

Today is Saturday, May 22, 1982. My name is Fran Gutterman, and I'm interviewing Janet Applefield, who resides in Sudbury, Massachusetts. OK. Could you tell me when and where you were born?

I was born June 4, 1935 in Kraków, Poland.

Was that a big city, Kraków?

Yes, that's-- I think it was the second-- well, I'm not sure at the time whether that was the biggest city, but I think now it's the second-biggest city. But our family did not live there. We lived in a little village called Nowy Targ, which is approximately-- oh, I don't know, maybe 15, 20 miles from Kraków.

At the time, I think there were about 2,000 Jewish people living there. My family-- my father was one of six sons. My grandfather had a very prosperous hardware-houseware type of business right in the center of town, in the square. And my father was involved in the business with him.

What kind of business was it?

It was houseware, hardware, machinery, bit farm machinery. It was the only type of store like that in town, so they did business with all the peasants from all around. And let's see. My father was involved in the business, and on and off different sons were involved in the business. But then one of the sons--

You mean his brothers.

--his brothers. One of the brothers went to Israel in 1935 and never returned, and two of the brothers studied abroad. And I think on and off the grandfather tried to get all the sons involved, but my father was the one who sort of got hooked because he was the oldest, and he-- actually, he didn't want to be in the business. He wanted to-- he studied dentistry, but somehow--

OK. What was your father's name?

My father's name was Alojzy--

Alojzy--

--Singer.

--Singer. And my mother's name was Maria. Amalja was the Polish name. And my mother came from a village called Wadowice. That's the same town that the Pope comes from. And she was the oldest-- oh, she's not the oldest. That's not true. She is the middle daughter of three daughters, and her father, my grandfather, was involved in dealing in hay. That was his business.

My recollections of-- my very early recollections was of a very happy family life, a lot of people around all the time, and weekends we would go to visit my grandparents in Wadowice or they would come to visit us. And of course, I was the first grandchild, so it was like I was the--

--pride.

--the pride, yeah. Oh, dear.

All right.

OK. I had a sister. She was born in 1938, and she died in 1941 of diphtheria.

What was her name?

Her name was Sarenka. And anyway--

Did you have any other brothers or--

No, I did not, no. So anyway, I do have recollections of my uncles taking me places and doing-- I had one uncle who rode a motorcycle, and I remember going on the motorcycle with him.

And in 1939, the war broke out.

You were how old then?

I was four years old. Now, these are not recollections. This is what I've heard from my father and also what I've read in his memoirs that he had written. And apparently, there was incredible chaos when war broke out. People were just running and going in all different directions.

My father took me and my mother and my sister to my grandparents' house in Wadowice, and he and my grandfather and my uncles were just running, just running-- they didn't know where they were running to, but they were-- apparently, it seemed like people were going east toward Russia.

And during their running, they got separated but eventually ended up in Lwów. And in the meantime, my grandfather, my other grandfather, my grandmother, and my two aunts and my mother and me and my sister and the uncles all went in a type of caravan with horse and wagons, and we headed also toward Russia. And--

Do you remember any of this?

No, I don't remember that. But this had been told to me by my uncle, my aunt's husband. And it took days and days with a lot of awful things happening along the way, being turned back and being stopped by the Polish police and so forth and so on.

Anyway, we ended up in a place called Luck. And finally, my father found where we were, and he-- and at first, we were all living together, but then we went-- he took me and my mother, my sister, and we lived in a place called Vynnyky. And my father tried to earn a living somehow, and he was--

Was this still in Poland?

No, this was in Russia.

You had already--

This is Ukraine, yeah. And then one day, there was a declaration that everybody had to take out Russian passports or else they couldn't work, and a lot of people some people did. And some people were afraid that if they did that, they couldn't return back to their homes, and was utter confusion. And my grandparents did and my uncle and my aunt, and they were-- eventually, they were shipped to Siberia. According to my father's notes, about 200,000 people were shipped to Siberia to the labor camps.

