

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Eliahu Eilam Kimel
February 25, 2016
RG-50.106*0254

PREFACE

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ELIAHU EILAM KIMEL

February 25, 2016

Gail Schwartz: This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Eli Eilam. It is taking place on February 25th, 2015 in, at the Museum and in **Raanana**, Israel and it is being conducted by Gail Schwartz. What is your whole name?

Eliahu Eilam Kimel: Whole name?

Q: What is your full name?

A: Full name. It's Eliahu Eilam Kimel.

Q: Is that the name that you were born with?

A: I was born like Eliahu Kimel.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in **Krosno**, Poland. It is in Galicia.

Q: When were you born?

A: On 30 July 1934.

Q: Let's talk about your family? What were you parents' names?

A: My parents' names were, my father was Abraham Kimel and my mother was Regina, **Rivka** Kimel. She was called Regina but in Hebrew she was Rivka.

Q: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

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A: No. I was the only child.

Q: What kind of work did your father do?

A: He was a photographer and he had also a business with when like toys or something and he was also equipment and materials for photography.

Q: Did your mother work?

A: Yes she did. She was actually the photographer because she studied it as a student, as a girl and she was an expert. In these times, those times also the negatives and the positives had to be reduced. It means today with the new technology it doesn't need it. But then were little spots on both, on the negative and on the positive and she was correcting it by hand and she was expert in this.

Q: What kind of neighborhood did you live in? Was it a Jewish, a non-Jewish neighborhood?

A: I don't think it was a Jewish neighborhood. I can't say, I don't remember. None of my neighbors. Yes, one neighbor was Polish in the same floor of our house. I remember them because they had a girl in my age and we were invited to each other's house.

Q: Was your family a very religious family?

A: No.

Q: Did you observe any of the holidays?

A: Yes, we did of course. But in those times I think even today, also not religious people up to here in Israel we celebrate all holidays, not being religious. We are secular. We don't think that it has to be connected with religion because it is part of our lifetime.

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Q: Were your parents Zionists then in the 1930s?

A: I didn't understand the question.

Q: Were your parents Zionists in the 1930s?

A: Yes, my father was. He wanted to make **Aliyah** after I was born and my mother said if I have two or three Jewish clients in a week, so I have two or three complaints. And imagine if all my clients will be Jews, Jewish, what shall I do? I don't want to go there. So we stayed, they stayed, let's say we, stayed in Poland.

Q: Did you have a large extended family? Did you have aunts and uncles and grandparents?

A: Yes. A few years, maybe a decade or more ago we made a family meeting and we prepared like family book and then I found that other extended family was nearly 100 persons. And after the Holocaust, we, my generation we were six. Six.

Q: Let's talk about, I know you were quite young. Did you start school before the war started?

A: No.

Q: You did not?

A: No, I was five years old.

Q: Right and you hadn't started. What language did you speak at home?

A: Polish. My parents spoke also Yiddish but not between themselves, only with other Jews. My father studied in Vienna so he was speaking very good German. And my mother also knew

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German because in Galicia was Hapsburg, the Kaiser and they were speaking a lot of German there.

Q: How much education did your father have?

A: How much what?

Q: Education.

A: Education. He had like secondary school in Vienna.

Q: Is that where he was born?

A: No he was born in **Sanok**, in Galicia. In Poland.

Q: And where was your mother born?

A: In the same town, Sanok.

Q: How much education did she have?

A: She studied elementary school and then she studied, how do you say (assistance from “translator” in background). Occupation at high school. She studied photography.

Q: Do you have any memories before the war started? I know you were very young. You were only five.

A: Well not really memories. I had only once there was a flood in our town and this I remember. And even my father doubted because once I spoke about this with him so he said when -- you were too young to remember it. But still I think maybe somebody told you about. But I think I do remember it.

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Q: Let's talk about your first memories then. What are your first memories? Anything in 1939 when you were five.

A: But I have memories but not important. I think like once I was left alone at home and I remember that I was very upset and I cried and it was, I think it was just in the time when the war broke out. I can't say exactly when it was.

Q: Now the war has broken out, so what's the first –

A: What was the – I can't tell you if I remember it or most of it was told to me. Is that my father went from the photo shop home and the Germans occupied our town. Well I remember before this when I was standing on the balcony and I saw I could see the airfield in our city. It was also where pilot school so the German planes were diving and shooting and it was such a beautiful vision to see. And I remember my mother was crying. Come, we go to the basement. Come, come. They will kill you and I said no, I want to look at this. This I remember. Maybe this was one of the first things that I remember. And then when the Germans occupied it was a few weeks later, maybe two, and they made the, by a barrier and they stopped my father. And my father was tall man and he felt himself very confident because he had very good German so he started to argue with them. What you are making him barrier? Go away and that. And they beat him. So he got a shock. He came home and he told my mother we are going and we fled somewhere to the east, near the river **San**. In a ranch of my cousin's grandfather. It was not my grandfather. But it was grandfather of my cousin. And we were there. My father was not with us in this ranch but I was with my mother and with my aunt and this cousin at their grandfather. And –

Q: Where was your father?

