This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mr Julian Kulski on September 25th, 2014 in Washington, D.C. Thank you very much, Mr. Kulski, for coming today, agreeing to share with us your story, your experiences, your testimony.

Thank you. It's an honor.

I would like to start with getting a sense of what your life was like before the war, so I will ask very basic questions, and from that we will go from there and build a picture that we'd want people to know to put your story in context. So the first question, what was the date of your birth?

I was born on March 3rd, 1929 in free and independent Poland.

In what part? What was the town or village or city?

I was born in Warsaw, Poland.

A big village, yes?

Yes.

You were born in Warsaw. Did you have any siblings?

One sister, four years younger.

And what was her name?

Wanda.

And when was she born?

She was born about four years later.

Do you have a date of birth?

No, I don't.

You don't remember.

Well, it's in May.

OK, OK. And your father's name and your mother's name, what were their names?

My father's name was Julian S Kulski and my mother's was Eugenia H Kulska.

What was her maiden name?

Solecka.

Solecka. Can you tell me a little bit about their backgrounds, what kind of a family your mother came from and your father came from?

Well, my mother descends from an 18th century King of Poland, Stanislaw Leszczynski, and my father descends from the Chief Rabbi of Warsaw in the 19th century by the name of Dow Ber Meisels.

No kidding.

A great Polish hero. He was involved in both insurgencies against the Russians and provided arms and support throughout the Jewish community of Poland in support of the fight against the Russians and the Russian anti-Semitism.

Isn't that interesting? So few people have such an unusual family connection or blend.

Yes.

So what uprisings would these have been?

Well, one was in 1930.

You mean 1830.

1830, and the other one's in 1861.

I see. And did your father know this rabbi? Did he ever see him?

No, he knew his daughter who was his grandmother. It's an interesting story. They were both born in Krakow and she lived in Kazimierz, which was the Jewish section. Her father was the rabbi of the oldest synagogue in Poland, in Krakow, and as young kids, they met, fell in love, and both families didn't want to have anything to do with them because one was Catholic family and the other one was Jewish orthodox. And so they had to leave Krakow and move to Warsaw.

So explain to me. It was your father's grandmother who was the daughter of the rabbi?

That's correct.

So it's a little bit like Tevye's family on Fiddler on the Roof where one of his young daughters, the last one marries somebody who's not Jewish but a Gentile.

Well, he was extremely objective and she was well educated. She was English-speaking. But when she wanted to marry out of the Jewish faith, that was just too much for a chief rabbi.

So your father's grandfather, what kind of family did he come from? He was the Christian element in this, right?

Right. His grandfather, the husband of the daughter of Meisels, was a famous doctor, and he practiced in a town called Radom between Krakow and Warsaw.

So this was on both sides educated people.

Very much so, very much so.

OK, and it also sounds like-- I mean, one of the questions that I usually ask is how much of a person's family history was told to them, and sometimes people don't have much because no one talked to them as a little child, but it sounds to me that your father told you a lot.

Well, he told me that after the war. He certainly didn't tell me during the war when I was growing up, when I was 10 years old, 15 years old, because it was too dangerous to know that you had a Jewish ancestor, because according to the German law, my father was considered Jewish. I wasn't, but the third generation, so that was kept a secret until after the war.

My mother of course told me her story. There was no problem there.

Uh-huh. So what was her story? Tell me a little bit about that.

Well, her story was that she was born in a little town called Mielec outside of Krakow, and as a young girl, she came to Warsaw and went to a ball and this handsome young officer of the Polish Legions, who was my father, and they got married and they stayed in Warsaw.

Did she have siblings?

Yes, she she was the oldest of four siblings and her mother died when she was 11 years old of TB, and she basically brought up the siblings, so she was very maternal.

Which means that even though she came from, let's say, an educated elite family, she had some duties on her that are not usual for children growing up. That'd be quite hard.

Yes, it was a big-- so she waited to have me for about 10 years after the marriage because she enjoyed the freedom and being able to travel with my father to Moscow, to Paris where he worked, but during the war, she had to work as a farmhand in order to feed us during the war. So she was not beyond being able to do anything that was necessary in life, hard work.

We'll come to that. We'll come to that. Did you know your aunts and uncles?

Yes I did, most of them.

Well, so what were their names on your mother's side of the family?

Well there was a young stepdaughter called Sophia and there was another one, actual sister called Stefa, and a brother called Stefan.

OK, those were from your mother's side of your family.

That's right.

What about your father's side of the family?

My father had the two siblings, a sister three years younger and a brother who was 10 years younger.

And what were their names?

Her name was Stanislawa and his was Wladyslaw.

Uh-uh, Wladyslaw. In your memoirs which I read, you mention an Uncle Norbert. Who is Uncle Norbert in the family scheme?

Uncle Norbert was my father's tutor during the Russian occupation of Warsaw. You were not allowed to be taught in Polish. Schools were taught in Russian. So my family hired this young lawyer. In exchange for living in the apartment, he was teaching my father and his sister the Polish history, Polish, mathematics and all kinds of languages.

So he became the hero of my father, and when I was born, he became my godfather.

Oh, I see.

And he also married later my aunt, my father's sister, so he was my uncle and my godfather.

I see. And when you talk about this Russian occupation, what years would we be talking about?

Well, this was up to 1914, 125 years of occupation by Russia.

And it encompassed Warsaw.

Very much so, very much so.

OK, but some part of your family was in Krakow, which would have been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the 19th century.

Yes, my mother came from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Mielec and TarnÃ³w where she was born and brought up was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

A question that I've always been curious about, was there a different sensibility amongst people who were brought up in one part of Poland versus another given the different rulers and the different policies of those rules?

In some ways, yes, administratively, militarily. I mean, the Poles had to fight in those armies, so it was either Russian, German or Austrian, and they had different discipline, different ways of fighting-- the same thing with the civil administration. So when Poland became independent in 1918, it was quite a problem to start administering the country in one single way.

Yeah, because people had different--

Different backgrounds. Yeah, different traditions.

So what are some of the stories that your mother would tell you about her own family given that she is descended from royalty?

Well, she didn't know much about her original background. Her stories were more about her parents and her grandparents.

Mm-hmm. What did your grandparents, that is, her parents, how did they support the family? And the same question will be for your father's side. How did his parents support their family?

Well, my parents were landowners on my mother's side. On my father's side, his father married a shoemaker's daughter in Warsaw and they had a hard time financially, and the grandfather didn't help him because although he married somebody who was not acceptable society-wise, so did his oldest son, Julian, and he didn't have anything to do with the grandchildren until my father was 18 when for the first time, he met his grandparents.

Oh my, oh my. What family dramas.

Yes, yes. Typical Victorian rules and the regulations.

But I take it because they were educated, they must have spoken more than one language. Is that so?

Oh, yes. Well, my father spoke, had to speak Russian, and my mother spoke German, and they lived in Paris so they both spoke French, and later in life they learned English.

Mm-hmm. Do you have any earliest memories from your own childhood?

Yes, I have a memory of my father saving me from a very cruel German nurse. I was a very independent boy and didn't always do what people wanted me to do, but what I wanted to do, and the nurse was very cruel. She would take me under a bridge and put some hard stones and make me kneel for an hour when I was five years old.

So that's my first memory, and one evening, she told me she would beat me in the middle of the night, wake me up, and my parents were going out to the opera, and I begged my mother not to go. And sure enough, an hour after they left or half an hour, she started beating me, and fortunately my father left the tickets to the ball behind and entered while she was beating me, and he threw her out of the building. So he became a great hero of mine.

Sad, I mean a very sad thing for to happen to a little boy, but a good way for a parent to appear.

Oh, it prepared me for what was coming later on. When the Germans came, I wasn't surprised at the cruelty.

It's so sad. I mean, yeah.

What kind of family life do you remember? And I mean this in many ways. If you could describe your living situation, did you have an apartment, did you have a house? Where was it? And so on from the earliest days.

Well, we lived in an apartment overlooking the Vistula River. It was a beautiful apartment on the fifth floor overlooking the Vistula River. And then in 1935, they built a house specially designed by an architect, a landscape architect in the suburb of Zoliborz in Warsaw, and we moved there.

So most of my memories are from Zoliborz, which was a new suburb mainly used by the government, military elite.

And was it north or west or south of Warsaw?

It was north of Warsaw, the most northern part of Warsaw.

OK. Did it take a long time to get into the center of the city from there?

No, the communication was pretty good. There were good street cars and I used to travel even as a young boy all over Warsaw on street cars.

So would it take half an hour or an hour to get from your home by streetcar?

Oh, about 20 minutes to downtown.

That's not bad.

No.

That's not far at all. And what kind of a household was it in this house? How many people lived there? Did your mother have help?

Well, my mother had three helpers, two women and one man, and besides us there live two aunts, my father's sister and also a cousin of my mother's who was who came over from Japan. She was a Polish consul in Tokyo and brought in a lot of Japanese things and music and kimonos.

Must have been exotic.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

--a young boy. So there were four separate apartments, little one-room apartments where these aunts lived, but they were really designed for my sister and for me when I grew up so that we could live at home but have our own separate place.

How clever. I mean, how clever. But it meant that you had not only your mother and your father there but an extended family.

Yes, we had an extended family, and during the war we had a lot of refugees, Jewish families, Christian families, so the house was really full during the war.

Tell me a little bit about these aunts. You mentioned the one who was a consul in Japan.

Yeah.

What were the other two aunts like?

Well, the other aunt was my father's sister who was an intellectual, a historian, and interested in poetry and interested in architecture, so she me interested in architecture at an early stage.

And was there another aunt?

Well, there was another aunt during the war.

Oh, I see.

It was a refugee.

I see.

Did you go to school?

Yes, I went to school before the war.

OK.

There was a school not far from my house. I would be able to walk to it and back.

Do you have any memories from school?

No, except that I didn't like it.

Was it a public school?

It was very much a public school. My father felt that he was very interested that I not be brought up in an elite environment, and there were a lot of poor boys from poor backgrounds who gave me a hard time, but that's exactly what my father wanted, to strengthen me.

Was your family religious?

No. Well, yes and no. My mother's side was extremely religious. My father's side was not.

And what would be the reason, you would think, that they were not?

Well, my father was against what he felt the Catholic Church was holding back, the social progress, and he was very interested in equality and everybody having the same rights. This was something that he fought for during the First World War. It was not only for Poland's independence but also for giving everybody opportunity and equality, and he felt the church, like in France where he studied, holding them back.

He was also very much against anti-Semitism, so that was one of the reasons actually, he became a Mason, and he was very much interested in development of Poland, the social and economic and physical, and then when he became the mayor of Warsaw, of course he was able to put these plans into execution.

And was your mother religious?

My mother was religious and my grandmother was extremely religious, but my father decided to baptize us in a Protestant church and told us that when we were 21, we should choose the religion, whether we wanted to be Jewish, Christian, Catholic or Protestant.

Really?

And that really gave me a very difficult time when I was growing up, because I had to make this decision for about four or five years. I really strove to try to find out, and I never did find it.

That was going to be my next question.

I'm a Christian, yes, I guess, but I'm very proud of my Jewish background. I'm proud of my father. He was a Mason and a freethinker. So I've been very fortunate in my inheritance.

And the values, it sounds like also the values.

And the values, right, of my father.

Tell me a little bit about your father's career. How did he start out? How did he progress to the point that he held the positions that he did? Well, my father, his mother, the shoemaker's daughter, was a socialist and an anti-terrorist. She was in the underground against the Russians. So he was brought up in his home, in a very patriotic Polish background.

They had a secret press there. They had arms in the apartment when he was growing up. Then he wasn't able to go to university in Poland, so he went to Belgium to study engineering, and then he interrupted his studies because the First World War started, and he joined the PiÅ‚sudski's Legions and fought against Russia and was very badly wounded on the Ukrainian Front.

He was shot through by the machine gun through the stomach and was in hospital for about six to eight months, and it affected his his whole life, his whole nervous system. The only reason he survived was because it was very cold winter. It was January, and he froze on the front.

But then he came after the war, and then soon after was the Polish-Soviet war, which Poland won. It was one of the two countries that ever beat the Soviet Union, Afghanistan and Poland. And he was back in the army. He was in the intelligence service, military intelligence, and he was very close to Marshall Pilsudski.

So let me interrupt. For many people, some of these events are not going to be familiar, so I'd like you to tell me the dates. When was this Polish-Soviet War? When did it take place? And tell us a little bit about who was Marshall Pilsudski.

The Soviet-Polish War started 1920, '21. It was an attack of Lenin of trying to take over Europe, so Poland's newly formed army under the leadership of Marshal Jozef Pilsudski, who was the George Washington of Poland, together with some volunteers from America. The Americans provided some pilots who fought in the Kosciuszko Foundation Squadron during that war.

There were some Italians and some French and some English who supported it in order to defend Europe from the Soviets. And at first, the Polish forces were winning. Then the Soviet forces got all the way to Warsaw and it looked like Poland was going to lose and they were going to enter the rest of Europe, but what is today called the Miracle on the Vistula, Marshall Pilsudski together with Marshal Foch, the French support, came up with a very good military strategy and beat the Soviets and took hundreds of thousands of Soviet prisoners of war, and that was the end of the war.