My father didn't, and he-- way, way back, when he was a little boy, he remembered that when Lennon was hiding and running away, he and his party stayed at my grandparents'-- his grandparents' home, and he had some recollections of even sitting on Lennon's lap. And the family helped Lennon, gave him money, and all kinds of things.

In fact, after Lennon returned to Russia and became the head of the party, he wrote the family letter thanking them for all the help and sent the money back that he had borrowed. So he remembered that, and he thought, well, perhaps he could have a special privilege or-- so he wrote to the party, the Communist Party, and he did get special passport.

But then what happened was that Vynnyky was returned back to Poland, and it was no longer part of Russia because apparently that land was always going back and forth. And the Russians were moving out, and they asked my father-- we could have gone with them.

But that part of Poland was, in fact, invaded by Russia? It wasn't invaded by Germany, right?

At that-- when we were first there, but while we were there, it changed over. I just reread that in my father's book. It changed over, and then the Russians moved out. And--

It changed over to German hands?

Well, yes, and within a very short time, the Germans came in. And my family had the opportunity to go with the Russians, but they didn't with the expectations that things would momentarily change. So they didn't, and then the Germans came. And then--

So you're saying that, in fact, you moved back there because Russia moved out of--

We were there. See, we were there when the Russians were there, and then we were there when the Russians left. But when the Russians left and the Germans came, we were in hiding. And then one day, one of my uncles came with a truck and came to pick us up, and we went back to Nowy Targ. And in Nowy Targ, we lived in the ghetto, and the situation was really bad. And so--

Do you know when this was? Was this in 1940?

I think it was 1941, '41, maybe '42, '41 or '42. OK, so this was about a year and a half after the war had started. At this point, you were about six years old or--

Five.

--five. Do you have any recollections of this period at all or when you were living in Nowy Targ in the ghetto?

Not really. I really don't.

Did you have any idea what was going on?

Yeah, I knew there was a war.

Did you have any sense of your Jewishness at all or the fact--

Oh, yes.

Were your parents religious?

I think everybody was religious. I don't think there was a-- it just was a part of being.

Being Jewish?

Being Jewish. And I have recollections of-- I have recollections of Sabbath and baking the challah and not doing anything on the Sabbath.

Did you have any sense of antisemitism at that point?

No, not at all.

You were aware that there were other people that weren't Jewish?

Yes, yes, because we had non-Jewish people working for the family, household help, and I have recollection of the men praying with the prayer shawls and the wrapping of the hand.

My maternal grandfather was very religious, and I don't think my other grandparents were as religious. But I

still remember going to shul and all that stuff, yeah.

Did you have any sense of what kind of relationship there existed between Jews and non-Jews? Or did you--

No, not really.

--between Poles and Jews?

I didn't, no, no. I didn't-- as a child, I didn't feel any of the tension.

OK. Did your father ever talk to you about if there had been any thoughts even before the war started of leaving Poland or of going away someplace else?

Yes, he did talk about it. You mean during the war?

I mean before the war.

Oh, no, no, no. Just after the war, yeah, we talked about it.

OK. So you ended up back in Nowy Targ in the ghetto-- in the ghetto, and why don't you talk a little bit about that, either your recollections or what your father told you?

Well, my father's notes talk about how terrible that period was, that there were people shot every day, that there was a quota. If there was anything ever done to a German, then the Jews had to-- there was a percentage-- they had to pay with certain percentage of Jews being shot, and he talks about being arrested by the Gestapo and being questioned and one time the Gestapo coming to the house and having everybody undressed. And they brought with them some women, and the women had a choice of taking anything they saw from their closet, their clothing.

And, well, then came the time when they realized that they gathered I don't know how many Jews and shipped them off in trains.

You're talking when they liquidated the ghetto?

Yeah, that was happening.

Do you have any recollections yourself? How long were you in Nowy Targ, in the ghetto there? Do you--

Not too long, just probably a matter of weeks or a couple months or something like that. It wasn't long at all.

