Q: Right.

A: It wasn't only me, no.

Q: No, he obviously did a lot.

A: He did.

Q: And what year was that?

A: This was in '91, yeah.

Q: Soon after he had passed away, I guess, yes?

A: Yeah, a year after.

Q: A year after. Okay.

End of Tape Three

Conclusion of Interview