

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Paul Jonas**  
**May 3, 2013**  
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## PREFACE

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**PAUL JONAS**  
**May 3, 2013**

Question: This is a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mr. **Paul Jonas**, on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013, in **Brooklyn, New York**. Thank you Mr. **Jonas** for agreeing to speak with us today, and I'd like to start the interview at the beginning. Please tell me your name at birth, where you were born and when you were born.

Answer: I was – my name is **Paul Jonas**, born in southern **Poland**. I'm born 6-22-22.

Q: So, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1922.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. What kind – you wish to say something?

A: Yeah – no, no.

Q: Okay. I'd like to know a little bit about your family. Can you tell me, did you have brothers and sisters?

A: Yes, we were seven kids; four brothers, three sisters. My father was – had a bank, he was pretty [**indecipherable**] and my mother was the cook.

Q: So your father had a ba – was a banker?

A: A banker, yeah, a banker, yeah.

Q: Okay. Tell me a little bit about your siblings. And I'll want to talk about your parents too, but with seven children, that's quite a family.

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A: Yes.

Q: Could you tell me their names, from the oldest to the youngest?

A: Yeah, the oldest was **Abraham**, then came **Joe** –

Q: Okay.

A: – then **Esther**, then **Schuler**(ph).

Q: Okay.

A: Then – ri – hi – **Hinder** – **Hil-Hilda**.

Q: **Hilda**.

A: **Schuler**(ph), me and **Manya**(ph). **Manya**(ph), you met **Manya**(ph).

Q: **Manya's**(ph) the youngest.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. And – and of the brothers and sisters, was there somebody who you were the closest too?

A: I usually with – with **Manya**(ph).

Q: You – the two youngest were together.

A: Yeah, ye-yeah.

Q: Okay. Did you hang out with your older brothers at all?

A: Yes, sure.

Q: What were they like? I mean, did they have different personalities?

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A: **Joe [indecipherable]** he was a little bit different. He used to take the toys what we got, and try to see how they are made, and never put it together.

Q: So he liked to take them apart.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. Otherwise he was good. Sometimes we were fighting. I had th – a little knife, maybe a inch. I tried to kill him. So my mother used to say, okay, okay, I'll kill – I'll help you kill him, tomorrow, tomorrow. Ten minutes later we were playing again, you know.

Q: **Abraham**, the oldest, what was his personality like?

A: He was a very nice, all business re-really. He never had time to go to play, he was busy, he was working in the bank.

Q: He was working in the bank.

A: In the bank, yeah.

Q: And was he a serious kind of person – ser – a more serious kid?

A: Yes, ye-yes. He was the oldest, he was **[indecipherable]** the father.

Q: Okay.

A: And he is the one who got killed for the – from the Nazis, a day before the American army came in.

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Q: We'll talk about that. We'll talk about that later.

A: Yeah –

Q: Right now I'd like – what I'm trying to do is get a sense of what was the world you were born into. Who were the people who were important to you who were in it. What was life like. You know, all of that ca – I'm trying to paint that picture with words, your words.

A: Yeah. Well, we were very good all, but in general was very poor. The whole country was poor, especially our town were very poor. There were a couple – two factories, I think, or three. And –

Q: What did they make, those factories?

A: One was sneakers, or soles from the sneakers, one locomotives.

Q: And one made locomotives?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And we have some what a – what a – what do you call it, cutting in the – the trees? Th-The lumber yards.

Q: A lumberyard.

A: Or a lumber – a lumber mill, a lumber mill. And this is the way the people – and we had the river **San**, so most of the – of the – went fishing and selling the fish.

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Q: Tell me, where in **Poland** was the town of **Sanok**? Where was it located?

A: This was – it became the border between the – during the – 1939, between **Germany** and **Russia**.

Q: I see. So it's –

A: It was li – years ago, **Galicia**, Ukrainian over there. And over – on the river, that was th-the border, where the people used to [**indecipherable**] run away, and –

Q: So there were – so when one side of the **San River** was **Poland**?

A: Yeah.

Q: And the other side was already **Soviet Union**?

A: Soviet – yeah, yeah.

Q: I see.

A: I mean, became.

Q: Became that way.

A: It was Ukrainian, yeah, before, ukra – and then became the **Soviet Union**, yeah.

Q: Were there many Ukrainians in – in **Sanok**?

A: Yes, yes, yes. I would say 90 something percent.

Q: 90 percent of **Sanok**, it was Ukrainian?

A: Yeah, I mean, the whole side was Ukrainian, yeah.

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Q: I see. So how many Poles were there, not many?

A: Well, as – were hard to tell how many because everybody spoke the same language.

Q: I see.

A: They went only the same church, so – but we were studying in school, Ukrainian.

Q: You were studying Ukrainian in school?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah, we had to. This is **[indecipherable]** the language was, you have to study a foreign language, but everybody used to study U-Ukrainian.

Q: Tell me, what did you – what language did you speak at home?

A: In – in ho – in the house? Jewi – Yiddish.

Q: Yiddish.

A: Yiddish.

Q: So that was your first language?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And otherwise you sa – you spoke with the Polish.

Q: Mm-hm. Had your family lived in **Sanok** for a long time?



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A: As long as I know, yes. I don't know if they were born he – I think my father was born there. My mother, I'm not sure.

Q: What's your father's name?

A: **Herman Jonas**, or **Hirsch**, whatever. In – in Yiddish **Hirsch** – **Herman Jonas**.

Q: And do you remember when he was born?

A: No.

Q: But it would have been 19<sup>th</sup> century.

A: I used to have a passport, if – if I have time, I could find it –

Q: Okay, maybe later.

A: – and let you know.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, but I know I have a passport, I know where it is.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: And your mother's name was?

A: **Rose**.

Q: **Rose**.

A: **Rose Jonas**.

Q: **Rose Jonas**.

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A: Yeah.

Q: Do you remember her maiden name?

A: **Finck.**

Q: **Finck.**

A: **Finck, f-i-n-c-k.**

Q: Uh-huh. And was her family also well-to-do, the family that she came from?

A: N-No. Na – na – made out barely a living, you know. Most the time my father had to help them out.

Q: Okay, so you had a well-to-do branch, and a not so well-to-do branch.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Mm-hm? Go ahead.

A: They were my relatives, my uncles. They're from my mother's side.

Q: What kind of personalities did your parents have?

A: I don't know I – what do you mean?

Q: Their personalities, like was – were they extroverts, were they shy people, were they very sociable people –

A: Sociable people, yeah.

Q: They were?

A: Yeah, they were, yeah.

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Q: Yeah.

A: They were not loud, very respectful always [**indecipherable**] and charity.

People came always for something, with the holidays, you were hungry, their doors are always open, you know.

Q: Were your – was your family – let's say your social lives. Was it – was it centered around the Jewish community in **Sanok**?

A: Most of the time, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, most of the time always, yeah.

Q: So when you speak of charity work and so on, it was through the community.

A: Yeah, well, every Friday – I told you my father was rich – he used to take me or another one, put money in the envelope, and shove it underneath the door, and run away, for so – for the people. And I asked him, Daddy, who, why? They are – they are not poor, but they are ashamed to say they are hungry. The poor people, he says, th-they had what they eat. They'll take a little from you, a little from them, th-they'll have it. But those people was ashamed to say they don't have it. So that's why he took money in the envelope, put it underneath the door and run away. I se – I asked him, why are you running? I didn't want them to think they are se – they – they owed us something for it. They don't want to know – yeah.

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Q: And do you think the people ever realized who it was who gave them –

A: Some knew, some don – didn't.

Q: Yeah, yeah. Well, it was very thoughtful, in a very dignified way, you know.

A: Like – like, for example, there was nice people, but they couldn't afford an – she needed a surgery on the eye; surgery back in this little town. So nobody could give them the money, so my father send her. And she was – she had surgery done, she was okay. Then we met in my – doing – after the war, he end in **New York**, so – her son became a dentist. Now – and I didn't know, because the na – they changed, the name changed. And I start to give him work, because you know, implants, he was specialist in implants. And then they find out who I am, he started the oh, my mother told me you – that you – your father saved my mother's eye and so on and so forth, you know.

Q: So it sounds like they – they instilled those values pretty early on.

A: He – money-wise, he wa – he was very nice to any ch-charity, churches, and so on.

Q: Even churches?

A: Yeah.

Q: Even churches.

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A: We had – we had over there a – it was a building built on the army, I'm – you know, the Polish army. He gave them a lot of money, and because of this we have – I – a permanent lodge. We didn't have to pay for the ticket, nothing going – yeah. The lo – lodge were only for us.

Q: Wow, a lodge?

A: Yeah.

Q: So that meant a – a building that wo –

A: Like a balcony inside and – in the main – there was like a – like – like here, **Madison Square Garden** or something like this, over there in the time, not so big. But this was the only –

Q: Oh, so, if you wanted to have an event there, that meant that you were able to do so.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay, and there would be no charge for it.

A: No.

Q: Okay. What was he like at home? Did you see him much at home, or was he away mostly at the office whe –

A: A-Away.

Q: Yeah?

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A: Most time I saw him was on Saturday.

Q: Okay.

A: And Sundays. During the week at night – because when he came home, we were sleeping.

Q: Okay.

A: And but Saturdays and Sundays we were together.

Q: Was he – was he a person who was – it was easy to be close to?

A: Yes, yes. Everybody liked him. His w – he was very nice, very warm. And always helper, always listen.

Q: Could you tell him your problems as a chil –

A: Yes.

Q: – as a child?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yeah. Yeah, well, he never lay a hand [indecipherable] or something. He just look at you, and you know, this is it. He always kept his promise, always. But you have to be punished. Even you – you are – apologize, you are punished. Not as bad, but – and if he says I'll buy you this and this, he always bought it.

Q: Yeah.

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A: Yeah.

Q: So he was reliable.

A: And my mother was a little bit different.

Q: How was she different?

A: Tomorrow. Tomorrow never – come tomorrow, tomorrow. You want to go in the movie? Tomorrow'll be a nicer movie. Okay, tomorrow came **[indecipherable]** tomorrow'll be a better movie. Yeah. In his case was different, but if she said it, this is it, yeah.

Q: So, why do you think that was, with your mom?

A: Well, i-i – I don't know, she was afraid to – to spend a penny, or she was afraid that something happen to the kids. She was always very careful. Don't go here, don't go there, don't – you know.