The Soviets capitulated and part of the agreement was that Poland could recoup all the arts, paintings, jewelry and things which the Russians stole from Poland, and my father was the head of the commission in Moscow, together with my mother, who went through and brought all the antiques and things which they found in museums which were Polish back to Poland.

What a fascinating--

So they do they had an interesting life during the early days, and then after that, my father decided that he wanted to become a political scientist and he went to France. My mother worked in order for him to study, and he went to Sorbonne and got his degree in political science. So when they got back to Poland, he was going to be in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but instead he ended up with the Treasury Department, and then in 1935 became Vice President of Warsaw.

OK, I was thinking of asking this question later but I'll ask it now. It is unusual for a city to have a president or a vice president. Usually they have mayors. What was Warsaw's situation?

The difference between the mayors and the president is that large cities like Warsaw, Krakow, Poznan, Gdansk, have presidents. Smaller towns, smaller cities have mayors. So that is the only difference. It's basically the same functions but a different title, and since Warsaw was the capital of Poland, it was the most important city, therefore the president of Warsaw was second in line to the president of Poland.

Oh really?

Right, and after when the war started, the Polish government left and the president of the city was Stefan Starzynski who fought against the Germans for a whole month. And he in fact became the head of the Polish state, and the Germans arrested him immediately after they conquered Warsaw and shot him a month later, killed him.

And then my father father was an old friend of his, still from childhood days, and they were together in the Legions. They were together in that prison camp. They were together in Moscow. They were together in the treasure and then in the Warsaw City Hall, so it was natural that he followed and was appointed president, during the wartime years from 1939 to 1944.

That is an amazing story in and of itself, and when we are into the war years, I'm going to want to know more about it because, I mean, the question that can come up being in such a position, incredible.

It was a horrible position.

Yes, yes. But going back now to his career, he made then a jump from the Treasury Ministry into, let's say, the municipality.

Right.

OK, and what were his responsibilities as vice president?

So as vice president, it was for the whole transportation system, buses, streetcars, cars, future metro, besides that, the electricity, all the city industrial concerns, labor. There were four vice presidents, and this was his responsibility.

And did your mother finish university?

No, my mother never went to the university. She was well read and very intelligent but she never went to university. She married early.

Mm-hmm. It's quite an accomplishment to help put your husband through college, you know, particularly if that's the Sorbonne.

Yes, right.

How did she do it?

Well, she worked. She taught Polish to some Russians in Paris. She did everything she could in order to live on basically pennies, so it was very difficult times for them but they managed it. And she wrote her memoirs and my father wrote his memoirs. My fathers are published. My mother's are still unpublished.

And was this before you were born?

Oh, yes. That's why she was waiting. She wanted to put him through university to give him the opportunity, and only after he started to go up in the Treasury Department, they decided to have me.

And tell me a little bit about their personalities, what kind of a personality your father had and your mother. had.

My mother was very outgoing. She loved people and everybody loved her. Her maternal instincts having to bring up her sisters and brother when she was a teenager, taught her how to take care of it. Also, she had an example of her father, who was also very interested in helping people.

The towns that they lived were very large Jewish population, and her father was known for taking care and helping poverty-stricken Jews. So my mother was brought up in the spirit of looking after people and taking care, and this was one of the problems that I had with her because she was trying to take care of me too much, and I was too independent.

So we're very much alike. I'm very much like my mother, but we've had that problem. We loved each other but I wanted to be independent and this lasted a whole lifetime. My father was completely different. My father was really quite shy to start with. He had to overcome it to become a public figure, and he did very well in that, but he was an intellectual.

He thought 10 times before he spoke and he was very broad-minded, liberal and a very admired person in Warsaw, known and admired. Sometimes my mother would get on his nerves because she would say something just without thinking, and that would get him get him into apoplexy.

But it sounds like they were both very strong people.

They were both very strong people, extremely strong people in different ways, quite opposite, but very much in love.

Also very nice.

So I met a cousin of mine in Poland just two months ago, and comparing how we were brought up, they were rich but didn't have love, and we had lots of love but we were not so rich.

Yeah, well, all of these things are crucial for a child, of course, in their development, and in many ways, it helped-- or when you had a strong upbringing, when you're put into times of stress, sometimes you have some reserves to draw upon.

Exactly, and I think that's what pulled me through the war.

Really? Yeah.

So tell me a little bit about-- you were born in 1929, yes?

So Hitler comes to power when you were just four years old.

Yes.

From the time that you could remember, did your parents talk about history and politics and current events at home?

Oh yes. My father and uncle Norbert used to talk politics, but the closest I got was when I was eight years old, I spent a summer in Bydgoszcz which is a city on the German border, and my so-called uncle-- he was one of my father's wartime buddies-- was the governor of the province, and I was lucky to spend two summers in the governor's palace.

Wow

And they had also a summer place. It was surrounded by Polish armored troops and I was allowed to ride in Polish tanks. I was eight years old, so that was great fun.

What a thrill.

And I learned to swim and I learned how to have great social life to the point that when I got home, I told my mother that she didn't behave like the president's wife should, the way aunt Hela as the governor's wife, because they had balls every week and lots of food and lots of dancing. And furthermore, I told her that my father should be a right-winger, not a left-winger, and my mother told him that, and he burst laughing that this eight-year-old was trying to tell him out what kind of politics he should have.

But I was just interested in all the nice things, all the wonderful cookies and chocolates, and one day I even ordered eight guys for a ball which didn't exist, and my uncle caught me and chased me around the palace. So I was full of beans.

It also sounds that the sense of what it is to be Polish was very strong in your family.

Well, it was not only one family. I think in school, the teachers, the family and everybody were so excited to have a free and independent Poland, free for everybody. The Christians, the Jews, particularly the Jews had wonderful theaters and social life, and in my life, I didn't run into any anti-Semitism because my father's closest friends were Jewish members of the Legion, Polish Legion who fought the side, like the writers. And so religion was not an important part in my upbringing.

Well, also, I mean, from what you were saying is that many people will say in their testimonies that as they're talking about their lives, either that there was anti-Semitism that they experienced as Holocaust survivors or as Jews growing up in Poland, or as Poles who had very little contact with the Jewish community. That's different for you and for your family.

Well, it was different in the country and different in the city. In the city. I mean, 1/3 of Warsaw were Jewish, and so there were a lot of orthodox, and I used to enjoy as a boy going in there and seeing the food, the laughter, the language. To me, it was very, very fascinating. Although I didn't know I had any Jewish background, it was just very interesting.

But the place where I lived, it was all Poles of Jewish background who were the leaders of Poland, university professors, army men. 10% of Polish officer corps were Jewish. So I didn't pay any attention to that. That's why I didn't run into it, but I heard stories that in the country, it was different, that the Orthodox Jews lived separately from the Catholic peasants and sometimes there were problems, but it was never something that I saw in the city.

It wasn't part of your life.

No, it wasn't part of my life.

Tell me about your childhood friends. Did you have any close friends as you were growing up?

Well, the closest friend that I had was in Kazimierz on the Vistula in 1939, the beginning of the war, a girl by the name of Zula who was also of Jewish background but was Catholic, and we became good friends. And then we continued in Warsaw when I got back from the vacation.

OK, so tell me about Kazimierz on the Vistula. Is that far from Warsaw?

Kazimierz on the Vistula is about two hours from Warsaw by car, and it's an old port on the Vistula which was mainly a Jewish orthodox town.

North or south?

It's north.

So closer to the Baltic Sea?

No, no, south. Sorry, south towards Krakow. And since Poland was the main exporter of grain, Kazimierz had the places for storing grain, and the Vistula was the main avenue of going to the Baltic. But it was a summer place and it's still a big vacation place. I was there a month ago with my wife.

And my parents rented a house there, and although my father expected war, he didn't realize how soon it would happen, and just as soon as he got settled in Kazimierz, the car came from Warsaw from president Starzynski taking him back because the war started.

OK, so right before we get into that, I want to spend a little bit of time on Kazimierz in this. So you were there in the summertime?

Right.

Would this have been July or August of '39?

This was July-- August. Well, it was already mostly August because the war started on the 1st of September. So no, it was August and September, August and September.

And is that where you met Zula, or had you met her before?

That's where I met her.

OK.

I met her, she was also spending summer there.

And she was from Warsaw?

She was from Warsaw too.

And how old was she?

She was about-- I was 10 and 1/2 and she may have been 11, something like that.

OK, and you mentioned that she was Catholic but of Jewish background.

Right, right, I think one parent was Jewish and one was Catholic.

Uh-huh. Which one, do you know?

Not really. I'm guessing. I know her father was a Polish army officer who was killed at Katyn Forest.

Oh, I see.

He was a prisoner, taken prisoner of war by the Soviets.

And what was her last name?

Sorry?

What was Zula's last name?

Wojecka.

Wojecka?

Right.

And how did you become friends? What about her?

Well, they lived, they had a cottage next to us and we just met. I don't know how, but became good friends, and we used to go to the center of Kazimierz on particular on a market day when the peasants from the area would bring their goods to sell, and the Jewish people who lived in Kazimierz would buy, sell, horses, sell horses and chickens and pigs.

And it was a lot of fun, but it's an old medieval town, small town square, and at one end was a big cathedral and right of the center was a wooden synagogue.

Did you speak Yiddish?

No, no.

So she was integrated?

She was integrated, right, but she ended up in the ghetto.

We'll talk about that. We'll talk about that. It sounds pretty idyllic as a place.

It was an idyllic place, definitely. It was a beautiful summer, and we used to go swim in the river, and we had the run of the place, of the woods and of the square, the beautiful architecture in the square, a lovely little town.

And did you, even being only 10 years old, did you sense that there was something that was troubling in the larger political air, or not so much?

Well, I already learned that a year and a half before when I was in Bydgoszcz when I was with my uncle the governor, because the Polish army was already training, as I said the tanks. And I also saw a very funny movie of Hitler making fun of it, so that was the beginning.

And then, of course, since then, I got interested in who Hitler was because he looked like this a funny guy at the beginning, and then I heard all these horrible stories about what was happening in Germany. And nobody could believe it until we saw it in Warsaw, and it came with a bang.

Yeah. So when your father gets you settled in this summer place, did he expect to stay with you and then was suddenly called back?

Yes, he expected to stay at least a week or 10 days. That was his vacation, but he was called off to Warsaw because he was not only vice president but he was the head of the anti-aircraft civilian defense, and he had tens of thousands of people trained already for putting out fire. In each building, there was somebody who had sand and water on the roofs, so when the Germans started dropping incendiary bombs, they were trying to put out the fires as soon as possible. He was responsible for the sirens and the aircraft notifying the military.

Do you remember whether you still were in Kazimierz when the war actually started?

Yes, I was very much in Kazimierz, and I remember the day very well.

Tell me about it.

I was out mushroom hunting with Zula, which was--

It's OK. We can stop right now. We can stop. Don't worry.

OK, so tell me again. Do you remember September 1st, 1939?

Well, I'll never forget September '39 because it was the first time in my life that I was really terrified. Zula and I went out mushroom hunting. It was early in the morning and about 10:00, somewhere around 10:00 in the morning, there was a terrible noise and the trees started bending, and right over the treetops came out huge black aeroplanes with crosses on it.

And we didn't know what it was. We didn't know that the war started, but they were flying to bomb Warsaw, so they had bombs underneath it, and so we just laid down. They seemed like hundreds of them. There weren't that many, I'm sure, but it appeared to me, to a little boy, and we were terrified. And then after they left, the trees straightened out and there was this wonderful silence after the noise.

And then I looked up at the sky and there was a eagle circling around, and the eagle is the symbol of Poland. This was a white and black eagle coat. And it was something which was so unusual, the whole experience, first of that noise, so we ran home and we found out. My mother told us that the war started, and she started worrying about my father who was up in Warsaw, because we knew that he had such a dangerous post.

Did you have a telephone in Kazimierz?

Oh yes, we had telephones, yeah.

OK, and was she able to have a telephone connection to Warsaw?

Yes but I didn't. I was too young to use it. We didn't use it. You know, I had my own life with Zula, and there was another boy called Jendryk that lived in the same cottage, and we used to do a lot of just running around and doing things that boys do like drawing things in the well.

So once your mother tells you the war starts, do you remember what happened next?

Well, I remember that the everybody, the adults were terrified. They were glued to the radio. And then about two weeks later on the 17th of September, the news came that the Soviets attacked the Polish army from behind. They formed an alliance with Germany, and that's why the Polish Army had to surrender because they couldn't fight on two fronts, and both of the enemies were much stronger.

But there were a lot of soldiers coming through Kazimierz and a lot of talking about what we should do. I know that my mother at one time, my mother and some other women with children got onto a horse-drawn vehicle, and we went out running off towards Krakow, but then we turned around and came back the next day. There was just complete chaos on the roads, people running away from one front to the other, being caught either by the Germans or the Russians.

Well, it reminds me of that very famous scene, and I think it's Andrzej Wajda film about Katyn where there's a bridge, and people are running on one side of the bridge.

