

Ewa T. M. Budek-Bielski

Tape 1

August 29, 2013

R-50.030*0740

Summary

00:00 Ewa T. M. Budek-Bielski was born August 18, 1932 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She had two older brothers, George born in 1930 and Marion born in 1931. Her father was a diplomat working in the military and her parents came from prominent families. Her mother, Parelina Miradonska Prosk (?) (indicates nobility) was born in April 1909 and her father, Mertriso (?) was born January 1, 1900 in the Market Square in Krakow. Ewa knew the grandmother from her father's side and both grandparents on the mother's side as she lived with them. After the start of the war, they returned to Germany and settled near Gdynia. During bombardments, they hid in the basement. Once Ewa saw Hitler in a motorcade after the Germans arrived in Poland. Her family were evacuated from Gdynia by train and when it arrived in Krakow, the grandfather arranged for them to be smuggled off the train and to live in a former servant's apartment.

05:00 On the father's side, they were business people who traveled all over Europe. His father took him with him so he learned languages. His father was a representative of a coffee company. His father had two siblings. His brother died during an experiment in Paris and his sister, Irene, lived in Krakow. Poland had many wars for 100 years and his father seldom talked about them to Ewa, only talked about it to her brothers. Ewa knew little about her father's people except that they lived since 1400 on the Krakow Market Place. They were prominent but would not communicate as everyone was scared. Argentina was her father's first post. He was a military attaché and was always in the military. His final rank was Major. He attended the university while working as a diplomat. He was President Hoover's translator. Her mother's parents were prominent as her grandfather was the Regent's gardener. He was appointed from Franz Joseph's court and was a Police Inspector for the city of Krakow. People knelt and kissed his hand. Ewa's mother had an older brother, Ervin Pros-Nevandowski (?) who died in the forest of Katyn.

10:00 Ewa attended the same private school in a convent that her parents had attended in Krakow. Those five years the Convent was scared as afraid the Gestapo would come and take the people away. The family returned to Poland as her father was called back in '38 or '39 when the war began. She was five or six when she left Argentina so remembers little. She spoke Spanish but forgot it. They had help at home and Ewa was taken out for walks. She remembers returning to Poland. Her grandparents were on her mother's side and they lived in Krakopatz (?) . Before the war, her father bought property in Gdynia near the ocean and forest and had a home there. They had to travel through Poland as Gdynia was on the Baltic Sea. It was a new city.

- 15:00 The Poles built it as the Germans thought Gdansk was their city. Her father became a lawyer for the new enclave and he spoke five languages. He completed law school in Krakow at the university there and worked for the municipal services in Gdynia. Gdynia was close to Gdansk and there were few Germans there. Gdansk had brick houses. Gdynia was more modern. From her balcony, you could see the ocean and the forest was across the street. They picked mushrooms in the forest. Ewa was a good girl and always went with someone to the forest. They had more servants than residents at home. She had a nanny and there was a cook, a laundress, a housekeeper and a shopper. Ewa's mother did not attend college. Her father met his future wife in Krakow and soon they were married. Ewa's father was a military person and had no room for girls. She was scared of him, especially when he was in uniform. Her brothers were his boys as they would be the next soldiers. Her mother was quiet and loving.
- 20:00 Ewa liked her parents. She was shielded as others took care of her. She had to get permission to see her mother and grandmother. They lived in a huge villa. She had no contact with her mother and grandmother on a daily basis. The maid fed her and took her for a walk. Her grandparents did not live there. Ewa was not lonely as she had her brothers to boss. She was closer to her older brother than to Marion. The older brother was busy. They were all mischievous. They did terrible things. Hiding in the forest was the best game. They had a formal dinner at noon where they all ate together. They had snacks for supper. They would speak of the coming war. Her father was in the military and secret people came to talk to him. Her first experience of war was hearing the planes. Her grandma thought they should move out as the forest reached the Russian border and the sea was close. They moved to a famous street and got a huge apartment in Gdynia.
- 25:00 They could not take their dog, "Newsh" (?) but he found them. When they were bombarded, they ran to the basement without taking anything. All the windows had to be covered as Hitler was coming. He came on their big street of Shantogika (?) and her father was gone and they were not permitted to look through the windows. They had to be away from the street when Hitler came. The children tried to open the blankets covering the windows to see Hitler. No one could shoot him if there were blankets covering the windows. Ewa peeked and thought he looked like a devil. He was sitting in an open car with other people. She had previously seen his picture. She was on the 2nd or 3rd floor and looked down to see the military motorcade in SS black uniforms. She could not see Hitler's expression. She and her brothers viewed him.
- 30:00 They had a big home so were able to hide from the grandparents. Two days later the Germans came to the door to throw them out and the grandma said in German, "Come later." They had bundles ready. Her mother put her fur coat on though it was September and everyone dressed warmly as they did not know where they were going. The servants were not in the apartment as they went home. Ewa was with her mother, grandparents

