United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Eugene Chmielowski
January 31, 2015
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PREFACE

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EUGENE CHMIELOWSKI
January 31, 2015

Question: This is a **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mr. **Eugene – Eugene Chmielowski**, or **Eugeniusz Chmielowski**, on January 31st, 2015, in **Chicago**, **Illinois**. Thank you very, very much Mr. **Chmielowski**, for agreeing to meet with us today, and share some of your experiences. I'm going to start our interview by talking an awful lot about pre-war life, to get a sense of what the world was that you were born into, what are the people – who are the people, and what were the forces that helped shape you, before we come to the war years. So we'll start at the very beginning. Could you tell me, what was the date of your birth?

Answer: March 5th, 1929.

Q: And where were you born?

A: In **Lublin**, **Poland**.

Q: And what was your name at birth?

A: Same as it's now, **Eugeniusz Alfred –**

Q: Do you have a middle name?

A: **Alfred** –

Q: **Alfred –**

A: The medium is.

Q: – **Chmielowski**. What was your father's name?

A: **Adam**.

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Q: And your mother's?

A: **Sofia**(ph).

Q: And her maiden name?

A: **Dowkewich**(ph).

Q: **Dowkewich**(ph). Did you have brothers and sisters?

A: I got the sister. **[bell ringing]**

Q: Is she older or younger than you?

A: She was older by 16 years.

Q: Sixteen?

A: Yes.

Q: Wow, that's a long time. So what was her name?

A: **Lillian**.

Q: **Lillian**. So she was born in 1913?

A: Something like this, yeah.

Q: Something like this. So, your father, when wer – do you recall when he was born, what year he might have been born?

A: 1898.

Q: No. If you sister is born in 1913, your father must have been a little older.

A: I looked the documents, and it was 18 – nine – '89.

Q: Nineteen – 1889.

A: Eighty-nine, yes.

Q: Okay, so it was 1889, that would make sense then.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: So he was about 23, 24 when your sister was born.

A: Yeah.

Q: And your mother? Do you know when she would have been born?

A: Si – si – in 1892.

Q: Okay. So you were – I mean, they were quite eld – not elderly, but they were older when they had you.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Tell me about what your father's profession was.

A: My father was the officer in the Polish army, and he retired dru – early, at the age of 47, because at that time they wanted more younger people in the army. And he was a graduate of the so-called Russian West Point, with the number one vocation. And so he ret – he was ret – he re – he retired, and I had a great time with him, he used to walk in the park, on every Sunday in **Kovel** where I used to live, before I was deported. And he always was teaching Jewish university subject, like **ROTC**. So –

Q: At a Jewish university?

A: Yeah.

Q: Really?

A: There was a Jewish university in **Kovel**.

Q: What was it called?

A: Pardon?

Q: Do you remember what it was called?

A: Not the name itself, no.

Q: So, you say you were born in **Lublin**.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you live – did you spend your childhood there?

A: Probably – maybe – I remember when – 19 – 1935, I was still in **Kraśnik**, which was by **Lublin**. I was born in **Lublin**, obviously, in a hospital, but we lived in **Kraśnik**, where my father was some kind of a official for the Polish army, or so. **Kraśnik –** so in ’35, we’re still in **Kraśnik**. So probably from ’36, we – we moved to **Kovel**.

Q: Mm-hm. And is that far from **Lublin**?

A: Oh probably, I – maybe couple hundred miles.

Q: Okay. So, within – was it still in the same part of the country, then?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. And – and what was **Kovel**, was that a village, or a town?

A: No, that was town, that was town.

Q: Aw – about how many people? Do you know?

A: Offhand, probably 100,000 maybe, about. That I'm not sure of.

Q: Did your sister play a role in your growing up, or had she moved out of the house when you were born?

A: Well, she – well, she graduated from high school, she moved to **Warsaw**, she was studying there. So, I had the very brief relationship with her. And of course, with the age differential, little brother.

Q: Well, in some ways then, did you grow up as an only child?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Did your father talk about his military experiences as a young man, to you? Did he tell you about what his early military career was like?

A: Yes, he was talking that he was a f – go-got first lieutenant when he graduated from that – I call it the Russian West Point. And then when **Bolsheviks** took over, they escaped to **Russia**. They expec – escape to **Poland**, and his parents lived there. Also, he had a brother, so he lived in **Kovel**, but he was a doctor, so Russians didn't bother him.

Q: Okay. I want to go back to the time – the Russian West Point, was that within the Tsarist empire?

A: Yes.

Q: Was it outside of **Poland**?

A: **Kiev**, it was in **Kiev**.

Q: It was in **Kiev**.

A: Yeah.

Q: It was in **Kiev**. So he was at first inducted, or – into the Imperial Tsarist Army?

A: Yes.

Q: And did he fight in that army?

A: I don't believe that he fought in that army, because he joined – he joined Polish underground, and so on.

Q: In those – in the – during World War I?

A: Yeah, correct.

Q: And your mother, was she from **Lublin** as well?

A: My mother, I don't know exactly where she was born, but probably around **Żytomierz** or **Kiev**, in that area. And – and she was a registered nurse, and of course, during the – in **Poland** she didn't work, because my father is an officer, made very good salary. As a matter of fact, we had a full time servant, and he had –

he – he had – and we had the part time servant, and he had the orderly. Later, dis- discontinued orderly, but at one time, each officer had a –

Q: Had an orderly.

A: Yeah, that's right, so –

Q: Okay. How do you say orderly in Polish?

A: **Ordynans**.

Q: Okay, because another interview that I had this week, somebody was talking about an **ordynans**, and they couldn't think the word in English, and I didn't know what it was. And now I know. Thank you. Okay. So, to go back – so your mother was born in the territory of today's **Ukraine**.

A: Yeah.

Q: It if was **Żytomierz** or **Kiev**. And your father as well, or –

A: Yes, that's right.

Q: So they all came from the east, then.

A: **Vinnytsia** or something like that. As a matter of fact, his parents probably were deported by – by **Stalin**, because a lot of people from that area, **Vinnytsia**, **Żytomierz**, **Kiev**, were deported.

Q: You mean jer – before the world war – world – World War II?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: In 30s.

Q: In the 30s.

A: In early 30s, they were.

Q: Did he have any communication with his family? Because you were in **Poland**, and –

A: Not really, not really, th – the only communication, he was writing the Polish consulate in – in – in – about – asking about some of his papers, but I don't – I didn't see any postcards from – from his parents, so it, of course, when **Bolsheviks** took it over, probably i-if you are sending letters, they probably threw it in a round file. The circle file.

Q: So, did he talk much about his underground activities during World War I?

A: Well, he wasn't the bragging type, he just mention here and there, and he took part in a – in a – in a f – a fight against the **Bolsheviks** in 1920, and **Poland** defeated them, and –

Q: So he was part of that battle?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And he really – in **Poland**, somehow government didn't like people who got education in Tsarist **Russia**. They rather lean toward the people who were under **Austria** or **Prussia**.

Q: Why?

A: And he was – he was a graduate of the –

Q: Russian West Point.

A: Yes. With the number one –

Q: Certificate?

A: Yes. So – well, like in many politics, there's no like to – those people were too smart.

Q: Yeah, that's true. Do you know the name of this military academy that was in **Russia**?

A: Not really. Probably **Kiev** military academy or something. I probably could dig out from – from some of the papers that I have here, because at one time I was thinking about getting a lawyer and trying to – because my grandparents had a big, big, big landowners they were, around **Vinnytsia**. And one of the guy from Serbian society, he went to **Ukraine** about five, 10 years ago, and they paid him for his house which he had over there. Except he couldn't take money fr-from **Ukraine**, so he got to leave it to his aunt, or something.

Q: So you're thinking about reparations, about you some –

A: But you know, it's getting late. I'm 85 now. Another month I'll be 86, so –

Q: Well, congratulations, happy birthday. You – so your grandparents were landowners?

A: Yes.

Q: And they had two sons, your father and his brother?

A: Yes.

Q: And so did both of them finish higher education?

A: Oh, the one was the doctor, so evidently he –

Q: Yeah.

A: – and he had to finish it in – in **Russia**, yeah. And ri –

Q: And did they have girls? I'm sorry, I interrupted you. You – I – were they the only two boys, or were there more children in that family?

A: That's what I am aware of, because I haven't discuss it with my father, but I know for sure that him and his brother, because he lived in same town. And when the Russians came, he didn't visit us be – for the obvious reasons.

Q: Of course, of course. Tell me a little bit about your mother's family. Were they also landowners?

A: That – I don't know too much about my mother's family, but evidently they were well-to-do, because she – she graduated as a registered nurse. At the time it was like at the university, at that level. So evidently, you – they could afford to send her, you know, to – for her education. So evidently they were doing okay.

Q: And was her family also in this **Vinnytsia - Kiev** area?

A: Evidently so, because you know, when the – my father and they met, so that they had to be someplace in the area.

Q: Which – which to me suggests that – did you know any of her family members? It sounds like you didn – you wouldn't have had the chance to do so.

A: No, there was a elderly woman that used to live with us. She was a part of my mother's family, but I don't know what was her relationship to – to my grandparents there. But she lived with us, about 95 when she died.

Q: I see. Okay. But this is also unusual for the people that I've talked to, that so much of your parents' families were on the other side of the border. And that that border was closed, you know, during the 1920s, and the 1930s. Most people had their families around them. The larger families. Did you – before World War II, did you visit with your doctor uncle much? Did you see each other often?

A: Oh yes, they used to come over to our house, we used to go to their house. And by the way, we were doing much better to hear that he's a doctor.

Q: Well, if your father was a high ranking officer, that would – that would make sense.

A: Yeah, so it – but – but yeah, we were visiting quite often, I mean, at least once or every couple months, yeah.

Q: Did he have children?

A: No, they didn't. They didn't have.

Q: Okay.

A: He was in a concentration camp, as was **Lillian**, my sister, but she came back to **Poland** and got a – tuberculosis, and she died from that.

Q: Tell me a little bit about her story, before we go into your own story. **Lillian** lived in **Warsaw**?

A: Yes. While she was attending the university.

Q: Okay, and that was when – that was in the late 1930s?

A: Yes, 30 – '39 – '38 - '39, yeah.

Q: She would have been then, 25, 26 years old?

A: Something like that.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: And what was she studying?