That's right, that's right.

Should they go to one end of it or should they go to the other end?

It was complete chaos, complete chaos.

Yeah. How far-- did you see any German soldiers coming in? Yes, they came in, I would say in the second week of the war, towards the third week, and I was on the square when they came. It wasn't the market day, but they came on motorcycles and in cars, and it was a very hot summer and dry summer, so they were all covered with dust, and so my first thought was they didn't look like victors. They looked like a losing army.

But they were the victors, and then they brought in an orchestra, Wehrmacht orchestra, and they started playing in the square, in this medieval square, military marches. And they brought in the orthodox rabbi and tied him up to the roof of the wooden synagogue and started a fire and made the elders run in to try to save him, and they all died right in front of my eyes, and I was 10 and 1/2 years old.

And it was just like Dante's hell, and it was a little building that they were all together, about less than 100 Jewish families in town, but all of them perished later.

Oh my goodness.

There's a monument outside to the Jews of Kazimierz that were murdered during the war.

It sounds-- I mean the juxtaposition of a resort town, an idyllic place, and medieval, and then even a German marching band, OK, that's nothing out of the ordinary.

No, but doing it while they were committing this horrible crime on innocent and helpless people was impossible for a kid to understand. I still don't understand it.

Of course, of course. Was anybody, I mean, was your mother there in the square? Were you alone?

No, no, only I and Zula, the two kids, you know. I don't know. My mother couldn't keep track of me, you know. She had my sister she also had to take care of. She already started working as a cow hand, her job. Everybody in the little house, we ran out of money. My father didn't have money, so we had each one, everybody had to do his job, and my mother's job was to take care of the cow, so she had to take it to the field and milk it.

When you went home, I assume you told them all about this, what you saw?

Oh yes, yes,

What happened after that?

Well, after Warsaw capitulated towards the end of September, my father came in the limousine, city limousine, to pick us up. He had a problem walking, problems with his legs, because he did so much running around the city during the siege of Warsaw. He looked tired and sick, and they took us to Warsaw, and I remember entering the city and seeing dead people on the sides and dead horses and ruined buildings.

And My mother burst out crying and got so sick that he had to stop the car because she threw up when she saw everything that was happening. I mean, my father knew it, was used to it after a month, but for us coming from this idyllic place, it was just such a shock. When we got to our house, the house didn't have any windows left, you know, because of the bombs.

Was your neighborhood bombed?

Sections of the some buildings were bombed, but most of the bombs fell on downtown.

OK.

On hospitals, churches, synagogues. That's where they were bombing.

And your father took you to your home.

Yes.

Was there any change inside your house?

Well, it was full of glass and dirt, and it was the same house but it wasn't. Fortunately, before the winter, they were able to get the glass back in the windows because it was a very hard winter, a very cold winter, and there was a shortage of fuel. It was very difficult and the Germans started the terror immediately.

They arrested my father's boss, the president. They arrested my father. They came to our house and I was 10 and 1/2 years old. I was playing on the floor with my [? bolsa ?] ships, and I had German ships and I had Polish ships, and I remember these three Gestapo men coming in and searching the house, and one of them stopped by and spoke in broken Polish and asked who was winning this war.

And I said of course, Poland is winning the war. But it's interesting that this guy today is 96 years old and he is the one who admitted that the Germans killed President Starzynski a few weeks later. My father, everybody thought that it turned out that he died in a concentration camp, but he says that-- and this was examined by the Polish courts-- and they pretty much decided that it's a true story, and I agree with it. But it's this guy that talked to me about the ships, and it came up.

What's his name?

I can't remember his name but he was a Silesian. He and his brother, Silesians, joined the Gestapo, but he left a year later, joined thr Wehrmacht, survived the war, then went to the university and became a history professor. And just now, two years ago, he notified the Polish government that he wanted to tell the story of what happened, and he also talks about my father appearing for interview by the Gestapo headquarters.

They were called in. They wanted to know about the Foreign Diplomatic Corps having left Warsaw and what happened, and how come the president of Warsaw was making such anti-Hitler speeches towards the world about all the crimes that the Germans were committing on the civilian population.

This was President Starzynski?

President Starzynski right, and my father, who was the vice president. And he remembered. This Gestapo man remembers now that they came in dressed to a T with the hats on and elegantly looking, and they were very mad that they were being interviewed by low level Gestapo men rather than some high level dignitaries. They felt that it was an insult.

It probably was.

It was. Well, they didn't have it, but Starzynski was offered to form a Polish government, collaborative government. He refused so he was useless, and he says that they took him to the park and he tried to escape, and he was shot. Well, he was executed right in the middle of Warsaw. And then he's buried somewhere on the outside of Warsaw in what was then an SS camp, and there is no way of finding the body.

There is a memorial in the Warsaw cemetery, but it's empty. They never found the body.

Can I understand it correctly that it was assumed until just two years ago that he died in a concentration camp?

Yes. Yes, and there were all kinds of stories that he was in Dachau, that he was killed during the Warsaw Uprising, like the head of the Polish Underground Army, General Grot-Roweck. And definitely it wasn't true. He was killed right then in Warsaw.

And tell me then, how do you make the connection that it's exactly this person who stopped in your house?

Because in his statements to the Polish government-- and it's lengthy, it's about 25 pages-- he mentions coming and interviewing to our house a few days after the city was taken over. And my sister and I were the witnesses, and my sister remembers that the guy got sick. He got a cold or something, was throwing up downstairs, and asked for a glass of water. My mother made him some tea.

So details like that, he remembers how my father was dressed. He remembers my playing with the things. And I remember him because I was so surprised that a Gestapo man would ask a question like that in Polish.

Yeah.

So he's a real person. I think he's pretty much dying now, but before he died, I guess he wanted to get it off his shoulders.

It's amazing.

It's an amazing story. Amazing.

It's amazing.

And of course, they haven't found the body, but my father spent his whole lifetime until he died looking for his friend's body in Germany and on German television. And nobody came up and nobody knew anything about it. There were all kinds of stories, you know, that people made up, but I believe that this was the story because I remembered this guy.

Yeah, yeah. And it sounds that he would be in a position to know.

Well, he was the translator, yeah.

Unbelievable.

And he was told by the guys who shot Starzynski that the less he knows the better.

Ah.

They didn't want to give him the details, but they told him that he was killed.

If you ever remember his name, let me know.

Well, I got it in the home.

Yeah, yeah. This begs the question. President Starzynski is executed right away because he was no longer useful. And your father then takes over his position in 1939 and is in it for the next five horrible years. How did he survive? How was it that he was not executed?

Well, he was given an order by Starzynski to continue taking care of the city and of the people. He was elected by the Underground Polish government. The Polish government was in London but the Polish Underground was in Warsaw. And they made my father the successor to Starzynski, but the Germans, who needed to have the city operating well, and they didn't have the manpower because most of them were in the army, they needed the city to be running properly so they made my father the mayor.

BÃ¼rgermeister was his title, so he was the president from the Polish government side in London and the Underground government, but as far as the Germans were concerned, he was the BÃ¼rgermeister. So some of the Polish citizens of course who were not involved, who didn't know about the underground, thought that my father was a collaborator and that the whole city hall was a collaborator, and it was tens of thousands of individuals.

It's a huge city, million and a half. In order to operate, there was a very big bureaucracy in order to run properly, the electricity, the transportation, the schools, the whole system. So the fortunate thing for my father, and I think this is why he was able to survive although he was arrested three or four times by the Gestapo because they suspected that he was a member of the Underground and that he was anti-German.

But there was one individual called Ludwig Leiss. Who was with Hitler in the First World War in the Bavarian regiment. He was a regular soldier like Hitler, but they got to know each other, and then in 1934 or '35 joined the Nazi Party and joined the Brownshirts, and went up very quickly although he didn't have any much education if any, became a general in the Sturmabteilung, SA.

And he was trained to be the supervisor of Warsaw. So his first job in Warsaw was to create the Jewish ghetto before he became the so-called governor of the city, and he worked with the-- what was his name? I keep on forgetting, sorry. The head of the Jewish ghetto.

CzerniakÃ³w.

CzerniakÃ³w. CzerniakÃ³w was a good friend of my father's before the war. Adam CzerniakÃ³w was in the Polish Senate and he was also a member of the City Board, so my father knew him very well. But before my father met Leiss. CzerniakÃ³w worked with him for about nine months, and everybody, the Germans were already furious with Leiss because Leiss treated CzerniakÃ³w well.

He gave him a Mercedes and a driver and he let him travel all over Warsaw and treated him like a human being, and of course, the Germans were absolutely livid because he wasn't carrying out Hitler's policy towards Poles and towards Jews. But eight months later, he was appointed the boss of the city hall, the so-called Staatpraesident.

So he became the city president, then my father was the mayor, but above each of the city departments there was a German, and some of them, most of them were pretty horrible Nazis. But since he had contacts with Hitler himself, he was able to overcome and save a lot of people in the ghetto and outside of the ghetto before the ghetto became taken over completely by the SS which was in 1940. From there on, they closed up the ghetto and neither Leiss nor my father could do, but for the first year, the city hall was able to take care of everybody in Warsaw inside and outside of the wall.

So that meant that your father reported directly to Leiss.

My father reported directly to Leiss, but my father reported directly to the prime minister of Poland. So he had this horrible dual job. Publicly, he was reporting to a German, but on a daily basis, he was surrounded by three Polish Underground military intelligence agents, and he was in daily contact with the civilian and military underground facilities.

So he was able to gather intelligence and pass it on, being himself an intelligence officer from the Soviet war. He knew how to do it and he was able to maneuver it, and fortunately, as I said, Leiss was the one who saved many lives, including my father's and my own. He got me out from the train in Auschwitz. He got my father out of the Gestapo three times.

Did you meet him?

No, I never met him. I never met him. After the war, he together with other Nazis were before the Polish courts, Denazification courts, and the surviving members of the ghetto and of my father's administration defended Leiss, and the other Nazis were hanged but Leiss was declared a Nazi but not a criminal and he got a few years' sentence which he spent in Polish jail after the war for belonging to a criminal organization, the Nazi Party.

He wrote his memoirs and my father wrote his memoirs and CzerniakÃ³w wrote his memoirs. So I've got all of these and I've translated them into English.

Amazing. So it sounds from your telling that he was not brutal in a very brutal position.

He was referred to by the leaders of Warsaw as the prisoner of the city hall because he was a martyr, because he had to save as many lives as possible and provide decent living conditions. For a while, CzerniakÃ³w would come almost every week to see my father. He was allowed to leave the ghetto and to report to my father and to Leiss.

And my father at first was very suspicious of Leiss because he was a Nazi, and all Nazis were horrible, inhuman. And yet this guy, after CzerniakÃ³w left, and we'll describe the conditions in the ghetto, he turned to my father. He said, poor people, about Polish Jews in the ghetto, and my father was taken aback.

And there were a number of things that he did during the five years. He knew about the Underground Army. He knew about the Underground State and he did not report it to the German authorities, and the German authorities were suspicious of him. In 1944 after the attempt on Hitler's life, Fischer, who was Leiss' supervisor, was told to form a list of 100 Nazis who were not loyal to Hitler, and he called Leiss and gave him the job to do it in Warsaw, to find 100 Germans, and there were tens of thousands of Germans living in Warsaw at the time, military and civilian, to form that list.

And Leiss said, well, I'm sorry but I don't know anybody who is disloyal, and Fischer said, why don't you start with your name. And during the trial after the war, Fischer tried to pretend to save his life that he allowed Leiss to be the good guy, which was a lie.

Amazing, amazing. I mean, I also think-- I mean, then Leiss, your father and all those people were living on a razor's edge.

Well, Leiss was too. Leiss was more afraid of Gestapo than he was afraid of us, the Underground Army, and he used to go hunting outside of Warsaw with Fischer. And in 1943, the Polish Underground courts passed the sentence on Fischer for the death, for the murder, of the ghetto population and the Polish population outside of the wall.

And I was in, at that time, the unit, the commando unit, which executed the sentences of the Supreme Court, of the Underground courts, on Nazi criminals, and the sentence was passed on Ludwig Fischer. When they were coming back, we put up machine guns along the road, and as the Mercedes was passing, we shot Fischer's car.

And unfortunately, these two guys changed cars and Leiss was in Fischer's car. And Leiss just hit the floor and when the car arrived in the city hall, he called my father downstairs and he said, for all the good things which I have done for the Warsaw population, and they're trying to kill me. Why don't you get in touch with the Underground and tell them that I am a Polish friend, a friend of Poles?

My father said, of course, I would do it tomorrow right away if I knew how to do it, but I have no contact with the Underground. But of course, he did contact the liaison officers, and they notified my father the next day to tell him that the order was on Fischer and not for him, and to never change the cars again.

I mean, it sounds to me that all of these things you're telling me, you learned after the war.

Oh yes.

OK. At the time when your father was in this extremely precarious position, did he ever talk at home about what was going on in the office?

No, no. No, as a matter of fact, that's one of the reasons why he gave me away. I didn't live with my father and my parents during the war.

