

## **RG-50.030.1016**

### **Summary**

Allan Firestone (né Abraham Wiznitzer) was born on January 31, 1933 in Kołomyja (Kolomyia) in eastern Poland (today part of Ukraine). Besides his mother and father, he had four older sisters. Of these only he and one sister survived. His father, Jacob Wiznitzer, owned a grocery store and some real estate. His mother, Clare (Lochs) worked in the grocery store. His parents were originally from eastern Poland. His grandparents were already dead. His mother had a sister, her husband and four children. His mother also had a brother who lived in Germany with his wife until he was expelled to Poland in 1941. His father had brothers and sisters who lived in the United States. According to Firestone, Kołomyja was a town of about 30,000 fairly equally divided between Poles, Ukrainians and Jews. The family spoke Yiddish or German at home. While Firestone's father considered himself a modern Jew – he did not wear a beard or skullcap – he did pray at home and went to synagogue on holidays.

Even before the war started, Fireside's family was aware of the danger to Jews. Fireside, himself, did not experience antisemitism since he played with Jewish friends. Soon after the war started the Russians invaded. Jews were ambivalent about their arrival. The Soviets left in June 1941 and were replaced by Hungarian troops whose occupation was fairly mild. When the Germans arrived two months later Jews were forced to give up valuables, wear the yellow star and suffer other limitations. Later in 1941 the Germans began to ship Jews off to the Belzec extermination camp and to murder Jews in the nearby Szeparowce forest. The major roundup occurred on January 25, 1942. The next day Firestone's father was arrested by the Ukrainian militia and deported. His oldest sister was raped and then also deported with her husband. Their baby was left with the husband's parents. When they were deported his remaining sisters took the baby in but eventually gave the baby up to the baby's grandmother. Both were soon murdered by the Nazis. Two of his sisters, Firestone, and his aunt, uncle and four children, were forced into the ghetto in Kołomyja. One more sister tried to escape but was killed. He and his other sister were later able to escape the ghetto and hide in the apartment of the maid of the sister's boyfriend who had been killed. They stayed there from late 1942 until the Russian liberation in February 1944. His sister met and married, and they and Firestone made into the American Zone at the end of the war. The United States approved their visas, but in order for Firestone to immigrate he had to be adopted by his sister and her husband. The brother-in-law's name was "Firestein" which Firestone later changed to Firestone. He also changed his first name from Abraham to the more American sounding Allan.

Life was difficult at first in the United States. Firestone felt like a "fifth wheel" living with his sister and her husband in Brooklyn. Their father's brother, who had sponsored them, was very helpful in helping them all to adjust. In time, Fireside went back to school and gradually adjusted and made friends. In 1953 he was drafted into the U.S. Army and after that felt that he became his own person. Allan and his sister visited Kołomyja once but found it very different from how they remembered it except for the continuing antisemitism from the Ukrainians.