Interview with Witold Pawlikowski
January 21, 2015

Question: Good morning.

Answer: Morning.

Q: This is a **United Hol – States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **Witold Pawlikowski**, on January 21st, 2015, in **Arlington Heights**, **Illinois**. And thank you very much, Mr. **Paliko – Pawlikowski** for agreeing to speak with us today, to share memories of your life and childhood in **Poland**, and the experiences that you went through with your family. We very much appreciate your willingness to do so.

A: My pleasure.

Q: We're going to start at the beginning. I'm going to ask a number of questions about your childhood, and what your memories are pre-war, and then we'll go on from there. So my first question is, what was your name at birth?

A: **Witold Julian Pawlikowski**.

Q: Okay. And your date of birth?

A: May 5th, 1931.

Q: And where were you born?

A: In **Lódz**, **Poland**, which is a – a city, industrial city 180 kilometers southwest of **Warsaw**.

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Q: How many kilom –

A: 180 kilometers.

Q: Okay, 180 kilometers southwest. Did you have brothers and sisters?

A: No.

Q: You're an only child.

A: Only child.

Q: Can you tell me, what was your mother's name and your father's name?

A: My mother was **Sabina**. Her maiden name was **Majewski**(ph).

Q: Okay.

A: And my father was **Wazlow**(ph) **Pawlikowski**.

Q: **Wazlow**(ph) **Pawlikowski**?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you have any earliest memories from your childhood, even if they might be vague?

A: Well, I suppose when – it – it started when – when we moved back from the villages, because my father was a teacher. So, several first years o-of his career were spent in the villages outside of the city.

Q: Were you with him, you and your mother?

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A: Yes, I have a picture of myself on a horse. Well, the horse is about this size. So – but I do not remember that, because –

Q: Okay. Do you – do you remember how you lived and where you lived in the villages?

A: Apparently we lived in – in – in the – around the huts, but I do not remember the hut. I don't –

Q: Was your – was your father by profession a teacher?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay, di – was it grade school, or middle school, or all of it? What was his subject?

A: It was gra-grade school.

Q: Grade school teacher?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. And tell me a little bit about his family background. Did you know – did you have an extended family of aunts and uncles and grandparents and so on?

A: Well, my – my grandparents had three children; my father and a bro – and his brother and his sister.

Q: Was he the youngest or the oldest?

A: He was the youngest, and her sister was married, and her brother was not.

Q: Your father's brother?

A: My father's brother –

Q: – brother was not married.

A: – was – was not married, and he was killed during the war, with no family left.

Q: Oh, I see. And how did this happen?

A: He was taken into a camp and just gone.

Q: Died there?

A: But – but I don't know the details, I – I never had the chance to talk, because when I came to po – when I went to **Poland** back, in 1979, the grandparents were both dead, so I could not talk to them.

Q: And do you know what camp he was taken to?

A: No.

Q: Was it by the Germans?

A: Yes, by the Germans.

Q: By the Germans. Do you think that –

A: Bu – because when Germans came in, they occupied that part of **Poland**, all the way to the cuz – **Curzon Line**, that – and the **Soviet Union** came from the other side, of course.

Q: And was there a reason why he had been arrested that – that you knew of?

A: Well, I suppose it's – the reasons are very simple, since my father was in the military. And when he was moved in 1939, he was moved from **Lódz** to the eastern part of **Poland**, to **[indecipherable] Stanisławów**, which is not too far away from the **Lwów**, or as the Ukrainians call it now, **Lviv**. And he moved in April 19 –

Q: Excuse me, I'm going to interrupt right here. You're talking about your father, I'm still talking about your uncle.

A: Oh, he – he was also a teacher.

Q: He was also a teacher.

A: He was also – also a teacher, and –

Q: And was that why he was arrested by the Germans? Do you know the reason why?

A: No, I don't know the reason why, because we were not there at all. We were already in – in eastern **Poland**.

Q: Yeah. And you had an aunt as well, right?

A: Yes, and – and she had a family and – and her – her daughters still live in **Lódz**.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: So I did visit them when I was there in 1979, and 1980 – no, and – and 2000, excuse me.

Q: What was your aunt's name? I know – I know, it's –

A: **Orealia**(ph), I think.

Q: **Orealia**(ph)?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: **Pawlikowska**? That would have been her maiden name.

A: That would have been her n – her name then, yes.

Q: Her maiden name, okay. And was – what kind of – your grandparents, were they educated people as well? Because both sons were teachers.

A: Well, my – my grandfather was a medical student, but he did not get the medical degree, he was just a – what do you call it, the – like a – like a nurse, something. And my grandmother didn't have any –

Q: She kept house, right?

A: She did the house, right.

Q: Yeah. Did you know your grandparents we – when you were a little boy?

A: Yes, my grandmother. My grandfather died in 1918 of some influenza or something like that. I – so I never met him.

Q: So they were city people?

A: Yes. And my – my grandmother comes from another town called **Płosk**, which is south of – of **Warsaw**. Southeast of **Warsaw**. And we still have some family there.

Q: Let's turn now to your mother's family. Ha – her name again was?

A: **Sabina**.

Q: Uh-huh. And her maiden name?

A: **Majewski**(ph).

Q: **Majewski**(ph). Was your mother an only child, or did she have siblings as well?

A: No, she had two sisters, but one of the sisters died, also in – in 1918 – ’19, or something like that. But her other sister survived and sister survived, you know, the war times. And she – she’s buried in **Lódz**.

Q: In **Lódz**?

A: Yes.

Q: What is – do you remember your aunt’s name from your mother’s side?

A: **Jadwiga**(ph).

Q: **Jadwiga**(ph), okay. Did you – di – were her parents alive when – your grandparents on her side, when you were born and when you were a little boy?

A: I don’t rem – I don’t rem –

Q: You don’t remember your grandparents on your – on your mother’s side?

A: On my mother’s side?

Q: Yeah.

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: No, they must have been gone.

Q: Okay. So it sounds like you had a – a really rather small family, all told. I mean, if you had – am I making an assumption? Is that –

A: Right, m-my – my – my aunt had two sons, they were both younger than I, but they already dead for several years now.

Q: Oh, I see, so they were born in the 1930s.

A: Right.

Q: But after you.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Mm-hm. What kind of place did you live in, in **Lódz**?

A: Well, when we came to – from the village, we lived in an apartment. And I – I do remember it slightly. But then my father was – decided to go back into the army, and there was an – in –in the Polish army there was a – like a training system, where they would train the young people before they were drafted into the military, which – which a – all the young Poles who were drafted, it was just like **United States** had a draft at one time. And so he would be teaching in high school, the basic skills of the military.

Q: So he had been in the army before he was a teacher?

A: Yes, beca – well, he graduated from – from the military academy – you know, the officers' training school. And he left as a – as a second lieutenant.

Q: Oh, I see. So he had quite a rank, as well.

A: Well no, it was the lowest – lowest officer's degree. And he – because he – he was a teacher and th – and then he was teaching these courses in – in **Lódz**, in 1939 he was transferred to eastern **Poland**, and he became assistant to the regional commander.

Q: Okay, before we get there, a little bit – did he fight in World War I, your father?

A: No, no.

Q: No, so he –

A: He was born in 1906, so he would have been too small.

Q: Okay. So he was rather a young man in –

A: When – when –

Q: When World War II broke out, he was still quite young.

A: He was still 30 – 33.

Q: Yeah.

A: Right.

Q: All right, so yes, I'm sorry I interrupted you. So, he was transferred to a village in the eastern part of –

A: No, it was – it was a town.

Q: It was a town, mm-hm.

A: Town in eastern **Poland**, and so he went there in about April, and then we moved to – to be with him in July, and of course in September first, the war broke out, and so we were left behind, completely away from our family. And I suppose the reason we were deported was simple. My father was a military and he was therefore the enemy of the **Soviet Union**.

Q: We'll come to that, we'll come to that.

A: Okay.

Q: I want to talk a little bit more about pre-war life. Did you go to school when you were – were – were you already old enough to start school when –

A: Yes, I was – I was seven year olds **[indecipherable]** the school year. I was seven, and I went to first grade in **Lódz**, and I graduated from –

Q: First grade.

A: – that in – before the – before – you know, in – in June of 1939.

Q: Do you have any memories of it? Any memories of this first year of school?

A: Just sl-slight ones. I know – I know where I was going, you know, th-th-the – not – it wasn't too far away from where we lived. And I remember some beginning of some poetry that we were learning of how **[indecipherable]** was – a poem that

everybody knew by heart. And so I remember some of these – these things, you know. But I don't remember the daily – daily, you know, life or something from that. I knew that I could walk by myself, and –

Q: Did you – at home, did your mother have help in running the household, or did she do it all on her own?

A: No, she did it all by herself.

Q: All by herself.

A: And so when – when my father started working for the military in – in – in **Lódz**, we moved into a military building, an-and that I remember.

Q: What wa – how wa – why is it distinct in your mind?

A: Well, it's – I suppose because those – in a bigger building, you know, we were on seventh floor or something like that, and – and it was much nicer apartment than the one we had before. And so I remember that.

Q: Was it bigger?

A: It was bigger. And I – I remember one Christmas that we spent there, and by that time I had the little dog, and the dog was named **Tito**. Way before **Tito**

[indecipherable]

Q: Really?

A: Yes. And –

Q: A precursor.

A: – and we had the Christmas tree like this one in here, an-and there were some chocolates hanging on it, you know. And the little dog would eat away the – the bottom of the chocolate, and the chocolate would fall out and he would eat it.

Q: A smart little dog.

A: Smart little dog, it's stuck in my mind.

Q: Yeah. What are your memories of your father?

A: Well, I have a – a – a very distinct memory of – of him when he came out – after he moved into the eastern **Poland**, he came back, you know, to help us get, you know, loaded and – and things. And I was going – I was co – I was out – outside on the street, and he – and here was a figure of an officer in a – what do you call these, like a long – it wasn't a coat, it was a – like a hanging thing, you know, it –

Q: Was it a cape?

A: Like a cape, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: And because he was in – in a different unit in – over there, he had to wear this cape. And he's walking in his uniform, with the cape on. So, I remember that.

Q: He must have been quite elegant looking.

A: Yes, of course.

Q: What kind of a person was he?

A: Well, I don't know. He was – he was a loving father, and – and that's all I can say really, because you know, I – at the age of seven, what kind of recollections do you have of what – what kind of person your father was, you know.

Q: Well, some people – yeah, one can't have much. But is he someone that you were in awe of, or afraid of, or was he very warm? Those sorts of thi – memories.

A: No, I was never afraid of my father.

Q: Okay.

A: And I suppose wa – once he started wearing the military uniform, you know, I was quite impressed. Because Polish military uniforms were very elegant, you know, with the – with the high boots –

Q: Boots.

A: – you know, and things, and so he –

Q: He must have cut quite a figure.

A: He quite – that's him.

Q: That's him? And can you focus in on that? Let's focus in on that picture. Such a young man, truly.

A: Yes. But – so he – he cut quite a figure in the – in the uniform.

Q: Did that mean you wanted to be – to grow up and be that way too, or did that thought not occur to you?

A: It didn't occur to me at that time, but en – and later on I n – actually never did. And my military career is something else, and I'll talk about it later on.

Q: Okay. All right. All right, so then, let's turn to your mother. While I'm at – while I'm at it, what – what are your first memories of your mother, as a little boy before the war?

A: I don't know, I don't really have any particular memory because she was – she was with me all the time. I suppose when – when she took me to kindergarten, and it would just – just happen to be that in the – in the building that we lived in, the kindergarten was just across the street. And so she took me there, and I remember her at that time. But, otherwise I – I don't remember hearing any park – particular thing from – from those days, that – she was there all the time. She was helping, you know.

Q: Again, I'll ask the same type of question. What kind of personality did she have? Was she outgoing, was she more reserved?

A: I suppose you could say that she was both. Sometimes she could be very outgoing and sometimes she would withdraw into herself. But she was very active. Before the war she – I don't know how it happened, but – but she became part of a

women's movement of some sort. And it was also kind of a mi-military thing. And so these women were head – were having camps every year. And I remember that we were went with my mother to those – those camps, and she was working in th – as a quartermasters at – at the camp. And so she was quite – quite active during those days, and I suppose she was very happy, because you know, she would do something, so, you know, very useful. And one of these camps was – was in the area where the president of **Poland** came to visit. And I remember seeing him at that time, in nine – 1937, probably.

Q: So it wouldn't have been **Marshall Pilsudski**, he had already died.

A: Oh, no, no, no, no, no, he was gone, right. But it was – no, no, it wasn't **Wojohosky**(ph). No. Nn – he was never president. But anyways, so –

Q: But that's quite impressive.

A: So I was – I was quite impr – because you know, the ceremony and everything else, he – you know, and so thi – all the women from the camp were over there, that's why I – I **[indecipherable]** that's why I came, you know, there too. So that – that I remember.

Q: Did – I mean, you were a little boy, so you know, again, it's like you said, how much can one really say, but your – did your parents talk about the things that were important to them? And I'll say what I mean, like did you have a sense of whether

they were religious people, or whether they were, I would assume, quite patriotic people? But what sort of stories do you remember hearing from them, and the – the things that they did at home? What – what were those pillars of – of identify, I guess one would say.

A: Well, you – I do remember s-stories that my mother would tell me about – about her father.

Q: Okay.

A: Who traveled when he was – when he was a young man, he – he was edu – being educated in – in **Saint Petersburg** in – in a medical school. And then he traveled, and he traveled through the areas through which we traveled later.

Q: So you mean through the areas of **Russia**?

A: Right. And the –

Q: And so you'd hear stories about those things.

A: And I remember too, this particular one, that he was – he was in – in – in **Tashkent**(ph), and that's where we went through also. And so it was, you know, an unusual story that the second and third generations went the same way. Slightly – in slightly different circumstances of course, because he went as a free man, and we did not.

Q: Yeah.

A: But that I remember.

Q: Did – was there a sense of patriotism at home?

A: Yes. I think all the time, and – and especially with – with Father in the military uniform also. It was – it was always present. I can't recall any particular talks about it, but – but you know, they – they lived through the period when **Poland** was born, so for them it was very important. And they were patriots, both of them.

Q: What about church? Did they go to church regularly?

A: Yes. Yes, we – we went to church, and I – I remember – I don't remember the name of the church, but I no – remember where it was. And when – when we lived in the military block, I know.

Q: Now again, this is probably not fair – a – a fair question to somebody who was six and seven years old at the time, but I'm curious. In **Lódz**, which is a rather large city, there were – there was a large Jewish population as well. And did you know of – did you know that there were people who were Jews? Did you have any Jews who were neighbors? Did that – did the Jewish world ever, in any way, come across into your world?

A: I no – I don't go, I – you know, I – but – but yes, I – I knew that it's a multinational, because there was not only Jews, but there were Poles, the Germans,

the Russians. It was very international city, because it was an industrial city and the – the – you know, with all kinds of – of people.

Q: So it was multi-ethnic.

A: But – right, but I don't remember any kind of a anti-something, an anti-somebody talks, because my mother was going with – with girls that were of German origin and I'm sure they went with the – with the Jewish girls, and then so – but I don't remember particular that – like if there was a Jew that was visiting us, for example, no.

Q: Well, I'm thinking, did you ever go to streets that were – maybe the baker, or there would be a tailor, or you would see like streets that would be particularly, you know, more Jewish, in the Jewish section of town, or – or neighbors who might be around. That – that sort of question.

A: Mm, no, I – I don't –

Q: You don't remember.

A: – I don't recall. And I'm sure, because they were all over the place.

Q: Yeah.

A: So, but it – it did – it didn't strike me in particular because – I guess because there was no distinction in – in the way that no, they're something else, you know.

So in – in – in my mind there was – there was no some kind of a predetermined love or hatred of somebody else. I think it – it was just natural to me.

Q: Yeah. Did you know – did you have a sense – now again, this may not be a fair question because I'm asking it of somebody who was seven at the time, but did you have a sense that there were others, people who were not Polish in the city, or is that something you learned or knew about later? When you say that **Lódz** was a multi-ethnic place, and –

A: Well, I'm sure I have seen all kinds of people in the streets.

Q: Okay.

A: You know. And – and because the Jews at that time were dressing in a distinct way, you know, so you could recognize them. And they – m-most of them wore beards, you know, and things like that. And I'm sure I have seen hundreds of them. But I – it did not impress me in any particular way that this, oh my goodness, is something else. So it – and – and that's the way I am, I – I'm – I'm very accepting person. Besides, I've seen many people of all kinds of things, so – and we'll talk about it later **[indecipherable]**

Q: Yes, yes. Describe a little bit about the city itself, again, through your eyes. You told us that, you know, you were in a military barracks – that that – not a barracks, but an apartment –

A: Right.

Q: – that your parents moved to. And was it – were you in a section of the city that was in the center, or in the outskirts, and what did it look like?

A: Well, I cannot tell that **[indecipherable]** exactly, and I did visit it later when I was in **Poland**. But no, it wasn't a – in the middle of the city, but it was just a little bit away.

Q: Outside, mm-hm.