A: I thought she wanted to be a doctor.

Q: Okay. And what happened to her when the war started?

A: Well, war started on the first of September. My moth – my mother didn't feel too good, so she came over to **Kovel**. And she was in **Kovel** on the 29th of August. And my father was begging her, says, listen, stay here. War is going to break out any time. She says, they need me over there, I belong to many organizations there, they're going to need me there, and she went back to **Warsaw**.

Q: I see. And then what happened to her?

A: And then, sh – sh – after they destroyed **Warsaw**, she – she wound up in a – in – in a concentration camp.

Q: Well, do you know what kind of activities she was involved in?

A: All those – for example, Free **Poland**, and stuff like that, see?

Q: Was she part of **Armia Kryova**, or you don't know?

A: That I don't know. I don't want to give something that I'm not sure of.

Q: Okay. Was she involved in underground activities, then? Resistance activities?

A: Well, we didn't have too much correspondence dur-during the war.

Q: Of course not.

A: No.

Q: I'm talking after the war, when – did you find out her story? Did you find out about her story?

A: Well, we were looking for her through Red Cross and everything, and **Warsaw** was destroyed 80 percent. But finally we found her, and she lived in the same house what she did before the war.

Q: My goodness.

A: In **Żoliborz**. **Żoliborz** wasn't destroyed that much. So she lived there, and she was working in the bank at that time, under – under communist **Poland**, she worked the bank.

Q: And when you – okay, when you found her, what year was that?

A: Probably it was '47.

Q: Okay. Did you see her, did you visit her?

A: No, no, oy – in those days you couldn't go to –

Q: No, of course not.

A: – to **Poland**.

Q: So, did you ever meet her again?

A: No.

Q: After 1939, when she left **Kovel**, and went back to **Warsaw**, no one ever saw her again.

A: No, no.

Q: Did she ever have the opportunity to write in a letter what had happened to her? Did you ever find out details about her story, her life?

A: Well, she didn't talk much about her conc – life in concentration camp, but she said it was tough, and – and of course, then she was working in a bank, as a clerk, because being the daughter of an officer, this new ga – new – new so-called Polish government, did – didn't look at those people –

Q: Very favorably.

A: Very favorably, right.

Q: Which concentration camp was she in?

A: I – I really don't know.

Q: You don't know.

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: There's a bunch of letters of hers, maybe in one of them I could find out, but I just – after she died, I didn't want to read those letters.

Q: That's understandable. What year did she die?

A: Fifty-two or '53, something like that.

Q: So, she was a young woman.

A: She was 38 when she died.

Q: Very young woman, yeah.

A: As a matter of fact, her friend send us to **England** to get penicillin, and we sent something, but it was too late.

Q: Oh. And your uncle, you say he was also in a concentration camp?

A: Yes, then he came back to **Poland**, br – as a matter of fact, she was buried at **Pouwonski**(ph).

Q: Your sister?

A: Yeah. And I'm sure that right now it's probably cost 10,000 dollars, the plot over there. But I'm sure during that – in 50s it was still – so he buried her there, so –

Q: Your uncle took care of that?

A: Yeah. And he wrote me couple times, and then asked me, why don't you come back? And I wrote him back, I said, listen, I don't want to come back to a country which killed my father. And so then I got the reply, he said, those letters with English stamps do me lot of harm. So our correspondence stopped at that.

Q: Oh dear, oh dear. Were you able to find out more about what his life had been under German occupation?

A: No, not really.

Q: And so you wouldn't know what concentration camp he was in.

A: No, I wouldn't know. But at – the letters did say that they were in a – in a cattle car, something like that, like we to **Siberia**. And sometimes they were standing in the water up to their ankles, and stuff like that. So there were some horror stories about his life.

Q: And it's also – I mean, that is a tragedy, but it is also a tragedy that you could never meet and talk about these things. That you – that – that you were so separated, and you couldn't correspond.

A: Well, of course, back in 50 s – '53, like any young man, is not interested in those things. I mean, I was always patriot, stuff like that, but you know, young people, they have different – for example, even here in – I jo-joined the Siberian society about 25 years ago. Before that it was playing cards; bridge, poker, stuff like that, so –

Q: You were enjoying your life.

A: Yes, I don't have any complaints, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh. Okay.

A: I'm retired for 20 years now, and you know, I'm doing okay, and my daughters are doing okay. My grandkids are doing okay, so –

Q: Well then, let's go back a little bit, okay? Let's talk about your family, your immediate family, your mother, your father, yourself, pre-war **Poland**. You said that

your father earned quite good money, or must have had a very good pension, if he retired from the military, so that you had both a maid, and other household help, and he had an orderly.

A: Correct.

Q: Okay. Can you describe your home to me, in **Kovel**?

A: Well, we never owned the house. We always –

Q: You had your own house?

A: – rented.

Q: Rented, okay.

A: Yes. And, as I mentioned, wi – for example, when my father was arrested, he was in prison in **Kovel –**

Q: Let's not talk about the war yet.

A: Yeah, okay.

Q: I want to just talk about what life was like beforehand.

A: Oh, peachy, peachy.

Q: Peachy.

A: Yes. As I said, we used to take walk in the park every Sunday. We used to go to the cemetery, visit this aunt – my – my mother's aunt, I believe, that, you know, she died when she was about 95. And – and –

Q: Did you have conversations with him as you were taking these walks?

A: Oh yes, we were talking about different things, but he never – never talk about his military service, and stuff like that. He would say oh look, they building a new park here, and I used to enjoy it, even as a little boy, I say well, that town is going someplace. And –

Q: Did you spend as much time with your mother, as with your father?

A: Probably yes, yes, with my mother. Both of them were pretty strict.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: Tell me about that. Tell me about that.

A: Well, for example, I didn't go to the first grade, my father was tutoring me. That wasn't the –

Q: It wasn't fun, huh?

A: – best year of my life. And my mother, she was strict, but **[indecipherable]** for something, if it was reason – reason, she would say okay. And my father was, when he was at home, he was engrossed in his books about military, even though he was retired, and he was a big stamp collector, and this type of a thing. And as I said, it was – it was pretty nice.

Q: What was – why was it that you didn't go to first grade?

A: Well, my father says, why you should go with all these people there, where you can do it at home?

Q: Right.

A: As a matter of fact, I only went to second and third grade. And then not – from that, I jumped to the high school. Wasn't easy.

Q: I can believe it. I can believe it. So, which of your parents did you feel closer to?

A: Probably mother, as is usually.

Q: Mm-hm. And – and what kind of a personality did she have?

A: Oh well, if my father had the personality of my mother, he would be general.

Q: Really?

A: Oh, she was tough. Sometimes, she was sick, had the heart condition and so on, and s-some – my father had the military doctor, so – but you know those military doctors, they didn't think much of them. So he used to go to private doctor, even though, you know, uncle was a doctor, but he didn't go to him. So sometimes a guy would come and say something bad to my mother, my mother says, get out of this house, yeah.

Q: She didn't like the diagnosis.

A: No. So later I will tell you how she was handling **KGB**, and k – **NKVD** at that time.

Q: Good. I will want to know about it. And so, she was a strong personality.

A: Oh, very strong.

Q: Okay. Was she – was she someone you felt safe with?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And she, like my father, she spoke fluent German, obviously fluent Russian, and fluent Polish, so –

Q: Multilingual.

A: Yeah, multilingual.

Q: Were you studying any of these languages as a little boy?

A: Well, I – I – when I went to – to high school, I took English, because at that time you need only one modern language. When my sister went to school, she needed two classical languages, was Greek and Latin, and two modern languages, which was French and a –

Q: And Polish.

A: – and German.

Q: Oh, French and German. Well, that's quite well-rounded.

A: Yeah.

Q: That's quite a classical education.

A: Because English wasn't very popular, before the war, in **Poland** –

Q: Yeah.

A: – just now, so yeah.

Q: Then –

A: My mother, later she was working as interpreter, so I was talking to a woman, and sh-she said well, she speaks German like she just came from **Berlin**, and she didn't use the language for 25 years.

Q: Wow, that shows a talent.

A: Yeah.

Q: A – a real facility for a language.

A: And she spoke three languages, and later she tried to learn English, when we were in **India**. And some people here, they come and they spend here 40 years, and they don't even learn English.

Q: And she learned it there?

A: She had a rough time with it, I'm sure **[indecipherable]** 50, so that's –

Q: It's harder.

A: It's harder, yes.

Q: Yeah. What kind of a personality did your father have?

A: Well, as I read some of the opinions of his superiors, that he was pretty easygoing, but di-didn't have much confidence

Q: In himself?

A: – even though – even though he had, you know, good education, and so on. But he wasn't pushy, let's put it this way. And he – like in any – in any area, you have to be pushy, to really succeed.

Q: And did you sense that from how you knew him, that he was more reserved –

A: Exactly.

Q: – he was more – okay.

A: Yes.

Q: A quieter person?

A: Yes, that's right.

Q: Did you feel that you were close to both of them, though? Were you a close-knit family, or –

A: Yes, of course, I was the only one at home, so – and my father, for example, as a – when I was then, I don't know, eight or something, and **[phone ringing]**

Q: Okay, let's cut. **[break]** Okay, we were talking about –

A: When I was seven or eight years old.

Q: Yeah.

A: I was riding a bike, and another boy hit me with something, and as it happened, he was son of a doctor, so my father took me to that doctor, and says, listen, whom you raising? Raising a bandit? You know kids.

Q: Yeah. And what did the doctor say, do you remember?

A: Oh, he says, oh, I'm going to discipline him.

Q: Did he treat you, for whatever wounds you –

A: No, the –

Q: No.

A: It wasn't big wound, just a scratch.

Q: Just a scratch. Were your parents very religious, or not so much?

A: Not so much. They – th-they believe in God, but my mother very seldom used to go to church, and – and my father, right before the war, I think, he went to – to confession, and so on. And of course my mother was running the orphanage, and she was running the home for the old people.

Q: This is before the war?

A: Yeah, before the war. So she says oh, that counts more than going to mass every Sunday.

Q: She had a point. She had a point. So she was involved in such activities?

A: Oh yes. Was – when she was sick **[indecipherable]** president's wife sent her a letter.

Q: Wow.

A: Yeah.

Q: So she was quite well known, she was quite prominent.

