

Interview with Michael Lin
February 27, 2000

Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: This is the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Michael Lin**, conducted by **Gail Schwartz** on February 27th, 2000, at the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum. This is tape number one, side **A**. What is your full name?

Answer: My full name is **Michael Abba Lin**.

Q: And what was your name at birth?

A: My name at birth was **Mordechai Abba Lin**.

Q: Where were you born and when were you born?

A: I was born in **Riga**, September 14th, 1936.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about your family. How long had your family been in **Riga**?
How far back can you trace your family?

A: Yeah, but I'm not -- I don't want to say nothing, not yet, yeah. Maybe we'll ask about **Latvia**?

Q: All right.

A: As far as I can remember, my grandparents were born in **Latvia** in eight -- 19th century. And my father and my mother, they came to **Riga** in 1934, and had a wedding over there and got married and lived in **Riga**.

Q: What were your parents' names?

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A: My father's name was **Abba Lin** and my mother's name **Kia Lin**, born **Hayman**.

Q: And what kind of work did your father do?

A: My father, he was born in the small village called **Babovka**, and in the beginning he -- he studied in **Yeshiva**. But then he decided to drop it and became a tailor and when he came to **Riga** he established a small business. Yeah, a small business.

Q: Did you -- do you have any siblings, any brothers or sisters?

A: I have a half si -- a half sister. She was born in -- after the war, in 1946.

Q: Did you have a large extended family in **Riga**, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents?

A: Yes, I -- I had a -- a large extended family in **Latvia** actually, because my grandfather had 15 brothers and sisters, and of course, i-in those times, half of them died early. But --

Q: This is your grandfather on your father's side?

A: On my father -- oh, yeah, my grandfather on my father's side. But I-I have known three of his sisters and one brother, I have known personally.

Q: Tell me where you lived in **Riga**. Were you in the center of the town, or on the outskirts?

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A: My father came over from **Barovka**, they rented an apartment in **Sardonikova** Street. **Sardonikova** Street was in the -- the so-called **Moscow [indecipherable]**.

And no -- how is it to say maybe less than a mile from the center of the city, because **Riga** was then a small town, only 300,000 people. And yeah, this was most -- a lot of Jews li -- used to live there and later it became a ghetto over there, so you should know the area, about. It was --

Q: How would you describe the neighborhood, was it a middle class neighborhood?

A: I would mostly describe it as a working class neighborhood. Across the street they had -- it was not a church. In Russian language it was called **bougadena**, where they used to house poor people, you know. And I would say working class like shop owners or factory workers or small business people. Like my father was, yeah.

Q: How did your parents meet each other?

A: Well, my parents met each other -- you -- the villages where they used to live are very close to each other, about six kilometers, I think, or maybe less from each other. So one village was called **Skundaliena** and the other was called **Barovka**. And they probably knew each other much earlier than -- before they got married.

Q: And did your mother work?

A: I -- I want to ask -- no, just ask me a person [**tape break**] Okay.

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Q: And so can you tell us a little bit about your mother's family and background.

A: Okay. My mother was born actually in **Daugavpils** in a hospital, but it was six kilometers from the village called **Skundaliena** as I mentioned. And my grandmother, her name was -- maiden name, **Kuperschmidt**, right? And my grandfather's name is **Hayman**. So where they got married, they had a small farm, let's say maybe 18 acres, a country store and a few cars, maybe seven cars and they possess some land. It -- it's unusual, I think for the Jews to possess land, right, in **Latvia**. So they considered themselves more or less well -- well off, right? And so my mother actually, since her childhood, she worked in the farm and worked in the store and worked in the office, kept the books -- bookkeeping with her sister and older brother. Her older brother went to **Daugavpils** and then became a -- a businessman. And she and her older sister and their mother, they -- they ran the business. And my -- on my father's side, my father was a blacksmith and so they were poorer, much poorer. And my -- you see, my mother was a -- of the so called -- maybe they considered themselves intelligentsia or something. So she married late, because she was very choosy, I think. So -- but she realized that my father was a good man and had a -- a head on his shoulders, so I guess it's how -- what happened.

Q: How religious were your parents?

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A: This is a peculiar situation because my mother was never a religious woman, and my father was very religious. I remember that on holidays my grandfather used to send a -- a **kishen**. We're talking in Yiddish, but it's a pillow in English, with a -- with a chicken, you know, ga -- slaughtered chicken. I do -- even remember the blood in the **kishen** and the -- a-and the feathers, you know. And my -- my father tried to have a Jewish house, kosher, all of this, but my mother always resisted and sometimes my father was take -- would take a -- a knife my mother used to cut butter and then use it for meat, and throw it out the window. And this what the situation was. You know, so there was a -- you know, I would say, a **contrarian** interest. Of how you call it?

Q: A little disagreement, contention?

A: Yeah, yes, yes. [**indecipherable**] that again?

Q: What language did your parents speak to each other and to you?

A: To each other they spoke Yiddish, but to me they always spoke Russian, and we lived in a -- in **Latvia**. Is -- but -- but in -- in those areas, they came from **Latgalia** where people mostly spoke Russian language more than Latvian, because it was close to Polish border too. So they spoke Polish, my mother spoke German and my father, of course, spoke Hebrew and Latvian and that. And my father served in Latvian army too, when he was a young man.

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Q: Did your parents feel that they were Latvian first, or Jewish first? What do you think?

A: No, it's hard for me to tell because I was very young, but I can imagine that when you live in a bu -- how it is, I -- of course they're Jews. F-Fir -- first and foremost they're Jewish people, but you're loyal to your country where you live. It's -- it's why he served in the army, and dealt with the -- in business and everything, it's -- it -- and he stayed, even -- he's -- his brother actually left for **Palestine** in 1934 to become a **chalut**, but we stayed in -- now I want to turn off and I want to say something, but I don't know what to say. Turn off, please. **[tape break]** What -- where did we stop?

Q: Well, you were talking about this organization.

A: Yes, you see, in **Latvia** there was an organization called **[indecipherable]** and this organization actually an-anybody could belong to -- to this organization, but -- and my mother and my aunt, and probably my grandmother, I'm not sure, belonged to this organization, **[indecipherable]** just was a pure Latvian organization. I would call it guards, and because you were a property per-person, you should have belonged to this, especially in rural areas, that's what I want to say.

Q: An-And did they belong?

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A: Yeah, they did belong to this organization. Of course, during the Soviet times it was forbidden and we'd not -- you wouldn't mention that you belonged to this organization, but if a -- as a matter of survival you would like to belong to this organization, my mother did.

Q: Did it require her to do anything?

A: No, it didn't require, probably only paid dues, and you know, probably only that.

Q: What are your very first memories?

A: I would say my fir -- very first memories, th-the coming of Soviet army in 1940.

Maybe before I have some memories, but in 1940 I -- I remember standing by school number 56 [indecipherable] Soviet times it was number 56, and I saw

Soviet tanks coming off **Moscowyella**, it's a street called **Moscowyella** in **Latvia**.

And I remember the small tanks, yeah. And where they parked, they were parked -- there was a -- a street called **Zilnaw iela** where the great synagogue used to stand, that they burned it. There was a cor -- small corner between **Lacspiesa iela** and **Zilnaw iela** and all the -- right there there was a corner where the Soviet tanks stood. And this I remember vividly.

Q: Did you -- of course, you were born in 1936, so you were so very young, but before that time of the Soviet tanks, do you have any recollection of your parents

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talking about difficult times, hard times, a man named **Hitler**? Anything that brings back that memory?

A: I can tell you something about [indecipherable] I'll tell you, my father was a small businessman and about maybe seven, 10 people used to work for him in the shop, tailor shop, and he made the suits for -- for a company. So after the Soviets came, of course he had to relinquish his business and what is interesting, that the Soviet government, they hired him to work for them in the army, to make uniforms, I think, and th -- and he was making good money, they paid very well.

Q: He was working as a civilian in the army?

A: Yes, as a civilian, he was working in the Soviet army as a civilian, yes. And the - the former, his employees -- you know, in -- in capitalist countries the employee not -- not always is satisfied with his salary or something. So they would -- before the Soviets came in, they knew they would come in, they said oh, when they come in, you -- you will not feel so good. After they came in, my father was hired by the Soviets and the workers made so little that they would meet my father and say, I -- how good it was when we worked for you, in comparison what we make now when we work for the Soviets.

Q: Let's get back to your memory of when you were four years old, and you saw these -- the tanks coming in.

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A: Yes. [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah, what -- can you describe -- what -- what your thoughts were?

A: I-I -- I couldn't have any thoughts for desse -- was too young to, I was not even -
- 1940 I was under four years old, still. But I remember it very well, and --

Q: Do you remember being frightened?

A: No, I was never frightened, I couldn't understand that actually, frightened or not,
th-this is a -- not the -- the sense that I had.

Q: What kind of school were you going to at four years old?

A: At four years old I didn't go to no school.

Q: Oh, you were just standing on the corner.

A: Oh yeah, I standing with my mother. I was standing on the corner and watching
this passing by, that's it. It's a -- it's a natural thing because you know, something
new.

Q: Did she say anything to you, that you remember?

A: No, I can't remember that she -- she -- she told me, no.

Q: And then when is your next memory?

A: My next memory is when the war started. In 1941, it was June. And I think -- I
remember my father carrying me -- before that I would say when we left our

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apartment, we -- we possess some goods, especially with -- my father had some stuffs. I remember sacks of goods sitting on the floor, we lefted everything.

Q: Now wha -- wha -- you're talking about leaving your apartment, why were you le -- why were you leaving?

A: Why we were leaving? We had to run. We had to run for our lives and I think my father took me on his arms. He only put on -- he had the leather, I remember, a black leather overcoat and my mother took a few things. She -- my father had the golden watch, and this overcoat and then he carried me to -- to the railroad. Not to the station, on the **Lacspiesa iela** there was an overpass. And that's to the train. And I think this was the last train. And I remember -- I'll tell you the truth, I remember shooting, and I think shooting and shooting and shooting a lot. And I wouldn't say I can say for sure that they were bombing us at this particular time, but I am sure that the train was the last one to leave **Riga**. I can't say the date, but this was the last train. And I was -- sat in the train, it was a mixed train of civilians and military. And we took off so slowly, it was so slow -- there was a place called **Mezure Park**, it's - - **Mezure Park** it's -- it's like a forest park. It's pine trees, you know? And it took us so many hours to get to **Mezure Park**, it was maybe five kilometers from us. And you know what happened? Turned out the military suspected that the m-machinist there, locomotive machinist, that's called? He was probably a traitor is

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what we understood. So, I-I -- I saw it. They pulled him out of the locomotive, put him against the train and shot him dead. And since -- after that, the train began moving, and quickly -- pretty fast. And then suddenly, German airplanes came over us and began bombing. They began bombing, we left the train, began running into the forest. And I personally, I remember I fell into a pit, a very deep pit with water. I lost my parents, I didn't know where they are. And I woke up -- I-I woke up on the -- on the table, operating table, right in the forest. And the doctors, they patch me up. I -- I was wounded in my right leg. Even now I have a big scar. And yes, it's how it happened. We boarded our train back and it turned out that the last three cars, railroad cars, they were blown apart, and my mama to -- mama told me that about 40 people died in the train. So, I think it was the last train, and from then we moved pretty good to-towards **Estonia** and we moved pretty fast I would say til we reached [**indecipherable**], then we came to **Yeloslavl**. **Yeloslav Skyoblis**, it's a region, **Yeloslav Sky** -- yeah.

Q: Let's move back a little bit. In between 1940 and 1941, betwine -- b-between the time that the tanks came in and the time you had to leave in that year, do you have any memories of that time, of --

A: Between 19 --

Q: In **Riga**.

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A: -- 1940 and 19 --

Q: 1941. Do you have any memories of that time of things that were happening in the town? Did you parents say anything?

A: No, I don't know. I-I -- I don't have memories, it's --

Q: I know you were very young. I know you were very young.

A: I have memories like, I would say, when I went to my grandfather, yes and you know how in a small, tiny village, there were probably fleas, and my mother didn't want to keep him overnight over there. And then we went back to her village and I was running and suddenly a dog bit me on my left foot. And then I remember there was a circus passing by and the small pony was ki -- pulling a -- a wagon, and behind the wagon an elephant was tied up. This I -- I remember this, yeah. This kind of things.

Q: Yeah. So during that year, between '40 and '41, between -- it had to go --

A: [indecipherable]

Q: -- i-it -- yeah, a-and you don't have any --

A: No.

Q: -- other memories that were upsetting or frightening?

A: No, no, no, we lived pretty good. We -- we had the -- my mother w -- and my father, they lived really good life, I would say. My mother liked theater. Sh-She

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liked reading and going out. And I would say movies. She could tell you every name of a personage in the movie. She liked arts.

Q: So until the Germans came in, life wa --

A: Pretty good.

Q: Pretty good.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. How would you describe yourself. Again, you were very young. Were you very close to your parents, were you very dependent on them?

A: Wh-When you -- when you so small it's -- especially in Jewish families, you know how it is when kids are very close to their parents and so it was -- what I can say, they very close.

Q: When it was time for you to leave -- you were saying how your father, you packed up things and you were -- you have memories of st -- of bags on the floor. What did your parents say to you? Why -- what did they tell a young child why you were leaving?

A: No, I-I -- I don't remember this, I-I -- I can't say nothing because I -- I don't remember wh -- if they said anything to me or not. The only thing I know my mother told me, that my father didn't want to leave. She said he told her, maybe we will overcome this situation, you know. But my mother loved me so much, and she

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never believed that -- that we're going to be safe with the Germans. And so she insisted of leaving, yeah, this wa -- I -- I know for sure.

