

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Jerzy Głowczewski**  
**May 7, 2013**  
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## **PREFACE**

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## **JERZY GŁÓWCZEWSKI**

### **May 7, 2013**

Question: This is a **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **Jerzy Głowczewski**, on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at the **Kosciuszko Foundation** in **New York City**, and I would like to thank you, Mr. **Głowczewski**, for coming to speak with us today. And I'd like to start the interview, like we always do, at the beginning. I'd like you to tell us a little bit about yourself, starting with the date you were born, the place you were born, and please pronounce your full name for us. And I'll – then we'll go from there.

Answer: All right.

Q: Okay.

A: My name is pronounced **Jerzy Głowczewski**, that's in Polish. In English, **Głowczewski**, to make it easier. And I was born in November 19, 1922, so I am over 90 now. And probably what we discussed with you is that I'm one of the last living witnesses, not to the Holocaust, but to the times of the Holocaust, as witnessed by many of us who had to escape, occupation of **Poland** was by the Germans and the Soviets – Soviets. And we found ourselves in different parts of the world.

Q: Well, let me interrupt for a second. That's a wonderful introduction, and we will go back even further, because we will get to that central part of the experience and the reality of what the two different forces were, and how they played themselves

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out in **Poland**. But let's start far more individually. Tell me a little bit about your family, your father's name, your mother's name, their occupations.

A: Well, my father's name was **Kazimierz Głowczewski**, or **Casimir** in – in English. And he was from an old family who was probably a landed gentry sometime in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, our area. And they found themselves also refugees in – in the 1770s, to **Warsaw**, when the part of the country in which they lived, which is **Pomerania** on the **Baltic** shore, was taken over by the Prussians. And that was the beginning of the big, tragic Polish history, was through stupidity of the rulers and of the ruling classes, they run into the situation where the **Poland** was divided. It was once a very –

Q: Large.

A: – flourishing Polish-Lithuanian kingdom, very large, enormous amounts of territory, from the **Baltic** to the **Black** Sea almost, which was a magnet for many foreigners who were written down as refugees or immigrants. Because **Poland** had a unique in – in the European history, system of elected kings, and – and the parliament.

Q: For the Middle Ages, unheard of.

A: Unheard of. Unheard of even during the later ages. So **Poland** was an open country. I always compare it to **America**, although 300 years later, but it was a

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country of immigrants. We had many, many nationalities, and foreigners as far from **Sweden, Scotland, Spain**, tracking down, looking for freedom of location to live, education, religion, and – and speech. It was – but that also requires some kind of rules.

Q: Yeah.

A: And they – the – they were so e-e-enchanted with the freedom that they forgot that there are rules also, they have to contribute something to thi-this country. So they did not pay taxes, for instance, they did not care about the army. So the Polish-Lithuanian army was minimal, in – compared to the neighboring countries like –

Q: You're talking about the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

A: Eighteen – na – **Russia**. But this is why so many people were displaced during the – and my family was one of those, on my father's side. On my mother's side, entirely different story. My grand-grandfather was a Napoleonic officer –

Q: Oh my.

A: – who went to **Moscow** with the Polish-Lithuanian army, to occupy **Moscow**. And they did, but then they were defeated by frost, and again quarrels among them. So they retreated. My – my great-gran – grandfather was wounded on the present **Belarusian** border, and was saved by some people who lived in a – in a landed manor. Landed gentry in mano – manner. And returned to **France** when **Napoleon**

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was gone already. And he was so di-disenchanted with the re – resurgence of the royal family in **France**, that he returned back to **Poland** where he met all the other people who were also some kind of revolutionaries, too.

Q: They were sort of like 19<sup>th</sup> century revolutionaries.

A: Yes, yes –

Q: Yes.

A: – well, **Napoleon** arose –

Q: We – 1858, yes.

A: – from the revolution.

Q: Right.

A: French revolution.

Q: Right.

A: So there was this spirit of – of revolution. And he brought his two out of his three – his five children, he brought two sons to **Poland**. And one of my gra – my mother's father is – is the – is –

Q: Son.

A: – is the son of that – is – yes, of one of these Frenchmen.

Q: Well you know what – one thing that strikes me right away, is that you can trace back your family to – across two or three centuries. Not many people can.

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A: Yeah.

Q: They know that there's thi – so this must have been mo – something that you learned about at home, you know, that your parents told you, that was in the air, that – you know, how did you fi – how did it become known?

A: F-First of all, I collected all this materials from the family, and members who were alive after the war.

Q: Okay.

A: And saved this in form of loose leafs, handwritten stories. And then I collected a lot of photographs. I have at home many albums, which I redone, sa – taking back the history of my family to 1840s. Why? Because our [indecipherable] story unusual.

Q: Yeah.

A: In **Warsaw**, our house and our apartment survived the uprising and the war.

Q: No kidding?

A: Oh yes. So that's why I return after the war.

Q: Okay.

A: Because my family was survived, and my mother, my – and – and th – the home is here, our business, which was a big lithography, painting –

Q: Well, this I wanted to ask about you.

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A: Yes?

Q: I – I wanted to – to learn more about how your family supported itself, whether or not both of your parents worked, and – and tell us a little bit about that.

A: We – we had a – we – my parents met soon after – I think right in '21, soon after the big celebration after the – the victory of the – the **Bolshevik** war.

Q: Okay. Against the **Bolsheviks**.

A: Against the **Bolsheviks**, yes. And my father – I have a – photographs of him in the uniform, on a horse, but – but I think he was released quickly, because he inherited from my grandfather, a big lithography and – and painting works, one of the biggest in **Warsaw**, who specializes in painting, scientific albums –

Q: What was it called, the company?

A: Artistic lithography of **Władislaw(ph) Głowczewski**.

Q: Okay.

A: My grandfather.

Q: Okay.

A: Was born in 1843, and I suspect that he was fighting in this 60 – in 1860s in this – one of these crazy insurrections, where the Polish-Lithuanian area a – gentry actually arose against the tsarist, you know, with pistols and sabers against the Russian army. And so that was one of these tragic events in the history. Because



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there is a big gap in his history, which I suspect that is – not to mention anywhere, because it for – afraiding – yeah, they were afraid of talking about this, after the [indecipherable] in '69, or something like that.

Q: Yes.

A: But I saw his photographs in some kind of a patriotic, you know, uniforms and thing. So – so that's – that's – that's this part of the story, but – so my father actually inh – inherited all this business, very – one of the most well-noted painting works, and, after the World War I, and he met my French mother, because all [indecipherable] were French citizens from Napoleonic times.

Q: Oh, wow.

A: But all the women who married lo – lost their French citizenship. So men maintained this. So, I have this French connection, which was our life, until recently.

Q: Did you have siblings?

A: What?

Q: Do you have siblings?

A: I have one daughter, yes, here – here in **New York**.

Q: Excuse me, but do you – did you have brothers and sisters?

A: Oh, no, no, I'm – sibling, I'm sorry. Yes, I had one brother, but he died.

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Q: Is he older or younger than you?

A: Younger, three years of – yeah.

Q: Okay, so he was born in 1925.

A: Yes.

Q: You were the oldest son.

A: Yes.

Q: The oldest child.

A: Yeah.

Q: How would you describe your childhood? Is that too ba – large a question? How would you describe your childhood?

A: Childhood?

Q: Yeah.

A: Well, there were two phases. One was extreme pleasantness, and ease, and well-being, after the World War I, because of my father's ability to run this business expanded. But unfortunately, he was killed in a car accident on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1929, 10 years before the war was – the second war.

Q: But you were just a boy?

A: I was a boy, seven years old, and of course, I barely survived this crash.

Q: You were in the car?

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A: Yes, I was in the car. And so, hard times arrived soon after, because next month after this accident, the **Wall Street** went bust in **New York**. And since my father had many, many business connections and plans and – and ec – of expansion, that loans, bank loans, property bought on credit and all that, collapsed with the – with the crash in **New York**; worldwide, grand dep-depression descended. And here is really a – a very interesting, to me at least, the story of my mother –

Q: Yes.

A: – who did not have any special education. In fact, the World War I prevented her from finishing her high school even, because as a French family, they were evacuated from – from **Poland** to **Moscow**.

Q: To **Moscow**?

A: Yes, because they were French, and the Germans were coming and occupying the Russian held territories in 1915.

Q: That's right.

A: Until they – they stopped confronting the Russian army, and what they decided that, let's not fight any more, let's make a revolution everywhere. But th-the French citizens who were evacuated to **Moscow** stayed there until '16 – 1916 - '17, but then the revolution erupted in **Russia**, and they were again evacuated through the

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[**indecipherable**] the northern sea, to **France**. And they came back to **Poland** in 1919. That's where my father met my mother.

Q: Wow, it was fascinating even up til that time.

A: Yeah.

Q: So, your mother is – is faced with a very heartbreaking task in 1929.

A: Yes, she – she was a very beautiful young woman, surrounded always by elegant men. And they returned to **Warsaw** in 1919-20, and met my father and began a very happy life. And so I was born in – under that period, but, you know, few years later, it – the tragedy struck, and my mother, against wi-wi – advice of everybody; family and friends, and acquaintances well placed here and there, decided that she will run the business herself. So she began to work alone as a worker in her own establishment. From all the stages of production, you know, from the lowest [**indecipherable**] and afternoon she was sitting on – behind my father's desk, with the accountant and business manager, and was learning how to run a business.