A: Yeah, she was in that – a **[indecipherable]** of the women for whatever, yeah.

Q: So she ran an orphanage in **Kovel**?

A: Yeah.

Q: And also an old people's home.

A: Yes. Of course, non-profit.

Q: Mm-hm. But was it like a full time job?

A: For her it was. And as a matter of fact, the president of the – of the **Kovel**, she was involved there as well, but later they found that she took some money, so there was a trial be-behind the closed door.

Q: Really?

A: In those days when somebody got the big position, they used to get every break possible. Yeah, so – and the – on the other hand, my mother used to take some stuff from home, and take it to the orphanage and my father says, well, what are you doing? Says, don't worry, it's enough for both of us.

Q: So she – she was not somebody who was very bureaucratic, in that sense.

A: Exactly.

Q: Okay. And what was the outcome of the trial?

A: Well, she got to return whatever she took, and that's it.

Q: Mm-hm. Did you ha – **[phone ringing]** Okay, let's cut. **[break]** Did your parents talk about politics at home?

A: Yes. My father was for government. He subscribed to newspaper like "**Polskas Bronna**(ph)" – Armed **Poland** in – in English. And of course everything was rosy in that paper. My mother was it – reading so-called "**Dzień Dobry**". They had different opinions.

Q: Your – who was reading "**Dzień Dobry**?"

A: My mother.

Q: Your mother was reading "**Dzień Dobry**."

A: Yeah. Good morning.

Q: Okay.

A: That was like, well, wasn't very literal paper, but as it turned out, they were right, and the – then the "**Armed Poland**," because "**Armed Poland**" followed the government line, and of course, everything they said, we're not going to give you

the button from our coat, and you know, we lost war in 30 days, except **France** lost in 10 days.

Q: The – so – they di – did your parents belong do different, sort of political points of view? Different political positions?

A: Yeah, my father was blindly following the government line, and my mother was rather realistic about the things.

Q: I see. And the government was headed by whom at that point?

A: **Mościcki**.

Q: **Mościcki**, okay.

A: He – he had a lot of patents about fertilizers.

Q: Did they talk also, about international politics? That is, what was going on in **Germany**, and what was going on in **Russia**? Do you remember such conversations?

A: Well, of course they were talking about **Bolsheviks**, how bad they were, and so on. But as far as **Germany**, **England**, I don't think they discuss it ver-very much. Of course, my father thought that after 20 years, the **Bolsheviks** became more human. As it turned out, they weren't.

Q: Yeah. So they – beca – did they talk about **Bolsheviks** more because they were from the east?

A: Exactly.

Q: Let me think. You mentioned before, your sister came to take care of your mother a little bit, in August of 1939. And your father begged her to stay, and he said, the war is coming, the war is coming.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did – did – did he have some sort of inside information, or was this something everybody felt?

A: It's everybody felt that it's a matter of days. As a matter of fact, he – he got the letter from – from the army that they inducting him back.

Q: He's being mobilized.

A: Mobilized, right. And he became the chief – chief of anti-aircraft defensive cover, except they didn't have an air – aircrafts.

Q: So – so at that point, he was 51 years old?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Do you remember the day the war broke out?

A: Oh yes, I do.

Q: Tell me about it.

A: Well, listening to radio. Radio that day used to say, this plane is crossing our border, this plane is doing this, and the **Warsaw** is bombed, and other towns are bombed, and so on. So it's a –

Q: How did – how – what was – when your parents heard this, and when people in the – in **Kovel** heard this, how – how were people behaving? How were they reacting to this news?

A: Well, I think they took it in stride. For example, we – we lived – we lived close to downtown, and on one occasion we went to the – where there was a army headquarters, and they have a army mess over there, and we went there for lunch, with my father, mother. And as we were having lunch, all of a sudden the planes came over. You could see the faces of the pilots, and one of the lieutenants says, oh, those are Polish, because they got Polish insignia on the planes.

Q: Did they really?

A: They did. And as he said they are Polish, they started shooting. So we went – run away from the building, and there were some planes over there, so we hid in there. So that was like probably third and fourth of September.

Q: Amazing that they were so close you could see the faces.

A: Yeah. They – well, there was no aircrafts. And the – later my father got couple with those aircraft guns, so then they were flying very high. Evidently they had some space on the ground.

Q: So those first few weeks, your – was that as close as you got to someone from the German military –

A: Yeah.

Q: – was this person in the plane?

A: Yeah.

Q: Or did you see soldiers on the ground?

A: Not German, Russians.

Q: Okay. But before we come to the Russians, those first weeks before they – they arrive, what were people doing? What was happening in **Kovel**?

A: Well, they were going to work, and I think schools were closed, because they made the hospital with those schools. So – and I was going to go to the fourth grade, but never happened. And –

Q: By the way, were there Jewish people in **Kovel**?

A: Quite a few, yeah.

Q: And what professions did they usually have, or jobs, or trades?

A: Running businesses, running businesses, what else?

Q: Okay. Did your family know any? Did you have any interaction?

A: Oh yes. My mother had a good relationship with those Jewish people, because she was running that orphanage, so she needed some funds. So they – they were –

Q: Supporting it.

A: Of course, where we lived, the owner of this house was Jew, too, and – and I was talking with his son. His son was six, seven years older, and I was telling him that we going to beat Germans, and this guy says, no way, they're too strong. Of course, he was 15, or something.

Q: So, two military experts having a conversation.

A: Exactly, yes.

Q: So, people still continued going to work, even though there was no school. What was the talk that was going on?

A: Well, really, we didn't interact with – with the outside world, you know, we just – my mother, father, and myself, except for that trip that we made to that military mess over there. **Cassino**(ph), you could call it **cassino**(ph), really. So, I never finished that lunch.

Q: No, I guess not. So you stayed at home.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you – okay, did you do any preparations? Did you expect the Germans to arrive at some point?

A: Well, we as a military family were given the gas masks, because at that time everybody was expecting the day going to – to gas, but never happened. So we – we – we received the masks, those high – high tech masks that – because the old ones, you could choke in them. The new ones, they were really comfortable, but we never use them. And later we cut them to pieces because they didn't want Russians to take them over.

Q: Okay. So how do things progress throughout September? What happens?

A: Well, September 17th, Russians entered **Poland**. And they were marching. And we – we lived in that house, and by that house there was a water pump. And as they were marching, this soldier – I was outside – came by me. Says, can you give me a cup, because I want to get some water. So to was – ma – my first interaction with the – with the Russians. And he was very, very polite, very nice. So that was probably on the 18th of September.

Q: Was **Kovel** close to the border?

A: Yeah, we're very close. I don't know how many miles, but yes, **Kovel** was pretty close to the border, Russian there. So, of course, my father **[indecipherable]** that,

and when the Russians came they getting men to shovel the snow or something. So we were selling some different things, to survive.

Q: So, but that's already in the wintertime.

A: Yeah.

Q: Before that happens, did you see many soldiers after that?

A: Oh, they were – they – they were di – there were whole columns of tanks, and everything else, going through **Kovel**, going east.

Q: Or west. Or were they g – they were going west?

A: We-West, right, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Going west.

Q: Did many stay in **Kovel**?

A: Don't know how many, but at one time we had a lieutenant living in – in our home. They took – took one room from us, and he was living there.

Q: That was pretty early on?

A: Yeah. Army – Army lieutenant, and by the way, he was very nice guy. Of course, a lot of Russians were okay, except for the government.

Q: Does there any interaction between your father and himself, because both of them are military men.

A: No. My father was already arrested when this lieutenant moved in.

Q: Tell me about this arrest.

A: Well, it was the second day of Easter, in 1940.

Q: So it's the se – it's half a year later.

A: It was probably March.

Q: Okay.

A: Knock on the door, it's three – three en – **NKVD** guys enter, and there was one civilian, who sort of sided with Russians. He was a Polish citizen. So they – we had the big radio. So they took that radio, they say it's no way private person could have a radio like that, it had to belong to the government. And then he – had the leather – leather briefcase, they took that one too, and they took him away, and told my mother that he'll be released in – in couple days, which of course, never happened.

Q: Did they say why they were arresting him?

A: No, they arrested all the officers, all the officers –

Q: So, was he expecting this to happen?

A: Well, probably. But he had the chance to go to **Romania**, that – that was still when the war was on, because the – the people were going – from part of the government, they were going through **Romania**. So they stopped and they say to him, listen, let's go with us, we go to **Romania**. And my father says no, I got to take

care of my wife, and my – my son, so he didn't go. Otherwise, he – he would survive. That was still in the – September, of course, that he had the chance to go to **Romania**.

Q: Do you think he fully – do you think he expected he'd be back in a few days, like they said?

A: Ah, probably not. My – my mother went to the **NKVD**, and says, where are they going to process him, and so forth. And she says, where is the radio? Oh, you'll get it back eventually. Didn't care about the radio, she cared about him.

Q: Yeah.

A: And – but they made her offer. They said, we are going to release him right away, if you're going to give us some information about lot of people in this town. And of course my mother turned them down, for two reasons. She was really patriotic. Second is she knew that they were lying. So, she didn't pick up it.

Q: How long did this take, when they came to your home, and they banged on the door? Was it a half hour, an hour, sa – all day?

A: Oh, at least hour and a half probably. They were searching the house for – for guns, some reason. Suddenly that's a – most hour and a half, yeah.

Q: Do you remember saying goodbye to him?

A: Oh, he said goodbye to me. And he said, take care of your mother.

Q: Oh my.

A: Never happened to me before. First time. Okay.

Q: Well, these aren't easy memories. These aren't easy memories.

A: So, what was, 24th of March? That's six – three weeks later, another knock on the door. Again, three **NKVD**, and a private person.

Q: Same private person?

A: No, different. You got 30 minutes to pack.

Q: Did you recognize the first or the second person who came by, or not?

A: No, I didn't know him.

Q: Okay.

A: Oh, he really was a member of communist party before the war.

Q: Okay.

A: And so, half an hour, and pack. My mother started arguing with those people, with those **NKVDs**. Probably Germans would shot her on the spot because she was telling them that **Stalin** gived his own mother, and so on. And I started to pack, and this **NKVD** man was helping me packing, because my mother didn't pack.

Q: She was busy arguing.

A: She was being arguing with them. And they also admired her language, you know, that they were exhaust probably. Great education, and she – she was a college graduate. So half an hour passed, hour passed, five hour passed.