A: But we had the very good connection by – by rail, you know, in the – what do you call it, the trams?

Q: The trams, mm-hm.

A: Right. And so, I remember having to use two or three trams to get to my – my aunt's place. So –

Q: Mm-hm. Your father's sister.

A: No, my mother's sister.

Q: Oh, your mother's sister, okay.

A: My mother's sister. And I don't remember where my – my mo – father's family lived. You know, my grandfather. But I do remember that they – he was working in a – in a factory, and most of the industry in **Poland** was – was the textile industry.

Very highly developed textile industry. And so he was working as a maintenance man in the – in the – in the factory.

Q: That would have been your grandfather?

A: My grandfather on my father's side.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So I – I remember him. My grandmother died, and I do remember that she was, you know, in – in **Poland** there are no places where you could put the people like – like a – funeral homes. So basically the person lied in the house for three days before the – the person was buried. And I remember seeing her in the – you know.

Q: Was that a shocking thing? You know, you had seen her alive, and now she wasn't any more, and you were a child, or was that something strange for you?

A: Well, I'm – I'm a – I'm sure it was, I – I don't recollect it right now. But seeing your grandmother laying there and not moving, you know, i-it's a shock to any child.

Q: Yeah.

A: And you know – but it's – it's so strange that I remember that she was laid out, and that was natural thing, this was the thing to do.

Q: Yeah.

A: And in fact, it was – you couldn't think of anything else, because she belonged here, so therefore she goes from here, you know, to the – to the burial ground. And tha – that – that I recall. And I do not recall the – the funeral of my grandfather, or my – my mother's mother at all, because we were not there.

Q: So, let's turn now to the place that your father is sent in April 1939. What kind of a place was this? What was it called?

A: It was a small town in the mountain area, very beautifully located, that I – that I remember. And I – and I remember when other – when we were – when we were traveling, I remember when we went into the train to – to start the journey. And so he had rented a – a – part of a villa on a hill. So in order to – to go to the town, you had to go down the hill and – and th – and walk to the town, because it wasn't too far away. So that – that I do remember, and it was really a – a beautiful, beautiful area –

Q: It sounds so pretty.

A: – with the mountains across, you know, you could see the hills.

Q: This the **Carpathian**?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Yes. And, you know, we didn't have time to travel and visit and anything else, because we only had two months there. But – but I do remember – I si –I still – I still can see the view, you know, of the – of the mount – of the hills, because they are not very – very tall. But of the hills that were – that were across the way from – from our apartment.

Q: Well, that was, you know, the summer of 1939. And was there any sense in your world that people were getting more nervous, or was it a beautiful summer?

A: As far as I was concerned, it was a beautiful summer. My – my father, you know, worked and I – I do remember, I think that – that he took us on one of the – he had to visit the camp where he was training th-the kids, and – and we did go with him to – to visit that. I don't recall the details, but then I remember that we went. And you know, it – the – the area, which of course loc-located in – in the part where many people were Ukrainian, White Russians, Jews – again, you know, because that's – that's the way it was in **Poland**, all – all over the place. And that I remember. And I – and I remember our – our apartment very well.

Q: The villa.

A: Yes.

Q: And in the villa –

A: And you – you were – we were renting so-somebody was the owner of the villa, and downstairs was a lawyer that had an apartment and we had the one upstairs.

Q: Tell me about it. What did it look like, this apartment. It sounds beautiful.

A: Well, it – we had – we had the – the living/dining area, and the – and the bedroom for my po – for my parents. And the little – little place where – where I lived. And then – and the kitchen. So it wasn't very bag – big, but – but it had – had the balcony, so you could go on the balcony. And we brought all the furniture of course, from – from which when we moved. So it was very nicely furnished, and my mother was quite happy. I don't remember how we were going to the – to – for the supplies for example, was the nearest – nearest shop or something –

Q: Grocery store.

A: – grocery store, but – but apparently everything was fine, and –

Q: Was it a – were – was it a residential area where there were other villas right next to it?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Okay.

A: Yes, it was – as I said, it was located on the hill, overlooking the town, and – and very, very, very nice.

Q: Would you think that – would you be able to say whether it was a well-to-do area of this town?

A: That I wouldn't – I don't think so, because my father was just living off of the military pay, and it wasn't that much. But – but apparently the apartment was affordable, and you know, th-the owner had built the – the villa several years ago, and my father apparently found a space, and that's where we moved in.

Q: Mm-hm. And the name of the town again was?

A: **Dolina**(ph).

Q: **Dolina**(ph), mm-hm. So, any other sort of memories from the summer of '39, after you moved there?

A: No, not until – not until my father was ordered to go back to his unit.

Q: So tell us about that. Did you – oh, excuse me – September 1st, 1939, did your parents have a radio at home?

A: No.

Q: So how did you learn that there was going to be a war, or that there was a war?

A: My father must have learned through this – through the office.

Q: Okay.

A: Because I don't remember exactly when, but several days later, he was ordered to go back. And I remember taking – you know, taking him to the train, oh – and

him standing – him dressed up in unit – mili – uniform, and saying goodbye to us, and I remember his picture, it was the last, you know, picture of him being in a uniform.

Q: You mean, your – the picture in your mind.

A: In my mind, yes.

Q: Yeah. I forgot to ask this before, but as far as you could tell, were your parents close to each other? I know, it –

A: It's a difficult question to ask, because you know, what – what does a seven year old know about –

Q: Yeah.

A: – what their parent – but they – I don't remember ever of them arguing or – or yelling at each other or anything like that, no.

Q: Mm-hm. Okay.

A: It was – you know.

Q: A peaceful home.

A: A peaceful **foam**, yes, that's very good.

Q: So, when you said he was ordered back, where was he ordered back to? Was it **Lódz**?

A: Yes. I don't know it was **[indecipherable]** that he was not reassigned, but you know, of course, it's several months, you know, that it – but he was reassigned to go to his regiment, and it was 27th regiment of – in the army. And so he left, maybe two or three days after the war broke out.

Q: So, early September.

A: Early September. And by that time I – and I do remember when later on there – there was a lot of mil – you know, people and military, they were moving out to – to go to the border and go to **Romania** and go to – to **Hungary**. So I remember these transports and transports and transports of people on the – on the – you know, horse driven carts, and military walking. Thousands of people just moving out. That I – that I'm – that was even before – on the – of cour – of course before the Russians came in.

Q: So tell me, **Dolina**(ph), it – was it close to the border of **Romania** and **Hungary**? And was it close to the border of Soviet **Ukraine**? How – was it is – a borderish area. That's what I'm trying to say.

A: Yes, it must have been about, you know, maybe 50 - 60 kilometers from the **Soviet Union**.

Q: Okay.

A: And about the same thing from – from the other borders. Because you seen that **Poland** was like this, and this thing goes straight over here, you know. So it was – it was called **Do-Dolina**(ph) **Koa**(ph) **Stanisławówa** (ph), and the **Stanisławówa**(ph) was largest city.

Q: Okay.

A: And now it's called **Ivana**(ph) **Petrowsk**(ph) in – you know, in the Ukrainian. So apparently it wasn't too far away because people who were just walking, you know, within walking distance from the borders.

Q: And you would see this on your street, where you lived, or would you –

A: No, down below.

Q: Down below.

A: Down below because the main st – main road was going through there.

Q: Could you see that from your house?

A: Yes.

Q: The balcony of your house –

A: Yes.

Q: – you could see all the movement.

A: All the transports were walking, you know. And – and of course at that time we didn't know what happened with my father at all, because when the Germans

attacked, of course they're moving very fast, and the Russians – on the 17th of September the Russians came in. And my father came back to us after the Russians have occupied our area. And he was wounded. A shrapnel had hit him in the leg, and so he was wounded, and he came. I don't know how, but at that time the border was still kind of fluid.

Q: Permeable, mm-hm.

A: And so he had the chance to – to escape from – because his unit was destroyed, bit – be – by – by the time he go – he got there, it – it was gone. So – and complete disorder was – was in charge of everything. And so he managed to come back to us. And he was wounded, and – and I remember that somehow they found out that he came back. And the Russian military people came in, and they saw him, and they saw him being wounded, and they said, well, we'll – we'll send you a doctor. And the Russian doctor came in and was tending to his wound. But my fa –

Q: Was this the fir – was this the first time you saw any of the Russian soldiers, or – or Russian military **[indecipherable]**

A: No, I – no, we saw them also coming in.

Q: You also saw them coming in.

A: We saw come – coming in, and they were not very impressive, because they – they we – they kept, you know, kind of goofy looking boots on it, you know, and –

and th-th-th – they were not just like, you know, Polish military. They were not really very well dressed, but there were plenty of them, so – and they were armed. So that I remember, their – their coming over, you know, transporting –

Q: Right.

A: – themselves into – into **Poland**. And then ma – somehow, I don't know, they alt – already the underground system must have started, because my father decided that he's not going to be waiting until she – he is well, so they can take – take him – you know, the Russians can take him. So he decided to escape.

Q: Okay.

A: And he left us, and went toward the border, and there must have been some kind of, you know, group of people that was being formed, and apparently they were just caught on the border.

Q: Okay.

A: And he was brought back into our town, which of course we didn't know. But sometime later, his barber, who was a Jew, came to my mother and he said, you know, my – my cousin is working as a guard in – in the jail, and he told me that your husband is in jail. And he also said that if we wanted to visit him, he will permit us to get in, provided it's four o'clock in the morning.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: So, we did go, and –

Q: You too, as well, even though you're a young boy?

A: Yes, so – so we went and – and he brought my father out from I don't know where, and this was the last time we saw him.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: So, it must have been some time in October.

Q: What did he look like?

A: Of course, he was no – no military uniform, he was dressed up in some kind of a – maybe jail uniform or something, but – but I don't exactly remember ama – as that, you know. But this was the last time we saw him, and as I said, it was probably the – towards the end of 1939. And then we were told that all the prisoners were being transported away from – from **Dolina**(ph). And several weeks later my mother went to **Stanisławówa**(ph), to the larger town, to inquire about what happened with him. And of course, nobody knew anything about it. You know, and of course they did, but they didn't. So this was the last time I saw my father, was –

Q: Did you – you – when you went and you saw him then, you didn't know it was the last time, and your mother didn't know it was the last time.

A: No, of course not, of course not, because we – no, we know, you know, somebody's in jail, who knows what – what happens. And – but – so we didn't

expect him – but sometime in the beginning of March of 1940, the transport occurred, and he was taken out.

Q: Also, you say he must have been in jail for several months before –

A: Before he was –

Q: – he was taken out –

A: Right.

Q: – taken away. Do you remember his demeanor when you saw him? Did you – you know, did – do you remember anything of what he said, or your mother said, or how long the meeting lasted?

A: No, I don't remember the – the – the words that were exchanged, but it lasted about 15 - 20 minutes, no longer than that, because you know, the – th-the fellow that was the to – that permitted that, was taking a very great risk.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because if the – if the **NKVD** would come in and just –

Q: And find it.

A: – find it, he – he would really suffer.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, so – so it was very brave on – on his part, and very kind on the part of my father's barber to even come up with this idea.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, so we were grateful for that, but it was the last time.

Q: Yeah.

A: And – and after that we –

Q: What did – how did your mother live? I mean, how did you – did you have any savings, did she – or were you spared from these types of day to day worries, where will the food come from, how will we get by, or things like that?

A: I'm sure that that's wa – that's the way it was, because you know, the – the – the pay stopped, of course, everything just was ruined. So – but it – I don't recall that she would be going and selling some of the things like it happened later. But – but this is, apparently she – they must have had some money. And – but you know, then the Polish **złoty** had been exchanged, taken out, and the Russian **ruble** came in and – and all that, and I really don't know how – how that happened, but it was just several months that we lived, because we – when the Russians came in it was September 17th, and when we were deported, it was April 13th. So it's –

Q: So your father – your – she finds out that he is – he is taken away, some time around March – February or March –

A: Something –

Q: 1940?

A: Yes.

Q: And she doesn't know anything else. Did you go to school during those months, or was there –

A: No.

Q: – no school?

A: No, I did not. Every – ev – no, everything was just – just – the whole thing was shut.

Q: Okay.

A: You know, and the Russians were taking over, and no, I did not go to, like second grade at all.

Q: Did you vi – you and your mother, did you venture out of your apartment, or did you pretty much stay at home during those months?

A: No, I remember we went – we went into town, and must have been to – to get some supplies or something, but I don't exactly remember what stop – you know, what store we stopped, or something like that. But –

Q: Did the town look – did – did you notice anything in the town, were there a lot of soldiers around, was it – the atmosphere and things like that, do you remember anything about that?

A: No, but you know, y-yo-you could feel that it was not the same. Then – and then of course, th – right then from the very beginning, the – the kind of terror started, where you wouldn't be able to talk to anybody freely. You – you would – you know, it was – it – you could feel that everybody is kind of backing off, you know, I'm not going to say anything, and you know, that's the way it was, because you couldn't trust anyone any more. And of course, like everywhere else, there were – there were a lot of communists, Polish communists or Ukrainian communists or Jewish communists. And those people would – did go into cooperation, so you already didn't know who you can trust. We apparently trusted my – you know, the landlord, because then he didn't – didn't kick us out or anything like that, so, you know, must have been a very kind and good person to permit that. But, other than –

Q: Did you go to church? Do you remember going to church during these months?

A: No, I don't remember at all. I don't remember. And I don't even know – I don't even remember what kind of church we went to in – you know, before that, but – because I don't recall – recall that there was – there would have been church close to where we lived. It must have been somewhere else.

Q: I asked, I mean not only for, you know, whether this keeps up traditions or so on, but sometimes in such moments, that's where people gather, and they feel safer doing it, even if they may not speak to one another.

A: Yes, I'm – I'm sure – I am sure we did attend the masses got – but I don't recall seeing – you know, being any – any church at the time, I don't remember.

Q: What was your mother's demeanor like during these – these months? Did she seem to change for you, or not so much?

A: No, I – I – she was apparently a strong character. And so somehow she accepted that, you know, and when she was born and – until 1914, that part of **Poland** was under Russian occupation, all – you know. And so she was not shocked by – by, you know, being under Russians again somehow.

Q: So **Lódz** had been under – had been under the Russian occupation, earlier in the century?

A: In – wha – in it – in – before the first World War, yes.

Q: That is par – part of the tsarist empire?

A: Yes, mm-hm.

Q: Uh-huh, okay, so she was – it wasn't the first time she saw Russian soldiers. Or soldiers.

A: Right. Different – different ones, different uniforms and you know, different government kind of thing, but – but she was familiar with that.

Q: Did she speak Russian?

A: No, she did not. Even – even – you know, she probably some few words.

Q: Excuse me. **[technical interruption]** Okay, where were we? We were talking about your mother, and her knowledge of Russian, or lack of it and so on, and that she was not unfamiliar.

A: Right, but – but she – I don't know, maybe she was just simply not the type to learn other languages. She did learn some sp – some French, and – when she was in school, but apparently she had enough to get by when we were finally required to speak Russian. But – but she did not become fluent, you know. Probably enough words to – to get by. And the Russians and Polish are very similar, so you could really understand without having to really learn the language. And that's the way she was.

Q: Okay. So your contact w-with the Russian military authorities sounds like it was rather minimal. It was when they came – the doctor came to look at your father's wound, and then your father left, and – I should say Soviet military authorities, not Russian military authorities.

A: Right.

Q: And then it was when you visit him in – in prison that one time. Had it – had soldiers, or had any, from the occupying military authority been down your street or in your home in, you know, after that, before – before April?

A: No. Becau – you know that when they found out that my father was going – was out –

Q: Gone.

A: – they – I don't remember that somebody came in to inquire about what happened, that my mother was beaten, or something like that. Somehow we – we were lucky enough to avoid that kind of contact.

Q: All right. So what happens in April? And what date in April?

A: Then we – then the first deportation from the Polish territories occurred in – in February – in February. And so we were aware of the fact that people were being deported. And of course, you never knew who was going to be the next one. But then on – on April 13th at night, another – three o'clock, four o'clock in the morning or something like that, a banging sounded at the door, and the Russian troops came in, and th – we were ordered to pack within half an hour, and we're being taken away. So –

Q: And you were woken up from sleep?

A: Yes, and this is – this is the standard normal way that those units operated. Because you were asleep, you were drowsy, you know, you – you don't – you couldn't resist because you were not organized yet. And so this was the standard way that they would come in in the morning. And so we – my mother packed

whatever she could into a match – kind of box, and we were then taken to the – to the railroad station in – in **Dolina**(ph).

Q: And how were you taken?

A: By – by horse driven cart.

Q: Okay. Were you the only ones in the cart?

A: Yes.

Q: I see, so the neighborhood, nobody from downstairs, nobody from across the street. You were the only ones?

A: That's what I – from – from – from – within the nearest –

Q: Yeah.

A: – area. And we were taken over to the – to the station and loaded on the – no, I call it cattle car, it was just a regular, you know, railroad car that how was – inside was divided into two areas. The middle was open, and then on – the other two they had the – they had the lower level and they had another level where we – they would put the people on.

