

I'm Sylvia Abrams. Today we are interviewing Marcel Weintraub, a Holocaust survivor. The project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section.

Mr. Weintraub, why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself, your name now, your name in Europe, how old you are?

Well, I was born in Poland. Lived in Poland all my life. Family, Jewish family.

How old are you today?

I'm 58.

Where do you live now?

2118 South Belvoir Boulevard.

That's in University Heights?

South Euclid.

South Euclid in Cleveland.

Right.

Do you work?

I'm semi-retired.

What kind of work did you do?

Electrician.

Are you married?

Yes.

Does your wife work?

Oh, part-time, yes.

What's her name?

Telsa.

OK. Do you have children?

I have four children, three boys and a girl.

Tell us their names and what they do today.

The oldest is Frank, then is Cherie, then Jonathan, and William. The three boys, they all graduated from college. Two of them are engineers and they're going for master's degree now.

Cherie is in Texas. She's going for a master's degree. She's going to be a librarian. The youngest one, Willie, is at

Berkeley University. He's going for a master's degree in biology.

You mentioned you have one grandchild?

Yes, Jonathan has a baby, seven months old. It's a boy. His name is Mikey. And he's working for the Navy.

It sounds like you have a very lovely family and a nice life today. Let's go back in time to the time of World War II. Why don't you tell us where you were born and what you remember before the beginning of the war? Where were you born?

I was born in Krakow. I went to school there. I didn't quite finish grammar school. I had one more year in 1939. The war broke out.

How big was Krakow in 1939?

About a quarter of a million inhabitants.

How many of them were Jews?

I think, if I recall, it's about 75,000. It seems a little, I don't know my estimate, where I got it. But it seemed to me it was quite a nice Jewish population there, about 75,000 if I remember correctly.

What did the area of the town look like where you grew up?

Well, mainly big buildings, big, I mean, four flight-- what you say. I forgot already.

Apartments?

Apartment buildings, yeah. Four floors most of them were four floors, three floors. There was no elevators in them. Running water we had. What else? Toilets, most of them were in the hallways. They were not modern to any imagination, but livable.

Did your family live in one of these apartments?

Yes.

Tell us a little bit about your family. How many brothers and sisters were in the family?

Well, I had two sisters. One was older than me a year. She just got out of school.

The other one was younger a year. She was still going to school before the war. Then when the war broke out, there was no school.

What did your family do to make a living?

We had a restaurant, a bar. Bar [NON-ENGLISH] was the name of it on Dlugiej ulice. It's a long street. Making a living.

Your father ran the restaurant and the bar?

Yes, yes.

Did your mother work also?

She used to come into the restaurant and help out. Then we had two girls there. It was a nice place.

Would you describe your family as well-to-do, comfortable?

Comfortable, yeah.

Did you have to help the family?

No, no. I didn't like drunks. I never cared to be among-- to go in a bar. That was not my desire. I hardly ever came up there and see what's going on. Didn't drink and it didn't impress me.

How would you describe your family's life? Who made the major decisions?

I think my mother. She was a quite an intelligent lady. Well, she used to like to read books.

Now cheder, I didn't like. For one reason or another, I still didn't find out. Matter of fact, I cannot read Jewish. They applied a lot of their efforts for me to go to cheder and learn something.

Well, not exactly with a beard, my father did not have a beard. Religious? I think we had a kosher house, if I remember correctly.

You know, if you're a kid, 13 or 14, you don't care if there's two sets of dishes or one. You need a knife, you grab a knife. I guess that's what I did. But we probably had milchig and fleishig.

How did you get along with your parents and your sisters?

Great. OK.

How did the family get along with friends and neighbors?

Very good, yeah, very good. Our house was always an open house. My friends used to stop, and their friends, and my sisters' friends. It was an open house.

Were there non-Jewish as well as Jewish friends?

Yes, yes, yeah. A matter of fact, in the building, it was quite a few of them, maybe half and half.

What was a typical day like for the family?

Well.

What time did you get up?

Before school, we used to get up and sit down and have breakfast, or a roll and butter, fresh rolls from the corner store. It was right in the same building. We had a mleczarnia, it's a dairy store. We used to go and get four or five rolls, or a bagel, or a horn.

