

Three years. So she must have been born by the end of World War I, somehow? Because your date of birth is in 1914. So your youngest sister probably was born in '18 or '19, something like that. Yeah, yeah.

My father kept his word. But he loved his family. And he never divorced my mother. And how long I live, I don't remember if they was arguing between [INAUDIBLE]. So I didn't think of this.

They loved each other?

Yeah, it was the atmosphere in the house was everything peace, you understand. If we with the kids alone, we respect each other. And that.

On a Saturday, what did you do? Did your father go--

No, no, no.

Do something with you?

Saturday, got up in the morning, went to the mikvah, came home. We ate dinner. And also one thing-- this woman who raised us, she was sitting by the same table that all [INAUDIBLE] sat. I think, I don't know if you will find somebody which will give you a better opinion about my father.

Did your father talk with you about politics? About the larger world around?

There was a newspaper, so like here, is The New York Times, there was Moment, The Chwila, the most popular Jewish newspaper.

Was your father somebody who was interested in politics?

Well, what he read in his paper. He was not-- he didn't live so like the Americans are living with baseball, and something else.

No, I guess what I'd like to hear or understand is, since the more-- in the later years of your childhood, and when you started to be a grown man, the world situation was becoming more and more complicated.

One thing I tell you, here, you have girls, 12 years old, and they have babies. That didn't exist. You understand?

No, but there was the time of the big depression, the time after World War I, in terms of economy was not easy. You were in a Jewish community in Poland, antisemitism was rising. So how did your family experience those years?

The first thing, ma'am, I live on the street, the WaÅ,owa, the name for the street. I tell you, was half Jewish people, families, and other Catholic families. Quite a few are a high officer from the military. Lived on this street. You know.

Did you socialize with each other? I mean, did you--

Oh, yeah, yeah. The most time I had friends, Pollacks, and one time, my father, sitting in the living room-- and read whatever, came one guy, a Jewish guy. And he asked for me. So my father get up, opened the door, he say, go. Your Catholics are here.

It was an open house. My all brothers associated with the Catholics.

In school, did you go to a school where both Jews and Gentiles were together?

No, we were going to the same school. You see, there was a Jewish school. We never went to the Jewish school.

And did you feel that it mattered at school if you were Jewish or not Jewish? Were people treated differently?

Oh, yeah-- you can imagine that one day, on the outside the school, I was playing. And somebody from the third floor was coming back over, and say, hey, listen, your brother is [INAUDIBLE] fighting. So I run up, and I tried to run under the table, and my brother took a pencil and knocked him in the head.

No, no, we was not Jewish people which was afraid for a fight. And if somebody insulted us, we react so like-- he was [INAUDIBLE]. There was a beautiful park, it was sitting different Jewish boys and girls. And sometimes they attack them. So my brother a few guys more, he was watching that, and he had good sticks.

They want beat the Jews, then we beat them.

And if you say, they, who are they? Who were these people?

Who? You know very well that the Jewish people are not liked. That we gave [NON-ENGLISH]-- we gave the religion, we gave medicine, everything. But they don't like Jews. What they can do?

It is easier to hate like love. Yeah? This is a completely different thing. And especially was the whole antisemitism came from Eastern Europe. If you came in a company from German, or French, or Belgium, you never heard a word Jew.

And there-- during the war, I had some trouble with the police. And I felt that I cannot stay more in Warsaw. I must disappear.

I took a detective-- of the Gestapo. I smashed his face, and I run away. So the ground in Warsaw started to be dangerous for me.

So I told my girlfriend, we will get married. I got married. And I went on the farm.

Let's backtrack a little bit before we get to this-- to the time when you got married. I would like to hear a little bit more before about your growing up, in terms of your education. You went to school in Tarnopol for how long?

There was a three-year commercial lyceum.

And what was your plan? What did you want to be? Or what were you studying for?

Commerce.

Commerce.

So I was sure end up in my father's factory.

OK. So you went to this three-year--

Three years.

--school. And when did you--

After gymnasium, I went to lyceum. So like here, the Baruch College.

So about what age were you when you finished your schooling, approximately?

I finished my schooling with starting the war. [GERMAN].

So you were still at school when the war started, in '39?

After a year time, when I left school, starting the war.

So you went to school in Tarnopol? You finished school in Tarnopol? And what happened next? What did you do?