Q: So there was like bunkbeds inside the –

A: Like a – like a bu – like a bunk, but it was just a whole solid floor across the whole thing. And – and so they loaded the entire thing, I don't know how many, 60 people, I think were just like – we're just packed, you know. And the doors were

shut, and in the, you know, several hours laters, this – the train started and we started moving towards the – the Soviet border.

Q: Did you know that at the time?

A: Which way we were going?

Q: Yeah.

A: No, no.

Q: Did you – did you have one of those bunks, were you standing up, were you sitting down, were you –

A: I think we were – we were on the lower floor.

Q: Okay.

A: And so th – and – and a – the – the – you know, the only facility that was in the thing was – was a hole in the – in the floor where you could go and do your whatever – things. And so we were taken, and it took couple days, I suppose. Because you know, those – those transports, they are not – they stopped for military and this and that, and they didn't – they didn't care how long it takes for them to travel. So, a-after a couple days we had to be relo – reloaded into the Russian train.

Q: Tell me – tell me this, the – the atmosphere within the cattle car, were people silent? Were they crying, were they talking, were they – what was – what was going on? Did anybody say anything?

A: I don't recall, but I'm sure they did talk ab-about it, you know, and – but there weren't any c-cries, any yellings, or anything like that. It was rather quiet, because everybody was s-so scared –

Q: Yeah.

A: – that you – you know, I mean all of a sudden you're taken away – everything is you – y-you in completely different world. This is what you have, and that's all? And so it wasn't something that the people start sa – you know, telling jokes, and laughing, you – you know. It was – it was rather silent. And I remember when – when we came to the border, and we had to move to the Russian trains, because the Russian railroad system was wired in Polish. So th – we couldn't use Polish trains any more. So we were reloaded, and kept going east. And then realized that we are being sent, you know, into the territory of the so – **Soviet Union**. So it – I don't remember how it – how long it took, but it probably took several weeks for us to finally travel almost to – to the **Ural Mountains**, just a – towards the – towards the – with – on the south of the **Ural Mountains**, and – and the – and the – and the steppe begins, the – the plains.

Q: Did you have any – I mean, how did you eat? Did they give you any food, any water?

A: Yes, we were ti – we were fed apparently, you know, the – the famous Russian thing that you can get on a train. It's called **kipiatok**, the hot water – the boiling water from the – from the engine. So they would open and said okay, okay, go and get **kipiatok**. So everybody went, you know, and –

Q: Did people have cups with them? In – did you –

A: You – if y-you better had something on your own. So that was the only liquid that we were given, and they apparently must have stop on their own – on the – on the way wherever they stopped, to give us some bread. And in general, in Russian – in **Russia** that's what you – if you're lucky, you eat bread, not like this one in here, but – but you were lucky if you – if you got, you know, a hundred grams of bread a day. And that's the way we were fed.

Q: Did – were – did everybody survive the three weeks?

A: Yes. Which was very different from the first deportation, where people were deported in the middle of the winter. And in that time, many old people, many children have died o-of – just froze to death. I-In our case no, because it was – you know, already spring.

Q: So you don't remember the cold –

A: No.

Q: – particularly.

A: No, no, no, it wasn't – it wasn't that, because no, it was just normal spring temperatures already. So we were not freezing and – an-and it was cold, but we were not freezing.

Q: Did your mother say anything to you during this transport, at – during the time you're in the cattle car that you remember? I'm sure you spoke, I'm sure you talked.

A: Oh sure, n-no, I – I don't remember any particular –

Q: Okay.

A: – like I suppose she must have talked to m – told me that don't worry, everything is going to be fine, but I don't recall this, as a particular, you know, moment of my life.

Q: Did you know anybody else prior – I mean, there were other people on the – on the cattle car, did you recognize anybody?

A: No.

Q: So, they were all strangers?

A: They were all stranger, y-you know, you were **[indecipherable]**

Q: You were just **[indecipherable]**

A: – and you know, after being two months, you know, in an – in a new area.

Q: Right.

A: But – but you mir – you make friends right there, you're beginning to talk to people and –

Q: Yeah.

A: – yeah.

Q: Okay, so tell me what happened after that?

A: Okay, and then after – after traveling for some time, we were unloaded in **Kostanay**, which is a capital city of the **Kazakhstan**, **Kazakh Republic**. And we were transported to a – to a **kolkhoz**, which is –

Q: What's a **kolkhoz**?

A: **Kolkhoz** is a – is a farm run by the government.

Q: Okay.

A: It's a – you know, there was no pra – private property, there was just a – when the revolution happened, they took the mi – the land from the landlords, and from the people and made them into units, which are large administrative units called in – I think our case, **kolkhoz**.

Q: Okay.

A: And we would – we put in a – in a – the village, and in – into the house of a – of a Ukrainian couple that was deported during 1930s.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: When – when the – you know, the Russians started the killing of the Ukrainians, and they just simply starved them to death. And I think it was just like nine million people di – that starved to death, because they started rebelling against the, you know, Russians taking their soil, their land, their – their things. So they became a part of this group that lush – Russians, as they say, pacified them by transporting them into the **Kazakhstan**. So – so they fully realized what we went through, because they went through it. So they were very kind, very friendly, you know, and – and opened their house for us.

Q: Isn't that interesting, given that there had been tension and conflict between Ukrainians and Poles historically –

A: Right.

Q: – particularly in the border regions. And it's – kind of – feels almost like grace, that you – your destiny brings you to a place where you have people who understand what you're going through.

A: Right, you know, and in – and I – I don't to – I don't think there was any Russian normal person that did not go to some kind of something like that. And then ta – so, we were there for several months, and my mother was working cutting peat.

Q: Mm-hm. And how do you – what does that mean, cutting peat?

A: Well, you know – you know what peat is, it was – it's a – it's a – like a – hm. A growth of – of – of a thing –

Q: Okay.

A: – and it's – like the growth is so thick, that it – it forms about a size like that, you know. And once you try – once you cut it into – into like squares, and then it gets dried up.

Q: Okay.

A: And then you can burn it.

Q: So it can be used for heating.

A: It can be used for heating, right.

Q: And for fuel.

A: Right.

Q: Okay.

A: And so she was doing that and – and I remember telling him – her telling me later is that the – the lady of the house, that – the Ukrainian woman took my mother away for – for a minute and she said, **Sabina**, I have to tell you something. My son, who is in the military is coming to visit us, and please, for heaven's sake, don't say anything against the Soviet government, because he's going to report you, and he's

going to report us, and all of us are going to be taken away. Mother about her own son.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: So, you know, that – this – th-this – that's the way the system worked. That you never – you – you never knew – you couldn't form any kind of units, like you know, people getting together and thinking and whispering and thing, because you were afraid of your neighbors, of course, but you were also afraid of your own children, because the propaganda was such strong thing, they said it – if they – if he heard them talking something about the **Soviet Union [indecipherable]** government, they would a – a – have – against it. They were – there were people to be – get in river – get rid of because you know **[indecipherable]**

Q: They're **[indecipherable]**

A: – the system.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, and so that's the whole system worked, it worked on the basis of complete distrust to each other. And –

Q: So that makes it even more remarkable that you – you were able to form this bond with these people, because they had gone through enough that they reached

out to you, or you reached out to them, I don't – I don't know how, but – but in that atmosphere.

A: Right, but what – apparently they – well, the – first of all, they knew that we're new, so we are not part of the system, you know. And – and the other thing was that all of a sudden they realized that they had gone through that, and they may as – may as well open their hearts to people that are going through it right now, you know, and so it was – it was really very nice. But we weren't there too long.

Q: I see. What happened?

A: And then we were transferred –

Q: Oh, by the way, did the son – did the son come and did you meet him? Did you remember that – anything about that?

A: No, I don't remember that, but – but he – he was going to come right – right away, so –

Q: I see.

A: – so you know, so she – he must have come.

Q: Okay.

A: And you know, then everybody was quiet and –

Q: Right.

A: – everything was fine. The – the – the system is wonderful, and you know, and you have to do anything to survive. So everybody – they didn't know exactly what to do, what to say, and how to, you know, say hello for the **Soviet Union**, you know, **Batka**(ph) **Stalin**, and –

Q: What does that mean?

A: Father **Stalin**. He was father of the whole Fatherland. So, you know. And it's really strange that within few years – because the revolution was in 1917, and that within few years, it's to – what, 20 years, and you could – you could create such a system of oppression, that – of mistrust, of – of fear. And – and s – and many times you didn't have to say anything. It's just that you happened to be in the wrong place in the wrong time. And you were just arrested.

Q: So this – this knowledge – you were seven years old. Did you feel this automatically? Is this something your mother warned you about, so that – you know, don't talk here, don't talk there. How did you know this, as a seven year old boy?

A: Well, that – I was listening to – to – to the Ukrainian woman telling my mother about it, and so this – this is – it – it just becomes natural. You c – you c – you could feel this happening, you know, and so everybody just simply shuts up.

Q: Okay.

A: And – and a – and I d – I didn't tell you that, but – but when we were being deported, my – my little dog **Tito**, the chocolate eater, the Russian officer that was in charge throws it at me and he says **[speaks Russian]**. Take – take your –

Q: Take your dog.

A: – do-dog with you. And so he was deported with us to the – to the **Soviet Union**, and –

Q: There was a dog in the cattle car?

A: Yes, a little dog in the – and the dog is – dog was about like this. It's – it's a – it's a kind of a dog that apparently comes from **India**, but, you know, thousands of years ago. And he was simply a house dog. And when we ended up in a – in a – after being taken away from this **kolkhoz** and put in another one, which – which was a – a cattle farm – no, I'm sorry, no, this was the **kolkhoz** yet. My mother was going on – on to this – cutting this – this peat. And he run after her one time, and then he c – he run away and come – comes back after a while, jumping at my mother and – and you know, and – and howling and taking, you know, just come with me, you know. So – so she goes with him into the steppe, and she sees a – a big rabbit, killed. And killed by this little dog. And what happened in – in all these generations of being house pet, in – in circumstances like this, his past comes to him. Because apparently these dogs were used to kill the snakes.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: And they're little – little dog, half of the – of the rabbit, jumps at the rabbit, grabs him here by the throat and kills him one – once **[indecipherable]**. And then – why did he realize that my mother will be very happy to take this, I don't know. But she came in and – and we had the feast that evening.

Q: That's amazing. That's amazing. That's amazing and I'm also amazed that the cattle car people didn't eat your little dog, cause everybody's hungry.

A: He was not much to eat, you know, so the – wouldn't – wouldn't even feed one person, so probably that's why he survived. And he survived through the – all – all our being in **Russia**, and we took him back, you know, we took him to **Teheran**, and I'll tell you that later.

Q: Okay, okay. So he got some of your crumbs of bread when you were in the cattle car, and that allowed him to survive, too.

A: Yes.

Q: Wow. Okay. So your mother is then transferred. How – do military authorities, or the local authorities –

A: No, the – the – the loc – loc – local ter – authorities just loaded us up and you know, send us to another area, and that area was – it was a f – a farm that was dedicated to raising cattle.

Q: Okay.

A: And so all of a sudden from peat digger, she becomes a cattle rise – raiser. She had a group of 30 calves that she had to take into the steppe, feed, you know.

Q: So, shepherdess.

A: Shepherdess, right.

Q: Okay.

A: And so she – she was doing that for the rest of the stay up north.

Q: For a city girl.

A: For a city girl who – person that was taking care of, you know, camps an-and things like that. But that – that was normal, and i-if – in – in **Russia** there is a saying that **[speaks Russian]**

Q: Mm-hm. What does that mean?

A: It doesn't work, it doesn't eat. So – so everybody had to work.

Q: What about you?

A: No, I was too small. But then wa – once we were transferred to the other location, and it was already getting into the time when the – when the schoolyear begins, I was assigned to go to the Russian school.

Q: So this is half a year. If you're leaving in April, if you're deported in April 13th, 1940, you spend a couple of months in the first place, and then several months in the second, and –

A: End of September came around –

Q: And then September comes around.

A: – and – and – and – and I was – and I was – I was put to school, and I – again for the fir – to the first grade, because I, you know, didn't know Russian at all. And – but for a kid to learn is much faster, and so I – I went to school, and apparently I was very good, because I have – I got a diploma.

Q: You got a diploma?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Let's see the diploma.

A: Oh yes, I have – I have a diploma that I was given after graduation – after completing the first grade.

Q: So that would have been a regular school year, September to May or June or something.

A: Something like that. And this is my diploma.

Q: Oh my goodness. Got that?

A: And it – and this **[speaks Russian]** or diploma, because I – I graduated as – as a – one of the first students. I had – everything was very good, and so **Batchka**(ph) **Stalin**, **Lenin** gave me this in appreciation.

Q: Well, were you proud of it as a young child, or did you already feel a sarcasm there?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Okay.

A: I already knew what it was all about.

Q: Okay.

A: So –

Q: What are some of those other papers?

A: Oh, this is – this is a – a – was graduation from the fir – first case – grade – the first grade, and the Russian language, the mathematics, history, and I – all the grades were – were very good. **[indecipherable]**

Q: Let's turn it this way a little bit, okay. Can you – can you focus in a little more so that they co – we could actually read the writing? Okay. Thank you. So you took these papers with you. You –

A: So somehow I am – I managed to save them, and you know, this is really – the only thing that I remember, that proves that – that I was deported to the **Soviet Union**.

Q: You never had any other kind of – of –

A: Documents, passports or something like that? I – I don't think so. I do – I don't recall seeing anything that my mother had.

Q: Now, when those soldiers came to deport you, did they in – you know, back in **Dolina**(ph), did they say why? Did they say, you're enemies, or did they just say, pack up you're leaving?

A: Yeah, that's all. They just simply do not discuss these things. It's –

Q: No reason given.

A: – no reason given, just pack up and go. And so, you know – but I – I'm – in a way I'm glad that I – that I went to school, because I still remember a lot of Russian. I cannot – I cannot just talk too much, because you know that, after years of not using it. But – but – and it's – it's very difficult for me to – to read, but after a while I can – I can begin to read, you know, and so like **[indecipherable]** just, you know, it comes out. But – but it's – but it isn't – oh, and this is – this is **[speaks Russian]** the national –

Q: The people's **commissariat**?

A: Yeah, **commissariat** of education.

Q: I see. I see.

A: So, you know, I'm very proud of this.

Q: Well, actually, I think it's something very much to be proud of, for a child that is traumatized like that, to still be able to perform in school to such –

A: And – and – and – and I di – passed grades, so –

Q: Yeah, you know. I'm sure that your mother was very pleased, even though it was –

A: Well, you know, it wa – it was – I'm glad yat – that I did, that I didn't waste my time, that I have learned basics to the point where – I'll tell you later, probably, this was useful for me when I was in **U.S. Army**.

Q: No kidding. No kidding. Okay, we'll talk about that.

A: Okay. Anyway, so th-the rest of the time that we spent in 1941 –

Q: So where did you – excuse me – you – you moved to this other place where she becomes – she starts herding cattle. Your living circumstances, were you – tell me a little about that.

A: Well, we lived in a – in a – a barrack.

Q: Okay.

A: That we were assigned, I think we were like three families in – in one room in a barrack. And s – it was just the place for you to put down for night. And because my mother was working, so she was entitled to – to some kind of a ability to get food, you know, from the local store.

Q: Were you hungry during these times, during these months?

A: Most of the people in the **Soviet Union** are hungry. If you survive on a piece of bread that's about that size, you know, of loaf of bread, and maybe little bit of vegetables, or something that, you know, that come out your way, yes, you are hungry all the time. Maybe you're not starving, but you know, you don't – you don't – and there's not much – not – not mu-much else to eat. And you just – so you just simply feed yourself with th-the least things that you can get. And it – it's – in a way it's good because you don't have to spend your time cooking things, you know. But –

Q: So it's a – it's a far cry from **Tito** eating candies off of a Christmas tree.

A: Yes, it was a ver – a very far cry. But **Tito** was wi-with us, and he – he became a – a protector dog of the cattle. Because I remember one time the – the wolves came into the village, you know, to see if they can get one of those calves, you know. And it was in – in the evening and I remember the whole village came out with – with you know, something to bang on and trying to get those – those wolves out.

And my dog run out and he started after them. And since they never saw anything like that in their lives, they got scared. So they started escaping and he run after them. And I said to myself, well, that's – that's the end of **Tito**. Well, after couple hours he comes back, he's – his mouth full of – of you know, wolves' –

Q: Fur?

A: – wolves' fur. So apparently he was chasing them and – and biting them, and he chased them away. So he became a hero of – of the – of the farm. So – he had quite a life.

Q: Was sort of like, you know, in **Shakespeare** when he wrote "**Romeo and Juliet**," and it was a tragedy, he'd introduce some comic relief. So here is **Tito**, he's the comic relief.

A: That's right, that's right. And so, you know, all the people in the village really liked him, you know, and all that kind of stuff. And he survived until later. And I'll tell you about that.

Q: Okay. So, during this time, do you know whether your mother was able to inquire about your father, or not even?

A: Oh, no, no, not at – not at all.

Q: Not at all.