Q: Amazing.

A: Amazing.

Q: Amazing.

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A: And I have all that documented in the photographs, what my father was taking, which my mother was taking, and beginning in 1973, which I was taking. All these albums survived the war, and are here –

Q: Wow.

A: – on **66<sup>th</sup>** Street.

Q: What happened then?

A: Well, she pulled out an – an amazing feat of courage and – and goodwill from people around, she saved the business, and actually established a very prosperous life, and married for the second time in '37, when she – when she was sure that everything was going to work well. And –

Q: What was the name of her second husband?

A: [**indecipherable**] **Zhontkoski**(ph).

Q: **Zhontkoski**(ph)

A: **Zhontkoski**(ph), yes. And this is the man who became my, sort of model of how to behave, how to –

Q: You were close to him?

A: Hm?

Q: Were you close to him?

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A: Yes, very. Although, not really physically, but emotionally, yes. Because I was lacking this paternal connection for – for seven, eight years.

Q: And th-these are crucial years in the development of a child.

A: And he came, and I was – I was a troubled boy, yeah, I was – I was not doing well at school, I was kind of a little hooligan, I must say. And so, when he married in 30 s – '37, in '38, they – me and my brother were kicked out of the house, we went to a Jesuit boarding school, which was –

Q: Will they bring – did you –

A: – beautifully – you know, f –

Q: Did they bring you into order?

A: Yes. Was all – although they did not molest me, no. But they did bring me – and that was, I – I visited the place in 2010, it's outside **Lwów** – **Lviv**.

Q: What kind of – yeah, what kind of memories do you have of the time that you were there at that Jesuit boarding school?

A: I must say, I have all the best memories, yes, yes. Because I – I needed this – this ruse –

Q: Discipline.

A: – you know, y-yes. I needed – I didn't realize. Now, I can say yes.

Q: Yeah.

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A: It was a – a – a – a – almost a miraculous decision to sa – to save me, you know, because I – I got straightened out. And it was just when the war broke out, when we were – were on vacation after that first year with the Jesuits.

Q: So the war broke out after your first year of boarding school?

A: Yes.

Q: Tell me, how did the war – how did you learn about the war happening? That is, when it happened, the day that it happened, where were you?

A: Well, prior to that moment, we were well instructed by our history teacher, who sported a big scar on his cheek, like that. And the rumor was that he was serving in the cavalry in ni – in – during the **Bolshevik** war. And he took part in a – last probably in the history of mankind, cavalry charge between the Polish cavalry and the **Marshal Budyonny** cavalry of –

Q: Of the Russians.

A: – of Russians.

Q: Yeah.

A: Who were moving from the south, from the **Ukraine**.

Q: Well, certainly for the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

A: Yeah, hm? Yeah.

Q: Certainly the last cavalry charge.

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A: The last – last cavalry, yes, charge.

Q: Yeah.

A: I think – I think several thousands – thousands of cavalry was involved on both sides. So – so he was very much aware of the dangers of the war, and he, during his history classes was explaining to us what the present situation and – and – may bring. And one day in April '39, we were gathered in the auditorium where we used to have a theater productions and so forth, there was a lo – radio and the loudspeakers connected, and we heard the announcement of the foreign minister from the Polish parliament, the same refusal of accept **Hitler's** request to give in to the – to German reg – demand of some – some territorial – and we were, of course, cheering in support, but this teacher told us, boys, you don't know what is going to happen, but everything is not going well. So you can cheer, and – so w-we – we had the sense that somebody warned us, of course not – so we – the vacation came later, in – on June or July, and we had the great time during vacation. And – and then suddenly we were called back from the vacation on the – on the **Baltic**, on the beaches, we were there, by – by somebody send a car with a driver, return immediately and so forth. And – and as we were driving back, somebody bought a newspaper and there it was, and I thi – this is – this is the date I know, it was August 23<sup>rd</sup>, '39, where there was a big news that the **Hitler** made a pact with the



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**Soviet Union** that there will be no war between them. And that was the – the invitation for the – **Germany** to invade. There will be no intervention of the Soviets.

Q: Now, did that – did people understand that instinctively? When they saw the news – [technical interruption, break] We – we were at – you find out – ah-ha, my question was, you read in the newspaper about the agreement between **Hitler** and **Stalin**, and did people instinctively then realize that this is bad for **Poland**?

A: I – I don't remember how people – because we were ki – you know, I was 17 and a half, and there were two girls with me, and we were driving to –

Q: They're much more interesting, of course.

A: They're much, much inter – but, you know, fi – wha – it was 10 days later –

Q: Yeah.

A: – or a week later, 23<sup>rd</sup>? Yeah, eight days later, we were woken up at five o'clock in the morning by the air – air raid sirens. And – and then, of course, I – we run on the balcony, and there were planes above –

Q: Was this in **Warsaw**?

A: Hm?

Q: Was this now in **Warsaw**?

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A: Yeah, yeah, yes, and with planes and artillery sh-shooting a-air – anti-aircraft, and I saw one plane being downed. And then of course, we run to the – to the radio, and there was this announcement that th-the war has started, and the president had a statement, and my brother said no, it's fine. We are not going to school. So that was – that was the reaction.

Q: Yeah. And did you go back to school?

A: No, no.

Q: So you had only one year at that Jesuit school –

A: Yeah.

Q: – but it did what it needed to do.

A: They did, yes, yes, yes.

Q: Okay. So what happened –

A: And of course, all the – all the – all the drama that developed the next few days, you know, the declaration of war by **England**, and **France**, and everybody was looking at the plane, where are the French planes coming, where are the English planes? Where – where is the aid, where is this, and so forth, how many days can we do it alone? You know, this type of thing.

Q: Okay.

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A: So i-it was a moment full of expectation and hope. In the face of absolutely deteriorating physical situation around, people fleeing, you know, and roads full of refugees, and so forth.

Q: What happened with your own family? How did things develop within your family, and for you?

A: Well, there was a – there was a – a – an unfortunate, or fortunate, I don't know, uphill on the radio, some kind of a military person, pronounced that in order to formulate new units of the army, all men able to bear arms should move east.

Q: Right.

A: Somewhere between **Wilno** and **Lwów**, on that border, since Soviets are not going to interfere, and the new units will be formed there. And we need more volunteers and so forth. So, we parked – unfortun – fortunately we had our cars, and we parked this – and some friends, you know, and cavalcade of motorcars, full of men. We left **Warsaw** at night. The roads were jammed, and my mother didn't want to go, and my – she kept – my brother was 14. Said no, I am here, I have a – my house, I have the – the works, and I'm managing this, and he will help me, and I have lots of friends. You go, you were going to join the army, go. I am going to stay here. That's how we separated. And then of course –

Q: And what happened with your stepfather?

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A: What?

Q: What – what about your stepfather? Did – where did he – did he go with you?

A: Oh yeah, yes, oh he was a – he was a chauffeur. Yes, he was driving, of course, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: So we – he and his brother and couple other, and me, and so we left **Warsaw** that night.

Q: What happened?

A: On the sixth.

Q: Okay.

A: Well, we had – that's where we – we – we didn't find any recruitings center anywhere. It wa – it was hardly possible to move on the roads. Millions of people, refugees, with chickens, goats, canaries in the cages, you know. On bicycle, and motorcycles, on foot. It – it was a – it was a scene of complete chaos. Plus the German planes were strafing and shooting on – to dec – on the columns of civilians escaping. They were escaping nobody knows where. East. Most of them were later caught by the Soviets and deported to **Siberia**.

Q: You mean, all of these fleeing people?

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A: Well, yeah, because they didn't have a place to go, so you know, they were like vagabonds, vagrants, considered by the Soviets when they c –

Q: Right.

A: – when they entered.

Q: Did you meet up with any Soviets?

A: No, but we were – we – we – we found a place in **Lwów** with – with this Mr. **Schiffman**(ph) family, who was related to the business of my stepfather.

Q: What was your stepfather's business?

A: Well, he was a manager of a large chemical in – factory of – of some products that were used for military paints and special fire resistant something, I don't know, but it was a big outfit outside **Warsaw**, and so they had their agent, who was in **Lwów**, that was Mr. **Schiffman**(ph) and his family. And they accepted us then because hotels were all filled up, and it was impossible to find a place.

Q: Did you know the **Schiffman**(ph) family from before?

A: No, no, no.

Q: Okay.

A: But my stepfather knew, and when we could not fa – tried here, and here and there, you know, well-known hotels, we, I think for one night maybe, we found a

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little Ukrainian hotel that was accepting us, but later we found the **Schiffmans**(ph) had a big apartment, so [interruption, break]

Q: Okay, so you were with your stepfather in **Lwów**, and you were staying with a family called the **Schiffmans**(ph).

A: Yes.

Q: Who were his associates based on his chemical business.

A: Yes.

Q: His re – was a representative. Can you tell me, were they German, or were they Jewish, the **Schiffmans**(ph)?