and brothers. The SS shot their dog. There were hundreds of people walking as the entire city was evacuated. It might have been one-half million. They were all walking to the railroad station. There were soldiers on the street watching them. There were both cattle cars and passenger cars at the railroad station. She went into 2nd class and her brother got lost so her mother was in panic. Marion was not there. The Germans brought him to the station. Her mother was screaming. The street was guarded so everyone went to the railroad station.

- 35:00 IDs were not checked so the Germans did not know her father was in the military. It was helpful that her grandparents spoke fluent German so could communicate with the Germans. They sat three days at the railroad station and did not know where they were going. Some were herded onto cattle cars. It was silent on the train. There was no one else with them in their compartment. The train stopped in the morning and her grandpa recognized Krakow. He spoke to the railroad people and had the entire family smuggled out by Poles. It was in September. They did not know the train's destination.
- 40:00 They knew that atrocities were being done in Auschwitz. She was sleepy, scared and hungry and does not remember much, just that they were hustled out. The Germans ran the train so it was done secretly. Everyone knew her grandpa as he was the Police Inspector. He held a high ranking position in Krakow close to Franz Joseph. They hid in the station. When the train left, they marched to Market Square where her father's family lived. They carried their small bundles. In Europe the streets are crowded so they blended in and marched to Linden Street where the family lived. It was 1 and ½ hours from Katowice where her mother's father lived. The father's family were there since 1400 so generations lived there.
- 45:00 The relatives were surprised to see them. The Germans took over the city and evacuated many people. The Father's aunt and uncle and parents lived there; now they had seven more. They all lived in the attic and the Germans lived on the lower floors. When the Germans held maneuvers, you were not permitted to watch or you would be shot. Her grandpa tried to find them a place to stay. A servant said he is Jewish and going into hiding so could have his home in Katowice. It was so small that the brothers could not live with them. They lived with a friend. At first they had two rooms but soon the Germans confiscated one room for a German family. They had to share the bathroom with them. It was a very modern home
- 50:00 They had a niche to hang up their coats, a kitchen, waiting area, bathroom, a big room and a small room. They lived in one of the big rooms and shared with the German family the rest of the home. Katowice is in the center of town. It was a modern house in a modern neighborhood. There were German soldiers and a garden across the street. Germans occupied all the buildings. The German family consisted of a man and a woman. She remembers her grandpa sitting in a chair and crying. They could not bathe

much. They had no interactions with the German family. Ewa was curious and hungry. If they gave her a biscuit, she took it. They were nice to her. They did not wear uniforms so thought they were interrogators. It was hard to get food. Once or twice a week, they would go to a church and bring back food. They got barley (kasha) but no milk. A lady who had a store in the building would feed her. Her husband was in the Polish/British Air Force. She hoped that he would return. The lady would share her sandwich with Ewa. Ewa has a postcard her father sent her from the POW camp. He was permitted to mail one every three months. He was an interpreter for President Hoover who sent him packages so he was placed in the POW camp for officers from all over Europe. There was the Prime Minister of Belgium and Stalin's son.

55:00 Ewa placed a picture of her first communion on the card and mailed it back to him and he kept it. Her father survived the war. One day all the POW had to stand on the field and they asked who speaks French, Spanish, English and German and he responded. After six years in the POW camp, Patton took him out. Her father had gone east over the Elbe River and was liberated by the Russians. The American and Russian Armies got together so Patton met her father.

60:00 Ewa saw her father after the war as he did not want to return to a Communist Poland. Ewa had to smuggle herself out from Poland and saw him in West Germany. The three siblings could not escape together so each escaped on their own. When she met her father, he did not talk about his internment. He just kissed her hand as he was a military man with no showing of emotion. He had to work for the CCC, the Communion of Germany. He wrote a book about Stalin's son who wanted to learn German and her father knew Russian so he taught him in the prison camp. The book was a memoir and was printed in English. The Russians shot Stalin's son as they thought a Russian should not allow himself to be captured.