A: I don't know. I don't remember it. I didn't ask. And we were running. There was a place to hide, such a cave in the ranch and we had always to run if they were saying Germans are coming or Ukrainians are coming. So we were running and hiding in this cave and I remember very good that once I was sitting in the cave and it was quite long hiding there. So I slipped out from the – I

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escaped. My parent, my mother, that aunt they didn't take care. I was speaking with my cousin my age. And she didn't say a word that I went out and I went out and there were pear trees. It was a (translator) – it was a plant of, plantation of pears. And I was climbing on the tree to pick the pears which I loved. Little pears and very ripe because I think they couldn't pick them up because of the war. And it was left on the tree. And I was on the tree when I saw three people coming in. They were dressed now I know they were Ukrainians and they spoke – Ukrainian is very similar to Polish but it's not the same language. And I tried to hide and I jumped down from the tree and I didn't run to the cave. I was standing on the place. And the chief of them, he had a pistol and others had guns and he asked me where are you, where is your mother. And I was so excited and my nose was full, and I wanted to take out a handkerchief from my pocket. But what I took was a pear. And I gave him the pear so all of them started to laugh. It was a very funny situation and I don't remember exactly, but they left me, they went away.

So when I came to the cave so my mother and my aunt they started to -- they hugged me and said oh you are so clever that you didn't run and show them where we are hiding. So I became a hero because instead – I didn't do anything. I was so frightened that I couldn't even run. So this I remember also, memories.

Q: You stayed there for how long?

A: All this period of time what I remember have no, no quantity. I don't know how long it was. I can't remember. It was some time. I assume it was a short time. And then we crossed the river, river San. River San was the border between the German occupation and the Russian. They had an agreement and the Russian entered from east, and the Germans from west and we crossed the river at night and I think I was most of this time, either asleep or I don't remember. I don't remember how we crossed the river. And –

Q: Is this you and your mother?

A: And father also. And we reached the city of **Lvov**. **Lemberg** in Yiddish. There my grandfather, he was already secular this grandfather. Not the other one but this one was secular and he was, he had, he was a lawyer and he was secretary of the court in Lvov.

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Q: Is this your mother's father or your father's father?

A: My father's father. And we settled in Lvov and I went to the kindergarten for the first time. And it was not long, maybe two months. In this time what I remember that my father, he had a good connections with a vendor of photographic supplies and he went to him and told him, you know I was buying all the time from you. Now I want you to send me all your stock and this was an old man and he said ok and he gave him also a credit for all the stuff. And my father was going around in Lvov and surrounding to all photographic shops. Why? Because the Russians demanded that everybody will get a new ID with a picture so there was a great need of the photographic supplies. And I remember my father was coming in the evening with a suitcase full of money and he and my mother were counting the money. My mother was also working as a photographer. They made a cooperative in, from photography and my – in this time my parents made big money which I think, this I can't tell you exactly but I felt this helped us in the future because of course the money was not the same value as before because it was inflation also. But when we were taken to Siberia, which was one night, they took us in a train. The people, the Russians caught us and they told us. This I also know from what they told me. They said we can either go back to the German part where we ran out or we have, we are not allowed to stay in Lvov. They will transport us somewhere to the east and they pushed us in the midnight in a train that the cars were too (translator – cattle train). A cattle train.

Q: How long were you in Lvov? Do you know?

A: Maybe two months or three months.

Q: Two months. So what are we talking about when you left about –

A: We are talking now about –

Q: December, about December.

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A: No, no September, maybe October, but this was a very hot October. I remember it exactly because when we were in the train and the people were like two floors. They divided the car in two floors and we were pushed inside. The adults couldn't stand up. They had to bend. And we went one way.

Q: Do you remember this? Do you remember the train?

A: Yes, I remember it very good because also I got how you say in English. (translator – whooping cough) Whooping cough and the people from the second floor let me sit near the little opening which was like a window or I don't know, of the car to get some air. It was very hot inside and they gave us little boiled water to drink and this was very difficult and traumatic ride. We went three weeks one way.

Q: You were in that car for three weeks?

A: Yes, three weeks. The car was going and standing and going and standing in stations.

Q: Did they let you get off the car at all?

A: No, not at all. They did not and I don't know where I got – I don't remember how they threw out the pile of what the people do

Q: Waste:

A: The sore, the sore. And—

Q: What about food? How did you get food?