Q: So it was her --

A: Yeah, her. My father was a m -- my father maybe a -- he was a smart person, I know that, but in this case, maybe he was a little naïve about -- like many -- so many people.

Q: Did other members of your extended family leave with you?

A: You see, as I told before, my mother's sister and -- and her brother, they lived in **Skundaliena** in next big town called **Daugavpils**, and my -- my ... I'll call it -- my mother's uncle had seven kids -- seven children. Their name was **Kuperschmidt** and then the -- they remained in **Riga** with all -- with all seven kids and obviously they were killed. And my grandfather remained in his town **Barovka** and he was shot. My mother's sister, her name was **Dwara**. In Russian they used to call her **Vera**. She was kept alive with her son, as my mother told me, for awhile, because she was a translator for the Germans, translated from German into Latvian and Russian, I know this. And my ol -- uncle, with his wife -- yeah, ma -- my -- my aunt, she was married in 1935 or '36 and her to a person named **Opanansky**, who was sa -- later in Soviet army, and he was killed in action. And she -- she had the small child, two years old, so was -- she was killed in -- with the small child, two

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year old male. And my u-uncle, he was shot in the -- in the fortress of **Daugavpils** with his wife and the three year old too -- male child. And then I had the -- my grandmother's sister, on my mother's side, sh-she -- she didn't have her own kids, but she -- she married to a person who had his own four. But two of them escaped. One of them actually, a woman, I don't remember her name, she was a communist. And in 1937 the -- she was caught by Latvian police and probably worked over good in the prison. And then they probably released her and she went to **Russia**. But you know what happened in **Russia** in 1937. So they -- they grabbed her and sent her to **Magadan**. She got married in **Magadan**, f-far eastern **Pacific** Ocean, she got married. And I saw her in 1957, she had a son. And sh-she spent 20 years in **Magadan**, from '37 to '57, it was precisely when I came from the army and I saw her. It was strange that she never blamed the communists for her misfortunes, which was very strange. And my grandmother's si-sister, as I mentioned, they were business people, dealt in lumber and had properties and houses in **Daugavpils**, so everything gone. I even remember my f -- my uncle's building had three stories in -- on **Riga** Street in **Daugavpils**. It stands now.

Q: Speaking of the communist party, when -- before you left **Riga**, and did that word mean anything to you as a very young child, the communist party?

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A: No, if you ask me about the communist party, it never meant to me nothing because I -- a -- a -- nothing at all. The only th -- I began understanding wa -- the co -- what is it probably when I was nine, and I began s-seeing the pictures of Mr. **Stalin**, because before that I -- I -- I haven't seen these, I never read nothing. There was no time for reading.

Q: Before you left **Riga**, had you heard of a man named **Hitler**?

A: No. I never heard th -- I don't remember.

Q: So it was just the three of you who left, your mother, your father and you, and getting on the train.

A: As -- as far as I can -- as far as I can remember o -- for my family only. No, I would be wrong. I forgot my -- my father's sister. She -- she was with us, too. Four people.

Q: And you were together in one car?

A: Yeah, we were together in one car, we went to this [**indecipherable**] an -- a village called **Pol'kino**. What is interesting, then we met over there a family, they were our neighbors. They lived next building from the yard across this. Their last name was **Pantz**. We met them in this town -- not town, it's a village, **Pol'kino**. Because I was wounded my mother had to carry me once a week or whatever to a doctor about eight kilometers away for bandages. It's an interesting story there. My

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father and some of his friends, they -- they tried to catch some fish in the river. And you know what? After all their efforts, they caught only one fish. One fish, I remember this, one fish. And why I remember that very good, because now my -- my daughters-in-law father, he came from **Byelorussia** -- but actually, it's not like that. My son went to -- with his wife to **Byelorussia** with all his fishing equipment and I telled -- I tell him, you know what my son, you will not catch one fish over there, they ate it, everything. So --

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Michael Lin**. This is tape number one, side **B**, and you were talking about the fishing.

A: Mm-hm. The -- th -- good enough, my son returned from **Byelorussia** and he told me, I did catch one fish.

Q: Just to get back to that beginning train ride, did your -- did you have enough food, what was the conditions like in the car?

A: We lived in the village **Pol'kino** for a short time, maybe f --

Q: No, no, no, I was talking about that train. Do you remember when you got on the train out of **Riga**?

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A: Ah, out of **Riga**.

Q: Did your mother -- did you have enough food?

A: Yeah, but this was -- oh, okay, on the train from **Riga** after we got bumped, we left these three railroad cars behind and I-I don't remember precisely, but it took us very short time to reach **Yaroslavl**.

Q: What -- were there -- was this a train car with seats?

A: No, this was -- as I mentioned before, this was a train, a mixed train with civilians and military. So --

Q: But did you have seats to sit on, did you have benches?

A: Wa -- yes. It was -- those cars were called, I remember, **Pullman**. You probably have them in **United States**, it's what kind of here. It's regular passenger c-cars.

Q: And how did you sleep?

A: We slept on benches. They have just benches, that's it, nothing we -- no pillows, or mattresses or something like that, no.

Q: Did you take -- you were very, very young, did you take anything special with you, a special toy, something you wanted to play with?

A: No, I-I think we didn't have any time for taking more valuable things than toys. I don't think we took anything with us besides just a few things, as a -- as I mentioned before.

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Q: B-Before you left, did -- did the word ghetto ever -- was that ever mentioned?

Did it ever mean anything to you?

A: No, I wouldn't say that the word ghetto ever meant to me anything, I -- I don't remember.

Q: So you left before the ghetto was established in **Riga**?

A: Obviously I left before the ghetto was established because as far I know from -- now I know from literature that the Germans entered **Riga** about July first, probably. And then we left with the last train, what can it be, 28th of June? So there was no time to waste and we had to run for our lives. That's how it was.

Q: So yo-you -- you're saying you left the end of June?

A: Yeah, twen -- yeah, I left 27th to 28th. This was the last train, I -- I thought I -- as far as I have in my mind.

Q: Why do you think your mother knew enough to leave? Well, how do you think she knew? I know this is looking back, obviously, as an adult.

A: Yes, well I -- I -- later -- I-I can think that my mother is a -- was a woman -- she died already -- she was a woman of perception. I think she was a very bright woman. And besides, my mother mentioned to me that of course she s -- learned everything, she read newspapers and listened to the radio. We -- we knew what's going on in -- in **Germany** and **Poland**, it's obvious. And besides, w-we had the

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relative, I think, my mother mentioned him. Very removed, but he was a [indecipherable] I think, in **Lithuania**, I think, a [indecipherable] you know, the chief -- yeah. And he predicted that -- of course, I don't know how they predict, but they know what they talking about. So we knew very well.

Q: Did your -- now you're in **Yaroslavl**, what -- h-how -- did your wound heal all right?

A: Yes. Yes, in this **Pol'kino**, it took me ow -- actually, I'll tell you, maybe. You know, with this primitive medicine, they patched up my wound so badly that even now it's -- you know. So it took me about eight months for me to heal it.

Q: How did your mother find you when you were thrown out of the train?

A: I don't remember -- I don't rememb -- I was on the ma -- on the table operated. I woke up, I see the doctors, my mother saw them -- me too. So wa -- wa-wa -- we were all running and the bombs were falling all over the place. And I saw the airplanes, they were very low. Actually, it was covers -- fa -- co -- forested area and only you could see th -- I would say from above, you could see the railroad tracks. So -- so they can say.

Q: Were there other children from other families on that train?

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A: Yes. I think I had a distant cousin who was me -- his name was **Yosef Zaks**. This -- it -- maybe I forgot a little bit, but my father's first cousin, **Riva Zaks**, she was with her ch -- with her child, **Joseph Zaks**. Yeah, **Yosef Zaks**, in -- in Yiddish.

Q: Do you remember talking to him on the train at all?

A: No. No, on the train, I -- no, I don't remember. I only m -- I -- met him only in 1945. She -- she was -- I would say -- this is personal, but I would say my mother loved me more than she loved her son, because my mother never gave me away to this -- how you say, we call it in Russian language the **dom**. It's called, like for orphans. Orphanage. And -- and my father's first cousin, she gave him away into orphanage. So my mother always mentioned that. Yeah.

Q: How long did you stay in **Yaroslavl**?

A: We stayed o-only for, I think a month. I want to say something about -- this is not **Yaroslavl**, this is **Pol'kino**, the village. One day I was walking alone, and I saw a peasant woman. And there wa -- high in the sky was an airplane, I guess it was a German airplane. And this woman took off a kerchief off your head and began waving to the German airplane. Yo -- I -- I think it was a sp -- how you say, a spy plane, yeah, and she -- I remember it. She -- she waved to the German airplane.

Q: Did you tell your parents?

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A: No, no, I -- I didn't tell this, but I -- I kept it inside there. You ga -- I didn't know what I -- what it is, but looking back I know what it is.

Q: Did you have enough food at that time?

A: In **Pol'kino**, yes, we -- we had what to eat -- we had what to eat, but if you want to know how it went further, our journey from **Pol'kino** to cur -- to central **Asia**, **Dalino**, it's called **Vallo Furginah**, we're --

Q: Well, before we get there, I just want to talk about --

A: [**indecipherable**] **Pol'kino** [**indecipherable**]

Q: -- you -- you had enough food. Where did you live?

A: We had a -- I remember th--there was a two story -- a two story house, I think.

Yeah, even I remember the color, it was gray. Yeah, you know, there wasn't hung -- a hunger right away of the first days of war. It started later.

Q: What does a five year old know about war at that time? What -- what -- do you remember questioning your parents? You were five years old, you had to leave your home, you're in this new s -- town --

A: [**indecipherable**] I was not five yet, September would be five. But I don't think, when we talking about a five year old having any judgment to judge what the war is, or peace, it's only the minute he feels it, in my opinion, he feels it, what a war is, you know, or what hunger is. But I don't think it -- after awhile, if you, under

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peaceful conditions you have bad impressions, maybe if you personally affected, you know, physically, then you probably will remember, but otherwise I -- I don't think so. It's philosophical point, I don't know.

Q: Did you stay very close to your parents in **Pol'kino**? Did --

A: Yes, of course, it was my parents. We slept in one bed, obviously, you know. Since 1941 til 1944, I slept in one bed with my mother. That's it.

Q: And then you stayed there and then when did yo -- how -- for how long?

A: We stayed in **Pol'kino** for about a month, I think. And this was already I would say end of July, or beginning of au -- August, and then we took off from there because th-the Germans were moving and actually it's much to the north of **Moscow**, but they were moving qui-quick, I don't -- I w -- I have to look up in a -- if the Germans reached **Yaroslavl**, I don't think so.

Q: And then you got back on another train?

A: Yes. We got back on a train, but this was not a -- already not a **Pullman**, this was a cattle train. And we were sleeping on shelves, there were no pillows or mattresses or something like that and it took us about a month. Actually, we were changing trains. In the beginning my -- my mother told me we had the train loaded up with coal and we were sitting on the top of this sc -- railroad car with -- full with coal for awhile, until we got another one that was empty, a cattle train and we --

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from there we went all the way down to -- to central **Asia**, as I said. That town was called **Utchkulgan**. A damned place, I would say. Damned.

Q: What was it like?

A: Okay. My father was still not in the army. They -- he probably got sick or something, they didn't ask him til 1943. I remember 1943 they'd -- they -- they were all in -- lined up and when the [**indecipherable**] came, and they lined up and sent him off.

Q: Bu-But now you're still -- the three of you are still together.

A: Yes, and my father's sister.

Q: Oh, the four of you.

A: And my father and me and my mother, and we lived in a barrack. No, at the beginning I would say not, it's -- was not a barrack. I remember January 1942, we lived in a big wooden house. And -- and the hunger began to set in. You know why I remember this very well? Because there was an 80 year old person, and he probably had money. And he had the girlfriend who was about 30 years old, so -- and we lived together in one room, about maybe, I would say 30 people. I remember another thing. He had money, so he bought some carrots. They dug a -- a -- a pit and buried the carrots into the pit and covered it so -- some food, right? So this -- what I want to say, this old man lived with this younger woman -- well she

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lived with him for -- of course for food. And suddenly this house burned down. It -- I remember snow in central **Asia**, snow. January there, snow. And then -- it was '42, yeah, we moved to a barrack. My mother worked at the factory that used to make ropes, and she would leave me alone, obviously, in the barrack. Yeah, I was bitten by a scorpion at night once, in my left leg, and my father once reached into his pockets at night and got bitten in the -- in his hand. I would say with food the situation was so bad, if I tell you that I didn't see any milk for four years, you wouldn't believe me. And bread, they used to make it from a little cornmeal, how you say, the dark, dark bread, mixed with -- we call in Russian language **mich**. It's a -- parts of sunflower seeds, but they're not sunflower seeds, it's the -- the waste of **sunsower** -- flower seeds, because you could see the --

Q: The hull.

A: The hull -- hulk. No, hull --

Q: Hull.

A: Hull?

Q: Hull.

A: Yeah.

Q: The outer part of the seed.

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A: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, the -- the hull mixed together, it was kind of bread that he was yellow inside. In 1941 I'll tell you -- we were going to sit here for a long time --

Q: Good.

A: In 1941 I caught malaria. Yes. An-And lucky for me -- and then I had a little bit pneumonia too, maybe in light form. I thought I'm going to die, I said my mama, I'm dead. I remember she began crying and all this, but survived.