Q: She was protective.

A: Very protective. I was sled riding with **Manya**(ph), my sister. And when you – and this – this was, I don't know, maybe six inches full of snow, but it was winter. I ask her, are you dead? She goes, I don't know. I said, let's ask mommy. So we went and asked mommy if she's dead. So this – really, she was ah – ah – oh – oh, my kids, my kids, my kids.

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Q: What's your earliest memory? Can you go somewhere and think, what's the earliest memory you've got?

A: Well, I don't know. I don't – if I shall say it not. The thing – I – I – I was afraid to say I'm a Jew. I would like to change my religion. Because you were called stinkin' Jew, stinkin' Jew. You know, my father was a j – I was always a stinkin' Jew.

Q: So the kids would say these things?

A: Yeah, in school, and – yeah, always. If – and they beat you up, you know.

Q: Did that happen?

A: Oh, almost every day, yeah. But, for example, we had somebody, our neighbor. He was shoemaker, and they were – they were poor. He has more kids tha-than – than shoes. So my father sent him to a college, like we call gymnasium.

Q: Yeah.

A: He finish college, he became a officer in the army. This what he wanted to be, okay? We – and we go to school, and there was another boy, a non-Jewish boy, start to fight me; he was much bigger than. This guy was looking. When the other guy says – he start to bleed, then he stopped the –

Q: When the other guy started to bleed.

A: Yeah.



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Q: But not you.

A: No. Then he stopped it. Said, oh, that's enough, that's enough. And it on and on and on like this. You know, I'm handy?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Everything. I – when I was in school, I don't know, was I, eight years old? Whatever. They came out with a picture with the first president of **Poland**. Well he used – where he was born, he used to live. And they give us bark from a tree, right? I made a house, it came out – just a copy of it. So they took it, they put it in a museum, and they told me, it won't be under your name because you are Jewish.

Q: Ohh.

A: So now you know how – how nice **Poland** was to us.

Q: Yeah. Those are quite bitter things.

A: Yeah, we were – we were – we were never teenagers, we were never kids, because we all – while you were playing we are afraid somebody came in with a stone over there.

Q: And was that to all your brothers and sisters too, they had similar experiences?

A: Yeah, yeah, sure, you know, thi-thi-this was normal. This was normal, yeah.

Q: Were there any kids who were Polish, not Jewish, who you knew they were nice, and they were friends?

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A: Yes, yes, yes, I had – I still have friends. They were very close with me, yeah, very nice. And th – his mother, when I was playing with him, his mother once say – she didn't know that I am on – in the side. She says, don't play with him. They're all a **shochet**. You know what a **shochet** is? The guy who kills – cut the chickens, the animals.

Q: Kosher.

A: Kosher, yeah. Even when we were so close, yeah.

Q: That must have been quite chilling, such things. When you're a child, you don't understand them.

A: Well, they didn't know what the mother was talking about.

Q: Yeah.

A: I did. I was scared from this day on, I was so scared to look at her, you know, because –

Q: Yeah.

A: The only good time I had was Christmas.

Q: And why was that?

A: Because when Christmas – when they on the first night Christmas and they saw a Jew, was lucky, you are lucky, because **Jesus** was a Jew. So then they were, come in, come in, they have cookies, the whole thing. I didn't know why, but then

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when I grew up, I find out why, because **Jesus** were a Jew, and according to the thing, they say maybe this is **Jesus**, you know, a reincarnation of him. So this is very nice to me.

Q: It must have been very strange.

A: Hm?

Q: It must have been very strange.

A: It was, it was. You were in a country where you were stranger there. You are born there, you are citizen, you went to the army there, but you were still a – a stranger over there. And that's why most of the Jews, they spoke very bad Polish, because they spoke only Yiddish. Because you don't like them, they don't like you. And the whole day, wherever you go in this, you could hear **Żyd** – I don't know if you understand, **Żyd** go to **Palestine**; Jew, stinkin' Jew, go to **Palestine**. This was every day, in school, without the school, wherever you go.

Q: How did your parents deal with this? How did they – you said your mother was protective.

A: Yeah.

Q: Is this one of the reasons you think she was?

A: Maybe, maybe.

Q: Okay.

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A: Yeah, but, what could – what could anybody do? You had to send the kids to school.

Q: Mm-hm. Was there a Jewish school in town?

A: Well, they didn't teach it, only Hebrew. So what good to do Hebrew?

Q: I see.

A: And not Hebrew really, just how to pray. So I – can't do nothing with it.

Q: Tell me, were your parents religious?

A: Yes, very religi – Orthodox.

Q: They were Orthodox.

A: Orthodox, oh yes, yeah.

Q: Okay. And they observed all of the –

A: Everything, mo-more tha-than – than you have to. They were very – yeah. They were so bad – religious I'm talking about – one – once on [indecipherable] by mistake, I – I pick up a flower, and I [indecipherable] Shabbas, I forgot. I thought I'll die, that I wouldn't wake up any more. In the morning, I went – I look around to find I'm still alive. I thought God will kill me because [indecipherable]

Q: Well, you ta –

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Well, children take things very literally.

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A: Ye – well, yeah.

Q: Yeah, and – yeah.

A: Well, you always – in school, whatever, I mean, Hebrew school, don't do this, God will punish you, don't do this **[indecipherable]** You're afraid to work, you're afraid to si – laugh. You don't know when He's going to punish me.

Q: That's a pretty frightful god.

A: It is, it is.

Q: Yeah. So, even though they were very religious, they didn't have much choice as far as schooling for you.

A: R-Right, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: First thing, you have to go to school –

Q: Okay.

A: – because you have to read and write in this language where you live. So you have to learn. But only **[indecipherable]** Jews always spoke Yiddish language.

Q: What were your experiences like in school, in school itself? Were there subjects that you liked that you were very interested in?

A: Usually I l – I like history, and I think, it's not physics, but similar you know.

Q: A science.

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A: Yeah.

Q: A hard science.

A: I – I like the best that, yeah.

Q: What were the teachers like? Did they treat you any differently?

A: Yeah, they were nice.

Q: They were nice.

A: Ninety-nine of them were nice. And in Jewish, not Jewish, it was the same treatment.

Q: Okay. So where did this come from then? If the teachers, which were – represent authority, were decent, why do you think the other kind of behavior was there?

A: Yeah, but why – why do we have it here too? The Jews are rich, and the Jews are this – you know, especially when the time is bad, somebody's fault. Then who else could it be? It has to be a Jew, standing over there, you know.

Q: Scapegoating, yeah.

A: The parents. You brought up like this. Like we brought up, don't trust this guy.

Q: Yeah.

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A: And same thing over there. He's a Jew, don't trust him, don't do this. They told you. The mother says, we are **shochet**. You know what a **shochet** is, a killer. He kills the animals, kosher.

Q: Kosher.

A: So there was – we lived together, looks like, and we – we probably hate each other, the same time.

Q: Did you feel that at the time?

A: Yes, yeah. Well, I was ashamed, afraid to say I'm a Jew.

Q: Yeah.

A: Then when I came to **Russia**, I was older. That was a little bit easier. Yeah, they didn't call me the **Żyd**, they call you **Ivrai**, you know, you know, **Ivrai**. And this always – I – I didn't trust, I'm afraid to. It was a whole thing, maybe he had killed someplace, yeah.

Q: Was – was there a large Jewish community in **Sanok**?

A: To us, according to the town, that's pretty large.

Q: Okay.

A: And most of them very poor, most of them. We have rich people too, Jewish people I'm talking about.

Q: Yeah.

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A: But a – a lot of them were poor. Beggars, poor, yeah.

Q: Your sister mentioned that your father also had a lumber mill.

A: Two lumber – lumberyards were there.

Q: He had two lumberyards?

A: Not the lum – lum – we – we the – lumber mills, yeah.

Q: He had two lumber mills?

A: Two lumber mills, yeah.

Q: In addition to the bank?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: How could he run them all?

A: Oh, we had people over there, we had – same in the bank, we have a guy who was the manager, like my brother. And where – over there we had two of them.

Q: Was he a good businessman?

A: Very good.

Q: Yeah?

A: Very good. Because he had – you know, had patience, with you. He didn't jump on you because you did not have the money now. And the people liked that, yeah. I – I think I have from him the same thing. I know, when I bought the office, when I came in the office, people – this is years ago, don't forget, I'm retired already, but



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now 50 years ago, everybody was sitting there in the waiting room with keeping the money like [indecipherable] the wallet. I didn't know when I bought the office, I came in and I ask her, why is everybody hold their money like this? We want to show you that we have the money, so you would treat us. So I told them, you put the money away, you are a patient here, and when you are a patient, you have pain, you'll be treated, money or not money. And this was a – they like it. And I triple my income the first – yeah, the first year I triple it.

Q: Wow.

A: And I was very successful. I had three doctors work for me. Have two floors.

Q: Wow.

A: Yeah. I – probably this I probably learned from my father, yeah.

Q: That's quite a lesson. That's quite a lesson.

A: It is, it is, yeah.

Q: Let's mention on tape too, what was your profession when you came to the **United States**?

A: I was – I was a – a – a dentist. But it – you know in **Russia**, the – you have the papers, but you're not a – I would say you are – are [indecipherable] is a dental physician. Over there you don't get a doctor degree.

Q: Okay. So you did your studies in **Russia**?

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A: Yeah.

Q: You went to school in **Russia**?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: I see.

A: Was not really a school the way we have it here. We were working so many years in a clinic, and then – you know, with the doctors, they trained you. And then, after I forgot how many months, they beca – I became the title, physician. This is when **Stalin** give an order. They were short on doctors, and short on nurses. If you were two years, or three years, something like this, a nurse, you became a – take another test, and you became a doctor. And this with the – with the – with dentist too, yeah. And when I came back here, then I went back to **Germany**. I went through four or five years. And I came back, I went to **Pittsburgh** here, and got my license.

Q: I see. So when you came to the **United States**, you went to – you went for studies in **Pittsburgh**?

A: When I came to **United States**, I went to **Germany**, back to **Germany**.

Q: Back to **Germany**?

A: Yeah.

Q: And that was for what reason?

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A: For the same reason, because I had license, but there wasn't license like – but they didn't have the college. I mean, they had it, but –

Q: In other words, it's not acknowledged?

A: It's – yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: They had a – but in – in **Nowosibirsk**, somewhere far away, we were in – in – in nowhere there, you know.