Q: Were you still in the house?

A: Still packing.

Q: Packing?

A: Yeah.

Q: What did he help you take? What did you take?

A: Everything.

Q: Okay.

A: Like I have pictures here on that wall over there, my pictures from before the war. So finally the truck came, lorry, or whatever. What was happening, they were deporting so many people on that day, that they ran out of those trucks. So when the truck came, we loaded the truck all the way to the brim.

Q: Oh my goodness. How unusual.

A: I e – I even took a dog with me.

Q: You took a dog with you?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: What was the name of the dog?

A: **Katsis**(ph), or whatever.

Q: What kind of dog?

A: Oh, mongrel. So then we go to the station, those cattle cars, all this stuff, and the dog. And of course we thought – we used to sell the stuff later in **Russia**, so –

Q: But you were able to take a lot of things with you.

A: Yeah.

Q: But does it fit into the wagon, and there was space for it?

A: Yeah.

Q: So tell me some of the things that you took.

A: Linen. The towels. I took some stamps that – my father's collection. I took lot of pictures, and – and by the way, this lieutenant comes with a – th-there was a – before the war there was a jam in about maybe five pound cans. So he brings this sugar, and he says to my mother, take this. Because they keep telling you this – everything is in **Russia**, but there is nothing there.

Q: So this lieutenant who was in your house –

A: Yeah.

Q: – Soviet lieutenant –

A: He was living there, because they r – they di – took one room, see?

Q: After your father is arrested for those three weeks, here was this lieutenant, in one of those rooms.

A: He was there all the time, and he brought that sugar, so we took that sugar. And he was a very nice guy, quiet and everything else, and of course he didn't discuss politics, because you know, he would be afraid to discuss politics, and so there were, I don't know how many, 50 people in that car.

Q: Was your – did your mother quiet down at some point? What happened?

A: Not really. She was arguing with them all the time.

Q: She was arguing, and you were packing.

A: Yeah, the – wi-with the – with the –

Q: With the **NKVD** fellow.

A: **NKVD**, yeah, right. He says, take a – take you can, but originally they get half an hour, but it lasted five hours, so we took lot – lot – lot of stuff, and –

Q: Did you take food?

A: Not – not really food. May-Maybe a little bit with the food, because we used to dry bread, you know, before the war, figure just in case. So we took some of that dry bread, and of course that was a February – April 13, so weather wasn't bad as February 10, when the first people were deported.

Q: Did you know about those first deportation?

A: Oh yes, we did know, yes, yes, yes.

Q: Did you know anybody who was deported on February 10th?

A: Over here?

Q: In **Kovel**.

A: No, from **Kovel** they didn't deport February 10th, because they were deporting people who – who had parcels of land, see?

Q: Oh. So February 10th was a different category of people?

A: Oh, different, yes. That was people who – who got the land as a prize for fighting the Russians in a 1920 war.

Q: So how come your father didn't get any?

A: Well, we didn't need it. He was an officer, you know.

Q: Okay. But he fought in the 1920 war.

A: Yeah, but he –

Q: He was fine as an officer.

A: Exactly.

Q: Okay. Okay.

A: Work on land is – is a – is a hard work.

Q: It's true.

A: It's not – not easy. And by the way, that's how my parents treated help. Thi – this woman that worked for us, when my father was in prison, she too-took parcels to him. So evidently, they were good employers.

Q: That means something, yes.

A: Except one thing I couldn't reconcile, because she wrote to us in **Russia**, a letter, in 1940, in December. She says that she – she – she passed the parcel to – to my father, and at that time, he wasn't there. So evidently those – those prison officials took the parcel and told her he is there, but I'm sure he wasn't there, because it was December of 1940.

Q: And when was **Katyn**?

A: It was in May.

Q: Okay.

A: It was in May, so th-th – the –

Q: But when you were taken to the train, did you think your father still was in prison, locally?

A: I thought so, because they screened the windows in prison. They put the screens over there, see? So they didn't want – of course, that was April. They didn't want to see those people that people were being reported. But that was in April. They

probably went to **Katyn** later that month, or beginning of May. Because the order to execute those people was signed on my birthday, March the fifth.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. And **Stalin** died on March the fifth. Good present for me. …

Q: Okay, so you get to the train. Tell me what – how many people were in that cart, along with your things?

A: About 60.

Q: In that lorry? Or in the train? In the train?

A: No, no, the car.

Q: Yeah.

A: In the car train, yeah.

Q: So were – what did it look like inside?

A: There was no toilet, there was a hole in the floor of the – of the wagon, of the car. And –

Q: Where did people sleep?

A: Oh, the – oh, on the **[indecipherable]** It's like a wooden floors.

Q: Like platforms, or something?

A: Yeah, yeah, that's –

Q: Like bunkbeds?

A: Not beds, but yeah. So, that was a three weeks trip.

Q: Well, tell me about those bunkbeds first. About how many people would be on one platform?

A: Oh, probably eight, or so. And they were like three story deep – high, and –

Q: Three levels high?

A: Yeah.

Q: So there were three of them? Okay.

A: Yeah, about eight or nine. So – and there were about four of them that way, so it's about 60 people, like I say. I never counted them, but –

Q: Did you know anybody who was on that train? Did you recognize them?

A: Yes. There was a **[bell ringing] –**

Q: Okay.

A: – my father's friend, so after my father was arrested, and this guy was arrested – **[coughs]** Excuse me.

Q: That's okay.

A: So that his wife and his daughter moved with us, and the daughter was about year older than – than I was, I guess, and we were pretty good companions. So they – but later they moved out, but somehow they got deported same day, too.

Q: Okay.

A: So, the officers' families were deported on the April the 13th.

Q: So that was the category for that deportation.

A: Yeah. Policemen, officers, and high – high government officials. That was the 13th. Later, there was another deportation in June. That was from towns again. But February 10th, it was strictly from – from villages.

Q: I see. So, where did all your things go? All those things that you brought with you? Did they go in the middle of that cattle car, or something?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And did anybody take them? I mean, did people steal it on the – you know, steal an –

A: They couldn't steal that, the doors were locked all the time, so no, no way to steal them. I don't know how they – don't remember how they treated my dog over there, because there was a dog, too.

Q: Was it the only dog in the cattle car?

A: Yeah.

Q: And did the dog survive the journey?

A: It did. But didn't survive **Siberia**. Those big Russian Huskies killed him.

Q: So tell me about the beginning of the journey.

A: Well –

Q: Did you see anything – did you – were you near a window? Were there any windows?

A: No windows. They would open the door once a day and give some hot water and clothes, on the floo – on the February 10th they were opening more often, to throw out the dead bodies. But you know, weather was pretty good in – in April, so it took about three weeks, then we got to this nation there.

Q: I still want to talk about the journey a little bit. Do you remember leaving **Poland**? Did people know when they were leaving **Poland**?

A: What do you mean? What people?

Q: Well, the people in the train. You were on a train, the doors are closed –

A: Oh – oh yeah, they we – they – they – they knew, because we had to change the cars, because **Poland** had a w-wider, or not narrower rails. So they had to s-switch the cars.

Q: I see.

A: So –

Q: So also the – there was a delay.

A: Yeah.

Q: And that's when you knew you were leaving Polish territory.

A: There was **Szepetówka**, there was – that's as far as we went on the Polish, and then they switched to the Russian cars.

Q: The – the place was called **Szepetówka**?

A: Yeah. That – that was where the rail would stop.

Q: And were the doors open during this time, or were they still closed as the –

A: Closed. All the time they were closed. That the – they open them when we are moving from one car to the other.

Q: And did people react to this, that is, when they realized they are leaving **Poland**, or not?

A: Yeah, they were singing, you know, religious songs, and patriotic songs and so on. That's about it.

Q: What – how was your mother on this train? Was she quieter, was she still angry, was she –

A: Well, she didn't have nobody to argue with, there were **[indecipherable]**. Yeah, so that –

Q: But you said her health wasn't that great.

A: Well, she had a, I guess, heart condition. But maybe part of it was in her mind, too, because what they say, that lot of people, when they went to **Siberia**, all of a

sudden they got well. You know, going to the doctors all the time in **Poland**, while they were in **Siberia**, the sickness disappeared. So –

Q: And what about you? Do you remember how you were feeling?

A: Well, as I said in – I, from the very beginning – for example, after my father was arrested, I used to go with this girl, you know, go play. And I didn't think much of it. I mean, I was sorry they arrested him. I didn't think, you know, he'd be killed, but – but all my life I have everything took in stride, because I figured well, it's not going to help me if I am going to despair and stuff like that. Is going to make things worse. So, I was on the train, doing nothing, like most of the people. They were singing, and so on.

Q: Was it that you were trying to keep yourself from being sad?

A: Oh, as I said, you know, usually I – I take things in stride. It's – I lost my father when I was 11, mother when was 17, and –

Q: Okay. Let's go then further on the train. Do you remember what you ate? What kind of food there was?

A: Well, some of the dry bread what we had with us, and maybe – maybe occasionally, I don't know, if the train stopped on the – I – I don't really remember much about how was the food situation, but I know we had those – th-that pur – that

dry bread. So **[indecipherable]**. But I don't know what the dog was eating. It was three weeks.

Q: Yeah, it still had to have something.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: So –

Q: Did they ever let you off of the train?

A: Not – not go – going there. Not going to **Pavworda**(ph).

Q: Where did you finally end up?

A: It's **Pavworda**(ph), which is the **voivodship [names Russian locations]**

Q: Oh, you've got to repeat that, I didn't catch all of that. Say it slower.

A: **[speaks Russian place name]**

Q: **[speaks Russian]** So from **sovkhoz** I know it's a – some ca – collective farm.

A: Collect, yeah **[indecipherable]** wheat.

Q: But what part of **Russia** – was this within **Russia** proper, or in another – was it –

A: Yeah, I think it is. Or was it a part of **Kazakhstan**? I don't know. But **Pavwarda**(ph) was a – like a capital city of the **Pavwarda**(ph) –

Q: **Pavwarda**(ph).

A: – voivoid – **voivodeship**.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Yeah.

Q: Of the region.

A: Yeah, so.

Q: Or the district, yeah.