Q: Wh-Where were you living then?

A: Then, in **Utchkulgan**. No, th -- no, this was not **Utchkulgan**, this was **Andejan**.

This was **Andejan**. And luckily for me, my grandmother's brother lived there with his daughter-in-law in there -- and -- hi-his daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law's daughter. This I have to tell you, his name was **Moskevich. Velville Moskevich, Velville**. In Russian language they call him **Vladimir**, but he was **Velville**. Actually we would say wolf in Yiddish. His son was a famous flyer, everybody knows him, **Yakov Moskevich**, a general and commander in chief of Soviet Air Force. Two times hero **Soviet Union**. As we know, he was arrested in 1941 and with other generals, and shot. So -- but in **Uzbekistan** where I lived in, they probably didn't know about the situation with him yet, so they supplied food to -- to his father. So it's how we survived, because they didn't know of the situation. But later on they arrested his daughter-in-law and sent her to -- to far away places, this I know. So I

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survived 1941. So I mentioned you about the burning down of the house. So, after that we moved to a barrack. I would say maybe seven families lived there, in the barrack. My mother worked at the f -- rope factory, suppli -- they supplied us with bread, as I mentioned.

Q: We're -- we're in **Utchkulgan** now?

A: Utchkul -- yes, **Utchkulgan**. Tiny piece of bread, of this mixture. Tiny piece. It was absolutely piece -- if you -- if you press it in your hand, I-I think water would come out. There was a kindergarten, yeah, I attended kindergarten as I remember, but the food was, you know, a little pea soup. Whole day, that's it. Believe me. So my -- my mother had to survive somehow. She began dealing -- how you say selling and buying fruits, vegetables, you know and selling and buying and sometimes she would go into the desert and collect tortoises, yes. She had a big, how you say, not a hammer, but an axe. And she would discard the par -- carapaces and only take meat out and the eggs, and bring it in a sack. One time she was really caught in -- in a storm. It was a terrible storm, I remember and -- but she brought the sack with -- with the turtles, anyway. She got sick, but -- but my father's sister, she probably didn't have a strong constitution my mother had. So sh-she began actually starving to death. One day she had diarrhea, they took her to a hospital. And they took her hospital -- after she became a little better they fed her sauerkraut soup. And you

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know what it is, sauerkraut soup? You eat it, in a few hours you're dead. That's what happened to her. I remember it was raining, ter-terrible rain and my father was coming from the hospital and he was crying. Yeah, it's what happened.

Q: Were -- were -- was your family able to bury her?

A: I-I don't remember actually, I will tell you. I don't remember how they did it because they didn't take me with -- with them. So --

Q: What was your father doing? Was he working?

A: Yeah, my father was working. In the beginning, I don't know what he did. In the beginning we -- we're together with the **Bukara** Jews, you know, **Bukara** Jews, they used to have collective farms over there, they used to go to synagogue over there in b -- with the **Bukara** Jews, but later I don't -- I can't say that I remember.

Go -- in 1943 he was drafted to -- into the army and he never came back. And

[**indecipherable**] when I lived in barrack, the situation was so bad about -- I think it was about like **Ethiopia** in modern times. I -- I was then seven years old, a-and a young guy maybe 10 years old lying on the floor on a mattress, and you -- he was squirming like, because he was dying. And I was with him together in this room. I remember getting so scared I crawled along the wall and bolted the door and ran and ran til I -- I don't know for how long I ran. I stopped and I -- in a few hours I came back and I remember some me-medical personnel, of course not in a car,

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medic -- some medical personnel gave him an injection, I think and he died over there. He was swollen like three times his regular size, I -- I'd -- I think so, yeah.

Q: So while you were there, you said you went to kindergarten?

A: Why did I -- why --

Q: When you were there, you went to kindergarten?

A: Yes, I don't remember what year I went to kindergarten, but probably it was '42. For awhile -- I didn't even go for a long time there, because you know, there was no -- there was no food over there, no --

Q: Were you parents very comforting to you?

A: Well, everything they could get, they -- what can I say about my parents? The best in the world.

Q: I-I was just wondering what you tell a young child -- what a parents says to a young child going through such traumatic experience.

A: I-I don't remember actually, I'll tell you. F -- my -- of course my mother, what can she do? She comfort you and the -- if there's no food you -- what can you do? You want a piece of bread, but how to get it? So when we had these turtles it was already a holiday, right? But this was already when my father was in the army. I remember it when she began going into the desert to get these turtles.

Q: How long -- how long did you stay in **Utchkulgan**?

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A: In **Utchkulgan** we stayed til 1944, when my mother got news from **Ural** mountains -- beyond **Ural** mountains, it was the cor -- valley -- it's not a valley, actually. Beyond the **Ural** mountains there was a town called **Tavda**. So in 1944 -- you know, I had nothing to wear, because we lived in a s -- I -- I -- actually, I was sick for three years with malaria, right? I got some quinine, right? I remember sitting on the -- in 120 degrees **Fahrenheit** sitting on -- on the -- on the stone and shaking. You know what malaria is? After three years of malaria? So, my mother got the news that my father's first cousin, he was a -- a soldier in **Tavda**, there was a -- a prison for -- maybe for all kind of people, political and the criminal elements. And they called her to come over there. So I had nothing to wear so my mother knitted something for my feet, and it was December already. You know, I had to wear this. We stopped over in [**indecipherable**] town, right? Now it's probably called **Orenburg**, if I can remember. I look out the window -- you know, we took a train, right? We come to **Orenburg**. We stayed only there, my mother had to look -- somebody told her maybe my father is alive, because she got the news that he was released from the army because of sickness, but she couldn't find him. We stayed over -- the wind was sweeping -- this is an open plain, no forest over there and the wind was sweeping so horribly that my mother couldn't take it any more, so we -- we boarded a train to **Swedlofska** and from there to **Tavda**. I'll tell you, we had the

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very [indecipherable] small luggage. There was no -- no luggage, actually, and she placed it on the -- on the floor and somebody wanted to steal. So my mother was pretty alert, she gave him a -- a kick in the behind so he fell in -- on the railroad tracks, I remember that. When we boarded the train -- of course there are no toilets. There are toilets, but you know what, no heat. So the human excrements and all this urine, was frozen and piled up I would say maybe three feet high. Yeah, and that's how we traveled to **Tavda**. This was not **Tavda**, it was called a town, **Saragolka**. You see, I remember all the names. Yeah, it was **Saragolka**.

Q: Wh-What was it like when your father was called up into the army? Do you remember that?

A: No. I -- I -- I wouldn't say that I remember. I only, when I -- as I mentioned, I saw him lining up on the -- on the sk -- square of this town, and [indecipherable]

Q: D-D you remember missing him and asking where he was?

A: I don't remember missing or asking where he was. I-I -- I don't -- I can't say that. I -- I-I don't remember.

Q: So when he left it was just the two of you, you and your mother?

A: Yes. After he left, my aunt died, just me and my mom, and that's it. Two of us.

Q: Did you mix with other children at that time, when you were in **Utchkulgan**?

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A: No, I wouldn't say that I mixed with any other children, I was by myself. By myself all day. You know -- you know the two --

Q: What -- what did you think about? What did you do to occupy your mind?

A: What did I do to occupy my mind? I was looking for food, and you know what? I remember this case -- you see, I am shaven now, right? I am 63 years old now and I am shaven. It's how I was shaven when I was seven or eight years old. So what did I do? You know p-peaches -- actually not, apricots. And the **Usbecks**, of course they had their orchard in somewhere else -- there was a market, surrounded by a high wall, as they do it in **Asia**, was a clay wall. So one time I stole a -- you know, I stole a melon from one **Usbeck**, and he ran after me with a n -- with a knife. But he -- of course he couldn't catch me. And the -- in the corner I remember there was a bank, and the bank had a nest of wasps. Yeah, the wasps, of course, the melons are not like in this country, they are a little bit be -- sweeter and better. The wasps has very sm -- good smell, right? So they attacked me and bit me se -- I di -- I remember seven times in my head. So my head had big bumps. Then I -- in order to survive I collect -- I of -- of course I dropped this melon, what could I do? And in order to survive I would pick up the seeds from apricots. But a -- I remember being ashamed doing this, so I wouldn't do it bending, with my hands, but I would pick them up with my feet. With my toes. With my toes, yeah. And collected them ca --

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then coming home and taking a -- a stone and breaking, and they were nutritious. So -- so I ate like the s -- the seeds.

Q: Why did you not have any hair on your head?

A: You see, during the war we had the la -- lice. In order to get rid of them we had to shave our heads.

Q: Wh-Who did that for you?

A: I -- I actually don't remember who -- who shaved my head, you know.

Q: Was that hard for you, as a small child?

A: No, I had no feeling there about having hair or not having hair, probably the same I don't have now. I don't remember having any feelings about styles.

Q: Did that hold true for your mother too, did she have to have her hair taken off?

A: Oh no, my mother never shaved her head, no. She didn't do it.

Q: So now, your father had gone and your -- yo-you've moved -- you've continued on your journey.

A: Yes, we came to **Saragulka**, was December 1944, and my father's first cousin, his name was **Ulman, Schmul Ulman -- Schmel Ulman, Schmel, Schmel**, yeah. And my grandfather's sister, my -- my f-father's side, she was there too with her daughter. And it turned out that **Siberia** was much better than central **Asia** in -- as

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food is concerned, because my mother began working, not chopping wood, but sawing wood, you know, big logs of -- she worked all day.

Q: How had your mother's health been up to that point?

A: You know, it's very interesting, my mother's health was very good. She was a very strong woman despite later starting to complain about high blood pressure or something, but I remember she had her -- her -- when she was younger, she had her, you know, w-women's characteristics a little, about -- complaining or something, but actually her health was pretty good, considering the horrible times.

End of Tape One, Side B

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Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Michael Lin**. This is tape number two, side **A**. I just wanted to ask you, when you were in **Uzbekistan**, were -- did your mother know what was happening in **Europe**, and if so, did she talk to you about it? Did you as a child, have any idea of what was happening with the war, and the Jews also?

A: I-I -- I would say I-I can't recollect if she was talking with me about the war, and these other things. The -- mostly we were talking about food, I think. To me was, at least the -- but what was happening, of course she knew what was going on, but she never talked with me about the situation, I would say. And I never attended school yet, I was in a -- I don't think I had any strength to attend any school. I was young til then from -- I began going to school, I was only eight years old.

Q: Okay. You were living under these terrible times, under these terrible conditions. Did you -- and -- and did you feel very Jewish? Did you -- were you angry that these sad times were happening to you because you were Jewish? Did any of those thoughts come through your mind?

A: You see, the -- I -- I didn't know what Jew and not Jew is. Later on I real -- I understood what a Jew is or not a Jew, but at a young age I probably didn't

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understand what it is, what -- to be Jewish or not Jewish. I -- I -- I didn't know nothing about it yet.

Q: I-I was just asking were you -- in case you were angry that this is happening cause you were Jewish.

A: No, no I -- I couldn't say that, because later on when I understood, then I -- I knew what it is to be a Jew, but in th -- then, I didn't understand. Now, my mother, of course, ne -- obviously I -- I don't even want to talk about it. But she knew all the situation, but she never converse with me about this -- what's going on.

Q: So now it's December 1944 --

A: Yes, it's December 1944, we come to **Saragulka**. Seemed like it -- the end of the world. There was a -- a sc -- a school, I began going to school at the edge of the village. A -- a s -- a small -- and there was a club. S-Strange enough, I began performing i-in the club, ju -- reciting poetries suddenly, I remember. And s --

Q: You were now eight and a half.

A: Yes, I was about eight and a half years old. I be -- I remember applaud -- applauses. I don't even know where I got this poetry from, you know, and declamations, you know, this kind. I don't even know. I don't remember how it happened.

Q: Did your mother recite poetry to you?

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A: Probably she did. My mother probably said it, poetry to me, because when I last saw her, she was close to 85, she was still reading in German and reciting great authors. Yes, she had the very good memory.

Q: What language were you reciting your poetry in?

A: Of course in Russian, it was **Russia**. Obviously. So, Russian language.

Q: Did your mother -- when you were very young, did your mother sing you any songs?

A: I-I can't say that. But there's an interesting case, when I was younger, I can remember. Maybe it's imagination or something like, about the angels. I remember was a **taholim**, as they say in Yiddish, like a dream. But I was lying in bed, I think I was maybe three years old, or four and I saw somebody in white clothes above me, hovering above me, and I -- I-I think it was an angel. And I -- even now, I -- after all these years I think that angels exist. I remember this, yeah, it was wa -- I-I never forget. I tell my -- my sons that angels exist, yeah.

Q: Di -- had your mother sang you any songs about angels?

A: No. I don't think my mother -- she was not a religious woman, so it was a -- of course she knew th-the Bible. My father used to tell her stories from the Bible. I -- I remember this very well, about -- yeah, I can -- now I recall when we -- when we led me to this. I recall it, about -- about **Eliyahu Nawi**, I recall when -- when my --

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my father used to tell stories about how he u -- would be invisible, go to place, to place, help people and all this stuff. I -- I recall it vividly now because it has to come to me, you know, maybe I have something I forget, but I remember, yeah. From the Bible my father used to tell a lot of stories to my mother from the Bible and she would -- yeah. Sometimes you s -- like you see dead people. My mother told me a story, she thinks she saw her mother in the -- in the square. O-Of course I don't believe this, but maybe she imagining, but it's what she told me. Yeah, it happened to her.