A: Jewish, Jewish.

Q: They were Jewish, okay.

A: I mean, his wife was a Hungarian Jew.

Q: Mm-hm. Mr. **Schiffman**'s(ph) wife.

A: That's what I write in the book. And she wasn't very pleased, because they had other refugees already, in their big apartment, so – but, while we were there, five days I think, wondering what to do.

Q: Yeah.

A: We were scon – we had no connection with **Warsaw**, telephone –

Q: Cut.

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A: – telegraph, all closed down. Only the shortwave radio was announcing some very dramatic upheavals for the president of **Warsaw** – mayor of **Warsaw**, right [indecipherable]. The people who have cars, all the taxi – taxi should help to bring dead people from the street, col – you know, this type of horror stories. We had no, absolutely no contact with the family. And then – then the Germans came very close, and they actually surrounded **Lwów**, so the gentleman in charge of our group decided we have to move out quickly, because tomorrow the German will encircle the – the city, and it will be it. So we left at three o'clock in the morning –

Q: Well, how were the **Schiffmans**(ph), were they – they must have been quite nervous.

A: Oh, we – we asked **Schiffman**(ph), of course, to join us, he said no way, we are not moving. Nothing is going to happen. That's – of course, they perished in the Holocaust, but – but this was – this is my memories of these people, who are –

Q: Okay. So you moved a –

A: The night before, I – I mentioned this – this Hassidic Jew in the – in the city of **Zamość**, which was a renaissance city, renaissance baroque city with an outline of fortifications done by some Italian specialist architect, so – fortifications and we stopped there and – and – and he gave us shelter, to wash, and some food.

Q: Was this before you came to **Lwów**?

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A: Before to **Lwów**, before, yes.

Q: Yeah. And tell me about – about this, di – how did you meet up with him, how did you know to stop there, at –

A: Who?

Q: At – at this **Zamość**, at the place –

A: Oh yeah, well, we stopped on the markets square, which was actually empty. I don't know, maybe refugees were going the other way. Yes, because we diverted from the main track where everybody was moving. We diverted to another place, we had somebody to leave over there on the road, one of my uncles. And we were look around, and then came a little Jewish boy with the – with the – with –

Q: Payos.

A: – side curls, yes, and – and had the white apron, and – and – and he said, gentlemen, can I – you need – you need some help. Please step in, we have food, we can wash and so forth. So we went to this corner, kind of a wine cellar, under the arcades of very beautiful, gorgeous, historic city square. And I remember the – the name was called **Festendik**(ph) in the Polish letters.

Q: So was Yiddish and Polish.

A: Ye-Yeah, **Festendik**(ph) is – and as we entered there, we saw the – the – the – the – the boss, you know, with the long beard and – and – and he said welcome,



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welcome, sit down. And he gave us – went to wash, and you know, and – and somehow, after all night of driving, and there was a discussion, it's in the book, about my stepfather and – and him, he was inquiring, what – what does – what is happening, what is happening? I don't – we don't have any paper, no papers, nothing, no radio. Well, we think that we were escaping because the Germans are behind us, you know. And – and – and then, when we were leaving, after you know, refreshments and food, he didn't want to accept any money. He brought a bottle of **Tawki**(ph) which is an old, old musty, you know, dry – de – an ancient bottle. He says, this is the oldest bottle I have in my wi-wi – cellar. Will you be kind enough to drink with me this, you know? So we drank, too. And he says, remember me always. And he didn't want to leave. He said, look, this is ordained by the God, and I cannot change what has been ordained, so to stay, to go, it doesn't matter. It is going to happen, something, so I have to g – and – and he refused to – to go, you know, that's ju – that's another, this little jewel of – of the – of the count – of the discussions, like that, with people, threatened, obviously, or maybe they did – were not fully aware of what is going to happen, but –

Q: So it sounds trying – you know, it sounds like in – in this chaos, somebody is making sense of it in his – in this way, for himself.

A: Yes.

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Q: And once – and, you know, he said remember me, and it sounds to me like you did, you know, because he's in your book, and – and you talk about him now.

A: I am fully aware of that, and I made the drawing the next day of that – of that restaurant, on that corner, yes.

Q: And did he tell you his name?

A: **Festendik**(ph), that was his name.

Q: Oh, that was his name.

A: Yeah.

Q: **Festendik**(ph), uh-huh, uh-huh.

A: The clever one.

Q: So, you left at three o'clock in the morning in the – from **Lwów** –

A: Yes.

Q: – because the Germans were going to surround it.

A: Yeah, and then – then the only – the on – I was – I mean, they – they – they – the grownups were deciding where to – we have to head for – for the Romanian border, because there's nowhere to go.

Q: Okay.

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A: I mean, other people going to go – going to **Lithuania** because it's safer, and it – no, no, it – too – too far away, we're – we're too different dist – a great distance to – to go back around the eastern border, and so on. So – so we went there. And –

Q: Did you meet any o – did you meet up with any armies at all, any soldiers at all?

A: Well, th-this is the situation, that at one point we – w-we – we stayed in a – in – in a little manor house, or farm of some Germans, who were there for generations, living in – close to the Slovak border already, or Romanian border. And

**[indecipherable]** and – and then we – we – we repaired old cars, and things like that. I was making drawings of all these activities, and – and then Mr. **Byger**(ph) said don't worry, d-don't worry. Here I am German, if the Germans come, I will tell them that you are my family, so nobody will happen to you, nothing will – everything will be all right. You know, the – also the naiveté of t – of th –

Q: Right.

A: – of being – I tell them that you are my family, no – no problem. And we were sort of waiting couple days, deciding what to do, then suddenly two policemen came on the bicycle, you know, they came and they started talk to the driver of one of the cars, we were two cars, and the other family had a s – a chauffeur. So it was a kind of a luxury escape.

Q: It certainly is.

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A: Yes, and the – and the – and they talk and they talked, and then they left. So the – the – the chauffeur came running, said, they want to – they came to req – requisition the cars. So di – so why did they go ba – I told them I need something on paper [**indecipherable**]

Q: So this was the Russians who came?

A: No, the Polish a –

Q: Ah.

A: Polish policemen from the nearby post, came to requisition the cars, and this chauffeur cleverly said, how can –

Q: Right.

A: – you have to bring me something on – on paper –

Q: Paper.

A: – with a stamp. So they – they went on the bicycles to – to bring this paper, and we packed and left, and that was the only thing to do.

Q: Okay.

A: And as we arrived o-on a – on a boat there, we were joi – we joined actually a – a big column of the air push – air force maintenance crews in trucks. And among this passengers there in the trucks were pilots, who were telling that they lost all the planes already. They were fighting as long as they could, but no new planes arrived,

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so wi – they were told to evacuate to **Romania**, because the French are flying the planes to **Romania**. Again, naiveté. So they lost all the – that – but these pilots were with us, finally we've crossed the border when somebody came on a motorcycle dressed half in the uniform, half in civilian. And he said, the **Bolsheviks** are over there, 10 kilometers from here. I escaped. The **Bolsheviks**? So, then the commotion, and the Romanians opened the border, and we crossed.

Q: So, until that point, they wouldn't have done it?

A: Hm?

Q: Until that point, they would not have –

A: I wa – no, because they're the bo – this was like s – a small border crossing, not used by many.

Q: Okay.

A: So they didn't know what to do, and they were waiting for the telephone –

Q: Instructions.

A: – yeah, yeah. And so we were standing in front of that barrier, and the whole column, couple hundred trucks, full of equipment, mechanics, and pilots. And this is – was the beginning of the Polish air force, in **France** and in **England**.

Q: Really?

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A: Which counted 15,000 men eventually, in **England**, 15,000. That's what the Royal Air Force museum wanted to know, ho-how did you manage to get 15,000 Polish pilots in **England** in '43 - '44?

Q: And it was –

A: While the French only had 300? I said, ask the French.

Q: And they – it was because they were able to cross the border at that time?

A: Because – because this was the only – the only segment of the Polish armed forces who could – who was most precious, because they were very well trained, with experience in fights during that two weeks of war, three weeks. And they were immediately formed into squadrons in **France**, when they got from **Romania**. The Romanians closed their eyes, looked the other way, and they all went by train, through **Yugoslavia** and **Italy**, which was neutral still, to **France**. And some went to the **Middle East**. And later, an – a year later, I followed to the **Middle East**.

Q: So tell me, what happened to you, and your stepfather and whoever you were with in the small group?

A: Well, after fi – few exciting days, meeting with the Jewish family, in the little town of **Falticeni**, where they had this –

Q: Tell me about that.

A: It was one of the – the first little Romanian provincial towns we run into –

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Q: Okay.

A: – after crossing the border. And – and of course the – the grownups started to look – walk, and ask for someplace to stay. And there was a little – a young man walking alongside, and – and talking something to – to them, in broken French. So they said, no, no, no, they didn't know what he was talking about, thought he was begging, or something. But he was persistent, he was foreign, and they couldn't find any – anyplace. A hotel? Never – never heard of a hotel in **Falticeni**. And he was saying – so they finally followed him, and he ca – they know that he was the son of the owner of a beautiful, sort of bourgeois villa, with all these paintings, you know, all the naked not – nymphs bathing in the streams, you know, flowers, you know, thick gilded frames, crystal chandel – chandeliers.