I did nothing. I was most times I spent in my father's business. My father, how much he gave you, that was enough. You see, you didn't need to beg my father give you-- I have no money.

I [INAUDIBLE] ma'am, I am proud of my heritage.

So you started working in the family business together with your father and one of your brothers?

The eldest brother.

And did you did you plan at that time to stay in Tarnopol? Or what did you want to do?

Ma'am, you didn't plan nothing. But the life was very nice, you understand? You had everything. There's only one-- the one bother that my father had trouble with the military. So he went to Argentina. But he's not alive no more.

I was in Argentina four years ago.

To visit your brother's family?

Yeah, I went to visit his grave. I was a week time. He had a daughter with a son. They sold the works for Shell Oil Company. And the daughter, the daughter married a non-Jewish man. And one time he expressed himself, I saw what is in him, inside, anyway-- I didn't talk more.

When did you last see your brother?

Oh, by that-- when I was four or five years ago, he was already dead.

But did you see him after he went away to Argentina? Did you--

Oh, yeah, he was writing letters, and that. And we had a man which was a good friend for my father. So he said to us that the letter, that his son got married in this house. So we had contact, and everything.

Right, right.

Was a big family, it was a nice family.

So but eventually, things changed in Tarnopol?

Oh, sure-- I was in Tarnopol with David Robert three years ago. But I just want to get to the-- as we move forward in the history, in 1938, for example, were you still working with your father?

No, by then the German-- you see, we had a lots of presses, [GERMAN] soap. And they brought presses for everything, and they were made from the full metal, what the [INAUDIBLE] metal. Not iron, copper. So what-- the job they took everything.

Well, how do you remember these times when the Germans came?

I, personally, will tell you that I didn't have to hard times. But I was-- I am a witness what has happened to all the

people.

Were you afraid about what could happen? Did you realize what was happening?

Ma'am, I am a Cohen. And Cohens have terrible temper. And I was sitting in a restaurant in Warsaw, and I have stuff for the underground. Came in one guy, and I didn't know there was another guy, and the girl which was working in the restaurant, she right away showed me there's another exit.

I go out that exit, and the other guy stays there. And he hit me with a eine Peitsche.

With a whip?

Yeah. And he tried to make the corner so he had a help. I put my leg and he fell on his face. I took his hair, and smashed it to the street. And there was a taxi, I jumped in a taxi, and I drive. And the taxi drivers, they knew what was going on.

And one corner, I took the corner, they were still behind. I gave them 500 zÅ,oty, and you go. And I jump out, and I went in, in a house. What later I found out, son of a gun, was bleeding like hell.

I couldn't stay in Warsaw more, you know. They would look for me.

How did you get to Warsaw? What brought you to Warsaw? Did you go for work reasons?

No, no, to Warsaw, I had a 10-ton truck with six soldiers. And my boss told them to bring me to Warsaw. And that-- and on the way, to Warsaw, they must stop in Krakow. And in Krakow, was a known camp-- the Plaszow. The director for the camp was Amon GÅ¶th.

He could stay on a balcony with a gun, and didn't like someone-- killed them. I mean, and he got-- they caught him, and he was sitting in jail. So I said to the director, I would like to see him.

And I went there. Oh, [GERMAN], and a Polish sergant, there was not an executioner, though. A Polish sergant thought if he can take off his pants and his shoes, he will hang you. And the judge said, good, all right. And I was staying 20 foot from the place where they hanged him.

Well, and ma'am, that Amon GÅ¶th was a high cultural guy. Fat and intelligent. I ask him, how could you do that? Oh, no, [GERMAN].

In the notes that I got from your son, he says that in 1939, when the Russians occupied Tarnopol, you worked as an accountant for the local government in the division of propaganda films. Can you--

I was the economist from the state. I didn't work, but I had a friend he would say, listen, you must work next door where lives an NKVD man. They will start to look for what you're living in that. So he came one day told me that in the office, they need a man. I say, well, what can I-- how you know that? You will do the job.

He was a lawyer, and he couldn't do the job. So I went there, applied. And they gave me the job. And I had two weeks-- they want to see what I can do. And after two weeks, they say, you are accepted.

I got a very good salary from them.

So who was your boss?

The Communist Party.

The Communist Party.

The government.

OK. And--

I was starshii ekonomist OblIspolkoma.

And what specifically did you-- was your task? What did your work consist of?