Well, excuse me, because that's exactly one of my main question here as I was reading your memoirs or your sort of like diary that you wrote afterwards.

Right.

I found it very odd that at such a young age, you would not live at home. Tell me what happened. How did things progress?

Well, right after the war, the Germans closed the schools. I had a lot of free time and from the time I was 10 to 12, I and a friend of mine went out and we would pick up the bombs, small bombs which fell on the streets of Warsaw, that didn't explode. We would take them to the garage of my friend and we would take the powder out of it.

And so my father was worried that I was going to get killed, and my father was being arrested at home by the Gestapo, so he was worried that during the searches of the home, I would get him into trouble or he would get me into trouble. So he got in touch with my pre-war Scoutmaster by the name of Ludwig Berger who was also of Jewish background.

I think he was a Protestant, but he was Ludwig Berger, and I lived with him, and I wanted to join the Underground Army when I was 12, so Ludwig came to my father for permission because I was only 12 years old, and my father said, of course you can join the army. So I was sworn into the Polish Army at the age of 12.

Unbelievable.

And I lived with Ludwig which was only about three blocks away, so from time to time, I would drop in on the house, but basically there was no school, and Ludwig trained me as a soldier. And Ludwig formed the first unit of the Polish Underground Army out of the Boy Scouts, and so most of them were older than I. I was the youngest one.

And at first, I was just the runner. I was running around with secret contacts to the Ghetto and to a lot of places in Warsaw. But later on, at the age of 13 a year later, I became a regular soldier and I was trained in arms and had maneuvers outside of the city, and were trained in ordered to prepare us to fight.

So did you your father, did you tell him before you went away that you and your friend were collecting these unexploded bombs?

He heard about it because my friend lost his leg. I wasn't there, but he was supposed to wait for me, but he got some nitroglycerine and it exploded, and the whole garage went off and he lost the whole leg, so my father knew that I was-- they were also trying out and making bombs and trying them out in the parks, and so he was afraid that I was going to get killed, and he had no time for the family.

He worked day and night at the city hall, just dropped in for food once in a while, and so there was no man to take care of the little boy, and he felt that Ludwig Berger would be an excellent person to take hold of me.

And did your mother have anything to say about it?

My mother didn't know anything about it. My mother was very upset after the war when the book came out that she didn't know anything about it.

She didn't know anything about the powder?

No. Well, I don't know. I don't think she knew anything, she knew very much. She certainly didn't that Ludwig Berger would sign me up as a soldier in the Underground Army.

But she knew he took you?

Oh, yes. He was a Boy Scoutmaster, and also together with Ludwig, there were two young women, Stefa Sola and Aleksandra Sola Sokol, who were the daughters of a doctor who took care of my mother's father when he was sick in Tarnow, Dr. Sokol, so she knew them and everybody knew Ludwig Berger from before the war because he was an actor. He was a very active youth leader in the Boy Scout movement.

And you said he was Jewish?

He was of Jewish background and so were the two girls. All three of them were of Jewish background.

And how is it that they wouldn't have been in the ghetto?

Well, because they were hiding. They were hiding, so my father really handed me over to a Jewish family, basically. As I said, religion had no part in it. They were extremely patriotic, integrated Polish intellectuals, and there was a little boy, Marik, who is still alive, the son of Ludwig. I saw him a month ago.

Oh my.

And we keep in touch, and when I was being arrested by the Gestapo, he was playing over the secret place where we had our arms, and he was only 8 years old at the time. I was 13.

But here is my question. It's not so much that they were integrated and religion didn't play a part. It is, wouldn't they have been known by the Gestapo, and how is it that they could hide in plain sight in Warsaw?

Well, in almost every house in Zoliborz that I know of, certainly every other house, had a Jewish family being hidden including our own house. My mother hid about nine members of the Jewish family between our house and also later on we had a house in the country, and she took care of, saved, a number of members of the Jews who were integrated and were not Polish speaking, and who could survive in hiding.

I see. And it's a kind of crass way to put it, but did Ludwig look Jewish?

Yes, very much. Just look at the picture.

OK, so that meant that if he was walking down the street, he could have been picked up?

Well, he was 6 feet, 4 inches tall. He was extremely handsome and he was very self-confident. He was a real leader and bordering on the arrogant. So I don't think they would have dared him until they found out that they were looking for him, and this is how I got cauight and Stefa was arrested.

We'll come to that because I want to do this a little bit chrnologically.

They were looking for Ludwig.

OK. But it's just so surprising to me to hear of somebody who would be living openly more or less on the Aryan side, and he could consider himself a Protestant, but that doesn't matter if the Germans are in control.

Exactly, but he was a great hero in this part of Warsaw. He was known by everybody and loved by everybody, and nobody cared what he was. He had a Jewish grandfather or grandmother or whatever it was, you know-- it was unimportant.

Did he have false papers?

Sorry?

Did he have false papers? Did he have false papers? Did he have real papers that said--

I'm sure he had false papers. They all had false papers. All three of them had false papers in case of being caught, but Berger could be a German name as well Jewish.

Of course.

So you know I don't know what kind of papers maybe he had the Volksdeutsche papers for all I know.

OK.

I mean, it was the height of conspiracy, and nobody was supposed to know anything what the other person was doing, but I know that when I moved there, there was a little boy, kind of a poor boy that lived in the apartment, and Ludwig gave me a job to try to test him whether he was not going to report Ludwig to the police, whether it was for his activities in the underground or for being of Jewish background.

I didn't know at the time, but the point was that I was able to convince him to do that, and Ludwig had him shot.

So what was the test?

He was head of the company of 150 soldiers, and at that time, the captain had the right of making a decision like that legally. A suspect was enough to be killed because he could bring so many deaths if he was caught by the Germans.

So tell me, what was the test that you had for him?

Well, I talked him into going to the police and selling Ludwig for money, and it wasn't very difficult. He already had that idea, so I went and reported to Ludwig and Ludwig had him shot.

Wow.

But you know, again, that was something that was-- I was 12 years old at the time and I only found out later that he was killed and where he was killed by our execution squad, and I felt of course responsible for it.

So you maybe have to repeat it a little bit, but tell me about what your life was like with Ludwig in this new place.

You had the two Sokol sisters. You had Maric. He was Ludwig son?

And there was a mother, a grandmother living.

Where was Marik's mother?

Marik's mother, they were separated.

OK.

She got him after the war, after Ludwig was killed, but at that time for whatever reason, he was living with the father, and Aleksandra Sokol was head of the International Couriers Section, women's couriers, and they were also responsible for also attacks on German criminals. Stefa, who was the love of Ludwig, and she was kind of his secretary and did all of the secretarial work for him, and did the home caring, cooking and taking care of the house.

So she was his girlfriend?

Sorry?

She was his girlfriend?

She was his girlfriend, right.

And in this household, you first joined the Underground, and then at age 13 you were accepted into the Underground Army?

No, I joined them at the age of 11, and in the same year, later that year when I was 12, was when I was sworn into the underground, 1941.

Which means you don't really have a childhood. Your childhood ended then.

Yes. Well, everybody had to grow up, but basically we were brought up. The Germans made it very clear that it was a question of time that they were going to kill us all. So it wasn't a question of whether we live or die, only when, and that made the whole mental attitude different. This is why we rose up in 1944. That's how our brothers in the Warsaw Ghetto arose in 1943, because they preferred, we preferred, to die with our arms in hands than go into the gas chambers

And it was a question of age. Both inside the ghetto and outside of the ghetto, the adults the priests, the rabbis, would tell the kids not to stir things up, not to form a resistance, not to resist because that would make things worse. But we knew better. We knew that we had to defend ourselves. Who had to defend our families, and it proved that the young people were right.

And when I meet now with the American kids in high schools, I often am on their side because when you are young, you are honest. You're not spoiled. You have got certain inborn morals and you know better than the parents who are more scared.

Well, they don't want their children to die.

Well, they don't want their children to die, exactly, but they don't realize that you have to fight to save yourself.

Well, you know that in one way, when I was looking through your memoir, you're answering another question that I had, because I see these pictures of children in uniforms with guns, you know, and they clearly aren't even teenage boys yet. They're in that age of 10 to 13. It just boggles the mind. But a teenage boy who's 17 or 18 could be part of this. It's already something you can-- they're on their way to manhood.

But it's happening all over the world. As an international architect, I've worked in 30 countries. I've worked in Arab countries. I've been in Israel many times, and I realized that in places which are dangerous, the kids grow up very fast, and there are many children soldiers unfortunately, still today.

It's true.

So it's true in Afghanistan and Iraq and in Jordan, and I'm sure the Israeli kids are brought up in the same spirit of defending their homeland. So it's not something that you recommend, but when the Germans closed schools and the only school was the military courier, you grow up fast and you grow up in a different way and you mature faster. I mean, I have some children.

One of my son is almost 30, but he's what I was at 13. He's so far beyond because of the easy life, no challenges, and the parents and the schools don't expect, don't provide enough challenges to these kids. I meet a lot with the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, the high school, the middle school kids, and I make friends with them immediately because I become that age back when I talk about my experiences.

And I have great respect for them, and there are some wonderful young people. When I hear about the education system being bad, there are always bad students and good students, but the good students are fantastic.

Yeah.

Great kids.

Amazing. Tell me, let's go back to how things what were some of the other activities you took part with under Ludwig's, I suppose, guidance or direction and so on.

Well, first of all he trained me to prepare me for arrest by the Gestapo, and by torture.

And how do you do that?

Sorry?

How do you do that? How do you get trained for that?

Well, two things. He taught me how to fight when you don't have a gun, fight with your teeth, how to kill a person with a knife or with your hands and with your teeth. That's how he died. He also prepared me how I should answer under torture about him, because he knew perfectly well that I would be the natural one that the Gestapo would want to find him through me.

So he said, just say to the Gestapo that you hated me, that I was a tyrant, I wouldn't let you have sex with girls, I wouldn't let you have the freedom that you wanted to do, that you really hated me, and that you will collaborate with them in trying to find me. And also, don't admit that you know any German, so you have a translator. So he prepared me very well for it and it was very useful when I was taken to the torture chambers.

Tell me some of the activities that you took part in. You said you were part of the commando unit that was--

Well, this was later. This was after Ludwig died. This was part of-- his unit became the division which was supporting the general headquarters of the Polish Underground Army called Baszta, the tower, but after I was arrested and they were following me trying to find Ludwig, I had to leave because I was burned, and they joined the commandos in order to be able to return, be able to kill some Germans right away. I couldn't wait for the uprising.

But while I lived with Ludwig, at first I was carrying secret messages, and at the one time he took me to the ghetto, which was an experience. I used to go to visit my girlfriend in the ghetto, but this was when the streetcar would still be allowed to go. It wasn't allowed to stop inside the ghetto, but it went from one gate to the other, and I would jump off, see Zula and then jump back on the streetcar, which was under the police guard.

Was this when the ghetto was still part of under Leiss's control?

No, no, no, no. Leiss only headed it a few months. It was still in the construction stages. He only headed it about eight months, six or eight months. It was the planning stages rather than even construction. No, eventually they had to redirect the street cars around the wall, but at first, they went right straight through the ghetto because it was an integral part of the downtown.

So Zula--

Tell me when. OK, this is a continuation of our interview with Mr Julian Kulski. We were talking about you visiting

Zula in the ghetto. So that answers another question that I had, which was what happened to Zula. She was then forced with her mother to enter the ghetto.

After the 1943 Warsaw Uprising, I believe she was in the bunker with Anielewicz and they committed suicide in the last days of the Uprising, but I have no proof of it. That's just my conjecture, knowing her and her spirit, that she was in the underground inside the wall the way I was in the underground outside the wall.

But in 1942, Ludwig took me for a two day visit into the ghetto and he told me that he was taking me so that if he got killed there, I would be able to take out the information from inside the ghetto. And I was wondering at the time, if he was killed, why wouldn't I be killed, but I didn't say anything to the orders.

I went in and went through a secret underground passage through one of the buildings, and we met some Polish Jewish underground members who brought us some dirty clothes because we would be recognized right away in our outfits from the outside, so we put the rags on, and we were going to a place where Ludgwig was meeting some leaders of the Jewish underground.

What did you see when you emerged inside?

Well, it was suddenly hell. There were dead people on the sidewalks, children, and then I saw a German hunting, shooting innocent people on the street, pregnant women being kicked. It was just unbelievable. We had to hide. When he was shooting, we had to hide in a doorway over in an apartment building, and then we got there and Ludwig was asked to transmit through the Underground government to London, the information what happening to Warsaw Jews.

OK, what kind of information and what kind of requests--

Well, by that time, it was already train loads being taken to the gas chambers, and everybody knew. My father told CzerniakÃ³w what was happening and CzerniakÃ³w committed suicide, but the West didn't do anything to help, and there were desperate attempts. They asked the West to inform Germans that for every Polish Jewish life, there would be a German killed, prisoners of war and other German citizens, and they realized that it was an unrealistic request but it was a desperate move to help.

They asked to have the train bombed on the way to Majdanek, to Auschwitz. And also, they asked us for information how to build bunkers, for concrete and reinforced steel, so they could prepare for the uprising, and for arms. I know that my own company submitted 50, sold or gave 50 guns, to the Jewish fighters.