Q: In the middle of such chaos and war.

A: Yes. And he – in this **Falticeni**, a very rich, local Jewish family gives us this shelter because they son found us, and he considered that this is honor to do this, and duty. And then they found it – we found this black woman housekeeper, who looked like **Mammy**.

Q: Looked like who?

A: **Mammy**, from the “**Gone With the Wind**.”

Q: Had you seen “**Gone With the Wind**” by that point?

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A: No.

Q: Just later she seemed – that's the analogy you make, okay. And – and what –

A: After a few –

Q: – like to know, what did you – what kind – do you remember what you talked about with this man, and this family?

A: No.

Q: No. So what – they wouldn't, asking about the war, and what was going on in **Poland**, all of that?

A: No, I don't re – I don't remember.

Q: Okay.

A: And frankly, I – I was so excited about this adventure, because there – there was very nice – nice girl with us in that group, you know, from –

Q: Oh, really?

A: Yeah, which we found – I mean, **Lwów**, you know, friends. So, in other words, not the – the issue. So, we – we reached **Bucharest** finally.

Q: Mm-hm. And now, remind me, was anything happening in **Romania**, or was **Romania** quiet, and on the side, and politically not involved, not [indecipherable]

A: Well, **Romania** was in – in – in – in close alliance with **Poland**, that they will get help, and – and fight together, and the invasion come, and so on. Nothing



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happened over there, absolutely nothing. They – and they were in deep trouble.

Although they were living very well. **Romania** was rich with oil. The **Ploiești** oil fields, which we crossed, were pumping oil all the time, and that's why Germans finally occupied **Romania**, to get their oil. And **Bucharest** was amazing city, much more – maybe not that historical, but much more beautiful than **Warsaw**, frankly. It was planned very well, it had the **Arc of Triumph** on the – on the – on the big square, like in **Paris**, you know, big avenues full of trees and st – i-it was – it was very elegant, the Royal Palace, and all that. But later, when – when – when we stayed there, you know, the – the – the – the fascist school came.

Q: So how long were you in wa –

A: [indecipherable] I went to school there.

Q: Oh, so tell me again, give me a sense, how long did you stay in **Romania** in total?

A: We traveled a little bit, back and forth, but part of our group left for **France**.

They got visas. We were in contact with my uncles who lived in **France** then, my mother's brothers. And they were both in the ar – French army, but they were writing very, very dramatic letters. They said th-the French do not want to fight. So I – I don't know what to advise you, frankly. It doesn't look good here, so why don't you stay in **Romania**? And about New Year's day, 1940, we finally received

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post cards from my mother, from **Warsaw**, saying, you know, with all this German stans – censorship and so forth, very vague about **[indecipherable]** said, we are fine, I hope you are too. Let – let's wait til spring, you know, this type of saying stay there, do not come back. So we knew a little bit, but that was the last contact we had with my family until five and a half years later. There was no – no – no way to com – communicate. So we stayed. My father got involved with some kind of intelligence work, with some Armenians from **Lwów**, I believe, who had contacts with the – with the Soviet s-sphere of – so I believe that they were working on a – what's happening after the Germans invaded, or occupied **Romania** actually, after the fascist school, and what was happening in the Soviet zone, and they were contacting this Polish government in – in – in **Paris**, and then in **London**. There was a ki-kind of network of spies, and Polish had – government had a very well-established network there. So a friend of ours, who was one of those people before the war, engaged my stepfather into this and some other people; I was kind of witnessing these gatherings, were always very funny, very fancy, who dressed around. But that was the cover of some meetings, which later, after the war, my stepfather told me that this was a **[indecipherable]**

Q: Ah, so he told you after the war –

A: Yeah

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Q: – about what these were.

A: – I met him in **France**, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: But if he – because he stayed, he didn't return to **Poland**, because he – because of his past, he was also in the inter – military intelligence in – in **Italy**, where the Polish army came from the **Middle East**, yes.

Q: So you even started going to school there?

A: And then I – then we d – he discovered that there is a public school being formed in **Bucharest**, and that's where I went, because I still had two years to go before the – th-the end. So I went to this school, a-and the teachers were mostly people who knew something about some subjects, not a prof – professional teachers. There were no books and things, but there was mostly by memory. But I did my second cl – my – my first – my – my class of **[indecipherable]** which it was – and – and then we had to flee the Germans when they came, so we were es – escaped.

Q: Give me a sense of dates, if you can.

A: Well, that was in November in 1940.

Q: Okay, so it's a year – the war is in for a year, and the coup takes place then, right before then? Is this a –

A: And the what?

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Q: When does the coup take place?

A: Oh, the to – the f – I don't know exactly, but it was in – during the summer, or spring. The king abdicated, King **Karl** abdicated, and he f-fled with his mistress, Madame **Lupescu**, which was known before the war, through all the newspapers, all over the – **Europe**. And – and his son, **Michael** became the king. But he was again – but he was already degraded in his power, and there was – the – the General **Antonescu**, who was the military leader of this coup, and that's where the – the – the – the fascist regime was installed. And that's where I have this story there, about my two friends, two girls who were Jewish in this school, and – and they wanted to arrest us once, on the street, because we were assoc – we were – we were associated with Jewish girls. And I have the names in the book.

Q: What were their names?

A: **Irka(ph) Gold**, and I forgot. I forgot. It's in the book.

Q: Okay. We can look up later.

A: And –

Q: This begs an – excuse me for a –

A: And we – we – we – we – we simply started a fight with these young hooligans in – in the fascist uniforms, that were harassing people on the street. You know, the – the other people –

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Q: Right.

A: – as it was called. So that was my first kind of taste of – of being what I would like to be, you know? I am standing for somebody.

Q: Yeah. Were there many Jewish refugees from **Poland**?

A: About – [interruption]

Q: Okay, so the question was, were there many Jewish refugees from **Poland** in **Romania**?

A: Some, because I've – I – I was in that school in **Bucharest**, and w-we had few, mostly, what I remember were girls. And the other one was – was **Irka(ph) Gold**, and – and the other one was **Suka(ph)**.

Q: **Suka(ph)**, okay.

A: And I have photographs with them. And they were very good company, we enjoyed tremendously, you know, our walks in the park and trying various drinks, forbidden then, and – and – and that's why – that's why we were very close with this group, and that's what I told you happened one day, which sort of brought me up straight, you know, and I knew who I am. It was like a –

Q: A test.

A: – passage of a certain threshold, you know, then?

Q: Yeah.

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A: I am a man, and I know what I am going to do. This is good, this is bad – this is bad. So that's what this – the moment.

Q: So, you know, in some ways in your telling it, I – I have the impression that there is all this war, there is this chaos, there is this fear, and yet, at the same point, you're a teenager, and you're growing up.

A: Exactly. Exactly, exactly, you are right. This is what I want to tell people now **[indecipherable]** it was not only blood and sweat and suffering, but it was normal life. And it was so much more precious, because it was happening in terrible times.

Q: Yeah.

A: But you cannot suppress – I mean, the – the force of life. And probably it happened everywhere, even in the camps. Very human, humorous situations, and people pick up on that, and love and enjoy, even if they suffering. But there are decent moments when they suddenly say, why not?

Q: Yeah.

A: We can laugh also. It will help, or not, but this is our nature. And not – that's what was happening. We escaped finally from **Romania**, through **Turkey**, and we ended up in **Palestine**.

Q: How did you end up in **Palestine**?

A: Well, this was a –

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Q: And why was a goal to go?

A: – this was again an organized – organized de-deportation of the refugees, from **Romania**.

Q: By whom?

A: By the Polish government i-in exile. Probably in **London** by then.

Q: So, if your stepfather was involved, does he – would he – did he have some extra information?

A: He – he – he had – it was all organized for us, but it was – it could not have been organized for everybody who was with us, because we left **Constanța**, which is a port on the red – **Black** Sea, in luxury, on a – a cruise ship, **Transylvania**. And there were about 600 people there, all Polish refugees. And we met many of them whom we knew from **Bucharest**, from cafés, from streets, from cinemas, and so forth. So, I – I still say this is one story that is not explored how this was organized, this whole evacuation. Somebody bought the whole ship, and – and we didn't have any money. We were living in a very luxurious apartment, yes, with the **Otis** elevators, electric then, and they had the **Mercury** car, **Ford**, waiting for us on the by – you know, because – because of my stepfather's environment he – he lived in. And I was going to school there. But who provide this? Who provide it, who organized this? Who gave us a word, get packed immediately, and move to this

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small hotel. Here is a address. Huh? Where we moved, you know? And few days again, six o'clock in the morning on the station, and somebody gives a bag, and in the bag are tickets for this express train to – to the ports. Who organized? And then I find 600 people on that – on the boat. I made lot of sketches in my notebooks, of these evacuees. It's a caricatures I was drawing you know, what they were doing, you know. Sitting in the bar, vomiting across the deck. Watching sun – sunsets, you know, on the **Black Sea**. And we ended up in **Constantinople**, in **Istanbul**. Again, evacuation, a boat across the **Bosporus**. A villa on – on the shore of – Sea of **Marmara**. Lots of people here – here and there. And then one day, again notice everybody to the station, railroad station on the Asiatic shore. Tickets for the – for the cars, and we go, 24 hours across **Turkey** to the southern port of **Mersin**. Two weeks there, again, sitting on the beach, eating oranges from the trees, a novelty. Waiting, waiting, waiting, suddenly a ship comes, and – and is anchored on the **[indecipherable]**. So everybody is parked, okay, here, on this hour, in the dock, barges take us to the ship. As we aboard the ship it says, Polish flag, is says **Marshaba**(ph), the name of the ship. One of the merchant ships who was, at the beginning of the war, serving the eastern **Mediterranean**. So it was organized that it will take the – the – the refugee somewhere. And there is this story that one of this crew was telling us how he remembers the evacuation of – escape of Jews in –



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in – in old, worn out boats, who were unworthy of – not sea – to go into sea. So they were just sailing toward **Palestine**, and their crew was abandoning, so they – they became victims of a accident, and as a – survivors of sea, they had to be accepted by the British, with – that was how they were going around the – the – the British blockade, for Jews to go to **Palestine**.