A: No, because the system is such that once you – you become arrested, you are lost to your family. You just simply, you know – and you don't want to – anybody to know, because then you became a – a – an enemy of the people. So, you know – but everybody knew, of course, that we are the enemies, because once we were deported, that means that you are the enemy. And – but – but – but the locals were understanding. They knew, because they went through the same thing themselves.

Q: Even in the second place?

A: Ena – even in the second place. It was – some of the people were there, you know, the same way, and the only other thing that I remember, other than just – just going to school is that one time a Russian, whoever, one of the representatives came in to me and he said, you know, we – we lost a couple horses, they escaped, they run away into the steppe and they probably went to this other vil – you know, place. Are you willing to – to go after them and bring them back? And of course I said yes, of course. So they gave me a horse, and they say okay, you go that – that direction, and that – that village is over there. And somehow I managed to go there.

Q: You're eight years old.

A: Eight years old. And to bring those two horses back. And in the meantime my mother almost had a heart attack, because they told her do – what they did. And you

know, to get lost in the steppe is no problem at all. But somehow, I don't know how, I managed to come back.

Q: Wow.

A: So not only my dog was a hero, but I was a hero also.

Q: Did you – when you were in the cattle car, and you started talking to people, do you remember anything about any of those people, what kind of people they were, whether they were all military families, or some professions, or –

A: No, they're – they were a congregation of all kinds of people. Because you know, anybody that worked for the polis – Polish government was naturally a – a –

Q: An enemy.

A: – an enemy. So they – they had professors, they had teachers, they had, you know, simple people who were in the army, you know, for example, you know, just – just being a private in the army. But it was in the army of the – of the enemy of the – of the **Soviet Union**, so –

Q: And when you were in both places, I get the impression that your contact, actually, with official authorities was rather minimal. They weren't part of your daily life, but they controlled your lives.

A: Right, because you know, th-the – the thing is that – that once you get deported into these vast territories, you – you – you can be physically free, because you're

not going to go away anywhere, because it is just simply impossible to escape. And I read many books later on, that – it's the same thing is written in – in many books or people that were actually in jail, they were – they were, you know, under – under the – the supervision of the – of the military and things. And – but they were free to move about, because they didn't c – there was no way you can escape. Because you knew that once you walked away into the – into the steppe, you're dead. And if you're not going to just die because of hunger, you – th-the wolves are going to get you.

Q: Tell ma – you know, for those of us, and I'm one of them, who – I've never been in a steppe. What does a steppe look like?

A: It's – it-it's a just vast space, flat.

Q: Anything grows in it?

A: Just a – just weeds, just, the s – you know, grass. No trees. Just simply no trees, just flat as you – as far as you can go. Just like sometimes it feels here in – in – in – in – even in **Illinois**, except here they are, you know, they're farms. But over there just simply, what it probably was here a couple hundred years ago, just plain full of grasses.

Q: And probably small animals.

A: And some – some small animals, some wolves, you know, things. And in the middle of those – of those things, there were these locations of different farms, and like this one that we went – that we were, the – the cattle farm. Or there were – there were both the grown-up cattle and the calves, you know, and so –

Q: You might have – you might have mentioned it before, but tell me again the name of the first place you were at, with the Ukrainian couple, and the second place.

A: The first place I don't remember.

Q: Okay.

A: But – but the second one I – I even know the address. **[speaks Russian]**. The first – the farm number one, **Krabawick**(ph) was – was a little town that was like a c – a county seat.

Q: Okay.

A: And **Kostanay** was the – the capital.

Q: Okay.

A: So, that I remember. The little **[indecipherable]** I don't remember what its name was.

Q: So, you were there at least through the school year. What about the summer of 1941? Where – in June 1941, the **Soviet Union** is attacked by Nazi **Germany**. Did you find out about that in this remote, remote place?

A: Apparently yes, later on, because you know the – th-the newspapers would arrive there from time to time, and th-they would learn from the Russians we would – we would find out. But it wasn't until later, of course, that it came to us somehow, you know, through word of mouth or whatever, is that – that there – once the Russians were attacked, and the Germans were moving very rapidly, th-the Russians somehow managed to make contact with the – with the west, with the British and the Americans. And they formed a ali-alliance all of a sudden. And so, because they – they couldn't have enough equipment, you know, so the – so the British and the Americans started supplying them with – with the military equipment. And at that time, of course, the – the relationships between the **Soviet Union** and the Polish government was broken in 1939, and we didn't have any mu – a-any diplomat relations with – with them at all.

Q: Wa – explain how there could be a Polish government, where was it?

A: Well, in – in 1939, as I told you, there were people, hundreds of people, thousands of people moving out of **Poland**, going – going south. The Polish government also left. And from – from **Hungary** they were then transported to

France, and they f – reformed as a – as a new government representing different political parties. Then es-established this – themselves in **France**, and they started building up Polish military, because there were a lot of people that were escaping. And that – they somehow managed to escape then from – from – from **Romania** and from **Hungary**, where they were – they were interned, because those countries were – were in – were – what do you call it? Were not participating in war, they were – they were neutral. So they – by the thousands they just run different ways. You know, the – the roads opened to **Italy** and – and all kinds of places.

Q: So this is where your father had hoped to be able to land.

A: That's what he was hoping, that he's going to – to end up. And so they formed military units in **France**. And then, of course, when **France** was attacked, they did give up even sooner than – than **Poland** did. And since we had an alliance with – with the British, the British had evacuated Polish troops from **France**, into **England**. And this – so the Polish government had reestablished itself in **England**, and upon British insistence, the **Soviet Union**, because I don't know exactly what – what was the – the – the words, but they said, you know, okay, we'll – we'll qui – give you equipment, but you know, you got – you – you telling us to open the second front, you know, we not quite ready yet. But you have thousands of Polish troops in the **Soviet Union** prisons. Why don't you release them, and you'll have

ready troops, you know. So somehow they managed to reestablish relationship with the Polish government in – in **London**.

Q: So it's the Americans and the British who are saying this to the Soviets?

A: Right. They said, you know, wis—we'll help you, but – but you know, you saying that you don't have enough troops, and blah-blah-blah-blah, this or this. But you know, you have – you have maybe couple hundred thousand troops that you have arrested when you came into **Poland**. Because that's what happened, you know, because the units that were located in – in the east, they were all, you know, taken over by the Russians, and by the thousands they were deported to **Russia**. And as you probably know, the – the – many of the officers and – and a – and a -- leading classes, like judges and teachers and things, they were – they were arrested by the thousands by the Soviets. And – and then the Polish officer corps, at – at least they know about 20,000 that were killed in **Katyn**, which was several times where they decided to liquidate the Polish military prisoners of war, which was against, you know, the **Geneva Conference**, of course. But they killed 14,000 that was known, that – that were – that – that were killed.

Q: Do you think your father might have been amongst them?

A: I don't know. I don't think so, I don't think so, because those were the officers that were – that were arrested as – as they gave themselves up to – to the Russians.

Because you know, **Poland** ha – had a – had a – a pact of – of military help. And of course when the Germans and the Russians reestablished their pact, th-the Russians just liquidated that – that pact, so th-th-the officers that were arrested, you know, in the – in the military, they were in mi-military uniforms, they were in the units. So the troops were sent, you know, into exile, but the officers were put in the – in a – in the prisons.

Q: Let me go back a little bit. When you were talking about the first days of the war, and the Germans overri – overrunning **Poland** very, very quickly. And then September 17th the Soviet army marching in. Were you surprised to see the Soviet army? Did anybody – I mean, did anybody expect to see them? How did they kn –

A: Th-Th-They – they came in and they were actually saying that they are helping us. They are liberating us.

Q: From?

A: From the possibility of being taken over by the Germans. And then –

Q: So that was – that was what officially was being spoken?

A: This what – what – what was telling people on the street, you know. And because we didn't – you know, th-they didn't let know that they had the **Stalin** li-libben – **Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact**, which they signed in August.

Q: So tell – I mean, this is all stuff outside of your own specific experience. But to put it in some context, can you explain a little bit about that pact?

A: Well, as I said, th-the – the Russian and **Poland** had non-aggression pact –

Q: **Russia** and **Poland**, mm-hm.

A: – for the – for the 10 years, and so we did not expect that the Soviets would move. But the **Hitler** and – and **Stalin** signed a pact, called the **Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact**.

Q: And what – what are those names? Mili –

A: **Ribbentrop** was a German repres-representative of – of the government, and the **Molotov** was the – the Russian like min –

Q: Soviet.

A: – Soviet – Soviet minister of mili – of the military affairs. And so they signed a pact where the – the Russians told the Germans that they are – they will attack **Poland** from the – from the east. And they pre-assigned the border, which they are going to divide **Poland** into – into, you know, into two parts. And so, on September 17th, they just simply moved.

Q: Okay.

A: And – and so the – all the Polish military were, you know, surprised as to what's going on. We have pact of non-aggression with you, and – and so that's what happens.

Q: So, in other words, they had the pact. There were several pacts going on. There was a Polish-Soviet non-aggression pact, and there was a surprise on the side of the Poles when they see the Soviets there, because what happened to our pact? Then there is the **Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact**, which was signed –

A: Which kind of canceled –

Q: – canceled that one.

A: – canceled the Polish – Polish-Russian pact.

Q: And that one is when Nazi **Germany** and **Soviet Union** agree not to fight each other, and divide **Poland.**

A: Right.

Q: And then when the Soviets march in, they tell people – locally, the word on the street is that we're here to save you from the Germans.

A: Right.

Q: Okay. All right.

A: We are here to help you. And so, you know – and the – and then the – once the – this became and – and they came in to **Poland** and – and all that, I remember they were al-always saying **[speaks Russian]**

Q: What does that mean?

A: We are friends with **Germany**.

Q: They would say that?

A: They would s – the military, you know, people that – well, the authorities, were saying that they are friends of the Germans.

Q: And yet they're saving you from German occupation.

A: Right. Well, because they took over, you know, that – that – and that they – you know, several months after they – they took over, even before we were deported, they had elections. And 99.9 percent of Poles voted for those territories to become parts of the **Soviet Union**. O-On paper, of course.

Q: Did your mother have to vote in those elections?

A: Everybody had to vote. And it didn't make any difference how you voted, because the percentage came out 99.9 anyway. So –

Q: So, let's go back to the address of the place that you were, which I could not repeat for the life of me. And in June 1941, the Nazis attacked the **Soviet Union**,

and somehow world – word must filter to your village that – that now – you know, there is an attack, the **Soviet Union** is at war on its own territory.

A: Well, there's not **[indecipherable]** yet, but they were – they just moved to – to west –

Q: Eastern.

A: – the eastern part of **Poland**, and then it's a military –

Q: Right.

A: But apparently this is what – this is what – what happened, and as I said the – they would receive from y – from time to time the newspapers, and all of a sudden ne – you know, the newspaper just turned out to write like that. Because once we were friends, and now we're the enemies. And so, somehow this kind of information got leaked into – into our areas. But it didn't make any – any difference, until later on, when the re – when the relations were reestablishment between the Polish and the Russian government. And when the Russian issued a – a document, which made us back free citizens, with ability to move on the territory of the **Soviet Union**.

Q: And when did you find out about this? How did – did somebody come to the – the barracks that you and your mother lived in, one day, and say you're free now, you can move about the **Soviet Union**?

A: I don't know how it happened, of course you know. But – but this is – I know that later on from – from reading, that this is what happened, is that – that all of a sudden, even the people in our – in our little community have realized that now they can move about.

Q: But – but – okay, now I'm going back to your life and your mother's life and your experiences. How did this happen with the two of you? Was there a moment when you found out, and do you remember that moment?

A: Oh. I remember – one – one thing I remember is that after that happened, is that all of a sudden the older – the people that were located within – within the territory that we were in, somehow they discovered that the Polish army is being formed, in the southern states of the **Soviet Union**. And so everybody started moving south.

Q: So in other words, you knew that you could – all right, I think I'd like to stop here now, though – **[break]**

End of File One

Interview with Witold Pawlikowski
January 21, 2015

Beginning File Two

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **Witold Pawlikowski**, on January 21st, 2015. And before the break, Mr. puli – **Pawlikowski**, we were talking about the moment, or let's say the – the – the time when you and your mother learned of the agreement that the Polish government in exile made with the **Soviet Union**, and what was going on, you know, in those – in those immediate days and months. Before we get to that, I want to know, did your – did you make friends, did your mother make friends with other Poles while – or other people while she was in the **Soviet Union**? You had mentioned before that people were very distrustful, and kept a distance between themselves. Was there ever any exception to that, when people bridged the gap?

A: Well, in a way, but you know, it – it wasn't – it wasn't a friendship. You just don't develop friendship all of a sudden like that. It was – it – it was a – a kind feelings towards us, und-understanding feelings, that they know what we're going through because they have been through it.

Q: That means the locals who were there.

A: Right. And – and – but it's very gi – difficult to call friendship, if you're there for three or four months and you move somewhere else, you know. It's – it's not th

– not the same thing as you develop friendships over a long period of time. But it was g-good relationships, let's put it this way.

Q: And what about other deportees. Di – do you get to meet or get to know, in any way become close to other deportees?

A: Yes. The-These – these were – these were your – your people, and so, you know, and – and since we are in the same village, and well, like I said beginning that we lived in with two other families in there. So – so you developed this kind of friendship. Which lasts – I have friends now that – that I – not too many, I – I haven't – those that I met in the **Soviet Union**, they all went different ways. But the ones later on in **Teheran** and **Iran**, I – I ha – I maintain friendship with those people until now. And I – I remember an – an incident when I was working for steel – **U.S. Steel Corporation**, and I was traveling throughout the **United States**, and I – so I – I went – I was going to **Cleveland**, and I told my boss, I – I said that's great, because I have a friend in **Cleveland**. And then a few months later, I-I was going to **Philadelphia**, and I said, oh, it's terrific, I have a friend in **Philadelphia**. And then I'm going to **San Francisco**, and he says, if you tell me that you have a friend in **San Francisco**, I won't believe it. And I said, but I do. So he said, how in the heck could you guys do that? Well, you know, I have a friend that I just talked to just recently who – who lives in – in **Argentina**. I have friends in **Australia**.

That's – that's the way – what happens, you know, that those people spread around all over the place. I have fre – friends in **Canada** that – that we visit, and we – we keep the – those friendships.

Q: You mentioned something to me earlier, that your mother also developed such friendships. That there was a lady in particular who was her best friend.

A: Yes.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about her?

A: We – we – we were in the same collective farm, and she was there with her mother.

Q: Who was this lady?

A: Her – her name was **Leila**. She was a Polish Jewess, and my mother had developed close friendship with her, and then when we – we left, she went to **England** sooner than we did, because her brother was in the Polish army.

Q: So she was Jewish, and she had been deported as well.

A: She wa – she was deported as well, with her mother. And so when – when – after years that we haven't seen her, because she was already in **England**, when we finally ended up in **England**, she – she ca-came to visit us, and then I was moving to **London** from the little town that – up in the – almost on the Scottish border. And so she accepted me there, I was with – with her for some time.

Q: Oh, so you lived with her, then?

A: I lived with her, and then after years, you know, after I came here, and I was in the army again, and we f – with a friend mi – of mine, we – we went to visit **London**, and we went to visit her. And at that time she was working for a very exclusive nightclub.

Q: Oh, really?

A: And she invited us and – and we met Mr. **Errol Flynn**.

Q: Oh, my goodness.

A: That's right, that's right.

Q: Oh, my goodness. And –

A: So – so, you know, these friendships last a lifetime, because you had something in common.

Q: You had this experience that you'd gone through.

A: Yes. Mm-hm.

Q: Did you ever meet her brother, who was in the Polish army?

A: Yes, and he moved to the **United States**, he lived somewhere in the – in the west coast, and he's gone by now.

Q: And do you know much about their story, where they were from? Where she – what town she was from in **Poland**?

A: No, I –

Q: No?

A: – I don't, no. But she was very close with my mother an-and I – I have a picture.

Q: Okay. Maybe you'll show me later. Okay, terrific. So, there you are –

A: Oh **[indecipherable]** her last name was **Yolis**(ph).

Q: **Yolles**(ph)?

A: **Yolles**(ph)?

Q: Would that be **j-o-l-e-s**?

A: Double **L**.

Q: **J-o-** double **l-e-s**, okay.

A: Not – not the **J**, **Y**.

Q: **Y**.

A: **Y**.

Q: **Y-o-l-l-e-s**. Okay. **Filo**(ph) **Yolles**, okay.

A2: **[inaudible** in **London**, **Janusz**(ph) **Scruwajinski**(ph).

A: Oh, and well, we'll – we'll tell that story later. **[indecipherable]**

Q: Okay, about somebody else that you know.

A: Right.

Q: Okay. So – so yes, so your mother and other people in – you know, who were – who were deported from **Poland** learn about this agreement where you're free to move, yes?

A: Right, and – and how did it come and all way to this little godforsaken place, I don't know, but we found out that there is an agreement, and that by this agreement all the Poles are released from the prisons, and then the Polish army is being formed. So when – when this group of Poles in our village and o-other places heard that, they all got together and they decided to move south towards where the army was being formed.