Q: Yeah. So you got some – you got some education in dentistry in **Germany**?

A: **Germany**, and then in **Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**.

Q: Okay, okay. We've jumped ahead a little bit, but that's okay. So, when you – in the late 30s – if you were born in 1922, that means that you were already a teenager, an el – you know, 17 - 18 years old, when all kinds of unrest happens.

First of all, tell me the name of that Polish president, that you made the –

A: **Pi-Pilsudski**.

Q: **Pilsudski**.

A: **Pilsudski**.

Q: Did you have any – was he talked about at home, was he somebody that you felt was also your president, or, you know, not really.

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A: He like – I – I mean [**indecipherable**] was the president, we say we like **Pil-**  
**Pilsudski**. He was nice with the Jews, the Jews were nice for him. He was twice in  
**Siberia** in prison, and two Jews, one Jew I knew, h-he – they – they – I say – they  
smuggled him out from there, from prison, from **Siberia**.

Q: From the Tsarist prisons?

A: Yeah, yeah, from – from **Russia**, twice. And this way, nobody could touch a  
Jew as – so long he was alive. And this guy had papers so nobody – nobody could  
– not could – the only thing [**indecipherable**] as he himself, **Pilsudski**.

Q: I see, I see, well there's another story, you know. And you knew this person?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Was he from **Sanok**?

A: He was from **Sanok**, yeah. He was a dentist, too.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: So tell me, how did you come to want to be a dentist? How did that occur to  
you?

A: Well, in '38 - '39, I wanted to be a dental mechanic, you know? The one who  
makes the teeth in the lab.

Q: Yeah.

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A: So we started down by this dentist, and then the war started, and then Siberian.

And I wind up in the clinic after – after we were freed from – from the camps, and I was working over there. [indecipherable]

Q: So the – so that means that the – the – one of **Pilsudski's** friends was the same dentist that you started working for. Is that correct?

A: What?

Q: I mean, this man, who was part of having saved **Pilsudski** –

A: Yeah.

Q: – is the dentist that you eventually apprenticed with.

A: Yeah, right, right, yeah.

Q: What was his name?

A: **Tannenbaum**.

Q: **Tannenbaum**.

A: Yeah.

Q: His first name?

A: Dr. tame – el-eli – **Elijah** –

Q: **Elijah**?

A: **Elijah**, yeah.

Q: **Elijah** tan – and so he tel –

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A: They call him **Eli – Eli**.

Q: Uh-huh. Would he tell you these stories?

A: Yeah, everybody know he can – everybody knew him, everybody saw him, everybody points the fingers, in – Jew or non-Jew, he saved **Pilsudski**, he saved –

Q: Wow, wow. So – but also as a teenager, you're starting an apprenticeship, but the world is changing. Did you talk about what was going on in **Germany** at home, did you talk about political life?

A: Not much.

Q: Not much.

A: Not much.

Q: Okay.

A: My father, they not like to discuss it because it's – everybody knows we're suffering as it is. What's good to talk about it? We can't help nothing. Just listened to the news, and we'll learn plenty of it.

Q: Okay. And was the news full of what was – what **Hitler** was doing, or not so much?

A: In truth, I me – I don't know.

Q: Okay.

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A: You know. And I like to say the joke when – when **Hitler** was on, and the guys – a Jewish guy sitting and reading **Hitler's** paper. So the guy asks, why are you **Hitler**? Why don't you have the Jewish paper? So, by **Hitler's** paper, it says the Jews are rich, the Jews are that. The Jewish paper [indecipherable] says Jews are having killed, and [indecipherable]

Q: He wants to read good news.

A: Yeah.

Q: Still, did you expect – I mean, was there a sense of people becoming more nervous because of what was happening in **Germany**?

A: Oh yeah. About two years before the war, we knew **Hitler** is coming.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, and the – and the non-Jew, hey **Hitler** is coming, hey, **Hitler** is coming. Finally, we got to get rid of you, yeah.

Q: You'd hear a lot of that?

A: Oh boy, [indecipherable] none of these, they ga – they got more fresh to us.

Q: Mm-hm. More of this kind of –

A: Yeah, the minute he died, **Pilsudski** [indecipherable] marshal, they start to go to the Jews, you know.

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Q: Yeah. I wonder why Poles would have been so happy that **Hitler** was coming, because look at what happened to **Poland**.

A: But they didn't know this. They thought because they're not Jewish, that **Hitler** al – will welcome them. He says, okay, here, I'll give you more Jews to kill, you know. They were happy because they think, aha –

Q: Wa-Was there actu – I mean, there was beatings and things, but was there murder that happened in **Sanok** because of these things?

A: No, no. It was when just by accident, there's beating.

Q: Okay, okay. So, would you say it was a relatively safe place to live, if you take away the fact that you'd be – be –

A: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yeah, yes.

Q: Okay. Had you ever seen a dead person before World War II?

A: No.

Q: Had you ever seen a murdered person then?

A: No. Only that one I saw the first time is when we were in the Russian camps, and we went to work in a ca –

Q: Right.

A: – like laying the trees. And while we working – to work, he asked a piece of bread. Nobody has a piece of bread. And a couple minutes later, he dropped dead.



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Q: Hunger.

A: It's the worst time yeah.

Q: Yeah. Do you remember where you were when you learned the war had started?

A: I was still at home. Still in – i-i-in our house.

Q: And do you remember that day?

A: The day, no, but every – everybody was remembered, uh-huh.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah. And – and our president, don't worry about anything, two weeks we'll be ho – back. We are winning. It's not true. I don't know if you know the story, you could even look up in the books. When **Hitler** came in with the tanks, with the trucks, the Polish went with the – on horses with the sabers. A couple hours later, they were all dead.

Q: Yeah.

A: They were against the –

Q: Yeah. When was it that you saw – when did **Sanok** – when did the war come to **Sanok**?

A: I-In '39, may – '39 - '40.

Q: So, if it start –

A: They o-occupy mers – march in, they occupied **Sanok**.

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Q: So you saw soldiers then?

A: Yeah, yeah. Seen the whole army there, you know, and then, when [indecipherable] they took over the Ukrainian part too. And then when the Polish army start to come in, they have to move out.

Q: Okay, li – we'll get to that second.

A: Oh, okay.

Q: But first come the Germans, and it's in '39. So the war starts September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939.

A: Yeah.

Q: And about how long after that did the Germans end up – I mean, did you have Germans coming into **Sanok**?

A: I know we were with them not more than maybe – maybe a week.

Q: Okay, so a week later, in September, they're there. How does life change?

A: You are afraid to move out here – well, from the house. You are afraid – you know, to – anybody who come in now and – and shoot you, yeah.

Q: Did that happen?

A: Not at the time, no. Not when we were there. Yeah. Because there soon was a mix-up. They – they was afraid, even the Jews, but they didn't know if th – we are Russian Jews, so move on to the Russian side, or – so they were –

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Q: What – how did life change for your family? What happened to your various family members?

A: We all left the house.

Q: You all left the house?

A: Yeah, except one my brother, you know, the oldest brother. Everyone left there. Took a suitcase, whatever you could go, and you went over the water, which is the **San**, over the **San**.

Q: River, uh-huh.

A: Yeah. And while we are going, we wen – the bom – bombs are coming – came down. When you see **Manya**(ph) – you saw **Manya**(ph).

Q: Mm-hm.

A: She was on her way with the horses. They mo – cut off the rest of the wagon, she was – she, the horses and the driver was only on the two wheel, you know  
**[indecipherable]**

Q: So her wagon, your sister's wagon was bombed?

A: Yes. She couldn't talk about that for two or three weeks. Couldn't move from the shock.

Q: I see. Were you – were you near her when this happened?

A: No, no, no.

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Q: Tell me how your family left **Sanok**. Was it all at once, was it separately? Was it – what prompted them to leave? What made them leave?

A: Well, **Hitler** came in, were there a couple of days or weeks, I'm not – something like this. And everybody run after the war there. And there were some good officers, the German officers. They used to say go, move, move. We are not killing. But the others coming in and they are the – so, everybody run.

Q: Well, **Manya**(ph) mentioned an instance where her sister was ordered – was it **Esther**? Was ordered to go to the town square?

A: This I n – I knew – I knew something about it. I knew something, but I don't know what happened, and why.

Q: Did you run separately from your sisters, or did you, as a family, go together?

A: We went together.

Q: You went together?

A: We went together, except during working, I told you what's happened, the bomb, and they disappeared, you know, and nobody will know where you are. People [**indecipherable**] to somebody – somebody else there, yeah.

Q: So the bomb was falling before you left the **San** – before you crossed the **San River**, or after?

A: No, we – after, after. Before already – before the Russian came in.

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Q: Okay.

A: While we were on the Russian side, the Russian wasn't there. Was all Ukrainian, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: So this after –

Q: Where did you go?

A: We went to a small town, a **Terapa(ph)** – **Teraba(ph)**, something like this.

Q: **Terra(ph)**?

A: **Ter** – yeah **Terra(ph)**. **Terra(ph)**, I think it's **t-r-w-a**, something like this.

Q: Uh-huh. And why that place?

A: We supposedly have some of our rel – our relatives, I mean, through marriage relatives. And they're in there, they won't let us in. We have a – still a – a horse, and a wagon, and w – and – and we were sl-sleeping outside. Says yeah, okay, in the backyard you can sleep out on the grass, over there. And –

Q: But they wouldn't let you in the house?

A: No. They had other people already. That's what he said. There was jealousy, ma – my father was rich. But anyway, in the morning we got up and want to continue running; a wheel is missing from the whole thing. We know who took it, they took it, yeah, because they had horses too, and cars. And then –

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Q: And what good would this wheel do them?

A: No, because we thought maybe we could go – but we were on the border almost, almost. So we thought maybe we could go a little deeper away to the – towards **Russia**.

Q: I understand that.

A: Yeah.

Q: What I don't understand is when they took the wheel away, what value is that wheel to them?

A: Well, they were staying over there, they didn't want to move, they are – they went – because there's the Russians coming, they are back home. And this happened a couple days later, **Russia** came in. So they were there. We didn't have nothing there [indecipherable] in the house, and I don't know how long we were there, for a while. Then when the **Russia** tell us, go in there, they call it shal – shal – **shalone**(ph) – **shallon**(ph)? Their train, cattle train. And they took us to – t-to **Russia**.

