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Yep. This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Selma Tennenbaum Rossen on September 20, 2019 in Springfield Township, New Jersey. Thank you very, very much for agreeing to speak with us today, for sharing some of your life story and your family's experiences and destiny during World War II.

Well, thank you.

Well, I'll start our interview with the most basic questions.

OK.

Can you tell me the date of your birth?

March 6, 1936.

March 6, 1936.

Yes.

And what was your name at birth?

Selma Tennenbaum.

OK. Where were you born?

I was born in Zolochiv, Poland.

OK.

It was then Poland.

And is it still or no?

No, it is part of Ukraine now.

So that means it was on that eastern part of Poland that has been so often contested territory.

Absolutely.

OK.

When my parents were born, it was Austria, Hungary. And then it was Poland. Then it was Russia. Now it's Ukraine.

Well, isn't it interesting? A person can be born and live in the same city, maybe even the same street, and have lived in four countries.

That's correct.

Yeah. And they have much different experiences than those of us who are never near such borders. Let me ask a little bit about your family. Can you tell me your mother's name and your father's name?

My mother was Elizabeth Tennenbaum, Elizabeth Horowitz Tennenbaum. And Father was Samuel Lipa Tennenbaum.

OK, so your mother's maiden name was Horowitz.

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Yes.

Did both sides of your family come from-- was it Zloczow that you said?

Zolochiv.

Zolochiv.

Yeah, actually, Father was born in a very small hamlet called Gologory.

Doldory?

Gologory.

Doldory.

G-O-L-O-- Gologory, which is actually means "Bare Mountain."

Ah. OK.

But Mother was from Zolochiv.

And was this small hamlet close to Zolochiv?

Yes.

OK.

Very close.

Did you have brothers and sisters?

I have a sister.

And what is her name?

Her name is Edith Tennenbaum Shapiro.

And was she older or younger than you?

She was one year older. 13 months to be exact.

Really? 13 months older? So you're very close in age.

Very close.

13 has always been my lucky number.

[LAUGHS] That's very good to have.

Yes.

For so many of us, we keep looking at it like, oh, it's an unlucky number. But it's good when it's the opposite. So you

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have one sister.

Mm-hmm.

And she is still living?

Yes.

OK. Your mother's side of the family you say were all from Zolochiv. Did she have brothers and sisters?

No.

OK. And her parents, do you know their names?

Well, I remember my grandmother's name. Her name was Basha, Barbara Horowitz.

Barbara.

Yes. I don't remember my grandfather's because he was killed very early, and we never knew him-- in an accident. He was not killed in the war.

OK.

He died before the war.

OK. Did he die when your mother was already an adult?

No, she was a child. She was I think four or five years old.

So does that mean your grandmother brought her up?

Oh, yes.

By herself.

Yes, absolutely.

OK.

She had a little restaurant near the railroad station in town. And that's how she made out.

Wow. It must have been a hard life for her.

Yes. I know it was, right? But she's a very stalwart woman, very religious woman. And she always felt that God was on her side.

And so you knew your grandmother.

Oh, yes. Yes. She survived the war and came with us to America.

Oh, my.

Yes.

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Did she live on her own when you were born? Or did she live with you and your parents?

She lived on her own.

She lived on her own.

Yes.

OK. And there were no other children, just your mother?

Correct.

All right. On your father's side, did he have brothers and sisters?

No, he didn't.

Oh, so he was also an only child.

He was an only child.

All right.

No aunts, no uncles, no first cousins.

OK. And what about his parents? Were they alive when you were born?

Oh, yes. We lived in the same house with them.

Ah. OK. So there are three grandparents in your life.

Yes.

All right. What were your paternal grandparents' names?

Leon and Lola Tennenbaum.

OK. And Lola, do you remember what her maiden name might have been?

I think it's Tapaun.

Kapaun?

Yes, T-A-P-A-U-N.

OK. And did they survive the war?

No. No. Grandmother died of typhus. We were actually living just outside the ghetto. And Grandfather committed suicide, took some cyanide when he was picked up by one of the roundups during the war.

Oh. Do you have any memories of them?

Oh, yes. Absolutely. Because it's funny. Very small memories because this was before the war. My grandfather owned a factory. He was traveling. And he was a cultural Jew, a very strong cultural Jew but not a religious Jew. My grandmother was really orthodox, very kosher kitchen.

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Can we hold on for a second? So your grandfather was a cultural Jew but not a very religious Jew. And your grandmother?

Grandmother was orthodox, kosher kitchen. And grandfather when he went traveling sometimes brought ham back with him from his travels. And then he would take Edith and me to the back stairs of the house and give us ham sandwiches. Now, Edith is much more adventurous and brave than I am. So since then, she loves him. And I felt very guilty, and I don't eat ham to this day.

Oh my goodness.

I eat bacon.

[LAUGHS] But not ham.

No, the guilt still stays with me.

Oy yay, oy yay. But so he was a bit naughty.

He was a bit naughty, yes.

Yes. But that's also very charming in a grandfather.

Yes, he was a very good grandfather.

Yeah. What was the factory that he owned?

What was the factory--

Factory that he owned.

He owned a factory that made paper products, boxes, and all kinds of printing material for the pharmaceutical industry.

Aha.

So the box that you get your medicine in and many of the items, like a headache powder, which was called [? guduchi. ?] Came in little paper twists. So they did all the packaging for pharmaceutical industry. And they were probably the second larger manufacturer of pharmaceutical packaging in Poland.

That's quite something.

It's something. And that factory saved our lives.

Well, we'll, come to that. We'll come to that. Was it a large factory then if it was the second largest in Poland? Or was it not so large?

It was not that large. I mean, this is Poland. Yes.

OK. Well, also because it sounds like a very specialized niche.

Yes. It was a classic niche market.

Yeah. About how many people worked in that factory?

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Well, it varied. But I think right before the war, it was close to a hundred. That's pretty big, yes.

Yeah. And did your father work with your grandfather? Or did he have a separate business or pursuit?

Well, Father has a law degree. He originally planned to be an engineer and so studying in Lemberg, in Lvov. But Grandpa needed some help in the factory. So Father came to help him. In Poland, you didn't have to attend classes to be a lawyer. You just had to show up for the final exams. So Father switched to law, and then he worked in Father's factory, essentially running it, the technical side of it, from a very early age.

Oh, wow.

Yes.

Well, that speaks to somebody who had talent.

Mechanical abilities and management abilities and language abilities, yes.

Your father, when was he born? Do you know?

Yes. He was born in-- I'm blanking out for a minute. But it's April 9, 1909.

OK. And your mother?

My mother was born on September 12, 1909.

Ah, so there's just half a year difference between them.

Yes.

So your father was a young boy. Actually, this parallels in the generations a little bit, that his child was during a war and yours was during a war, in that his was World War I.

Oh, absolutely, yes.

Did he have any memories of World War I?

He did, but not that many. At that point, Poland was part of Austria, Hungary. So they were really in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

All right.

And there was really no prejudice against Jews at that time. There were some pogroms, but not close to where he was.

OK. Did he ever talk about such things? Did he ever talk about his own childhood, his own growing up, or things like that?

Not in the-- not that young. But certainly, once he was a teenager, absolutely.

So he would tell you stories.

Oh, sure. Yes.

Are there any favorite stories of his that you remember?

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Well, not particularly. But he was a great athlete. And he was a member of a lot of clubs. He always encouraged us to be athletic and to swim and to read. Most of the stories really had to do with the books that he read. And we were brought up on a lot of Polish literature and American literature. And he liked western stories from the United States.

Well, in some parts of Europe, and particularly Germany, people would always-- when they talk about westerns, their eyes would light up, and they'd say, Karl May, Karl May.

You got that one right. Yes, absolutely. Yes.

Was that one of them?

Yes, it was. Yes.

OK. And this name is not known in the United States.

He was a very popular in Poland.

Yeah.

But we got things like Anne of Green Gables. And I'm trying to think of-- but a lot of western stories, yes.

And were they translated into Polish?

Oh, yes, sure.

OK. What language did you speak at home?

Polish.

Polish. Did your parents speak Yiddish?

Well, I'm sure they knew Yiddish. I mean, I know they knew Yiddish. But at home, we always spoke Polish.

OK. And with their own parents also?

Polish.

OK, that's a distinction. Because in some families, it was not that case.

I know.

OK. So would that mean that you were-- that that sort of-- being a cultural Jew, that was one of the ways that that showed that one was more secular in that way or more assimilated?

Also, our town Zolochiv was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. And their attitude toward Jews was very different in that Jews were allowed to hold high offices. They could practice law in a way they could not in parts of Poland which were occupied by Russia. And there didn't seem to be-- lots of Father's friends were not Jewish. But he was very devoted to Judaism and to Palestine and was culturally assimilated.

Well, if it was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, I would assume that he also spoke German.

Of course.

OK. And your mother, too?

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Oh, surely.

OK. Did your mother have higher education?

Yes, she went to law school.

Also?

Yes.

That's unusual.

Yes. Yes. They were both lawyers in prewar Poland, which is unusual.

Very. And did she practice?

For a little while, and then she had us.

OK. How did your parents meet?

Well, they were apparently introduced by their parents, actually Mother's mother and Father's mother.

OK. Was it matchmaking? Or was it just--

No, they were children.

Ah.

The picture you see standing other there of my parents, he was-- I think they were 16-year-old. So they knew each other from high school.

Tell me a little bit about their personalities, your mother's personality and then your father's personality.

Well, Mother was a great reader also. But she was very social. She made friends very easily and had a lot of friends. She was also interested in things like clothing, jewelry. And she was a fabulous cook. I mean, our grandparents were fabulous cooks. So she was very social. But she did get a law degree because Father went to law school.

And she did not get as involved in politics as Father did. Father were also a great reader. I think that both of them were great readers. But Father was also a great sportsman. And he was a manager, very good technical manager.

Did your mother participate in the work of the factory at all?

No.

No. So her world was running the household?

Yes.

And a social life and a literary kind of interest.

Aboslutely social life, yes.

OK. which one-- is this a fair question? Which one were you closest to?

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That's an Interesting question. I don't think I can even answer that question because there were some things that Father, and there were some things that Mother did. And they both did their bit with us, right.