And then later on, I was in the Warsaw Fire Brigade and the Germans respected the Polish firemen because they needed it during the Allied bombing of Warsaw. The Polish firemen were very important, and the Polish Blue Police, some of them were collaborators, some were members of the Underground, so you couldn't depend on whether the firemen were under the--

According to German law, the police and the fire departments went under the police, under the Gestapo, under the SS. So the guy who destroyed the ghetto and murdered innocent-- destroyed the whole ghetto and the people inside was Stroop, JÃ¼rgen Stroop, and he was responsible for the police fire department. Once a year, there would be a parade of all the fire trucks and the firemen on it in the firefighting uniforms before him, and he was very proud of the Polish firemen. He didn't know that 80% of us were members of the Underground Army.

So when you were in the ghetto, there was the request of a life for a life? When you were in the ghetto, there was this request of a life for life because so many Jews were being killed indiscriminately?

Right, right.

There was a request for information on how to build bunkers.

Bunkers, and for arms.

And for arms, and you were able to supply them with 50-- what was it again?

50 pistols.

50 pistols, and that was later.

Yeah, it was later.

It was later.

And we were able to use the fire department trucks because the Germans would of course, if there was a fire in the ghetto, they would let us in through and then we could drop the information, come out. As a matter of fact, when I was in full fireman's uniform with my helmet, I was allowed to go walk through the city through the night after the police hour. And when we ran into German patrols, Wehrmacht patrol, they would salute. I would salute them. So it was a very good cover for us to carry arms and attack Germans.

Was this the only time after the ghetto was sealed off that you were in the ghetto, or did you go in to deliver those 50 pistols?

No, no, I had nothing to do with that.

OK.

No, no, as I said the first time, I would just go to see Zula.

OK, and so I want to go back to this again. When I asked earlier not what happened to her at the end, but how is it that she had to go to the ghetto when she was half and half?

Well, because they were considered-- everybody was considered Jewish up to the third generation. If you had one grandfather who was Jewish, you were Jewish as far as the Germans were concerned. That's I was saying that the Germans knew that my father's grandmother was Jewish, he would have been considered a Jew by the Nazis.

I see. And so for Zula and her mother, of course, who was Jewish, it's a given.

Right.

But, and this is where the juxtaposition for me sounded so confusing, that she is forced but Ludwig isn't. Do you see what I'm saying? She cannot have a choice of living outside. This is someone who doesn't know the war, who doesn't know the situation, and why?

There were over, I would say, between 100,000 and 140,000 Jews in Warsaw that survived either being hidden--

Outside the ghetto.

Outside the ghetto.

Outside the ghetto, OK.

I mean, the reason all three of them, Ludwig was killed on the street in a fight with an SS man, Stefa ended up in Auschwitz after we were arrested, and Ola committed suicide after she was arrested in the church with the false papers and arms, and was tortured and committed suicide with a suicide pill. We all had them. In case we couldn't stand the pain anymore, we would commit suicide. I had it in my ring.

You wore a ring?

Yeah, I had a silver ring that was empty inside, and I had the cyanide capsule in it, when I was arrested when I was 13.

OK, I think we'll break now and we'll talk about all of these incidents after.

Ready? OK. This is a continuation with our interview with the Holocaust Museum with Mr Julian Kulski, and before the break, we were talking about the guns and the armaments that were brought in by the fire brigade to the ghetto. But you were not involved in that, and from what I understand, it was the one and only time you were in the ghetto after the wall was secure, that is, people could not go in. Did you ever go there again?

Not after the visit in '42 with Ludwig Berger. That was the last time.

That was the last time.

Last time.

How did things proceed for you after you left? What kind of activities were you involved in?

Well, I continued training, military training, maneuvers outside of the city, learning about new arms, explosives, but soon after in 1943 in the middle of the summer, there was a wedding of two Polish Underground officers in one of the downtown churches, and there were about 100 underground officers attending it, which is against all the rules of conspiracy, which they broke, and somehow the Germans learned about it and at the height of the marriage ceremony, the SS entered the church and arrested 89 people.

And among them was Ola Sokol with whom I lived, with Stefa and Ludwig, and she had false papers, German papers under Evy Keller, and guns. So as soon as we found out that she was arrested, Ludwig left the apartment and he sent me home to my parents, and so only Stefa and Marik and the grandmother were left.

But 10 days, two weeks later, I found out through our underground sources that Ola was tortured so badly that she committed suicide and died rather than tell the stories, so I felt I was safe, and in the morning, I went back to the apartment. Ludwig stayed away, fortunately.

Well, in the afternoon, I was in the living room and I heard banging on the front door, and Stefa said, who is it. And I heard, Gestapo, open the door or we shoot through. And I was on the first floor, and there was a balcony, and I was going to jump into the park, the public park, and escape. So I opened the door, the French doors, and I looked behind me and the Gestapo men already had a machine gun pointed at me, and said, [GERMAN], so I had to surrender.

I was arrested on the spot. They did a check on the apartment. The little boy was playing over the secret safe where the arms were kept, and so they took me and Stefa and took me downstairs, and they opened big Mercedes cars, three of them, and they put us in and took us to the Pawiak Prison.

What's the Pawiak Prison?

Pawiak Prison was an old Russian prison in the center of Warsaw, huge, built to take care of Polish freedom fighters of the 19th century. This was a huge, huge, huge, prison, and there were double gates, and the cars went through the first gate. They closed the gate behind and suddenly there were all kinds of horrible German shepherds that were trying to attack us, growling, and they were all fed on human flesh, on the prisoners' flesh.

So I will never forget the sight of these dogs, and I love dogs, but these were just wild animals, horrible. And then finally, they opened the outer gate, took us in, and there they put us on one side of the room, the men, on the other side the women, and I was standing, my face to the wall, and I tried to make contact with Stefa across the room.

I turned my head and one of the Germans hit me on the wall, and my nose started bleeding. So that was the first time I knew that I lost my freedom. Then they took me and took everything away from me and shaved my head, and being a 13-year-old, all I was worried about is how am I going to go on dates. Instead of worrying about my life, I was worried about my hair.

It just shows the mentality of a 13-year-old. Then I was thrown into a cell which is supposed to be for one person, and there were six of us all together. It was jammed, and at night we had to sleep like sardines across the room. In order to turn over, we had to all do it at the same time because we were just stuck wall to wall. And then in the middle of the night, you heard the execution squads on the outside and the cries of the people being shot and tortured.

There were all kinds of poor food, hardly any food. We were allowed to the bathroom once a day only for five minutes, so there was bucket in the corner, smelly. It was horrible.

Were you the youngest there, do you think?

I was definitely the youngest one, and of all the strange things I was selected by the adults to be the one to be a representative because every morning, the door opened and I had to report in German that six prisoners, all here, everything in order. It was very short, and then I had the door slammed in my face, but it was the same in a prisoner of war camp later. I don't know why. Being the youngest, they had the greatest faith in me that I would be honest about food, cutting bread.

The prisoners themselves had selected you?

The prisoners selected me, right, right.

And you speak German?

Very little, very little. Well, I had this German nanny but I didn't want to learn German. I hated her. But it turned useful. I understood more than I could speak, and I knew a few words. I knew enough to say that. And then one day, I was taken to the Gestapo headquarters for examinations, for torture, and we were in a prison van and I was with Stega, and we were able to finally agree on the same story so that each one of us would tell the same story about Ludwig and everything else. And that was the last time I saw her.

From there, she was sent to Auschwitz where she survived the war, but she didn't know that Ludwig was killed on the streets a few weeks later, so when she got to Poland it was a shock because the first thing she was looking forward to was to see Ludwig whom she was crazy about, and when she found out he was dead, she died soon after a few years later.

Really?

But I was taken and put into a cage, which we called a street car because it was a narrow room with about 16 so-called chairs, very uncomfortable wooden bench, and we had to sit back to the main corridor where the Gestapo men walked back and forth. And this was the beginning of the torture because at the end of the corridor were the torture chambers, and we could hear the cries of the prisoners being tortured.

And then they would put these people into the same room with us, women without breasts, with eyes cut out, with fingers pulled out, kind of inhuman. So you sat there for about four to eight hours without food, without all these things, and then the Germans were playing. They had the radio and they were playing German tunes and they were cooking steaks.

So you had all the senses which were starved after two weeks in the prison, and then two days with no food, and the music, the cries of being tortured, and the smell of the food and the music were just completely wretched. So by the time I was taken upstairs to one of the examination rooms, they asked me if I speak German. I said no, I didn't know a word, so they had to get a translator.

That was one thing that Ludwig prepared me, so that gave me time to come out with an answer, a lie, while the translator was translating it. My father did the same thing when he was arrested. And at first, they wanted to know my relationship with Ludwig, so I mentioned all the things. And I told them that I want to help them find him because I hated him.

And so they said, well, will you join us? I said, of course, anything to find him. And then they gave me a book full of pictures of freedom fighters, a very thick book, and made me look at each picture to see if I recognized anybody. And I recognized one, and he said, who is it. Where did he go?

I said, well, he's in my cell in Pawiak Prison. When they knew I was making fun of them, I got really hit behind the head.

Was he in your cell?

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

And excuse me, for those of us who don't know, why would that be making fun if you recognized this person?

Well, because they felt that I wasn't leading them to the underground.

That's true,

I didn't. I didn't. I just picked out somebody I knew, but there was a picture of Ola, there was a picture of Ludwig. There were pictures of other members that I knew, that I didn't say anything. Then they started beating me, and after beating, they again started talking me into it, that if I just lead them to Ludwig, I can join the Gestapo, and I will be well off and I'm so young. It's a pity.

And there was bad guy and good guy routine. Then they made me look through the secret files to see if I'd find something that I would stop and be interested, which is amazing because I was being able to see all of the Polish and Jewish underground fighting organizations they had files on. But then towards the evening after all this beating and starvation and torture, they asked me where Ludgwig worked.

I said, well, he worked taking care of some gardens. So he took me to a map of the city, and they saw a building in the middle of the gardens and they said, what is it. I said, well, it's just a garden shed, but actually Ludwig had a German car there and some arms. So they pulled me up into the car. It was an evening. There were again two Mercedes, open cars with machine guns on the sides.

And I remember we went through the center of Warsaw. It was a beautiful, sunny day. And I was bald. I was starving and I could see the human, you know, the normal life, and almost felt like crying. And there were two ways to the garden. One was from the bottom, from the Vistula, and the one from the top, and I knew that if we came from the top, there was a gate and whoever was there could escape.

So we came up from the top and sure enough, the German car said Pol, Polizei, and they were recognized right away as a Gestapo car. And by the time we got down, somebody escaped. Ludwig wasn't there, but fortunately he took everything out of that building.

Beforehand.

And then they took me back and they had one more day of tortures, and then they sent me back to Pawiak Prison. And then about 2 and 1/2 weeks, three weeks later, they were calling out names, those to be executed, those to be sent to Auschwitz, and I was on the list to the Auschwitz.

Did people know at that point what Auschwitz was?

Oh, perfectly well. Everybody knew what Auschwitz was. It was a frightening name. My Uncle Norbert was murdered there in the first year in 1940.

Well, how did he get arrested? What happened with him?

Well, they arrested all the Polish leaders, university professors and the leaders of parties, and he was the leader of the Polish Socialist Party, so he was a public figure.

What was his name?

And he was arrested at the same time as my father.

I see. What was Norbert's last name?

Sorry? Barwitzki.

Barwitzki.

Norbert Barwitzki. And my father was also arrested, and my father was arrested for a different reason. During the siege of Warsaw in 1939, there was an American photo reporter by the name of Julien Bryan who came voluntarily three days after the siege and was taking pictures, movies. Most of these movies are right now in this museum. They were bought by the Holocaust Museum and restored, and my father took him around Warsaw taking pictures.

Well, a year later, somehow the Life magazine, which Julien Bryan's pictures occurred, got to the city hall and his seceretary gave him a copy of this Life magazine.

Your father.

And my father brought it home and hid it in the laundry closet. Well, during the next Gestapo search, they found the Life magazine and they were convinced that my father was a American spy. So this time it was extremely serious, not only that he might be a member of the Polish Underground government, which he was, but that he was an American spy.

So he was taken to Pawiak and thrown together with Uncle Norbert, so they spent about two days in prison together saying goodbye, and that was the last time my father saw Norbert. Nortbert went to Auschwitz. He helped organize an underground there and then he was killed there. But my father was released. My father was taken to a torture chamber, too, and told to take off all of his clothes. He knew that he was going to be beaten to death, and he was just in the process of taking off his pants as a senior Gestapo man passed through and recognized my father.

It was the same man that arrested my father in 1939, so he knew that my father was the mayor of Warsaw, and he said to the guys, don't beat him yet. Wait. And then my father knew that once they beat you up that badly, they would never let you go be alive because they couldn't let you out on the streets in condition like that. They didn't want people to know what they were doing. So that saved his life this time.

So the Gestapo who said delay, what made the delay into don't beat him at all.

Well, I guess he realized that he was the mayor of Warsaw and they let him go.