Do you have any recollection of all of that period when you were there?

No, I really don't. The only thing-- I have a recollection of-- one time, we tried to escape before-- I think my parents realized that this was it, and so we tried one more time to escape. And I remember they rented a horse and wagon, and we left in the middle of the night.

And we were just riding. I'm not sure where they were trying to go to, but we were riding. And then we were stopped by the Polish police and clubbed, and I remember even running into the fields and hiding there, and then we were turned back.

And then my parents realized that there was just no way they could get out of this, and they decided that they had to give me away. I just remembered that I didn't say anything about the death of my sister, and I don't remember too much about it.

It happened in 1942?

19-- she was born in '38, and she-- about '42 or end of '41, something like that. And I don't remember. I

remember-- I remember her being very sick and not being able to get any medications or doctors or anything like that. I don't remember. Actually, she died when we were still in the Lwów area, and that's where she was buried. But I'm not sure why I-- I think I blocked that out completely.

And it's something that my father never even talked about too much. I guess it was so painful for him. But anyway, so they had decided that they had to do something, to give me away and possibly try to separate themselves. And they discussed that it would be best if-- after they gave me away, if they tried to separate so that that would increase their chances of surviving.

So my father got in touch with a woman who was a nursemaid to one of the children of the family, and she was a woman who was half-Polish, half-German and had a special status. She was called-- people like that were called Volksdeutsche. They were half and half.

And she took me, and the following day, it was like the day before the final disposition of all the Jews-- and what happened was then my father-- my mother went to-- was shipped out on one of the cars, one of the trains, and my father went to a work camp in Kraków.

And I went to Kraków with this woman, and that was it. That was the last time I saw them. No, that's the last time I saw my mother, but the last time I saw my father was-- when he got to Kraków, he was living in a ghetto, and every morning he was shipped to the cable factory in Kraków. And my father realized that this woman didn't want to keep me. It was very dangerous for her, and this was just a temporary thing. And he got in touch with a cousin of mine, and he didn't remember even how that happened, how he did that.

But this was a cousin who spoke German fluently and had agreed to take me, and he had given her, I guess, all the money and jewelry or whatever he had to do this. And I have recollection of being transferred from the woman to my cousin, and this was done-- I was on one side of the fence, the ghetto fence, and he was on the other side. And so that was it. And I went to--

You went through saying goodbye to him?

Yes, that was the last time I saw my father. And then I went to live with this cousin.

--who was Jewish.

--who was Jewish.

In Kraków.

Well, we lived in a town outside of Kraków. It was-- I can't even remember now. Do you want to know the name?

Well, if you remember. It's not--

I have-- it's just-- right now I have it-- I took a trip back to Poland this last-- two summers ago. Oh, last summer. It was last summer.

So it's first time.

First time, yeah.

It must've been incredible.

It was. It was unbelievable.

Was this around '42 then or '43?

'42.

1942?

1942.

And how was your cousin living? At that point, being Jewish was--

OK. She had Polish papers already, and it was arranged that Polish papers were bought for me. I think they were purchased from a priest. And so I took on the identity of a Polish girl of approximately my age, and my name was Krystina Antoszkiewicz. This was a deceased child. And she and I lived outside of Kraków. And she wasn't very nice to me, and I'm not sure why. But I don't have good recollections about that.

You were seven years old at this point?

1942, I was seven, right.

Is your memory clear at this point?

Yeah, a little.

More so.

A little more clear, right. And she had a boyfriend, a Polish boyfriend, that used to come to visit, and we lived in a little cottage. It was part of another house, and it was kind of private. And he used to come to visit. He owned a leather factory.

Some of this information I found out recently, and I'm not sure whether I should combine what I recall now or whether I should just go back and talk about my trip. I'm not sure how you want me to do that.