Q: So how were you going to do that? How did they do that?

A: We were transported to – to this – to the railroad station, I don't know how, how they managed this I have no idea, but the transport was formed and we were moved to the railroad station, loaded on a train. And the train, I think it was like six weeks that we were on the train. Again, the cattle car, and so we were moving from one place to another, until we went to – through **Tashkent**(ph), the place that my grandfather was – was in, and we went through **Bukhara**(ph) and I – I don't know how many other places.

Q: Was – was the cattle car different than the first cattle car?

A: Well, it was – it was slightly bigger, because of – of the railroad system of – in – in the **Soviet Union**. But the – the – you know –

Q: The slats were the same.

A: The slats were the sa – the same. Except for more people.

Q: And I take it they weren't closed then, and – and you weren't locked into these cattle cars.

A: No, we were not locked any more.

Q: Okay.

A: No, because we were free citizens to move about. Which is, you know, very unusual in the **Soviet Union**. And so, in traveling all these – these distances, we finally ended up where they decided to unload us because the railroad wheels were being abused, you know, so we had to discharge. And they moved us to a **kolkhoz** called **Frumza**(ph).

Q: So this was a collective farm called **Frumza**(ph)?

A: It was a collec – collective farm called **Frumza**(ph), and is – and it wasn't far away, maybe 20 kilometers from what they call now **Almaty**(ph).

Q: Ah.

A: Or **Almata**(ph).

Q: **Almata**(ph), mm-hm.

A: And so we're unloaded there, and put in a **kolkhoz**, and then we found out that a part of the division is being formed in – in alna – **Almata**(ph). And we were with this other woman and her son, and both my mother and she became ill with typhoid fever, and she died.

Q: The other lady died?

A: The other lady died. The son was 15 or 16 at that time, older than I was, and so my mother, you know, took care of him. And my mother almost died also, but she was – and she was – she was – she told me later on she was moved from the room, into the hallway, and this – the – the nurses said **uzha**(ph) **konshied**(ph). She's finishing up. And – and then my mother said no. I have a son. And then she recovered. And so, what happened that this – this – this lady's husband was in a – in a Polish military unit, a corps of engineers, and he escaped and was in – in **Palestine**. And –

Q: Did she know that, or –

A: And she knew that, and he had also her addresses from – from the **Soviet Union**. So he discovered that his best friend is in a unit that is being formed in **Almata**(ph). And his friend came to pick us up – pick them up and take them to where the military was. And she was gone already, so instead, we were taken, and – and –

Q: And the boy.

A: – and the boy. And –

Q: What was his name? Do you remember?

A: **Janusz**.

Q: And his last name?

A: **Sohachewski**(ph).

Q: **Sohachewski**(ph).

A: **Sohachewski**(ph). And when – when – when we came to **Teheran** his father took him and brought him to – to **Palestine**, and enrolled him in – in the Polish like organization of – like a mil – paramilitary organization. And then, of course he went to **England**, and he lives in **England [indecipherable]** right now, and we keep in touch.

Q: Amazing. Amazing.

A: So, you know, he's just like my older brother.

Q: Did you have hopes of maybe finding out about your father when the Polish military unit was formed?

A: Right. My – my – my mother had written to the Polish Red Cross, and the international Red Cross and I – somewhere she has a – a document which is – it appears that your husband has died on the territory of the **Soviet Union**. And that's the only thing we have.

Q: Oh, my.

A: But there – there's no record of when and how, of what causes – was it his wo – you know, re – reworking of the wound, or was he killed? We don't know. Because this kind of documentation you simply do not get from that system. There, nobody knows anything. And as – it's much easier that way. And you know, it – to me, right now, it doesn't make any difference. I know that he perished. So what else can you do? But, you know, it's – it's something that you have to live with, and something that you must realize, that this is what happened, that you have gone through some unusual circumstances, and – and you have to live, because if you don't, if you think about it all the time, you can really hurt yourself quite a bit. So that's why me – maybe I have forgotten some of these things, maybe purposely, I don't know.

Q: That's –

A: But you know – but it's one of those – those things, and what difference does it make where he is, and if I – if I could find his grave or something? It's 50 some years, you know, he's gone. And you know, I – I d – I know he's gone and I know that he's perished at the – you know, in the territories of the **Soviet Union** and –

Q: That's it.

A: – that's satisfactory to me.

Q: Did you find that when you were s – when you were already – had you already left the **Soviet Union**, or before, your mother?

A: Yes, I think it was already in – in **Teheran** that she found out, right. And we have never – there was nev – never a trace of him, you know, somebody coming out that knew him from the prison or something. Nothing. Just gone. So I – I suppose he must have died soon after he was deported, you know, and probably from the wound, because it wasn't healed, at that time.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your journey from **Almata**(ph) to actually leaving the **Soviet Union**. What was that like?

A: Well, first of all, you know, once we were under the protection of – of the military, we began to be fed.

Q: The Polish military. Even though – even still in **Kazakhstan**?

A: In – in – still in – in **Uzbekistan** because **Almaty**(ph) is in –

Q: **Uzbekistan**.

A: – **Uzbekistan**.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, so – so our survival was – the possibility of survival was much, much better terms. And then, as I said before, the – the Russians didn't want to – to arm the Polish military, because it was – you know, something that they just don't do.

You do not arm the enemies, who become now friends, and so – so they were still asking Americans and British to open up the front, and – and they said, well you have – you have the Polish army, you have over 100,000 troops, you know, why don't you arm them? Oh, we don't have anything to do. So the British said, well, then you release them. Let us take care of them, let us arm them, and they can become a part of the second front when we finally open it. So, by miracle I suppose, Uncle **Stalin** decided that yes, okay, we will do that. And we were released. And so military started moving **[indecipherable]** troops.

Q: So the first – the first thought had not been to release all of – not – not allow anybody to leave the territory, but just grou – regroup and form a military unit.

A: That's what – that's what even the Poles wanted to do, because of what – they wanted to fight for **Poland**, you know, as when the Russians are –

Q: Right.

A: – going to start pressing westward, they will part of the – of that system. But the Russians didn't trust them, because they were all anti-Soviet. Many of them had – had fought in the – in the war of 1920, when the Soviets started pushing into **Poland**, and were defeated, luckily. So – so the – all these troops were enemies.

Q: And also the – the – you know, nobody knew about **Katyn** yet. Nobody knew at that point.

A: No. Not – not yet.

Q: Okay.

A: No. And so – so the – the relationship was lukewarm at best. And I suppose they really wanted to get rid of those people too, because there – there would – you know, there would – th-they were like a – like – like a foreign organism within the system, you know, and th-there were – there were – y-you know – I – I remember there's a little story that one of the units, I don't know which one it was, because I had it – I heard a story about it. But they were being formed and a – and then local people have come to – to this unit, and they said, do you – do you – do you play this – this hymn that – that is being played by – by the trumpet? And – and guy says what – oh, what a – what a di – this single trumpeteer sings this song, you know, di – plays this song. And all of a sudden this – this guy realizes that in the city of **Kraków** there is a – there is a – a church with a – with a spire on it. And in – in 14 – in 1200 some, when – when the Tartars and – and Turks s-started moving towards **Poland**, they came to that town. And the guy being at the top of the – of – of the – of the tower, he saw it. And so he played th-the hymn to warn the city to close the gates and – and protect itself. And – which we did. And then – their – their attack was **repursed – repursed**, and then they had to go back, and we chased them away. And – and they remembered this story being told over generations, because you

know, from – that if they hear that flo – that – that – that hymn again, they will become free.

Q: So the local people came to a Polish army unit –

A: To ask that they play this – this –

Q: Trumpet.

A: – that they can be free – free. Well, of course it took another 50 years, but they – they're free now.

Q: Yeah.

A: So these – these stories do happen and – and I – I had it in a book and I don't know what happened with the book, but – but it was written, yeah.

Q: And you heard it – and you heard it then, when you –

A: After we left.

Q: After you left.

A: After we left, yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because it – you know, it would be written and all that kind of stuff. But can you imagine now, from 1200 something, to have it believe that something like that, if – if this – this trumpet is played again in our town –

Q: We can –

A: – we'll – we'll be free.

Q: We can – we can **[indecipherable]** yeah. We can be free. Did you travel then, from this place to – by train, or by horse driven carriage, or –

A: No, we were – we were loaded on the train – because it was, you know, quite far east. So, together with the military we were loaded on trains, and we were then sent all the way to – to the **Caspian Sea**, to the par – port of **Krasnovodsk**.

Q: **Krasnovodsk**.

A: Mm-hm. And then we were loaded on the ship, and went south to the port of **Baclevy**(ph), which is already on – on the – on the Persian territory.

Q: What do you remember on the ship crossing over?

A: It was packed with people.

Q: Really?

A: Just a – people were sitting on – on the – on the – not only all the – th-the – the – in-inside the ship, but also on – on the decks. They're just packed the people wer – as much as – as they could. So –

Q: Your mother and your – yourself were together?

A: Yes, we were together. And it was – i-it – it happened right before Easter of 1942. So, the Easter of 1942, we celebrated as free people.

Q: So, when you left – so, in other words, it was like a – a two year saga. You had been deported on April 13th, 1940, and two years later you're on this boat, leaving the **Soviet Union**.

A: Right. Right.

Q: Now, were you had been deported to, you know, that second place, were there others that couldn't – that weren't free? I mean, was it only Polish deportees who were – or deportees from **Poland** who were in this cattle breeding, or cattle herding town, or were there deportees from other countries that were also there?

A: No, just – just – just **Poland**.

Q: So, all the Poles more or less left that place.

A: Ay – ma – those that had the guts enough to say, we are going. But there were some that had little, you know, a little – started little gardens and th-they put the vegetables on there, something like that. And some decided to stay. And out of over a million and a half of people that were – that were deported to the **Soviet Union** during the – at the time, only couple hundred thousand people have moved away. The rest of them either died, or had to wait until 1953 to return to **Poland**.

Q: Right, I see.

A: Luckily, we were not one of them.

Q: Okay, I wanted – thank you for filling that in, cause I wanted to get a sense of the scope, and that's what you gave me right now, is that a million and a half people had been deported from these eastern territories of **Poland**.

A: Right.

Q: And only a couple of hundred thousand were able to leave. Now, did you have to have a military connection in order to be able to leave the country? Because this was – the whole purpose was to regroup, and –

A: I – I – I think so. And this – and – and I think, luckily for us, because we were considered to be military family, just the same like – like this friend of mine, **Janusz**, we were able to leave.

Q: Okay.

A: Some of them probably not. I don't know all the stories, you know, how it – how it happened, but – but that's what happened to us.

Q: Okay. And on this ship, did people feel like they could talk freely? Were they talking all the time, were –

A: All the time. Well, you – you can imagine the stories that – that the people were saying, and – and you know, then we're dropped in – in **Baclevy**(ph) in – in – on – on the shore, and the British had already the tents prepared. The camp – camp already was being formed.

Q: Was it the – excuse me, was it the Soviets who had – were commandeering the ship, or was it –

A: Yes.

Q: It was a –

A: Oh, right, it was a Soviet ship, yes.

Q: It was a Soviet ship –

A: Oh yes.

Q: – and so Soviet officials?

A: Yes.

Q: Uh-huh. And, did they treat you any differently now that you were, you know, leaving the country, or were they distant, or were they rude? What were they were like?

A: Oh yeah, they were always distant.

Q: Okay.

A: Because you are afraid that if you get too close to someone, that someone, like I told you about the son –

Q: Right.

A: – may tell them that they are too friendly with us, for example, you know. So no, they were – they were a distance away. They did their duties, whatever they were

told to do, they were doing. So they – they were to transport all this Polish cattle, that was fine with them, and you know, they did their – their duties as a seamen. But, you know, we were on the ship only, I think two or three days, so –

Q: Oh.

A: – this is a shi – it's a short distance.

Q: Okay.

A: Because **Caspian Sea** is a lake, huge lake, but it's called sea.

Q: The **Caspian Sea**, yeah. So you're dropped on the shore in **Baclevy**(ph).

A: We dropped on the shore in **Baclevy**(ph) and we spent Easter there, and – and the first thing you – you had to do is to attend, or to go to – to be washed, and all your things were to be given up, because lice was in everybody's clothing. And not just lice, hundreds of them. I remember one time sitting down and – and killing 200 of them in one time. Just, **ck**, **ck**, **ck**, you know.

Q: This was in the **Soviet Union [indecipherable]**

A: This was **Soviet Union**. So that's – that's why we had to give up all our clothing, and they were just burned.

Q: Well here – I didn't ask this before, but let me ask it now. You mentioned that when you were in the cattle car, in your first deportation, there was only a hole in the ground for people to take care of their natural functions.

A: Right.

Q: Were you ever able to take a shower? I mean, this is – it's such a naïve question, but I wondered.

A: No.

Q: Wer – no.

A: No. No, you know, it's – you – you are being transported, you di – never knew when you're going – you know, you've made a stop. Some people would go away, you know, to find some, I don't know, food or something like that. They come back and they're – and they're – the train was gone. And that's why yo – a lot of families were lost. That's why there were a lot of children that were without the parents, because either they died, or they simple – there were incidents like that, where the mother was left over, standing in the car, and you know, the train was gone. So, of course the – there was no time for washing.

Q: So what about when you got to where – to the first place, the **kolkhoz**. Was there – was there – what were the hygienic facilities like there? Okay.

A: There – there – there – there usually was always a **banyo**(ph) what they called, or bath, probably bath, you know, where you could take the shower. But taking showers wasn't a weekly occurrence, you know, because they would be closed, and

– or – or you were working, or something like that. So you – you just had to wash in a little bowl.

Q: A basin.

A: Yeah, and that's the way it was, so basically the – the – we – we started being civilized when we ended up in – in **Baclevy**(ph).

Q: Okay.

A: We were cleaned up, issued new clothing, and we spend there, I think about two weeks. And then we were taken by – and my doggie, by the way, was with us all the time. **Tito** was there. And so, in about two weeks, we were loading – loaded on a – on a trucks that were driven by the Iranians, and we were taken by these trucks, on a terrible road which was climbing all the – all over the mountains, across the mountains, and in – into the **Teheran**, which is located on – on the plains, on the – on the south side of the – of the range of mountains. And at that time, they were already forming camps. And like in **Teheran** there were three civilian camps, and a military camp. So we were in camp number two, and we stayed there for about two years.

Q: Well, that's a long time.

A: Right, and by – my mother then found a job again as a – as part of a – of a quartermaster of the – of the camp. So she was working in the camp, and right away

they reinstituted the schooling system. And the – the camp in which we were was actually an unfinished factory, tha – with number of buildings that were built by the Germans, because Germans had the very good relationship with the Iranians before the war. And when the war broke out, th-the Russians, the British and the Americans oc-occupied the country. Maybe it – it's strong wor-word to use, but they moved their military forces –

Q: Into **Iran**.

A: – into **Iran** to protect the – the oil fields, because they didn't want to give to the Germans. So, at that time, you know, we – all these three militaries were present in – in **Teheran**.

Q: What about – I mean, how much interaction did – did you and your mother have with any of the British authorities? Was there any interaction? Did they appear in your lives at all, or –

A: No, th-there were – they – they had administration of the camp, was given to the Polish –

Q: Okay.

A: – administration. So the British were just on the outside, you know, and we did not have anything to do with them.

Q: So, the hu – the people who were in the camp –when you say you were there two years, your – you're a child. In 1942 you're 11 years old, right?

A: Right.

Q: And you stay there until you're 13 years old. Now – approximately.

A: Appr – right.

Q: What happened to – on that boat coming over, there must have been fighting age young men. I mean, the whole purpose of releasing people from – from the **Soviet Union**, was to be able to form these military units. What happened to them, where did they go?

A: All – all – all the young men that – that were in the – in the military age, they were taken into the army, or the – they volunteered for the army. And they were moved to **Iraq**. So the Polish military training bases were formed in **Iraq**. And not only that, but they were also used to protect the airf – th-the oil fields in **Iraq**. So they – they were there until 1943, I think. And then they w – they were moved to **Egypt**, and from **Egypt** were the second front bes – being opened in **Italy**, was being invaded by the allied forces. They participated in – in that campaign.

Q: So who – when you were in this camp in **Teheran** for those two years, who were the other people in the camp with you? What kind of people were they? Children?

A: No, there were a lot of children, and of course, as I said before, there were a lot of orphans, an-and this – this – th-the – the camps in – in **Teheran** were transitory camps. So the people from there were being transported everywhere: to – to **Africa**, to **India**, to **Mexico**. So there were – as the people were coming in, so were people were leaving all the time, so –

Q: So if you were a child, or you were just, you know, a – a young family, I would take it they were not military people, cause the military guys, I mean, the young men were in different places –

A: Right.

Q: – they were somewhere else.

A: Right. They – so they all – this – so camp number – camp number one was the mili – no, camp number four was the military camp. But it was very small camp, because this was also a transitory camp. And so wi – whoe – whatever unit came in from – from the **Soviet Union**, they were just processed and moved to where the training actually had to start, because they had to retrain. Many of them were young, and th-they didn't have any service. So they were do –

Q: So they were doing what your father would have been training them –

A: Right.