Every day, it's the same routine. Some days it was eggs for breakfast. Most of the time, I think a roll and butter and a cup of coffee or cacao or chocolate.

Then for lunch, I don't remember. I know we didn't have McDonald's. But what we had in school, I guess we stayed in school till about 2 o'clock. After when we got home, probably a sandwich or something then.

Or did we have dinner? I don't remember. It's been so long. But we had a meal every day. You know, a cooked meal at home.

There was never any leftovers. It's funny. It strikes me so funny between today. I guess because there was no way to save something, no refrigeration.

I don't think we cooked to have some leftovers. It seemed like it always worked out. It's funny. Today I can see it, it's so different. There's always something left over. We never had any.

So your mother cooked just enough, the family to finish that day?

She knew the exact. She had the dipstick for everybody.

You mentioned that the family was not real religious but you think that they kept kosher. What do you remember about holidays, Jewish and non-Jewish holidays?

I used to go to shul with my father and my mother whenever the holidays came up. Dressed up, and we always had a clean shirt hanging on the chair. Something new for every holiday, always that way, the whole family, I think. I don't know if the girls went or not.

Do you remember any special holiday celebrations?

Yeah, all of them. I remember the celebrations. The holiday, if they would just drop me from 100 years behind or from a different country, smell that aroma of the holiday. There was something to a holiday, something different than a Monday or a Wednesday. That spirit, that holiday atmosphere existed. It was there.

Did the family belong to a synagogue?

My father went. We always went to the same temple. Now if he belonged or not, I don't know. I imagine so. Never asked my father do you belong.

I don't know. Chairs, we didn't have any. There was very few chairs. Everybody stood up there. If it was Yom Kippur, they stood up.

There was nowhere to sit down. I don't think that was allowed. You were supposed to pray standing up, I think.

Like, in the Catholic churches, they didn't have any chairs. Everybody came in there and they kneeled. That was the purpose, I think, of it. I think in our temples, maybe they had some.

There was a temple, progressive or whatever, modern, I think they had. Yes, they had benches because I stopped after the war in that temple. In 1975, I went back, and I stopped at the temple. There was a minyan there. That's all, all the gentlemen.

I looked at the temple. They had seats. I imagine some people must have been sitting in other temples. But most of the temples, the shtiebels, you know, they were in such a manner that they had the Sefer Torah there. The rest is probably a couple of benches there for the hazzan when he gets tired of screaming and sat down. But the rest of the people stood up most of the time.

You went there with your father on the different holidays?

Yes.

How about the role of politics? Did Zionism or any political organizations play a part in the family's life?

Yes, most like it. Yeah, matter of fact, I belonged to Akiba right before the war.

So that was a Zionist group that you belonged to?

Yes. My sister, I think, belonged, too. Yeah.

Did socialism play any part in the family's life?

Socialism. I don't believe so.

Was your family active in any other political organizations that you knew of?

No.

How about other kinds of community organizations? Were you aware of any others?

I don't know. My father was a veteran from World War I. That's how he got the license for the liquor store, actually. I don't know if he ever kept in touch with any of his constituents, with the veterans or not. I don't know.

I knew that he used to he used to like to gamble. Occasionally, he went, there was a cafe on na Grodzkiej, That's the street, the name of the street, Grodzka ulica. Was the cafe on the second floor.

He used to go out there occasionally. I've never been there. What he did, what kind of friends, I imagine he had friends there. Otherwise, he wouldn't have gone. I don't think he drank.

So that was the one place you knew that he went.

Yeah, yeah.

What was the main language spoken at home?

Polish.

Were there any other languages spoken?

Yiddish, yeah.

Did you speak Yiddish as well or just Polish?

No, I didn't speak. I think I was really exposed to Yiddish in the camp where I had to.

But at home the family spoke Polish?

Yeah. But I talked the language. I could talk. Maybe not fluently, but I could talk and understand well.

What kind of books were in your house?

Books, Poland was poor in literature. We had private libraries, private libraries. If you wanted to borrow a book, you had to pay a fee.

First, you had to sign up to a library. The libraries were small, a room, something, I don't know, 40 feet by 60 feet was enough to have a library. There was quite a few of them.

Then in the schools, we had libraries, but not like you see libraries today in America. So usually, somebody borrowed a book and you borrowed it off of the person. We had a few books in the house, too. Yeah.