A: In the station they were supplying us. It was, they were guards were all stations where we arrived were guards. I don't know if the guards were going also on the train, on another car or they were waiting for us in the station. But in every station we stopped. They opened the doors to

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let air get in but nobody could get out. And sometimes, I remember once, they wanted to close, to shut the door before we went. And one man put his legs and he didn't let the guards to close it. And one of them said – he was, the officers had other heads as their soldiers. And I was saying this was the head of the officers. They are the best, they are closing the doors firmly. But the others they don't care about much to shut the door completely because it was very important to get air. Well this ride was one of the traumatic rides I remember. There was another even worse.

Q: What did you do all day long with your mother and father? Did they – you just sat there?

A: We were sitting there inside. I don't think that we did something. I don't remember we did something. It was like, (translator) we were like cattle, yes.

Q: Did your mother do anything to comfort you, did she – you were –

A: Yes they were. When I was coughing and I was throwing out, she was holding me. But –

Q: When did that end, when did that train ride end?

A: We arrived somewhere in Siberia and I tried when, in these times, when I was in Israel, in the dot, I was looking in the map trying to find where it was. And I couldn't find because the place that we there arrived at the end was not marked on the map. First we arrived to a train station and then they took us in such a (translator – truck). Truck, yes. They took us in trucks and we drive two days in the forest, somewhere. And the last we arrived to a place that was called **Ozero**. Ozero is in Russian a lake. And there was a lake and a swamp around this lake and this place is not placed on the map because there are a lot of ozeros, a lot of lakes in Siberia. So –

Q: Do you know how to spell that word? Do you know how to spell it?

A: Ozero, O-Zed-E-R-O.

Q: Now you're there and what's happening there?

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A: When we entered there it was like a glade in the forest and a slope down to the lake which was a swamp and there was one barrack, a very big barrack. Once I think it was a prison or something like this I assume. And we, after we got (translator – stretchers to lie on). Stretchers to lie on and there were I think three, one over the other. And I was lying with my older cousin. (translator) She said like in the concentration. It was not a concentration camp. (translator) It was a work camp. And so the first night I remember I was lying with my older cousin and he was, he had matches. And he made a fire with a piece of paper, newspaper and he was burning (translator – flea) Fleas?

Q: Oh, the bugs, the fleas?

A: Yes, it was very nice. I remember it. I was so happy that he was – but there was so much, so many that you can – well, and –

Q: Are we talking about 1939 still?

A: Yes, yes. And we stayed there after Molotov Ribbentrop, after the Germans started war with the Soviet Union and I think it was 41.

Q: Yes, that was June of 41.

A: So we stayed

Q: Wait a minute. What did you do there? Did you do anything?

A: I am just going to tell you. The father, men were working in the forest. They were cutting trees and putting them (translator – in the trunk). They were putting the trunks into the river and, (translator) the trunks of the trees into a river and it was float somewhere. And they had, they were cutting it. I remember that one of the family friends was killed by a tree. At this time I was very shocked that I won't see him anymore. But and we stayed there and I –

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Q: Did you have clothes, did you have enough warm clothes?

A: What I remember is that we had, when we got one house that the parents built, the prisoners or the families, the adults, they had not only to cut the trees, also to build the housing for us. And we got a house, built of the trunks of, no the whole (translator – trunks) built of trunks and this was basically the house was one big, for me it was big.

Q: Was it just one family. You were just by, just your family?

A: There were a few families. And it was also my cousin and my aunt and my – they were adults. They were 20 and 19 years older than me. So they were older. The adults. And –

Q: Did you have enough food?

A: Well this was also a question. I don't remember hunger in this. We got as prisoners we got food. And my aunt was also the cook. She was, like my mother. My mother studied photography and her sister which was older than she, she studied cooking. And she was a cook in this camp so I think, I assume that because of this we had enough food then. It was, I guess that it worked like this because then I didn't ask it. I didn't care. It was not a luxury food but we didn't starve. We didn't feel hunger or I didn't feel hunger then. What I feel, what was the worst is that I was closed in winter time, in one room that I couldn't get out. It was 40 degrees minus and I couldn't play. It was very, very hard time for me as a child. What else that I had no toys. And I had no sweets. And this I remember very good.

Q: Were there any other children from other families?

A: Not in my room. There were children in the camp. But not, I could, only when the snow -- the method I could play with other children and then we went in the forest. We were picking all kind of berries and –

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Q: Did you go to school there?

A: No, because I had no, there was no school. What was built first was a prison. And the second was a (translator – infirmary). Infirmary. These were two public buildings. And I went, before the war with Germans, the Soviet Union and Germans started the war, before the invasion of the Germans, once my father said to – there was a like the Soviet, like a manager, and he quarreled with him and he said that Hitler is a son of a bitch. So he said well this is politically. You speak politic and he put him in the prison. And just at the next morning he opened, there was announced that there are the Germans attacked Soviet Union. So this manager came entered my father told and he opened the door of the prison and he bowed and he said to my father. You know you are right. He is a son of a bitch. This I remember also. Someday my father was telling it very proudly.