OK. It sounds as if they were engaged with you.

Very much so.

OK.

Having said that, we were brought up by nannies.

Well, that was one of my next questions.

Yes.

Yeah. I wanted to ask, would you have said your family was well-to-do in--

Yes.

OK.

Before the war.

Before the war.

Yes.

Describe your home for me a little bit. Where did you live? What do you remember from your home?

Well, we actually lived over the factory. Not exactly over at the factory. But there was a very big building. And on the second floor, there were apartments of my nuclear family, Mother, Father, Edith, and I. And Grandpa and Grandma Tannenbaum also lived there.

In the same apartment or a different apartment?

Well, different apartments, same floor.

Got it. OK.

The factory was on the bottom floor. And there was an adjoining building.

Ah.

And there was-- and we moved from there when the Russians invaded, which was in 1941. It was when I was five years old. So I don't have too many memories of that first apartment except Grandpa giving us ham on the back stairs. And I have this very strange memory, which I've talked to Edith about, is in the kitchen when the maid and the cook were there, there were geese. And they were stuffing the geese, the heads of the geese. They were stuffing the geese for foie gras, you know, it's-- and just--

And you remember that?

I have that memory, right.

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How interesting.

Yeah. And I also remember that in the winter, they put sacks with hay on the doors for it to provide protection from the cold air, yes.

Well, tell me about the house itself. Did it have modern conveniences?

Yes. We had one of the four toilets in the city of Zolochiv. And one of them was actually--

Well, there's a distinction.

[LAUGHTER]

One of the ones was actually a flush toilet, right.

Oh my goodnes. [LAUGHS] Well, I asked this a lot partly to know, what was the level of modernity? What were the level of conveniences at the time? We can make assumptions that aren't necessarily true-- how a place was heated, how a place was lit, what kind of access their water--

Well, we had those porcelain stoves in each room.

You had a-- oh, you had those types of--

Stoves, right.

OK.

And Father had one of the six cars in town and of town. But if we go somewhere, we would not-- it would not be in a car. It would be a horse-drawn carriage, [POLISH].

So you had an automobile.

Yes, we did.

But you would not use that.

Automobiles at that time were not that reliable. I mean, there's a picture of my father going to his wedding in the automobile. But that are only for very special occasions.

OK.

They had tires which didn't last. And it wasn't that easy.

Ah. Interesting that if one had an automobile, one didn't necessarily use it.

Not for every day, no.

OK. Every day was still the--

Horse-drawn.

Yeah, [POLISH]. Horse and buggy.

Absolutely.

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Yeah. So were there farm animals even though you lived in the city? Like, there was a horse? There was a stable?

No.

No.

No.

OK.

Not around us. But there may have been in the outskirts of the town or something like that.

So when you'd use a horse and buggy, it wasn't your own. It would be hired like a taxi.

It would be hired, sure.

OK.

Just like a taxi.

OK.

And did your family-- I mean, some people did in the city keep chickens. You mentioned geese.

I mentioned the geese. There may have been some chickens somewhere. But I did not come in close contact with any of them.

OK. Did the building have a garden of a kind, a yard where you could play?

Well, there was a wonderful park right across the street from us. And I do have memories of going for a walk with my father-- it was my mother and a friend of hers in the park.

OK. What was the name of the park? Do you remember?

Hmm. I'll have to look it up in the book, right.

That's OK. And do you remember your address in Zolochiv?

Sure. Well, it's 11 [POLISH], which is-- [POLISH] is eagle. So it's number 11 Eagle Street, [POLISH].

So eagle the bird?

Yes.

Aha. Well, that's quite regal.

Yes.

And wasn't it also the Polish symbol, the national symbol, the eagle?

Oh, yes, absolutely. Right on.

OK, OK. You mentioned earlier that your father also had some political interests.

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Yes.

What were they?

Well, he was very involved with the Jewish movements. And he had started a couple of clubs associated with them. The idea was to regain Palestine.

So he was a Zionist.

Oh, absolutely.

OK, OK. And was he involved in Polish politics at all?

No, not really.

OK. So in Poland, his profile-- well, let's say for Polish society-- would be as a businessman.

As a businessman, right.

OK. And did you have a radio at home?

Yes.

A telephone?

I think so, yes.

OK. All right.

Yes.

And if you're born in March 1936--

I was five when the Russians came in.

But the war starts September 1, 1939 when you are 3 and 1/2.

Right.

Now, in that part of Poland, was it the Germans who occupied it?

No, no, the Russians.

So that would have been in 1939.

Right. They started to come in 1939. I really mispoke when I said '41. '41 is when the Germans came.

OK.

The Russians came in '39.

Do you remember, have any memory of this? You were 3 and 1/2.

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What I remember is leaving our apartment, which must have been in '39. And it was raining, and we were walking not with my mother but with a friend of my mother's. And we had to move to a different apartment because the Russians nationalized the factory. And they threw us out of there. And then we went to a different-- a very small two-room apartment, which eventually wound up in the ghetto.

Ah. OK. Do you have memories of what that apartment looked like?

Oh, sure.

Describe it for me.

Because we lived in that for quite a while. It was an apartment house. And there was an interior courtyard. And there was balcony that run on the interior courtyard on the second floor. And that's where our apartment was in it. And we had like a two-room apartment.

And you had a balcony on the inner courtyard.

Right. The balcony that was not part of the apartment. There was just this balcony. You had to come out of the apartment and can run around the inner balcony, which as kids we'd like to do. And some friends of our parents and us also had an apartment on the other side of the courtyard.

Oh, that's perfect.

Right. Well, there's some memories from that courtyard. But more of that later, I think, yeah.

OK. And could you go downstairs from that balcony? That is, was there a way of exiting the apartment and leaving the building by using this balcony?

Yes.

OK. Was that the only way to get out of the apartment?

No, I don't remember that. It may have been straight from the apartment. But I don't think so. I think you stepped out of the apartment into the balcony, and then you had stairs downstairs.

OK. Was it far from your original home?

Not that far, no.

Do you remember the street address there?

I don't remember it yet. But I can give it to you.

OK, OK. And you remember still at age-- you would have been about 3 and 1/2 or 4, not much more than that because-- so until that moment of moving from your own home into this place, you don't remember-- you don't have memories of the war.

Well, there was no war in 1939. Then 1939, when the Russians came in, we don't have-- there was no major bombing. There was nothing like that. They just came in quietly. So my first memories of a war is 1941 when the Germans came.

Got it. You're right. You're absolutely right. It is a occupation. But it's not fighting.

Right.

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And explain to us how it is that the Russians came into this part of Poland and not the Germans.

Well, this was the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

And what was that?

Or some people call it the Stalin-Hitler Pact. It happened in 1939. And Hitler and Stalin formed a non-aggression pact. And part of it was the division of Poland. Russia took part of it, and Germany took another part of it.

OK. And your part being in the east--

Was Russia.

Was Russia.

Yes.

Yeah. And that pact many people say is what allowed Hitler to attack Poland.

Yes.

Because one week afterwards, after they signed it--

Right. When he was-- he was essentially assured that Russia would not have a second front, would not attack him from the East.

Yeah. And did your grandparents-- did your paternal grandparents move in with you when you moved from one place--

No.

No? What happened with them at that point?

Well, this was-- since Father didn't own the factory. Grandfather did. So Grandfather and Grandmother were considered to be bourgeois and capitalists. So as such, they were in danger because the Russians would take over the intelligentsia and over the owners of the property and send them to Siberia. Very, very sadly, a lot of people who were sent to Siberia actually survived. But who knew that at that time? So people did not want to be sent to Siberia.

Of course.

So it was decided that Grandfather and Grandmother would go to Lvov, to Lemberg.

Was it far from Zolochiv, Lemberg?

I think it's about 50 kilometers, something like that.

That's not much.

No.

M'kay.

But Father had some-- Grandfather had some connection there in a pharmaceutical trust. And they said that they felt they could protect them from the Russians. Now when the Russians came in, they looked at everybody, and their passports got stamped.

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OK.

It said "jevrej," on it, which means Jew. And in some cases, it did not allow Jews to move outside of the area where they were living. By some absolute fluke of nature, Father's-- Grandfather's and Grandmother's passports were not stamped. So they could move to Lemberg. Father's passport got stamped as an enemy of Russia.

So they told us later that their suitcases were always packed under the bed. But they needed Father to run the factory. There was nobody-- because Father's factory-- Grandfather's factory had printing presses. And they had Cyrillic alphabet, and Father spoke Russian, Ukrainian, and Polish. And every bureaucracy needs printed stuff. So they hired Father to run the factory.

So in other words, it wasn't his factory anymore.

No, of course not. It was nationalized. And then what they did is they appointed a Ukrainian woman to be the director. But she couldn't run it. So even though she was technically the director, he was whatever, and he ran the factory. And we were not deported to Siberia.

But I'll tell you, what a bitter thing it must have been for your father.

Yes. Did he ever talk about that later?

Oh, we talked about it quite a bit. I mean, he hated the Russians. He really hated the Russians because they nationalized, of course, all the business. But also, they sent a lot of people to Siberia, and they also executed some people.

Yeah. Do you remember-- do you remember-- I mean, again, I realize I'm asking you questions of when you were of a four-year-old, five-year-old child now. But were there conversations at home? Did you feel fear of any kind? Or was life pretty normal for a kid?

I was going to say I wouldn't say exactly normal. But during the Russian occupation, I don't remember feeling fear.

OK. OK. The new two-room place where the four of you lived, did it have running water?

No.

I take it it didn't have one of the four or five toilets of Zolochiv.

No. What did that have is what do you associate with an outhouse. But it was inside the house. So it was this wooden thing, and there was a hole in there. And that's where you went. And there's one thing I do remember is that my mother-- I don't know if you want anecdotes like that.

Absolutely.

My mother once went to the bathroom, and she put her pocketbook behind her. And then when she got up, it fell into the toilet. Right. And then it was quite the occasion to get it out of it. So these are those little flashes of memories I have from things like that. But otherwise, we played with friends. There were little girls there. And there was-- Sue Gold survived also and her brother.

So a childhood friend?

Yes.

What was her name?

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Susan Gold.

Oh, Susan Gold.