Q: – in – back in **Dolina**(ph), right?

A: Right, right. Except now they are – they are not 14 - 17, they were – they were, you know, ready to go into the military.

Q: Right.

A: And so these units were trained until 1943, I think, where they were then made ready for – for military service.

Q: Were there any transports that came after you, from the **Soviet Union** that is –

A: Oh yes, yes –

Q: Okay.

A: – their ka – they kept coming, and so my mother would – would receive those then, and put them in the different places where they had – they – not all of them could live in those buildings, and so there were also tents, that the British had given us. And so there were – there – there was a kitchen and, you know, the – everybody was being fed from the – the kitchen, and there were the facilities. American gifts were coming, because at the time a lot of people were donating things. So our clothing was – was American clothing, because that's what we have gotten from – from them. And as I mentioned to – then we started school. And there were – there were no books, so every had – everything had to be written. You had to remember from what – what the teacher was telling you.

Q: Wow.

A: Because we had no books. But – but –

Q: Did you show your certificate from the first grade?

A: No. But they also formed scouting organizations in the – and I jon – joined the scouting. And, so actually, normal life.

Q: I mean, from your description of it, my impression is that it sounds to me, if you take away all of the uncertainty of life, and knowing that this is transitory, and that it will end – it also sounds like a wonderful place to not be alone, that there will be people there, that you – you can talk to them, that you could meet other kids, that you could make friends, that – you know –

A: Oh yes, you know, yes. And – and on – in so – but we had, you know, we – of course we're free to go, so we could go to town. And since my mother started working we had some, you know, some of money, and we were able to go to town. And the – the Persians, who are very friendly – nothing like happens right now – and so we – we really started living a normal life. We went to movies, American movies that were being played at – at that time. And it lasted until about 1943, something like that, and then they started liquidating the camps because all the people were moved away to different – different locations. And my mother then received a – a proposal to go into town and work for the Polish unit that was taking care of the – of the refugees and things. And so we moved into the city of **Teheran**.

We rented actually, an apartment – a – a room in the – in a – in **Teheran** itself, and my mother was working and I started to go – and I was going to school, and –

Q: Still a Polish school.

A: – to a Polish school. And we lived not too far away from another friend of ours that is right now in **San Francisco**, and we had great time, because – because we were – the – the camp in which actually the sc – because the – they kept liquidating the schools, and finally ne – and – and that was camp number three. And that was located in the mountains, very beautiful area. And we'd have a bus that would take us there, and in the evening we would be driven back again. And so I went through – through the grade school, and in – in 1945, when we moved to i – to **Lebanon**, I was already in first grade of high school.

Q: Really?

A: Right.

Q: As 13 -14 – well, right on –

A: Yeah, 13 - 14 –

Q: – right on schedule.

A: Right. Right on schedule, I was 14. And so I remember that, you know, we had – we had great time, because several of us lived in – in a city by then, and we c –

could get together, go to the movies, and – and you know, and visit the bazaars, and – and really had great time.

Q: It sounds like exotic, and adventurous, right?

A: Absolutely, yeah, show my – my **[indecipherable]**. But absolutely adventurous, because we were – we were taken one time to visit the Shah's palace.

Q: Oh wow.

A: And I also remember that we were returning one time, and I don't know what – how – how was it, but we decided to walk. It wasn't that far away, so we were walking on – on the road towards **Teheran**, and here comes the Shah. So we waved, you know, and all that stuff, and he –

Q: Was he in a motorcade?

A: Yes, in – in a limousine, you know, motorcades and all that kind stuff. So – and he must have realized that – who we are, because he wa – you know, waved back. So, you know, he – then – then we absolutely felt like free people. A-And our – our – our wrong **[indecipherable]** was over. And so – so – you know, then, towards the end of – almost at the end of the war, in July of 1945, because everything was being liquidated and, you know, the British and the Americans were going to move out of there too, we were taken by train to **Baghdad** in **Iraq**. And there we had to stay for

two weeks because something happened with our visa, transitory visa through – through one of the countries.

Q: So this is from **Teheran** to **Baghdad**.

A: To **Baghdad**.

Q: And then after that, **Lebanon**?

A: And then from – from **Baghdad** we went to **Lebanon**, and we went in – in buses, all the way to – to **Beirut**.

Q: How long did that take?

A: A couple days. It was – it was quite the trip.

Q: Do you remember what you saw through the buses, and what kind of landscape –

A: Sand and sand and sand. It was a real desert. Until we came to – to – to – to **Lebanon**. And **Lebanon** is – is beautiful. It's green, you know, the – the mountains are – are beautiful, and so it was completely different land – you know, landscape once we entered the territory of **Lebanon**. So from – from bay – from **Baghdad** I remember that we had an opportunity to visit the – you know, the – the marketplaces, the – the – you know, and it was – it was really quite an experience, and I – I don't know where I have it, but I bought myself a – a – a – one of these knifes, you know, that you –

Q: Oh, the long knives?

A: – you see **[indecipherable]**

Q: The – the curved knives?

A: Yes, the curved knife, I still have it. So –

Q: Was this a – all of these journeys, from **Teheran** to **Baghdad** to now **Beirut**, this was all under the aegis of Polish authorities, and they in turn were under the aegis of the British authorities?

A: No, this was already beginning of the international ref-refugee organization.

Q: Okay.

A: Because that was the end of the war, and all of a sudden they had refugees all over **Europe**, so they formed this international refugee organization, and they took over the administration.

Q: I see.

A: So, once we moved to – to **Beirut**, and we stayed couple – couple weeks in – in a transitory camp in **Beirut** itself, and then we were moved to a small town called **Ghazir**(ph), just north of – of **Beirut**, in the mountains. And at that time we were given some substis – subsistence money so we could go on our own. So we became self-sufficient, and we had to supply ourselves with food and – and – and, you know, and clothing and –

Q: So your mother's work stopped. In other words, her work as being quartermaster stopped –

A: Stopped.

Q: – when – when you left **Teheran**.

A: Right.

Q: Okay.

A: And – and in **Lebanon**, the – one of the – as I understand, one of the agreements with the Lebanese government was that the people that are coming in are not going to become part of the economy of the – of **Lebanon**. But they are – they are going to be self-sufficient. So – so that's we – that's why we are needing the subsistence, so we can live on our own.

Q: And how long did you stay there?

A: Until 1950.

Q: Oh, you were there for five years?

A: Five years. Yes, so I graduated, and I graduated from, you know Polish – Polish educational system is divided into high school, and **[indecipherable]**. And high school lasted for years, and then **[indecipherable]** la-la – was the other – the other two years. And –

Q: So it was a six year program.

A: So it's a six year program. And this is my –

Q: Can you show that like this? Okay. That's your high school graduation –

A: This is my high school graduation and it says that – the fact that I became a grown-up.

Q: Okay. And that was in – I can even see the word **[indecipherable]** down there. Something about **Beirut**.

A: Right. Tha – this was – it was issued by the – by the division of – of – like – like a – like education department of the Polish **[indecipherable]** in **Beirut**, on 25th of – of April, 1950. So –

Q: Ten years – 10 years and 10 days after your deportation.

A: Right. So I – I did get some okay thing. Good – good, and some, you know, **[indecipherable]** what do you call this, like in high school, the – this – the – the best sta –

Q: Excellent.

A: Excellent.

Q: Very good.

A: Very good, so even from – from chemistry, technical wri – thing. Geometry. I had a very good **[indecipherable]**. That's what forces me to go into engineering in school.

Q: What is the application – what's the piece of paper underneath that one? What's that?

A: Oh, and this is – this is the – this is when I graduated from – from four years of high school.

Q: Ah, so when you're a little bit younger.

A: Right.

Q: And you graduated there too in – was it the same place?

A: 1948.

Q: 1948.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Also in **Lebanon**.

A: Right, but it – this was – this wa – the – the – after people started leaving there, too, they started liquidating different camps, and so we had to move from **Ghazir**, which is in the mountains, to **Zouk**(ph), which was on the bay. And so this is 1948, plus two years, 1950.

Q: So, in – when you lived in these places, were you also in an enclosed community, or did you live in town, having your own rooms, or –

A: Oh no, we had – we – yes, we rented rooms. So we were really on our own.

Q: Were there many Polish people there?

A: Yes, well, en-enough to – to form several schools. Like there was one in – in **Ghazir**, there was one in **Zouk** and there was one in – in the mountains on the other side of **Beirut**. And t-then they started liquidating, and everything was then put into – into **Zouk**.

Q: Did you also have much contact with local people? Lebanese?

A: Oh yeah, yes, you know, I – in a way that th-they were friendly people, and th-they were – they were really amazingly capable of learning languages, because you know, they had a long history of being traders. And so this – so this became a natural with them. So most of the people that had any – any shops in like – in **Ghazir**, they s – they spoke adequate Polish to tell you that, for example, they would c-call, pig missus, pig missus. It wasn't that the missus was a pig, but they killed the pig, and they were selling the meat. So – so – but – but they were very, very nice, very polite, and a friend of mine who lives in **Australia** was telling me years later that she moved to **Australia** and – and she met a – an Arab from – from **Ghazir**. And so she – the – he emigrated after her, and they got married in – in **Australia**. And then years later, in – in 1980s or something like that, the three sisters that – that lived there decided to make a round world trip. And they went from – they went from **Australia**, first stop was **Lebanon**. And they were walking on the streets of this town of **Ghazir** and an Arab comes to them, and of course they

la – they look different. And so the – he says, what are you ladies doing in here? And my friend says, well, I'm the wife of, you know, this – this **[indecipherable]** you know, we are Polish, we lived here. Oh, you are Polish. So you – stands at attention, and starts singing Polish national anthem.

Q: Oh good God.

A: He remembered, all these years. So they are – they're really fantastic people. And – you know, and we never, never had anything that we would be afraid of. We lived among them, being scout, we – we went on – on the trips, you know, just walking trips around **Lebanon**, and we never had any problem at all.

Q: Did you ever pick up the local language?

A: Some. Yo-You know enough to kind of get – get along it, and – but of course, over the years of not using it, it – it – it just disappears. I just remember Leban – Lebanese national anthem.

Q: You remember – so if you were to walk around, you'd be able to sing it.

A: But – but you know, it – they were really very friendly people and they were – after the first World War they were under what they called French protectorate. So all – almost everyone spoke French. There was also American university in – in – in pa – in – in – in **Beirut**, and some of our older members of the school went to study in there, and – but then, you know, towards the – the 1950 –

Q: What did your mother do for the five years? How did she support herself?

A: Well, she was – she – you know, we were – we were given the money, but she started working for, you know, with the school, doing all kinds of things, being able to paint, you know, she would – she would take care, and she was really taking care of like a – like a club for children, and they were dancing, and things like that. So she was busy all the time. You know, she – she had things to do.

Q: Did you ever see her, in all of those years, those 10 years, did you ever see her despair?

A: No. I think after you go through something like that, you could have done all the desperation in two years. The rest of it was a wonderful life, basically. You know, of course you didn't know anything about your husband, you were lonely, no family, and – but there are people like you that became, you know, part of your circle. And so she never despaired, and – and I think she – she was – she was too busy to – to think. And then besides, she could – she could, you know, embroider, so she would embroider. She wrote poems, which – which I have, you know. And so she was quite a positive type of person. So – so anyway, so after – after all this was done and – and told her that – that they were trying to relocate the people as soon as possible so they can start normal life, because this was not a normal life.

Q: Right.

A: So finally in – in a – in 1950, towards the – the end of 1950, in July in fact, Her Majesty the queen decided to accept us as – as being capable of going to the territory of the – of **Great Britain**.

Q: Had you been trying for a long time? Had your mother been trying?

A: No, no, this was all done between the Polish government and the British. They – they realized that they have to remove those people from **Lebanon** because they had – they had an agreement that they won't work. So what do you –

Q: Well that can't happen forever.

A: No, that can't happen forever. So they decided that the best way is to simply bring them to – to real life. Really real life, not what we have for life for the last number of years. So, we were load – loaded on the shi – on the military ship. And you know, on a transport ship in **Beirut**, and moved across the **Mediterranean Sea** and up north to – to **Great Britain**, and we were unloaded with – in the – the port of **Hull**, **h-u-l-l**, and then transported to a military camp, a post-military camp in northern **England**, on the border with **Scotland**.

Q: Oh, I've been to **Hull**.

A: The so-called – so-called **[indecipherable]** district

Q: Oh yeah, it's a very pretty district.

A: Very pretty district. We were within walking distance from there.

Q: Oh my. Oh my.

A: So it was – it was really something, and there was nothing to do there, you know, I could dig ditches. And I was not about to dig ditches.

Q: Well, by now you're a young man, you're –

A: Right, I was – I was – you know. And so my mother called **Rilka**(ph) –

Q: Okay.

A: – in **London**, and she said, yes, of course he can come to – to **London**.

Q: I'll take him to see **Errol – Errol Flynn**.

A: Right. No, that was later.

Q: Oh, that was later.

A: That was later. So – so I moved to **London**, my mother stayed in the camp, and I started looking for a job. And there was a – the Polish **[indecipherable]** units formed a – like a – like a organization, and one of those things that they were doing was – was employment. And so I went to their employment office and –

Q: Did you speak any English at that point?

A: Yes. Oh, by the way, I – I – we did learn English in **Lebanon**. We had the Lebanese professor who was teaching us. So I-I – I cannot say I was fluent, but I was capable of communicating quite well –

Q: Okay.

A: – in – in English. Not with a British accent, of course, but – but nevertheless, enough to be able to move about **England** with no problem. And so, when I moved to **London**, I was with **Rilka**(ph) for a little while, and then she arranged for me to go to a youth hostel, and I was working in a youth hostel. So I started looking for job and – and the – the guy said, well, there's something that you can – you can do, there is some factory that you can go in. So I went for an interview and the gentleman that was interviewing me, he said, what do you want to do in life? And I said, what – I would like to be an engineer. And he says, oh, I'm sorry, I'm looking for a worker, not for an engineer. So –

Q: So it sounds like it was a trick question.

A: I suppose. But – so I was – I was – I had to go back, and they said, you know, there is – there is a – an office of a – of a – a Polish American, who was born in – in **United States**, but was educated in **Poland**. He became an engineer, and he worked in the Polish corps of engineer in – when – during the campaign in – in **Italy**, and there he met a British engineer who was working for the British corps of engineers, and they formed fre – friendship, and they decided that they liked each other so much that ti – after – after the war, they opened an office. And that office was to convert many of the residences of **London** into flats.

Q: Oh wow.

A: So they were doing this kind of work, and when I – when I went for an interview, the gentleman said yes – and because I – and when I graduated from high school, there was an Polish engineer who taught the boys the drafting. So I knew about eng-engineering drawings, I knew about drafting, I know about, you know, things. And so he gave me the opportunity to work for them, as my first engineering job.

Q: Oh, how wonderful.

A: And it was really fantastic, because, you know – but my mother told me in the beginning of my career that, just remember to – when you work for someone, take a letter of recommendation from the person. And so they – so I – when I was in **London** mat – from – I think from September or something like that, and we left for the **United States** in the beginning of February –

Q: Which year?

A: – of 1951. So we were in **England** only several months. And what happened is that my mother had ta – three uncles. My – my grandmother came from a family of 12.

Q: See, I hadn't that far – back enough, when I was asking you about your parents, your grandparents and so on, I didn't ask how many children were in those families, or that generation.

A: Well, that's – that's my – my grandmother had – had 11 siblings.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: And – and three of those siblings, all boys, escaped to the **United States** in – before the beginning of the second war – or the first World War. Because, when you are drafted into the Russian army, your career lasted 25 years, so all your life, basically. And so they didn't want to – to do that, and these – they – they came to the **United States**, and one of them settled in **Baltimore**, and the other one settled in – in **Ohio**, and the third one somewhere in **Ohio** also. And when we – when we left **Russia**, my mother somehow reestablished contact with him, and – Uncle **Miczesław**(ph) and he asked her, couple years later, if we would be wanting maybe to emigrate to the **United States**, and my mother said yes. But in those days, they – they had the visa – no-not the visa, but they had like every nationality had a number of places assigned.

Q: A quota.

A: A quota.

Q: Okay.

A: And so she – the Polish quota was always, you know, taken up. So we just simply waiting all this period, from, you know, we – we started doing this in **Teheran**, and he had to write the affidavits and all that kind of stuff –

Q: That's a long time.

A: Yes.

Q: That's like six or seven years.

A: Yes, and it still would have taken longer time, but the American government had passed a special law that permitted 18,000 military families to come to the **United States** for set –

Q: Polish military families.

A: Right, from – from the second Polish corps, to – to **[indecipherable]** units to – to immigrate to the **United States**. And si – again, since my father was counted as a military, we were given the opportunity –

Q: Excuse me to interrupting here, but you – I – I take it that your mother didn't have many documents with her. Did she have a document that said that her – that your father was in the military, or were there other ways they could substantiate that?

A: No, she – there was – there was something that yes, she – she had the substantiation. Cause we – we do have some documents of – of my father, and I – see the – here's the – the – the certificate, he graduated from the – from the officers' school.