Do you remember what particular kinds they were?

I don't know. We had some Jewish books. I don't know. Jewish, I cannot read. No.

I didn't like the rabbi. I guess I never applied myself to learn Jewish. I don't know why. I'm sorry, really. I know I didn't want to learn German. I just couldn't.

Till today, after all I went through, I can understand the German. But I just would not-- it doesn't come out right.

What kind of entertainments did the family go to? Was there a theater in the neighborhood?

Yeah, we had Jewish theater. Matter of fact, I went-- it must have been the last year before the war. I never wanted to go to a Jewish theater. I was not interested. But one time I went there.

I still remember the name of it, a matter of fact, Abhiman Zeizig. I don't remember the artist. It was in the open air under the sky, an open air theater. It was very good.

Did you ever get to go to any concerts? Were you in any museums?

Museums, yeah, we went from school. We had all kind of excursions, go to museums. I went to visit the Wawel. It's the king's palace from, I don't know, 16, 17, 18th century.

So you were in all those big public buildings through school programs and trips?

Yeah, yeah.

Did the family ever go on vacation?

My mother used to go on vacation, yeah, in the summer. Where did we go? Jaworzna, I think. I'm not sure now what's the name, to a farmer, and we stayed there. I remember one year I got bit by a turkey on the farm. But we used to go on vacation.

So you used to spend the summers there?

Yeah.

OK. Let's talk a little bit about you personally. What do you remember about yourself? What did you look like in those years?

I don't know. But it seemed to me I looked-- the German appraised their Herrenvolk as blonde. I think that would help me. I looked more like an 18 carat German and the rest of them were 14 karat to me.

That's how I looked. I think that was very helpful during the war. That helped me a lot. the

I never wanted to wear a band. Some of the kids and older people say, well, you're ashamed to be a Jew or what? I said, no, I'm not ashamed.

I just am not going to let myself tattoo by the Germans to wear a band. I didn't do anything. There was no reason for me to wear any insignia, whatever they come out with.

Were you healthy as a child?

I imagine so.

You don't remember being sick?

No.

Well, yes, I was sick one day. My skin turned yellow all over.

But there was no doctor. I don't remember what the hell happened. What they call that yellow?

The jaundice?

The jaundice, yeah, from malnutrition or undernutrition. I don't know what.

That was already during the war or before the war?

During the war.

But before the war, you had been a healthy child.

Yes, yeah, pretty healthy specimen.

How about your interests? Did you have any hobbies or talents before the war that you were interested in?

Nothing to talent to speak about, just an average kid interested in sports and girls and everything else, the whole surrounding.

You mentioned that you got to go almost to the last grade in school before the war. What was the name of the school you attended?

Tadeusza Kosciuszki.

This was the public school?

Yes. A grammar school. Yes, public school, grammar school. It's not like we have here, high schools, you know, eighth grade, and you're out.

So you got to go through the seventh grade before the war?

Yes.

You mentioned you went to cheder.

Yeah.

Where was the cheder?

The cheder is a couple of houses away in a backyard somewhere, in the court. There was a rabbi. The kids used to come there at four o'clock and be taught by a tall rabbi. I don't remember his name.

But he wanted to teach, really. I was not interested. I don't know why.

So how many years did you attend the cheder?

Many years, but I didn't learn anything.

So you went to both the schools until the war broke out and then you didn't go to either one after that?

Either one.

Who were your friends up to that point?

Some of the names I remember. Mietek Schiff was one Jewish kid. Henek, I don't remember his last name, Henek. It's another, Zigmund. I don't remember his last name.

Romek, I don't remember his last name. Scharf, Henek Scharf, Henek Scharf, matter of fact, he was on the other side of ghetto, too, for a while. I'd see him occasionally.

Were your friends Jews and non-Jews or--

Yes.

It was a mixed group?

Mixed, yes.

What did you enjoy doing together?

Oh, talk. We usually had to make our own games or entertainment. We couldn't buy anything. There was no toys for sale, like you had today.

We had little games. Stood on the corner, mainly, and talked. I had fun.

Would you say until the war broke out that you had led a sheltered life?

A sheltered life, I would think so, yes. Yeah.

At that point, had you made any plans for the future, what you were planning to do?