Q: Any other memories of that time until June 41? Any other memories?

A: Well the memories of a child that I was picking mushrooms, not important things because there was nothing special traumatic then. Relatively, this working camp for me as a child was not -- this was an open prison. Why I say open. Because all around was forest. Nobody could escape and there was nothing for to escape because there was food. We were supplied by food. And there was nowhere to go only forest and forest and there were wolves also in the forest. I remember that in, next house to us was a female dog and at night she was barking at the wolves and they ate her and the next morning we found in the snow they left her womb with little bodies inside and as children we had the sticks and we pressed the wolf and we took, we put out, we pushed out very little bodies of her womb, but they were dead of course and frozen. This also I remember. This was a very nice view.

Q: Now it's June 41 and the Germans have invaded Russia. Now what happens?

A Now we are going to get at my hardest time in my life. We were liberated. They come, they said now you are free. You can go wherever you like so understand but in Soviet Union. Nobody

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had to get out of Soviet Union. How it happened that all my family that was there and not only my family, but most of the people in -- not only Jews, also the Poland, Polish people that were refugees there went to **Uzbekistan**. Many people. I don't know how many. Many, many maybe a million or close to it went to Uzbekistan. Also many went to **Kazakhstan** but Uzbekistan was, maybe the Russians did it. They wanted us to go there. Or there was a rumor that it's nice and good and there is food of course. This was the main question, food. So we went to Uzbekistan and --

Q: How did you get there?

A: By train. This was a train that, not like cattle train. It was a train that we went also not one day, many days we traveled in a train.

Q: You're with your mother and your father?

A: Yes. We met there in Uzbekistan one aunt and another. So it was very, for me, all my life I didn't know. And we didn't ask where we could ask, how they contacted with each other in order to meet somewhere. I have no idea. Maybe by mail because mail still was working there. And we arrived first, we met in Tashkent which was a big city. And then we went to the east. It was called **Seragana**. It is on the east of Uzbekistan. We saw mountains and they said this is China already. The mountains that you see are in China. So this was a big valley. It is called, now I know because I looked at the maps. It is called the Seragana valley and we were in the town of Seragana.

Q: Do you know how to spell that?

A: I think S-E-R-G-N-A. (translator – S-E-I-G, S-E-R-G-A-N..)

Q: How long did you stay there?

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A: I think more than a year. This was, this was terrible. It was such a hunger that people were – all the fields were cotton because they had – this was a military need cotton. They made of the cotton the uniforms and tents and so they needed cotton. And from the grains they pressed oil and they made soap and oil of it. So this was very important for the war for the military so that's why they had to grow only cotton. And there were some gardens of the Uzbeks that they had also fruit but not for us. They needed it for themselves. And after some time, maybe a year of terrible, terrible hunger which people died. I remember we, myself and my cousin that lives in Jerusalem, a female cousin. And a male cousin. They both are a bit older than me but let's say the same age. We were going around looking for something to eat in the winter. We had to collect it. What the camels or donkeys did with, I don't know English enough. We collected this. (translator – waste) Waste, the waste of the not human.

Q: Of the animals?

A: Cattle waste. We were collecting it and by this we found many children dead. Swollen bellies from hunger. And –

Q: What did you have to eat?

A: Nothing. We, my father was going to the factory that was pressing the cotton grains so after it was pressed it, the **chelelosa** [ph] that was taken out of the press, it looked like a roof, you know like the roof what was put on the roof. And this was, he was taking this. And my mother was boiling it with (translator – radish) Radish. She was cooking it with radish. That time I dig up. And this was what we were eating. And so it –

Q: Did you go to school there?

A: No. No, I had another cousin there that she was also older than me, 19 years older, and she was in Poland as a teacher. So she taught us, all three of us. Cousins the same, nearly the same age to write. So she took the newspapers what was there. It was newspaper was always because the Soviets they had to write and to put their ideas to say how great is Stalin and so on. So there

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were a lot of – we could get newspapers. So on the side of the newspaper, on the white, not printed side she drew lines and we were, we started to write the letters. This was like a school but this was the education I got. And I told you that I was, I had no toys. Maybe this is why I became an engineer, because I was planning and building my toys. I started then. I was creative and I made many, many things of nothing. And one day the Polish military organized to you know that there was the Polish government in exile in London. And this government was against communistic government in Poland. And they mobilized the refugees in Soviet Union. It was agreed with Stalin. And they were trained and financed by the British. And this army after they trained, they went to Persia and from Persia to Iraq. From Iraq to Palestine. From Palestine to Egypt. From Egypt they went to Italy and they made the great fight in Italy which made them very famous and til today the Polish are so proud. They should, the only place when Polish army did something, not the communistic army but this Polish Anders army, they conquered **Monte Casino** which was a very important place in the war in Italy. After conquering Monte Casino the Germans retreated and they actually went all over Italy. And this was, this battle was so important that today in Poland there is in every city there is a street named Monte Casino. And General Anders is very important and they have statues of him in Poland. So at least I go back now to where they, were training so we went, we moved to a little, little town. It was near the base of the Polish. And my mother and aunt were cooking. They were buying somewhere on the market apples.