Q: And this is what year?

A: That was '40 - '41. Well, I read about this on the second day of the war, about this story, about this ship who – two ships, actually, beached on the f – on **Tel Aviv**.

Q: And – and – and on your own [**indecipherable**] you met with one of the people who'd been the crew, on the crew.

A: No, not the crew, but they knew about this story, because they were – they were serving the – they were sh – serving eastern **Mediterranean**.

Q: I see.

A: And that became a known story.

Q: Story.

A: It became known story because they printed it even in **Kraków** newspaper on the second day of the war.

Q: Yeah. The war. I see.

A: On the newspaper, where there was nothing about the war.

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Q: Yeah.

A: But there was a story about this ship.

Q: That's so strange, too.

A: Yeah?

Q: Yeah. That's very strange.

A: Well, because this might have arrived few days before.

Q: That's right.

A: And there was no la –

Q: That's right.

A: – no information ready to print about the fact that the war was already on.

Q: So you were on this ship and then you – you – do you – how do you get to

**Palestine**? What is the procedure?

A: Well, we – we – we thought that we are going to **Cyprus** from – from **Turkey**.

The – us – the joke was we are going to the British concentration camp for the

Polish refugees. But it was next morning when we woke up, we were in **Haifa**

suddenly, not **Cyprus**, **Haifa**. And that's where we were unloaded from the ship.

Q: What did you see when you were unloaded? What – what was the vision in front of you? Sounds like you were an artistic person who – who saw – you know.

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A: You know, it was **Haifa**, it was not the **Haifa** of today, but it was a small town. I remember the green hill, which was called **Carmel**(ph), huh? And there was an eastern Orthodox cathedral on top of that. I remember the white towers. And then – and – and the British military police directing us how to go to a wooden barrack, or something like that, you know? And I don't – we didn't have any papers, I don't remember.

Q: Wow.

A: But something – something must have been organized. But this is, to me, a big mystery how this was organ – it was beautifully organized, everything. Every day –

Q: And what was the purpose for – what was the purpose of this organization to evacuate –

A: I have no idea.

Q: – these particular refugees to **Palestine**? Did you ever figure –

A: I have no idea, but because there were many refugees who had the families, and there were some Jewish families, like the **Wolfgangs** [indecipherable] from **Lwów**. I mean, **Juleg**(ph) **Wolfgang** is now in – in – it was a class below me, because my whole school from bu – **Budape** – **Bucharest** was found in **Tel Aviv**, recreated, with better teachers, because we found a lot of Jewish teachers from

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before the war in **Poland**, who couldn't find a job, and were no – the one was **Cecilia Hubber**(ph), who was teaching us Polish literature from memory.

Q: Wow.

A: No books, no books.

Q: So, did you kind of recreate a community?

A: Yes. Well, **Tel Aviv** was already sort of a Polish-Jewish community, I mean, even the – the signs above the shops were in Polish. It were – i – I mean, everybody spoke Polish, this was it.

Q: And was there any – I mean, did people – did – was there any difference between Poles and – and Polish Catholics, Polish Jews?

A: No, no, no. Absolutely not. In fact, you know, there was a very moving moment when we were – went through these customs, British customs in **Haifa**. And we were going somewhere, I don't know, there were some buses or something, I don't know, because we ended up in some kind of small hotel, I remember. And – but before we reached this transportation, means of transportation, we were surrounded by the people who lived there, the Jews, who had a heartbreaking moment, because they came and they held photographs of people, of their relatives from – from before the war, and the names of towns from which they're came before the war, as immigrants to **Palestine**. And they were trying to show and ask whether anybody

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knows about – about these people, whom they left behind when they emigrated.

And of course, this was a – so moving.

Q: Did you have any –

A: Very dramatic moment.

Q: Did you have any idea of what was happening to the Jews in **Poland**?

A: No, no. No. No, I knew before the war there was anti-Semitism, yes. Of course I knew. I – I saw the – the – the right wing, the [indecipherable] gangs like in **Bucharest**, you know, harassing. Yes. But I had, of course, no idea what was happening.

Q: Okay. And nobody did?

A: In 1940 - '41.

Q: So you arrived in **Palestine**, can you give me an approximate date?

A: In December 1940.

Q: In December of 1940.

A: Hey, we lived – left **Bucharest** fort – November, then you know, these stopovers in – in **Turkey**, here and here, it was – it was December or early January 1941. But we quickly – I remember my stepfather found this friend who was in the intelligence before the war, who – they worked together on – in – in **Bucharest**. And he was already in new uniform, because in **Palestine** there was a Polish

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brigade, Polish independent brigade, about 4,000 men, who crossed over from **Syria**. They were in – in that first wave of immigration and distribution of the army men, immediately, to **France**, to – to **England**. And when **France** stopped accepting because they did not want to fight a war, really. So they send these people from the **Balkans** to **Syria**, which was under the French protectorate at that time, **Lebanon** and **Syria**. And the brigade was formed from all these army types over there in allet – in **Homs**, where you hear the name now, **Homs**, in **Syria**, one of the towns which is now being bombarded. And that's where the brigade was formed. And when the [indecipherable] collapsed, the French wanted to disarm them. And there was a confrontation between the French general, and the Polish general, commander of the brigade, who said, if you touch any – any of our guns which we have, we will fight. And with the – for the first time in the history that the French – that the Poles will fight the French. But we will fight and win. And they decided to – to move everyth – with every equipment they had, they – to move to **Palestine**. And they went through the **Golan Heights**, through the – through the Sea of **Galilee**. So this is how they were, and of course they were a-accepted with open arms by the British, who did not have anything in the **Middle East**, anything substantial. There were 60,000 British forces from **Palestine**, all the way to **Kenya**. The British empire. And mostly of them were colonial troops, or Indian troops. So

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here is something that comes about 5,000 Poles, with officers, everybody trained, and so on, you know, ki –

Q: And motivated.

A: – and motivated. No other country i-in occupied **Europe** every organized this type of a evacuation formation of large number of troops, which ended up about – over 200,000 at the end of the war, of Polish troops in that navy, paratroopers and 15 squadrons of the air force, all – all branches, from bombers to fighters.

Q: So what happened with you?

A: So I was getting back to school for my last year.

Q: All of these exciting things going on, and you have to go to school.

A: Yes. Well, because I – my – my stepfather said, you will not join the army until you finish the school. He was accepted, although he had category **D**. But he was some kind of clerk situation.

Q: Tell me, what does category **D** mean? Okay.

A: Un-Un-Un-Unsuitable for military service, probably.

Q: Oh, great.

A: Although I never expected –

Q: Okay.

A: – from his looks. Maybe heart or something, I don't know.

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Q: Okay.

A: Anyway, he was put in some kind of a clerical work, and I saw him very little, except that he and – and this Polish officer of the intelligence, rented an apartment, with two bedrooms. In one, I was sleeping, in the other, his young wife was sleeping. And in the middle was kitchen and bathroom. On the [indecipherable] street in **Tel Aviv** – in **Tel Aviv**. And that's where we were living. He was coming sometimes to visit us. He was already in **Alexandria**, I remember, in **Egypt**, because the brigade moved in while I was in school, to **Egypt**. And when I finish the high school, I – I followed – that I – I – that's what I am describing in the book. I – I went with a group of Polish-Jewish recruits for the army, because they were – they w – we were all recruits, there was no [indecipherable] and they were all Jewish. And we went to – to this camp near – near **Haifa** for –

Q: Training?

A: – being dressed in uniforms.

Q: Which country's uniforms?

A: Polish army uniforms.

Q: Polish army, not British?

A: Well, we had British uniforms, of course, but we had **Poland**, and all the distinctions, you know?



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Q: Got it.

A: Of course British.

Q: Okay.

A: A-And – and this is, in this camp, **Bayjirjite**(ph), was not far – not far from **Haifa**, where we got – where we were changed into soldiers, physically. And –

Q: Was it tough training?