Q: Do you remember your father conducting any Passover **Seders**? Do you remember your father conducting any Passover **Seders**?

A: Not that -- I don't remember. I don't think we would be -- as I mentioned to -- when they -- he -- he used to go to the **Bukara** Jews in **Uzbekistan**. I was not a participant, he -- he would go by himself.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So, I-I -- he -- I don't think we would be able even to conduct any Passover **Seders** if you don't have nothing. You could only use your hands, nothing else.

Q: And -- and no memory of **Seders** when you were very young and in **Riga**?

A: Yeah, I remember -- well, I would not -- not say that we -- I have memories of **Seder**, but I remember o -- the -- when they bought fish, usually a -- a live pike,

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long pi-pike, long. And the fish was alive, I even dipped my finger into his -- caught me by -- yes, caught me, th-the pike caught me, it's a vicious fish, yeah. But --

Q: An-Any memories of sitting around with other relatives at a **Seder** table in **Riga**?

A: No, I-I don't have these memories, no.

Q: Mm-hm, okay, we're move -- we've moved forward and you're in **S-Saragulka**?

A: Yes, w-we're in **Saragulka** and it's wintertime, December. You see, th --

Q: December '44.

A: Yes, December '44. And it was a much better place, at least we started school, going to school in the middle of season. And the school was about a -- a sh -- a small -- not a building, a -- a house, a wooden house in i -- in one -- in one room the -- the teacher had four classes, starting with first and -- to fourth, yeah. Right on the edge of the forest. They used to tell me that bears are crawling around during summertime. Because they had this tree they called in Russian, **Kairda**, but it -- it se -- they have seeds. In **Siberia** they have this -- maybe it's called **pignolis**, in Italian?

Q: Oh, **pignoli** seeds.

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A: Yeah, it's -- actually it's -- they look like pine trees, but they have the seeds, very edible, contain a lot of -- of oil, so it's very -- so we use -- they used to collect this, the autumn time. Then they used to go hunting too. One times -- wintertime I saw my father's cousin with his soldier -- fellow soldiers, going a hunting expedition, bear hunting. And I don't know what gratta -- hit me. I was sitting in my shorts, actually. The houses over there are very peculiar. They're very long, wooden houses, and the entrance is from both sides, both sides of the houses. So I was sitting on the one side, the end of the house and looking through the window I see the soldiers going bear hunting. And I -- I bolted out through the door, it was about 40 degrees Centigrade, minus, and I jumped on the sleighs, and my hands and knees got stuck to the sleigh, so they had to pull me off the -- the steel. I was crying, of course, but they know what to do, they put in a -- in a big pot they put some cold water and they dip your hands into -- in this cold stuff. Yeah, but it's very painful. So, it was a much better place than in the **Uzbekistan**, plus they had some dried nettle. Nettle is a -- in **Europe** -- they have in **America** or not, I don't even know?

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah, so you make soup o -- from it, in your -- nettle. Then they had potatoes and because here the celery, he was a guard over there in the prison. And so it was much better than in central **Asia**. But in a few months they -- they drafted him and

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he joined the army. I mean, in the front, he went to the front in 1945. So we stayed til May 1945, we stayed in **Saragulka**. And -- and then we t -- went to **Riga**, but I don't even remember what trains we took, was it the passenger trains or any other. I -- I -- I don't remember.

Q: Le-Le-Let's talk a little bit about May 1945. How did -- th-the war is over?

A: Yes, the war was over, yes.

Q: What did that mean to you as a eight and a half year old child?

A: You see, they tell me the war is over, we're going home. And what can I say, we're going home. I don't think I had very -- a reaction very viv -- I don't remember that I had a reaction, positive or negative. I don't --

Q: Was there any celebration?

A: I don't think we celebrated anything, no. But j-just casually. We had a patch of potatoes, so we sold it, this potato patch. Yeah, my mother and my relatives, they had a patch of potatoes and they sold it to somebody and -- and we went to **Riga**.

Q: How did you hear about your father?

A: I think my -- my mother had a -- news from somebody. It was not official. It was not official, somebody told her something, that he's supposed to come home. And he never came.

Q: Did you miss your father while he was gone? Did you talk about him a lot?

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A: No, as I mentioned, I -- I don't remember talking about my father. Me -- maybe I did, but I don't remember. But did I miss him, or -- I don't remember.

Q: Or your mother talk about him to you?

A: No. I am -- I am telling you maybe I'm a little angry at my mother, that she didn't search for him, but she told me she couldn't take it in -- in **Skalif** the weather was so bad and we sat at the railroad station and there's no food and no clothing and no nothing. She couldn't ex -- possibly to look for him. I remember the wind, it was overwhelming. So maybe I shouldn't blame her, but it's how -- what it is.

Q: So now it's May 1945 and your mother's preparing to leave and to go back to **Riga**.

A: We're not preparing, we just -- we just left and that's it. We sold our patch of potatoes and took a long way from -- it's not **Ural** mountains, but beyond **Ural** and we came to **Riga**. It was in May or beginning of June -- I wouldn't -- I -- I remember passing by, there are a lot of cemeteries, there were cemeteries, some were close to **Leningrad**. And a lot of German soldiers, I remember, buried over there, with crosses, crosses, crosses, crosses, I remember those cemeteries, for miles, seems to me. And you can -- the northern route we took. We took northern route and we came to **Riga** in -- in May, yes.

Q: Did you have any memories of **Riga** from before?

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A: No, from before I didn't -- I probably did, yeah. I remember the f -- I remember vividly the street and I remember this **bogaden** as I told you, the f -- the poor house, like -- like a church, it was a hospital hou -- for the poor. I remember the yard, it was like a -- the buildings were about five stories high, I think, I'm -- and there was a yard, and buildings surrounding the yard. I remember this is -- yes, and the school where I stood in 40 -- 1940 in the street, **Menishnai** and th -- and the other **Yikapils** over there and **Lascpiesa** street and **Moscow** Street, I -- yellow, in Latvian language, it's called **yella**. I remember them. They were --

Q: Wer -- were you happy about returning? Were you excited?

A: No. I-I don't recall that I was any different from -- you know there was a few Jewish families in -- in **Urals** and I remember a brother and sister there from **Harkov** in **Ukraine**. And yeah, we did a few things that I recall. Yeah, I remember -- this I will tell you. One time, what they did, they -- they made for me like boots, high boots, called **buky**. And one day, it was probably January, there was only one tractor and one lorry. Lorry is in English a truck. And it was disabled. **Zilfife** the lorry was. So the tractor was pulling the lorry and we kids were running after this -- the lorry. And we got into -- deep into the forest, everybody of the kids they jumped into the top, I would call it, of the truck, and I tried to do it too. So unfortunately I stepped on the -- on the wheel, and the wheel turned and my left leg got under the

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five ton truck. And the kids didn't see me, so they left me alone crying in the forest, and you know. So I -- I cried and I called and called and called til the railroad tracks. And during the war, because they probably didn't have adults, so a 15 year old, about, a girl was checking the tracks, and she saw me. She grabbed me, put me on her shoulders and brought me home to the village. So -- yeah, for three months I -- I had this swollen leg, but fortunately nothing broke. Probably the snow was so thick and soft that it just pressed into the so -- snow and didn't break my leg, no.

Q: Did you experience any anti -- any anti-Semitism when you were in **Russia**?

You said this Russian girl brought you home --

A: Yes.

Q: -- which was a positive. Did you have any negative experiences with the Russians?

A: During my chil -- early childhood, the seven, eight, and ni -- I'll tell you, the first experience in anti-Semitism I probably began having when I was in fifth grade, I think, understanding -- understanding what it is.

Q: Okay, now you're back in **Riga** and where did you s -- where did you and your mother settle? Did you go back to your house?

A: No, we didn't go back because my mother went over there and this was alre -- a ghetto region. And he -- she remembers she climbed the stairs, everything broken

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over there of -- piled up. So she just turned around and run from there. But r -- as I mentioned, we left a -- a lot of stuff over there. So one day my mother came back -- I don't remember whether -- our neighbors, where they lived then. She entered their apartment alone, and you know what? She found -- she had -- in those times there was style overcoat with a fox -- entire fox over the shoulder, right? You maybe remember right? And she found this. She found -- she took away the overcoat, and the fox. She found a golden watch. And I think a few other things. And she told me about that. And this is interesting because h-her friend told her, why you didn't take everything away from her, what belonged to you and even didn't belong to you? And my mother says, I wouldn't do that. [indecipherable] I only took what I saw mine, and nothing else. That's how it is.

Q: And then where did you settle in **Riga**?

A: In **Riga** we settled -- they gave us a room on the -- by the small **Daugava** -- small **Daugava upe**. And **Dauga upe**, it's a -- a river, **upe** in Latvian language, **upe**. And there were -- it was a -- a church for the old believers. There is a church for old believers somewhere, from **Moscow** a small street takes you. And they gave us a room in the -- in the house that belonged to the old believers before. I think it was even beyond the walls.

Q: When -- when you say they gave us a room, who was they?

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A: Nu -- who gives us? The -- probably the government, probably, or whoever they -- who gives you -- you don't enter the room by yourself, right? So somebody gave you the room. So i -- after the war the si -- the situation was pretty bad with food.

My mother managed always somehow to survive, so she began trading. There was a -- a market, you know, in old stuff, **clotheses** and all, she sells and buys. Then she had connections with the army. She would get some American sugar, and -- it's called **tushunka**, it was -- it was canned meat, you know, from **America**. And I remember it was very tasty, very tasty. So in 1946 she got married. Actually '45 or '46, and he was a -- a soldier, he served in the army, his name was **Raishstain**.

Raishtain, Hugo Raishtain. Actually, his name was -- **Hugo** is he called himself, but he -- actually **Kyos** his name was.

Q: When da -- when did you definitely hear about your father? When did you and your mother definitely hear about your father?

A: About our father?

Q: Well, what had happened to your father.

A: About my father, I mean? I -- I th -- up til now I don't know what happened to him. My mother thinks sh -- that he died on the way home. Or somebody -- even -- she even mentioned maybe he had the -- a little money, and maybe somebody killed him, or he died -- or he died because he was sick, is what --

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Q: So you never got any definite information?

A: I never got any information about my father, never.

Q: So your mother remarried, and you're at school?

A: Yes, my mother remarried, but he was an invalid, actually. He got hit in the leg and -- in 1944.

Q: Were there other Jewish children who had returned like you did, and did you spend time with them?

A: Yes, I had, later on in -- already in third, fourth grade and I -- I had Jewish kids, friends of mine, **Lotkin, Izzie Lotkin, Joseph Pomeranzif**. I don't even know --

Q: Did you talk about what you had experienced with these other children, during the war? Did you -- did you as children speak about your experiences?

A: No, I wouldn't say that I talk with them about our experiences. The only -- the only person I would talk with is -- I mentioned before my -- **Riva Moskevich**, my father's first cousin had the son, yu -- **Joseph**. So with him we were friends. He was my third cousin, I would say. With him we talked about a lot. But beside that, I-I-I - - I talked very little with my mother. Was -- probably there was a reason, I didn't like sh-she -- she remarried, probably, you know. And many times I would run away from home and slept in -- underground -- you know big buildings, they have basements. I would slip -- it's wintertime and there were gangs, even kids of my

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age, 10 - 12 years old, 14, I joined with the gangs, you know. Not rough stuff or some, no, but just we had gangs, called **spana** in Russian language. **Moscow** gang or -- or [**Russian**] gang or some -- from other parts of the city. So we fought each other, you know, with sticks and stones and clubs and bottles and those --

Q: Did you -- did you feel very tough because you had been through such a difficult childhood?

A: Yeah, I was very tough, I felt it tough, because I'll tell you, I didn't hesitate to use my fist right away. If I didn't like, or somebody bothered me, I would use my fist right away, bam and that's it. I didn't know any better, you know? Very tough, I was very tough.

Q: Well, you had seen so much as a young child, and ha -- and been through so much.

A: I don't know what the reason, because I'd been through so much, or just the character. I can't judge, but I was pretty tough. I was hit one time by an -- one guy hit me with a knife on my chin, a little. Well, since -- we run barefoot on asphalt, since I -- I was -- you know, barefoot, I never knew what footwear is. I'll tell you the truth, my f -- soles of my feet were so thick. I used to like to play soccer and ice hockey, you know, so we play on a -- in the dusty field soccer and a nail hit my foot, the sole of my foot. As I mentioned, the sole of my foot was so tough, that I

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tried to pull the nail out, it wouldn't come out. I pulled it and pulled it, at last I pull it out and a tiny blood appeared. It was by the river, I just washed it up and then we continued playing soccer. We swam since I was a ch -- nobody bothered me, my mother never [indecipherable] me where I am. All day I was by myself with kids and -- I liked school, I'll tell you. I liked school. I wouldn't miss it because I knew I need it.

Q: Were you with Jewish and non-Jewish children in school?

A: Yes, the school was mixed, and there was no such thing Jewish or non-Jewish, everybody together. And I attended 50 -- Latvian 56 school that before the war was a Jewish school where my father's first cousin **Shaina**, she was a teacher there. And we lived -- later we got an apartment, it was basement apartment in 1946 when my sister was born, half sister, we got an apartment next to the school, it's called **Male Lacspiesa**, little **Lacspiesa iela**. I just would climb over the fence and I was in school.

Q: Mm-hm. And did you experience any anti-Semitism in elementary school?