Q: If you could hold that up just a little bit like that. Can you zero in on it? Yeah, got it? Okay. Okay, thank you.

A: You know, so –

Q: So she had documentation.

A: So, she had the documentation and you know, several other things that – that she had, you know, so she could prove that my father was – was in the military. And so we were – we were granted the visa, as part of the 18,000 permissions. And so on – on February – beginning of February, we were loaded onto one of Her Majesty's ships, and shipped from **Liverpool** to **London** – to – to **New York**. So the trip lasted, I think about 14 days or something like that. So we arrived in **New York** on February 14th –

Q: Nineteen –

A: – **Valentine's Day**, and everybody was, you know, saying, oh, Happy **Valentine**, and we didn't know what –

Q: What it was.

A: So it was. But we learned. And my – my – my mother's uncle's wife had family in – in **New York**. So they came out to take us from the ship. And I still have a business card of the cousin, that he showed them to – so he took us – he took us to his home, and we stayed in **New York** for several days. And –

Q: Do you remember – do you remember any first impressions?

A: Yeah, I remember Statue of Liberty.

Q: You do? Yeah. So you went through **Ellis Island**?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, we didn't, we – I don't know why, maybe because we came from England or something, but we were – the re – released directly into his care.

Q: I see, okay.

A: And so he took us from the – from the –

Q: Pier.

A: – pier, he took us to – to his house.

Q: Okay.

A: And permitted us to kind of release a little bit after the – after the trip. And then loaded us on the – on the train and shipped us to **Ohio**.

Q: To **Ohio**, so you didn't even go to **Baltimore**?

A: No. No, we went directly to **Ohio**, and my uncle picked us up at the train station in – across the border for – in – in **Pittsburgh**.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: In **Pittsburgh**, and then he took us bri – by car to his house, and we st – we were staying with them. Unfortunately, the first experience was not the most satisfactory, because after about four months – and I started working in – in ice cream factory, I was making the **Popsicles**. But this was my – my first job. And after about four months, my uncle called my mother and he says, you know, my wife, your aunt, and you just don't seem to be getting too well together. So, he says, you know, you – you have to leave.

Q: Oh dear. Oh dear.

A: So, we started looking for a place, you know, since I was already employed. We started looking for a place, but then my mother decided to call the uncle that lives in – lived in **Baltimore**, and maybe they could just take us for, you know **[indecipherable]** four months, you know, just a new country, everything – so wi – the cousin came in and she looked us over, and she decided we're okay, and so –

Q: That must have been hard.

A: Hm?

Q: That must have been hard.

A: Well, ya – hey, once you go through –

Q: Go through **Siberia**, right.

A: – hell, it's – nothing.

Q: I know. Okay, fine, okay.

A: And so, w-we moved to **Baltimore**, and we stayed with them, I think about a month maybe, maybe less. And my – my cousin says, you know, I – I don't know what to do with you, you know, wh-what am I do – we don't even know how to help you completely two different worlds.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know. And so she says, but you know, but there is – there is a Polish priest that went through German concentration camp. He is working in the parish right here. Maybe we take you there, and maybe you can – maybe you can find a better communication with him, maybe he can help you better than – than I. So she took us – she took me there, and we – I met the priest.

Q: Do you remember whos – what his name was?

A: I have it written down somewhere, but I – I didn't –

A2: **Fillipovich**(ph).

A: Oh, Father **Fillipovich**(ph).

A2: Father **Fillipovich**(ph). **[indecipherable]**

A: **Fillipovich**(ph). He was – he was really – you know, he went through different kind of **[indecipherable]**.

Q: Right.

A: And so he understood. And he said, you know, since you were working as a draftsman, we are – we are running a – a bazaar here, you know, and there is a gentleman that – that works for **Bethlehem Steel Corporation**. Maybe he can help you. So the next day I – I came in and he to – introduced me to the guy, and the guy says well – he was – he was Polish, second generation, I think, but he spoke Polish and he says well, let me see if there is something I can do. And so he gave me the address. The next day I went by train or something to what they call the **Sparrows Point**. **Sparrows Point** was where they had the shipyards, and – and the – the – you know, regular steel company thing. And so I – I – I talked to the – to the gentleman that was in charge of engineering office. I showed him my document from – from **England**.

Q: Your letter of recommendation.

A: My letter of recommendation. And the next day they – the fellow says, you know, you can – you can come and start working. So – so within couple days I – I was already employed **[indecipherable]**

Q: What a relief.

A: – in what I wanted to do, you know, so it just fantastic. And when I – when I came back, my aunt says, your mother isn't here any more. She rented an apartment

and she – she's waiting for you with – with supper, so you better go over there. So I – from that point on we were –

Q: On your own.

A: – on – independent, on our own. Which was, of course, the best thing that could happen to anyone. We – we kept a very good relationship with – with – with the uncle. And so I still maintain a relationship with – with his grandchildren, you know, talk to each other and things. And I – and I started working at **Sparrows Point** of the **Bethlehe-Bethlehem Steel Corporation**. And had a fantastic experience, because you know, it's something that –

Q: It's what you wanted to do.

A: – some – wanted to do, I wanted to do the engineering. And so, soon as possible, I – I signed up for the civil engineering studies, the evening of course, at **Johns Hopkins University** in **Baltimore**. So I'd work, come back from work, go to school. And I completed quite a number of courses, and then in 19 – middle – towards the end of 1954, I got the papers from **U**.**S**. military that I'm being drafted.

Q: Were you a citizen yet?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: That's another story.

Q: Okay.

A: So, I was finally drafted in the beginning of 1955, and after – after the basic training of eight weeks, our regiment was shipped to **Germany**. Because at that time, the regiment that was there – and it was – they had the – the duties of – of – of – of watching the border.

Q: East-west border?

A: East-west border, yes. And that regiment stayed there as – as – regiment as a, you know, unit, all the time from the be – the end of the war until 1955, beginning. And then they decided to exchange the units, move second regiment back to sh – to – to the **United States**, and us, as a whole regiment, ship over there. So we were shipped as a regiment to **Germany**. And since I got the job as a – as a regimental draftsman, of course, I was in a headquarters of the regiment in – in **Nuremberg**, whereas the – the battalions were sh – were s-stationed around the border. So it was – it was interesting because it was different kinds of draftsmanship.

Q: What were you doing?

A: Doing military plans when they they were doing their, you know, their exercises, I had to – to – to document where they're going to be, and what time, and what units and all that kind of stuff. It got to be **[indecipherable]**. So I worked – I was working there. And I remember one – one time, the sergeant of – of the **S-2** section,

which is the intelligence section, comes to – to – to the room that I was occupying, and he looks at me, and he looks at – at the – the plans that I am working on, and he says, are you a **U**.**S**. citizen? And I said no. So he said, oh my God. He runs to the colonel, tells him the story, and the colonel does whatever necessary, and within two weeks, I was shipped to **Frankfurt**, **Germany**, where the American consulate was, with two sergeants that swore that they knew me since.

Q: And they had never seen you before, huh?

A: No. And I was given the **U**.**S**. citizenship. So – so – so when I came back from the army, I was, you know, I was already –

Q: A **U**.**S**. citizen.

A: – a registered citizen. And – and it really helped me quite a bit because sometime later the same sergeant comes in and he says, do you speak a little Russian? And I said yes, I do. And he says, oh, would you like to go to a refresher course in **Russia**? And I say yes, of course. So I was shipped, for three weeks of Russian refresher course, in **Oberammergau**, **Germany**, and you probably know **Oberammergau** is a place where every 10 years they give the – the Easter thing.

Q: The Passion Play.

A: Passion Play.

Q: Yeah.

A: And it is a beautiful, beautiful town where everybody there is a sculptor. They sculpt, you know, in wood. So I spent three weeks with – with the military intelligence refresher course. And it was amazing experience for me because the – the people that were with me, they were from – you know, from private through major.

Q: Wow.

A: And all of them went through the army school of languages, and they want – an- and you know all these people were going – if necessary were going to be used as interrogators of the prisoners of war. So their basic Russian was based on the military requirements, you know, in other words, what – what do you ask, you know –

Q: Right.

A: – and all that kind of stuff. So they – they had to maintain their skill. So they were there and the first few days, you know, they were way ahead of me. And then, all of a sudden, s-s-started clicking, you know.

Q: Your first grade.

A: My first grade started clicking back. And by the time we were e – we were finished, I was way ahead of them, because my pronunciation was **[indecipherable]** better than th-theirs. And – and you know, I had the opportunity to – to visit that

wonderful place, and I – since they were doing all these kind of things that my mother always told – told me that, you have to have, in your house, you have to have a picture of Our Lady feeding the baby **Jesus**.

Q: Okay.

A: And so I had that remembrance, so I went to one of the sculptors, and I said, did you ever make the sculpture of Our Lady feeding the baby **Jesus**? And he says, no, but that's interesting. He says, come, come, come, come. So he took me to his – to his workplace, and he starts pulling out the books, trying to figure out, you know. And he finds a – a picture of lady – Our Lady feeding the baby **Jesus**. And he says, you know, I'll – I'll – I'll put you on rock – o-on the rock and – and **[indecipherable]** this, and she's going to be feeding baby **Jesus**. Is that – is that what you want? Excuse me, ca-can you sneak out and go and get that sculpture?

Q: Can you cut the panel, please? **[break]** And so, what's that?

A: So this is the – this is the sculpture that he made.

Q: Oh my goodness. Oh my goodness.

A: And – and th-there are only two of those like that. One painted, and the other one just as in wood. And he sent me both, to – to the – to – to **Nuremberg**, and he says, which one do you want? And I bought both, and the other one I send to my cousin in **Poland**. So they have that.

Q: Oh, my gosh.

A: But – but all – you know, the only thing that he showed me was this po – upper part. And the rest of it, with her putting her li –

Q: **[indecipherable]**

A: **[indecipherable]** on doing – and doing, that was all she – all his interpretation. And so, this is what – what I remember from **Oberammergau**.

Q: From **Oberammergau**. Well, thank you for sharing that. That – did you explain to the people where you were taking the Russian refresher course that – how you came to know Russian to begin with?

A: Yes. But, you know, that – basically, you know, I – I found out that most Americans are not interested in that, because it's – it's so far away from their background, from their pe – that you s-simply do not understand, that how in the heck – excuse me – my English – you can come to somebody's home at two o'clock in the morning and take him away, and leave everything – you know, you leave everything behind. It was just in – incomprehensible. And so there – they were not interested. And so therefore, you know, I just kept it to myself, and I don't have anything against it, because it is so different. You know, how do you explain to – to people that never experienced any kind of a – of **[indecipherable]** with authorities, that somebody can come to your house at two o'clock in the morning and take you

away, leave all your things behind, and, you know. But – but I explained to – to this – to these guys, and they accepted what it was.

Q: Was there a reason why they would have wanted you to take this Russian refresher course? Did they have anything in mind for you?

A: Well, because I was wer – working for the regiment.

Q: Okay.

A: And the regiment was on the border, so they needed people that were familiar with the language, just in case –

Q: I see.

A: – if some – something should happen, each unit had a translator that could interrogate the people. And here's a guy that not only that experienced being there –

Q: Yeah.

A: – and knowing the people. And so I was very grateful. But then I suffered some – somehow, later on, because whenever we would go to **Canada**, and I take my citizenship papers with me, I was always stopped on the border, and I – and there was also a telephone call made to **Washington**, because my – my paper, my – my citizenship paper is not the normal thing. It does not have my photograph, it does not have sig – signature of – of – of a judge. It has a signature of Consul General of the **United States** and **Frankfurt**, **Germany**, and it just doesn't sound normal. So –

Q: Okay. It wasn't what they were used to seeing.

A: So it was – it was always checked, and finally I decided, what am I doing, why don't I just get a passport and be done with it.

Q: And you did.

A: And I did and ever since then I was – it was okay.

Q: Okay.

A: So, you know, a-all these experiences add up to – to a – I would say a rather interesting life, if you want to call it that way. And then, when I was drafted into the army, I decided to move my mother to **Chicago**, because here we – we have many more friends and people that we – acquaintances that we had from the past. And so I moved her, and then I went back and was drafted. And when I was released I came back, and I restarted my studies at **Illinois Institute of Technology**, and I started working as a draftsman for engineering firms. And my first firm of employment was a fi – was a firm of – in – in which our chief engineer was Lithuanian. And most of the draftsmen were lith – were Lithuanians. So, that was my – my beginning of a career in **Chicago**.

Q: Well, did they ever – did they ever discuss the **[indecipherable]** with you?

A: No.

Q: The treaty of **[indecipherable]**

A: No, no, and interesting thing is that – that once the Polish army had left **Soviet Union**, the **Soviet Union** formed another army, which was the – an – a new government –

Q: Right.

A: – of **Lublin**, and a new army. And that army fought with the **Soviet Union**, and a – you know, participated in the liberation of **Poland**. And of course, the **Anders' Army** was a traitor. So – but it was – it was, you know, an interesting experience, because I already had something to show. That not only that I did get the document from – from the army that I worked as a draftsman, so – and when I – when I came to the – to – to **Chicago**, I started working for several firms, and the wa – and again for **U.S. Steel Corporation**, because th – I was already with experience from – from –

Q: From **Baltimore**.

A: – from **Baltimore**, from **Bethlehem Steel**. And I worked in different engineering firms until 1978. And in '78, I – I read an advertisement in a civil engineering magazine, a re – and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission had been looking for personnel. And so I went for an interview, and because my background was civil engineering, and it was also in – in – in dams, because the last firm that I was working for was a firm of Dr. **Bauer**(ph), who had, you know, his doctorate in

hydraulics, and so I worked on – on things. And so I was accepted. And so in 1978 until 2008, for 30 years, I worked for **U**.**S**. un-unit. And that was really fantastic experience, too, because we – there were five offices like that, and **Chicago** office had the Middle East – the mi – mi – middle west.

Q: Midwest, mm-hm.

A: And so we had, you know, a number of dams. And so, all these thir – 30 years that I worked, I haven't visited all the – all the dams.

Q: Oh wow.

A: So there's – there's quite a number, and people always say what? Tell me? You know, but there are hundreds of dams that are run not only by the Corps of Engineers, but also by private industry, where they have, you know, hydraulic facilities. And because they – they are using the waters of the **United States**, they are obligated to take a license and to fulfill the requirements, and we would go and visit and see if everything is okay, and if not, we would write down what we find that is – needs to be repaired, and they were obligated to do that. So, it was – it was –

Q: Sounds like an interesting – interesting job.

A: Oh – oh, it was – it was very interesting, and you never get tired, because you know, a dam is a dam and a – a – and a plant is a plant. No, it's not. Each one is

different, each one has separate problems, or arrangements or whatever. And – and you know – and to – y-you – like if you going to a different – different – different thing to do every time you go, cause it's different.

Q: Did you think much about those two years of deportation throughout your life, or do you kind of push it to the past?

A: I try to push it to the past, because I don't think that – well, it's not my nature, you know. And – and besides, I've read so many times when people are reliving their – their past, and especially if the past is not a pleasant one, you are unhappy. You are – you are always under this – this influence of this – these horrible years, when you starved to death, when you were beating 200, you know, lice a day. When your mother almost died, you know, and where you were just by a – by a miracle, taken away from there. Because you know, I do not consider it any different but just miracle, that we just happened to be in the right place, at the right time, so that we could leave that, you know, wonderful life of the **Soviet Union**, you know. And so I – I don't want to think about it. I know I had that experience, but –

Q: Did you ever wonder why you – why you were able to leave, and others didn't, couldn't?

A: I asked, but I didn't get a answer, you know, and – and – but I pray daily, thank Him for that – for that opportunity to be able to leave. Because I know that we would not have survived the next winter, you know. And –

Q: You were too weak. Your mother was too –

A: My mother and I. And if we were, the next winter and the next winter and the next winter would have been the same, you know. So – and it took the re-remaining of those people that were deported, those that survived, they didn't have an opportunity to return po – to **Poland** until 1953. And we left 1942. So that's 11 more years of that kind of living, whereas I was saved that/

Q: And just to – so that people will understand, can you explain why they would have been able to leave in 1953? What event allowed that to happen?

A: Uncle **Stalin** died. And so –

Q: And that meant?

A: – the changes begin – began to – to occur in the **Soviet Union**.

Q: I see.

A: And at that time apparently, the Polish government in **Poland** –

Q: The communist government.

A: – would have been able to – to obtain release for those people. And so th-the remnants of those deported – and people are not only deported in – in – when I was

deported, there were hundreds of them, thousands of them were also deported, you know, as the Russians moved in the – in the push on **Germany**. So –

Q: You mean on the attack on **Germany**.

A: When they attacked the **Germany**, and then – and then they occupied the Polish territory, all the people from the underground forces, all the politicians, whoever they could put their hands on, were deported again, so that that was in 19 – you know, '43, '44, '45, and later. And only after the – the final – you know, when – when – when **Stalin** died, and changes started to occur, they could manage to release those people.

Q: Tell us a little bit about your own life, did you get married? Did you have children?