They were cooking like you know compote of the apple with a lot of water and we were carrying, also we children were carrying the, well this, it was very heavy for us. We were carrying it to the gate of the base. And the soldiers would come in, they were coming up and buying this, drinking this, buying from our mothers, this thing. And this we did. We were walking six kilometers one way in the very, very hot days. I remember it that we are going –

Q: Are we still talking about 1941 or –

A: Yes. 41. But then when my father was mobilized and also he tried to, also my uncle so they –

Q: They were mobilized into the Anders army?

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A: Yes and then they got food. I don't know. Our hunger was not so bad after they were mobilized. I remember the first time I saw chocolate. They thought that my cousin, my age, he got the portions before us. So he came and brought me. He had in his hand a piece of chocolate and so he said guess what I have in my hand. I couldn't guess. I said maybe you have a bug. No. Who eats bugs? So I said oh maybe we were drying seeds of melons. And this we were also eating. Ah, melon seeds. No. And he was so anxious to tell me about, so he opened his hand and look a chocolate. And the chocolate melted in his hands so I licked the chocolate from his hand. It was the first time I ate chocolate. This I remember also.

And then one day I told you about the hunger. It was, there was also -- people were sick because there were so many lice that everybody, many people got typhus and people died from hunger and from typhus. And my mother became also ill. And they took her to a hospital there in -- it was still in Seragana before we went to the base of the Polish army. And there was a hospital. And my father was visiting her every day.

And one day he came. He said let's go. Tomorrow we shall go to visit mother because she missing you and she doesn't feel well. Ok so we went and the next day and he took me out, high, I think it was the first floor in a building. And we entered to the room entered to the room and my father see another woman in her bed so he get, ah where is she? Ah, she died this night and she is down in the cellar. So we went to the cellar and there was a like a car, a flat, flat carriage and full of bodies. Like piled on it. And we were looking around the pile. Around the bed, the dead. And my father find her, found her and he said she has still pulse. And we tried to push, to pull her out and I had to help him to hold the other corpse not fall down. And so she went and he said down to me go and call a doctor to run, to we want to make her well.

Q: To save her? To save her?

A: Yes. So I ran, I did. I was first time in my life there and I didn't know where so I ran out all the four floors up and where we were before and I saw a person which it was a physician with a stethoscope on his neck. So I pushed his apron and I tried to tell him something but I had no air to breathe because I was choked and he understood maybe. And he went after me. So I ran down and he and my father married her, they put her to life. It was our family. And then I go back to the way to Teheran.

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We were, we were allowed to get out as a family because of the military to follow the army to Teheran.

Q: Just one minute. So you're, they revived your mother. And then did she come back with you? She came –

A: She revived. She was since then she was ill person. She didn't –

Q: She came back home? She came back to you?

A: She came back home and she went with us to Persia.

Q: Until you left, then life went on the same way is what you're saying, right?

A: Sorry.

Q: Before you left again and your mother came back, you just –

A: It was short time before we went, we were allowed to go out of Russia also.

Q: Now you're about to leave. Ok.

A: Yes. I need a short break. I give you **Yadin** in meantime. Excuse me please.

Q: Hello. Is there anything you wanted to add?

Yadin: I am just a bystander. Heard some of these stories before but I clearly I, all I can say is that the time in Uzbekistan is really the -- and what happened to him with his mother which was really the biggest trauma. Not that the rest of it wasn't traumatic. But that was the hunger and his mother's so called death was really what made the biggest stamp on his psyche. Did he tell you about when they had to leave Uzbekistan, how they were trampled or – Uzbekistan. How

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they trampled over each other.

Q: No, no we were just –

Yadin: (in Hebrew to Eliahu Eilam Kimel) Ok it's coming. Ok hold on.

A: Now we are allowed to go so we –

Q: Are we talking, what, 1943 or what are you –

A: No, 42 maybe.

Q: 42, ok.

A: It was after the Japanese made the attack to the Pearl Harbor.