OK.

Because he was too important for the Germans. The Germans didn't have a way of running the city, and so my father had this unfortunate situation that he did his best in a terrible situation being endangered by the Gestapo and by the SS and also by the communist underground, which didn't know. They threw a bomb at his car while he was going to the city hall one day, and the Polish Underground had to notify the communist underground that my father was a member of the Underground government, so to desist.

But after that, my father stopped using the car and started driving in a droshky, in a horse-drawn vehicle, to show that he had nothing to be afraid of. So let's go back to your imprisonment. So there you are, and you're on the list to go to Auschwitz. What happens?

Well, evidently, somebody in the city hall went over to Leiss and told him that the mayor's son was being sent to Auschwitz, and my father refused to go and ask for my life because he felt that if he started asking for favors from the Germans, he would really be a collaborator and he would have to pay the price for it. But somebody, one of these directors, went to Leiss, and Leiss must have gotten in touch with Berlin and Berlin ordered the Gestapo in Warsaw to let me go.

Wow.

But when I was being released, I was sent up to the chief Gestapo man who was Colonel Hahn who was sitting behind the big desk in a big room up on the same building where the torture chambers were, and he was under a huge painting of Hitler, enormous paintig, full wall size, and there was my father and Leiss and my father's translator sitting back.

I couldn't say hello to them. They didn't turn around. But I got a lecture from Major Hahn. He said, I know you are a member of the underground. You were caught red-handed, but General Leiss says that you are only 14 years old so we'll let you go, but next time we catch you, the devil himself is not going to save you.

Wow.

So then I was released, but they followed me everywhere I went in Warsaw because they thought that I would lead them to Ludwig.

Did you go home to your parents?

I went to my parents', right, to my parents' house, but they thought that I would lead them to Ludwig, so they send me to the country place outside of Warsaw where I spend about a month, and Ludwig came and visited us and that was the last time I saw him.

And what was this country place called?

Baniocha.

Baniocha.

Which was about an hour and a half by the narrow-gauge gauge railroad.

Let's just break for a second.

So you were sent to Baniocha. Now did your mother know of any of these things that were happening to you?

Well, she knew that I was in prison of course, and she saw me afterwards. There is a picture in the book of my mother's sister, younger sister Sasha, who hid the Katz family, and Ludwig supposedly with a new haircut, but he was 6'4" but the change in outlook then, it was just question of time when he would be-- and everybody begged him to leave the city and go and fight in the woods with the partisans, but he was so involved with the Underground in Warsaw that he didn't go.

And sure enough, he was caught in one of the regular street car searches. They saw the street car and he and his second in command started running off, and the SS men were running behind him and shooting machine guns, and finally he got to a house with a garden and he was jumping over a fence and one of the SS men got to him. He ran out of bullets so they started fighting hand to hand, and Ludwig tried to kill him, the German, by biting his throat through, but another German came through and shot him point blank.

So when I found out that he was killed there, I ran over there, and his body was removed but his brain was still lying on the ground, and I just swore that I would revenge him, and every time I killed a German during the uprising, I would say, it's for you. I loved that man.

I wanted to ask you, what did he mean to you?

Oh, he was everything. He was my best friend. He was my teacher. He was my Scoutmaster. He was my captain. He was the one who got me into the army, and whose ideals-- he was a great orator and he knew Polish literature by heart, and on every national holiday, he would line us up, all 150 in the company, in a line, and he would orate the poems of Mickiewicz and Slowacki in Polish, just to keep up our spirit, our national identity and our love of freedom.

So he was feeding us the things which we as kids needed most, love of Poland.

I can't imagine what that must have felt like to see somebody you loved and only part of them there.

He is buried in the military cemetery now, and every time I go to Warsaw, I go and lay some flowers on his grave.

So his body was discovered and was buried.

Yes, his body was taken to a police barracks, and then I guess they were buried somewhere in a place, and after the war, he was found and buried with military honors. After I found out he was killed, I and another boy spent the night tearing up the street signs on the street that he lived, which was [PLACE NAME] Street, and we repainted it with his pseudonyms and hanged them up, so we renamed the street in his honor.

What were some of his pseudonyms?

He had three, MichaÅ,, Michael, Hardy and Goliat.

Wow.

He had to change three times to maintain his secrecy. The last one was Goliat, and Goliat is the one that I took over after I was arrested. Before that, it was Chojnacki but I changed it to Goliat in his honor.

Well, after you were released, did you have a chance to talk to your own father about what had gone on in prison or anything?

A little. I think he knew. He went through it himself so he knew perfectly well what I went through. It didn't take much. I talked a lot to Ludwig when he came over and spent the night in the country. All he wanted to know, what happened to Stefa and how she was, and he congratulated me for not spilling the beans under the torture. He proposed me for a medal he was just proud of me.

What kind of activities did you get involved with after these things?

Well, after this, I was just so full of hate and a desire for revenge on these beasts, on the Germans that killed my friends in the ghetto and outside, that I went in search of disarming German soldiers. And I and other guys were able to get some old guns. I had an old American Western Colt about this size, and we spent the whole night looking for Germans, individual Germans that we could catch and disarm without killing them, because for every German there were 20 to 100 Poles, innocent civilians, shot in the same place. It was mass rip--

And we found in the morning, we found downtown a sergeant, big sergeant with a beautiful gun on his side, getting onto the front of the streetcar which was Nur fÃ¼r Deutsche, only for Germans, and we followed him, but besides the sergeant, there were five other soldiers, regular soldiers with rifles. And they all got off at the railroad station, at the Danzig-Warsaw Railroad Station, near Å»oliborz, and we thought we would run down the steps, and hide under the viaduct and disarm him before the other soldiers came down.

Well, we faced him with both our guns and said, Haende hoch, or you're dead, and he instead of raising his hands, being a seasoned soldier, started opening up his gun and pulling out, so it was was question of us or them, and we both fired and he fell on his face, and he was the first German that I killed. And my initial reaction was they were supposed to be supermen, and yet they were human. You were able to kill them.

You know, as a 13-year-old boy, I was surprised, and then of course, we saw the four guys coming towards us, about 20 feet ahead of us, and they saw what was happening so we started running, and they took the rifles off and started shooting at us and we ran up the embankment near the ghetto walls and by the ghetto walls we got to downtown.

And then on the way back, we were told not to go through the station because the Germans were arresting people left and right, and the next day they killed 20 women and children on that spot. There is a sign and every time I go there, I feel responsible for the death of these poor people.

So that is something that's been a burden for you?

Yes, for your whole life. I mean, it wasn't my fault. It was a matter of life and death. It was war. But the results were something that very deeply-- first there was that boy and now the 20 women and children. And it was after that that my father sent me to the countryside again to try to hide me.

And then after that, how did life progress? What happened?

Well, then the commandos heard about my actions and I was able to join them, and the commandos had the advantage that they were responsible for carrying out the death sentence on Poles who sold Jews to the Germans, who were traitorous, who were collaborators. And so we had an opportunity to kill some Germans legally after that. It was, again, pretty horrible because we had to go into the homes, sometimes kill the family as well as the individual because they were well armed and they would defend themselves during the execution.

That's huge.

Then we were all praying that there would be an uprising, and the commandos were ordered in full under arms for 10 days before, and we were all, my whole unit, about 14 of us, housed in my father's house, because my father of course knew every day about it, that we were hidden there fully armed, and they used to bring food, big cauldrons of soup, once a day for all of us, and we couldn't wait to have the uprising.

And then on the 1st of August, we got orders to go and retrieve arms for the whole company from our secret place, and we were carrying it across one of the major streets and a German car, because they were expecting something, saw us and started firing at us, so the Warsaw Uprising was started by the six of us by accident. It was supposed to start at 5 o'clock in the afternoon and this was 2 o'clock. So the Germans were able to bring tanks.

And this was in the center city?

This was in the city, in Zoliborz in Warsaw.

So in your neighborhood?

In my neighborhood.

In your suburb area.

In my suburb. So this was where I spent the whole occupation and the whole battle, in Å»oliborz fighting. Around that I knew--

Yeah. So in other words, we're talking August 1st, 1944.

Right.

That's when the uprising starts, and you're saying that the entire time of the uprising, you stayed in your neighborhood?

Yes.

What kind of activities did you take part in?

Well, the first time I was fighting, I got my rifle which was a 1939 Polish rifle, and I was able to shoot across the street at the Germans while they were shooting at us. Then after they left, there was one wounded and one killed. We had to go around and get across another boulevard, and there was a tank standing and machine gunning us as we were jumping over, and this was the first day of the uprising that I got the wounded.

I got hit in my arm. It was something that not incapacitated me, because on the other side, there were nurses. They took care of it and I was able to continue fighting. Then that night, the commander of the section, of thr Zoliborz section, decided that the Germans knew already about it and they were winning, so he took us out into the Kampinos Forest, which was about 15, 20 miles outside of the city.

We marched all night, and then the next day, we got an order from the commandant of Warsaw, of the whole city, to return, and we had to return. On the return, we had to fight a very big battle with some German luftwaffer. They had the airport, military airport, to get back to our own homes, and we lost quite a few.

My commander was badly wounded. We had to leave him behind, and then we got home and the civilian population was very excited, and just like during the Ghetto Uprising, the Jewish Polish fighters raised the Jewish and Polish flags. Polish flags were flying from every home and we were welcomed by the civilians, and they helped us build barricades, so we built the barricades.

And we mounted the front lines, and the Germans, when the Germans started attacking, we would let them go behind our positions. They were stopped at the barricades, and then they would get into fire from our buildings and from behind the barricade, so they lost quite in the first few days. They lost a lot of soldiers.

The Germans did.

The Germans. Well, also, I took a prisoner, one of the Germans, and the Germans were bullies, and when they were in power they were heartless, but when they were captured they were cowards. And this old guy that I captured, he started kissing my feet begging me not to shoot him, and I said, well, we don't shoot prisoners, but they knew that they shot us because they didn't consider us army. They considered us bandits, so there was no way of surrendering. We knew that we had to fight or kill ourselves because the way they killed us would have been a much more cruel way.

Yeah. What happened to this German prisoner? Well, I took him over to the back and he together with other German prisoners did some helping in the military kitchen and digging up passages.

Trenches.

Trenches. They were employed, and he always smiled at me when he saw me. He was an Austrian and he was trying to tell me he was not a Nazi. He had a big family. Please don't kill him. I had no respect for him.

I can't get over it. You're a 14, 15-year-old boy, and yet you're not. You've been fighting for a while.

We would kill the Gestapo men, we would kill the SS men, but we did not shoot the Wehrmacht, the regular army. We would take them prisoners.

So the Uprising lasted several weeks.

63 days.

63 days. Two months.

And the Germans, Hitler issued an order that he wanted to have every man, woman, and child in Warsaw killed in return, and he wanted Warsaw leveled to the ground the way he leveled the ghetto after the uprising. So the Germans came in and took the order, and in the first day, they killed almost 100,000 innocent women, children, babies. It was a massacre.

It was so bad that the German command had to stop it because they knew they would not win the war, the battle, if they continue spending this ammunition and the effort of killing innocent people rather than fighting us. So after that, they continued shooting people, and then in 63 days, every day they murdered the number of people that died in 9/11 in that building. That's 3,000 people a day for 63 days.

It was medieval in extent. And then after, we had to surrender. They continued leveling the city to the ground so by the time the Russians came in the following year, Warsaw was just a pile of bricks.

Tell me me you said you were in Zoliborz the whole time.

Right.

Did you ever venture into the city and come back? What you knew of it is what you were hearing from other people who had been there?

During the uprising, it was just what I heard from people who had escaped from other parts or who came through the sewers. The sewers were the connections, and a month later after that in the middle of the Uprising, my father came across the sewers to Zoliborz from the center and he almost drowned. He slipped and the Germans set up barriers, wire barriers, and his body ran into the barrier and his leg was completely cut off by that.

So at that point in '44, is that when the Uprising happened? He stops being the mayor of Warsaw? He resigned. On the fourth day of the uprising, he resigned because he felt that he could no longer administer the city, which was divided into various sections by the Germans. There were five sections of freedom fighters separated by German army, and so he felt there was no need and he asked to be relieved, he and his two vice presidents.

Now, would have they been arrested?

By whom?

The Germans.

No, this was when the Uprising--

So he was in the territory that was controlled by--

By Poles.

Got it, got it. I didn't realize.

He was on the front line. The city hall was on the front line. It was opposite the opera house.

OK, and so he was going through the sewers to get out from that central--

At the end of the month when that whole section of the ancient city was destroyed, the army went to the central city through the sewers and he was able to go through the sewers to Zoliborz to find out if I was alive.

And your own family home, was it still standing?

Yes, yes.

OK.

In the last few days of the uprising, the Russians sent weapons and ammunition from the low-flying aircraft without parachutes, and one of the big bags of ammunition came into my bedroom. Fortunately, it didn't explode, but it ruined the bedroom.

So through the ceiling?

Sorry?

It came through the ceiling?

It came through the side wall kind of near the window. They were flying these First World War planes, double planes, very, very low. They would turn the engine off and they would fly very low but without the parachute. Either it was too low or they wanted to have everything destroyed on the ground but pretend that they were helping.