A: We were loaded there, and from there –

Q: What did that look like? Was it a town that you unloaded on, or –

A: Pr-Probably outskirts of the town, yeah. T-To-To the trucks, and from the trucks to the **[Russian]**. And at that time you could buy anything there. Everything was in the stores.

Q: Really? There were things to buy?

A: Yeah, at that time. When the war broke out with **Germany**, then everything disappeared, and – and **[speaks foreign language]** We – we came, there was a big hall, and in that big hall, there was one room there. And in that hall there were probably 200 people. But waiting for that lorry, or truck, my wife – wife – my – my mother start a conversation with one lady over there, and this woman, she – she was a wife of the landowner in **Poland**, but, when they were deporting her, the administrator of this estate volunteered to go with her to **Russia**.

Q: Really?

A: So every time, says liss – listen, I am volunteering here. So, they gave them this room over there, those – she was – this woman that her, probably boyfriend, and two little kids, six and seven. And this woman says to my mother, why don't you move with us? So we moved to that room, my mother and myself, so there were six of us there.

Q: Was that a better room than other people had?

A: Now there were 200 people on the – on the big house.

Q: In barracks, then.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: That was like a gymnastic hall, or something like that. So there were like 200 people.

Q: See what volunteers get.

A: That's right, yeah. And yeah, but evidently they got something going, because he volunteered, and eventually he died in **Russia** in the army, I guess. But –

Q: So you moved in with them.

A: Yeah, over there. But eventually we – we moved to the – the house over there. When we came, they gave us Russian constitution, and passports.

Q: Russian passports? Soviet passports?

A: We threw them away.

Q: Did you have any documents that you took with you, Polish documents, when you were being deported?

A: I don't think so.

Q: Okay.

A: Not mine. There were some stuff of my father, and so on, but so we threw away the passports, but we lived in that house, and my wife went to – my wife – my mother went to city hall, and said she wants radio.

Q: She wants a radio?

A: Yeah. And they say, well **[speaks Russian]**

Q: What does that mean?

A: Special deportee. And they told her special deportee cannot have a radio. And she opens this constitution, says okay, all residents **[indecipherable]** radio. So, they said okay. What kind of a radio it was? It was a loudspeaker. There was a main station, that's of course, and they were choosing the station, and you just listen whatever they chose. But sometimes very early in the morning they would say something. For example, one day they said **[speaks Russian]** Former marshal of **Poland** escapes to **Romania**. But five o'clock in the morning, they said only once. That's it. And

that's, of course, there was a chief of **[indecipherable]** they have a guy from the satis – sat – whatev – he wasn't a member of **KGB**, but close to it. So he –

Q: Mm-hm. Secret police.

A: Pardon?

Q: Was he the secret policemen?

A: Something like that. So he used to write **[indecipherable]** don't buy anything from Polish people, don't sell them anything. And he was our best customer.

Q: Was he really?

A: Yeah. He had a kid who was six years old, I never seen such smart kid. He would send him to our house to ask him that he wants this or that. So he would come, and he saw some of the **[indecipherable]** over there, they ask him, what do you want? He says, he come to play with me. That kid, you know, seven year old. So –

Q: And he really had come to purchase?

A: Yeah, yeah. He even bought – I had some broken watches, so he even bought those watches, because at that time in **Russia**, there were no watches. So I – I told him, listen, they don't work. He says, never mind. So, what was happening? We had this loudspeaker. People were coming.

Q: Was that the radio that she got from them then, a loudspeaker?

A: Yeah, that loudspeaker, yeah. So I –

Q: So what – excuse me, what did it look like, as a loudspeaker? A little box?

A: Yeah, that's it.

Q: And just a loud speaker on it?

A: That's all. The whatever –

Q: And a little knob?

A: Yeah, louder and –

Q: And softer.

A: – softer. They would set the station at the – at the –

Q: At the central, wherever they had –

A: The central, right. But people were coming to our house an discussing politics, so somebody snitched, and this guy, **bochinkow**(ph) come, the secret police, came at night to our house. He said, listen, there is a grievance against you people, that you involved in politics. So I have to deport you. If I don't do it, I will wind up in jail. So, deportation was the place where there was only one house. They call it **doczka**(ph), which more or less, period.

Q: Ah, it means the end, sort of.

A: Yeah. So he says, but listen, don't worry. Occasionally we can bring you some supplies – of course, not for nothing, he was get something for it – and you will survive.

Q: So was this in the same **sovkhoz**, or a different **sovkhoz**, or a different –

A: It was like 40 miles from it. But it's only one house, and the water well – outside was 90, and in the morning you had to break ice in that well, it was so deep.

Q: Wow.

A: For probably, I don't know, 75 meters. And there was a bucket, which weigh about, I don't know, 300 kilos, so you let this thing go, it will break the ice, to get some water. Because that place, only during the summer, that they were f – grazing the sheeps over there, all d – all d – during summer. But we were deported like in – in October, but fortunately November, Polish government sign treaty with **Russia**, and they let us out. So the **bochinkow**(ph) came over there, says **[indecipherable]** free. You can go any place you want to.

Q: So – but this is way at – this is towards the end. This is towards the end of your –

A: Forty-two.

Q: In '42.

A: Yeah, '42.

Q: Let's start talk – but still go back to when the beginning is. When you first arrived, did anybody come and tell you why you had been arrested, or make any kind of speech, or declaration –

A: No, no, no. They left us alone.

Q: So, did anybody have to go to work? Did you have to go to work, or your mother have to go to work?

A: Oh yes. During the summer, they were working on the field.

Q: What were they doing?

A: Picking up the wheat, or something like that. And then my mother said, I'm a nurse. I want to work as a nurse. And again they told her **[speaks Russian]** cannot be a nurse, because they're going in to cure patients. So, with her fluent Russian, they made her supervisor for that whole group of people who are working there –

Q: My God.

A: – in the summer. But it's only the summer. In the winter – nobody was working there in the winter.

Q: What did the **sovkhoz** grow? What did they grow?

A: Wheat, wheat.

Q: Wheat.

A: And when we came, the first job was to – there were stalks of wheat over there that we had to burn them, because it rotted. And you know, they had this big famine in **Ukraine**.

Q: That's right.

A: And th-there were thousands and thousands of pounds – kilos, of that stuff sitting there. But – so we were burning this stuff, and in the wintertime it's **[indecipherable]** just sitting around, and burning in a s-s – in a furnace – there was no coal, but I don't know how to explain it, it's a cow's –

Q: Cow dung? Cow dung? You know, what the cows make? That's what it –

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Mixed with the – the straw. They dry during the summer, and that's –

Q: Fuel.

A: – you buy it, with the winter, you use it as a fuel.

Q: Wow.

A: Yeah.

Q: Wow.

A: And we lived with my father's friend wife, and her son. He was – he was arrested too, same day with my father. But he was arrested two weeks before that, and they let him out. And he was walking in the Polish uniform, says, well, I'm safe now. But when they arrested other officers, they arrested him.

Q: Again.

A: And this woman came to **Russia** with nothing on, just a **[indecipherable]**. So really we had lot of stuff, so we were supporting those two people, all the time.

Q: Now, the fe – now, were you still living in the same room as the woman and her manager of the estate?

A: No, no, we moved to the private – private house over there. I don't know how it happened. Evidently, my mother went to the city hall and got this – this room over there.

Q: I don't speak much Russian, just a few words, but when you describe your mother, there's a phrase in Russian which comes to me, which is **wot**(ph) **zhenshchina**.

A: Oh yeah, what a woman.

Q: What a woman, what a woman.

A: Yeah, that's right, yeah. So evidently she – she went over there and they gave her this room in this – but next door was some guy from **Asia**, I think, **Uzbek** or something. It could be **Kazakhstan**, this part of **Russia**, I don't know. But –

Q: Well, do you remember what the house looked like? Was it – how it was built? Was it wood, was it stone, was it mud?

A: Well, it was more or less wooden, yeah. But there was electricity.

Q: Oh.

A: And thankfully so, because my mother went someplace, and that storm came, that snowstorm, which really, she had to crawl on the ground, but she saw the light in our window over there, and she crawled all the way to that house. But, for example, wa – one woman who lived in different building, she – she went to buy milk for her daughter, that storm caught her, they found her in the spring, clinging to that tel – to – to the telephone pole.

Q: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah.

A: Fortunately, she had the mother with her, so grandmother took care of that –

Q: Daughter.

A: – little girl.

Q: Yeah. Did many people die in the **sovkhoz**, of the deportees?

A: Not too many. I know this one colonel's wife, she died on the Christmas eve, and th-th-they were joking that they're making **Wigilia**, you know –

Q: Christmas eve dinner, yes.

A: – dinner, and she's supposed to get some mushrooms from the suitcase, and she leave to get us mushrooms, and she drop dead. So they said probably she was sorry for those mushrooms, that she has to give those mushrooms. But yes, she – she – and the – late – later on, when we moved to **Uzbekistan**, this – another young man

died, but not too many died over there. And for example, in the **sovkhoz**, I never saw u – Russian soldier.

Q: I was – that was my next question. How much – how much was there interaction with any authorities, any Soviet authority?

A: Chief of the **sovkhoz** maybe, but when I was two years in – in **Siberia**, I never seen Russian soldier, never. And I read those stories in that book what I gave you, some people say they were guarding them, and stuff like that. Didn't happen to us. Probably that **bochinkow**(ph), he was politic –

Q: Yeah, political officer.

A: Yeah. But he was a nice man.

Q: The one who did business with you.

A: Yeah.

Q: These are things are so interesting. You know, there's – there's the – the official stories, and then there's what really happens, you know?

A: You know, I hate to say, but we had all this stuff that we took – took from **Poland**, because sometimes you couldn't buy anything with money, was all with trade, barter. But, as I lits – other peoples' stories, hunger and so on, I cannot say that about us.

Q: You had enough to eat, do you think?

A: Yeah, most of the time. I think I was very hungry maybe two days out of those two years. But what I explained that my mother did so, so good, you know, over the – her lifetime, so maybe somebody was watching over us.

Q: You never know, you never know. Then tell me, what was the hardest part of being there?

A: Hardest part of being there … was pretty boring. Boredom.

Q: Was there a school?