Q: Pearl Harbor. Ok, so it's 1942 and they let you –

A: They let us out. So we went to a town on the coast of the Caspian Sea in the Soviet Union. And there we should, we had to cross the Caspian Sea to the southwest. It was not south, it was quite a long journey. And everybody was afraid that he won't get place on the ship because it was you know not so organized. Not, no ticket. No, everybody was pushing in and we entered. And I remember this. They gave me a (translator – bucket of water) bucket of water and told me you know this is so important, the water. So you have to keep it very good. And it was with a rope. It was, what (translator – held together with a rope) held together with a rope and I was held, holding this and everybody was pushing into the entrance to the pier. It was like a gate and the people were so pushing in that I was so pressed that I lost breath and I fainted. Before I fainted I stepped on a child that was already dead so and after this I fainted and the stream of people pushed me out and I was on the other side, the side of the pier. And my mother and my aunt, they revived me with the water that I had, but not all of it. I was very, I didn't lose the water, even though my head was cut with the rope. I was so stubborn not to, to lose the water.

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And we went on the ship. The ship was –

Q: You're now eight years old almost right?

A: Sorry.

Q: You're almost eight years old now. Eight years old.

A: No, I am, yes, almost eight. And then I, we found that the ship is a tanker and there is only place above. And there were (translator – benches) like benches from wood over the tanker, over the tank. And everybody pushed in, sat on his place and was afraid to get up because the place would be taken. The people were pushing. You know people are like animals. It's, when it is (translator – survival) survival. And we wanted to survive to go out of the terrible Soviet Union then. It was really, we were, everybody was suffered the hunger and they wanted out. So we went 36 hours on this tanker not getting up, making all our needs where we sat. And to us impossible. This was very, very shocking, this. And after 36 hours we arrived to a place called **Pahlavi**. It was in the name of the Shah's family. Pahlavi. And this town Pahlavi.

Q: This is in Persia? In Iran?

A: Yes, it was not called, we didn't get to any town. It, we just went on the shore of the sea. And there were mats of putting, put on the sand and the mats above to make shadow and there they laid us then. This was few days, I don't remember how many we were there. We were ill with malaria and with all kind of – and there we got the dates from India, fresh dates. This was our food to eat. And after short time they took us with trucks through a very bad road in the mountains to Teheran. Near Teheran was a camp.

Q: You're still with your parents?

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A: Yes, but my mother was taken to a hospital. She didn't function any more like a person. She was always ill, but she was taken to a hospital in Teheran and was, we were separated. I was with my aunt and with my cousin.

Q: Where was your father?

A: My father was in the army. He was already maybe in Palestine or in Iraq.

Q: He left, he went into the army right away when they formed it?

A: We were allowed to get out because he was already in the army. So he was in the army in the Anders army. And we –

Q: So you got to Teheran you said?

A: Yes, Teheran but it was in, out of the town, out of the city. It was in a camp. Also a refugee camp of Polish. Polish camp and they put us in a like ghetto, three or four barracks for Jews. And there was also a house that was an orphanage of Jewish children which later became the Teheran Children. And we were together with them. They were helping us, those Teheran children were organized and there were already Jews with Jews and we were few. We were few Jewish children with the Polish army. And when the kids were bullying us, beating us or trying to do any very, very bad things to us, the big children were taken with little. So those children were helping us, were coming to save us. And one day there were, wanted to push me into the -- you know the toilet was like a grove and upon were wooden covers and the people were doing, all the, all the it was like a canal full of shit. And they had to, the big children wanted to push me into it. And I was fighting so hard with them and my cousin saw it and he called the children, the Jewish children from the orphanage and they came to save. Those bullies ran away and I didn't. So I didn't die and thanks to them. But the time in Teheran was for me very bad also because I went to the school there. I went first to the school. The first class I was older than, I was, I should go to the second class, but as I never studied so I went to the first class and in the school. I had a teacher that I remember her still today. Because when, in the morning when we

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started the school day, the children they had, the Polish had such a song to sing for -- like **Adon Olom** in Jewish, some religious song in the morning. The teacher was handing a big cross with poor Jesus Christ on it. And she went around the desks forth and back and she was pushing in my face the poor Jesus because I was, I crossed him. I was, she blamed me for crossing Jesus so I remember her. She was a very great pedagogic person. And I hated school.

Q: You were living with your aunt?

A: Yes, these were a few barracks and every family put some blackouts like walls in the big barrack and so and there were like beds of wood and this barrack. I was in the barrack of my aunt.

Q: Did the army camp have a name? Was there a name do you know?

A: I didn't understand.

Q: Did the place have a name? Was there a name?

A: No, this was called Teheran, the refugee camps, Polish refugee camp. I read about it later so there were 27,000 citizens in this camp. And we had, I had to go to shower once a day so it was more than a kilometer, let's say about a mile one way to the shower. And one way back from the shower. To the barrack. And that's --

Q: But there was no name of this barracks, of this place? It didn't have a name?