A: I would say the first time I understood what it is -- maybe I didn't understand then what it is, but later on I -- I began when my teacher of sports, of the physical education, I remember even his name, **Vasily Vasilivich**, was his first name and his father's name, **Vasilivich**. Fa -- **Vasily Vasilivich**. You know, as a kid I w -- I liked

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to prank -- pranks and everything. So one time he takes me by the shoulder and say -- and says me -- tells to me, you know what? We saved you for -- from death in -- Germans, and you behaving like that? I understood right away what it means. This was my first experience with this kind of -- excuse me -- garbage. Since then it's how it went, many times. Of course, I couldn't hit him. I should have, but --

Q: What were some of your other experiences like that?

A: Th--This was when I was adult already.

Q: Oh.

A: You don't -- you're not interested, or I'll tell you when adult --

Q: Well, we'll co -- we'll come to that

A: Yeah.

Q: But when you were in school, were there any incidents with the other children?

A: No, when I was at school, y-you know, I wouldn't say that somebody would say kike or something like that. Maybe I heard somewhere far, but nobody would dare to tell me in my face.

Q: So you felt safe on the street?

A: Yes, in those times I felt pretty good -- safe, because you belong to a gang, and local ki -- local persons would never touch you, only somebody from outside. I felt -- what I want to mention, in 1946, this I mention -- I remember vividly. As you

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remember, maybe some of wa -- you, all these German and Latvian collaborators. Not -- Germans are not collaborators, like **Drexel**, but collaborator with **Dunkel**, you know, about 10 of them, when they had a [**indecipherable**] a trial? I remember 1946, about February, I went to my friend. I was about nine -- less than 10 years old --

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Michael Lin**. This is tape number two, side **B**.

A: -- all the time my mother was telling me about the Germans and Latvians and -- and as I mentioned, I was standing on the corner between **Lacspiesa** -- no, it was **Zilnow iela** and **Moscow iela**, yes. And my mother asked me, do I want to go to the -- to vi -- vitness -- witness? Witness the hanging of the -- of the 10 people, I think there were 10 people. I said -- I said no, I don't want to go to wit -- witness. It was a -- I remember the -- vividly the day when they were hanged, because it was snowing and no sun, the sky was covered with clouds, but it was not dark. And my mother se -- went with my stepfather to witness the -- the hanging of these 10 -- I think 10 people. Then he told me what -- how happened. They were brought by trucks and then they was -- they stepped on stools, and the stools were knocked

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under them and she -- she was witnessing -- it was on the -- a big square in r -- in **Riga** on -- what was it? It's called the parade square or I-I -- I'll not -- I don't recall precisely how the square, but I remember the square, it's very big.

Q: What was the date?

A: I think it's February 1946. My mother witnessed the -- the hanging of these bastards.

Q: Why do you think she went to witness them?

A: I don't think for enjoyment, but for -- for justice, or it's supposed to be. Tooth for a tooth.

Q: Did your mother at that time, or even during the war, ever talk about going to **Palestine**?

A: You see, you -- going to **Palestine** you have to be a dedicated person, but -- and as you know before world wars, not too many Jews went to **Palestine**, only very dedicated, as my uncle [indecipherable]. And you know how people are. When they s -- well established in certain place, they want to live there in this, like anybody else. So now it's something else, and then was something else.

Q: So you continued on with school. You were 10 - 11 - 12, and what was life like for you then? Do you have any specific memories?

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A: No, what to say? It was hard in the beginning, you know. A stepfather is an invalid, he gets impatient. You know how much patient you can get in certain instances. And he worked. He worked, not always, and my mother didn't have an official job, but she tried to -- later on she began -- began working in trades. I mean, a saleswoman. She wa -- became a saleswoman, yeah. And th-then 1946 my stepsister was born and we sa -- lived in very small apartment. No, I would say, we began eating better than before and slowly, slowly, life improved. I remember when I was a kid attending this school, first time I saw, during the -- the -- how you call it, elections? This was a Soviet style election. In school they would organize -- I don't know, it was specially for new republics, like **Baltic** Republic, where it was als -- also [indecipherable] I'm not sure, but over there I -- they would bring artist and singers and all kinds of stuff and all day they would play music and -- and praise **Stalin** and all the party and we used to watch it, enjoy it actually, I would say. You know, everything is good for a peasant.

Q: Were you part of any Russian youth group?

A: No, I would say I was never even not a peer -- Pioneer. They used to force you to become a Pioneer and wear this -- how you call that, tie. This is like a tie and in public maybe I would put it on, but then I would take it off and put it in my pocket, because I never wanted to be a part of it. I don't know, it was mainly in -- inside me

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that I didn't want to be a member of any organization, even from childhood. Not a Pioneer, later on a [indecipherable], later on a party member. I know many Jews were party members, I -- I have friends that live in the **United States**, a lot of who were party members, but I, never. I felt I don't belong there.

Q: Was your mother a member?

A: No, no, no, no.

Q: Or your stepfather?

A: No. My stepfather was a Zionist before World War 2. Of course, he never mentioned, you know [indecipherable] were a Zionist, what happen to you.

Q: What would happen?

A: If you were -- what would happen? Will go to faraway places, is what would happen. So, you know, I-I [indecipherable] but in a quarrel, let's say my mother would quarrel with him. And she would give a hint that he was a Zionist, he was scared, you know. Obviously my mother was joking, but you see, Zionist is a good cause. It's why we have our country there, and he was a Zionist and didn't want anybody -- he belonged to a sports club and he was, himself from **Rezekne**, and his -- two of his sisters, they went to **Palestine** in 1933, but his mother and two br -- an older brother, they all were killed in **Rezekne**. So -- and he always dreamed about coming to **Israel**, so they managed to come to **Israel** in 1966.

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Q: When you were 13, did you think about having a **Bar Mitzvah**?

A: No, nobody gave me **Bar Mitzvahs**, nobody gave me **Bar Mitzvahs**, no, I don't know. I don't remember. Yes, when I -- I was **Bar Mitzvahed** -- I don't remember, but I -- I was in Jewish circles because my father-in-law had his cousin and the -- the cousin had two --

Q: Your st -- your stepfather.

A: Yes, my stepfather over there. He had a cousin, he was an invalid too after the war, who got hit in the head. And he had two daughters and a son. Yeah, and they really wa --

Q: Was it safe to be outwardly Jewish in **Riga**?

A: Outwardly?

Q: At that time.

A: You say outwardly, nobody wore beards, or didn't wear -- I never seen anybody wearing Jewish uniform, you know, I recall the black stuff.

Q: Did you do anything religiously in the late 40's - 50's?

A: No, I never did, despite that my father was a **Chabadnik**. My father, personally was a **Chabadnik** before war. You know **Chabadnik**, in **Israel** they have this. But I personally, no, I was not religious. I -- what to say about religion? I believe that I am a Jew by blood. I don't have to be very religious to confirm it.

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Q: So then you went on to high school. Any experiences there?

A: Yes, I went to high school -- a-actually, you see, he was not my father, right? So he always insisted that I go to work. I was 13. Go to work, go to work, but I want -- I wanted to study. I wanted to study and I went -- actually I went to school evenings, high school. I went to work, I was a lathe -- lathe operator, worked a little here, a little there, you know, what do you want, you were 13 or 14 or 15 years old, you know. And that was tough actually, in many ways, obviously. So one time I worked at the big factory, they used to build floating cranes over there. They -- and you know how in **Soviet Union** is, they you -- they s-send you to collective farm to work summertime. So I am 17 years old, they send me to a collective farm. There was about five people, or seven people, maybe. One Jew, engineer, me, 17 years old, and ab-about five **schlubs**. Big, huge. Out of the army already. You know what -- what they did to this engineer? They actually treated him like piece of dirt. All the time, kike, kike, kike to him, and he couldn't do nothing. He was a -- a weak person. It what my opinion is he looked weak and he behaved weak. I didn't say noth -- a word, but one day we're sitting by a table, the engineer was not there, these five guys and me. And you know what he says -- one of the guys tells me? Hey, hey you, kike, give me the -- pass me the **leffel**. **Leffel**, he need a sh -- a spoon. Pass me the spoon. I don't know what hit me. I -- I jumped up, ran toward

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the guy and hit him with my left, right in the jaw, right in the bloody jaw. He fell on -- on the floor, right? He fell on the floor and then he got up and tried to jump on me, but the others, they -- how we say, they s-stop him. So they separated us, but we lived on the -- how you call it -- **sarai** in Russian language, how you call -- with this hays -- haystack? How you call it, barn. Yeah, we lived on the u-upper part of a barn, in the huge barn. So I was afraid to go to sleep. We slept on the straw, you know, there was nothing, just maybe you -- you take from home a blanket, maybe. I was afraid to go to sleep. We had to climb a -- a ladder. But the -- I had to go to sleep, so I collected a lot of stones, maybe five, six big stones. I climbed the ladder, stepped i-in the opening, and I say, now approach me one by one. And nobody approached me. It was some kind of psychological thing. Nobody approached me, I throw away the stones and went to -- into my corner. And nobody touched me. That's how we tre -- it was instinctive, you know what I mean? But it's how a Jew should behave with everybody.

Q: Do you think you behaved that way again because of what you had experienced before that?

A: I actually behaved like this again, and it happened I'll tell you when, in 1960 -- '61. I -- I was a seaman on a fishing boat. It was not the fishing boat, it was a transport boat actually, the -- named **Riga**. And we would cross the **Atlantic** by

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Canadian shores -- how to recall it precisely not to make a mistake -- by Canadian shores w -- you know what I did, I loaded up barrels with herring from other ships. And you worked like this 12 hours a day. It was a int -- it was [indecipherable] of six hours and six hours. And there was one from **Latgalia**. A guy -- I -- I have a picture some of this, but I didn't bring it. He was from **Latgalia**, a lat -- a **Latgo**, and he called me kike. In those -- then, I didn't hit him, but I took a -- this worn out glove, with salty gloves herring and I -- three times I hit him in the face, crisscross like this. And this was the end of it. One guy approached me and says later on and says he could kill you -- you. And I said, well, he didn't. And what is interesting, next year I was going from **Riga** to **Moscow** and th-they stopped at the station, right, in **Latvia** over there. And I walking along the train and I -- I see this guy. He runs towards me as if I am this best friend. It wa -- you probably have to give them a good shot that they remember you, right?

Q: So when you were -- you said you went to school at night and worked during the day -- and th-this when you -- we're going back in -- years when you were in high school. An-And then what happened?

A: No, I worked in th -- during the d-day and went to high school. I graduate from high school and then I was drafted to -- in -- tha -- I want to mention -- yeah, you're -- I am okay, I am okay. I want to mention one thing. Maybe it has to do something

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with anti-Semitism. I -- when I graduate from seventh grade I wanted to go to junior college. I always dreamed about becoming a geologist. So, I have a -- I had a friend at the [indecipherable]. He was already a student in -- in **Siberia** geological faculty. And so I was talking with him what he is doing and -- and I ask him, where do you think should I go for these courses? He says, come to us to **Swedlosc** over there. But I didn't want to go cold, I remember this, cold. So I say, I'll go to **Ukraine**, be -- for exam. Well, it was 1952. I went -- okay, I send my papers, they had invited me for it. I passed the exams very good. I think I should have become a student of -- in **Kiev**, capital of **Ukraine**, but I got a letter that I was not taken, so I think i -- there was a reason for n -- me not being taken. An-And this ta-tartar told me, you will never be a student in **Ukraine**, he told me himself, my fr-friend. He says --

Q: This is because you were Jewish?

A: Yes. He says, come to **Urals**. That's what happened. I think it's better that I didn't go and become a geologist. I -- I feel that otherwise I would be staying in **Russia** til now.

Q: So what did you do instead?

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A: When I came home I got this information that I -- so I went to high school, because this was junior high school. So in 1955 I was drafted in the army. So they took me --

Q: This is the -- the Russian army?

A: Yes. I was in the Russian army, it was September 1955, I think. And --

Q: What's it like to put on a Russian uniform?

A: First I want to say that I didn't go to college. I don't know, I didn't feel like -- to go -- going to college. And I -- I went to the army, I would say, not thinking about anything. So, of course was -- how they transport you, they transport you cattle cars. Later there was no -- any accommodations.

Q: Did that bring back any memories to you?

A: Probably. And especially what was interesting, one time -- okay, wh-wha -- what happened, we were traveling and suddenly we stopped. We heard shots. Shots, shots, we stopped, everybody began running toward the sounds. They opened wide the cattle car, the doors, and they see a soldier is lying -- he was then not a soldier, in civilian clothes, were not soldiers yet. And I see he was dead. What happened, a - a drunk sergeant, he was drunk, he gathered all these boys together, drove to -- into a corner and began shooting, and he hit only this guy, fortunately. So what -- I had my first experience with the army. Then we came to a town called **Perlomiesk**.