Yes. I'm sure she does a lot of work with-- right. And she's written books on this. And sadly, her brother didn't survive. But I just talk about it later.

OK. And you were too young to start school, weren't you, at this age?

That's correct.

OK. Did your older sister start school?

No, we didn't have school. But we did have tutors that would come to the house and teach us. We both learned to read and write very early.

OK.

I also remember being taught how to tell my right hand from my left hand by standing against a wall and toward the dining room table with your right hand and the other one was the left hand.

Did you have any non-Jewish friends at that age?

No.

No.

But we had a very devoted maid-- her name was Hanka-- who actually moved with us, too. She didn't live with us, but she was with us in that apartment. She had another apartment nearby. And I remember going to church with her.

Do you?

On Sundays, right. And, again, these are those little memories from very young. And in Poland, they had little niches in building were there was statues of the Virgin Mary or saint and all of that. So as we were walking from church, she would encourage us to select one of those as a patron. And I remember getting very mad at Edith because she selected this beautiful Virgin Mary, and--

That meant you couldn't.

I couldn't, no.

[LAUGHS] Were your parents aware that she would take you--

Oh, sure.

And was it OK with them?

Yes.

OK. So they were very open and liberal minded.

Right. But we were Jewish. There was no question about it.

OK. OK.

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And they would not want us to--

Convert.

--convert, right.

All right. But many families-- and I've interviewed people who were children at the time-- when they found out that the nanny or the maid was taking the child to church, that maid didn't work there anymore.

We didn't have anything like that.

OK. You also said your father was a great patriot earlier. Was this for Palestine or was this-- OK.

Yes. Very much so. He was not a Polish patriot, no.

OK. Or Austrio-Hungarian? No.

Well, he had a great respect for the Austrio-Hungarian Empire. And he talked to us about it and that they had a lot of different countries and really let each country do their own thing. And there was very little, in our area, prejudice against Jews. Not sure about other areas.

OK. So his view of what Austria-Hungary had been--

Was much better than-- right-- than of Russian. Right.

All right. But what about when Poland got reconstituted?

1914, right.

That's right.

1918.

1918.

1919, yes.

And after having been dismembered 120 years earlier.

Right. I can imagine that it can be confusing as to, where do you now live? Where should you integrate to? Should you integrate? You spoke Polish at home, which is already a sign of--

Absolutely.

--that this is a choice that the family makes when there are possibilities to make other choices.

Right.

Was his business integrated into Polish economy.

Absolutely. We led a very good upper middle class life.

Mm-hmm. OK. What else did I want to ask? So at this time when you're living in the two-room apartment, your paternal

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grandparents moved to Lvov where they hope to be able to avoid deportations.

Right.

Your mother and your father, your sister and yourself live in this two-room apartment.

Right.

What happens with your maternal grandmother? Where does she go?

She had her own apartment. And she was not the bourgeoisie, and she was not a capitalist. She was a working woman. So she safe.

OK. And did your-- were there people at that time-- you say you don't remember feeling fear. But did your parents talk about people who might have disappeared at that time or might have been arrested? Or was that ever part of a conversation?

It might have been. But I don't remember that very distinctly because I really don't remember much fear from that period.

Oh, that's--

Yeah, yeah.

It's just-- well, of course this is the wrong-- it would have been your parents who could have told me the answer to that question.

Oh, yes. Yes. And Father does talk about in his book. But I'm going on my own memories.

Of course, of course. Are there any other memories from that time for you?

[PHONE RINGS]

Not really.

We can cut for a second. So I'm sorry. We cut--

I think we went up to the-- we are still in the Russian period.

Yeah. And I was asking you whether there were any other memories that you had of that time.

Not really, no.

OK, OK.

I mean, there were very incidental ones. For instance, I remember being in the kitchen, and there were barrels in there. And there were cabbages brought in by the ton because you didn't have any fresh vegetables during the winter. So the maids grating all the cabbages--

To make sauerkraut?

--to make sauerkraut for the winter. Things of that type I remember, but just fleeting memories.

Mm-hmm. When do things change again?

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When the Germans came in.

So tell me what happened.

And that I do remember. Because when they came in, the bombing started. The bombing started.

You're five years old.

Yes. '41, yeah, over five years old. And I remember going outside. And there were these planes flying by. And I thought there were strings which were dropping from them. And Father said, no, no, these are bombs. And we had to go-- we went into the cellar.

OK.

And I think from what I remember, there was a period of these bombs. And then the Germans came in. And the shooting started immediately. Now--

Do you remember that? Did you hear shots? Did you see soldiers?

Absolutely. And we had to hide. And I can just-- I'll just tell you what I remember.

Yeah.

Even though originally we hid in the cellar. And then Father decided obviously that that was not safe. And they took us to the factory where there was an attic built over the factory. And apparently, it was not clear if you saw the building from the front that there was an attic. So I remember going into the attic.

And there were-- you could see between the boards on the street. And there were people-- and you heard the shots. And I remember being very scared there, but also being very worried where I was going to go to the bathroom. And I remember saying to Mother, what am I going to do? And she said, no, you just go in the corner of the attic. And I was saying, how can I do it? And that's what it was. So we stayed in that attic.

So no pot, no anything? Just the corner of the attic?

It was a corner of the attic that I remember. Now, later on, I think they brought some containers.

Utensil, yes.

Yes. And I do remember being scared at that point.

And you're 5 and 1/2.

And we're in that attic for quite a while. Yeah.

OK.

There were a lot of shots that time.

And so you were able to see a little bit through the slot-- through a slat of wood.

Right. But then I walked away from it. I saw it. Then I went to the back part of the attic, yeah.

Was the factory on a-- was the street a major street or a side street?

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[POLISH] was-- well, it was a building that has a opening on a major street, but this was the back street. But there was a big open space there.

On the back street.

Yeah. And that's where the Jews were gathered. And the first day, there were several thousand Jews that were killed, the first days that the Germans came in.

This you learnt later?

All I heard was the shots. But then I learned-- yeah, I learned later. Yeah.

OK. Through the slats, what was it that you could see?

Well, I just saw some people. And then as I said, then I just walked away from that. I just felt very scared. And I went to the back, yeah.

And how did you eat?

Well, there wasn't much to eat the first couple of days. But then people from the factory were very devoted to our family. And Hanka, who was the maid, she brought up some food for us and I assume water, right.

OK.

And this lasted like two or three days. And then we went back to that two-room apartment.

I see. And did you ever encounter any of the German soldiers?

I saw them. And I'm going back now to a later episode. But I was walking on the street, and there were a couple of Germans I guess in uniform. But there was also a woman, and there was a little girl. And the little girl pushed me. And I fell. And I really hurt my leg.

And I was very surprised that my parents were so panicky, and they didn't say anything. Usually if somebody pushes a child, you would say something. And I had an open sore on my leg for quite a while. But they were, of course, terrified that they would take me or whatever. So that was the only episode I remember that I was really involved with the German soldiers.

So this could have been his wife and child? We don't know.

We don't know, no.

We don't know. But someone who felt like she could do that and get away with it.

The thing is, the little girl could do it, right.

Yeah, the girl do it.

Also, another thing, there was-- on the first few days-- no, after the first few days of shooting, it all quieted down. And from what I know now, there were a lot of rules and regulations that had to be put into effect. And, again, the Germans needed somebody to print them. So they sent for Father. They were told that Father could run the factory. And then Father did that.

And one of the things that happened is you had to wear an armband with a Jewish star if you were six years old or older.

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And the penalty if you didn't have one, it would be death. They would kill a six-year old child. And oh, I remember I was very jealous of Edith, because she was six years old, and she got an armband. And I was five, and I didn't get an armband. And of course, I didn't understand--

Why don't I have one?

--why don't I have that armband, too? Yeah. So these are memories, right.

Yeah, well, children have a logic that makes perfect sense to them. Perfect sense.

Soon enough, I got an armband of my own, right.

Yeah, yeah.

Right.

[LAUGHS]

And so was your father somewhat safe, do you think, because he was doing this work?

No question about it. And again, the factory was nationalized, this time by the Germans.

OK.

Now, the Ukrainians loved the Germans. So they appointed a Ukrainian woman.

The same one as before?

Interesting question. No, it was a different one, Rose Dachko to be the manager of the factory. But Father was running it, and she kind of got jealous. And this is a story my father told us. And it's also in the book. And so next time the German commandant called, she didn't take Father with her. She went by herself. She didn't speak German. She didn't know what he wanted. And he yelled at her and said, don't ever come back without Herr Tennenbaum.

So they valued Father. But Rose hated Father for that because-- but she couldn't run around the factory without him. But again, the fact that they needed a lot of documentation and a lot of printers. So he got a permit sent that he was a valued worker, and he was-- in the beginning. In the beginning when there were the roundups, they respected this. Later on, not so much.

So what was happening with your paternal grandparents in Lvov at this time?

Yeah, we were in touch with them all the time. And they were protected by this woman who was in charge of the pharmaceutical trust.

A pharmaceutical trust?

Right.

In--

In Lvov.

OK. What is that?

Well, I gather it was like a union that was responsible for all the pharmacies and things of that type. So they got him a

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job. So he was also a protected worker at that point. As I said, these things didn't last forever.

OK. So he seems to be doing OK in Lvov.

And they did have phone conversations, Father and Grandfather.

Through what-- there was no phone where you lived.

Pardon me?

Well, there was no--

No, but you could get a phone. In the factory, there was a phone. And in the other factory, there was a phone.

OK, so they communicated that way.

They communicate. Also, there were people who traveled back and forth between Lvov and Zolochiv. And they brought new of-- and Father did mention that he would send people to Lvov to find out what was going on with his parents.

But he himself could not go.

No.

OK. And that was because-- you see, the Soviets were the ones who stamped in that he's Jewish in his passport.

Yeah, that was during the Soviets. But in the German, you still have that permission to travel more than a few miles from the house.

OK. Now, his protection, was that extended to you and your sister and your mother?

Well, they got a worker's permit for my mother. And her job was to-- the Germans had a quota that Jews had to collect furs and glass and metal. So she had to collect a certain amount of glass and metal and furs every month to deliver to the Germans. And so that was her work.

That's not fun.

No. But she was protected. With us, the problem didn't come into effect until the ghetto was formed, which was at the end of 1943.