I guess whatever you feel comfortable with. If you want to combine-- it's not essential that you say which part is your memory and which-- how did you find out this information from--

Well, I knew that he-- I remember that he had a leather factory. Well, let me just tell a little further, and then I'll go back. So I remember his coming to the house, and one time she went to meet him in the city, in Kraków. And we went in together, and she asked me to wait for her across the street in a church while she went to meet him in a cafe.

And she didn't return for hours and hours, and I came out looking for her. And when I came-- I went into the cafe, and I was told that the cafe had been raided by the Gestapo, and everybody was taken away from there. So I was just walking the streets, and a woman came up to me and took me home with her. And--

A Polish woman?

A Polish woman. And I--

Was your cousin's boyfriend who was Polish-- did he know? Do whether or not he knew?

OK, well, this is-- when I went back this summer, I didn't remember the Polish boyfriend's name. I remembered the name of the village. And I went into the village, parked the car, stopped the first man that was walking by, and said, would you happen to know this man? And I told him the story. And all I said, his name was Victor, and he had a leather factory. And he said, oh, of course, just a minute. I'll show you where his family lives, and walked me a couple of blocks.

And we went into this little store, and she said, well that was my husband's uncle or something. And she said, he's not alive, but his brother is alive. And I met the brother, and the brother said, sure, I remember you. I remember your cousin. I came with a bunch of pictures, and he said he remembered everything.

And he took me to the house where we lived, and he said, well, my brother, Victor, had a munitions factory behind the leather factory, and he was part of the underground, the Polish underground, and he and my cousin were active in the Polish underground. And I didn't know that.

My recollection was that they were always sending me to the post office with very heavy boxes, and I was always mailing stuff. And I don't know what was in there, but I also remember some kind of a closet in the house that-- he hid in there. And he was wanted by the Germans, and he hid out in this little cottage that we lived in.

Amazing.

And I also found out that the cafe that they were meeting was a well-known place where the underground hung out. Now, I'm not clear whether this was the Polish underground or whether this was Communist Party. I don't know because I remember knowing a lot of Russian songs.

And so when I went to these Polish people, they were really confused because I knew a lot of Russian, and so they thought that my cousin was part of the Russian underground. So I'm not sure which is--

Did you ever see your cousin again after that?

No. Now, this is the cousin that's in-- I understand is in Australia. Supposedly, she was taken to a concentration camp, and so was he. And he only died about three years ago.

But she did survive then.

She did survive, and so I would imagine she would be in her-- she was like in her early 20s when I was seven, so I don't know. She'd be about 65 or something like that. She could still be alive, yeah. So anyway, let's see what else?

So you were living with this--

I was living with this woman. She was an older woman. She had an apartment right across the street from-- right above where that cafe was.

Did you tell her what had happened?

No. Well, see, I had a pat story that I was told to-- that I was from Warsaw and my parents were killed in a bombing, and that was it. That's all I told her. And she sent me to her family's farm outside of the city, a place called Bronowice. Actually, now it's part of Kraków. It's like a suburb. But at the time, it was all farm, still farm but not as much. They have big apartment buildings right there now.

She thought of you as Polish.

Yes. So she sent me to this farm, and I have very warm and nice recollections about that. There was a lot of people, and there was a lot of food. And I was treated well.

What was the name of the people that you stayed with?

Golomp. That's another thing. I didn't know-- after the war, my father never got in touch with them, and I never wrote to them. And all these years, I thought about it.

When you were on this farm, this was in 1943?

'42.

It was still in '42. And how long did you stay on this farm?

Until the end of the war.

OK. So that was about three years then that you were on this farm?

Well, maybe two years. Two years.

And the whole time that you were on the farm, you were perceived as Polish?

Yes. I remember being asked a lot of questions but never saying any more than I was told to say. And when I was back last summer, I met the family, and I asked them-- I said, did you know? And they said, well, we did suspect it. But every time we talked to you, you wouldn't tell us. And you'd get very upset, and so we didn't pursue it any further.