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You have a lot of tr-translation to do here. I don't know. And we came to a town called **Perlomiesk** and a big division over there called **[indecipherable]** division. Do -- don't write this. This **[indecipherable]** division it's called because they don't have a full, how you call, personnel. It's only maybe half or a quarter or whatever, during peaceful times, I think. So I went to this **Molodog Bietz**, it's called the young soldiers' training. We lived in barracks, 200 people. The food was, you know, we used to call it **kairza**. It's like they gave us boots, only they're not from leather, they're made from some kind of plastic. So we called the food they gave us, this **kairza**, like plastic it was **kasha**, like porridge. And a little bit of sugar and a little bit of meat. Yeah, everybody was hungry, you know, hungry, I will tell you. So we spent like this maybe ha -- training half a year, you run, you -- maneuvers, you shoot, you know, and all this stuff. You go to -- a -- a bathroom is about in the middle of the -- we call it -- we call it town over there **[indecipherable]** bathroom. A big barrack with -- for about 200 people, opened ho-holes over there, and around too, everybody urinates around the barrack. The barracks were so cold, it was about four degrees Centigrade. And -- and thievery? I had hundred rubles and my glasses, I had begun wearing glasses. And so I put it under my pillow, gone. Forget it. You know, if you'd -- even -- we call **partienki**, it's not like socks, but a piece of cloth you wind around your feet, right? And even this would be stolen, if they were new,

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at least, you know. I-I'll tell you, two years I was in the army, I remember going to -
- taking a bath only four times. In the beginning we went three times and then I
didn't go to -- didn't have a bath for a half a year. I -- we were wearing underwear,
s-summer underwear. For winter they would give us like **formbika**, it's like cotton,
right? And there was so -- supposed to be white, but it was not white, it was earthy
color, you know, black. An-And the [indecipherable] were all -- the shirt -- the
green shirt, you -- you would take a -- a knife and clean with a knife the dirt off the
-- you know, to come off. This what kind of an army. I used to play pretty good
soccer, and -- but I didn't want to play soccer, you know, no matter how hard they
tried to convince me. Swimming, I swam very good and I wanted to get away from
there, not to stay there.

Q: Were there a lot of other Jewish -- very many other Jewish soldiers, and did you
stay together?

A: With me, was only one Jew, **Dick -- Dick Teryoff**. And this **Dick Teryoff** was
treated pretty badly. You know when you her -- see small people, short and weak?
They have a field day with them. But I wouldn't say that anybody touched me,
because I came, 18 year old, I weighed six -- 73 kilograms and then in about a year
ya -- I became 82 and pretty athletic. One day my lieutenant saw me naked, took a
look at me he was oh -- he was a very short guy -- and he look at me and se -- says,

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oh how beautiful you developed. You know, I was athletic, I only needed meat a little bit on my bones, you know? But when you are short like **Dick Teryoff** and -- you were treated like a piece of dirt. And besides we had a lot of -- from **Asia**, Cossacks, Uzbeks, **Chuwash** from **Volgar** region. And I'll tell the u -- the Ukrainians were the worst. Especially I remember sergeant Ukrainian. He didn't dare to tell me a bad -- bad word, but I -- I felt he had something inside. He wanted to say something, but he didn't dare to. But those **[indecipherable]** people, they were called **churek, chumek**, and all kind of, you know, words that they wouldn't like it, to hear. One guy turned out to be a German over there, and with a strange name. His name was **Ingalls**. Is it strange or not? Friend of **Karl Marx**. And I think he was pretty anti-Semitic. A German guy from **Volgar** region.

Q: Did he -- did he attempt anything with you?

A: No, no, he didn't attempt to play with me, no. He was a big, strong guy, but he didn't **[indecipherable]**

Q: How long were you in the army?

A: I was almost two years. What happened, in 1956, as -- as -- as you know, or maybe know, **Czechoslovakia**, through **Russia** -- or **Russia** through **Czechoslovakia** began selling weapons. And all the weapons went to **Egypt** through port of **Nikolaev**. So they sent us to **Nikolaev** to load the ships. And you

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would do 12 hour shift with very little food. I would say they would bring at night, if you worked at night, they would bring you a -- two slices of bread with a cup of tea and a piece of sugar. It's all what you would get. And I worked over there all summer, July -- it was in June, July, August, I think three months. It was this funny in-incident in my -- I wouldn't say incident with me. I was on guard and there was a raider on ze -- on the truck, **Zeil**. And one -- I was on guard there, and one day, I don't know what hit me, I took my rifle and had -- had the sh -- stick, it's called like a -- it's like a knife, how it's called in English, I don't know, a knife on the front of the rifle. And I hit with this -- with this knife, a tire.

Q: A bayonet, you mean?

A: Bayonet, right. And I hit the -- I hit the tire of the **raider**. Then it, I think something going to happen to me. I became scared. And they didn't notice. And next few days I was not there on the guard, but when I came back I noticed that everything went over the -- overseas. And I was lucky enough to escape this kind -- they would prescribe me probably treason or something, I don't know.

Q: Were you involved with anything going on in **Hungary** at the time?

A: I'll tell you. Okay, so -- so we left **Nikolaev** in end of summer, I think. We came to our base -- and they send -- this was October, I think, 1956, they send us to collective farm, to work on a collective farm, and we slept in a church, a former

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church. They -- they didn't have any electricity there. They only had electricity for a few hours. The -- the gi -- girls would come over, you know, with soldiers and you wouldn't even see their faces. They used to show movies over there and use their diesel, you know, so there was some light maybe inside there, in the church. But otherwise, hm. So, one night, it was maybe three o'clock in the morning, they say alarm, alarm. We got up -- it was about 150 kilometers from our base -- we didn't ask nothing, nobody asks, you have an orderly row. And we came to our base, and - - and they tell us something happened in **Hungary**. It was November, October '56, somewhere. And they said -- so they took half of our battalion. They di -- it took only about a day or two, they gave out uniforms special for battle, battle gear, and fortunately they only took half of our battalion and they sent it to **Hungary**, and I was lucky, stayed home. And later I -- I met one guy and he was wounded in the cheek. A -- a bullet went through his -- both cheeks and never touched his teeth.

Q: Were you proud to be in the Russian army?

A: In those times, you know, I wouldn't say I was very proud to be in Russian army, but I actually had no feelings, is what I want to say, I had no feelings. I lived there, and you have to do what they tell you. And I -- I -- I wouldn't -- I didn't think about it. There is no -- they wanted me to be an officer, one time they approached me and

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said we'll send you to acadamia -- academy in somewhere -- **Odessa**. But I never wanted to be nobody there. I didn't want to be nobody there.

Q: Why?

A: It's probably -- you know what? I'll tell you the truth, I think subconsciously it probably had to do with happened to my father's cousin. I knew that no -- no matter who you are there, this -- the higher you climb, the faster you fall. I had the feeling like this. So this what -- I -- you know, maybe -- I remember my father-in-law, he -- maybe he was proud of having a guy like **Kaganovich** in the ku -- in the government, but I didn't have such a feeling because I know who **Kaganovich** was. If you can't speak Yiddish, or your own language, you don't have your culture, what kind of -- you know --

Q: Did you feel very Jewish when you were in the army?

A: I felt it, yeah, I felt good that I am Jew. I am not religiously, but -- but -- but my blood. You know, wa -- I remember when I was younger, when **Stalin** died and we had this situation, my mother was very afraid.

End of Tape Two, Side B

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Beginning Tape Three, Side A

Q: This is the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **M-M-Michael Lin**. This is tape number three, side **A**. And you were talking about **Stalin**.

A: Yeah, I was talking about I remember in 1953 when **Stalin** died, and my mother was scared because of the situation, you know, with the -- I heard all -- all the time about the doctors and the ti -- **timosh** -- what her was named, this Ukrainian last name? **Timoshuku** or whatever, I don't remember her name. And one day yo -- actually I -- I would say they were talking about [**indecipherable**] being prepared for transportation as to somewhere, faraway places. So that's why my mother was really afraid. One day **Stalin** died suddenly. It was March nine, I think or -- or earlier. I was skating alone in a park, Catholic park in **Riga** and I heard this. I had -- for me, it didn't bother me at all. I -- I don't even believe that somebody cried with sincerely. Maybe somebody did. For me this was absolutely non-event that he died. I was skating, then I come home and my mother say -- say -- says to me, what's going to happen to us? And I remember precisely what I told her. I say, somebody - - they will find another one. It was -- was my words, precisely. This was -- was my recollection about the situation with her, was in '52 - '53.

Q: What did you do when you left the army?

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A: When I left the army, I didn't go -- want to go to work right away, so I went to technical school. I went to te -- actually, I went to **Leningrad** Geological Institute, but I forgot, I'll tell you, mathematics, and I -- I couldn't pass properly. I -- I passed, but it was not good enough. It was a very prestigious institute -- college, I would say. So I went to a technical school, after a year and a half I graduated, I went to work. I worked at a power station. I worked at a power station and then I went to a diesel plant, where I met my wife, and my wife was from **Moscow** region. She was a -- she even used to work at the power plant in krem -- in the **Kremlin**. Yes, she was an ice -- insulation mechanic.

Q: And her name?

A: **Rya Lin. Rya Bramawa**, her maiden name. But she -- she never saw nothing, and her father died in action. And they lived in a village beyond **Moscow** [indecipherable] **Vladimir**, and she doesn't know nothing about nothing. Nothing at all.

Q: So you met your wife, and then did --

A: Here we go, I met my wife and I don't know if maybe I married young a little bit. Was 23 years old, she was 22, we didn't have an apartment and we didn't have nothing. And I had -- first we lived with ma -- my mo-mother and my stepfather didn't want us, so I'm -- I -- I -- I make him to want us. And then I tried to collect

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some money to buy an apartment during the **Khrushchev** time. You know they allowed to buy? So I went to -- became a seaman to make a little money, because you don't spend it. And my wife worked, and we bou-bought our own apartment, a small one in **Riga**. And we had the son over there in '64. But my parents, they always wanted to emigrate to **Israel**, and they started very early apply, and I applied too. Oh, it was interesting.

Q: When did you first start thinking about emigrating to **Israel**?

A: Oh, I think I began thinking about 1963, but I didn't apply yet. I let my parents apply. They began probably '64 to apply, or maybe even earlier. You see, I -- I was a seaman in a -- on a si -- on a fishing boat, right? On a -- then I wanted to be in a -- on a boat that, how you call a -- how you say it? A boat -- goods? To -- to --

Q: A freighter?

A: Yes, I want to be on a freighter. And you know tha -- I applied to be on a freighter and they never took me. You know, there is a reason why they didn't take me. They didn't want -- they understood maybe I run away or something. I wouldn't do this. I was a very **placeable** person. I wouldn't run away and leave my parents and my wife and my -- this was impossible. But nevertheless, you know the situation. So then in 1960 I went to college, nights. I took -- I took shipbuilding courses. Yeah, I worked daytime and I took sh -- courses in shipbuilding in **Russia**

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five years, nights. But everything til -- diploma, I didn't want to take my diploma. I'll tell you the truth, I was afraid that they impose a penalty when I leave **Soviet Union**, and I felt that wouldn't be proper that I take this diploma. It was mo -- my feeling. But my parents, they left -- we managed to leave in 1966 September, with my sister, she was then 17 years old. I went to **Moscow** with them, and you know, they had this embassy and police, a lot of police was standing behind. I was very naïve probably, or what, I don't even know why. The policeman approached me and began talking so loud. I -- he began talking so loud that I -- I -- I even asked him, why are you talking so loud? I didn't realize that he had the microphone probably over there hidden. So -- but then when I -- we entered the embassy, we went to some of the persons over there and I see a map hanging, of **Israel**, and it was '66. We -- we couldn't talk loud over there, so in whispers I -- I took a pencil and on the map I made the West Bank like this, I surrounded the West Bank, I say, it has to belong to us. And you know, fortunately the next year it happened. And then they left in 1966 for **Israel** and I was applying, applying of -- five times. They were applying many times too. **Refusenik**, refuse, refuse, refuse, but --

Q: Did you have many friend who were applying also?

A: I know only -- only one, but he was, I think he was a -- a activist. I don't remember his last name. He was an active -- Jewish activist because one time I -- in

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old **Riga** I -- I saw him in his apartment, he had all kind -- he even gave me a book to study Hebrew. And I took this book and then I had a friend, he was much younger than I am, his -- his mother -- his last name was **Sefian**. She -- she taught mathematics in -- in the college. So with him we studied a little Hebrew, you know? I began writing a little bit and -- and so I don't know Hebrew now, I forgot, but I can recall, I -- I think. And this guy, **Sefian**, he was a student with me too, he studied Hebrew with me.

Q: So your -- your parents left, you stayed with your wife and continued to work, and then --

A: Yes, I continued to work --

Q: -- and then what was your reaction after the '67 war?

A: Oh, I -- I always find myself in the -- in cul -- **Kulhorz**. They send me to **Kulhorz** and we -- the weather was so bad we didn't even work there, because it was June, right?

Q: Yes.

A: And it was so cold I was shivering even my -- as soon as I her -- there was no radio, but somebody had a radio somewhere and I heard about the war. Immediately I took a bus. I left everything, my -- my belongings, I-I took a bus, I wanted to hea -
- to listen to the radio. It was by **Yelgiva** 50 kilometers from **Riga**. So I took the

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bus, came to **Yelgiva**, from the **Kulhorz** to **Yelgiva**. From there I took a taxi. It turned out I was not by myself, there were other -- about three or four Christians and they were talking about the war, the -- even they mentioned one guy tells about that Israeli ar -- tanks hit -- hit them so hard that it -- and they went to -- into **Sinai** peninsula. And it was probably, okay, June fi-fifth, or it was about June sixth --

Q: Sixth, right.

A: -- yeah, I think. Yeah, first time I -- I heard about this, it was in a taxi in 1967, June sixth, yeah.

Q: Did you feel proud?

A: Yeah, it was very good feeling, very good feeling. I had a very good feeling. What else can you say? Yeah.

Q: And how did you --

A: And my mother was de -- my mother was there already, and my sister was there, they lived in **Kiryat Yam**, by -- by the -- by the sea.