So you knew that the Russians were close by?

Oh, we could see them across the river.

Really?

Because Zoliborz is on the river, and on the other side of the river was the Red Army and the Polish Communist Party Army, and they tried to come a few times but they were not trained for city fighting, and the Germans had such advanced equipment that most of the soldiers who came by boat across the river were drowned, killed.

But in our Uprising in 1944, there were more Jewish Polish freedom fighters than there were in the Jewish Ghetto, which is very little known.

Yeah.

In my own company, there was a whole section of about 24 freedom fighters from the ghetto, and they didn't go into the prison camps but they hid because they were afraid that they would not be treated-- well, in the last day of the Uprising, the Germans decided that they would treat us as combatants and gave us Geneva rights. We didn't believe it so it was a terrible experience to have to surrender. We were ready to die but we were not ready to go and lose our freedom.

How did the tide turn against you? Because it sounds like in the beginning, you were winning.

Well, only one in 10 had any guns at all. Nine were with their hands. They were supposed to get arms from the Germans, so they were slaughtered right at the very beginning. We did win with tremendous losses, but we won for two months, and the Germans that captured us and who fought in Stalingrad said that the Battle of '44 in Warsaw was worse than Stalingrad. It was house to house, room to room fighting.

It was hard on them and hard on us, but we had the advantage because it was our city. We knew every corner, particularly in Zoliborz, and we could defend ourselves better than attacking.

Do you remember the names of any of these Jewish Polish fighters with you?

No, I don't. I have it at home in my books.

Did everybody still go by a pseudonym at that?

Oh, yes. Everybody went by a pseudonym. It was only in the prison camps that we were able to declare our real names.

So tell me, how did the surrender happen to you?

Well, I was wounded again the first day and then I was wounded more seriously on the last day. About a week before the end of the Uprising, I got pneumonia which then turned into TB, and I was very, very weak, and my father was wounded in the sewers with gangrene in his leg, so we lay in our house.

But when the German tanks started approaching, my father forced me to get out of bed although I had a huge fever and I could hardly walk, and we walked-- he took me back to the front lines because he felt I would be safer in the company as a soldier than being caught as an insurgent with a gun, and wounded, because they were shooting all the wounded prisoners.

They didn't take prisoners. They were killing them, hospitals and everybody. So he took me there and the whole city was in flame. It was extremely hot and stinking, and I was given an anti-tank weapon which I could hardly handle, and I was firing at one of the tanks, and I hit the tank and the tank started firing but there was another tank standing by, and he saw the window from which I fired, and he turned a gun and fired at my window. And just before he fired, I jumped out. This was second story. And I busted my leg, broke my leg.

And that's why you were--

It still hurts. That was my second time. You were wounded.

But I was flying down as the gun, the shell--

The shell was going above my head, so it was worth it to survive. And then we were supposed to fight our way to the Vistula and the Russians were supposed to send boats to pick us up, and of course they didn't and the Germans knew about it, and that's why they forced our command, our general, to surrender, because we knew that we would be all killed by the artillery and tank fire before we reached the Vistula, even.

So you were on a broken leg and still with pneumonia.

Right.

Or still there. Did you say goodbye to your father at that frontline?

No. No, my father said goodbye as he took me two days before that, and he told me at that time that if I survived the prison camp which was doubtful because of my pneumonia and TB, I should not go back to Poland until Poland is free and independent, but try to go to London to his brother who was in the Polish Embassy in London.

So that's what I did, and I was in the camp about five days before the end of the war. It was an international camp. It was the largest prisoner of war camp in Germany, Stalag X1-A, Altengrabow located between Magdeburg and Berlin.

So in the heart of Germany.

In the heart of Germany, East Germany.

Yes, East Germany.

Right, and of course, to be liberated by the Russians, but I didn't know that, but five days before, at the camp gates arrived hundreds of trucks, American army trucks, to pick up American prisoners of war and the English, and the Western Allies. It was an international camp. Just leave Poles and the Russians and the Slavs behind to be liberated by the Russian Army.

And the war was still going on. I could never figure out how they were allowed to cross the line because the line was on the Elbe, and this was quite a halfway bit to Berlin. And evidently, what happened was that the American army sent some parachute jumpers to jump into the camp to prevent the Germans from murdering the prisoners of war before they were liberated.

Well, they were all caught and they were sent to the commanding officer, German commanding officer, and they explained to him that if he allows the American trucks to cross the line, they can liberate all of the prisoners and the Germans didn't want obviously to have the Western prisoners fall into Russian hands the way that the Western allies didn't, and so he agreed to it, and they were allowed to go through the German lines all the way to the camp and arrive at the camp and start unloading American prisoners.

And I had made friends with a Polish American from Chicago, and I was standing at the gate. The Germans didn't care. The gates were open, and he of waved me in, and I couldn't walk so they got me onto the truck. And the truck drivers were supposed to be unarmed. They were supposed to be Red Cross, which they were not. And boys will be boys. They all had machine guns above, and I remember they stopped to shoot a deer.

And then they disarmed a couple of German officers in one of these little towns. We went about 75, 80 miles an hour to these little, narrow German towns, and we got to the other side of the river. Well, they still carried me into the barracks and the next day, we had about two, three days, and we started walking, or rather they carried me. They wanted to take me as an American prisoner of war and smuggle me to America, and I said, no, I explained with my hands because I didn't speak English that I wanted to get to London.

So they thought, oh, this kid is really crazy. He doesn't want to go to America. But there were a couple of British Tommies walking by, and they explained that this guy, this kid was crazy but he wants to go to London. So they took me under their arms and took me to their camp, and then they had the problem because the following day, they were going to be interviewed by the British intelligence to make sure that people like me don't get through.

So they decided to put me into one of the uniforms, which was a [? Western ?] uniform, and they gave me the name William Jones, and then they bandaged my throat so that I was shot through and lost my voice. And that's the way they carried me through the colonels and the generals who were interviewed individually. Each one of the prisoners was interviewed to make sure that only the proper English prisoners got through, so.

That's amazing.

They saw this poor guy, the kid that could stand by that was a veteran of a battle in Africa, North Africa, and they saluted me. They passed me through. Then we got onto the trucks and we went to Belgium, and that was the victory date. It was five days later after my liberation, and we got clean there and we got--

Did you speak Polish with anybody?

No, no. There were no Poles. I was the only one who was [INAUDIBLE], so there was just little language, little German. And we learned how to get together without using the language. And it was victory parade and roses being thrown at us, and we were deloused because we were all full of sickness. I weighed 70 pounds. I was skin and bones and I couldn't walk. And the next day, they put us on liberators and sent us to England.

And do you remember the date?

Well, Victory Day was the 8th of May, wasn't it? 8th of May. I escaped on the 3rd of May. It was a Polish national holiday, Constitution Day, and the 8th, five days later, was when Germany surrendered. That's why I'm saying that five days before, they allowed American trucks through to show how would the Germans-- they would want to rather surrender to the West than to the Russians.

Of course.

But of course the plane full of these young Englishmen, Scotsmen, Irishmen, singing "All the Way to Tipperary." They were happy, and they were saying, when we get to Oxford, there will be girls. And they haven't seen women for years, and they were very naughty. They said, well, you know, when you get there, there would be women Air Force girls to meet you, and there would be an Air Marshal and there would be a 'God save the King" band, and you have to thank for the liberation.

And they said, it's only one short word. Well, they taught me that word, short, four-letter word, and I got down the steps. I was the first one, and these two pretty girls, and I turned with a big smile and repeated it. They dropped me like on the tarmac and these three guys were sitting there and laughing their heads off.

What was the first letter of that word?

Sorry? F.

F, got it.

What else?

Of course, of course.

But after that, they took me to a barrack and I asked for a a British intelligence officer and I asked for asylum, and next day they sent me by Red Cross wagon, because I couldn't walk, to Scotland, where I was admitted into the Polish Army in Britain.

So until that point, you hadn't spoken Polish to anybody since being liberated in GrabÃ³w?

No, no, no, no.

And you got into the country, and even British intelligence which had been there in Germany to prevent someone like you from going, at that point when you got there, they didn't send you back.

No. A, they didn't send back political-- you know, I asked for political asylum. But also, I was a Polish soldier, therefore I was an ally, and there was a Polish Army headquarters in Scotland. So that's where they sent me, and I was inducted into the Polish Army there.

And you had no papers with you?

I had no papers whatsoever. I just filled in, so I was able to fill in my real age, and then I sent a cable to the embassy, to my uncle, and I was released from the camp about a week later and went to live with them for a while.

So tell me, did you ever see your father again?

I didn't see my parents for 15 years. You know, I was 15 when I left and I didn't see them until I was 30.

Wow.

The first time, I was doing some school buildings as an architect in Turkey, and I stopped by in Poland in 1960. So I left in 1944 and I didn't see them until 1960.

But they survived.

But they survived, and I was in constant letters, almost weekly letters with my father, and I've got all these letters. I just passed them on to the museum in Warsaw because somebody is writing a biography of my father. They're also building a memorial for him.

Tell me, one part that we skipped in this sorry was from the time you were captured to your transport to the prisoner of war camp and what your experience was there, so I'd like to go back a little bit. And tell me, you were sick, you had pneumonia, you had a broken leg. But what happened after you had to surrender and what happened? What was your experience from that moment until GrabÃ³w?

I broke up my gun rather than surrendering it, and then we were marched off and put on trucks and sent to a temporary camp outside of Warsaw. And I remember the Gestapo men going around the camp looking like they would like to murder us but they were not allowed inside. And then they were put a on cattle train, and we were prisoners of the same tank regiment.

It was a-- oh, I can't remember. It's an elite German tank regiment and the general in charge gave us a pep talk, how many tanks we have killed, how many soldiers of his, what wonderful soldiers we were.

An enemy general saying this?

The German, he was being a-- he was an ex-cavalry officer, and he knew a Polish general from the Olympic games in Berlin and they were friends. So he tried to be very straightforward, but he said if we tried to escape from the train, then we would of course be shot, and those German soldiers that survived the battle were going on home leave on the same train, so they were our guards.

How did they behave towards you?

They behaved very well but I was dying and sick. I just disgraced myself in the thing, and I'm surprised that-- if they could, they would have thrown me out of it. I think I was so sick, I couldn't sit, and I couldn't stand, and there was no place to sit down. And it was a cattle train, like the same trains that they took people to gas chambers, and they wouldn't--

I remember we stopped in Berlin. There was a big Allied air raid and so that pleased us enormously. And then we got to the camp and they didn't have any space. The camp was so full, and it was rainy, it was cold, was wet, so I had to spend about two or three nights on the ground.

And you were already sick.

And I was already sick. So I was pretty much dying when some English nurse found me and they took me to a TB house, so called hospital, and we didn't have any beds. It was just the same wooden benches as any other concentration camp in a prisoner of war camp. The only difference between concentration camp and a prison camp was that they tried to kill you with not feeding you, so it was starvation, and hard work. They would send you to coal mines and stone quarries, and you lasted about a week.

But because I had TB and I was dying, they didn't send me to work, and that's how I survived. And once I got out of being sick, I went specially to another barrack where they had certain diseases of skin, and I got it myself. So that was very unpleasant, very horrible, but that kept me from going to-- so I survived but I was skin and bones at the end, and depressed, and I really wanted to die there. It was horrible.

OK, then, let's go back to England now. At the very beginning of our interview, you said that your doctors in Britain--

Military doctors.

Military doctors, suggested that one of the ways you could heal is by writing down what happened to you.

Well, there were two things. One was the physical. They didn't know how to take care of escaped prisoners of war, and they put me on a normal diet, eggs, rich milk and everything. The result was that my body turned into a huge carbuncles. I just couldn't absorb rich food and it almost killed me with the rich food.

But the worst thing was the psychological. I had nightmares. I would keep on fighting in the middle of the night. I would end up standing up on my bed, and I threw the side lamp in the corner because I thought I was throwing grenades, and I was in no condition to go into normal life let alone any kind of education, so the doctor suggested that I write down my memoirs in the form of a diary.

And I sat down. I was very fortunate to be invited. I had very bad relations with my uncle. My uncle was a completely different man from my father. He was 10 years younger. He never fought in any war. He was a very comfortable, childless couple, lived for themselves, and just a real diplomat, a diplomat's easy life. So when I arrived, he blamed me for the Warsaw Uprising, and I'd lost my friends and my whole city, my whole family, and they wanted to adopt me.

So we didn't get along, but fortunately there was a English aristocrat who was a member of parliament, a woman called Lady Ida Copeland, who was a member of parliament in 1935, visited Warsaw with a group of British MPs and was entertained at the city hall by my father. So when the word got through to the British government that the son of the president of Warsaw arrived in such a terrible shape, she invited me into her palatial estate in Cornwall.

And so I found myself from hell in heaven. I was met at Truro in Cornwall by a chauffeur with a Rolls-Royce, and I was taken to this gorgeous house right on the waterfront with hundreds of acres of land. The family was the couple in China, the famous China, and she was very interested in Polish affairs. She was a good friend of Ignacy Paderewski, and she put me in the same bedroom that he had with a view of the ocean.