No, I didn't make any plans. Even during the war, I never made any plans. I knew it was bad for me. I tried to pick the other side. A matter of fact, I used to tell my parents not to go along with the Germans, not to do whatever they tell you to do. Don't do it. Then you will save yourself.

How do you remember anti-Semitism in those days? You were 13 and 14 years old. Do you remember much about it before the war?

Yes. There was plenty of it. There was plenty.

They had Endeki, one organization. They called themselves Endeki. Then they had another one, Falanga. I wonder if that's the same Phalanges what we have in Lebanon today. We tried to support them. The name was Falanga. They had all kind of slogans.

I still remember their Falanga walczy, Falanga czuwa, Falanga zydow z Polski usuwa. Falanga is fighting, Falanga is watching over, and Falanga expels the Jews. Their slogan, their motto, or whatever you call it, it was prevalent.

Were there any particular anti-Semitic incidents or attitudes toward you personally or your family that you knew of before the war?

No, not personally. No.



Did your family ever discuss anti-Semitism in the household?

Yes. We used to.

What did your parents say about these things?

They were not gravely concerned about them. We knew they exist. But they were not too much concerned about it. It was livable yet at the times.

Let's go to the beginning of World War II. When were you yourself first aware there was a war?

Well, when I was first aware? I don't know. I think I read once, I ran across something, a book. It stuck in my mind. I read once a phrase, if I remember it yet, Ukrainian [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. That must have been a year before the war or during the war.

That meant that in the country, a somber night fell over. It won't rhyme. In Polish, it rhymes. In the nations, there is a desire and lust for war.

I couldn't understand it. It just didn't make sense to me. But at the same time, I didn't forget it. So it must have left something in my brain there to think of it.

It seemed that it was there, but invisible, so invisible. But I could feel it. It was kind of a despair in the country. People walked around and they didn't know what tomorrow will bring.

Once the war started, how did your life change? You had mentioned you had to leave school.

Yeah.

What else happened?

Well, start getting hungry right away. In the first four days, I think the war broke out on a Friday, the Germans were in the city already on Wednesday. The whole thing turned around in just a few hours, in 40 hours.

It's unbelievable. All of a sudden, the stores in Poland were small. A week later, you couldn't buy anything in the stores. You couldn't find nothing. Most of the stores were closed.

You had the money. You couldn't buy anything. But then the black market started coming. The main effect is the hunger and the oppression you could see.

The first day when they came in, I remember the streetcars didn't run. But somebody came from one side of the town, walked, it was not that far, and told me there was two Jewish boys killed at the Rynek Podgorski. It's right now, oh, five blocks away, two Jewish boys.

We didn't know much about the Germans at that time. We knew that it's a dictatorship, but we didn't know that much about them until they showed their claws and their teeth. As soon as they came in, they showed it all right. But we actually didn't know.

So I finally ran out there to see, find out for myself if it's true. I think I came to the street there. People were walking by and looking. There's two guys laying there.

That's the first time I ever seen two dead people. Up till that day, I have never seen people that are dead, or shot, killed. So that was the beginning.

Did you have discussions with your family about what was happening?

Well, we did have discussions. Father said well, this is just part of the war. It's not that bad. It will get better. The war won't last that long.

Every day, we kept hearing the same thing happen and worse things. Then when they came in, within a week, they start bekanntmachung, all kind of rules for the Jews. You could see them walking around, an oppressor.

It's hard to comprehend when your freedom is taken away what freedom actually means, what it is. It's not tangible. But when you don't have it, you know that you don't have it.

Was your father able to keep operating the bar?

Well, we had to close for a while. Then I had an aunt in Prokocim. That's about 15 kilometers away. Her husband was not Jewish. So we decided it would be a good idea if they want the bar, to run it, we'll give it to them and let them run it.

So we went over. We could walk at that time, in the beginning, first, just the weeks after the Germans got in. We gave it to them, and they took it over and ran it.

In their name?

There was no name above. There was no name above, just Bar [NON-ENGLISH]. The whiskey, the beer was there, the kitchen was there, everything, just personnel.

I don't remember whatever happened to the girl who cooked. I don't know. I think she came back. It was the same girl. I don't recall that exactly. But he took it over and he ran it.

As the war progressed, what happened to the family?