A: In those days we stayed there ab – only two weeks. It was mostly patrolling the – the shore of the sea. We didn't know what was happening, but there was German invaded **Greece – Greece**, you know? And so there was a – always that something may happen. So we were defending British empire there, on the beaches of – near **Haifa**. And – and later they packed us in the – in the train, and took us to **Alexandria**, and nearby in the big camp of the Polish brigade, who was already on the other side of **Alexandria**, on the west side, and here we on the – on the **[indecipherable]** three months training in the desert warfare. And after that – which was mostly marching in the sand – after that, many other sort of events, excursions here and there, but we were finally – I was selected to go to **Tobruk**. And – and then I participated in this Libyan campaign, after the liberation of **Tobruk**, went all the way to **[indecipherable]**

Q: Did you see active fighting?

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A: Hm?

Q: Were you par – did you participate in active fighting?

A: Well, I perpi – my one big battle of three days, stor – storm of the Polish brigades against a crack Italian division of **Bersaglieri**. It was the famous **duches**(ph) unit. They paraded by running. And – and that was – and actually, actual – this – this action by the Polish brigade, opened the – broke the front line of the German-Italian forces. So they retreated past **Benghazi**, and we were sent to – to – to **Sri Lanka**, which is then shore – shore – shore area of – of **Libya**, where there were a lot of agriculture lands, where the Arabs were expelled by the Italian colonists who lived in the little huts. And that's where we stayed. Ah, there were many things of war I forgot about. I s – I spended fi – four, five months in the desert, and then we were finally retre – rem – ordered to go back to – to **Egypt**, because it was too long to stay on the front line.

Q: And what you – about what year was this, what month and year was this, when you went back to **Alexandria**?

A: We went back in April '42.

Q: Okay.

A: April '42, and as a graduate with my high school diploma, me and some other friends were sent to the officers' training school in **Palestine**, in the **Gaza** strip. And

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then we – we were a ter – we – under – when this, the training, special training, but suddenly there came an – an – an order to make a choice. Either you want to continue the officers' school, or you volunteer to go to **England**, to air f – to the air force, to the paratroopers, or to the navy, whichever. One, two, three desks under the stands. One hour time to think about it. Go.

Q: Did you have a chance to talk with your stepfather about what to do?

A: No, I had no contact with him.

Q: He was still back in isra – in **Palestine**.

A: He was in – in – in – in **Egypt** later. I knew that he was in **Egypt**. But – but that was the – th-the first decision which I had to make on my own, and I chose the air force, but then somebody said, any questions? How are we going to get to **England**? None of your business. You will get there. Just say yes or no, which way you want to go, one, two, three choices. Military secret, nothing. So again, one transit come, another transit come, then across the **Suez Canal**, to – to the **Suez** port, another waiting few days, and then there are big ships in the harbor. What are these? Well, these are this, they brought the British army for General **Montgomery**, to prepare the offensive. That was the **Alamein, El Alamein**, big offensive with General **Montgomery**.

Q: Wow.

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A: Who had pushed the **Rommel** out. So we were loaded again on barges, and we were given Italian rifles. What do you – what do we need Italian rifles? You will find out on the bow of the ship. So we were – we – we approach the ship, it was like that, like a skyscraper, what is – Queen **Mary**, which was completely empty, because this Queen **Mary** brought 10,000 Scottish troops for General **Montgomery** for this offensive, and it was going back empty. So what about this Italian rifles? Because you have 1400 German prisoners which you took in **Libya**. You have to escort them. Where? Don't ask questions. No questions answered, yeah. And we had 1400 young boys like ourselves, from the **Rommel** army. Germans. And you know, and they were down on the – at the bottom of the ship, on the third class. We were occupying second class, where they removed only the beds, and put the, you know, bunks, so more people can sleep. And that was the luxurious trip on board of Queen **Mary**.

Q: Did you have any interaction with them?

A: Well, s-some, because we went to south a – through south **Africa**, and then across the **Atlantic** to **Rio de Janeiro**. And we didn't know why, but three of them escaped from the ship in the **Rio de Janeiro**, and they were caught on the beach by the Brazilian police, and they were brought back. So, there were some rough moments when one of the – our sergeant, who was fluent in German, interrogated

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them, and so forth, you know. And it turn out that one of the crew – they were mostly Australians, must have given them a big wrench, so they can – they opened the screws of the –

Q: Portholes.

A: – portholes, yes, which were screwed in. So that was a first. But then, from **Rio d'aneiro(ph)**, we went along the af – **Americas** coast, to **New York**. We didn't know where are we going, it was all secret, but we ended up in **New York**. And we unloaded the Germans here, and – on the lower **Hudson**, on **Jersey City**, again in barges. And on those barges, when we were sailing with the – our segment of the prisoners, now we began to – to smile at each other. You know, we were about 19 - 20, all a – both sides. So they had some piece of paper, they wanted an autograph, and I had some photographs, and some drawings that they made, gave – given to me, you know, as a kind of exchange. And we handed them over to the Canadians. Put them in the elegant passenger cars, and took them to the prisoners' camp in – in **Canada**.

Q: My goodness.

A: And we stayed for two weeks in – in – in – in **New York**, having a ball, absolutely ball. We were the first unit of 300 Polish ar – uniforms men, for the first time in history, seven officers, one **[indecipherable]** and – and we were almost torn

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apart by all these organizations, like that one that took a couple soldiers for this, for this, for dinner, for a dance, and – and we stayed for just two weeks, and then sailed on – on – in a big convoy, and then I decid – discovered that there are oh, Americans on these ships. And then we – we – when we learned that **America** is in war. And that was summer of '42.

Q: **America** was in the war –

A: Since December '41.

Q: That's right.

A: When – when – when we entered **Tobruk**, the officer told me, by the way, **America** was attacked by the Japanese somewhere, the **Pacific**, and **America** will join the war, hooray. And that was it. And then secrets. Nobody, no newspapers, nothing, until **New York**, where I found out that **America** is in the war, because 11 huge ships were taking troops to – to **England**.

Q: Now, amongst the recruits that were with you, were any of those original Polish-Jewish young men also part of this?

A: I'm sure they were, yeah. Now – now, there were 50 of us from the officers' training school, who were with the di – high school diplomas –

Q: Okay.

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A: – selected, okay? Fifty. And we were from the brigade, we were from the Libyan front. Two hundred-fifty were those who came from **Russia** in – in – in '41, after the General **Sikorski** and **Stalin** made a deal that **Poland** will help, if you release the prisoners. That was before **Katyn** was discovered. But this young guys were from – from – mostly from gulags and from prisoner camps. A-And we started to talk to them on that fantastic journey from **Rio de Janeiro** to **New York**, you know, across the equator and to Tropics of Cancer, and –

Q: And what were they telling you?

A: Oh, they were telling about **Russia**. About there – with the – for – for the first time, because they – they – they – they came out of **Russia. Soviet Union**.

Q: What were the things that you found most memorable?

A: What?

Q: What were the things that they were telling you, that you found the most memorable?

A: Well, they were t-telling horrendous stories of life in – in – in the camps. A-A- And – and – and the miracle of them being released at one point. That was a deal between – between Polish government in **London**, and – and the Soviets, prodded by **Churchill**, you know. You have come to some conclusion of all these disputes, you know, so i – you were very dramatic – in our may – in my age no, I was not

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really very much understanding the – th-the – all this implication, but I was a witness of this.

Q: Well, you know, how could one expect you to?

A: No.

Q: How could wa – it's just that one – it's one – in your telling it's one dramatic incident after another, without even stopping, you know? And they come over each other.

A: Exactly.

Q: It's not like one starts – one stops and another begins.

A: Exactly.

Q: Another takes place while the first one's still going on.

A: Exactly, exactly, exactly.

Q: So, as you're crossing that boat to go to – crossing the **Atlantic** again, and you see there are Americans on the ship, what's that – what's that stage like? What – is there anything memorable from that crossing?

A: Well, he – he talk – it took us 15 days. Thi – this whole sea strip from **Suez**, via south **Africa**, **Rio de Janeiro**, **New York**, and this is – this took six weeks, together. And that was the only time when I had a little notebook and I was making



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notes, and dates, and what happened then. Nothing important, but just as a reference. I still have it.

Q: Do you still have the notebook?

A: Yes, yes, yes. This is only the – the trip, you know, the – the sea voyage. Well, we were a big sensation for the American troops on that troop carrier, because they were young boys like us, going for the first time to **Europe**, abroad, you know?

They were from **Kansas** somewhere, from **Missouri**, you know, soldiers, **G.I.s**.

And we were sleeping in hammocks because everything was removed to make more room for troops, you know, this – on these transport ships. And eleven big ships, and the escorts, two cruisers and several destroyers, on – on all sides, cruising all here, you know, watching for the submarines and **U-boats**. So it was a

**[indecipherable]** pleasant, but mostly Americans were telling us, how is it in the war? What do you do? You know? And we didn't want to talk about the war, frankly, we were enjoying the – the – the – the – the trip. So, you know. But I – I learn how to jitterbug on that ship. I met many American soldiers who were trying to say a prayer in Polish, you know? They remember what their grandmother what told – told, you know? Terribly moving. Which I – moving now, but at that time, was ha, ha, ha, you know, make fun.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

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A: The stars at night, are big and bright, deep in the heart of **Texas**, that's what I learned that time.