But I didn't know-- I wasn't even sure of their name. Over the years, I had forgotten. And my information was so sketchy, and I was so apprehensive about taking this trip. But a few days prior to the trip, I came-- my husband came across some notes that my father had written, and--

OK. He kept saying, please write everything that's happened to you. And I was a kid, and I really didn't want to do it. So he wrote down everything I told him, and after all these years, I came across these-- you could hardly read. It was written in pencil. But in the notes, it gave the name of the family. Their name was Golomp.

So when I returned to Poland, I went-- I didn't have the address, but I went to the street where the church was and just walked up and down the street and looked at the mailboxes. And I found the name Golomp, and I knocked on the door.

And the woman-- in my terrible Polish, I told her the story, and she said, it sounds like it's the right family. She said that she did not become a member of the family for over 50-- she married one of the sons.

So I returned later that evening when her husband came home, and it was incredible. He remembered me. He, at the time, was about 15 years old. This was his mother who had found me, and she died about five years ago. And they were just incredible. They were just so warm and wonderful, and they didn't know what happened to me. And they felt really badly because they really cared about me. So--

He was a son that lived on the farm then.

He was one of the sons, and the other son lives now in a town about 100 kilometers from Kraków, Żywiec. And we went to see him. One of the days or the following day after I met Jan Golomp. We told him we were going to Auschwitz, and they wanted to take us there. It was very, very ironic that this Polish family was going to take me to Auschwitz.

And so we did that. We went with them. And then from Auschwitz, we went to visit the other brother. He was the older brother, and when he saw me, he was just-- he was just so moved, and he couldn't believe it. And--

Is your memory-- when you were on the farm, do you remember feeling that sense of caring while you were there on the farm from the brothers and the parents?

Mm-hm.

What did you do every day on the farm?

I went to a school, and I went to a religious school. I studied the catechism and--

When you say "school," do you mean in the city or-- you were on a farm, right?

On a farm. It was just very small, very small, not a lot of other-- I just remember a lot of people living there.



It was-- and what I learned was that the farm was owned by the Catholic Church, and the farm helped-- they said they-- they told me they sent food to the ghetto and they sent food to orphanages. And I remember one of the brothers of the-- the woman's brother-in-law, the woman's husband's brother, was the priest. I remember that.

Did you think about-- I'm trying to imagine what it must have been like for a seven-year-old to have any sort of sense of what was happening in a sort of grander scale. Did you have any sense of-- for example, I imagine it might have been hard-- you had a sense that you were Jewish, and yet on some level you knew that you were not supposed to reveal that, that that was wrong.

What was I feeling?

Yes, did you have any sense of what that meant? Was it bad to be Jewish or--

I don't have a sense of any of that at all. I still-- I think I'm-- still have blocked out a lot of those feelings, and it's just gradually, now, certain feelings are returning to me. Just very recently, just a matter of a month or so ago, I got in touch with the fear that I was feeling.

I didn't realize that I was so frightened. But just something happened. at work, and I got very anxious. And then I-- and all of a sudden, it made me remember how anxious and frightened I was feeling as a child, how scared I was. And I have a couple recollections of being really scared.

One was when I was living with the woman in Kraków, the half-Polish, half-German woman.

Volksdeutsche.

Volksdeutsche, right. I remember she would leave me in the apartment by myself, locked in without any lights, and I remember being terrified of that. And the second time I remember a Gestapo kept coming in and searching the apartment and ransacking it and how I felt about that then.

Were you alone then when that happened?

No, I wasn't. Those were the two incidents that I remember really being scared. Then I remember being scared when the war was ending and the Russians were bombing, and I remember being in the outhouse when the bombs were falling and seeing planes going down and things like that.

But I don't remember thinking about my family, where are they. Although I don't know-- are you familiar with est? Well, when I did est, the thing that came up for me was the anger, I guess, of being abandoned, not knowing where-- just being abandoned by everyone and not knowing where I was, what was happening to me.