Well, we stayed for a while. But every day I was afraid to stay at home myself. I used to say, well, there was no other way. Everybody cannot split. The father can't go one place and the mother and the two sisters.

So the family kept together. But I was very much afraid to stay at home. They say as long as you on the street or not concentrate in your own place, you're a sitting duck there. I knew what the Germans were up to.

Then there were all kind of demands they had, to give up the radios first, I think, then the fur coats. Then bring them, not only give it up, you have to bring it to them.

So I said that's the silliest thing to do. Smash it. Break it up.

I was not a man yet. So the family actually did not listen to me. But it seemed like I knew more than they did. So whatever they come up with, everybody is taking back the things. Seems like collaborating with your enemy, but that's what happened all over.

After that, they start coming out with stricter laws. The streetcar was divided for Jews and non-Jews at the time. Then they took that away.

There was only for Germans and no Germans. The Jews were completely excluded. They couldn't ride the streetcars.

Then Hitler came out. He said he's going to destroy. How did he put it in a word? I cannot think of it.

Ausradieren. I never found out what it meant, but I know it's a nasty word. Ausradieren he said. He's going to Ausradieren the Jews. So I knew what he was up to. As I knew he was a dictator, he's going to do something what is very, very radical.

At this time, the family and you were able to stay in the same apartment? You were still there?

Well, most of the time I was out in the street.

So you were out in the streets most of the day?

Yeah, I was most of the time.

Did you come back to sleep? Did you come back to sleep there?

Sometimes, yes, I came back to sleep.

What were you doing when you were out on the streets?

Trying to find out somewhere to go underground against the Germans. I was patriotic rather for my country. I would have. But there was nothing going on at that time.

If there was anything, I didn't know about it. It was very secretive. Secretive, is that right? Am I saying?

Yeah. In the beginning, I guess, there was not too many partisans forming yet. Well, in the same time, Hitler said it's a blitzkrieg. I knew a blitz is a lightning. So I said, well, it'll be on and off. So we didn't know what to expect and how to fight them.

You mentioned that people in the Jewish community, as the laws got stricter, were complying, and you didn't agree with this.

Yeah.

Do you recall any plans to deal with the situation at all that were discussed?

Did I?

Yeah, that you heard either in your family or among people in the community?

I said, whenever they ask you to go to work, don't go to work for them. They were afraid. Everybody was afraid. I said, don't go.

Every block or every apartment house had to supply so many people to the arbeitsamt, to the Jewish community so they had people available to go clean the streets. I said nobody cleaned the streets before the war. You didn't clean the streets before the sidewalks.

Why do they want to do? Why do they? What is the necessity now? We didn't do it before the war. That doesn't mean it was something right or wrong.

Every custodian around his house used to shovel the sidewalk. It can be done today. I said why do we have to clean the streets? It's unnecessary. They just want to kill us. They just want to work us to death.

People didn't understand. They volunteered. Matter of fact, I said, I'm going to go for someone.

There was a lot of rich people didn't want to go. So they paid somebody. So I took the zettel, a piece of paper, and I went to the Jewish community. Here I am.

OK. 25, you go with this guy. I don't know where. Most of the time it was just unnecessary, just to work you to death.

So I worked for an hour and ran away. Most of the time I outrun them. There was nothing constructive.

Let's talk about you as the war progressed. Did you stay in Krakow?

Yes, I stayed in Krakow. I stayed in Krakow on and off. Then finally when they made the ghetto-- before they made the ghetto, I think-- I was in another camp. I just couldn't stay in the outside anymore.

Oh, yeah. In the restaurant, I used to come in in the restaurant occasionally when I was very hungry and I couldn't get anything to eat in the outside. Money I couldn't make.

I couldn't make enough to buy a piece of bread. That was the most valuable thing to me, or a pair of shoes. That was the only worries I had.

Can I smoke?

You can.

All right. So in the restaurant one day, a German comes in, civilian, dressed as a civilian. He is talking. My aunt could understand some Jewish and German. So he talked to her. They got friendly.

Then he told her what he's doing here. She used to sell on the meat or bread or flour or anything, vegetables. She used to buy in the black market.

The guy used to come in, the farmer. He used to come in the back door in the kitchen, unload. Here, I got pork or veal or whatever. It'll cost you so much. And they used to pay the price for it so we can serve in the restaurant. People evidently had money to come out and eat the dinner.