Tell people who is Ignacy Paderewski.

Ignacy Paderewski was the great Polish pianist and the Prime Minister in the First World War.

So you say you suffered from nightmares.

Right.

What kind of personality did you have at that point? How had you been changed? How were you traumatized?

I had no patience. I had no patience with other people's problems because I felt they were completely ridiculous and unimportant in comparison to what I went through and what my friends, Zula and Ludwig and everybody else went through. And when they complained about the weather or complained about the clothes or complained about anything, I had no patience and I was very, very difficult to live with for that reason, because after all, everybody's problem is a big problem, but at that time, I didn't realize.

And I went through at least through my first marriage that I wasn't a very good husband, and went through what now everybody recognizes as post-traumatic--

Stress disorder.

Stress syndrome. But in those days, nobody knew, so they almost killed me with good food, and they didn't recognize my problems. But I was lucky because Lady Copeland became my fairy godmother. She not only-- well, when I arrived there, I arrived in my battle dress and my duffel bag. When I got to the bedroom, there was a black tie ready and the regular clothes, so she bought shoes, and every night we would dress for dinner.

This was still-- it was sixty-room house with some beautiful antiques and beautiful furniture and interesting people, and at breakfast time, we would just help ourselves. We had a big buffet, and that's where I got all the rich food that almost killed me. But in the morning and early afternoon, I would write my story down, and then she would take me for rides, and she was very involved in social life. And I almost always went with her in her Rolls-Royce driving around.

And I remember one day on the radio of the Rolls-Royce came through information that Winston Churchill lost the elections, and she burst in tears because she was a very close friend of Churchill's, and that's the only time that I was able to take her into my arms, the old lady, and try to cheer her up. But she didn't.

After I left and went back to London, she arranged to have me go be admitted to the top elite school in Northern Ireland, the Eton of Northern Ireland, and I spent a year and a half there being a normal schoolboy.

Amazing. Amazing. How could that happen?

Well, the headmaster and the masters all knew my story, but on purpose they didn't allow me to get involved with it. So I was on the crew. I did all the sports and I learned English, of course. I excelled in English literature. I had problems with mathematics and physics, chemistry, but I was very good in history and in English. I was a top student.

And then I got my Oxford and Cambridge school certificate, and I had the choice of what I was going to become, a lawyer, doctor or architect. I wanted to be a brain surgeon, but in order to get into a school of medicine, you had to learn Latin and I was just learning English and that didn't appeal to me, so I decided to become an architect, and then I was admitted to Oxford next year.

This would be what year?

Well, I got there in 1945. I stayed through-- I graduated at the end of 1946 with Oxford and Cambridge school certificate. It was 1947, so 1947, '48.

That you entered Oxford?

For not quite a year. I was a very rebellious student still, and I didn't like the traditional curriculum, and I was thrown out because instead of doing a house for a British ambassador in Athens, I was doing Frank Lloyd Wright's house in Arizona. So I left, and then I got my visa and came to America.

Well, first of all, I want to go back a little bit with your schooling. For somebody who had had no formal schooling throughout those very formative years of middle school and high school gymnasium, as it would be in Europe, how is it that only a year and a half schooling got you up to college level? That's an amazing achievement.

Well, not only the college level. Never went to college.

I went straight to university.

No, to enter the-- master's degree.

You bypassed the bachelor's degree.

To graduate school.

You went to graduate school.

To graduate school, so I had kindergarten two years, and then I had a year and a half of high school, and then I went to graduate school. And my feeling is that so many years are wasted in college. The high school is at a high level and the high school in England was excellent. It was at least second year of college if not third. So when I got to Yale, they wanted--

Well, there's another funny story if you want to hear about it. When I was still at Oxford School of Architecture, I applied to three schools in America, to Harvard, Yale, and another school. And Yale was the one who showed interest in me, but they asked for the credit hours from Oxford, so I went to the Dean of the School of Architecture in Oxford and Dr. Rice, and I said, well, here is the letter. Can you write a letter and tell them how many credit hours?

And he said, well, these Americans are crazy. You know that you are here working seven days a week, 12 hours a day, and he added it all up in seven hours, and I had more credit hours than a PhD. So when I got to Yale, they wanted to put me in the last year of graduate school.

Oh my gosh.

I had to convince them that I didn't learn anything at Oxford. I insisted on repeating the first year, and it was the best decision I made.

Oh my goodness.

But I was a scholarship student. I had no money.

Did you have any family in the United States?

Well, I had my uncle but I had no contacts with him.

That meant your father's brother from London?

Right, he ended up as a professor at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, but we broken relations altogether. We just couldn't get along, so he didn't help me at all. And then coming over on the Queen Mary, I met an American girl and a year later I married her, so I became an American citizen very quickly, and we were married through Yale Graduate School, and had children.

How many children did you have?

Two.

And why did you leave the UK for the United States?

Why did I leave the United Kingdom?

Correct.

Well, I think, one was an architectural reason. I didn't like traditional architecture. I wanted to do modern architecture and America beckoned. From the library and everything, I saw Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Kahn and the great American architects who are here. Second, I felt that I wanted to become a full citizen of a country. I knew I couldn't go back to Poland because it was under Russian occupation, and I knew that I would have a better chance to become an American than a British citizen, but my British friends felt that I was making a big mistake and they were very sorry to see me go.

But when I arrived here, I realized how lucky I was in England. A, I was part of the elite. I had veteran's benefits. The government paid for my education at Oxford and here I arrived with five doors in my pocket and without knowing anybody. Again, I went to Uncle, but we couldn't get along so I left. Then I arrived in Boston wit five dollars in my pocket. I couldn't find work.

I went to try to find work as a stevedore and they laughed me off, so I was starving for about a month. And finally I got to Cape Cod where my future wife lived and I became a waiter, and I was trained and I started saving money and that paid for the first year of Yale.

Amazing, amazing. In some ways, you've answered this question in part, but how did what you experience shape you? What kind of a person did it make you?

Well, physically, if something doesn't kill you, it makes you stronger. You probably know from the people who were in Siberia that didn't die, they became stronger, the climate, the conditions. And particularly during the growing up years, development years, physically become stronger.

Also having experienced all the difficulties, you become much stronger as a person and you don't allow anything to keep you from your career goals. So I knew what I wanted to be and I was able to do it and conquer all the difficulties. And I think that's all thanks-- sorry?

Did the nightmares go away? Did the nightmares go away?

Mostly, yes. And I have kept it out by writing about it, by sharing this with other people to prepare American kids for life, and I find that very satisfactory and I have made a lot of friends.

When you met your family again, your parents-- and I take it your sister must have stayed in Poland, is that right?

Yes.

That would have been 1959, 1960?

Right.

In those years.

The first time.

The first time.

Did you have the opportunity to find out and talk about the things that you couldn't talk about during the war years?

Some. I met Stefa who was straight out of Auschwitz with her number on the leg, and I bought some flowers. I took it, so I talked with Stefa about Ludwig and those things, and I talked to my parents, but since we were in constant correspondence I knew what was happening there and they knew about my life. But it was great getting back.

But Warsaw was not the same place, and the thing which I really missed was the Jewish section of Warsaw, because it was completely destroyed and never rebuilt. So the place where there is the Jewish Memorial, the Jewish History Museum now, these were residential streets with beautiful architecture, and it's all gone. And so I get lost in that part of the city, the old city and certain monuments.

And Zoliborz, the place that I was brought up, has changed very little.

Really?

Yeah.

Does your family house still stand.

Well, it stands but they had to sell it during the war because my father's salary was so inadequate. It lasted only for five days of the month. The rest of the time, my mother had to bring in food and sell it on the black market, so my mother had to sell all the jewelry and then finally they had to sell the house with the understanding that we could live until the end of the war, but they used the money to pay off the debt on the house and bought a country house where my mother had a garden.

Were there any actions against your father or for your father after the country went communist given that he had a prominent position?

That's a very good question and being asked all the time. Yes, my father was offered ministerial positions in the communist government which he refused. So he lived in a worker's house, a tiny little place in real poverty, but he never of course joined the communists, so he was an enemy of the state. They knew about it, but fortunately, before the war, he was involved as vice president building a lot of workers' housing, and the socialists who were in the first communist government remember his contributions for social welfare to the people.

And one of them became his protector, and he not only protected his life but the whole family. So he did whatever he could. He didn't last in his job very long, but he was well placed, a high government official and he was able to save them.

So that meant that-- OK, we'll stop for a minute.

We're rolling? OK. So we were talking about post-war and that your father had a protector in the Socialist Party which at first was allied with the Communist Party in Poland.

Right.

What was this gentleman's name?

Stanislaw Szwalbe.

Szwalbe.

Szwalbe. And for a short time, he was the Marshal of the Senate, so his position was-- but then after Stalin's death, GomuÅ‚ka took over and he was a private citizen, but he still was able to have enough power to save my father from jail.

I see. Did he also arrange for a place for him to live?

Well, he couldn't do much. There was so little housing and the only housing that was left were the very worker's houses, that my father and he worked on before the war, so that was where my father ended up.

And what kind of work did he do? What did he do when he worked?

My father worked in the Gdansk for a shipping company. And then he came to Warsaw and for the last few years, he worked in the rebuilding the housing in the city, and then he went, retired, and I was able to get him to come to America for a few weeks, few days, to visit me here.

OK. Is there anything else that you think we should talk about that we should explore here today in having discussed all these unbelievable years and unbelievable events that happened to you that you think is important for people to know about?

Well, I think it's important to know that freedom is not free, that you have to remember it on a daily basis. You have to teach this to the children so the history wouldn't repeat itself. And I'm afraid history does repeat itself. You can see that in what's happening in the world today, the Middle East, Ukraine, and I think that our children are being disadvantaged by not being educated properly about the Holocaust, about the Second World War, about the need to be on guard to save your independence.

Just because we had forefathers who fought in the revolution and made this country doesn't mean that we have to lower our guard and not defend it on a daily basis. I mean, we have things happening which shouldn't be happening, people being hurt where they shouldn't be hurt. And I think that for example the Scout movement, which I think is extremely important in training the character of the young people, is being maligned.

Many high school kids when they try to be patriotic are being discouraged or even thrown out of school for carrying flags or believing in God and things which are good and higher, and which will prepare them for-- and not spoiling the children.

I think it's a terrible thing just because the parents have an easier life, they make it so easy for the children that they go and look for satisfaction with drugs and smoking and sex and all kinds of bad things because they lack ideology, and I think they are starved for the ideology. And I find that when I talk to the groups of young people, they are just starved for my words because they don't get it at home. They don't get it in school.

So you'd say for values that are beyond themselves?

For values which they are not getting and they know that they should be getting.

I see. What about Poland's young people? Have you had an opportunity to talk to them?

Yes. There is a certain amount of the same thing because since independence, the ones who never encountered German or Russian oppression don't fully appreciate it. On the other hand, I think there's still enough adults and teachers who are teaching history, recent history.

For example, when I was there last month, I saw 100,000 young people doing a marathon on the day of the Warsaw Uprising. There were three days of festivities, theaters, plays, movies, three movies. We made enormous movies about the Warsaw Uprising, so that's always kept a debt together with the Solidarity movement, and Walesa himself says that Solidarity wouldn't exist if it wasn't for the Uprising, that the roots were in the fight for freedom and independence that we fought for in 1944.

So how do you make that direct connection? If the Uprising hadn't happened, why would Solidarity not happen?

Well, according to Walesa, the spirit of Polish history is the 19th century, first the Kosciuszko Uprising at the beginning of the 19th century, 1830, 1863, 1944, and then Solidarity in 1979, 1980. So this was something which was passed from father to son, from the grandfather to the grandson, and kept alive the will to live in freedom and not be satisfied to be a slave.

And that's why Walesa says in his introduction to my new book that if it wasn't for our actions in '44, he feels the Solidarity movement would not exist today and Poland wouldn't be free. He makes that very direct--

Connection.

And his own father was arrested and died at the age of 33, so he didn't know his father.

And what was it like at the 75th anniversary--

70th.

70th anniversary, excuse me, of the Uprising, and you saw all of the marathon and the celebrations and the commemoration of this, and you were there. How many people like you are still here who could see that?

Not many, mostly older and sicker, a lot in the wheelchairs. But the important thing was the way that the today's citizens treated us veterans. Taxi drivers refused to take fees. The restaurants were free. Hotels were free. It was just making us feel that they owe us a debt of gratitude, and it was very satisfying, and young people, for each one of us veterans, there was always a Boy Scout or a Girl Scout who would take each one under the arms, take us to the seats, sit down and look after us, bring us water. So we were well looked after.

I think that's a wonderful, fitting image and tribute, you know, with which to end our interview today. And with that, I would like to thank you, Mr. Kulski, for coming by, for sharing your story with us, for explaining the events and the experiences that you had and the bravery that you showed. So thank you very much.

Well, thank you for having me and I hope it will be helpful in the future generations.

I hope so too. And with that, this ends the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mr Julian Kulski or Julian Kulski on September 25th, 2014.

Thank you.