A: Yeah, there was a school, but my mother didn't want to send me to Russian school. She was afraid they may convert me, which would never happen. So she told them that I don't have shoes, and the board of education says they don't have in the budget money f – to buy stuff for the shoes. So I wasn't going to school, which was a big mistake, because I could learn s-something. Th-Th – they had a good level math in Russian schools, and of course I learned Russians at home, because lot of those Russians officers came to **Poland** after **Bolshevik** revolution. As a matter of fact, we lived block and a half for **Gagarina**, who was a princess. They said that **Gagarin** was her nephew, or –

Q: Oh, you mean the astronaut – the cosmonaut was her nephew?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah. She had the big estate in **Kovel**. I used to go there and ride her dog. She got the dog, I don't know.

Q: Like a horse?

A: Almost like a horse. And I used to date her – her – her daughter. I was

[indecipherable]

Q: Wow.

A: So, they used to come to our house, and of course they didn't speak Polish, but my parents speak Russian, so they were talking in Russian all the time. And you know, eight year old, nine year old kid, picks it up like that. So my parents realized that I understood everything, so if they wanted to say something that I don't – wouldn't understand, they switched to German, because Russian I understood everything. Even now I understand everything in Russian, my – i-if I took a brush-up course, probably that would came back to me, the Russian language.

Q: So, did you have to work as well, or were you to – considered too young to work?

A: Oh, when my mother was supervisor there, so wa – one s-summer I worked there, and I earned like 46 rubles.

Q: That sounds – I mean, I'll tell you, i-it sounds like nothing if you compare **[indecipherable]** but that sounds like a lot of money for a child.

A: Y-Yes, so –

Q: You know? How did – what di – how did you earn the money? How did you earn that 46 rubles, what were you doing?

A: Doing nothing.

Q: Oh God.

A: Politics.

Q: Politics, politics.

A: Then they **[indecipherable]** this wheat, they used to, how do you call it, process that wheat, and there was stack of those wheats, you know, hundreds and hundreds of kilos and so on. We used to play in these wheats, so – and they – they were loading to the cars and sending to **Germany**. And that they have the problem in their own country, and –

Q: Yeah.

A: – even the Germans started to bomb them, they were trying – still going.

Q: Sten – still sending to – so you knew the transports from the **sovkhoz** were going to **Germany** with wheat?

A: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: How ironic.

A: Yeah.

Q: How ironic.

A: And talking about the quality, at one time we went on a vessel, on the **Irtysh** river, and at that time they were evacuating some of the people from **Moscow** – not the top – top government, but the middle one.

Q: This is after the war starts?

A: Yeah. On that – on that vessel, you could buy anything for **kopeiki**. Not rubles, but **kopeiki**, everything. When you got off that vessel on the ground? Nothing. But, they're evacuating people from **Moscow**.

Q: The elite.

A: Yeah, so – you know that some equal, others are more equal.

Q: Some of us are more equal than others.

A: Exactly.

Q: That's right. Well, also is like a duty free cruise ship, you know? That's where you can buy things without taxes.

A: Yeah. And sometimes on sale you can buy cheaper than tax free.

Q: That's right. So – so you spend – I don't want to say an easy two years, but I want to say not as hard as some other places.

A: Exactly, exactly.

Q: Okay. And your mother is in charge of those – these people who are working in the fields.

A: In the fields, yes.

Q: And, is she well liked? Do you remember?

A: Oh yeah, yeah, they liked her. Yeah, they liked her. I mean, that – that was simple job, you know, pulling the wheat and so on **[indecipherable]**

Q: But somebody informed. You know, you said people came to your house, the room that you had in this wooden house, and there was some political discussions.

A: Yeah, exactly.

Q: And I have to say I was surprised when you said that, because from some of the other testimonies I heard, they said people were very careful about what they said, that they didn't talk with one another.

A: Not our house. Not our house. And by the way, the woman president of **Kovel**, president's wife, was in the same **sovkhoz** with us. And, she lived with policeman's wife. And they arrested this policeman's wife, and they took her to prison. And my mother went to that prison and asked them why she is there. And they said, well, somebody reported something on her. And she asked, tell me who. And they said – **NKVD** guy says, listen, I cannot tell you, but I write it. And he wrote **Zabatskaya**(ph), that wife of the president of **Kovel**. So, comes Christmas or something, she comes by our house with candies. And opened the door, and my mother says, what do you want? I brought some candies for your son. And my

mother says, do you want to take candies from this woman? I said no. And she says to my mother, I'm going to report you. Says, go ahead, do it fast.

Q: Wow.

A: Yeah, that's kind of people.

Q: Wow.

A: And when the Russian la – take over, her husband, president, and his assistant vice-president, they putting them on a truck, they were emptying the latrines, you know, like in the old days. There were the trucks that were emptying the latrines. So they were working on that – on the truck.

Q: Oh my God.

A: And she was snitching on the – o-on people.

Q: Wow. So it still – it got – it went on. It went on.

A: Yeah.

Q: The people who would come, what kind of things would they would be talking about? You know, the politics that was being discussed.

A: Well, that we have a Polish government in **London**, eventually going to go back. My mother say always, well, we going to go back to **Poland** with our – with our flags, and stuff like that. Never happened.

Q: Was there any talk about what had happened to the arrested military officers, or any news about them at the time?

A: No. We found it there, all the – after Germans discovered the graves. But my mother wrote a letter to **Stalin**, asking him, where is my father. And I don't know if I have this letter or not, but – but he answered her – maybe his office, whatever, to get in touch with the **Kiev NKVD**. Those were the people that were killing them.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: So he told my mother to get in touch with **Kiev NKVD**.

Q: And this is while she's in the **sovkhoz**?

A: Yeah.

Q: **Wot**(ph) **zhenshchina**. What a woman. What a woman. Did she? Did she write a letter to the **Kiev NKVD**?

A: That I don't know. That I don't know, I'm not sure. But – but she was surprised to get answer from him, but later we knew that he knew what is going – oh, of course he knew what was going on.

Q: Of course he knew, of course he knew.

A: But directed her there. But that was in '42, you know, so two years after.

Q: That's right. So tell me how you found out about that you – how do things change? First of all, how – your life goes on, you're in this, you know, you're

[indecipherable] has to deport you to the **[indecipherable]** which is this one place

–

A: Yeah.

Q: – this one house, in the middle of a field.

A: Yeah.

Q: Is that right?

A: Correct.

Q: And you're there alone with your mother?

A: Oh, there were couple other families.

Q: Ah, okay. And – and then what happens?

A: Well, we didn't live too long over there, because th-the – there was called, which I disagree with the term, amnesty. Because amnesty is for a criminal, we didn't do any crime. But they call it amnesty, that **Stalin** says okay, you can go where you want to go.

Q: Okay.

A: So then we started to – to – to move, and we went to **Itdisk**(ph).

Q: What's the place name?

A: **Itdisk**(ph).

Q: **Irtdisk**(ph).

A: As I said beginning **[speaks Russian]**

Q: That's right.

A: And there was a town, **Itdisk**(ph).

Q: And did you still have items to barter, to be able to get there?

A: Yeah, yeah. And over there, I don't know, couple thousand people, Polish people, maybe more. And there is this guy, lieutenant in a Polish uniform, talking to us. And all those two years they were telling us **[Russian]** That is not **Poland**. **[speaks Russian]** And now these Polish officers, in a Polish uniform, is talking to us.

Q: So you – translate please, what it was that they were saying. Pole – **Poland** doesn't exist, **Poland** –

A: Will never exist. That's what they were telling us all the time. And this officer is starting talking, and there were like, I think, probably two or three thousand people. Everybody was crying.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I still remember his name, **Reginia**(ph).

Q: **Reginia**(ph)?

A: Yeah.

Q: Wow.

A: Was ya – young officers, lieutenant.

Q: And had he – had he been released himself, or had he come from –

A: Probably yes.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: I see.

A: But –

Q: So what happened after that?

A: Well, after that we went to **Uz-Uzbekistan**, and my mother –

Q: And what was the reason for going there?

A: Climate.

Q: Really?

A: Closer to Polish – not embassy, consulate, whatever.

Q: Representation of some kind.

A: Yeah. So my mother was sick on the trip, but she got this fur coat, and I suspect she had the typhoid, you know. But she survived, and then we went to **Uzbeks**. And by the way, I don't have too many memorabilia, because on that trip from – from **Irtusk** to – to **Jambol**(ph), somebody stole one of our bookcases – suitcases. And

those were the people who were going to join Polish army. So then we went to this **Uzbeks**.

Q: But excuse me, your dog, was he gone by then?

A: Yeah, th-those – those **[indecipherable]** they killed him, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: Once he fell in the – to the well, so my mother gave some kids five rubles to get him out. But later – so we went to this – that was **kolkhoz**, not **sovkhoz**, but **kolkhoz** in **Uzbekistan**. Those **Uzbeks** are very friendly. They invited us, of course the – everybody is sitting on the floor. There is one big dish, everybody dipping in that dish. And so – and that time – that time we had to work, and this f – friend of mine that lived with us, with this – my father's friend wife and him. So he goes to work, and I, in the morning I take that shovel, put it on my arm, and go in front of the – this supervisor house, go around, go home.

Q: Oh God.

A: Comes Friday, he gets half a pound of flour – half a kilo. I get whole kilo.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: Because he says, this guy goes to work early. What it was, I was 13 at the time.

Q: You knew how to game the system. Pretty clever.

A: Yeah.

Q: Pretty clever.

A: And then I-I – my mother – there was **[indecipherable]** was a small town. So my mother was in charge of a hospital over there, there was not even a single doctor.

Q: Wow.

A: She was in charge of 200 beds over there, and she first had to clean out those corpses, they were sitting in a garages there. And –

Q: What corpses? From where, from what?

A: Those patients who died. And I went – I didn't feel good, so I went to the hospital for observation, and they didn't find anything wrong with me. Then I came back, and I got a high fever, and sure enough, I caught the typhoid in the hospital. So did that friend of mine. And I had temperature like 41 Celsius.

Q: Wow. Wow.

A: If my mother wasn't there, I wouldn't survive. Because she used – took care of me, give me some juices and stuff like that. And then there was a Polish representation there, so she wrote him a letter that she needs something for the patients, so they gave something. And so, we lived there I don't know how many months, but in August of '42, we moved further with General **Anders'** Army. I was too young to join the army, but as a family, of course, my mother was figure out how to do it, and we went to **Persia** from – and –

Q: Well, tell me about the trip from **Uzbekistan** to the point of leaving the **Soviet Union**.