So this German got acquainted with my aunt and told her what he's doing. He said he used to come in the back door. The Germans had special stamps, special stores for them. But evidently, he didn't have enough yet. They didn't feed the Germans that well either, I guess.

So he was an engineer. Hans Schneider was his name. He had a hochtief [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. High up and low down somewhere [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH].

So my aunt asked him if he would give me a job. I said, well, that'll be good. I'll have something to do. He's got an office.

So I said yeah, sure. I could not understand German, not the dirty words, not the good words. I just couldn't understand. I didn't want to understand them.

I hated them so much. I don't know if I hated-- yeah, I imagine so. I did.

So I didn't want to understand German. I could have never learned that. Any other language, I would have no problems with. But Germans, I just couldn't stomach.

So anyhow, I come in. He said, OK, you're going to work here with this and this guy. There was one Jewish guy, an engineer.

His name was-- oh, I had to worry right away. I can't go as Weintraub. So I changed my name there. I think I worked by the name of Marian Rachinski.

You took a Polish name?

Yes, very Polish name. A matter of fact, there was a Rachinski in London. That was the government outside Poland

formed itself, but the people had run away, the big shots, I guess, in the government. One of the government officials, his name was Rachinski. I didn't know about it. But that's what I picked.

But anyhow, made me out of paper right away. I had to have a paper so that I worked for a German beneficial place. So they used to catch on the streets. In the ghetto, they used to catch to work. Outside the ghetto, they caught the Polacks.

So I made out the paper he gave me, then put the stamp on with the eagle. I was all kosher.

So in that office there was a Jewish. Whether they had the ghetto or not, I don't remember. But anyhow--

You think this was before the ghetto or not sure?

I'm not sure now. But there was a guy by the name of Springer. He used to come in with the band every day.

And you weren't wearing an armband?

No. He didn't know that I was Jewish. No, the funniest part, one day in camp-- when we were already in Plaszow, when they liquidated the ghetto, they said there is no more ghetto, just the camp-- one day I'm in the camp. This Mr. Springer comes up to me.

He looks. He said, do I know you from somewhere? I said I don't know. I didn't recognize the guy.

But then it dawned on me. He said yes. Did you work? Are you Jewish?

He said it's unbelievable. I cannot believe it. He just didn't believe it. I said, yes.

So how long were you in this German's office, then?

Oh, I was in the German's office for quite a while, about six months, I guess.

What did they have you do, because you were a kid?

Oh, well, I was doing the opening the mail for the engineer. He had an apartment, also. He took Mrs. Zabner's apartment. Mrs. Zabner was a well-to-do Jewish lady. He took her apartment.

The bedrooms he converted to a-- no, not the bed-- the living room, I think, he converted to an office. The bedrooms, he had the kitchen, the bedrooms there. He left the one room.

Then finally he threw her out. He said now Mrs. Zabner, you must go. He said I need that room.

So finally, he threw her out and got the whole first floor. So he had a lot of projects. He worked only for the German government.

How old did they think you were while you were working there?

How what?

How old did they think you were when you were working there?

I don't know. I think I added a year in the camps, I think. I'm not sure now. I was not the smallest kid, but I'm not big today, you know. So I was not a big kid, by no means.

But what I used to do is open the mail for him. Once in a while, sneak in the kitchen and eat up his cookies, what he brought in, you know, through the office.

Then also the girl what used to clean the offices, we had two girls before in the restaurant. Then during the war, the times were bad so we had only one. So Tosia, one of our girls worked for him. He paid her, a big, nice, plump girl. So she knew me well.

Then later on, we had, let's see, I don't know. We used to spend about 11,000 zlotys a week for the payroll. So I used to help out. I had a little adding machine with levers, you know. Crank it six times, and 71 or so. He taught me how to operate it.

There was another kid doing the payroll. So we both owned. Then on Friday, I used to go out, get the money from the bank, and stuff it in the envelopes. So I was doing work in there.

Well, after work, when I finished there at the office, I used to go to the restaurant, to our restaurant's back door and get a meal. So I was getting more desperate for food. Things were getting tougher all the time.

A loaf of bread in the beginning used to cost five zlotys. Then it went up to 10 zlotys. Then it went up to 20. You couldn't buy it.