Q: Yeah. When you got –

A: So we ended up in – in **Liverpool**.

Q: Okay. **[technical interruption, break]** Okay, so you're in **Liverpool**, you arrive in **Liverpool**.

A: We disembark, I think the first, because th – I remember Americans on the deck waving back, full of soldiers still. And we went onto the train, which was waiting, and well, we were only 300, so there was some – somebody more than – than us.

And then we went directly to **Scotland**, to a camp near **[indecipherable]**, in northern **Scotland**, and we stayed there 10 days or something. We soon discovered that every church has a dance hall, and twice a week there were dances at the church hall, where you could meet a lot of lonely girls. But mostly we were being interviewed. Not us, from the brigade, where we were – had all our papers and army books and so forth, but mostly those who came from the **Soviet Union**. They were grilled again and again, who they are. Later, later, after the war I discover **[indecipherable]** you don't know why, because the – the – the army intelligence wanted to know who these people really are. There was no time to interview them in – in **Persia**, or in **Iraq**, when they came, you know, from the **Soviet Union**, nor

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in **Palestine**. So they were sort of quickly selected who wanted to go, so they were on the boat, and came. But the – the army wanted know exactly who they are, like – like you are asking me now. Where they came from, the addresses and –

Q: Right.

A: – father –

Q: Right.

A: – and mother and so forth, you know, for security. Because there was already a we – awareness that many, many Soviet agents could be smuggled this way.

Q: Yes.

A: So, they already knew that. So we stayed there, and then finally they – we were separated into various arms forces, units that we volunteered for. Those for the air force, those for the navy, those for the parachute brigades, and – and – and – and we parted in different places of – and that's where I begun about almost a year and a half training in various, as it was called, stations of – of the air force. It was all manned by the Polish ar – air force already, all instructors, all teachers. Except the teachers of English were – were Polish people. And then it – it – it took us about that time to – to reach the – the – the level where we could be transferred to – to the – to the front.

Q: So here's a question.

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A: It was just after the **D-Day**.

Q: So here's a question: do you think any of your trainers at the – during this year and a half were people you first might have met at the Romanian border, as you were fleeing **Poland**?

A: No, no, no.

Q: No.

A: It was such a mixture of – of people, mixing all the time. But I always had very good friends, and one of my best friends was a **Ludwig Gutmeier(ph)**, speaking about the Jewish people, who was with me from – from the time the brig – I didn't know him at the time we were in – in **Libya**. We met on the boat, actually, in that group. And he was a son of a – of **Aba(ph) Gutmeier(ph)**, a very well-known art dealer, and collector of Polish art, maybe better than this, in **Warsaw**. And he had a sister, whom he adored, he had a picture of – of her sister, was showing. And he escaped **Warsaw** during the, actually, German siege and bombardment, which means about 10 days after me. How he managed to – to escape, I don't know. Because frankly, we never talked about this. Never. The discussions were about today, right now, and what we are going to do tomorrow. But never – never reminiscences, something –

Q: It was not that kind of time.

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A: No, nobody – nobody was interested, frankly. What are we talking? What are we going to do tomorrow? Have another beer. You know, this was – that's – that's – that's the lesson, but – which I learn only recently, when I started to write this – this – this – this books, this memoirs, were 50 years after the war when I started.

Q: Why? Why did it take so long?

A: I never – I was never interested in – in – in – in – while I was collecting all the photographs, all the drawings of all these wanderings after the war – I saved everything, without even thinking about it. It was only the first Polish book, there were three books, these are condensed three books here. It was printed in **Poland** in 2003, and I probably started this writing about 2000, year 2000.

Q: Yeah, 55 years after the war.

A: And nobody ask me anything, and I don't – didn't ask anybody after the war, and I came to the d – completely destroyed city, **Warsaw**, and we're planning how to spend the night – dancing night, you know? But nothing about – nobody told me about the horrors of they went through, uprisings, and so on, the destruction, prisoner camps. Nobody. So this **Ludwig Gutmeier**(ph) was this very good friend, and he was with me on this first preliminary stages of tra – air force training, but at one – one point, he said ah, you know, it takes so long. I want to – I want to – I want to bomb the Germans. Said, how you going to do it? He said, well, I – you

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know what? There is a – there is a special they call the bomber. On the – on the big bombers, there is a guy who looks at the target and pushes the button. I want to be that guy. So he left area, because that was much more shorter training. And I met **Ludwig** after the war, in **Paris**, where we spent a very exciting time. And in 1961, when I came on the **Ford Foundation** visit to **America**, on my second day in **New York**, I met him face to face on **Madison** Avenue here. Yeah.

Q: Amazing. Amazing. So, what were you trained for, and what was your job on the plane?

A: I was pilot, fighter pilot. Which means, I was alone. My job was everything. And I was trained to be a speed fighter pilot. And I was posted soon after the **D-Day** to a Polish wing which consisted of three squadrons, 36 planes in **France**, on a field trip – airstrip. And we were in so-called tek – tactical air force, which means we were supporting the ground troops. If you saw “**Private Ryan**,” there is a – there is a shot where airplanes are flying very low over this loop of Americans who are trying to – to – to escape the encirclement. Well, that’s what we were doing. Air support to the ground troops, and – and bombing from the dive – dive bombing.

Q: Okay.

A: So – and from time to time there was an air contact, but the Germans were very few and – and sparse in those days, because the **Luftwaffe** was already – had the

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broken back, during the Battle of **Britain**, and following years. Last October, I was in **Washington**, I was asked by the museum of the **RAF** in **London** to be a keynote speaker on a yearly gala they have in **Washington**, in **Willard** Hotel, which is the – the luxury hotel, you know, on **Pennsylvania** Avenue. They have a yearly banquet – gala banquet for the f-foundation a – foun – American foundation of the Battle of **Britain**, where they are collecting money to build a monument at the museum in **London** to the pilots who fought the Battle of **Britain**, in 1940 - '41. And this was a – a – a – a – a dinner devoted to the role of the Polish fighter pilots, who actually, as my friend **Steve**, air chief marshal Sir **Steven Dalton**, who sat next to me in all this gala, gilded things and medals, the commander of the Royal Air Force of today, said that, it is little known, but had it not been for those 120 Polish fighter pilots who came to **England** in 1940, those who were emi –

Q: At the border.

A: – at the border, whom I ma – who were shipped immediately to **England** and **France**, and later to **England**, we would not win this battle, he said, because our numbers were dwindling. We had pilots after 15 hours in the plane, sent to this quadrant to fight the **Luftwaffe**.

Q: Oh my gosh. That's nothing.

A: It's nothing. So they were shot down like ducks, you know.

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Q: Like chickens, yeah.

A: And – and so the air chief marshal, and – then – and I was the keynote speaker for that event. So that's like the coronation of this whole – my wartime events, which happened 50 – 55 years later.

Q: How many missions did you fly?

A: Hundred.

Q: A hundred?

A: Yeah, just hundred, yes.

Q: And do you – over what territories?

A: Well, **France, Belgium, Holland and Germany**. And we were three squadrons, 302, 308, my squadron, and 317, where I had this friend, this Jewish pilot, **Kazik(ph) Becker(ph)**. There is the photograph of him, and he had this name of his sister chalked on his cowling, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: I had couple more Jewish pilots, yes. Th-Th-They were in every squadron, there was Jewish and like that.

Q: What was your last bombing mission?

A: Last bombing mission, we're preparing for – the Polish armored division, because we are supporting the army on the ground, right? So, in the British sector,



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there were Canadian force, and – and British, moving on the northern front.

Americans were further south. And the Polish armored division, the tanks, arrived at **Wilhelmshaven**, which is the main base of the German **Kriegsmarine**.

Q: Okay.

A: Built in – in imperial time, and – and it was the – we were prepared to support the – the – the attack of this British armored division on **Wilhelmshaven**, which already surrounded by the Polish army. When I made my hundredth, and that was the end of my tour – the tour was 50, that was my second tour. So you would – you don't fly tomorrow. Pack up, you can go. You have tickets and all that. And I was very happy. But then, th-the next few days, they started this bombardment, and – and it – and it – the war ended soon after that [**indecipherable**]. So – but – but – but the capitulation of **Wilhelmshaven** was accepted by the Polish kal – **kalner**(ph) of – of the arms division.

Q: That must have been satisfying.

A: And this is an amazing coincidence because the war started in **Gdansk**, by the bombardment by **Schleswig-Holstein**, the German battleship of the Polish outpost in **Gdansk** called **Westerplatte**, with **W**. And the war ended **Wilhelmshaven** with the Polish troops bombarding the **Wilhelmshaven**. An [**indecipherable**] coincidence.

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Q: How did you – so that happened in April '45?

A: Well, it – it – it – I was – I left this quadrant in April, and they were still flying til they – til the first days of May, when the armistice was. And from – by that time, I was in **Paris** already, with my uncle.

Q: So here – here's another question. Of those hundred mission – hundred missions, were there any that you felt more in danger than in others, or were each – all of them equally alike?