So this is-- you're able to live 2 and 1/2 years in this kind of a situation.

Right. Right.

OK. So that's quite a long time actually.

Yes. But what the Germans did-- and I'm sure you've heard about it-- the actions, Aktions, right. And--

In those 2 and 1/2 years.

Oh, yeah. And then Father usually was able to get advance notice when the action came about.

Tell the camera. I'm sorry that I put it that way. What is an action?

What an action is, it's a hunt, which means any Jew found on the streets or found in a hiding place, they would go on the

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streets, and they'd go into the buildings. And they sometimes had dogs. And if they found any Jews, they would round them up, and they'd take them to a big market place, load them into railroad cars, and take them to concentration camps.

Sometimes not concentration camps. Sometimes, as we found out later, it was a forest. And they were just get shot and buried in the forest. But we usually had advance notice. And you usually saw the railroad cross coming in and the sightings. And you knew that something was going to happen.

So when you have advanced notice, what would you do?

Well, what our parents did, they-- and Edith probably told you about it. They were just very concerned about us, about Edith and me. So they had the hiding place in the factory. So they tried to find a Christian people who would take us.

And there was a couple that seemed very kind. They always called Father Mr. Tennenbaum and all that. And sometime Father had a feeling that he might be receptive. They had no children. So he asked if they would take Edith and me, and they said yes.

And I remember that because they took us to the apartment. And I'm much more Judaic-looking than Edith is. So I remember they're putting me to bed and pulling the cover over on my face so my nose would be covered. And they didn't have to do that with Edith, but they just did it up to here. And I said, why are you doing it? And she said, it's better that way. It's better that way. So they had us during this action. And father was hid in the-- and Mother-- in the factory.

When the next action came, they said they would take Edith but not to me because I too Semitic looking. And they were very afraid that if somebody would walk into the apartment, they would see me. So Edith went. And I'm sure she told with that story.

Tell us.

And that she was left in this apartment. And the people left. So she was all alone in the apartment. And she didn't know what was going on. So she jumped out of the window and went back-- she knew where our parents were hiding, which was extremely dangerous for her to be out on the street by herself. And also, she could have led the Germans to where Mother and Father were hiding.

And you.

And me. But she survived the trip, and everything worked out. So when the third action came, we were going to be-- they didn't know what to do. So our old nanny said that she would take us.

Hanka.

Both of us, and hide us.

And her name was--

Hanja.

Hanja.

Yes. And I didn't want to go. I was crying. I do remember that. And what they did is they promised that we would have noodles with poppy seed and honey. So I then said, OK.

[LAUGHS]

So we went to Hanja. And there was a dish of noodles and poppy seed and honey. But there were these two little

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noodles, and I thought that the poppy seed and honey would be inside the tubes, but they weren't. It was all mixed up. So apparently, I started crying, and I wouldn't stop crying. And I think that set Edith off also.

And she cried.

Yes, so that both of us were just crying. And a neighbor of the nanny said, we'll just take them back to their parents. And Mother said that this was fate. We would either survive together or not survive together. So they didn't try to give us--

Up again. It didn't work.

It didn't work with us. But in many cases, it did work, and the children were given away into convents and Christian families, right.

Yeah.

And they were able to hide because their hiding place was not discovered. There's one memory I have from that-- a couple of memories from that period is that we came out of the action. And I had mentioned there was this courtyard in our building. And there was a dead man lying in the courtyard.

In the courtyard itself.

In the courtyard, on the ground floor, though. Not on the balcony. And I remember Mother saying to cover your face when you walk by it, which we did. And after a couple of days, some Jewish men came and took him away. And I remember that distinctly. So there was--

Was this the first time you saw a body like that?

Yeah, yes. First time I saw a dead body.

Do you know who it was?

No. Never found out. No.

OK, OK.

But it was-- I think the Germans at that point decided to have a ghetto. But the apartment that we were living in, that two-room apartment, was actually in the ghetto area. So they moved a lot of the Jews from other areas. And there were eventually 30 people living in two-room apartment.

30 people?

Yes. And I told you about Sue Gold, who was living in the other apartment. They also had a lot of other people with them. And there was another family on the ground floor. There was a little girl younger than I was. And I have a very bad memory from that because I don't know how that happened. But they were cooking supper or something. And there was some boiling water that spilled from the stove on her face. So I remember being very scared by that.

Tell me, do you know why-- you had to move to this two-room apartment when the Soviets were there.

Yes.

Why is it that when the Germans came in, you didn't move back to where the factory was?

Oh, there was no question about that. I mean, this was a beautiful house, and the Germans were quartered there.

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OK.

No way.

OK. Got it. All right.

Yeah.

Yeah. If it was one of the six places in Zolochiv that had a toilet then.

Yeah. Not for Jews. Not for Jews. No.

OK.

And I think-- oh, no. Well, I know that, again, I have memories from that period and of the ghetto. And there was one memory that I had nightmares for years afterwards.

And what was that?

Because we had this woman Hanja, the maid that would be with us until the ghetto was formed. And she would bring fruits and vegetables and things of that type. And she would even sneak into the ghetto. So we probably had more than the average family there. And my mother was looking at some vegetables, and she and a couple of other women were running a soup kitchen.

And there was a potato which was spoiled and had worms in it. And she gave that Edith and me. So we knew that the women had soup kitchens. So Edith and I said, well, let's-- and I think there was another girl involved-- let's do a soup kitchen. So we went down to the ground floor. And we had-- I just cooked that potato in the pot, and we had it.

And an adult man came, and he was obviously starving. And he asked if he could have that potato. And I think there was another person that came up. So they ate that. And for us, it really hit us that these were hungry grown-ups. And this is the thing I had nightmares about.

The hungry grown-ups?

The hungry grown-ups, that they actually came to-- what did they think about those six, seven-year-olds? They had a potato.

But your mother, did she give you that potato to eat?

No, no, no.

Just to play with.

Just to play with. But for these starving people, it would not be to play with.

Of course.

It would be-- it would be-- there was great hunger in the ghetto, and then typhus. You know typhus, right?

Tell me, what are symptoms of typhus?

Typhus is horrible disease. It's carried by lice. By the way, we had lice, and we had fleas. And one of our favorite sports was hunting fleas and killing them on your fingernails. And it's essentially GI with intravenous bleeding and vomiting

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and fever. And nearly everybody died who had it in the ghetto.

Now, the Germans got very worried that Father would bring typhus to them because he was going to the factory. And they needed him. So there were a number of Jews, including the Judenrat people, that had permission to live outside the ghetto. So they gave-- they called Father in. And they said they would give Father and Mother permits to live outside the ghetto.

And Father said, what about the children? And he said, no. And then he walked back to his office. And Father was standing, and the secretary was there. She had the permit that had his name and Mother's name. And he looked at the woman. He said, I cannot do it. So she put the permit back into the typewriter and she put in "und zwei Kinder."

So she wrote it in.

A middle-aged German woman.

And "und zwei Kinder" means?

And two children. And we still have that. Well, I think Father gave that document to Yad Vashem. But you could see there was a different typewriter for the original from it. So we were able to move outside the ghetto.

That is amazing, actually--

Yes.

--that a secretary would contradict the commandant.

Yes. A middle-aged German woman. Right. Of course, he didn't know what she did. He was already back in his office. And at that time, we got a message from Father-- from Grandfather that the work permits for his wife was no longer effective. He was very worried about Grandma. So he was going to send her back to us. And she arrived. This is Father's mother, whom I also remember. And she came just as we were moving outside the ghetto. And my other grandmother also came with us.

So two grandmothers are with you.

Right. And one of the grandmothers, which is Mother's mother, caught typhus. And Father's mother nursed her. So Mother's mother recovered. And Father's mother did not. And I also remember that because they sent Edith did out of the apartment because they were concerned that she would-- she was older. She would remember too much, which is true. She was much older than I was. But I was stayed in the house when Grandmother died. And I still remember her dying in that bed and Father's despair when she died. So she died. And no, she died of typhus. Right.

And was he able to bury her?

They got some friends, and they were able at night to take her to the cemetery. And they were even able to get a little stone. But when we came back after the war, there was no sign. They took all the stones from the Jewish cemeteries.

Who would have done that?

The Germans did.

OK.

Who knows? Ukrainians, Germans. Yes. One of those, yes.

One of the things that I'm struck by, though, is that it sounds like when you were hiding in the attic for those few days,

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how many people knew about this if you had food and water being brought to you?

There were at least three people knew about that because there were two Ukrainians that actually worked with Father to the factory. And of course, I know that from the book, not from my memory. And they really protected him because they were Ukrainians. And when the Germans came out, they said, no, no, no. They're not Jews.

So they knew that. And then Hanja the maid knew that. And afterwards, Rose Dachko, who was the nominal head of the factory, found out about it. And she was very angry. This was not only our family. There were a couple of other people in there. And she forbade Father do that again. But he didn't listen to her, and she didn't betray him.

OK. OK. So it sounds like-- I mean, you see human behavior in such extremes that there were these tensions. And there was this pulling and this disagreement. And it could have gone--

Oh, yes.

--very badly.

It could've gone very badly. I think there were so many people whose luck run out. We were just very lucky and that there were people who protected us, including some of the Ukrainian, which is strange.

Did you ever have any encounter with any of them, these people who could have betrayed but did not?

I knew where those people were at, but I didn't have that level of-- we had, really, encounters with people who helped us. And I remember those, yes.

OK. And the reason why you say you think it's strange is because the Ukrainians were much more allied with the Germans? Or was it--

Oh, sure. They hated the Russians. When the Germans came in, they were greeted with flowers and-- not champagne, but with flowers and flags. But the Ukrainians thought that the Germans would give them their own country. And they were very quickly disillusioned. The Germans said no. But they still preferred the Germans to the Russians.

Now, Ukrainians were killers of the Jews. The Poles didn't like the Jews. And they would occasionally point out the Jews to the Germans. But they were not as virulent as the Ukrainians.

Is this something that you came to understand later? Or is this something you felt at the time?

Well, I knew about the Ukrainians. I think that was kind of the way people thought, even to us. No, we were small children. But you said, Ukrainians, be very careful, right?