Q: Then how did you finally get out?

A: So I applied and applied and then suddenly my mother send me

[**indecipherable**] you know who used to send me? My uncle, who used to send me a -- I would call it a **weisof**. It's a -- papers for. And then my mother began. So in 1969 they finally let me go.

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Q: So you and your wife left in 1969?

A: Yes and my -- my son.

Q: Oh --

A: I had -- I had already a son who was four and a half years old, almost. '69 -- was '69 February, so my son was four years and about three months old.

Q: And his name?

A: **Acardy**.

Q: What were your thoughts about leaving **Riga**? You were born there. Did you --

A: I would say I was happy. And you know, I had a -- a guy -- another Jewish guy, my friend, **Igor Pavlowski**, yes, and this **Igor Pavlowski**, I asked him to see me -- see me, how you call it -- see me going away. He came and then came one my Jewish friends, **Cherfus Laib**. Yeah, this **Cherfus Laib** worked with me and we attended college together. He was a manager at the diesel plant. He came with his wife -- now they are in **America**, but they came 10 -- yeah. And --

Q: Was it very emotional for you to leave **Riga**?

A: No, I was just happy. That's it, happy. I am a person, maybe late now, I am older, I have such em-emotional feelings, you know. But when I was younger I was -- I -- I didn't have any emotions like now I have. Even about my dead relatives, the

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older I get, the angrier I become. I don't know, maybe not everybody like this, but with me it's like -- like this. I-I am very angry.

Q: You're angry at what?

A: I am very angry of what's going on in the world, with the Nazis, Holocaust denial, with this **Calley** person, you know, **Calley**, the Latvian guy? They say they can find nothing wrong with him, but take a look. Just go through the list of ar -- **RS** command, and you will find all these **SS [indecipherable]** people. They're all there, and his name is there. So everybody of them is guilty. Just by joining, you can imagine that you are guilty.

Q: What was it like to arrive in **Israel**?

A: Before we're -- I -- I spent four days in **Vienna**, yeah, in the castle, yeah. And then we -- in those times not many Jews used to leave **Russia** for **Israel**, you know, so they treated us pretty well, and allowed us to stay in **Vienna** for four days.

Q: Did you ever consider coming to the **United States** instead?

A: No, in those times, no. In those times I didn't consider come to the **United States**. But -- this a different story. Okay, so we spend four days in **Vienna**. I came to **Israel**, it was March fir -- March third or fourth. It was a hot day and I was wearing a bla -- black suit. So, my parents had a big car for me waiting. Black car, I remember.

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Q: What was it like to put your foot down on Israeli soil?

A: First of all, I was happy, pretty happy. And so we came to **Kiryat Yam**, she -- they had a small apartment, because they were a little -- I don't know, the -- my stepfather's sister brought them to **Kiryat Yam** and put them in a small apartment, three people, when they could get any apartment they wanted, you know? So I came to **Israel**, I didn't go to any [indecipherable] like many other people, I didn't take any loans or something like this. In two days, because my profession was very good, I went to work for **Kablan**. It's a private entrepreneur. So -- and he put me to work **Haifa Kimikali**. **Haifa Kimikali** it was a plant that was built in **Haifa**, a chemical plant, and it was just -- they're beginning to build with a French firm together. So I worked there for awhile. I worked there for awhile, but then I decided -- but there were no benefits. I didn't even know. I didn't even know how much I get, and I worked 24 hours a day many times. And they didn't pay too much. But I think -- I got an apartment, nice apartment in **Kiryat Shmuel**, and I thought I am in paradise. [indecipherable] I considered, my wife doesn't work, my kid is okay. I ma -- make money that I can pay rent. The rent was cheap then. I can eat whatever I want and still put aside something in the bank. So what do you expect? Even I worked a lot, but I was strong guy, I worked. But then I -- I just -- I had a bad experience with my -- **Kablan**, you know [indecipherable] business, he want to

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squeeze out a few. So I -- they took me **Vulcan**. It wa -- they used to build military, th-the, you know, duds. You know what a dud is, like bomb that -- no, it doesn't exist now, so I can say. So it was like a cast iron fact-factory, they used to cast iron, yeah. And I worked there for awhile, but you see the problem -- and we went through a -- this **Suez** crisis, you kno0w, '69 - '70 - '71, and I -- they never too -- took me to -- into Israeli army. I was a -- you know, I came 32 years old, nobody touches me? I work, but I felt somewhat -- something small, felt like I'm confined, you know? I wanted something bigger, some -- it's what my feeling was. It was not maybe financial, no. But something bigger, like. So one day, we -- we had the relatives in **America**, my grandfather's sister. She -- she was here since 1920. I never knew about her, but she -- she -- I asked her to send me a letter. So she send me a letter, I came on a tourist visa and -- by myself. A few days we [indecipherable] here, a owner of a factory, textile plant. So, he hired me. The sooner you're hired -- in those times I was making, like I said a -- I would say equivalent of our times maybe 1500 dollars a week, you know, so --

Q: What city were you?

A: It was east **Rutherford** in **New Jersey**. So -- so I worked there since '72 January til '73 May when I got -- yeah, I got my papers, you know, through **Tolstoy**

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Foundation and they didn't charge me nothing. Praise **[indecipherable]**. In those times they didn't charge me nothing, no.

Q: And your wife and son are still in **Israel**?

A: They're still there, yeah. And then this, you know, I think I got my green card, right, and I say, I'll go to **Israel**, check on my -- I had another son, this guy, who was born there, **Eugene**. So I -- I'll check -- I buy -- buy a ticket, I have my green card, I go over there, stay there for a few weeks and then suddenly at the airport they say, oh you can't go, you have to go through the army first. So they -- they took me about for six, seven weeks, I don't remember, **Mechana David**. Now of course I was not very happy, but what can you do? They actually didn't need me. Well, okay, I went through the same motions as a young fella, **Mechana David**. I took my oath of religions, and after that they released me and after six or seven weeks and I went back to **America**. Then the papers -- my wife got the papers with my sons, and in 1973 October they arrived, and that's how we've stay here.

Q: Did they come before the Yom Kippur war?

A: No. They came after Yom Kippur war. Of course, I was nervous. And I had a friend, a older man, so I called up and my wife didn't have any telephone. So through upstairs neighbors, Romanian people, I called my wife up and everything

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was okay. Of course, she -- she spent a little time in basement, you know, but everything turned out, you see, we're goo -- we're si -- where we should be.

Q: So then your wife and two children came to the **United States** --

A: Yes.

Q: -- and where did you all live?

A: Well, I rented an apartment, and I rent it now. Small apartment I rent and we both sp -- after a few years she began working, I -- I worked -- I am a good machinist and -- screw machine. And maybe in the beginning was not as easy because my language was not as good enough, but -- so I didn't think about going to school or something, becoming some contin -- maybe engineer or something. But the money was good, so I say, ah, hell with it, you work, you make a living and -- and my wife began working and she worked nights for 10 years. She worked really nights, from 12 o'clock at night til seven in the morning.

Q: Doing what?

A: She factory worker. She doesn't know any English now, even. Never learned. We worked and I'm happy. My -- both sons graduate from universities, and we have grandchildren one, and a second one coming up and -- and my son now -- I mean, my older, married to a old country woman, she is a doctor ni -- future doctor.

Q: And where do your children live?

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A: My -- my oldest son lives in **New York, 85th Street** and **Central Park**, he bought a -- a condo. He'll -- gonna move, buy an apartment, because too small now.

Q: And what kind of work does he do?

A: He works -- he graduate from **Long Island** University, but he became a blue collar worker, but he works for **Bell Atlantic**. He enjoys it.

Q: And your younger son?

A: My younger son is, what to say? Graduated from **Florida** State University with a Masters degree in international relations, but he wants to get a job in **Washington**, but I don't know. He works for somebody, but --

Q: Mm-hm. Can we talk now a little bit about your thoughts and feelings about what you went through?

A: Yes. In where?

Q: Just generally, after the war. Do you feel you would be a different person today if you hadn't gone through the experiences that you did?

A: If not for the war I would be -- even my thinking would be different, obviously. First of all, my father wanted to expand his business, one thing. Second, I had some talents for music, I think, and I want play s -- fiddle. So everything would be different and pro -- we probably would be well off people, you know. **Latvia** small country, but industry was not too big, so our size of business would be a pretty good

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one, I think. So it's how the situation you keep -- it's hard to say what I would be thinking about, but it would -- everything would be different.

Q: You -- your childhood was very difficult, extremely difficult. Do you feel you'd lost it? That you never really had a childhood?

A: I never had any toys, but I never felt that my childhood is lost because I was involved in rougher stuff like sports, gangs, and you know, I-I -- I -- I wouldn't say that I miss, you know, what it means to be a childhood, to be patted over your head? It depends on your way of thinking, it's -- I think, right? And so I-I -- I -- whatever I had, I had, and I can't -- you can regret or not regret, you can't change it, right? I -- I don't think I have hard feelings like -- like what -- about childhood. The only hard feelings I have, what happened to my family and to all of us, all Jewish people, this what I have. That to me personally, I -- I don't think so.

Q: Do you think a lot about your wartime experiences now?

A: You know, when time passes, you always remember the better parts of it, right? And the hard parts you -- as if you forgot. I [indecipherable] I -- I think so. So I remember my childhood with -- seems to me with a smile, yes. Cause a smile, I -- I feel this way.

Q: This is your -- your postwar childhood?

A: Yes.

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Q: After, when you got back to **Riga**.

A: Yes, yes, postwar. Well, before I can't say because I too young to remember very much. But I was very spoiled I remember and I -- I don't think I would be -- you see, in those times even my mother was giving me so much bananas -- can you imagine bananas in **Latvia** in those years? Because she was so do-doting. It was too much. Even I met one woman who even remembers how m -- my mother was doting over me then. So I don't know, maybe I would be spoiled.

Q: You're talking about after the war was over she spoiled you because you didn't -

A: No, before the war.

Q: Oh, be --

A: Oh, before the war she spoiled me, not after. After the war she didn't have the means to spoil me.

Q: When your children, when your sons were little, and the age that you were when you were going through hard times, did that bring back memories for you? Wh- When your boys were four, five, six, seven, eight, when you were going through such awful times, did that bring back memories for you when you were that age?

A: You see, when you have kids and they have -- they don't have to experience what I had, you feel happy. And sometimes when they me -- misbehave, or don't

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achieve what you wanted them to achieve, you regret that they didn't do it, I'm say didn't achieve. But this is a life, their own life to live, you know, if they've -- everybody has his own character. And you c -- you can't do nothing about. If you have a -- the way you born, the way you die, it's what I think. My philosophical -- it doesn't matter what background you come from, you're already born with the genes that command you what to do.

Q: But your childhood was so unusual, do you not think that affected your character, all the difficulties that you experienced?

A: Obviously. Environment affects everybody, an animal, right, according to **Darwin**, right, believe it or not. So it affects your brain.

Q: Well, that's why I was asking before. How do you think that affected you growing up, not -- not in what kind of job you would have, but just psychologically, because you were tested so unusually for a young child.

A: I don't know --

Q: Did it make you tougher?

A: I can only think about it and say that I -- of course it made me tougher. If I were -- if there was no war and all these conditions I lived through, I would probably be, as you call in Russian language, **Mami kin sinook**. Mother's -- how we call?

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Mother's son, or what? Yeah, just a spoiled brat, yeah. And I -- you know. I have something to say about Christian people. You see I have a ring here, my --

Q: Yes.

A: -- and my wife has this. This ha -- ring has a history. Not this ring, but the gold. My grandmother used to have a -- a armband, right? So --

Q: Right, a bracelet.

A: A bracelet made from gold and pearls, right? My mother always mentioned it. So one day, it was 1952, I think, I coming home -- I was about 15, I coming home and I see a woman sitting by our door. A very skinny woman. I remember her, she was so skinny. She asked me, here **Chaya** lives? **Chaya**, my mo -- my mother. I say yes, but my mother wasn't home, so I didn't let her in. After a few hours my mother came from work and -- her name was **Antya** and she was of Polish origin. Turned out she was from my mother's village, **Skundaliena**. And we didn't have a big place, so she slept on the floor. Mattress was on floor After she left, my mother showed me a bracelet, this bracelet. She says, you know what **Antya** bought? This bracelet. My grand -- my mother, she -- my grandmother's bracelet, she brought it from **Skundaliena**. She said, my sister, before she was shot with her son, she handed over to my -- this **Antya**, and this **Antya** kept it til sh-she brought it to my mother, this bracelet. I'll tell, this **Antya** was so poor, hungry and she brought this

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bracelet to my mother. What happened to this bracelet? In 1966 when my mother was allowed to travel to **Israel** --

End of Tape Three, Side A

Beginning Tape Three, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** volunteer collection interview with **Michael Lin**. This is tape three, side **B**, and you were talking about the bracelet.

A: Yes, so when my mother was allowed to travel to **Israel** she took the bracelet with her, and in **Keev -- Tamozhnya** it's called, the checkpoint, they na -- didn't allow her to take it with her. So -- but they were kind enough to write out a receipt. So two years later I was traveling to Crimean peninsula with my wife, so we spent a month vacationing. On the way back I went to **Keev**, and the -- and the checkpoint the -- I had this receipt because my mother sent it from **Israel**. So I had this receipt and they gave the bracelet back to me. And I knew that I would do -- be going to **Israel**, I didn't want to lose it, so what I did, I made two wedding rings for me and my wife. So it's how it is, it's what to ba -- story. But I wanted to emphasize how goyim, some goyim are good, good people. Oh, the other friend of my mother **Kuiznitz Orway**, who used to live right on the **Moscow** Street, close to **Rumbula** forest where the **Vulcan**, there used to be a factory, a rubber factory, he used to

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work, this g-guy in there, and they were witnessing the slaughter of Jews in

Rumbula f -- th-the her -- they probably didn't see in person, but they heard the shots for sure, and they told my mother. And they were g -- very good people.