A: No, it was called Teheran. The --

Q: That's all it was called. Ok.

A: It is called Teheran. Also the children that came to Palestine with **Aliyat Hadnoar** [ph], you know what is Aliyat Hadnoar. They got, it was called certificate, permission to go to enter

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Palestine but we didn't use certificates on the course of the Jewish agency, Aliyat Hadnoar, because we had the permission of the Polish army to get in. So we came separated from, not together with them. So we arrived to Israel to Palestine, on December 43.

Q: So you were how long –

A: Second Hanukah, second Hanukah light I remember.

Q: How long were you in Teheran?

A: I started the first grade and part of the second so let's say one and a half years.

Q: And then you were told you could leave to go to Palestine?

A: Yes. We were taken to a port. I forgot the name. I knew it. I found it in the map but I, this in the moment I don't remember how it is called. The port in the Persian Gulf in, near the river, near the two rivers that from Iraq that come in. And we went on a ship. It was called **Escanios**, this I remember. Because this was the first time that I enjoyed being with my mother. She, as an ill person, she got a cabin. A cabin with, I was with my mother in a cabin. And all of us, before I got to the cabin of my mother we were in the down, in the ship, with the children together. The people were together inside the ship and I had a cabin with my mother. And this was such a nice time for me that I could enjoy my mother for a whole journey to Suez. This ship went to the south, far to the south in the Indian Ocean, because there were German U boats, submarines that could shoot the ship. So we have, went very far to the south and then turned back and arrived to Athens. And in Athens, we stopped for three days. And we were not allowed to get off the ship. So I saw Athens only from far away. And after this they got add then also supply. So one day I see two people carrying a bench or I don't know what it's called in English. Maybe bench of bananas. How is this called in English?

Q: A bunch of bananas.

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A: Bunch. A bunch of bananas. And I looked at this with very big eyes, assumed I was very looking like – such big eyes so one picked up a banana and gave me. So I ran to my mother and I said mama, look what a funny cucumber I have. This was – I like bananas still today. We arrived to Suez. And we didn't cross the canal. We got off and we were put on a train that took us to **Atlit**. Atlit is near Haifa.

Q: You went through the desert, the Sinai desert on the train?

A: Yes, we crossed Sinai desert and we crossed all Israel along and people in the train stations were coming and looking at us like you know they are so – when we arrived to Israel we were not the first. Because first were those children from the orphanage. And this was such an excitement here in the Jewish **yishuv**, that those people from Holocaust, the first children arrived and it was such an event that when we arrived it was already Hanukah. And the children of, I don't think from Haifa. I think they were from the kibbutz there in **Bet Oren** is a kibbutz and they came to make with us a Hanukah party.

Q: So you arrived when, this is 1940 –

A: Three, December.

Q: December 43?

A: Yes. And my father is all the time in the army and he was fighting in Monte Casino and Italy. He got a medal from King George. For the fight of Monte Casino. And but I was with my mother. And my father arrived only at 47.

Q: You didn't see him until 1947?

A: I did because after the –

Q: We'll get there in a minute. So you've just arrived in Atlit, you said.

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A: Yes.

Q: In December 1943.

A: Yes.

Q: And so you're nine and a half years old.

A: Correct.

Q: OK and then how long did you stay in Atlit?

A: A short time, a few days.

Q: And then you went to a kibbutz you said?

A: No, I went to Jerusalem. I had a cousin that was for 19 years older than me. He was married and he was **Merkaz Klita Tashilano [ph]**. You know what this Merkaz Klita, Do you? The center that absorbs, absorbing certain, we have now for newer –

Q: Immigrants, for immigrants?

A: Yes, so I was – my cousin was the absorbing center for our family.

Q: What was his name? What was your cousin's name?

A: **Shlomo Meir**. And his wife accepted us in Jerusalem. Well from this time I became immediately Israeli. I didn't want to be **Olech Hadash**. I wanted to be a sabra and where I didn't behave nicely in my mother's eyes she was calling me you are a sabra.

Q: How was her health then?

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A: She didn't recover really. But she died very young. She died in Jerusalem and I think she was, she was 51.

Q: So now you're in Jerusalem and what do you do? Do you go to school or where did you live?

A: Yes, I went to school and then I went to high school.

Q: Did you live with your cousin?

A: No, I lived first with my mother and then I mobilized. After I finished the high school, which I did. I told you that I hate school, hated school but when I was in Jerusalem in the high school, I loved school.

Q: Did you pick up Hebrew easily?

A: It took me maybe three months. I was extraordinary. I wanted so much to be absorbed and to be like everybody and not to be a poor you know and **Rachmanov**. I was –

Q: Did the other children ask you about your experiences?

A: No.

Q: So did you talk about them?