OK. So let's go back now to the point where both grandmothers are with you outside the ghetto. And your paternal grandmother dies and is buried. And there's, at least in the beginning, a stone to mark it, her grave site. What happens after that? Do you continue living outside the ghetto?

Well, what happened after that is that, again, from what I gather is the feeling is that Father hears that ghettos are being eliminated in many other cities around Poland. And he's becoming convinced that what Hitler wants is to get rid of all the Jews. And on the last Aktion apparently, even people who had the permits like Father did, that they were needed workers, they were disregarded. People were picked up anyway.

So he knew it was close to the end. So the feeling was that maybe we should try to survive on false papers. And Grandfather, who was still in Lvov, said he had a contact. He had some jewelry and money left. And he would get us false papers that we can leave the ghetto and pretend to be Poles. Mother was not in favor of that. She was like I was, very Jewish looking. And the name that was picked as a false name was called Bulski.

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Bulski?

Bulski, B-U-L-S-K-I. I was Christina Bulska. Mother was Elizaveta Bulksa. Mother said, this is a fake name. They will discover us right away. They can tell by the way we look that it's not going to work. But I mean, what are the choices in a situation like that?

So there was going to be a man who said he could smuggle us out of the place beyond the ghetto on a train that would go to Warsaw maybe, a larger town where we could hide. And this, again, I learned, of course, later. Now when we were living outside the ghetto, a number of Mother's Polish friends would come and see us and bring, again, some food. So we weren't starving like so many other people.

And one of these women was called Helena Szczulczewska. And her name is on the wall of the righteous in the Holocaust Museum. And she was a member of the partisans, maybe yes, maybe no. She was a Polish patriot. She also engaged in all sorts of buy and sell, which is how you trade. This is how you survived in Poland at this time.

Like black market.

Yes. Exactly that. And she came to Mother one day, and she said she had this absolute deal, that there was some furs, that she has a seller, and she has a buyer. But she doesn't have money to pay for them right away. So if Mother has any money to give to her, and the next day, the money will come back.

So Mother took the money that was supposed to pay for the runner to take us away from Zolochiv and gave it to Hela. A couple of days later, Hela comes back, and she says money's gone. And Father's very upset. Mother says she didn't think the false papers would have worked anyway.

The runner comes in to take us through the German section. But we have no money to pay him. Father has no way to pay him. The runner says, well, that's OK because it's too dangerous now anyway, and he leaves. And this was probably the luckiest thing that ever happened to us.

Why?

Well, because very short period after, we get the news that the ghetto is surrounded. Everybody is being taken to the concentration camps. Now, the Gestapo had a list of people who lived outside the ghetto. And apparently, they came before they surrounded the ghetto and asked a woman on our street, do you have any Jews here? She said, no, no, no Jews in the street. She protected us. She sent them away.

And there was-- in the building next to the one we were living outside the ghetto, there was a hiding place. So we hid there for a couple, three days. And Father had cyanide. He was planning that the whole time we would take cyanide. And about a couple of days where this last Aktion was being taken place, there's a knock on the cellar, the overhead door. And Hela comes.

And she says great success in Africa in the war. We are going to win the war. It's a question of weeks, a question of months. Come with me to my place, which is a town called Yelykhovychi. It's about four miles from Zolochiv. And we also stayed with her over the summers. She said, I'll hide you. This is the woman that Mother gave the money to. So she says it's payback time.

Ah. So she took all of us. She said, what we're going to do is there's going to be a mass, major mass. It's a major holiday. There'll be groups of people coming out of church. You're going to come with me. And the two Polish ladies in the next building said that they'll come escort us and some other young people. And you realize all of these people would have been killed if the Germans thought that they were protecting Jews. And I do remember that walk. So we're all walking after mass.

So you come out from the cellar that you're hiding in. And do you go to the church and then come out? How is it?

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We go on the street and blend with the people who are coming out of the church. And we start walking. And we walked to Hela's place where we were hidden for 18 months.

Wow. I have a technical question.

Excuse me, I'm going to cough.

It's OK.

[COUGHS]

Do you want to take a drink?

I have--

Yeah? My logistical question is, I want to go back to where the Germans surround the ghetto, and it's going to be kind of like the final action, even for people who have those permissions as special workers.

For everybody, yes.

OK. So if they have a list of people that they know live outside the ghetto who have these permits and they go to the street where they're supposedly living and a Gentile woman tells them, oh, there are no Jews here, they've got their list. So how come they believe her?

Exactly. There were two lists. One was a Gestapo list, and one was a list of the stormtroopers organization, SS. We were not on the Gestapo list.

Ah. OK. But you were on the stormtroopers' list.

There may have been another list. But what happened is when the Judenrat, all of that, where outside the ghetto, this was all done very highly officially. Now, when Father-- when the people in charge of the factory panicked and they said they needed Father outside the ghetto so that they wouldn't get sick, then he got the permit from the guy who was in charge of whatever.

Of the factory.

Right. And apparently, we were not on the list that they used to round them up. And again, that's also in Father's book, right.

OK, OK. But--

It's those little things that make all the difference.

Yeah. Yeah. And by such a thin-- such a thin possibility is life and death in that situation.

Absolutely.

OK. So that helps explain why it is that even if you're outside the ghetto, you're not taken. You're not caught. You can hide. Were you the only ones in that space that was hiding? Or were there more people?

I think we were the only ones at the end. They were coming and going, all of that. But the last one, Hela came. It was only us.

OK. OK. All right. So you blend in. And you walk with the procession or the people leaving church. And do you walk

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to where she lives outside of town?

Which is where-- this is in the village called Yelykhovychi, which is where we used to vacation during the summers. So we knew the place.

OK. And it was about four kilometers or four miles?

Four miles.

All right. Well, it's a little bit of a walk, but not-- yeah. Was this springtime, summertime?

This was springtime.

Was it Easter? Was it--

April.

It was in April. It could have been Easter.

It could've been, yes.

It could have been. And you say you spend the next 18 months there.

Right. This was in April of '43 to August of '44.

OK. And in that time, describe for me the house, the location, the surroundings. What did it all look like? And you at this time are six years old?

Yes.

OK.

Six or seven. '43, seven. Yes. I was seven years old. I would say it's really mind boggling when you think about it. This was a house-- would it help if I showed you the picture of it? The drawing of it?

Later. Yeah, but now do it in words, and later, we may film it.

Absolutely. This was a farmhouse that had a kitchen, very large-- two very large rooms, another small room, and an outhouse, I guess. That's it. So when we got there, there were actually other Jews that were being hidden there. And we later found out that these people-- that's Nusha Sternschuss, and her son Fred, who was like seven years older than I was-- were actually the ones that suggested to Hela that she come and get us.

Ah.

But we did not know that at that time. And in that house besides Nusha and Fred, [? Rytele, ?] whose husband was a member of the Polish police. And he was the head of the police in Zolochiv. But there was also some suspicion that he cooperated with the Ukrainians. Anyway, he had to flee for his life from somebody.

So it was Hela, and there were two more people. There was a stableman called [? Jashch. ?] And there was a friend of Hela's called Misha. [? Jashch ?] was Ukrainian. Misha was school teacher. She was Polish. Very complicated. Misha and [? Jashch ?] were lovers at some point. But also apparently, [? Jashch ?] and Hela were lovers at some point.

[LAUGHS]

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But I did not know that at that time. This was just-- we found out later on. So in the beginning, they were very hospitable. But the way it ended up is that we were in the smaller of the three rooms. Grandma was with us, by the way. So there were the five of us plus Nusha and Fred. So there were seven of us.

And Grandpa at this time, was he still in Lvov?

He's still in Lvov. Yes. He's still in Lvov. He never comes to us, unfortunately. He was still in Lvov. So the issue was how to protect us. Nobody was supposed to know we were there. So Fred and [? Jashch ?] and Father dug out a dugout underneath the house. And I'm claustrophobic to this day, and I think that's probably from that time.

So this was a space about 3 feet by 3 feet. And they put branches on the inside of it. And all of us would go in there one at a time and stay there if any strangers came into the house. And since I was the smallest, I was always at the far end, which could be my claustrophobia.

And we would have to stay there sometimes for hours, sometimes for days if there were any strangers around the house. And if there were strangers come to the house, the signal was this woman Misha would start singing a song called [POLISH]. I still know the melody of that. If you heard that song, that's when you had to crawl into the hiding place.

And what is it-- what's the translation of the name of the song?

"Holiday Songs."

"Holiday Songs."

Right. No, I'm sorry. "Holiday Bells."

"Holiday Bells."

Yes.

OK.

But when there was nobody around, we were able to be in that room. And there was a stove in that room. Outside of that, there was this porch. And there was a large wardrobe on the porch. You know The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe? It was a wardrobe like that. The bottom of it came out. And through that, you got into this underground tunnel--

Oh my goodness.

--where we were hiding in. Right.

Oh my goodness.

I mean, it's beyond unreal. When you look at that and when you think that my parents were in their 30s when they planned all of that, it's beyond belief. And when there was nobody around the house, we were able to be in that room. And what I remember is actually Fred. He probably say our parents' sanity.

But they played a lot of games with us. There was a lot of lessons. We played-- when you have one long word and you can do many words with it. And they made a deck of cards. So they played cards. And as the children were being home schooled, I guess you call it these days-- because we did reading. We did writing. We did arithmetic. We did all of that. The adults were very, very involved with us.

So were you able to go-- that is, feel safe to go to other rooms in the house even when there's nobody around?

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Into the kitchen, definitely. We would tend-- maybe go to the middle room. We never went outside. Never went outside the house.

OK.

And we had to stay inside so nobody would see us, right.

Now that wardrobe, you say it was on the porch?

Yes, but it was like a sheltered porch. It was a wooden porch.

It wasn't outside.

It wasn't outside, no. It was an inside porch.

So if the song starts to be-- if you start hearing the song, someone outside the house would not see you opening the wardrobe.

No, no, no, no, no. This was-- yes.

OK.

No one would know. Right. And--

It is "Vechirni Dzvony." I think "Evening Bells" was the name of the song.

OK. And the house itself, was it isolated from other dwellings?

It was on a farm, yes.

And were there other buildings on the farm, like a barn?

Yes. And we spent some time in the barn also. Because at some point, the people who were hiding us got very nervous about us being in the house. SO there was a cellar under the barn. And we went in there for about three months.