I was going to ask you if you recall whether that was the way you perceived it. In other words, were you feeling angry at your parents for--

No, I was never in touch with that until the est experience. That's what I was feeling, I had been abandoned. But I never-- at the time, I didn't think of that.

At the time, what did you think was happening?

I think that I had a sense of what was happening, that there was a war, and my parents couldn't help it. And they were-- I really think I understood. I don't know what a small child can understand, but I think I did understand what was happening.

What was the conditions like on the farm?

Just very typically farm stuff, slaughtering animals and making sausages. And we would all eat together around-- on a round table with the food being put in one dish of probably potatoes, put it in the middle, and

everybody had a spoon and then a glass of milk or buttermilk.

So they were poor.

So I was never hungry. I don't remember being hungry. But I don't remember eating some [INAUDIBLE], just potatoes and bread and stuff like that.

And I was told-- when I reunited with the family, I was told of an incident when-- they were not allowed to slaughter their animals, and they did--

Why not?

Oh, I don't know. I don't know why. I guess-- I don't know why. That's a good question. I didn't ask. And one time the Germans came, and we knew there was supposed to be coming. And I told the family that they should offer them whiskey and vodka, and if that's not enough, then they should give me away. They just told a few different stories about me. And

They also presented me with about three pictures. And we all went-- my whole family was there, and when my kids saw my picture when I was like seven years old, they looked at.

Had you ever seen yourself at that age? Did you have any pictures of yourself at that age?

No. So it was really something.

What was your impression, seeing that picture?

I looked very happy and very-- a smile on my face. It wasn't unpleasant, being there.

And they also told me that-- this part of the story I sort of pieced myself together. When my cousin was taken away, her parents, who were also living on Polish papers in Kraków, went to look-- they didn't know what happened to her, and they went-- they sort of started to look around for her, and they found out that she had been taken away by the Germans.

They went to the place where we were living, and they got all my clothes. And they found out that I was where I was, and they sent a package of my things to the farm. And in that package, the family said, were my belongings, and there were-- some of the things were made in Russia.

And that's why they thought that she was part of the Russian underground, but of course, it could have been from when I was there earlier, so. And then, shortly after my uncle came to get me. And the family said that I cried, and I didn't want to go with him.

Was this after the war?

No, this was still during the war. And I didn't want to go with him, and they let me stay with them.

Do you remember this?

No.

Did your uncle survive?

I don't know. I don't know. I never heard anything about him.

Were there any other-- the family consisted of the husband and the wife and how many sons?

There were aunts and uncles, and they weren't all there at the same time. Sometimes they were in the apartment in Kraków. I didn't-- it wasn't like a one-family unit. There were a lot of farm hands. This was a

big farm because-- I don't know how many acres, but it was owned by the church, so it was a pretty big property.

But what kind of farm it? Was it a dairy farm or--

Yeah, there were cows, and there were fields with, I don't know, potatoes. I don't know what else, wheat.

Were you ever tempted to reveal the fact that you were Jewish?

No, no, no. No, that was something that-- I had such a strong sense of-- I don't know. Even if somebody would threaten me with my life, I don't think I would have revealed that. I don't know how that was even told to me that this is what I must do, but somehow I knew that I could never, never reveal that.

You said after the war they had said they suspected. Did they say what they would have done if they had found out for sure? Did they have any--

No, they had very, very-- they were very fine people. They also had a family member that was Jewish that I just found out about, and also, they had-- this woman's mother was taken away by the Germans and killed by the Germans for being a collaborator.

For what?

They considered her working for the underground, so. And also, as I said, there was a Jewish sister-in-law or somebody that they were very fond of, and just judging by the by meeting them after the war, I don't think that they would have denounced me or sent me away or anything like that even if they knew.

So while are were on this farm, you basically always had enough food and clothing, and you weren't--

Yeah, even judging by the picture of myself, it looked like I was dressed well.