A: Well, th-the – there were not all, because you know, sometimes you were going on a patrol, very high up, escorting American bombers, the flying fortresses, few times. But most of the real danger was because we were coming down on German positions, which were very heavily defended by the anti-aircraft guns and machine guns. And when you were coming down there, everybody was shooting at you. So it was touch and go. And sometimes we are flying two and three missions every day.

Q: My gosh.

A: Because we were very close, you know, it lasted one hour. You took off, one hour you were over the [indecipherable], you bomb, you – you come down, you – you shoot, and you come back. So it was – it was a lot of the sum – you were – found bullets in the fuselage. A couple friends were killed sa – many were killed because they landed in the fog, or something like that, you know.

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Q: When the war started, you had had one year of Jesuit school, which knocked you into shape after – after having been a troubled teenager, and when the war ended, you were – you were a fighter pilot with a hundred missions under your belt. Were you the same person? How had the war changed you?

A: No much. No, but in between, I had two years of the refugee schools in **Bucharest** and **Tel Aviv**.

Q: Okay.

A: Which were a salvation, because since that time, I did not read a single book during the war. There was no way. I read some English books when I learned. But aft – when I arrived in **Warsaw** after the war, and wanted to join the school of architecture, I was accepted without any tests, or anything. But my – my level of education was zero, I must tell you frankly, zero. Because I did not have full cycle of education like normal school. So I – I – I s – I suppose I learned myself.

Q: But as a person, you say you'd – your – as a person you didn't feel like you had changed much?

A: I didn't feel that I have. I didn't, no, honestly.

Q: Okay. Okay. I asked the question, that's the answer, that's fine.

A: Yeah, yeah, I know. I don't think I changed, no.

Q: Okay.

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A: I – I learned a lot, I suppose, about the world, about how people behave in different situations. I had my opinion how to behave, which started in **Bucharest** with saving these two Jewish girls. It was like nothing, but it is – it made an imprint in me.

Q: For you it was a significant threshold.

A: Absolutely, yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: I was so happy later, that we did this, what we did. And they run away, so you know – but –

Q: So when you met your stepfather in **Paris**, afterwards, is this the time when he told you what he was involved with?

A: Very little, but he told me that, you know, what you know is probably a fraction of what I would like to tell you, but there is no time now. One day when we meet in quiet, I can tell you yes, yes, I was involved in this, I was involved, yes, all these people that you mention, yes, wa – it was a cover up for something, and suppose and suppose. And that's where I went to – to serve in the second army corps, which was mostly composed of the army who came from – from **Russia**. Trained in the **Middle East**, and – and they – they – they played a very important role in – in the battle of – in **Italy**. They – they – they took **Monte Cassino**, and **Anzio**, and – and

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liberated **Bologna** and so forth. They were a major force in – in – in the battle of liberating – liberating the Italians. So – so he – he served there, probably. He – he – but that's – he only confirmed what I was ec – he wanted to tell me more, but we never got – because he did not return to **Poland**, my mother came to **Paris** for one month, on the permit – a passport, for one month, to get us back. Me and my brother.

Q: Oh, so your brother had also left by that time?

A: Well, he was – he took part in the **Warsaw** uprising in '44, and was taken as a prisoner, and s-stayed in **Germany** –

Q: I see.

A: – and was released. And he found his way to my uncle in **Paris**, near **Paris**, where I also found him, by coincidence. And that's where the whole family was gathering after the war.

Q: And your mother succeeded in bringing who home?

A: Me and my brother.

Q: But not her husband?

A: No, he came, and they met – you know, they were married two years, actually, before the war. And – and he was involved in this situation politically, that he knew he cannot come back. Plus he came already with a woman [**indecipherable**] **Paris**.

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I mean, what do you want? A-And – and that's how they separated, very politely and friendly. And they – they eventually divorced by mail. By lawyers and so.

Q: Well, when you came back to **Warsaw**, what did you find?

A: What did I find?

Q: Yeah.

A: I found my home, mostly intact. Half of it was burned, you know, the – the – there was a four corners in a square, and the backyard. And so the front was where our house was, our apartment. The whole length of this nine windows, and – and the lithography, built by my grandfather in 1893 was on the left, for four stories high. And then the two other wings were residences three stories high, also built by him in the – in the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. That was burned. And apparently, the fire stopped by itself.

Q: Did your mother tell you how she survived during the war?

A: Well, she was – she was serving pi – you know, with this insurgent during these – during this – well, first of all, the – the lithography was working, under German supervision. And I know that they were printing a lot of illegal documents from the radio, from **London**, you know, what is going on. It was done like an underground printing office, at the same time. But they were doing commercial things, whoever needed something, like before the war. And since this survived the – the – the total

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destruction of **Warsaw**, is a miracle. I don't like to use the word, but it was. A-And – and she was almost one of the first persons who returned to **Warsaw**, because Germans, after this uprising, expelled everybody. So it was a totally vacant ruin, city of ruins. Over a million people were expelled. The dead were –

Q: Where did she go?

A: Hm?

Q: Where did she –

A: She went to suburban location somewhere. And – and survived that – that – that few months there, and then came back, one of the first, and stood in front of the building. She said, my – my mouth opened. How did it survive? And she went through the gates, you know, for the – and said, lith-lithography is also there. The other two wings are burned down. And then the – and then the workers started to take in, you know, all the people from somewhere, who are coming, checking, and they were finding, so she – she assembled a group of people who started to clean, and – and sort of revive the whole thing. And it was the communist government who took it in '49, and – and really destroyed everything. They said there isn't a place for any industrial in the cit – in the center of city. You know, it was this type of explanation. But it was obviously illegal for anybody outside the state to have any printing –

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Q: Printing press, of course.

A: – situation.

Q: Of course. And you entered architectural school?

A: Yes.

Q: How long did you still live in **Poland** after that?

A: For 15 years.

Q: Until 1960?

A: Sixty – '62. Or '61 I came to **America** because I had all kinds of achievements, they were printed in foreign architectural press, in **America**, and so forth. So – so I was selected to go on the **Ford Foundation**, and I went for a trip for five months here. I bought a car on **Queens** Boulevard here, for 250 dollars. No, 200 dollars, an **Oldsmobile**, '51. And I drove 16,000 miles, all around **America**. And when I arrive at this certain famous school of architecture, **Raleigh, North Carolina**, which was formed in '48 with a couple of – a couple, both architects from **Poland**, who were here to work on a team for – to design the United Nations buildings. They were – they were picked up, and to write a new curriculum for this new school of architecture, modern architecture, which was not very familiar word in – in **America**, which was mostly Colonial, and Classical, as you know, in **Washington**.

Q: Yes, yes.



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A: So – so, a modern architecture was oh, modern architecture. And here came these two tac – this couple who were sort of very well known, and first of all, he spoke very well English, because he was in American schools in the 30s, his father was first consul in **Chicago**. Also they were – he was born in **Siberia**. So he was in the American schools, so he spoke English, and – and he was a – kind of like a prophet of the modern architecture. And he was **Lewis Mumford**, a very famous writer and – and he became enchanted with **Maciej Nowicki** and recommended him as a dean of the school of architecture, a new school which was being formed in **North Carolina**, of all the places. Deep south.

Q: And so you drove by there, and you went –

A: So I drove by, and – and one day after, I was asked by the same dean, would you like to join the faculty? I said, me? I never taught. That's very good. We need new things, you know. And about, you know, two weeks ago I was in **Raleigh** on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my being –

Q: Joining the faculty.

A: – joining the faculty there, and 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of that school.

Q: Wow. Wow. So, were you married by that point? Did you have children?

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A: Oh, I married in 1950, most beautiful woman. She is unfortunately now in the nursing home here in **Manhattan**, after brain tumors. And there are the – her picture is there. And –

Q: What is her name?

A: **Lenta**(ph).

Q: **Lemke**(ph)?

A: **Lenta**(ph).

Q: **Lenta**(ph).

A: Actually **Irene**, but **Irena**, but – but she was known as **Lenta**(ph).

Q: **Lenta**(ph).

A: And – and – and I have one daughter **Clara**.

Q: **Clara**.

A: Who is a chief editor of the **Conde Nast** travel magazine –

Q: Okay.

A: – here in **New York**. We have two grandchildren. **Sofia**(ph) is graduating from **Harvard** in May, and **Alexander** is second year in ha – in yart – from **Harvard**, and he is at **Yale**.

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Q: Quite an accomplishment. Quite an accomplishment. Is there anything that I didn't ask you, that you would like to add to what we've been talking about, to your experiences, to how you look at them?

A: Your questions were very intelligent, and well placed, and I don't know what can I add to this.

Q: Thank you. A fascinating story. Fascinating.

A: I hope these marks guided you a little bit –

Q: They did.

A: – because you were asking good questions.

Q: Well, thank you, and they did, and I look forward to reading your book, called, “**An Accidental Immigrant.**” So, Mr. **Jerzy Głowczewski** – did I say it right?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: For a Lithuanian, you are supposed to say it well.

Q: It's true. Thank you very much for participating this evening, for sharing your story with us. And this concludes our interview with Mr. **Jerzy Głowczewski**, on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013, in **New York City**. Thank you.

A: Thank you. I thank you.

**Conclusion of Interview**