A: **Krasnovodsk**. By the way, in that **kolkhoz**, all we had two carpets, big ones. So we sold them to the **Uzbeks** for 40,000 rubles.

Q: Oh my God. These were carpets from home?

A: Yeah, I took those carpets.

Q: Oh my God. So everywhere you went – so when you had been deported, because of that snitch, back in the – back in the **sovkhoz**, to **[indecipherable]** did you go with all your things?

A: Yeah, sure, yeah. Well, police **[indecipherable]**

Q: You had a police escort.

A: He – he – he took care of us, I mean, you know. And so that – of course, that 40,000 didn't do me much good. What happened, we took the train to that **Krasnovodsk**. So whole time was eating because you could buy peaches and stuff like that, and we had money to burn. And – but of course, they said, you cannot take money, you cannot take cameras, and no –

Q: These are the Soviet authorities?

A: Yeah. Nobody would take a chance to be caught, you know.

Q: Of course.

A: So I threw out that 40,000 dollars into the – into the **Caspian Sea**.

Q: Ohhh.

A: And in a suitcase I bought another 8,000 rubles, so I sold it in **Persia**, I was buying cover for it. We didn't know about that money in a suitcase.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: Yeah.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: So that's what it was –

Q: So how man – when – by the time you left the **Soviet Union**, how much had your – how much had your luggage shrunk?

A: Oh, was to nothing. Yeah. Because at **Pahlevi** you had to – they had those –

Q: What is **Pahlevi**?

A: That – that's a – from **Krasnovodsk**, which is the port city on Russian side, **Pahlevi** is on the Persian side.

Q: What's today **Iran**.

A: Yeah, today **Iran**, yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: So **Pahlevi** was the first stop, and from **Pahlevi** we used to go to different places. But – but in **Pahlevi** they had to give all our clothes, and they had those – don't

know how you call those, those big boxes with the fire underneath, that they put their clothes there to –

Q: Sanitize?

A: – sanitize.

Q: By the way, were you ever deloused in – in the **Soviet Union**? Did you have to go through a delousing process?

A: No.

Q: Did you have any lice?

A: Oh yes, yes.

Q: Yeah. Oh, good God.

A: Well, those **Uzbeks**, that's what they were doing, they were sitting here.

Q: Oh my gosh.

A: Yeah, **Uzbeks**, had the – gee, next to us lived that **Uzbek**. He didn't work. I – I think he was sick. And he had the sister, I think mother. And then I went to their house – you know, I am 13 years old.

Q: Sure.

A: And he goes by his sister, throws her on bed, and says to me, come, have sex with her. So I ran away.

Q: Oh my God.

A: Oh, those **Uzbeks**, every night, 50, 60 of them drunk, singing, going through that – through that **Sovkhoz**, and swearing, and –

Q: So, not very pleasant for women.

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, women would – them – meant nothing, zero.

Q: Yeah.

A: Zero. Yeah, so –

Q: So, in some – i-i-in some ways, those items that – that **NKVD** fellow back in **Kovel**, who helped you pack during those five hours, helped keep you alive. Can one make that –

A: Oh, exactly, yes.

Q: Can one make that conclusion?

A: Yeah, sure, exactly, yeah. Because like that – that f – wife of my father's friend, she came **[indecipherable]** she stood, you know. So if it wasn't for my mother, she would perish. Plus she – her son was left behind, and he died from a heart, and she – she almost got crazy **[indecipherable]**. But –

Q: That means left behind in the **Soviet Union**?

A: No, he was left in **Poland**.

Q: Oh, I see –

A: Yeah.

Q: – he was left in **Poland**.

A: They were already grown up. This – one of them was an artist, or something like that, but that's not an – on the subject, but they were going to high school, and they flunked the year. But this artist made up this certificate that they passed, so the father bought them a – bikes. And next year they go to the same class, same class **[indecipherable]** Yeah. And his brother was in the po – the post office, he work in the post office after the war. But –

Q: So – so there you are, you're in **Pahlevi**, and you hardly have any of your items left. You have a little something.

A: Yeah.

Q: What is it that you have, beside the 800 – 8,000 rubles?

A: Oh, I had this whole suitcase of still some stuff, like shirts and stuff like that, you know.

Q: Did you have any like, photographs, or – or –

A: Oh, photographs I had, yeah, like on this wall there's a bunch of them, yeah. I – I **[indecipherable]** them, and – but another thing that nobody carried, but what happened when they were deporting us, the soldier says to me, let's get a witness

here. So, half a block from us, maybe a block, lived a teacher who used to teach music in the grade school. So I went over there after – was two o'clock in the morning. He saw the soldier, he got scared.

Q: Yeah.

A: So he came over as a witness, I don't know what for. But in – in sometime, we getting a check for 1300 rubles, from the auction of our belongings there.

Q: No kidding.

A: Yeah. I'm the only one who ever got that.

Q: I've never heard of such a thing.

A: Yeah, we got 1300 rubles.

Q: So they auctioned your items –

A: Yeah.

Q: – and you got – I've never heard of something like that before.

A: So evidently this professor was at that auction, and they sold it, and of course, one – one – one item would be like eight – 900 rubles, so the 1300 dollars wasn't –

Q: Didn't mean much.

A: – much for all those things.

Q: Yeah.

A: But anyway, they sent a check, and I never heard of anybody that they got a check.

Q: Now, was it the same soldier who was helping you pack, who told you to go get the witness?

A: No. No, another one. Another one.

Q: And they were there together?

A: There were three of them.

Q: There were three of them, and they were there together?

A: Yeah. So this one went with me, and I brought this professor.

Q: I find that so unusual, m – because other stories people have told me, that when the other two soldiers would go away, the one who was left, would try to be nice. But if the other two were there, they wouldn't do it, because they were afraid of each other. But in your case –

A: Well, th-this one was packing, and those other were standing, listening to – to that – to my mother.

Q: To your mother.

A: Yeah.

Q: Well, they probably didn't have many people react to them the way she did.

A: And this – this guy went with me and brought – brought this professor, and he was so scared.

Q: Oh, poor man. Poor man. So there you are in **Pahlevi**, what happens after that?

A: **Pahlevi**, we went to **Mallare**(ph), which is another refugee camp, and then we went to **Akfass**(ph), which is another refugee camp.

Q: All in **Persia**?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you stay in either place long?

A: No, I think in **Persia** we stayed not more than maybe eight, nine months, all together. In the meantime my mother got sick, she was in a hospital, and I had to make a choice where to go. I had the choice **Africa**, **Mexico**, **India**.

Q: For both of you. A choice for both of you.

A: Yeah, so I chose **India**. In the meantime, my mother got out of the hospital, so –

Q: What was she sick with?

A: She has some kind of a rash, and they put her in a bed that, violet stuff, and –

Q: Oh, ultraviolet, some kind?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: So, but she – she recovered from that one.

Q: Okay. So you were there for eight or nine months, and then you went to **India**?

A: Yes. In ‘43 we – we reach **India**.

Q: Now, the Germans had, of course, attacked. When did you find out about **Katyn**? When was it that you first heard that there was something –

A: In **Persia**.

Q: Okay.

A: In ’43. When Germans discovered the graves.

Q: Okay, so what did you find out?

A: Well, there were bulletins. There were no newspapers in that town, and so the bulletin was – said well, Germans discovered bodies of the Polish officers. So, that’s was it.

Q: Well, how did you know that your father might be there? He could have been in one of those camps that released Polish officers to join **Anders’** Army.

A: Not too many.

Q: Okay.

A: I know one, **Piszkodski**(ph) that was a priest later on. Four hundred of them that they were routed someplace else. Four hundred out of 20,000. Four hundred only.

Q: So, were there names that were published, of who was discovered –

A: No, no, no, n-na – no – no names was published, no.

Q: Did you ever have any confirmation from any other source, besides those –

A: No, I didn't check even that **Katyn** list. One of the days I have to do it. But I'm sure he was there. I'm sure he was there.

Q: Okay. So it was in **Persia**, it was in **Persia** that you and your mother discovered this?

A: Yeah, exactly, yeah. That **Akfass**(ph) we lived, hundred degrees. There was a canteen where they had the fan over there, so my mother used to take me there to buy some soft drink, and that was – felt so good, that fan.

Q: Yeah.

A: And the – we lived in a – there used to be horse stables, we used to live in that.

Q: In **Persia**?

A: Yeah, in **Akfass**(ph), yeah.

Q: In **Akfass**(ph).

A: Yeah.

Q: Well, that's not very good –

A: But, when we went to **India**, there was a Polish town over there. We had our own police, we had our own everything. Five thousand of us over there.

Q: In what place was this?

A: **Valivade**.

Q: **Valivade**.

A: Near **Punayai**(ph), **Valivade**, 5,000 of us were there. And the high school, and the doctors – my – my mother first was a nurse over there, and later she was – because they – they got some German doctor who didn't speak Polish, so she was interpreter for the – for the doctor.

Q: Can we cut for a second? **[break]** Okay, so – so you're in **India**, and do you start going to school?

A: Yes.

Q: And what grade did you have to – what grade did you go into?

A: Well, first year of high school, which I started over in **Persia**, in **Teheran**. As I said, I – I finished second and third grade, and then ma – my mother put me in the high school in **Persia**. That was terrible.

Q: It must have been really tough.

A: Yeah. But she hired me some tutors for Latin, and for – so, went to **India**, went to high school, to the first – first year of high school, and I was struggling a little bit. But somehow they passed me. But by the fourth – four – **[break]**

Q: Okay, so you were talking about your mother hired some tutors for you.

A: In **Persia**.

Q: In **Persia**.

A: It wasn't in **India**.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Only, in **India** she hired some – my – my English teacher, so he was giving me the – some lessons privately, and I supposed to go five times a week, but I think I went about three times. The rest of the money, I spent on cigarettes.

Q: Oh my goodness. You were smoking at age 13 - 14?

A: Oh yeah – no, I was – it's 40 – '43, that's –

Q: You're 14 years old.

A: Yeah, 14 years old. Well, it was in style in those days.

Q: I know, I know.

A: But by the time I was a senior in high school, I was on the top of the class, specially math and physics.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: Wow, wow.

A: Then I went to the junior college, and –

Q: Still in **India**?