65:00 Harvard University asked her father to write something so he did. He was very conservative and spoke little, especially to ladies. She was the first sibling to reach her father. When her mother opened a box of her father's memorabilia from the prison, she had a nervous breakdown as thought he had died. They received this box when the father transferred from one prison to another. She was taken to a hospital that was evacuated to Auschwitz where she was gassed. Ewa finds it harder to read the old documents and talk of them now that she is older so gets teary. Her mother had the nervous breakdown in 1942. It happened in the apartment with the brother, grandparents and Ewa. The father's books were sent so they thought he had died. Later they found a letter in the spine of a book from the father.

70:00 Her mother started screaming and said that the father was dead; that they had killed him. They thought his belongings were sent because he was dead. The grandparents could not calm her mother so they took her to the hospital where she was evacuated to Auschwitz.

They visited her in the hospital. Ewa's last vision of her mother was standing in the elevator to go up to her room. Ewa was with her grandparents and she never saw her mother again. When they returned to the hospital later, they were told that everyone was taken to Auschwitz. Ewa has a photo of the hospital.

- 75:00 At first Ewa could not find the hospital document. After the war, she found her mother's name in the Auschwitz book. People were afraid to talk. Her grandparents would whisper as thought children would talk. Her grandpa was in danger from the Germans, not the Poles in Krakow. The grandparents spoke fluent German. The grandfather was a retired Police Inspector so the Poles were not a threat. The Germans tried to recruit him as a translator but he could not work for them as could not take their brutality. He told them his German was rusty and refused the position. During that time, Ewa walked on the street to the Convent School, the same one her parents attended.
- 80:00 For three months she would get up in the morning and pretended she was going to school but just walked the streets. She did not attend school as she wanted to see what was going on. One Sunday, Ewa saw the Church was opened and all the people were placed on trucks. She attended church and prayed and did not think that it would happen to her. She attended different churches. She would go into German hospitals looking for her father as she spoke fluent German. She saw soldiers. She was always happy if someone gave her something good to eat. One brother lived with a friend and the other brother lived at Market Square so she did not see them every day. She was 9 to 11 years old during the war when she was walking. Sometimes she would see a German film and they would turn on the lights to check IDs. She got scared as she did not have an ID but they did not get to her section in the theatre. The films would show Germany leading on different fronts in the newsreel before the film. Poles were not permitted to go to the movies.
- 85:00 The movie was for Germans so the IDs were checked in case they were false. Jews were part of society but she did not meet them as attended a Catholic school. There were no Jews in Gdynia. Her grandma did not want her to talk to the daughter of the apartment keeper as they were a lower social level. In the second year of the war, Jews wore bands with the Jewish star. Later the Jews disappeared. They usually disappeared during the night. There might be blood on the stairs in the morning so something happened during the night. Ewa was not afraid. In Gdynia, she was with her mother, brothers and grandparents so she was not afraid about getting on the train. When she was older, she realized how serious it was. She did not talk to anyone outside. After three months, the Convent asked why she did not attend school and the grandparents were not aware of her absence. She promised to return to school.
- 90:00 Ewa said she was a poor student and could not learn. She knew they were occupied by the Germans but no one explained anything to her as they were afraid. One relative was

afraid to talk to the next relative as they may be in cahoots with another. The Convent was a wonderful oasis as you forgot what was happening outside. You rang the doorbell to the Convent and went in and felt safe. Krakow was in the General Government headed by Herman Frank. Ewa said that she was not a good speller and could not do math as she could not concentrate. She had poor grades and they did not expect anything from her as she was a lost soul. They were given a meagre lunch as there was a shortage of food. She had a boyfriend from school who lived near the school and sometimes she got fed at his house.

95:00 The Convent only had grade school. She was not close to the Nuns. In the summer, the children were taken two weeks to the countryside. She attended school all through the war. Russia invaded in 1943 and the grandparents thought they would escape to Czechoslovakia where their brother lived. Her grandma knew Herman Frank from Vienna and she took Ewa to visit him to find out where her mother was. When they got to Vavel Castle, Ewa shook so bad that she could not speak. The Castle was in Warsaw which was badly damaged. The Germans had bombarded Warsaw but not Krakow, the capital. It was a beautiful town as was spared. They took a carriage to the Castle where they spoke fluent German. Herman Frank was short and did not know the mother's location.

100:00 Ewa watched the Nuremberg Trial and Herman Frank was hung. She knew that Auschwitz was a camp where they held people. The war was going on and they did not get much information. Poland had an Underground; it was the biggest resistance. The uncle from Market Square was a professor at the university and became the first prisoner at Auschwitz. His name was Bauerguizhinski (?) and he was a professor of Latin and Greek. Her mother's brother was an officer in the Polish Army fighting on the Eastern Front with Russia. All the officers were sent to be killed in Katyn. Ewa found his name on the list of those killed by Stalin. The Germans invaded the Soviet Union and found the mass grave and found his name.