Q: Tell me, how did that happen? Why would they do that?

A: Fir-First of all, we were not any more a citizen of any country, because the – our country was occupied.

Q: Okay.

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A: And he needed people.

Q: Who needed people?

A: **Stalin** needed people. Is it to work, or is – or is it in – in a gold mine, not – a coal mine, so he says, whatever. In the end, he probably think now, we in **Russia**, we became communists.

Q: Did your parents have any views on communism, pre-war?

A: Yeah, we all.

Q: Pardon?

A: We all have, yeah. We – we – we liked – we didn't like communism as such, but to be free, we are the same. Me and you are the same. This what all they liked about it. And then you bit in the beautiful apple, and the apple was very sour, you know.

Q: So, it was – it was not having had direct experience yet.

A: No, no, no.

Q: Okay. Oh, what did I want to ask? But it still sounds a little funny to me: I can't understand the logic. Did your relatives, the ones that were jealous of you, did they betray you to the Russians and say take –

A: No.

Q: – you know, so how – why was it that you would be taken? Why would –

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A: Not only we. There are – all of them were escape from **Germany** to **Ukraine**, they take all of them, those people away. And especially rich. We were rich.

Q: Well, how did they know? How did the Russians know that?

A: How they – everybody knew, til they me-me-mention the name, only the name, they knew, uh-huh.

Q: Oh, I see. So this – the village wasn't that far from **Sanok**?

A: No. I would say by car now, maybe 20 minutes.

Q: Oh, not far at all.

A: Make – may – may – maybe more – more or less, but – by car.

Q: Okay.

A: And the Germans, with cars and tanks, for them it's a couple hours there.

Q: Yeah. So – but when the Russians first came, did you feel some relief?

A: Yes. Oh, we were so happy. At least we could go on. You're not afraid to be shot, you're not afraid to be kicked around, or nothing. We was very happy, sure. Freedom, first time, yeah.

Q: You said you went with suitcases when you left your home. What had happened to your father's businesses? It – what was it – what was – I mean, when the Germans came, how could he be a banker any more?

A: He wasn't, he left everything; the house and the bank, the – everything.



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Q: Uh-huh. **Manya**(ph) mentioned that by that point the bank had gone under. Was that true?

A: Before the war.

Q: It had gone under?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay, he had lost the bank?

A: Yeah, before the war, we – again, because people didn't buy from us any more, and – not buy, I mean deal with us.

Q: Is that so, was because of that reason? Okay. And what about the lumberyards, the lumber mills?

A: No, they were still – I don't know [**indecipherable**] s-still there.

Q: Did your life at home – I'm going back now to **Sanok**, before the war, when things started to go badly, did you feel that at home where – was the money tighter?

A: I – I don't think so.

Q: Okay.

A: We were kids, but you – you lived the same thing, we had the same, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: We knew that something is going wrong here. Everybody was losing already.

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Q: Did your mother have help at home?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: And always have help.

Q: Okay. Were there many people who helped her out, or was it –

A: I don't know, I think we had one, two, three or four, more or less, yeah.

Q: Okay, cu – because that's a lot of kids to take care of.

A: Yeah, sure.

Q: And a huge household.

A: Yeah, well, Father could afford it. We – it's not then to afford it. Over there, they came to work for you only for the food, forget about the pay.

Q: Wow.

A: If you want, you paid a couple dollars. But so long as they have something to eat, and he – and there – there – we buy them a dress, or whatever, this was enough, yeah.

Q: Well, people were very poor then.

A: Yeah, very poor, yeah.

Q: Very, very poor.

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A: I remember the guy who works for us had black bread. I had never had black bread. I says, I'll – I'll – I'll trade with you. I gave him my piece of challah.

Q: Yeah.

A: And he gave me a piece of bread. He took the challah, put in the arm. I said, what are you doing? I keeping for – for my wife, when I'll come home tonight, he says, he went home to – he gave her the piece of challah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. For me the black bread was different, I – I – I grew up on white bread, yeah.

Q: Well, there's a big distinction, a lot of times, between farm people and town people, and poorer people and – and more well-to-do –

A: Yeah.

Q: – the white bread and the dark bread. You know, what could you be – afford to eaten – to be eating?

A: It's – even with – one night I slept in his house. My parents let me sleep in his – the house, oh, my shed is bigger than his house. Is one – a shed like, you know. The window was no window, you just opened thing. At night he ca – close it with – with – with wood. And I am so happy on straw. I says to my parents, I want to

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sleep like him. Yeah, because you're used to the good thing, now something different, for a child, something –

Q: Yeah. Tell me how – what your house looked like.

A: It was not too big a house, but [indecipherable] the eight of us, one, two, three, four – four bedrooms.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, and this was already a big house, with a kitchen, and a dining room, and living room.

Q: A single standing house?

A: Yeah.

Q: Was it built of stone?

A: No.

Q: Was wooden?

A: Wood, wood, right.

Q: Okay.

A: I think was wood anyway. Wa – most of them houses, even there was some, they put in wood so this, you don't have to paint it, you paint once in a while. But the bricks you have to paint [indecipherable] expensive. Cement house.

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Q: Yeah. Oh, I had a – I had a question in my mind, and then I – it just – it just slipped me. Going back to – going back to the village that you were in on the Ukrainian side, did you ever experience these types of – first of all, when we talked earlier, you know, about Poles saying all of these terrible things when you were growing up, and not feeling safe, was it the same thing – wa-was the same thing true of others? Like, would the Ukrainians talk in the same way?

A: No, much nicer.

Q: Much nicer.

A: Much nicer, we are – I felt like I'm a human being. We were dancing together, we are – we are sit – eating together. Sit, eat and dance with – with the – the non-Jew –

Q: And this was in **Sanok** still? Yeah.

A: No, this already when we left **Sanok**.

Q: Ah, when you left **Sanok**, okay.

A: Yeah, this we left **Sanok**. We were across the border, yeah.

Q: Well, the reason why I ask is you said that 90 percent of **Sanok** was Ukrainian.

A: Yeah.

Q: So the Ukrainians in **Sanok** behaved differently than the ones in this village?

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A: Yes, yes. Why? Because the Russians were – came in, over – over – over maybe a couple days before he came in, so we all go free, all of a sudden. It was the promise, everybody have the same income. So, you know –

Q: Yeah.

A: – so everybody was happy now, finally.

Q: And how – how was it – what happened – do you have a memory of what happened when – when you were actually deported to **Siberia**? What happened to you? I mean, it is – how did it happen? You were – the last you told me, you were at these relatives house, they don't let you in, they steal a wheel. I don't understand what value that wheel was to them. Did you tell me?

A: Yeah.

Q: What's the value for them?

A: Because they have wagons, they have horses. And a wheel over – at that time was a lot of money.

Q: So, if they have wagons, they just have an extra wheel to help them?

A: Sure, yeah.

Q: I see. Okay, okay.

A: And – and not only this, they would have two wheels, because we had to leave the whole wagon there.

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Q: So then they have a wagon.

A: Yeah.

Q: They have an extra wagon.

A: Sure. You can't go with three wheels.

Q: Yeah.

A: So they have the whole thing, yeah.

Q: So, okay, so there – there we are in this village, the Russians come, people at first feel relief, then what happens?

A: Well, we were there, I don't know th – how long.

Q: Yeah.

A: And then one day, they will call – we – and they call all the **[indecipherable]** and now – now we are **[indecipherable]** because we are from the other side, and they load us up on trucks. We thought we are going some – a different town to settle down. And they brought us to a railroad. Only at night.

Q: At night.

A: Not – never, never – only night, never – and then this was the end of it.

**[indecipherable]** once I see the cattle trains. And they start to close it up like **[indecipherable]** and we knew this is it.

Q: But did you have any idea of what was happening to you?

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A: Nobody knew it.

Q: You must have been scared.

A: We – we knew – we knew – we thought everybody we knew would be getting killed now. Why are they treating us like this, you know? There – a toilet – was – was a toilet; a blanket, with a pipe, this it. Men and women had to use the same thing. Shower, forget about it. Yeah.

Q: Were there a lot of people in that cattle car?

A: Li – I don't know. I don't know how many you – was a lo – big long tr-train, yeah.

Q: What had happened with your older brother **Abraham**? You said that he wasn't with you.

A: He wasn't, no.

Q: What had happened with him?

A: He was engaged – I don't know if he was engaged, but anyway, he had a steady girl, I think he was engaged. And they decided to stay. Why? Because our president was speaking on the – I told you, in a couple days we – we will get rid of the Germans. We are winning here, we are winning there. So he decide, let me stay. So we lost the war, and he lost his life.

Q: I see. I see. And nobody expected –



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A: Well, we had the cousins, really beautiful, they were so beautiful. They all got killed there.

Q: Did you find out what happened to them specifically?

A: To one, I know.

Q: What happened?

A: She – on the – of the day – I think the day, a couple hours later, before the Russian came in, a guy recognized her and he called a – a German, they kill him – kill her.

Q: So in other words, the Jews of **Sanok** were being killed even as you were in this village?

A: Yeah. She was in **Kraków** at the time.

Q: Oh, she was in **Kraków**. She was in **Kraków**.

A: At the time, yeah.

Q: Okay. So you're on this train, the doors have closed, you think that's it.

A: Yeah, I did.

Q: What happens then?

A: Well, I mean, I – the doors open, get some fresh air, and the food. Yeah, and only at night they ga – they feed us, at night.

Q: Okay.

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A: And always out in back of the – so no people are, you know. They probably didn't want to expose us to people, or people to see what's going on. So every night they was feeding us. You could go out a little bit. You know, you – they know they couldn't escape. Where you gonna escape?

Q: Tell me, what was the attitude of the soldiers towards you, toward –

A: Nice.

Q: They were nice?

A: They were nice.

Q: Okay.

A: They were nice. They were plain soldiers, you can't expect to kiss you.

Q: No.

A: But at least they were never – they were half nice, you know, some pe –

Q: So they weren't threatening you?

A: No. Some people help you, some soldiers.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, they were –

Q: Okay. And then what happens?

A: Well til we wind up – I don't know how long we take, I think on a six weeks, or something **[indecipherable]** this.

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Q: That's a long time.

A: Yeah. I think six weeks, tha – ya – more or less, yeah. Then we way – wind up in Siberian. I think it was **Nowosibirsk**.

Q: Okay.