Oh my goodness.

And that was very dangerous. Because once you were in there, you could not open it from the inside. So the only way you could open it from the outside, if somebody came and opened it. And we were there for three months during the summer. And then Father and Mother negotiated that it was getting cold in the barn. We cannot really stay there. So they let us back into the main house.

And that is Hela and the other two people, the--

[? Jashch ?] and Misha, right.

OK. OK.

But this is-- I mean, it gets more-- you wouldn't believe what really went on. Later, we picked up two more people. Just you had asked about the farm. I think one of the reasons we were able to survive was there was a farm, and you could grow vegetables on it. So you could get food. But even though there were large quantities of food, we're pretty sure that some neighbors knew about us because they could see-- they could have a feeling about it.

There was actually one woman who really knew about us, that we were hiding there. And then there was another Jewish

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woman who knew Mother and who knew Nusha. And she had a little girl a older than we were who had been hidden by a Christian woman.

And she converted, the little girl. And she kept not wanting to be Jewish. She was very troublesome. And I remember that Edith and Nusha and I had these talks that women, girls could pass, but boys can't. And of course, we didn't know what circumcision was, what it was. So we tried to figure out what it was--

Why girls could pass but boys couldn't.

But boys couldn't, right. And we couldn't really figure it out till we were much older, right.

Yeah. So it sounds like there was a bit of comings and goings on this place.

Yes, there were these two extra women. And later, there was another woman. There was another woman. There was another group in the barn. So Hela saved 15 people altogether.

That's pretty amazing.

It's absolutely beyond amazing. It gets really more amazing as you continue the story. And I remember some incidents. When Sandjesh, who's a Ukrainian man, just said, I have enough of this. I don't want to hide the Jews anymore. We have to-- and I remember that scene. He ran out of the house, and Father ran after him. And we were all kind of terrified about it. So there were these flashes of things happening.

Well, I can imagine that the pressure and the nerves--

Oh, yes.

--the nerves being frayed.

Yes.

And people in close quarters under fear. It doesn't bring out the best in folks.

Of course, we were younger, and we were sheltered from it. But if you read Fred's book, who was 15 at this point, and his father was killed, he saw his father die before he went into hiding. You could see that he was-- it was very difficult for him. But our parents sheltered us from a lot. And he became a very well known writer and television producer in Israel. But he could see the end of his life.

Did this leave a mark on you?

Well, probably less-- there were six of us children who survived the war. You know the statistics, right? 15,000 Jews started in Zolochiv. 70 survived. And they were among us-- the six children among them. So the odds were quite something. Edith probably also told you that one of the six won the Nobel Prize.

No, she didn't.

Yes, Nobel Prize in chemistry in 1981.

What was that person's name?

Roald Hoffmann.

Roald?

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Roald Hoffmann.

Roald Hoffmann.

H-O-F-F-M-A-N-N.

OK.

So when you think of what was lost in the Holocaust. But we were-- we were not the only ones who survived with two parents. But I think our parents were unusually solid and protective. So I think both Edith and I came out much better than some of the other children. Like Sue Gold when we were hiding and we were talking about splitting families up.

She had a little brother who was a year younger than I was. And he cried a lot. So when time came to hide in the actions, his grandmother took the little boy into one hiding spot. And Sue and her parents went into another hiding spot.

And they discovered the little boy and the grandmother, who didn't survive. So Sue, of course, was very much affected by that. Edith and I both made it. And I give her a lot of credit because she wouldn't stay given away.

She came back no matter what. Yeah.

She came back when the time was right. Now it's just to tell you how incredible this story is, when we were in hiding, one day, a whole group of SS troopers came in front of the house. And they essentially commandeered the house for themselves. Of course, we all went into the hiding nook. But Hela gave them this main room. At that time, it was the end of '43, beginning of '44.

So it's winter.

But they were very paranoid, the SS, because there was a lot of partisan activities hunting them for a change. So they were outside a lot. And they had the kitchen. And they gave a lot of their food to Hela, who give the food to us. And the fact that there were SS around the house protected the house from Ukrainian and Polish roaming bands. So we actually had protection with the SS people right there. And this happened like a couple of different times.

Was the house ever-- I mean, did such bands ever really attack the house or come to the house?

No.

No.

But our keepers sometimes did not feel comfortable staying in the house at night. So they would leave and just leave us there. And there was one occasion when a group, a German group-- whether it was SS or Wehrmacht, I don't remember-- came into the-- came in the front. They started knocking on the door. What us hidden Jews-- this is again from what I hear from my parents-- were afraid of if the house was empty, they would come inside, and they would search, and they'll find us.

So Mother and Nusha-- everybody else went into the hiding place. And Mother and Nusha went out and greeted the Germans at the door. Nusha spoke excellent German, even though she was warned not to talk Polish. But she kind of panicked, and she forgot. So they pretended that they were Polish ladies of the house. So the SS guy said, how come you speak excellent German?

And she said, well, I was really working in Germany during the war, but I came back to marry a Polish guy. And the Germans couldn't have been more of gentlemen. They came back with a box of candy and whatever for Mother and Nusha. And then they went out to do something. And then Nusha panicked because she realized she spoke this excellent German, and she shouldn't have. So she went back into the hiding place, just left Mother--

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Alone.

--alone. And Mother did a very good job. She was social, as I mentioned before. She had good cold blood, and carried it off. And then the Germans left. So when our keepers-- but they said they'll be back the next day. So when our keepers came home, they asked what happened, and they were told.

When the Germans came back, they said who are those two lovely ladies that come out last time? And Hela said, oh, they're our relatives from another city. They went back home. So these were the things that tested people's nerves. And I'm just mentioning one or two occasions. But there was a lot of very bloody-- and it was all blind / I mean, how did--

Did people argue with each other?

Oh, yes. Yes. Yes. As I said, a lot of people in a small area. And this lady, Eva and [? Wusha. ?] there was not good chemistry there. So there were arguments.

You mean Eva and [? Wusha ?] were the mother with the child who converted?

Right, was older then-- no, no. Eva and [? Wusha ?] was the woman with the little girl who converted to Christianity. Right. By the way, I'm just backtracking for a minute. If you think how all these people slept in one room, there was one bed there. And Grandmother and I had the bed. Everybody else had pallets on the floor.

Oh my goodness.

And they cleaned up afterwards. And it was a four poster bed. Memories are coming up as I'm talking to you.

Yeah, yeah. Mm-hmm.

And I had nightmares that there were devils dancing on the four poster areas of the bed, right.

Well, no matter how much there is an attempt to protect you, something comes through.

Yeah, there were periods we were scared. No question, especially when we were in the tunnel.

Yeah. And, yeah.

But again, Edith was a year older. She had some good memories from before the war. I didn't. I didn't know any different, being scared and having to hide. And--

That was normal for you.

That was normal, yeah. Anyway, how we try and figure this out, it was normal. And that's why I was very-- Edith wanted to go back after the war, which we did. I was very apprehensive because I had no good memories. But she did.

Edith wanted to do what?

Go back to Poland afterwards. I didn't. But I went, and I'm glad.

Yeah?

Yeah.

When did you go?

We went back in 1990.

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So decades later.

Oh, yeah. Well, the area we were in become part of Russia. And they did not allow foreigners in that area until Gorbachev and Glasnost Then we could come.

Yeah, and then you could visit. Well, I'm jumping ahead. But tell me, why are you glad that you went back when you did?

This involves a little bit of thought to answer that one. I guess I saw the house where I was born. I saw the attic. I saw where we were hiding. And I remembered that there were good people that saved us, I think. But the city was Russian. All the signs were Russian. The street names were Russian.

It was not home anymore. There was no feeling of going back to any roots. We asked about Jews in town, and they said there was one Jewish man left, an old man. But he left a little while before we left. And there was like nothing to go back to. But we did run into a woman that remembered Father.

That's something.

Yes. And I was wondering how she would-- she said a couple of interesting things. One of them, she went through the Russian occupation, the German occupation. And she really remembered him as a wonderful man and a grand old time.

And then she whispered to me, they're going to kill all of us. And I said, who's going to kill whom? And she said, the Ukrainians are going to kill all the Poles, because that part of Poland was given to Ukraine. And a part of Germany was given back to the Poles. And a lot of Poles left at that time.

So we're talking of post-war borders. So the fate of this part of the world didn't change. It still was transferred to somebody else. And Poland then had her borders go further west.

Correct.

She lost in the east. She goes further in the west

Right.

OK.

Right. And when we went also to the western part, and there were lots of Poles there also. But they said it's not going to last long because the Germans are going to come back. And they're not going to conquer us. They're going to buy us. And there were a lot of German factories and things like that over there, yes.

Well, it's also said between East and West Germany that it's not so much that East and West Germany united as West Germany bought East Germany. People talk about that.

They wanted it together, right.

Yeah. But we started with the question of, you were glad that you went back. It gave you something.

It gave me something, yes.

And I'm wondering how to put into words what that something was.

Again, great disappointment in Zolochiv that it became a Russian city. But the feeling of seeing the house where you were born and the park where you used to play with, and there was some reality to that. That's what I really wanted to

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see, to walk the streets where we used to walk. And yes, everybody spoke Polish. And I never felt that I was Polish. I felt I was Jewish.

To this day when somebody asks me, oh, you were born in Poland. Are you Polish? I always say, well, I was born in Poland, but I'm a Polish Jew. You do not feel-- like, you can be an American. You don't say I'm American Catholic, Jewish, or Muslim. But in Poland, you're a Catholic or you're the other. You're strange. And that was reinforced when we went back.

There was nothing in the Jewish cemetery. There was nothing. But we went to KrakÃ³w in the very early days before Schindler's List. And it was very sad. And then when we came back after Schindler's List, there was a museum, and there was so much rebuilding. We were back actually three times.

To Poland.

To Poland. And each time, we had an anti-Semitic incident that happened

Oh, that's so sad.

Yes. You see, the thing is we speak Polish. So it's easier for us to tell what people are saying. And I've had Americans come back saying, oh, this is wonderful. And I'm not sure that I see what's going on. Having said that, in each case, we had a Pole that interceded for us, saying we're not all like that. Don't--

Don't carry this as the only image.