OK, so why don't you talk a little bit about when the war ended.

OK. Well, let's see. When the war ended, the family took me to--

You were 10 years old at this time.

Yes. I think they got in touch with my uncle. And then my uncle took me, and my uncle took-- brought me over to the Jewish community in Kraków. And I was there with a lot of other kids.

Let me ask, when your uncle came to pick you, at that point they must have known you were Jewish or maybe-- unless your uncle--

My uncle had non-Jewish identity too.

I see. OK. So I was there, and I don't know whether it was a matter of weeks or months-- no, probably weeks. I was sick. I was very sick. I had jaundice. And a woman who also returned from wherever-- I don't know where she was, but she decided to take all these kids and took them to Zakopane, which is a resort town in the mountains, and opened a home for them.

And I was one of the children. After-- she opened two. One was in Rabka, and one was in Zakopane. And so I went there to live. By the way, she wrote a book. You probably should know about that. Maybe you already do. Her name is Lena Kuchler, and she wrote a book called One Hundred Children. It was published by-- in the '50s by Doubleday.

Is she a Jewish woman?

Yeah.

And she ran--

That should be part of your-- maybe you know about it. But this was a book that was published in-- it's out of print now, but I have it. I have it. It was published in 17 languages, and the story is actually about the children that she took out of Poland and took them to Israel and a little bit about her background.

But I didn't do that because my father returned. What happened was that one day, when I was-- I wrote a letter to my uncle, and someone from the home was going to the city. And he was bringing the letter to the Jewish committee. I guess maybe that's where they picked up all the mail. And my father had returned, and he had been searching for me for a long time and saw the name on the envelope. And that's how he found me. And--

How long was this after the war ended?

Let's see. About six months, something like that, eight months, several months.

Was this place where you were living close to Nowy Targ?

Nowy Targ?

Nowy Targ.

Yes, it is. It's actually maybe 20 miles away, just south of Kraków, close to the Czech border, in the mountains, the Carpathian Mountains. And so my father came, and he was very sick and very weak and couldn't really take me right away. And he rented a room in a nearby place while he recuperated.

Do you remember your first-- do you remember what that first meeting was like?

Yeah, I do. I remember because I remember feigning excitement when-- he was sort of a stranger to me, and it was strange. I remember when I was in the home, my name was still Polish name, Kryśka, which was the nickname for Krystina. And then my father came and started calling me Dzidzia. That was my nickname.

And it was really hard. I hadn't seen him for a long time. It was kind of a-- I guess I was happy, but I wasn't sure what-- there had been so many changes in my life. I didn't-- when I got used to one place, something else happened, and I was just never staying in one place.

At that point, you had lived almost as long without him as you had with him.

Well--

About six years old when you separated from him, right?

Yeah, right, right. So then--

And your mother?

That was it. I never-- I didn't know-- and it wasn't until my father told me-- that my mother was killed. And I don't remember feeling anything at all about that. I remember the least about her.

That's been really hard because I feel angry with myself that I have so few recollections about her.

And then we went to-- we went back to Nowy Targ, and we lived with-- then other people began to return, friends of my father's, and we lived in my grandfather's house. And then it wasn't safe. After the war, it was probably less safe, less safe then. Should we turn that off for a minute?

OK?

Yeah.

OK. What I mean by "less safe" is that the Polish underground was pretty active, and several of my father's friends were killed.

Your father's friends were killed by who?

By the Polish underground. Apparently, the antisemitism was--

So this was a different kind of underground. This was a--

This was the-- right. This was not the same underground that was fighting the Germans. It was the Polish people who continued the antisemitism, wanted to really rid Poland of all the Jews.

Were there pogroms or--

Well, not in the same sense, but I remember that in our house, we slept with guns under our pillows, and there were notes left on our doors saying, "you'll be next" and "get out" and "we don't want Jews here."

Do you remember-- you were like 10 years old at this time?

10.