Maybe they didn't hide Jews because -- but as Russian people, they were from -- from her village, from **Skundaliena**, they were very good people. And it's -- not everybody's a villain.

Q: Talking about all the terrible massacres and pogroms and killings that went on in **Riga** after you left, and when you heard about them, as -- and when you were older, ho-how did you respond to hearing those -- news of these terrible atrocities?

A: You see, I don't re-recall my reaction to this, but I never went to see our apartment, old apartment. I'll tell -- I never went to see. I -- I didn't go no cemeteries, no nothing. I -- I felt I don't want to see it any more, you know? Maybe it's wrong, but it's how I feel.

Q: Too painful you mean.

A: Yes. Because one time when my -- it was 1965, we went -- we had -- had a Jewish cemetery in **Riga**, in **Yugla** area, where my grandmother was buried. And then my -- my mother's aunt died in 1965 and they buried her in Jewish cemetery. And when I was in the Jewish cemetery there was nothing to remind me of my grandmother, there was ground. My -- my mother stomped the ground in the place

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where my grandmother was buried and said, here is the place where she was buried, as far as she could -- could remember. But there was nothing, they destroyed everything there. So this year --

Q: So you have been -- you have been back to **Riga**?

A: Since when?

Q: Have you returned?

A: No, no, no, this was in 1965.

Q: Oh, '65.

A: Yeah. I-I -- I intend to go, but my wife doesn't feel too good, so -- I wanted to go three years ago, just -- over the phone I-I realized that somebody knew my grandfather. Old woman, but this was three years ago. She even mentioned him like a [indecipherable] name, it like -- like a darling name. She called him **gidelka**, my grandfather, so she was a very old woman. I don't even know if she alive now because she was 87 then, and [indecipherable]

Q: What are your thoughts about Germans and **Germany**?

A: You know, I have some relatives who live in **Germany**, moved over there. As I mentioned, my father's cousin, who was a guard in **Ural** mountains, in the prison, his wife lives in **Germany**, in **Berlin**. And she has two daughters, one in **Sweden**, and one a -- one in **Berlin**. She -- they lived there in -- from the 70's, I think. And

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her hu-husband is a dentist and she is an owner of some -- what -- my feelings are very confused about the situ -- **Germany**. First of all, of course, they helped to build **Israel**, it's for -- we know it, money-wise, ah -- they must. Maybe new generation, they better. Was it only brainwashing, o-o-or else during the **Hitler's** time? I don't -- I don't know, this a -- or, weren't there anti-Semites before **Hitler**? As we say, a dirty pond breeds mosquitoes, no? So it was a dirty pond, **Germany**, that bred these mosquitoes. What I say, a lot of people don't like Jews. You have to read history of our people. And no matter how hard you try to escape, some people try to escape to be Jew, it will not help them any way. It's showed through history that even in fifth generation, you will be one day hit hard. I am proud to be Jew, that's it. And I always said I am Jew, that's it. What can I say? Who escapes our n-nationality? I call it nationality, not just a religion but -- because anybody ha -- can have a religion, but nationality, it's one. You have certain features, you have certain blood, maybe. But religion, it can have any religion. **Karl Marx** was a -- a Christian, right, considered. What kind of feature he had? Everybody -- if you walk through **Moscow**, everybody would call him kike, take a look at him. No matter how hard he tried to escape Judaism, or Jewish people.

Q: Have you become more religious in any way since your experiences?

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A: No, I didn't become religious, but I am proud of our achievements. I am proud that we have Bible. I am proud that people -- that everybody, e-especially in the western world has a part of our culture. Everybody, and they can't escape it. Sometimes I even have a feeling that everybody wants to be a Jew, but in their own way. And this is impossible. So I -- I am proud of our achievement. Maybe I would like to have m -- cultural achievements like the Greeks, maybe in architecture or in some other things. Maybe I would be in disagreement with the Bible, but actually they were different times. You had to take from the pagan world, you had to take a certain people and make them who they became. And there was no other way, because you couldn't pray to a -- to a statue, right? This was ma -- now, of course we a little bit we are out of -- separate from religion, it was -- in some ways it g-gave us the opportunity to achieve our greatness, actually Jewish people are great.

Q: How did you impart that feeling to your children, about the greatness of the Jewish people?

A: I-I -- I tried to knock in their head all the time. My older is not -- you know. Maybe he has in his heart, but he -- but my younger is very proud, and he work for Jewish causes and he went to **Israel**, served voluntarily in the army, worked in kibbutz. And this is a different k -- person. But my older is more materialistic, you

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see. I don't know how to express this. [**indecipherable**] materialistic too. A lot of them, unfortunately.

Q: Are you more comfortable around people who experienced World War two firsthand than those of us who did not?

A: No, it depends on situation. You know, I don't have many friends I would say, but I don't talk -- people in **America** they don't understand, many of them. They don't understand what it is. They have it too fat here. They're only complaining. Complaining and complaining. They took one dollar away from them, they already think that they are hungry. You see, depends on situation. **Comfortability** depends -- of course I am happy to see my old friends, we have organization with survivors of -- Holocaust survivors from **Latvia**, so I am a member, pay my dues. But -- but I know a few of them, one or -- one, two. That's it, because they're all from different places and older people than I am, even. Some of them younger, but --

Q: Did you go to the large 1983 American gathering of Holocaust survivors?

A: No, I didn't go to Holocaust survivors. You see, those Jewish organizations are so fragmented, and it seems to me I don't like many things about this, reparations and this, all what's going on. Pay the personalities from -- maybe if you have your name in the s -- in the bank, your personal name, you should get paid, yeah. But in general, my opinion is, it should go to the state of **Israel**, everything. I-I have the

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feeling all the monies, it -- where we're building our country, that's where it should go.

Q: How would you describe yourself today? Israeli, American --

A: First of all, mostly I describe myself as a Jew. My first love goes to **Israel**. I -- I -- I'll tell you, even when the -- the weather is over there no rain, I feel bad when they have no rain, you know? And this is first, these are my -- my head is -- it's -- you know, it's separation of head and heart. My head is materialistic, my heart is -- probably a lot of people like this, it's my -- I'm not the first. My heart is with m -- **Israel** and the Jewish people. I know we have a lot of faults, obviously, like anybody else. I don't say that we are better than anybody else, but we are peculiar people, we're special. And that's what it is.

Q: You were here in the 70's in the **United States** and of course there was the big Civil Rights movement that started in the 60's here. Do you feel that you, who lived through times when your rights were taken away, and your parents and everybody else, that you have a more -- a bigger sensitivity to people whose rights have not been addressed.

A: When -- you're talking about the black ama -- African Americans? You -- you see, like I said you're a person, no matter what color. If you're a good person, you're a good person, if you're a bad person, you're a bad person. And I didn't live

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through Civil Rights movement during the 60's over here, I was in the 70's. But I heard about the Black Panthers, and I -- but it's a radical organization. I -- I don't think by bullets and wa -- and bombs, you will achieve too much in this country, because this country, despite its democracy, we have a very strict police over here and -- and intelligence. I don't think -- and -- and lately I began feeling that -- you see, I am a middle class person with a blue collar back-background, right? We start in polit-politics now. And I feel that a lot of blacks don't like Jews, unjustly. I-I have my philosophy about that. Jewish people tried to help everybody, they out of their skins to help everybody but always it turns out against them. It's what happens with us. No matter what you do good for them, one day they will say you didn't do nothing for us and you going to be a Jew anyway. So we have to mind our own business. We have to be strong, we have to know how to defend ourselves and I think we have to keep our culture alive. I -- I don't say about, let's say inter-marriages, or some other things like this. I'll frank -- I'll tell you, new blood helps. Because I know in our religion we even allow cousins to marry, first cousins and this is not good. It creates monsters during generations. It's why short people or weak people or something like this.

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Q: Are there any smells or sights or sounds that come back to you now as an adult that you remind you of your difficult times during the war? Anything that triggers your thoughts about the war time?

A: Yes, I'll tell you. I don't think it's right to dislike people of -- Latvian people of -- in general. But I have the feeling that they -- they wronged us. They wronged us and during **Ulmenist** time it was pretty good. You know, we had culture, we had the -- you could do anything you want. But probably -- the fascists are fascists, they always felt the -- with the help of Nazis they tried to achieve **Ju-Judenfrei** country, you know, so -- but this is not the first time, and I hope it's the last, but I'm a pessimist about this.

Q: You think this could happen again?

A: As long as **Israel** is strong, I don't think so, but it's gonna -- goes into realm of politics. So I think we're becoming weak in **Israel**. Too m -- you see, you can't even compare **Israel** of today and **Israel** even 30 years ago. No, I don't even know what to say. What to say, we just giving away -- our tiny country away. O-Of course we have to separate from the Arabs, we have to separate somehow. But t -- empty land, we have to keep it. We have to keep it. When I look, let's say at **Golan Heights**, it's not only defense of the country, we're always emphasizing defense and defense and defense. It's not that. Take a look. Who divided up **Africa**, **Middle**

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East? The Colonial powers. They divided up, they set up borders and they set up their rules, their international borders. Who gave them the right to separate [indecipherable] **Jordan** from **Israel** -- from -- or to separate **Golan Heights** from **Israel**? Who gave them the rights? It's what I me -- question. Don't forget, **Golan Heights** was a tribe of **Manasseh** once. And you have to look at the historical prospectus. You know, during Roman times, your first je -- war, **Golan Heights** belonged to -- to Jewish state. Was it under **Agrippa**, or what his name was, [indecipherable] the second? I don't remember the name of the king with the [indecipherable] but it was under Jewish rule. I remember this vividly. So if French or English they decided to, for their own purpose to put new borders, why -- I don't go along with it.

Q: What do you think the role of education should be about the Holocaust to the next generation? Something like the Holocaust museum, for example? Do you think lessons can be learned from the Holocaust, or is it too large, too much to be grasped?

A: You see, we have many deniers of Holocaust, right? I -- I don't know, when people come and -- and look at the exponents, right? Exponents or exponents? I think it depends on the person what his feelings are, or he doesn't want nothing happen to u -- anybody else. Or some people cu -- come with a vicious heart. It -- it

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can happen too. They look and look and say, ah good. This what happened to them, fine. You can't -- you can't get into a heart of a person. Sometimes they're frank, you know, I -- I worked with bl-blue collar workers and I know how they smell, even in **America**. So there's nothing new that the anti-Semitism exists. I don't know what is the percentage, but everybody whispers, right? And especially for me, I don't look like Jewish, sometimes they think that I am a German. So they are frank with me. And --

Q: And how do you answer them?

A: It's a big surprise to them. You see, I don't use my fists any more because it would be a prison term. So I know how to behave, but you know, whatever was said about Jews over the centuries, it's alive today, in -- in their hearts, in their minds. They don't -- they will never change.

Q: Do you feel another Holocaust could happen?

A: Maybe not, maybe not like a Holocaust, but you see, t-take **Austria**. You see coming to power people like this **Hey -- Haider**. See, that's very simple. Good that **Haider** is a small politician in a small country, right? Suppose somebody comes in **United States**. It can't happen? Ah, anything can happen.

Q: Do you feel safe here in the **United States**?

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A: Yes, I feel safe now because we have a good economic climate. Ec-Economy is good and everything is prosperous. You always feel safe when there's something like this. In **Germany** we didn't have this situation with the inflation and unemployment and all that, **Hitler** would never come to power, you know that. Now there -- if the situation comes back, huh? I remember the situation here when - - about the loans to the farmers in **Iowa**. Right, they began blaming their bankers, the Jewish bankers, right? No? So see, you can't change. How you say, a -- a leopard can't change its spots, right? So what can you say?

Q: Do you speak openly about your wartime experiences to others?

A: I-I would say I don't talk about it.

Q: Why not?

A: Well, what to talk about it? You know, the locals, they wouldn't understand what it means, you know? How you talk to them? They -- you -- why would I talk, it will be complaining like, I feel. You can't teach nobody nothing. I know how they smell right away, ar-are you at least neutral toward Jews, or you friend of Jews, or you against us. It's -- it's in your heart, it's not that you can change by words. I don't think so. You don't change people.

Q: Is -- is there anything you wanted to add, or leave a message to your grandchildren for the future? Anything you wanted to say?

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A: No, I'll leave it open. I'll -- I'll not say nothing. I just want them to be smart people. Our people, our nation, I fight for. That's it. Hey, I'll tell you the truth, I have people, my -- my first cousin is [indecipherable]. You know who [indecipherable] is. 10 kids. Useless for the country. They deny even existence of **Israel**. This is my flesh and blood, my first cousin, she. **Tamara. Tamara**, what's her last name? She was born **Lin**. So what is [indecipherable] good for? Our people, right? Hm? So, there are Jews, and then there are Jews, too. They're not considered [indecipherable] Jews, but -- no way. That's all that I want to say.

Q: Nothing else you wanted to add?

A: No. That's it.

Q: Okay, well thank you very much. Thank you very much for doing the interview.

This concludes the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **Michael Lin**.

End of Tape Three, Side B

Conclusion of Interview