Yes.

OK. Do you want to relay what some of those incidents were or not?

Sure. Would you like to hear that?

Yeah, yeah.

Well, this was our first visit to Poland. And--

That would have been 1990.

1990, right. And we were coming back on a train from-- it's really pretty complicated. But anyway, at some point, we were on a train from Przemysl. I think we were going to Krakow at that point. And Polish trains are like European trains. So you have the compartments, and there are three people sitting in each side of a compartment. So I was sitting by the door. The next seat was empty. And my friend, the one who lost her brother, was in the end seat.

So that's Susan Gold.

Susan Gold, right. And then Edith was across for me, and then Jack was on the other side. And so there were four of us in the compartment. There were two empty seats. And the door opens, and a very, very drunken Pole says, plenty of room, plenty of room, plenty of room.

And I said, no, there isn't plenty of room in here. And they start inveighing against not only Jews, Americans, dirty Jews. And we were kind of shocked kind of sitting there. So another Pole comes down the corridor and grabs him by the scruff of his neck and says, we're not all like this, and--

Pushes him.

--pushes him away, right. And then he was very helpful getting our luggage out of the car and all of that.

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OK.

And then we were at a Warsaw train station again. And we were with a group before Poles and things like that. And they said there's a lot of beggars around and all of that, but don't give them money, which is problematical. But usually, I tend to give people money. So we go up to waiting for the train. We were going to go into Breslau, which is Wroclaw.

And we're standing there, and the middle-aged woman, Polish woman, approaches us and asks for money. And I didn't even say no. I kind of hesitated. And she started inveighing against all the Jews, back again and taking our money again and stuff of that type.

That's two. The third one was just big swastikas on Holocaust monuments. So I'm afraid that's still there in Poland. And yet I had my sister-in-law go and had a wonderful time with a Jewish revival scene in Krakow. I know of that.

Let's go back to Hela's farmhouse.

Yes.

Was there a woods nearby--

Yes.

--near the farm? OK. Were there other farm houses that could see her house?

Oh, no, no. But the woods are the killing woods. That's where they took all the Jews from the ghetto.

Oh.

And we knew that. And we heard the shots for quite a few nights.

Oh my goodness.

Yeah. And I think there are people that came recently from Israel and put up some monuments there.

OK. Now you say you stayed there until August '44.

Right.

What happened in August '44?

In August '44, the Russians came. And they came in from the east. And again, lots of bombing, and the Russians were very well organized. They wouldn't move until they bombed the cities flat. And then they would come in. And so they did. And--

And you're seven or eight years old at this time.

This is 1940--

4.

4. So I'm eight. Right. So they came. And Father went to meet them, and he speaks Russian and all of that. A lot of the officers in the Russian army were Jewish. But they would not-- they would not confess to that. They would tell Father, I'm Jewish. But there was enough anti-Semitism in the Russian army that they were afraid to speak out loud that they're Jews, although some did.

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But as soon as they-- they would ask us 'jevrej," and we said, "Jewish." So then there was a couple of days everybody was saying, oh my god, they brought us food, and they were really very good. And then the Germans counterattacked. So Hela said now everybody knows you're here. You have to get out of here. So after not being outside, we started walking to get away from the front lines. And I remember that very well also, because the Russians had a gun they called the Katyusha.

Katyusha.

You've heard of the Katyusha? It sounds like very loud, very rapid machine gun fire. So I remember walking along the pathway. There was the tanks coming this way and the Katyushas overhead. And I think I was beyond being scared. It's just pretty overwhelming. You just fall to the ground whenever you hear the Katyusha.

But there's a limit to how far we would walk because we have not had any exercise or anything like that. So I do remember that walk. I don't know how far we walked. But at some point, we stopped, and some Russian soldiers gave us food. And we waited in the fields.

Oh, so you were in the fields rather than in the woods.

Well, woods, there was a road. And there was a woods right next to it. But there was some grass in between, because we didn't walk among the trees. We walked on the grass. And I think we stayed like a night at most, maybe two nights there. And then the Russians counterattacked. And we were able to get back.

OK.

And then once we got back, then Father said-- they waited until Zolochiv was liberated, which took a while. And after that, he went-- it was only like four miles. He went to town. And in between, there were people coming out of hiding and talking. And they said that Zolochiv was demolished completely. What about my factory? Completely demolished, completely demolished.

But when Father went back, he found that was not true. There were a couple of bombs fell nearby. But it was not completely demolished. And a few of the workers were still there. And they said to Father, come back. And Father said, how can I be the one? Everybody's gone. There's nobody there. If you come back, then maybe you can come back to your apartment, the apartment you were talking about.

And Father was helped by a few of the workers. They got the workers together and were able to-- some of the machines were gone. But a lot of them were left. And the old story-- a bureaucratic army needs printers. And Father had to Cyrillic font, which nobody else had.

So the Russians came in. And again, can you do any printing? But there was no paper. The Russians said, we'll get your paper. And Father was able to get the factory working. Of course, it was nationalized again about four different times. But again, he had different boss and everything. But he was running the place.

Were you living in your old apartment again?

Yes, yes. But it was a very uncertain. There still were a lot of people being sent to Siberia.

I wanted to ask, do you know what happened to Hela? If her husband had been a police chief, that would not make her very safe at that point.

Well, I think the way they had it figured out-- and this is, again, overhearing what grown-ups were talking, not my turn, that if the Russians and Americans won, she and he would be protected because they hid Jews. If the Germans won, he would probably betray his wife, and he would be protected because he was with the Ukrainians and the Germans.

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I see.

Yes. So they both survived. He actually came back after a while, but then he left again. I don't think they ever lived together for any period of time. [? Jashch ?] and Misha got married. Yes.

For a while, it sounds like hippie land out there on the farm.

And Hela slept with a lot of the Germans. And that probably helped us all to survive. Again, this is overhearing grown-ups. This is not something that children figure out on their own.

Yeah.

But Hela unfortunately died of cancer.

[PHONE RINGS]

Rolling.

So you were telling me about Hela and what happened to her.

Yes. She unfortunately died of cancer in about 1956. [? Jashch ?] and Misha got married. And he was alive until I think mid-'70s maybe, '80.

Now, after everything ends, and as I had asked during this time is that the stress was there, the nerves were frayed, there were arguments and things, did people make up?

Oh, yes.

So these were not the kind of arguments that cause rifts that can't be repaired.

No. Well, I think as far as our family was concerned, that was true. But Fred and Nusha I don't think ever recovered from their arguments with Eva and [? Wusha ?] because the four of them went to Israel. And when we went to Israel to visit them, Fred discouraged us very strongly from visiting [? Wusha ?] and Eva.

And they were difficult, I must admit. They were difficult. And they tried to convert me to Catholicism and our parents were worried, because they thought Edith had more brains and that I was more susceptible, perhaps. But I think in the end, everybody realized we are in this together. But still, human beings are human beings. So that was--

For those of us who have not been through something like that, it is, for me, always a mystery and a bit of a wonder of when sometimes people cross the line that can never be repaired, and sometimes when it can be stretched. But they realize that it's the circumstances that made these things happen rather than the differences that are inherent between people.

I don't think there were any lines that couldn't be repaired. But when you think about the pressure that everybody was under, it's amazing. I mean, I was thinking of our parents. And they were playing games with us and teaching us and doing so many things with us. And I know that is not true because I know some other children who are in similar circumstances, and their parents did not hold up the way our parents did.

It's incredible. Because at the same time as they're playing games, they have to be aware of all these other things and keep that in mind.

And we were very well schooled. And Fred deserves a lot of credit. I still remember him trying to-- I'm a monotone. I can't sing. I still remember him trying to sing me-- there's a song, very patriotic Polish song that the young boy is dying from a bullet wound in his chest, and he's bleeding. And he's just singing to his mother, "The only thing I'm sorry about

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is I'm leaving you behind and Poland behind." And he tried to get me to sing that on key. Never made it.

[LAUGHS]

You could never get that one.

No. I think Edith got it finally.

OK. Did your parents' personalities change, do you think?

Well, I know that my mother was pretty anxious after the war. Now, whether that was because of the war, because I didn't know her that much before the war. But there was anxiety there, yes.

And your father?

My father probably less so. Probably less so. Because I think he was very, here's the problem. Let's find the solution, rather than overthinking it, yes.

What happened with Grandfather, and when did it happen? And when did you find out?

Well, Father called right after we were liberated. And he was told by some people they were in a concentration camp in Lvov. But that was in Lvov. When they had an action to take them to one of the mains places like Auschwitz or Dachau, that Grandfather took poison.

But Father-- there were several people who told him that. But Father never believed that. And for years and years afterwards, he would scour every source, check every source of possible knowledge, and was never able to find anything, any sign that he survived. So it's most probably that people who said that he took poison were true.

Mm.

And they were in their early '50s. But people say we were so lucky, which we were so lucky. So when we came to America, there were headlines in the newspapers that a intact family has arrived. But Father lost both his parents. So we didn't quit make it.

Yeah, it wasn't completely unscathed.

Wasn't completely unscathed, no.

And I suspect that in that situation, it is very bittersweet because, yes, you know you're lucky. But that doesn't mean that there wasn't suffering and that there wasn't fear and that there wasn't great danger, as you have described for us.

Yes. And I know there were periods-- again, listening when our hosts would go away for several days, we had no food. And we know we would go hungry for a while. I think the kids, they were always short, but said there were periods of hunger and certainly limited food in the ghetto and before all of that. But we were so much luckier than people who wound up at a concentration camp. And we knew that. We knew that, yes.

So for a while then, you come back to Zolochiv.

Yes.

Your father goes back to the factory. It gets nationalized and the same sort of-- it sounds like deja vu all over again.

Deportations start again and some shootings of people who were enemies of the state and things of that type. And Father decides that he needs to leave. And because this part of Poland was given to Russia, people who were Polish were given

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permission to move to the western part.

And you were citizens of Poland.

We were citizens of Poland. So we would theoretically be free to leave, except they wouldn't let Father go because he was indispensable to the operating of the factory. But Mother and us were able to go.

And did you?

And we did. And Father was able to sneak away when his boss was on vacation. But believe it or not, it was not safe to travel as Jews in Poland at that time. So we actually used those Polish Christian papers we had.