So I just couldn't afford. I couldn't steal so much. I didn't know how. I just didn't have enough. So I used to sneak in in the back door and get a meal and run out again.

But you didn't stay with your parents while you were working there?

No, no.

Because you had this false name and papers.

Right, yeah.

Where did you sleep during this time?

Well, my aunt, I think, also found me a place in the [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH], somewhere, oh, about four or five miles I had to walk every night. You had to be registered. In any place you lived, you had to be registered.

So she had an old lady, and there was another couple sleeping there. There was two or three beds, I think. She gave me a bed to sleep in there, and I paid her, I think, a zloty a night. That was not too bad.

But the custodian used to bother me when I'm going to register. So I used to bring him a pack of cigarettes a week. A pack of cigarettes was expensive, but I used to steal it in the store.

Well, finally, I couldn't steal that much. The demands were, it's like being on drugs. I run out my resources already.

So I had to go and look for other places where to sleep. So I used to go in the ghetto occasionally. I knew all the basements in the ghetto, and I could sleep there.

So when was the ghetto established? The ghetto was established while you were working in this German office?

I think so.

The ghetto, this must have been, by then, '41, '42?

'41, '42, somewhere.

So that is, you're 16 about this point?

Right.

That's when they established the ghetto, approximately.

Yeah.

OK. Then so then you would sleep in basements in the ghetto?

In basements in the ghetto, yeah. I found a place where they had a lot of feathers, chicken feathers and bales. I used to sleep in there, get in. There was nothing to get into the ghetto. It wasn't that hard. To get out was much harder.

Were you in any contact with your parents during this time?

Yes, yeah, occasionally.

Were they still in their apartment once the ghetto was made?

No, no. They left before-- no, wait a minute.

OK.

They left before the ghetto was established. They were afraid to go into the ghetto, so they left.

OK. Tell us about this. What happened to your parents, then?

Well, they left one day to Rzeszów. My grandfather, evidently, my mother's father, came from that part of Poland.

That's a little north of Kraków?

Yes. Yeah, about 150 miles away. But they left to a small town there. They said people didn't know what. They were so confused. People didn't know what they were doing and what was better for them.

So your parents decided to go there when they heard that they were going to make a ghetto in Krakow?

Yes, yeah. So they took the train and all their possessions, what they had, very little.

Did your sisters go with them?

Yes, evidently they went with them. Everybody went with them. Yes.

Were you able to keep in contact with them when they went?

No, not when they were away. No.

But you knew they were there where your grandfather was from?

Right, right.

And you were still working for the German?

Yes, I was still working for the German. Till one day, I used to come in in the restaurant. Then from the kitchen, I would sneak out in the front by the cash register.

We had a guy by the cash register by the name of Galuszka. My uncle got him. I was a friend of his. Then they had the bars were for [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] only for Germans, for Germans and others. So the bar was for Germans and others. The Germans used to come in there at night and raise their voices, sing their ugly songs.

I'd get sick and tired. It's worse than rock and roll. As much as I love music, it's just some music really made me forget about being hungry or not having things what I should have. Some melodies were kind of stimulating.

But anyhow so that Galuszka, the cashier, I noticed one day he was ringing up something on the cash register with big buttons on the handle. Well, we got along fine with him. He knew me. He knew that I was Jewish.

He knew that you were using these papers to work for the Germans?

I don't think he knew that. Yes, he knew. Because he wrote the letter to the engineer that the guy by Rachinski is Jewish. As I opened the letters, I never looked at any letters.

But that time, I said this letter there's something interesting about. I started reading. I started reading it, I said I better not waste too much time. I put it in my pocket and went to the men's room and I read it.

As much as I don't understand, I can make out two letters when they with the A, with the apostrophe on top, or a U. Those letters to me are something like hieroglyphs. I never seen.

So what happened?

So I took the letter in my pocket. The signature was Egoiste. I thought uh oh, my ground is getting hot there. So I didn't know what to do. But I can't come back anymore.

I just went out saying I'm quitting. I just left.

So we'll pick up on the second tape with what happens to you now, after you're done working for the Germans. You'll tell us. You're 16 years old. You're on your own. Your parents have gone to a town to the north. You're sleeping in the ghetto basements.

Right.

OK. So now we'll have to find out what happens to you next when we get back after we take the break.

OK.