105:00 Ewa's grandmother would ask why should she have lost two children as she was old and should have died. Ewa was close to her grandparents but they were not cuddly. She lived much on her own. She was clever and went to a friend's house when she thought they were eating as there was no food at home. Her grandma did not know how to cook. There was nothing to cook except for potatoes. She was ten years old but was like a grownup. She felt that she lost her childhood. She knew where to hide. The Germans never came to her Krakow house. The Germans would close a street and everyone would have to get on a wagon. Some had permission to be there as they were working so were let go. Many had false papers. Ewa did not see her brothers often. Both were fed and had a place to sleep.

110:00 Her middle brother was a Seeing Eye Dog and traveled with an Underground man who pretended to be blind. Her brother was 12 or 13 and helped the man go through cities and she learned about this later when he was in the Air Force. George stayed in Market Square with his cousin, Itika (?) whose father was taken to Auschwitz. The aunt wrote to Hitler and the uncle was discharged from Auschwitz. He became a school teacher at the grade school level. People were afraid and did not talk much. Their cousin was quiet. Ewa prayed a lot. Her grandpa worked for the Germans awhile and gave it up. He was old and drank so Ewa would run away and look for food. Her grandma walked with a cane.

115:00 They remained in Krakow until the Russian front was close and her grandma was afraid that the Russians would rape. They packed up for the Czech Republic where her grandma had a brother. They bought a ticket and took the train. They could register to obtain barley and sugar. There was a 7 PM curfew in the summer and 4 PM in the winter. Only Germans could walk the streets, not the Poles. Sometimes Ewa would go to the store and speak German to obtain food. She did not have an ID card. Her grandma thought the Russians would not get as far as the Czech Republic. When they arrived, Ewa was immediately put to work although she was only 12. She worked in a dairy farm. The peasants brought milk and they made cheese and butter but she was not permitted to eat it.

120:00 They lived in Dnafka (?), a town near Moravska Trebora (?). Ewa slept on the floor of her grandparents' room. Her brothers did not leave Krakow with them. The Russians came and assumed everyone was German and emptied the house. They had to stand outside. Ewa recalls the red star and the machine gun. The soldier asked her to show him around. She showed him the house was empty and was afraid that she would be raped when they got to the basement but she was not touched. The Germans had disappeared and they had a little quiet time. Her grandma decided to return to Poland and left by train but Ewa was left behind so she was afraid. The grandparents thought they would first secure a place in Poland before sending for her. They stayed in Kalamata (?) and she followed.

125:00 Everyone wanted to adopt her. A man accompanied her on the train up to the border and she continued on to Kalamata (?). The war was not over as there was still fighting in Berlin. Since her grandfather was well-known, when he showed up in Kalamata (?) they accommodated him and someone gave her food. Again, she slept on the floor as there was only one bed. They lived near the church where her parents got married. Yurich came but there was no room for him. Ewa wanted to leave as they were still under Russian occupation though the war ended. The Communists made a proclamation and a parade that the war ended. They thought her father would return but he did not show up as the Communists would kill him. There was a place where one could barter so her grandma got her shoes with wooden soles.

130:00 They did not have a telephone but messages were sent from one acquaintance to another. Ewa did not want to remain there. She had matured quickly at 13 and felt that she never had a childhood. She never played with dolls. She spoke with her brother on the street as her house might have been wired. There had been collaborators with the Germans and now with the Russians. She did not feel secure. She and her brothers decided to go to their father.

135:00 There were three sections of Berlin: American, British and Soviet. Ewa knew her father's camp was in the American section so they would be able to enter it. Her father had to hide from the Americans and the British as the Soviets were their allies. She took a train to Berlin and realized a group was being smuggled by a guide. As they got closer to the border, the peasants got off and only 12 remained. The guide agreed that Ewa could cross the border with them. He gave her two bags of food to carry. They had to jump out of the train 20 kilometers before the German/Polish border.