Really?

Yes.

When you were-- what was it? Your name was Bulka?

Bulski.

Bulski.

By the way, I still have the cross that I wore. Again, since I was Jewish looking, they gave me a big cross. And Edith was not so Jewish looking, just had a little medallion. And I still have the cross. I have it here because I have given it to someone. They gave it back to me. Well, we didn't realize that that was a mourning cross because it's inlaid with ebony, and there's a little statue of Jesus on it.

Oh, my.

So we changed our names to travel through Poland.

What year was this?

This was in the beginning of 1945.

Ah, so the war is still going on.

Yes. Yes.

OK, the war is not over. All right.

But in our part, it is over.

Yeah, of course.

But it's not over--

In Germany.

--in Germany, right. So we're again traveling, and there's a number of towns we go through. And finally, Father-- by the way, Father has bleeding ulcers. So in all of this, he had several major attacks that were life-threatening. But he recovers. And then he runs, in a town called Katowice, into a man that had the biggest pharmaceutical printing factory in Poland.

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So his competitor.

His competitor. Except he was the salesman. And his technical guy, who was Ukrainian, had to leave. So he asked Father would he join with him to run the factory, still under an assumed name because that guy was Polish Christian. So we are living there.

But does he know the real name? Does he know it's really--

He does. He does.

He knows who your father really is.

But the decision was it's safer. Because when the Jews came out of hiding, a lot of Poles said, well, the Germans didn't do a good enough job and things of that type. So the decision was made that he would live under assumed names. It was a town called Cieszyn. It was right next to Czechoslovakia.

And so we get enrolled in school with good Catholic children. I am in a panic because I'm getting ready for first communion. And if God finds out that I'm Jewish and I get first communion--

You poor thing.

--first communion under--

Under false pretenses.

--under false pretenses, I'm going to burn in hell forever. So this is not a happy period for me, right. And Father is beginning to get very concerned that people will recognize him. Because the pharmaceuticals, he already runs into people who remember him from old times. He says, we have to get out of here.

So we cross the border from Poland to Czechoslovakia. You can have a day pass illegally. And I'm the chief smuggler because I'm very small and thin. So they gave me just about, which is filled maybe with some money. I don't know. Maybe jewels. And I put it there on my waist. And then the family just goes for a day trip over the border and get rid of the stuff.

You don't come back.

You come back. We did this two or three or four times.

Oh, really?

Yes.

So you went over, and you come back.

And you come back. And then finally, when we get the stuff we need to Czechoslovakia, we go to Czechoslovakia. Again, traveled for a number of towns. Father wants to make contact with the United States forces in Germany. So all kinds of adventures. And finally, the only way you can get across the German border is what's happening today between the United States and Mexico. You hire guards, and they smuggle you. And you go in the middle of the night through the forest.

And was the war over?

Pardon me? At this point, the war is over, yes. Because the United States troops are in--

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Bavaria.

--Bavaria. So this is essentially the end of 1945. And so essentially, Father hires a guide. And I, again, remember this, the immigrant children going through the woods. And we get essentially caught by the Polish guards. I'm sorry, Czech guards because we're in Czechoslovakia. And they take away the luggage. And the guide say, forget your luggage. Go through. Father says, no. Because in that suitcase, you'll see a lot of pictures here, like my mother, my grandmother, and all of that.

And I have to backtrack a little bit. When we came back to Zolochiv after we were liberated, we found somebody was in our apartment. And we had all these albums, these pictures. And they tore all the pictures out, and they were all over the floor. And Father gathered them all. This were pre-war pictures. So he hid them in that suitcase that the Czech guards took away.

So Father says he was not leaving without it. People said it was crazy. So he goes to the station, to the Czech station. And he tells the officer in charge that these are pictures of my parents and my grandparents. I can't leave them behind. So the officer opens the suitcase. And there was my grandfather's picture, which we have there right on top.

And he closes the suitcase, and he says, go with God or something like that. And he lets Father go with all of his luggage. So we cross over Germany. And then again, lots of adventures. We can't go through them in a short period of time. But eventually, Father makes contact with the American army and he's hired by HIAS.

Ah.

Because Father speaks a lot of languages. So he was helping with displaced people from a lot of countries. And we were quartered, I remember that, in Munich in a house of a German woman within like-- her husband was a prisoner of war. She wasn't too happy about it.

But we make contact with some wonderful Americans. It was somebody called Dr. Elias and some others. And then after a while, Father was given-- we had an uncle in Brooklyn, who sponsored us. So we were actually on the second ship of displaced persons, came over in 1946.

That's early.

It was great here.

And do remember the name of the ship?

Marine Flasher.

I've heard Marine Flasher before.

You've heard that name before.

Yeah, yeah. And I think it sailed from Bremen. It usually did, from-- or was yours from--

Bremerhaven. It was from Bremerhaven. There was a very-- accident on that-- when we were on it, we heard somebody jumped overboard. And we later heard that there was an SS officer who was pretending to be Jewish, and somebody recognized him.

Oh my goodness. Oh my goodness.

Your father had a great deal of foresight.

I mean, if you just-- I mean-- I mean, this was five years. And when you think of everything that he did. But he always

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said, there were other people who are just as foresighted as I was, but their luck ran out. And that was true. That was true. We were just incredibly lucky.

OK.

Because if you think that 70 people remain out of 15,000. And I must say that Father-- and he was very proud of it. There were Jews, believe it or not, collaborated. There were people that joined the Judenrat. And he was asked many times to join the Judenrat, and we'd get extra rations and everything. He would never do that. We came here, we didn't have a penny.

Well, not quite true. Father-- when we went into hiding, there was a Ukrainian woman that was engaged to a Jewish man who didn't survive. But Mother gave her some of our jewelry.

[PHONE RINGS]

Mother gave us some of her jewelry. And she gave back every bit of it.

Oh, my.

A lot of people whom Father and Mother gave things, they just said it either was stolen, or they had to live on it, which was probably true. But we had these few pieces of jewelry, which enabled us to have something when we came to United States. But still, we had enough to give a couple of things to the kids.

And Father-- I mean, both my parents were lawyers. Father worked as a night-time cashier at a place like [INAUDIBLE], one of those 24 hours, went to school, got an MBA, and became vice president for Remco toy company. And Mother started a new luncheon in Greenwich Village. And so we always had food. And they just kept going.

And your grandmother came with you. Your maternal grandmother came with you.

Yes, and that was quite a story. As we disembarked from Ellis Island, her sweetheart from 45 years ago was there to meet us. His wife had just died a year ago. And they met, and they got married again. They got married. Unfortunately, he didn't live long after that. But that was a real--

What a lovely ending for her.

That was a wonderful ending. And by the way, she never let go of kashrut. And she would not touch any meat or anything. And you know something? Every person who hid us or who came to us respected her. And they went out of the way to get some food that she could eat. And she really feels that that's what's saved us, that she never let go of God, right.

Yeah. Well, it sounds like we've come close to--

An end. Yes, yes.

I'm sure there are many things that we could add to it. In one interview, you can never capture it all.

I mean, it's five years, right.

Yeah. I'd like to give you the final word in the sense of, what would you like people to take away when they hear your story, when they listen to it? What would you like them to understand from it?

Well, it's still appalls me the evil that exists. But then in spite of all of that, when you think of the people who saved us and helped us all along, who would've been killed and their families would've been killed, it's amazing. I sometimes

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think what I would have done if I was in a situation like that.

And I'm very glad that's Helena Szczulczewska is recognized on the Wall of the Righteous in the Holocaust Museum. And I just found out that [? Gresh ?] [? Tiss, ?] who is the Ukrainian man, is on the Wall of the Righteous in Israel.

OK.

Yes.

Because there would have been no miracle without these incredibly brave people. And Father talked to us about that, that the reason they did it was because they were people of faith.

I couldn't think of a better note to end on. Thank you very, very much.

Well, thank you for coming and for listening.

Wow. It's an honor. It's an honor.

Well, I tend to-- it's odd, but for a long, long time, I wouldn't talk about it. My children say that I never talk to them about it. But I'm 83. So it feels at some point, you feel you're like the last generation. And you really need to make people realize. And I just hope that something like that never happens. But if you look around the war now--

Yeah, evil is still there. Hate is still there. And innocent people still are suffering.

No question about it. No question about it, yeah. And I know that the museum, that only looks-- people are saying, yes, there are different holocausts, which is true. But when you think of what we went through, which is five-year-old children being herded into gas chambers, our problem was that we thought that west was civilized, I think.

Yeah. You never know what beast is in there.

How could people do things like that?

I mean, that's an unanswered question. As much as one can do historical research and look at ideology and beliefs and all of that, it still remains a great unanswered question.

Yes.

Yeah. Thank you.

Thank you.

OK.

And thank you, Gus.

OK.

He was standing all along.

And I will say that this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Selma Tennenbaum Rossen on September 20, 2019. Thanks again.

And thank you.

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So tell me, who is in this photograph right here?

These are my maternal grandparents, Basha and Solomon Horowitz. Solomon unfortunately died just after the First World War in a railroad accident.

An agrarian accident.

Yes. And Basha survived the war, came with us to New York. And when we disembarked at Ellis Island, her sweetheart of 45 years ago was waiting for her. And they got married after she came here. She was 65 years old.

What a lovely story.

It is a wonderful story, yes.

OK. Thank you for sharing that photo.

OK, now you want--

OK. Tell me, what is this photograph of?

These are our parents. These are my parents, who met when they were very young. I think they were both 16 or 17 at this point. And they were both in gymnasium, which is a high school. And you can see how they feel about each other.

[LAUGHS]

And they went through high school together, and they went to college together, and they went to a life together.

Oh, my. And so on the left is Elizabeth Horowitz.

Elizabeth Horowitz.

And on the right--

Was Lipa Shmul Tennenbaum. Now he was a little upset-- or, no, he wasn't upset. His mother was upset when he was named by a very Orthodox grandfather, who was Lipa Shmul. And Mother was named by a much more secular. So she was Elizabeth.

I see. OK. And this photo you think is taken when they're teenagers?

16 or 17, yes.

OK. All right, so this would have been the mid-'20s, sometime around then.

Yes.

All right, thank you very much.

Absolutely.

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