A: I think so. And then with the trucks, they brought us back into the **Tiger(ph)** – I don't know how you say **[indecipherable]**

Q: **Tiger**.

A: **[indecipherable]** not a jungle.

Q: No.

A: **[indecipherable]** don't know in – in – in English. They were – they were – they were the first one, nobody ever was there, you know. And there were several barracks. They gave us the saws, the hats, and told us how to cut it, and next day we went to cut it, you know, and –

Q: So your job was to cut wood, to cut the trees?

A: Trees, trees, yeah. Some things were so big, four people had to get on. Took us two days to cut one tree. Not – you know, some of the trees.

Q: So did the – was the whole family put to work like that?

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A: Only the brothers, and the sisters, not my parents. My parents were – my father was making some kind of sticks over there. I don't know why they need the sticks. And my mother was doing something else too, I – I don't know what.

Q: Okay. Was **Manya**(ph) also part of your group?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: She also had to go out to work?

A: Yeah. But she wasn't wa – in the woods, she was with somebody else. But the wa – we were living in the woods, anyway, yeah.

Q: The barracks were in the woods?

A: Yes, yes, yeah.

Q: How many people – what ca – what did the barracks look like?

A: Plain wooden – wooden structures, that's it. And **Manya**(ph) was there too, yeah. And I-I think – I don't know where she was, she was doing something around the house.

Q: Until – I mean, did you – so there you are in **Nowosibirsk**, did anybody ever tell you why you're there, why they brought you there, what the whole purpose was?

A: No. We had a guy come in every week, he was the main guy, and he was speaking to us, how good communism is, and this and this and – so – but we told him, we have only one slice of bread or two slice of bread, or – during the day, and

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one soup. How could we live like this? You gonna kill us. Now, he was a communist.

Q: Yes.

A: He says no, no, we don't kill. You – you understand in Russian?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: **[speaks Russian]**

Q: Okay. What does that mean? **[Russian]** Oh, you will die. We don't kill, but you will die.

A: Yeah, you will die.

Q: Yeah. Okay.

A: It is the answer.

Q: So – so –

A: But he was right, yeah.

Q: Did a lot of people die?

A: Are you kidding? Every day. The beginning was terrible, then we got used to it.

Don't forget, we have some people diabetic, some – they had no – no medication, no nothing. How could a guy like this survive?

Q: Yeah.

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A: And – and two slice bread. I was told, I don't know, I was told that this bread what we got, it was mixed flour with sawdust, yeah. It looked different and it taste different, but this what I was told. That was true, I don't know.

Q: Well, it sounds like you went from well-to-do to absolutely beggars in no time.

A: Nothing, no, nothing. Yeah. Not right.

Q: Did – did anyone in your family particularly get sick, so – you know, got – was – was too weak –

A: Not special, we all were sick, but not special.

Q: Okay.

A: My parents, they were – they start to go down.

Q: Yeah, well they were older.

A: Yeah. We were in the woods chopping the trees, laying trees. And the first time, after two years, I saw a farmer, a lady bring – she brought scallions.

Q: Scallions, yeah.

A: We didn't have to pay, other people have some money [indecipherable] to buy.

We didn't have much to buy. So I told my brother, the one you see him Sunday, I says, you make her busy, I'll take one, and I too – I took two and I steal it, I run away. And this what happened. I saw this there, and I run to my parents. I don't know, I know it was something with seven. It was 17 miles or seven miles one

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way. I – I bought it my parents, they were laying, they couldn't move. And they were so happy, they had the two thing of scallion, they made soup for two weeks.

Q: Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh.

A: So – was so – water in it, and, you know, nothing else.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: And I told my brother, in case nacher – **nachernik**(ph) – how you say that, **chernik**(ph)?

A2: The supervisor.

A: The supervisor asks where I am. Tell him I have to go – I – I mean, men's room, you know?

Q: Right.

A: There was no men's room. So, usually he's not going to look for you. And I had to ru-rush back, otherwise I wouldn't get any slice of bread, or no soup, after all day long.

Q: Oh.

A: So –

Q: And you say this had – this lasted how long, this kind of –

A: I think about three years.

Q: Then what happened?

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A: Then all of a sudden, **Stalin** gave a order to release us, we are free in **Russia**.

We could do whatever we wanted, we could became citizen.

Q: Did you become citizens?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No. We had to have passports to travel. [indecipherable]

Q: Okay.

A: And then one day, we had a little house, not our house [indecipherable] we got a house because my brother – you'll meet him Sunday – he became an accountant.

Q: Okay.

A: So because of him, we got some corn, some this tha – yeah.

Q: In **Nowosibirsk**? Was this in **Nowosibirsk**?

A: This is in – in – **Siberia**, in **Kamyen**

Q: In **Kamyen**.

A: In **Kamyen**.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: In – in **Kamyen**. And – so and everybody got a job already and this way I wind up in the clinic to work over there, became a dentist. And they were working in the



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mills. And one day, in I – you don't know what – you know what th – the

**kolkhoznik**, they're farmers –

Q: Collective farmers, yeah.

A: Yeah. They had to give every year so many heads, I mean, to the – to the  
[indecipherable] so many calves and so on. So – heads, they count. So  
[indecipherable] if you had a little, a calf, you give them this, and they'll give you  
a – a cow. It wasn't legal, but so long guy, because they're going to kill them  
anyway in the army. And so I – I – it wa – it was a holiday, I came home – so, and  
this the same thing they do with – with the army, the navy. They call your name, if  
– if you're not home, what's your name? So they take you. Just as long as they  
have a head, yeah. So I – I came home, I was praying, it was a high holiday. And I  
came home, and a guy is asking for my brother, another brother. Or his grandfather,  
he says, go in the army.

Q: So that's **Joseph**?

A: **Joseph**, yeah. I said, **Joseph** is not here. So, you want to go? I said yes, I'll go.  
So I'll go instead of him. And my parents [indecipherable] and so on. I told my  
parents, I have a chance to wind up in clinical hospital, because I was working  
already. I have some little paper that – who I am. So I was a year in the army.

Q: Mm-hm. In the Soviet army.

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A: The Soviet army. And there again, all of a sudden, **Stalin** gave an order to take all the Polish out and the Greeks [**indecipherable**] out from the army. Because we start to win the war already. We were crossing, you know. So he wanted to make another communist country in **Poland**. He thought now we are good communists, we are already – so then – then they s – they didn't dismiss us, but they took our passports, and give to a guy, he wa – he were – may wind up in the coal mine or somewhere else, yeah. So I told them, my neighbors from **Kamyen**, the old town, I'm escaping, I'm running away.

Q: I don't understand this part. I don't understand the part where you're dismissed from the army, but your passport, which I take it to be an internal passport, yeah, is confiscated.

A: Yeah.

Q: And –

A: But a guy has all our passports.

Q: Why?

A: He will take you whenever he needs you.

Q: Ah, I see.

A: In the coal mines, or he's whatever –

Q: I see.

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A: [indecipherable] you're not going home, you –

Q: So it's not like you're free.

A: No.

Q: It means you're just not serving –

A: You're never free in **Russia** anyway.

Q: Yeah. So tell me, when did you get cured of that? I mean, you – first of all it's – it's interes – well, it's – it's perplexing to me to hear of some – of a family that's Orthodox and religious, that would be inclined to si – to think well of communism. Because generally, you know, people who are religious said, oh, they don't believe in God, and so therefore –

A: Yeah – no, no. Ye – only a part. What you like is the freedom.

Q: Okay.

A: Here's the only part with – with – not –

Q: That you'd be free, that you'd be equal.

A: Yeah. But according to them, they says, you could pray, you could be religious too. The communist party, that's what they – you know –

Q: Okay.

A: – advertise.

Q: Okay.

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A: That you could be Jewish, you could be anything, you could be a religious, yeah, but it's not true, it's just –

Q: So in the forest there, were you – did anybody keep up any traditions? Did anybody pray?

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yes, always. In the morning, or [indecipherable] during the day if – because the Jew prays three times a day, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: [indecipherable] they stops working for a couple seconds, and they pray.

Q: Okay.

A: And e-even there the – the guard who was there, they didn't say nothing at all. The-The-They liked to pray too. They told us wa – they prayed, yeah.

Q: Ah.

A: There were even God in the communists, yeah.

Q: Well, they say that you know, religion was saved by **Russia's** grandmothers, you know? That those are – over the whole 70 years, those are the ones who weren't afraid.

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A: You know, I became – a very close friend, he was a – a communist party, he was a commissar.

Q: Okay.

A: Like the ha – highest – more than – than anything, he was **[indecipherable]** he was the **[indecipherable]** everything, in this town at least, yeah.

Q: In **Kamyen**.

A: Yeah. So he was fear of God, this – then he show me, he has a little picture from the Holy **Mary**, and they were praying, even though he was a – we were very close with them, yeah.

Q: Interesting. Very interesting.

A: So anyway – and then I escape.

Q: You escape from this release from the army.

A: Yeah, I le – I left the passport, everything. The guy ask me, how did you escape? The people will see you to escape. I says no, once the thing stop, the people go out, we go the other side out, out the – between the trains –

Q: Yeah.

A: – and so I did. They going out and we going between two trains, and we disappeared. And then we came home, walked home. I don't know if it was two ka – two weeks after. And where you go, you need a passport. So I – I went to my

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friend, you know. He became my friend because I be the only one, I was the only one, out – out of I don't know how many hundred miles which was a dentist. And I made him a crown, here, a cap, a gold on gold [indecipherable]. He couldn't have a gold one because the Russian are not allowed to keep gold. We were allowed because we brought the gold –

Q: With us.

A: – with us, you know.

Q: I see. I see.

A: So in this we became – yeah – yes –

Q: Well, you take away someone's pain in their tooth, they're your friends.

A: So, you know, so I make a gold crown. And then I went to him, I told him the whole story [indecipherable] we escape, we need passport. He called whatever, he called the – maybe an hour later we had new passports. I thought he was God, he was everything, what he could do over there.

Q: So how long did you stay then in **Kamyen** after that?

A: This I don't know. I think no more – maybe a year, maybe a year and a half. Not too long and then **Stalin** gives the order we – I told you, go home. You could stay here, or you could go home.

Q: So finally you could really go home?

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A: Yeah. But this – if you go home, you don't have to pay for the – they brought you here, and they – they took us back to **Poland**.

Q: Okay.

A: Free, you know, with the cattle train.