A: Yeah **[indecipherable]** like **[indecipherable]** you know, so – and I was kind of a rebel over there, and fighting with teachers, and si –

Q: So, how many years did you spend in **India**?

A: Five, ’43 - ’48. Five years, yeah. I left after **Gandhi** was assassinated in – in ’48, I believe.

Q: Did you know much of what was going on in **India**, in the country itself, while you were in – in this town, or was the settlement pretty closed?

A: What, in – in **India**?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: No, that was closed settlement. We knew about, you know, because we had a library, and they got a radio in library, so they were listening to **London**, so we knew about the national politics, but not on local.

Q: Not directly.

A: No.

Q: Not directly. So, you spend five years in **India**. How were things with your mother? What was going on with her?

A: Well, she – she work in a hospital, and th-then things got worse, and she died when she was 55, I believe.

Q: Of what?

A: Heart. Heart attack.

Q: Heart attack.

A: Now she'd be living another 30 years, because the implants and so on. See, in those days –

Q: So, she actually did have a heart condition when she was in **Poland**.

A: Oh yes. Yeah, yeah.

Q: She really did.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: But you know, between **Poland** '39, and '48 – she died in '48 or seven, I bel – '48 probably, yeah. So –

Q: Was that very sudden for you, or were you a – were you kind of prepared for it?

A: Well, I used to visit her every day for f – not too long, but every day. I felt it's my duty. And of course, I was crying at the funeral, and so on, that's – and th-they had those four – four doctors. It's not important, they were all Jewish **[indecipherable]** German. And my wife – my mo-mother had feud going with one – one of those doctors.

Q: Was she teaching him how to be a doctor?

A: Probably. So, at her funeral – at the cemetery, he steps up. And I go by him, I say listen. Uh-uh. And he says, listen, what I have a dead mother, that's between me and her. **[bell ringing]**

Q: So he said, what – what was between your mother, was between me and her.

A: Yeah. So I let it go, and boy did he give a speech.

Q: Did he?

A: Yeah.

Q: A wonderful speech?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: You had to write to **Liliana**(ph) and let her know, didn't you, at – about your mother?

A: Yes. Yes, yes, at the time I knew her address, and I sent some parcels to her, so – from **India**.

Q: Was there any – was there any chance, or any talk about returning to **Poland** after the war was over?

A: Well, some of the people from **India** did return. But, you know, being son of the guy who was killed in **Katyn**, there wasn't much room for me over there. So, even my uncle ask me this, why don't you come? Which I would probably do quite well, because at that time I already knew English quite well, before picking bad habits in this country.

Q: So – so you were alone then, after her death?

A: Yeah.

Q: What did you do? What happened?

A: Well, from **India**, after the – the camp was closed, there was choice; go to **Australia**, to **Canada**, and some people to **England**. But you had to have somebody in **England** to go there. But they put me on the list as an orphan of the Polish officer, so I went to **England**.

Q: Can we repeat that? So, we – you – what were **England's** requirements?

A: To go to **England**, you had to had some relative in **England**. But there was a list for people who could go in **England**, and they put me on that list somehow. So I went – went to **England**.

Q: As the son of a Polish officer.

A: Yeah, exactly.

Q: And an orph –

A: Orphan.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah. And in **India**, we were getting allowance, in money, so we could buy stuff and so on. As a matter of fact, it was sort like a government welfare. And you had the servant in **India**.

Q: No, really?

A: We used to pay him five rupees a month, and his father, who was a policeman in **India**, was getting 10 rupees a month. So the kid was doing well.

Q: Not bad.

A: I – I sent him to buy bananas first time, so he brought me some onions. But after about six months, he spoke fluent Polish.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: Yeah.

Q: Oh my goodness. So where did you land in **England**?

A: In **England**, sm-small – small town, forgot really the name of it, but that was like more or less camp. And –

Q: And you were 17 years old?

A: Yeah. And when I came to **England**, there was this Polish officer interviewing people, and he says to me, what the heck you came here, you don't have anybody here. I said, I came here to see the **[indecipherable]**

Q: To –

A: That's what I told him. Seventeen year old.

Q: Yeah.

A: No **[indecipherable]** '48, I was 19 at the time.

Q: Nineteen years old.

A: Yeah, so I told him, see, just like you.

Q: And how did he respond, do you remember?

A: Oh, bo-bo-bo-bo.

Q: And how did your life develop after that?

A: Well, I went to school.

Q: In **England**?

A: Yeah, there was a – a Polish government sponsored sort of junior college, I went there for two years, and I graduated, and then –

Q: Was this in **London**?

A: No, that was in bat – **Bottisham** – backwoods, small towns.

Q: **Bottisham –** how do we say it?

A: **Bottisham**.

Q: **Bottisham**?

A: Yeah, that was small town.

Q: Okay.

A: Backwoods. And I was living there, that was la – like a student just to live there. And I got the – the fight with some professor, so they kicked me out from that, so I was going to go to **Cambridge**. But they were playing bridge, and friend of mine says, listen, come to **London**. So he took me to **London**. So I went to **London**. No,

and there's – then I met my wife in **London**, because I went to school with her brother – late brother. So – and we lived there for five years, and **Dorothy** was born in **London**.

Q: So you got married in **London**.

A: Yeah. We lived there for five years, **Dorothy** was born there. And th-then we came to **America**. They wouldn't take her on the ship because she was seven months pregnant.

Q: Your wife.

A: So she flew, and I took the ship **[indecipherable]** some belongings. So I wounded up in **New York**, and most of the passengers, it was – I came on the **United States**, it was the fastest from lu – from lu – **Southampton** to **New York**, four and a half days.

Q: Wow.

A: Yeah. So tha – tha-that – most of them were Germans on that ship. As a matter of fact, there was a guy who was translate, he was a vice-admiral in the Polish navy. And he says, look, we used to fight, and I have to translate for them. But anyway, there was a immigration, and this guy was so rough with these people who didn't speak English, and finally I come to him, and I start talking, and he says, where did you learn English? And I say, none of your business. And he says, if it was up to me,

I would send you back. I say, fortunately, little people like you don't have much to say. Right now they would send me right back, you know, but in those days you could do those things.

Q: Your mother taught you well.

A: Yes, right. So then from **New York** I came to **Chicago**, and –

Q: And what was your career in – in brief? What was your career here in **Chicago**?

A: Well, first of all I worked, you know, I had this Polish junior college liberal arts, so what I am going to do with liberal arts? So I tried to get a job like Polish National Alliance, they were paying 40 dollars a – a week. So I went, you know, to do some physical work, I was, I think 120 a week. So then I went to – partly to night school, partly to day school, and I majored in accounting. But I work only six months in accounting, because the boss came to me, he says, listen, you're too smart to work in accounting, go to statistics. So I work in statistics for about 30 years.

Q: Wow. At a private company?

A: Yeah, **Kemper**(ph) Insurance, yeah. And by the way, I speak with the accent. Of course, in – 20 years ago I had a better vocabulary. So I used to represent **Kemper**(ph) in **New York** once a month. There were intercompany conferences, and there was a guy who finish **Yale** in our department, and he says, well suddenly,

the guy **[indecipherable]** speak with the accent. And the boss says, listen, he is very logical, and he's a good fighter, that's why he is going.

Q: Well, you had a school, you had a school to learn in, and that was not just the business school –

A: Yeah, so –

Q: – and the junior college.

A: And I did quite well, 32 years I worked there, and I got a small pension from them on the top of my Social Security, so –

Q: Have you ever been back to **Poland**?

A: Twice.

Q: When?

A: First time in '77, I took my cousin to **Victoria** Hotel, which was the most prestigious hotel in those days.

Q: In **Warsaw**?

A: Yeah. For a dinner, three of us, and I paid four dollars. And about five years ago, I went to – to look at my sister's grave **[indecipherable]**. So, I was coming from the cemetery, I stop at **Marriot**, and they had the smorgasbord there. I go up there, I says, how much? 142 **zloty**, which is 42 dollars.

Q: Still not bad. Still not bad.

A: So obviously I didn't go there, but –

Q: Yeah. So, did you ever go back to **Kovel**? Or is that now part of **Ukraine**?

A: No, that was u – **Soviet Union**, and of **Ukraine**, yeah. No. I stayed in **Warsaw** most of the time, and in the Carpathian lo – mountains, and **Nowy Sacz**(ph). I got friends over there, so I stayed there for a while.

Q: Did you talk much about your experiences, to your children, and to others as you – you know, here, in the **United States**?

A: Well, they know, more or less. **Lillian – Lillian** is more interested than **Dorothy**. She's interested, but **Lillian** wants more details. So I talk with **Lillian**, and of course there are those books that I wrote some articles there about myself, so –

Q: What would you want – what would you want other children, those who don't have much exposure to this history, what would you want them to understand about these events, and what their significance is?

A: Well, unfortunately, they don't teach it in school. They teach about Holocaust, but mostly about Jewish people. Here you have two – two – three people in **Chicago**, who were in **Auschwitz**. One is 96, other is 96, and the third one is very sick. So this one who is 96, he goes to **Skokie**, which is a Jewish – Jewish community here, and he talks the high school there, to the young Jews, and explaining them, showing his number –

Q: His number.

A: – that s-some other people were there, besides Jews. So he – he is spreading this thing. And we published a couple books. And you know, there are a lot of books in Polish, but – for example, **Adamczuk**, he – he wrote a book about **Siberia**. And, of course, his book is published by University of **Chicago**. There's about 4,000 copies he sold **[indecipherable]** but I understand he sold like 30,000 copies in **Poland**.

Q: That's wonderful.

A: It's wonderful, right.

Q: So what is your message? That you would want more people to know about the deportations, the Siberian deportations?

A: Sure.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yes. I'm willing to go to schools and talk about it. Of course, as I get older, I have more time, and most of my bridge partners died, so –

Q: Well, I'd like to thank you for sharing your thoughts and your experiences with us today. They've been very interesting, very intriguing. You've painted a wonderful picture, in words, of at least a little part of what you had been through. And I'd say that, with that, this concludes the **United States Holocaust Memorial**

Interview with Eugene Chmielowski
January 31, 2015

Museum interview with Mr. **Eugeniusz Chmielowski**, on January 31st, 2015, in **Chicago**. Thank you again.

A: Thank you.

Q: Okay.

Conclusion of Interview