My job contains on that-- they gave me-- tell me a number, 10 million, 20 million. And I suppose to divide that money, each village, each town. And I divide it. They send that to Kyiv-- Kyiv agreed that they send that papers back to me.

And I do one thing-- I was giving out money. And the law in Russia-- so if I give you money, something to do, in the end of three months, you didn't use the money, you must-- that was left over to give back to the cashier. And you get new money from the cashier.

There was one guy, the Fedulov, he was-- he had the propaganda. That is-- and the plan was that he will build a garage, there they can fix that part, too-- they can fix the trucks and that. He didn't fix nothing, he didn't build nothing. And they came after me.

And in each office is a member, is an NKVD. He called me in. I say, I never touched money, I didn't see money. And tell him, that is my job.

But that-- the Fedulov, he had the Orden Stalina i Lenina, they cannot arrest him. They took me. They brought me to the center from the NKVD, and they start to write. Write, write. Podpishi.

So I will tell you that-- so like I said, nikhuya. He went out, comes another guy. So the whole evening and the whole night, they came with three acts. In the morning, Alan Warning came in, a guy in uniform, and you know a Jew recognizes a Jew. I recognize that he's Jewish.

So I don't speak to him in Russian. What I speak to him in Jewish. And I tell him what they think, that I'm stupid? But what I will say?

They will send me in Siberia. After our time, he came back, he said, "Poshli domoi", go home.

So you were released?

Yeah. So if I sign one paper, I would enter Siberia.

And could you go back to your work after that? Or what happened?

What?

Did you return to your work?

Yeah.

And then?

And then, it was the end for the Russian. And they called me to the air force. So I went to Russian air force.

Meaning, you were drafted?

What?

Does that mean you were drafted?

Yeah.

Yeah?

Come there, they're organized, they have nothing. So I will tell you a joke-- the Russian which sits next to me, he ate the soup, one side down and the other side. And he gives me the-- I look on the-- he say, [RUSSIAN]--

Which means?

This means, ty sukin syn, what do you think? That I ate good, shit? [LAUGHS]

Everything was tougher off. And one night, the Germans came and they smashed him in pieces. That's the general was there-- he was screaming on them.

And I had a-- I kept-- and she offered me-- I give you a talk, and come with us. That's Russia I came to my home, and I told-- and I told my mother, what? For that-- had the Vienna furniture to go with them hollow baskets, they didn't have shoes.

But my mother would go, I will survive with the whole family. But [INAUDIBLE] in Russia, a commandeered can steal if he has a good chauffeur. Without a chauffeur, he cannot steal.

And he wants me to go to Russia. [INAUDIBLE].

So you decided against it?

Not I decided, but my mother. And I had my sister was together with me on the airfield. So one day, they came-- they smashed everything.

They is who?

They're the Germans.

The Germans.

So I told my sister, my sister was a nurse there. So I helped her to put them on the wagon, a few wounded guys. And I told her, you don't come back. Stay home, I will come home. And later, after 12 o'clock in the night, I left the base, and I went home. Went home.

The first week I didn't go out. I took off all the clothes [INAUDIBLE]. And after about five, six days, that the German came.

Was your family afraid of the Germans arriving?

No, on the beginning, if somebody told what the Germans are doing, ah, [GERMAN].

We don't believe it.

She didn't believe it.

And your one brother had already left, too, for Argentina, right?

Oh, he left before the war started.

Did your father or your mother, or any of you brothers and sisters ever think of following your brother?

No, that was-- that was my brother was eight years before it started, the war, he went.

So you did not feel threatened, that you were not thinking that something could happen to you?

No. We didn't believe people came from the west part of Poland, which was under the German. If they came and tell stories, they couldn't believe them. And I will tell you, I, myself, couldn't believe that such a cultured nation can commit such things.

But later, when Molotov with Ribbentrop made that pact, later they start in Warsaw, also.

So did you officially leave the Russian army? Or how did you get out there?

They-- I got an order, that to report to the airport.

Right, but then you said that you left, no?

And I left.

You left when the Germans came?

Yeah, I left, and a week time, the Germans came in. But at that time, when the Germans came in, the Russians went away back-- back to Russia.

Right, and you stayed home with your family?

Sure. That's my family.

How many of your brothers and sisters were still home at that time?

Everybody was home.

Nobody was married and living somewhere else?

No, only one sister, she got married in Lwow. I had a uncle which was the director from the court, so she lived with them. That is-- and another doctor fell in love on her. And my uncle--