Do you remember how you interpreted this? After the war, you, at this point, were Jewish, and you were openly Jewish. Did you have concerns about that?

I don't think I really thought about it.

I think that I probably just-- whatever was happening I accepted. That was the way I had lived all my life. Whatever was was.

You didn't question it at that point what it meant.

No, no.

So you were living with your grand--

No, I was living with my father and some of the people that returned, no relatives. No one returned from the family except my father. My mother, my father had told me, had gone to a concentration camp. It's not clear whether she went to Auschwitz or Belzec. So I'm not sure where she died.

My grandfather was denounced by somebody and shot by the Germans. My grandmother was marched with a lot of other people to the cemetery and shot, my uncles also. Everyone was killed. There was no one left.

My maternal grandparents ended up in Siberia, and at that point, we didn't know where. They had not returned yet. We didn't know what happened to them. They did come-- they did come-- my grandmother died there of natural death, and my grandfather and my aunt and uncle returned. The three of them returned. And the other aunt and husband and little boy were killed. Everybody else was killed.

How did how did your father spend the war?

My father was working in a cable factory in Kraków. And then he was sent to Plaszow. That was the other camp. Then also he went to Terezin. He was liberated from Terezin, so essentially he was in Plaszow and Terezin. And he survived.

How old was he? Do you have any recollection of how old he was when the war started?

Yes. He was born in 1904, and so he was 35 when the war began.

OK. So why don't you tell me what your recollections are of after the war? You were living at that point with your father and some other people. And how long were you there?

Until 1947. Well, not in Nowy Targ. We left because it wasn't safe. We went to live in Kraków, and at that point, my grandfather, my aunt and uncle returned, and we lived with them in an apartment in Kraków. And by that time, my father had made a decision that he wanted to leave. And he had a brother in the United States, one brother in--

OK. So he had a brother in the United States, one in Israel. And he asked me where I wanted to live, and I told him United States. And he began to start making plans to come here, and we came in March 1947.

Well, so that was pretty soon after. During those two years after the war, what did you do? Did you go to school?

On and off but not very much. I never lived in a place long enough.

Did you have any friends your age?

No. I didn't have any friends at all.

Do you recall why not? Because--

No, I don't know why not. I don't know.

What did you do every day?

I don't remember. I don't remember. I had friends when I lived on the farm. I also was studying religion, and I was confirmed. I have pictures to show my confirmation.

How did you feel about that?

I didn't feel very much of anything.

I've been asking you a lot about how you've been feeling.

I know. I didn't feel anything.

Perhaps that was the best way to deal with it at the time, it sounds like.

Apparently. Yeah. I just was totally, totally unfeeling, yeah.

You said that when you first saw your father he was like a stranger. How did that your relationship with him develop?

Oh, that was terrific. I was very close to my father. He was just a wonderful man, and it didn't take very long to break the ice. And he was just my friend.

Were you aware at that point that the war had been different for Jews?

Yes. I think intellectually I was aware of everything. I really think I understood what was happening. But emotionally I was just-- totally cut myself off from feeling anything at all.

So you came to the United States in 1947. Where?

To New Jersey. My father's brother was living there, and we also had some cousins in New Jersey. So that's

where we settled. And we came in March on a visitor's visa, which was good for, I think, three months, and then we had to leave. We would have had to leave to go to Venezuela, but in the meantime, my father married, remarried, and he married an American citizen. So we could stay.

Why Venezuela?

That was the condition of his--

But if he had a brother here, couldn't his brother--

No. No, he couldn't. He had to-- it was just a visitor's visa. It was either Venezuela or Cuba. Those were the two places I think we would have had to go to.

And so how was that for you? At that point-- so you lived in New Jersey?

We lived in New Jersey, and then my father met and married his wife. And we went to live with her family in Carteret, New Jersey. And when I first came-- I came in March, end of March, and I started school within a few weeks. I was enrolled in school, and I finished that-- I think I was placed in the fifth grade, which wasn't