Q: And what was the decision then?

A: We all went back home.

Q: You all wanted to go home.

A: Yeah, home. We are afraid to go back to **Poland**, because afa – in **Poland**, they still kill you.

Q: Did you know that at the time?

A: Yes, we knew.

Q: How did you know that?

A: We were talking everybody, yeah. So where – what I did – what we did – so when we came back to **Poland**, we had the Jewish underground. They got me – which – with every refugee there, and says, we'll take you to **Israel**. And this was – you know.

Q: Tell me, d-do you remember the cattle car going back to **Poland**?

A: Yeah.

Q: Well, how man – how long did it take to go back?

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A: I don't remember. I think around six weeks.

Q: Again, about – about that time.

A: Yeah, same, same.

Q: Same.

A: Nice, only the – yeah.

Q: And – but your whole family wanted to go back, even though it was dangerous?

A: Yeah. Yeah, sure.

Q: But why?

A: Because we knew we had no stay in **Poland**.

Q: I see.

A: We knew – all of us knew we are gone. We go to **Israel**, or we going to

American – because this was already occupied, the was – war is over, and **Poland** is occupied. If –

Q: Did you have any idea – I'm sorry to interrupt, but did you have any idea of how – the wide scale murder of Jews? Did you know that there had been something like the Holocaust at this point?

A: No. No. We know the **Hitler** youths are killing Jews.

Q: Yeah.

A: When the – I came to **Poland**, I-I – I was buying soap, **IUF** was on it, **IUF**.



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Q: IUF?

A: Yeah. Right away, so a Polish girl says to me, you know what – you know what this is? I said yeah, it was soap. No. These are [indecipherable] clean Yiddish Jewish fat.

Q: Oh my.

A: So we start to buy over there, and we grab it, you know, hey, went to the cemetery. And then the – I went in, I – to another house that they brought us, the underground, you know, show her there was Jewish beards [indecipherable] in the bath soap, laying over there with all kind [indecipherable] they were making all kinds of experiments on that.

Q: Excuse me, you – you've lost me now. When you get to **Poland**, you don't go back to **Sanok**. Do you remember where it is that you went to?

A: I think we were in **Kraków**.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: I think so, it was **Kraków**.

Q: And when you got there, how did you connect with the Jewish underground?

A: They connect with us.

Q: I see. Okay.

A: They connect – they – they found us.

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Q: How?

A: I don't know, they probably was watching echelon coming.

Q: By echelon, you mean each wagon, each train –

A: Each train, yeah.

Q: Okay. So that is – when they connected with you, somebody came to your cattle car and said, come with us or – or so on?

A: Yeah, yeah. To one guy. They said that only one guy. He said spread out. Let us know where they live, we'll take care.

Q: Okay.

A: And this what's happened, all of a sudden somebody knock on the door, we afraid to open, because [indecipherable]. He show us who he is, and he told us okay, this and this date, we'll come ge – what's happened is, the border from **Poland** to **Czechoslovakia**, **Czechoslovakia** was still occupied by **Russia**.

Q: Okay.

A: Also was occupied by the Americans. German was Americans. **Poland** was still occupied by **Russia**.

Q: Okay.

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A: I mean, free, but occupied, you know. So they came, o-on the border, the police were paid. So there – the days when this guy's on duty. So they took us and went through the – the border.

Q: Which border? Which of – country?

A: From **Poland** to – to **Czechoslovakia**. Was the – occupied by the **Russia**.

Q: I see.

A: You know, and **Poland** was occupied by **Russia** too.

Q: Okay.

A: And they told us, when you're working –

Q: Yeah.

A: – if it's happen to work during the day, if you see a Russian officer, soldier, and he speaks to you in Russian, don't ever answer in Russian. Make believe you don't understand, because they told us **Stalin** gave an order, all Polish citizen stay in **Poland** except the Turks and the other – Turks and somebody else could go free, whatever, home.

Q: I see. So you would have been stuck in **Poland**, and you didn't want to stay there.

A: Sure, you know.

Q: Okay.

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A: So [indecipherable] in a day, us, we are working like this, we were in **Czechoslovakia** [indecipherable] right, and working. I think there was 160 of us.

Q: Wow.

A: Working and who goes there [indecipherable] general, with all the stars, and two officers next to him. He start to speak to us in Russian. We shouldn't – so one of Jewish guy, he didn't know what to do, he start – I don't know if you know what's Kaddish.

Q: It's a prayer, isn't it?

A: Ka – after the deaths. Well, so he say – start to say Kaddish after the deaths.

Q: Yeah.

A: So the Russian, the general says [indecipherable] he didn't say nothing, he walk away. He would send us back to **Siberia** and we never come back. He had the power. So he ma – make like close his eyes, he knew they are Jewish. And this – so he went – we wind up in – again with the train. Through the night we traveled to – we came into **Austria**. **Austria** a – we were free. The Germans were there, you know. And then, some were in [indecipherable] **Germany**, some in **Austria**. And then when the **Russia** – and the war was over, **Truman** – we have a order, who has somebody in the **United States** and **Canada**, they're going back at the first. Who has nobody will go later, whatever.

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Q: So where did you end up – when you were in **Austria**, you say you were free.

Where did you end up staying?

A: **Hallein** by **Salzburg**. Everybody knows **Salzburg**.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: Yeah, by **Salzburg**, do its –

Q: **Align**(ph)?

A: **Hallein**.

Q: **Hallein**.

A: **Hallein**.

Q: It's a pretty area.

A: Yeah, it's very nice, it –

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. But there were b-barracks from before, from soldiers.

Q: Okay.

A: And we moved in in the – in those barracks.

Q: And who was running that area? Who was the running the pa – the barracks?

A: There was a – a – an la – they ca – cay – they call him officer. I think he was from **Switzerland**, or somewhere – somewhere there.

Q: Oh, so it wasn't –

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A: He was the captain of the whole thing.

Q: Okay, so was this an – one of the occupying armies, victorious armies, or was this a – nothing to do with the military?

A: No, the military was all over there.

Q: Okay.

A: But this was a – I-I don't know was a st – to Joint, or was it to another organization, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And they was supplying us with food, and with clothes and so on.

Q: And by that point, did you have a better idea of what had happened to the Jews of **Poland**?

A: Oh yeah. By this time, I told you when we – you start to buy the soap.

Q: Soap.

A: And then lamp, made from ska – Jewish skin.

Q: And – but was this somebody – peop – making – someone making fun of you, or was this somebody who said, this is really soap?

A: No, on th – on the – on the – on the market you could buy **[indecipherable]**

Q: And it really was?

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A: Yeah, yeah, on the market, like you know, you have basket with soap and basket with flowers and basket with this. Yeah, real soap, an-and lamps.

Q: You saw such things?

A: I think I – I think I bought one or two of the lamps of the human skin, the Jewish human skin. So I bought it, and I gave it to – and they bury it, you know.

Q: Okay, so at that point, when you saw such things –

A: And then I start to see more and more. Once we were in Russian – in American's hands like, they show us pictures, and we saw – we – we ca – we couldn't believe it, ah, we couldn't believe it, but – and then we start to meet the guys from the camps, and –

Q: Well, here's another question. You didn't go back to **Sanok**. Was there a reason why not to go back there, even if you would leave again?

A: I – we were 99 percent sure they would kill us. We come back, said why are we back? We [**indecipherable**] the houses that my father had. Somebody probably lived some of that, and – and then the mill – the wooden mills and the –

Q: Yeah.

A: You have to – why should they let us in?

Q: I see.

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A: Espe – I’m sure somebody was living in our houses, if the house was still one piece. It was, the house, I know, we find out later.

Q: So you’re in the American zone – or you’re in **Austria**, in **Allign(ph)** – **Hallein**, and you see –

A: Americans, occupy Americans.

Q: Americans – amer – by Americans. And how long were you in this place? How long were you there?

A: We came 1950 here. I think we were there about four years, three or four years, more –

Q: That’s a long time.

A: Yes, yeah.

Q: What did you do?

A: I was already a dent – at the dentist over there. Remember there – I told you I had the papers, yeah.

Q: Right.

A: So I been recognized to – not in **Germany**, for our camp.

Q: When – when you are a dentist, di-did you already started practicing in **Russia**?

A: Yeah, yeah.



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Q: Was there such – forgive me for this question, but were there painkillers that people had in **Russia**, or not?

A: Yeah, yeah, there was **xylocaine**. **Novocain**, we – we call it.

Q: Novo – **Novocain**?

A: **Novocain**.

Q: Okay.

A: Was a bottle like this, you know, you had to suck it out with a – with a syringe.

Now we have everything packed, you know, and –

Q: Yeah.

A: – you don't touch it, yeah.

Q: But then it was – okay, so there were painkillers.

A: Were painkillers, yeah.

Q: And in the camp, as well, in **Hallein**?

A: Oh yeah, sure.

Q: You had all that.

A: Everything sent from the **United States**.

Q: Okay.

A: Everything from **America**, yeah.

Q: Okay. All right. What happened to Mr. **Tannenbaum**?

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A: He was here, I saw him. In **Brooklyn** he had his [indecipherable] was engineer.

You know, and then was everybody getting older and older, finally he got too old.

Q: Well, that means he survived the war?

A: He survived the war, yeah.

Q: Okay, okay. So, in – and what was – what was your dad doing and your mother doing and your siblings, what were they all doing in **Hallein**?

A: Nothing. Nothing. My sisters, I don't remember [indecipherable] I don't think they were working though. And my par – father and mother, same thing.

Q: W-Well, what was their –

A: They didn't have to work, because over – everything free.

Q: Okay.

A: Everything, food, everything else.

Q: Well, what were their spirits like at that point? Because if your father – I mean, these – everybody had survived, yeah?

A: Yeah.

Q: But if you don't have a – an occupation, if you don't have a – a purpose, if you don't know where your life will be, that can take a toll.

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A: Yeah, but th – something – what are you doing in prison? You know

[**indecipherable**] I hope, and this was happen [**indecipherable**] hoping, and when the war was over –

Q: Did it feel like a prison?

A: Like a free prison. Yeah, you're free to go wi – now, I don't know if

[**indecipherable**] in between. I was here in – in the **United States**, I was working for the – the – a prison, a maximum prison, killers only.

Q: Wow.

A: Yeah. And the same thing, if he was a good prisoner, he was free. Free

[**indecipherable**] free, he could go in the town by hisself, he could go shopping for us. He was a free prisoner.