140:00 They jumped out at Kishton (?) while the train was slowing down for Berlin. They all waited with the guide at an underground bunker until the correct train for Berlin came along. Their train was returning to Poland. Ewa was exhausted and could not follow the others. The guide yelled at her that she was spoiling it for the others. He wanted the bags of food that she was carrying. They ran and jumped on the coal train while it was moving slowly and opened the latch. Two men jumped on and pulled everyone on. She scraped her leg and covered it up so her skin would not show in the reflection light. They covered their faces so they would be invisible. They went into the Russian zone of Berlin and opened their car and gave the Russian guards food so they would not be reported

145:00 Their contact moved them into an attic of a house where they were given tea and bread and a place to sleep and waited a couple of days. They waited for the Polish fighters who were bringing food to the British zone. The landlady took her to see Berlin and a car came along. They were put on old Army trucks with canvas covering. They lay in a small space. In front of the truck were empty crates that people could sit in and look like food was there. The Polish soldiers worked for the British. They drove from the Russian zone to the American zone and to the British zone where her father was. The truck stopped and someone went on top and tore the canvas and yelled, "Freedom!"

150:00 They went to the place where many people mingled as some were going to Poland and others arriving from Poland. They went to the dining room and got soup and she was told that her father was sending a car for her. She had told them her father's name and they contacted him. Ewa was driven to a cellar as her father had to be careful not to offend anyone. He dropped her at his friend, a German butcher, where she stayed a few days while her father tried to get her an Irish passport. Ireland was friendly to Poland. Her brother, George (Yurich), escaped. People recognized the name, "Budek." Polish Communists were captured on the border and marched in chains through the city.

155:00 When they realized who her father was, they placed him in a prison where he would not get tortured. When he came to the US, he was scared to talk so she told him that there are no devices in the US. The Russians were very brutal and took her father first and then Marion and Yurick. They knew he had children in Poland and wanted to take them out. Her father knew about her mother's situation. All the names of those killed in Auschwitz were published so they found out that she was murdered. Russia thought it was important to show what the Germans did. The Russians killed their own soldiers on the border if they returned as they did not want the civilians to learn about the West.

160:00 Ewa worked at Hudson and people did not want to hear about the war. She tried to educate her children and gave them books. Now, there is another war. Her father let her stay with the butcher while he was getting the legal documents. Ewa remained in Germany for five years until 1950 when she immigrated to the US. While her father was busy working for the CCG, Ewa attended school. She was not more interested in school than before. Learning Latin and Greek did not seem relevant to her. She attended a Polish school, Zeicheister, where there were three barracks: one for boys, one for girls and one for the school. She preferred the Finebuster which was made of bricks and was closer to her father.

165:00 Then she went to Radom where there was a school for Polish children. She had a spoon that she used for eating. Ewa was cheerful as she was free of the Russians. She lived in a barracks where they had one for the school, one for living and one for dining. She could wash once a week. Ewa still has friends from there. A friend sent her a picture. They had no interactions with the Germans. They had to be careful when they walked out as the citizens were nasty. When her papers arrived, her father took her to see Germany and to Spandau (?) Prison in Berlin. She could not leave Germany as the Americans would not permit her as she had no citizenship papers. A Polish/American in Chicago offered to sponsor her. She had to help his children in Wooster, Massachusetts. Her father was in the military and Marion was in Chicago with another sponsor.

170:00 Ewa wanted to see America so with five friends drove to California as her friend was from there and she had a niece there. It took them three or four days to get there. She was supposed to work for the sponsor for a year but the sponsor did not want her as she did not come on time so she was free to leave. From California, they drove to Cleveland as a former Polish officer was in charge of a bakery in Lakewood. He had 16 stores and remembered Budek so he hired her. He had a daughter, Christie and Ewa and Christie did not click. Ewa felt closer to his wife. She lived with them until she got married and they gave her away. Her father was at Harvard University in Boston and had remarried. This was a tragedy for Ewa as the new wife was German. They had two children. Ewa did not invite the wife so her father did not attend her wedding. Ewa felt that if the wife came, they would speak German and Ewa wanted to speak Polish. Marion came later. He was drafted and served in Korea.

175:00 He went to Chicago and ended up in Detroit and contacted George and got married. Ewa hopes there is not another war. When people talk of war, they have no idea of what it truly is. She shows the postcard that her father sent her and she attached her first confirmation picture from Krakow on it and mailed it back to him. As a POW, he could only mail one such postcard every three months to a relative. The Germans gave the prisoners the postcards. Her father wrote in German on the card and tried to condense what he wrote.

180:00 Ewa has tried to document her story. She shows the document that proves her mother was killed that she received in 1997. She wrote to the American Red Cross and to Germany to obtain the documents. Her mother was on the list of those killed in Auschwitz. She shows the letter that she received from the Red Cross. The document is written in German and indicates her mother was born March 25, 1909 and was evacuated May 1941 and killed in June 1942, on the 24th or later.

183:00