A: Yes, when – when I came back from the army, we started, you know, going back into the Polish neighborhoods and things, and I went to a – to a Christmas party of the Polish scouting orani – organization. And I run into a very beautiful woman, and so we start going together, and turns out that she – she lived not too far away from where I was, and so it was – it was beginning of 1957 actually. And it took her two years to decide that yes, she wants to marry me. Oh, look at the faces she's making. So we – we were married in July of 1959, and in 1961 we moved to this place here in chi – in **Arlington Heights**. And we're probably one of the very few Poles that

live here, because there's still – **Polonia** was still located in the – in the city of **Chicago**. And then my – my daughter was born in 1966.

Q: What's her name?

A: Her name is **Beatta**(ph).

Q: **Beatta**(ph), mm-hm.

A: And she attended school here in – in **Arlington Heights**, Ca-Catholic school. And then she wanted to go to – to **Saint inga – Ignatius College Prep** in downtown, and I was kind of just wondering whether, you know, for her to travel all that, and then she managed to talk to one of the boys that was going to school, and he – he talked to me one time and he says, Mr. **Pawlikowski**, you are going to commit a grave mistake if you don't let your daughter go. So, what could I do?

Q: Of course.

A: And – and she went to school and that – it's a very good school. And she **[indecipherable]** she studied Latin, she studied Greek, and she met her husband. And so, you know, they – and they were married, and now we are happy grandparents of a six year old, **Kinga**(ph), **Kinga**(ph) **Alexandra**.

Q: **Kinga**(ph) **Alexandra**.

A: A tri-lingual little character. She speaks Polish very fluently, she speaks Lithuanian **[indecipherable]** and now she speaks people's language.

Q: Which –

A: She speaks the language of the people that walk on the street, which is English. So, now we can con – we can conduct conversations in two languages, that is we and – and she, and another two languages with the Lithuanian grandparents. So, she's quite a character.

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

A: We went back to **Poland** first time in 1979.

Q: With your mother?

A: No, my mother went in 1958. Her mother still lived at that time. And so she spent about three months in – in **Poland**, and was – she still went by ship, **[indecipherable]** from – from **Canada**. And –

Q: Did you ever go back to **Dordinna**(ph)?

A: To what?

Q: To **Dordinna**(ph)?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, because it was – it was the **Ukraine** and it – and besides, you know, I – I felt kind of – I think I've been there once, and that's enough. I don't – because you never know what these people can do. And you know, there still are wonderful

places to visit in – in – in **Russia**, and – but even now, I don't think that I would be – there are so many other places. And I visited that one, one time, and it's enough. So – and I don't – don't expect to go there.

Q: What about **Lódz**? Did you go back to **Lódz**?

A: Oh yes, you know, '79, and then I went back in 2000. So I still have – I've – I have some cousins that live there and we're in contact with one of the cousins, **Wavia**(ph), who came to visit us then – in 1976 she came to visit us here in **United States**. And she was very happy, but she told us later that – she says, I don't even understand, how do you cover these distances? I mean, we get up at six o'clock in the morning, you drive til six o'clock at night, and then we drive again six o'clock in the morning, and, you know, she says, it – it just – just – how do you do that? I said, well, you sit in the car, and drive, and – you know. But she was very happy because we took her west, and we see the – we saw the Grand Canyon, and you know, things like that, and – in fact, I talked to her last week and I said, what – you know, as soon as you – as you retire, don't forget that we are going to visit **Hawaii**, because that she want – she wanted to go there. So I hope we can – we can manage to do that.

Q: So you still have li – a-as you have contact with friends that you made during those years of transition in ira – **Iran** and **Iraq** and **Beirut**, you also still have ties

with family – the family that you had left in **Poland** when you were such a young boy.

A: Well, except that now it's – it's the grandchildren of the –

Q: – chil – grandchildren –

A: – of the – of the family.

Q: – yeah.

A: And not what – you know, i-in fact, it was kind of interesting thing because – because all of a sudden I – I – I get the telephone call from my cousin in – in – in **Baltimore**, and she says, you know, there's this woman that – that wrote to me, and she says that she's cousin of mine, you know, a-and a – and a – y-you know, but she was saying something that I don't understand, you know. Maybe you can get in touch with her. So I get in touch with her, and find out that she's the granddaughter of one of the 12 children of – of – you know, of my grandmother's brood. And so we established a relationship with – with her. And we hope to visit **Poland** next year, and so I hope that I'm going to be able to – to meet with her, she lives in **Warsaw**. And it will be interesting, because no vos – all of a sudden, after all these years, you – you find someone –

Q: Find another relat – yeah.

A: Right, right. And, you know, it's – you wish it was here that there was – so I could have larger family in here, but you are thankful that at least they're all over the place, you know, so they could – you could – you could –

Q: **[indecipherable]**

A: – keep in touch with them somehow. And of course it's different worlds, different generations, she's much younger than I am, you know, and – but – but she was – she sounded very friendly, very wanting to establish a contact. So, we hope that we can – can do it.

Q: What would you want **Kinga**, when she is old enough to understand, what would you want your granddaughter **Kinga** to understand about who you were as an eight year old boy when all of this happened, seven year old boy. What would you want her to – to understand about that experience, and to take away from it?

A: Well, I suppose just a human part of it, and a – and – and a – and a positive human heart – part of it, that please don't dwell on it. That it happened, and it's gone, you live different life, and appreciate what you have, cause you never know what life brings you. And I don't – I don't think I would like to load her and burden her with such things as – as killing 200 lice in – in a day. You know, it's – it's just inconceivable. And why – why pester the – the mind of a young person with – with something like that? It – it's –

Q: But what does it tell her about you as a person, as her grandfather? How does – you know, there's – there's something through your life experience that can tell her something about you, and what would you want her to know?

A: About the world.

Q: Okay.

A: That there is a greater world that one should visit. About the people, that you should not be locked up, that you should be open for other people. And that – and if you are open for other people, even if the – if there are people that are against you, you can brush them aside because there are other people that will be friendly towards you. I think that's important to know, because I experienced it, you know, the – the – the Cossacks, the **Uzbeks**, the Iranians, the Lebanese, the British, you know. The-These – these are experiences, because all th-thi – all this expands your brain, and makes – makes the world smaller, and larger at the same time, and makes you appreciate different cultures without having to remember the bad things. And I think that's very important that – that you should not carry something that happened 200 or 500 years ago, and you still – you – you still kind of have some hatred tow- towards the new generation that doesn't know anything about it. And I – I think it's important, because if you don't practice that, we'll always be at war. And I think that's important.

Q: And you've been able to bury that for yourself, whatever – whatever pain that you might have felt, it's gone.

A: It's gone. No, it – you know, of course you remember.

Q: Yeah.

A: You remember the – the – that you were just kicked out of your own country. But I don't want to dw-dwell on it. I – I – I want it to be as an experience, but not something that I experience every day. I think that's very negative, and – and – and I think it's – that poisons your – your whole life, you know, your whole outlook at life, you know. And you know, i-it's – it's – it's not constructive, because you can live with – with the **[indecipherable]** you can live with – you know, I mean, like I told you about this story about these guys that were – for hundreds of years they are looking for someone that's – that's going to play the anthem for them, to – to liberate them, you know. This is the positive experience, and I think these are more important than the other ones, if you have survived them, of course.

Q: If you have survived them.

A: If you haven't, then – then you have a problem.

Q: Yeah.

A: But – but I think – you know, I don't – I don't hold it anything against, say, the Russians. Because they suffered more than I. I suffered for two years, they suffered

for the – all their lives. And – and you know, this – this – even during the tsars, there was different kind of situation, but th-they were people th-ther – that were downtrodden, and then they liberated themselves in the name of the communism – and they were downtrodden again.

Q: Yeah.

A: And so, you know, and you – but you also have to remember – remember I told you about the story about the German officer, that you – sometimes you really wonder, how can it be that people can be so cruel? A-And this – can I repeat this story?

Q: Yes, of course you can.

A: And – and – and the story is, I was reading – I read in a newspape – in – in a – in a ga – in a book that – as – as – as you know, there were concentration camps that were started on the Polish territory by the Germans. And most of them were to liquidate people that were undesirables, which was Poles, and the Jews, and there was – there was a story about this transport that was being taken in one of the camps, and the people were led into the camp, and there was a – a Jewish mother, and four or five year old little boy. And they were walking in and – and at the gate stands the – the Gestapo officer, dressed up in beautiful uniform, with the ha – with the hat and – and the long boots, and – and – and the **[indecipherable]** you know,

that he was kind of hitting his – his leg with it. And he was – for the boy it was – it was a marvelous, wonderful figure. So the boy just pulls away from his – from his mother's hand and runs to the officer and offers him the only thing that he has in life, an apple. And the officer smiles at the child, takes the apple, bends over, grabs him by the hands and – and kills him on the spot. How do you explain that? How do you explain the fact that pole – no, hun – thousands of Polish officers were murdered by **NKVD**, by killing them with a bullet in his – in the back of their head? You know, it was just a very simple thing, right. Next, next. Then you go home, you have supper. You put your child on – on your lap, tell him the story. And next day you go and do the same thing. Impossible to believe that human beings are capable of that. Am I to – to – to remember all these things all the time, and accuse all the people of the – being possible to do that? No, it – it was circumstances. But circumstances like that, there are hundreds of them, you know, that people can be capable of such barbarity, and it – in a civilized nation. You know, to – to kill six million Jews? To have special concentration camps that you just do nothing but daily, you know, take them to the bathroom –

Q: Death rooms.

A: – to – to the – to ta – basically take the shower, and instead of water coming out, a gas comes out of the shower things, and you – and you kill them by the hundred.

You know, and all in the name of an idea that – that these are bad people, and that you have to get rid of them because – because you are looking for **lebensraum**, which is the space, you know, living space, the Germans were doing it. They were going to liquidate the Poles, and they were going to liquidate the Russians, because they were going to take over all this territory and form a thousand year old Reich, you know.

Q: The idea.

A: That was the idea. And – and many of them went for it. And then when I was in **Germany** in – in – in 1955 or '56, it was all gone. They were all back to normal people, you know, and you – nobod – nobody knew. They just didn't know that something like that was happening. Which is, of course, something else. But – but –

Q: Well, from what you say, it sounds like we're veering between the need to go forward, and the need to remember, but not to dwell on what you remember. Is that right?

A: Yes, you – you – you have to remember. And that's why I think the Holocaust Museum d-does a wonderful thing, and I'm so grateful that they extended their willingness to come to places like – like my home. Yes, you must, but not that you have to, you must remember that. And you must teach that to the next generation, so they don't repeat that kind of mistake. And I think, if we learned any lessons, then

maybe the sacrifices will bear fruit. But the – the only thing we have to do is to make sure that somehow we convey it to other generations, you know, and they remember that human beings are capable of these unbelievable atrocities, all in the name of some idiotic idea, or – or in the name of **Bachkastani**(ph), who – who killed his own – he had the problems in the beginning of – of the – of the war when he waged war against **Germany**, because before, in the 30s, he killed all the officers' staff.

Q: You're talking about **Stalin**, yeah.

A: Yes, you know. And so – so, you know, because you don't trust anyone, even the people that were with you all this time, helping you to get to the top of the pile, and then you kill them because you mistrust them.

Q: Yeah.

A: And – and I think this is the si – this is the something that – that will – we should be able to convey to other generations, that you know, please don't become one of those. Be a human being. Be a loving human being and – and don't persecute your brothers.

Q: Well, thank you. Thank you for sharing your story with us today. Thank you for the energy and the time and the attention, and we're very, very grateful.

A: Well, tha – and thank you for coming, because, you know, I – I – I wasn't going to disclose this, what I have disclosed to you.

Q: I appreciate that you have. I appreciate that you have.

A: Well, thank – tha-thank your museum, really seriously.

Q: I will.

A: Thank you.

Q: And this concludes the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with Mr. **Witold Pawlikowski** on January 19 – excuse me, January 21st, 2015. Okay, so Mr. **Pawlikowski**, now I want to talk to you a little bit about the documents here that you have on your lap. Have you ever seen anything like this before?

A: No, I haven't. Because I d – apparently these were filled out by my mother somewhere. I don't rem – I don't see the date. But it says that it's a displaced person registration record, which – which shows the registration number, and my mother's name, place of birth, religion, the father's name, mother's name and last place of residency in **Poland**. And okay, thank you.

Q: And there's one for her and I believe one for you as well.

A: There's one for me, which is – which is I'm really grateful for that, but this a – cause I didn't even know that – that something like that exists.

Q: The third page is part of the listing in the list on the **[indecipherable]** boat that you took to the **United States**. Your names are down there.

A: Right, my names are – are here, and my mother's birthdate and place of birth, and – international ref – refugee organization travel documents are issued in **Beirut**. So this is the – the register of the – on the ship that – that – which we took to – to the **United States**, which is really something. You know, they just simply didn't share these documents with us, you know. Maybe they would have if we asked for it, but – and – and these are also some registration cards.

Q: For you and for her?

A: Date was 4-9-1950. So this was when we apparently are leaving **Lebanon** to go to **England**. Yes, last occasion **Beirut**, **Lebanon**, and destination **England**, on **SS Oxfordshire**.

Q: You know, it's interesting that I fou – I got those documents after I got the questionnaire that you filled out. And as I was looking through them I said, this confirms everything that you told me in the questionnaire, everything that you wrote in the que – now, one wouldn't doubt it, it's simply –

A: You do have documentation of it.

Q: We do have documentation.

A: Right.

Q: Yeah. So what does it say? Does it – does it have a meaning for you when you see something like this, 60 – 70 years after the event?

A: Well, it's just like what you said. It – it really shows the documentation that I did go through those things. It's not only the **Stalin's** picture that I have to show you, but – but there is actually documentation. Of course, we don't have any documentation from the **Soviet Union**, but – but this is – is a – a wonderful thing, and this – this is application for assistance, whatever that was. And it was 1947, so we were in **Lebanon** at that time. And this must be the – when international refu – refugee organization had taken over, and my mother had to fill this out. So – and this also is a recommendation from **England**, from the Polish hostel in **Lothian**(ph) **Park**, **Pendred**(ph) **Cumberland**, that my mother has left the camp to go to a hostel in **Liverpool**, and was due to sail for **USA** on the following day. So this is confirmation that we did travel on Her Majesty's – because Her Majesty paid for the trip.

Q: Ah, to the **United States**?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: What would you say to other people? Would you say that it is worth them making an effort to find out th – you know, about such documents?

A: Oh yes, I would say this – this is fantastic, and I – you know, maybe it is my fault, maybe I could have inquired myself, but –

Q: But you may never have known of its existence.

A: But **[indecipherable]** of the existence of something like that, you know. I mean, something that says that she left in feb – second February for the **Danfield Lane Hostel** in **Liverpool**, and then – you know, and – and this is the international refugee organization which – I – I – I have to read it, but –

Q: Of course.

A: – but it's a statement of my mother, that she had to sign, that she waives and surrenders any rights and claims of demands of any blah-blah-blah, whatever.

Q: Some official language there.

A: Some official language that I would be glad to – to read, but you know, we are really grateful to – to – to the fact that such an organization was formed, and helped not thousands, but millions of people to go back and to start life again, in a normal life. Not the place where you see somebody hitting a child's head on the – on the pavement, but normal life, and you can appreciate that and – and you know, that's why I want – when I came to the **United States**, I tried to every – you know, to – to do everything I can not to go against the law. I was never arrested. I did not use drugs, because life was too dear to me. And I – I think that's important to know,

that you just live once, and you live for a very short period of time, and it is much simpler to live a simple life, a normal life, where you have family, where you have – you go to church, where you worship, where you remember that it – it was not your doing that you were saved, it was something else. And then I think it's – that's very important how, even though you have no proof, cause you – cause you been just, you know, right place in the right time, but something else.

Q: I understand.

A: And I – and I think it's im-important to – to know and to acknowledge it, and to thank God for – for this gift of life. And now, being grandfather, you know, and having a ni – a young lady that, you know – where's – where's my painting? Where's my painting, grandchild's pa-painting? Because you know, the – the grandparents week this week. And my – show me – show yours, too. And – and we – w-we – we went to visit our daughter over the weekend, and she presented us the roses for the grandpa over there, and grandma got her embroidery of her painting, and grandpa got – got the picture.

Q: Let's see. Oh, this is –

A: This is – this is the embroidery.

Q: Oh, that's so sweet.

A: That's her – that's her painting, but embroidery, of course, is mother's. But nevertheless, Grandma got that. And this is **Jaja**(ph) **[indecipherable]** painting. So, you know, you have to remember that your blessing continues.

Q: Thank you. Thank you very much.

A: Of course – of course **[indecipherable]** is misspelled, but it's okay.

Q: That's part of the charm.

A: Right, that's part of the charm, of course. And grandma **[indecipherable]**

A2: But this one is important.

Q: Yeah.

A: But you know, that's – that's important. The grandpa.

Q: Okay.

A: And apparently, this is the grandpa with the beard, of course.

Q: Green beard. Well, thank you grandpa.

A: You're welcome.

Q: Thank you very much.

End of File Two

Conclusion of Interview