Q: Oh my gosh.

A: Yeah, and same thing we were. We were free to go and – but [**indecipherable**]

Q: Okay.

A: You can buy him a house if you have the money, yeah.

Q: So wa – so you were there for four years?

A: Yeah, I think four, I am not quite sure.

Q: Okay. That's a long time.

A: Yeah, it was, it was, sure.

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Q: Why did it take so long, do you think?

A: Because they have no room for us [indecipherable] the war was on, it was go on. They have the [indecipherable] with them. We have – we have secured, we are in the – in the camps.

Q: Okay.

A: Fo-Food, nothing goes up any. So [indecipherable] to take on the war. And when it was stop, first thing what they did is the soldiers, not us.

Q: Yes.

A: The soldiers to go home.

Q: Of course.

A: And after everything was smaller and slowed down, they start to send people [indecipherable] and then if nobody accept them, so the American [indecipherable] whatever, took him and send him someplace.

Q: So did you have sponsors to come to the **United States**?

A: My brother, who you'll see him Sunday –

Q: Uh-huh.

A: He went a couple months before us, he was in **Germany**, and some as – his group, or whatever, came first went to **United States**. So then he came here, and he send us paper, he is there. So that's what he send us to – to **New York**.

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Q: Okay.

A: He didn't have to show that he is working or something, but that he is there, so that –

Q: So – and he was here.

A: And he ask him to – to go there, so [indecipherable]

Q: So did the whole family then come over?

A: Yes, yeah, yeah.

Q: When did you find out about what happened to your brother **Abraham**?

A: When we came here.

Q: How did that happen?

A: I don't know. We hear the people talking and then we find out that my brother was killed, the last day, when the – same day or day before when the army came in, the Russian army. And –

Q: That is in 1939, or in '45?

A: Yes, '45, '45.

Q: So he had survived the whole war?

A: Yeah. The day before the – they were in the same town, almost at the same day, they came in the next day, and they kill him.

Q: Was – did he stay in **Sanok**?

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A: He was in **Sanok**, yeah. A-As far as I know.

Q: Okay. Has there ever been any curiosity from any of the family to go back and see what happened in **Sanok**, like a decade later, or two decades?

A: I was there with my brother.

Q: You were?

A: Yeah.

Q: When?

A: No, my – m-my son, my son.

Q: Okay.

A: I was – I couldn't find nothing, nothing. You go in there [**indecipherable**] they give you only when my brother died, when this one died, and nothing else, yeah.

And then I – I saw a piece of paper, of I don't know whom I got it, that this was the last officer who was leaving at the time from **Poland**, and somebody pinpoint he is Jewish. He's, okay, let me kill the last Jew. And he killed him. It's unbelievable, you know, when – when you think about it, y-y-you s – you – you don't believe it any more. How could that be, you know.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Well, this is it. And then when I came over here, I was working a dental lab, and I didn't like it. I start to like it. I said to myself, if I li – start to like it, I'll be a

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dental mechanic. I didn't want it. So I tried to get in the college here. Th-They couldn't take me because they have so many older people than I am, with [indecipherable] said will take another maybe eight – 10 years before. So I send my papers to **Germany**, and that was accept. So I went to **Germany** –

Q: Where?

A: Wi – wi – **Wizburg**(ph) – **Wizburg**(ph) –

Q: **Würzburg**.

A: **Würzburg**.

Q: **Würzburg**.

A: **Bavaria**.

Q: Yeah. It's a pretty town.

A: S-So I went there – beautiful town. I was there four years, five years to ma – to make my doctors. And then when I came back, I went back to **Pittsburgh** – not **Witzburg**(ph), **Pittsburgh**, and I got my degree, I'm a doctor.

Q: Did you speak German before you went to **Würzburg**?

A: No.

Q: So did you do your studies in German?

A: Yes, in germ – Jewish in – in – in – is very close, very close.

Q: So it wasn't so hard to understand.

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A: Not at all. I speak five language anyway.

Q: Which are they?

A: They Yiddish, Polish, Russian, I spoke **[indecipherable]** in Russian, German –

Q: And English.

A: English.

Q: Wow.

A: My father spoke, I think, eight or nine or 10, I don't know.

Q: Oh my goodness. What was it like being in **Germany** after – so soon after the war?

A: Beautiful.

Q: You didn't feel strange there?

A: Beautiful. Very nice.

Q: Did people – did people –

A: The people were very nice to you, very nice. They – they didn't – they are not the same people, overnight.

Q: How do you understand that? How do you explain it to yourself?

A: To me – to me, they are like – like robots. You press this button, they do this way, this – when they – when **Hitler** would turn around, say hey, now I want to



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kiss every Jew [indecipherable] oh, jawohl, jawohl, I mean, okay, they'll do it.

They – they just born soldiers, or born robots. That's what I mean.

Q: Yes, but are you saying that about humanity in general, or about Germans in particular?

A: Germans.

Q: Okay.

A: Germans. I-I – I – I married a German, anyway, a German girl. Same thing here.

Q: German Jewish?

A: Thi-Thi-This i – no, she became Jewish, yeah. I said listen, you no have to. No, I have to. I have a house in the country, right?

Q: Yeah.

A: We are going to the country. In the woods, it's late at night, it's dark, there's a sign. It's not a [indecipherable] stop sign. She tells me, stop at that. I says, stop for who, what? Stop it. I says why? I thought that maybe a deer, a bear. It's a sign.

What sign? I says, I saw the sign. Nobody stops there. There's nobody around here.

Stop. But this is they are, yeah.

Q: Can you turn it off, the camera off, a bit? [break]

A: We – lectures from the professors. So I went to these lectures, it was maybe had two or 3,000 people there. So then the professors, who comes down and tell me

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what is this? Is it nerves, is it blood vessel? Nobody is going, so I got up, I got down. So I – I explain to him [indecipherable]. So he says look here, a foreigner – because of my language – and you guys don't know what it is? So one girl, I knew what it is, but you didn't call me. The professor is stupid, did they – you know, in German, the professor, you know –

Q: Is king. That's right.

A: Stupid. I didn't call me there, but he came down. I says, whoever knows, you know. This is the way they are.

Q: Yeah. Okay. So, but did it – how did it f – how did it feel, with that explanation, being amongst the – or did it not s – matter to you? You know, I'm trying to get a sense of – you know, the war is just ha –

A: You know, in beginning, I look a-at all of them like they're all killers. When you live a while with them, you see that it's not them, it-it's the law. And they are – this is the way they were – the book says, yeah.

Q: Well, tell me then, if you married somebody who was German, clearly it was someba – thing that you didn't – you know, it wasn't – it didn't prevent you from becoming close, and having a family, and the – in the most intimate way possible.

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A: You see, his par – her parents were different. They are people. Her sisters, everybody [indecipherable]. Her mother – you know, this I find out later on, her mother spoke excellent Yiddish.

Q: Ah.

A: Now, the question is, why?

Q: Why?

A: To me, probably her grandparents, or somebody was the – you know.

Q: Was Jewish, yeah, yeah. Well then, tell me, how do you feel about Polish –

A: I-I-In the same thing. You can't blame the whole world because one or two are killers, yeah. Don't mean the whole country is like this, yeah.

Q: Well, then, I want to turn that to the Polish issue. Do you – how do you come to terms with, you know, from childhood, you had experiences which were frightening and degrading. And how did that ha – how do you feel about people who are of Polish background, wh-who are – who are Poles, and who are –

A: See, I – I didn't grow up in **Germany**, right? But Polish people, the Jews, if they want to go to medical school, or law, they couldn't get in. **Poland** wouldn't – they wouldn't accept Jew, the best grades. Over there they always did accept Jews.

Q: In **Germany**.

A: In **Germany**, til **Hitler** came, you know.

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Q: Okay.

A: So it's a big difference. Here, you were born as a stinkin' Jew, you die as a stinkin' Jew.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah. You can't become nothing here, because you are Jewish. Over there they never – they'll always help you. And a lot of rich people were Jewish over there.

Q: That's true.

A: So this were a temporary, you know –

Q: Yeah. Hang on a second. **[interruption]** Okay, so let's finish this first train of thought, which was about – about your feelings towards **Poland**, and – and it sounds like there aren't many good ones, you know.

A: No, no.

Q: Yeah. Is there anything you'd want to add to what we have been saying?

A: I – I think – I-I son – I son – I said what I want to know. This is the way it is. It was normal to us to be cold, an-and **[indecipherable]**

Q: That was normal, yeah. It was acceptable.

A: Yeah. Well he –

Q: Not acceptable to you –

A: – he have – no, you didn't have none choice.

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Q: Yeah.

A: This is it.

Q: Yeah.

A: You didn't. You are there and that's it, you know.

Q: And it was acceptable to their society to say it. That's what I meant to say.

A: That's what I'm saying is that before **Hitler** came, most of the doctors and lawyers came from **Germany**, because they could study there, they ta – took you in, you know. And th-then, you came back to **Poland**, you could then open an office. But you never came – became a judge.

Q: Yeah.

A: Only a lawyer. No, we have – we have a joke about that. A guy tried – he was a Jew, came back from **Germany** as a lawyer, he's doing very well. He wants to become a judge. He tries, once, twice, three – no. So finally sa – the priest called him in. He says to him, li-listen, you want to become a judge? Convert. He says, me convert? I don't want to convert. Li then – he says, think about it. Okay. He thi – comes back the next day to the priest, okay, I'll convert. So he converts, and every Friday [**indecipherable**] open, he's sitting in a restaurant, eating a chicken. Friday [**indecipherable**] the priest pass by, and says to him, son, you know, you're eating meat, today you can't eat meat. He says no, it's not meat, it's a fish. The

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priest looked again, he says no, it's – it's a chicken. He says, no, it's meat. He looked again, he says to the priest, Father, I did the same thing what you did. I took some water, I says, you were a chicken, you are a fish, you were a chicken, you are a fish. Now it is became a fish.

Q: Yeah.

A: This the way they had to do, you know. You go there and –

Q: You had to change who you are.

A: Ye-Yeah.

Q: Yeah. Your sisters. You mentioned that in the **DP** camps that they met their spouses, is that so?

A: Yeah, oh, they was already in the – occupy from the army where – after the war.

Q: Uh-huh, in the lager.

A: In the lagers, yeah.

Q: And were their spouses survivors? Were their spouses survivors?

A: Yeah, yeah sure.

Q: Yeah? Also from **Poland**.

A: Yeah. I think some of them were even from the camps. But mine fa – mine – they were [**indecipherable**] by Russian.

Q: Okay.

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A: Yeah.

Q: Your own parents, when you came to the **United States**, did they ever work again? Did they ever do – you know – what would – how did these –

A: Yes. My father was very handy. I probably took it from him. He became a carpenter.

Q: He did?

A: Yeah, became a carpenter, he fixed this, he fixed this, yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And my mother, who was still a mother, she was the mother.

Q: Okay. So she was still at home taking care of the household.

A: Yeah, the way we grew up, even til I got married. Whenever end of the week, you got the money, you always give to mommy. Always, everybody, father – we need money [**indecipherable**] so much. But this – this was no – Mommy is the head of that.

Q: And did they live here in **Brooklyn**?

A: Yes, yeah.

Q: And when did they die, when did they pass?

A: My – my father – my mother died, I don't know if it's 20 years ago, or more.

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Q: So they lived – they lived quite a long life.

A: Yeah, yeah. He – he was 78, or 80-something. Or 87 [indecipherable]

Q: Okay. What would you want young people today to understand about your experience in **Poland** before the war, your experiences in **Russia**, and the things you learned after the war. Those are three distinct parts, but what would you want them to understand about each of those segments of your life?

A: I don't think they'll ever understand, thank God, thank God. You grow up here, you just – sometimes I don't believe that I could go o – through the whole thing, yeah. Let – let me take the army. We have no beds over there. Straw on a piece of wood. And no underwear, in the same uniform you were sleeping and eating. When an inspection from the **United States** came, before he came there, everybody get a piece of white linen, put it over here, make believe we have a shirt. Yeah.

Q: Di – I didn't ask you much about your army day – your year in the – in the Soviet army. Did you do any fighting?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: No, we were just training, and then keep, you know, the prisoner – watching prisoners.

Q: So you were watching people who had been like you?



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A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: Or German pr – German prisoners?

A: No, Russian prisoners.

Q: You were watching Russian prisoners?

A: Yeah, it was not prisoners, it was – it was a torture. What it was is, I had 16 years old and 90 years old, all kind. This is **Stalin** had thing to scare people to talk. You couldn't talk about **Stalin** bad thing. So to scare you, almost every month, or every week sometimes, somebody has to disappear from your neighborhood. So this is you keep your mouth shut. The way they did it, never did – never arrest you at your house, or never at work. On the way home from work, usually the girls **[indecipherable]** girls start to talk to you, or they just have to ask you something, in the police station. You never came back. Used to **[indecipherable]** I met them over there, you know, I was a good guy, because I – I was part of them, almost, but they didn't know it. So they told me, one – a couple over there, from the wedding, they took him, for no reason **[indecipherable]** the people, just to scare. And then –

Q: So they were just normal people?

A: Yeah. I told you I had a friend of mine, became very friendly. He was that commissioner, whate-whatever you call him –

Q: Commissar.

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A: – mayor. So I spoke with him a lot, he says, we have to. We have to do it. Li-  
Like, for example, we have – you had lawyers, right? If you go to court over there  
at the time, they had – they had lawyers. The lawyers can't do nothing. If you tri –  
the lawyer will try to show you are innocent, so you are against the government. So  
you'll be punished. So you just staying there like a – like mummy, and that's it.

And listen. And this is the way –

Q: Well, I understand what you mean by saying it would be good if they never  
have to understand it – that is young people. Do you think that then – I mean, it's –  
it's one thing when you have someone who's gone through an experience, there's a  
cost in remembering, there's a price to remember. Are you saying it's better that  
people are never really informed of these things?

A: Not informed, yes. But – but they wouldn't understand you, because I don't  
believe it any more. You had to go through, you know, because it's a – impossible  
–

Q: Yeah.

A: – to – to – to accept, not to be a human being where you are one. Treat you like  
a – you are – yeah – o-or in the army – not in the army himself, in the toilets. There  
was a big hole with a piece of wood. And male or female, we all sitting together.  
Come on.

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Q: Yeah.

A: So you – you – you are used to almost nothing.

Q: It's very hard for people who have not been reduced to almost nothing, to know what it's like. And I suspect it's very hard to have words to put to that experience.

A: We were in the army, I told you [indecipherable] there, watching those prisoners. It was winter. For three months we didn't had nothing to eat. No – nobody cared to get – get to us, so we finally yu – saw a field where the farmers took off their cabbage. Was no cabbage there, the roots. We dig it out the roots, nothing wash it [indecipherable] shanell(ph), they call shanell(ph) the uniform [indecipherable] this is the soldier.

Q: Wow.

A: [indecipherable] they just couldn't understand, they thought that somebody make up story. Or – or like my brother [indecipherable] you know, the showers. Forget about shower [indecipherable] we had a – not a hole, a piece of stone over there, with a couple blankets hanging, they're outside a fire. You put snow, and from the snow we get steam. And this was our shower. You didn't get sick, you went without shoes, without the winter. This were your shower. Could you believe it? No.

Q: No.

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A: [indecipherable] remember?

Q: What was it like when you live in the **United States**? Does it – did it ever feel lonely that there wasn't anybody you could talk about these things to? Or that – who'd understand. Not that you'd need to talk about it, but who could understand it.

A: Only the foreigner, who went through more or less the same thing, will understand, yeah. Not from the other side. This was paradise. It was – here, when we came, we just couldn't believe it, we had the – we couldn't believe it, we are talking with a nice human being, you know. Thank God. Food all over. You don't have to stay in line, like you used to.

Q: That's right.

A: You used to stay in lines for hours, and then they haven't got any more. Like I – I – I love watermelons. I says, for one week or two weeks I was living only on watermelons. I had no money, I had nothing to buy [indecipherable] the watermelons were growing over there, just growing, you know, wild. And this the only food what I ate.

Q: Do you think – are there – well, here's a – a question that's a little provocative. Do you think that there are people who endured the Holocaust, who were never close to **Russia** at all, who don't understand what you went through?

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A: I'm sure there are plenty of it. For one reason that I – I-I-I tried to understand, is it true? I – I start not to believe what [indecipherable] look at me, and I'm still here, and I have a office, with kid, with children. How could I live? But yeah – I mean, you start to think, you go [indecipherable] details. You went through more than y-you could take, you know.

Q: Do you have – do you have – sometimes Russian Jews who have emigrated to the **United States** have felt alienated because people haven't understood their experiences. There's – I'm talking in the 70s, in the 80s, and the 90s and so on. Do you think there's something to that?

A: The worst thing is, if you can't share with nobody. It's always, you know, locked in the – in the – and you ask yourself what has happened [indecipherable] is it true? Some years, are you still alive, you know? So it's very hard to tell my kids. Okay, sure [indecipherable]. You can't. If you don't go through, you don't understand, yeah. Same thing with a patient, if you never have pain, oh yeah, don't worry about it, couple minutes you'll be finish. For you a couple minutes, but the patient is suffering couple hours.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. And same thing [indecipherable] not expected to understand.

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Q: Did you learn something about yourself as a person, having gone through these things?

A: Oh, a lot. I think a lot. I don't know why, it's all – in all of us. We afraid to throw out the piece of bread. It wa – it's just, it's too expensive – no, it's not expensive, it's – it's bread, you know, it's – it's something like a holy thing, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: And then you did a thing for everything. Every step you're doing here, you can't believe it, that it – you – I used to – I here, free? Do whatever I wanted, you know.

A-Alive. And to me at least, start to believe you have a God. You have somebody who does it for you.

Q: So it strengthened your belief?

A: Yes, yes, yes, more, more.

Q: But somebody would say, if He was a God, how did He allow this suffering? I mean, it's the perennial question.

A: Yeah, everybody ask it.

Q: Everybody asks this question. How will you answer them?

A: You look for a – for wa – answers. You ask, maybe, maybe this guy did something different. Maybe this guy did some – something **[indecipherable]** to

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somebody, that's why he has to be punished. Maybe. You don't know. I never spoke – spoke with God. I try. He has no telephone.

Q: Or the line is busy.

A: Yeah.

Q: I don't think the line is busy, but – but you mean, somebody who is victimized could be – could be responsible for that? They – they're guilty of – themselves, of being victimized? Is that what you're saying?

A: Maybe. I mean, if you going back to God now, make believe.

Q: Yeah.

A: We don't know why – you ask the same question. I was – I had the prisoners, I mean, medical thing, it – only killers, maximum, right. But the people there were 90 years old, 70 [indecipherable] never got sick. Why is this [indecipherable] die? That's the question, who shall I ask?

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: The same thing here, it's hard to tell why.

Q: But my question to you is more for those people who want to dismiss that there is a God, and say, if the – why – if there is one, why did he allow such suffering? And you say your faith was strengthened. How do you answer that question for them?

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A: Well, to me, what I went through is many miracles. Who else [indecipherable] miracle than God. Somebody higher and stronger than me helped me to go through this. Wha – two slices of bread a day for two years or three years? Working [indecipherable] and – and it's not that – you have to finish this amount. If you don't finish, you can work all night. Otherwise you wouldn't get nothing. It's not like eight hours [indecipherable] eight hours.

Q: Yeah, it's a quota.

A: Yeah. So the – the – you had so many questions. [indecipherable] some are why. Why did this guy die, he was so strong, working with me? How come I am and he is alive? Why – you know, and it's so many questions you can't answer.

Q: Yeah.

A: And like everybody else, you have to believe in something stronger than you are. So where you go?

Q: Yeah. To the telephone.

A: Yeah. You can't afford [indecipherable] the telephone.

Q: Any final thoughts? Any – anything else you'd want to say for the kids, for the grandkids?

A: I'm just – I just thank God they don't have to go through it, and I have to understand. Thank God for that. That's it. And everybody, they don't know what



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kind of country we have, really. You're born in good, so you don't know, the same thing. At home I didn't know what the – what mean hungry. I didn't the guy he is hungry, because hungry you don't see. You see he is working, I am working. If he [indecipherable] know what hunger means. The same thing with this. I wished I never really understand it, no.

Q: Thank you.

A: You're welcome.

Q: Thank you very much. This concludes our interview, the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **Paul Jonas**, on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

Thank you.

A: You're welcome.

**Conclusion of Interview**