A: Once we met maybe 50 years after school or about and we sat together a few friends and one of, one lady said I didn't know nothing about you. We didn't ask. We were not interested about what happened to you. We lived another life. She complained about her faith. They didn't ask. Nobody asked. And they called us nicknames, **Paleet** or Polish.

Q: Did you see any of the other Teheran children at all? Did you –

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A: No, because I didn't go to a kibbutz and I got, went to Jerusalem which I saw were two of my cousins that arrived with me. But all the other children, I had no connection any more. And I don't remember them even because there was not a friendship like cause I was not in the orphanage.

Q: So now you're in Jerusalem and you've gone through school and you've learned Hebrew and you're finished. When did you finish high school? What year?

A: 54. I was 20. Why? Because when I went to Israel, so my cousin said well he doesn't know Hebrew. I could go to the fifth grade so he put me into third. Why? Because he said he doesn't know Hebrew and I was also in his eyes, childish because I was very creative. I was always playing and building things so he said he is you know Yiddish. He called me **Fashpetaskind** [ph]. Fashpeta is –

Q: Playing around yeah.

A: Playing around child. So he put me in the third grade and these two years I lost.

Q: You were at school when the war ended in 1945. You were still young of course. You were only 11 so you were still in school. The end of the war. Do you remember the end of the World War II at all?

A: Yes, I remember but yes, of course.

Q: Any experience, anything you can talk about?

A: I remember the victors, there was some, in Jerusalem there was –

Q: Celebration?

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A: Yes, people were but I didn't take part of any –

Q: Well you were only 11 yeah and then what about in 1948 when the state of Israel –

A: This I remember very good.

Q: What do you remember about that?

A: I was in the closure of Jerusalem. It was again hunger but no comparison with the hunger that we had. We got, I don't remember how many gram, maybe two slices of bread per day. And very little water. That was also. And we used water a few times. First drink and then to wash and this then to wash the toilet and the same water used a few times. And well this was but the closure of Jerusalem, I had always a hope. I was very optimistic. I was, hoped that we will win and really it happened. We won.

Q: But it's 1948 and the state has been formed and you're 14 years old. Almost 14 when the state of Israel was formed.

A: Yes.

Q: Do you remember the celebration at all?

A: Oh this I remember excellent. This was a night that we went out to the streets dancing and this was very, very unforgettable night.

Q: Your mother was she still, she was still with you?

A: My mother died –

Q: What year did she die?

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A: 50.

Q: 1950. So then you stayed on and then you were still in school and you said you graduated from – your father had come back, right.

A: 47.

Q: 1947 so you lived with him also?

A: Yes.

Q: In Jerusalem?

A: Yes.

Q: You said you graduated from high school in 54?

A: Yes.

Q: And then what did you do?

A: I mobilized. I went to the army. I became an officer and after many years when I was 56 because I volunteered, I finished the reserve at 56.

Q: But then what happened when you finished the, what three years you were in the army?

A: I was three years.

Q: On active duty?

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A: And then I was in **milreem** in Ravel. And then I mobilized again after I became engineer. I mobilized to the army and I, as an engineer, and one of my inventions then as a very young officer and very young engineer is still today works and all the armies took it from Israel from the ADF. I don't know if they got permission or they stole it. But it was not important. But it is a development that I found out.

Q: Can you talk about it or you can't talk about it?

A: No it was not a –

Q: What did you –

A: It was something to security, no safety of all kind of grenades of hand grenades.

Q: When did you get your engineer training?

A: 57.

Q: So you went back to school. You came back from the army?

A: In Haifa. I left Jerusalem. I went to Haifa to the **Technion**. And I stayed in Haifa for 40 years. Because I married and I had three sons born in Haifa. And that's it.

Q: You stayed in the reserves? Can I ask you some special questions now? Do you think about your experience when you were a small child, when you were going through, do you think about that a lot now? What your experiences –

A: From time to time.

Q: Cause you had a very difficult childhood, of course.

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A: Yes, what is that I had some traumas that I still suffer from them. Few times I fell down from bed because I am fighting against bullies that want to do some harm to me and I find myself on the floor. It happened many times. But except this, relatively I think I am normal. I function. I made relative good life and also economically I built myself.

Q: Who did you work for, once you finished with the Technion? Did you work for a private company?

A: Well I worked in two places as an engineer but lately, but then I started to be more manager. First I worked for a foundry, organ, it was a very good experience for me. After the military I went to, it was a foundry in **Netanya**. And then I went, after this I found, I got into good job in the fields of **Abora Does**, the oil fields. And I experienced this piping and after that I started to, I made a course in marketing and I was and at the end I have a company of actually marketing.

Q: What happened with your father? Did he work in Israel? He came back from the army and what did he –

A: My father, he – my mother died very early and my father, he married again. He remarried. He lived with his new wife, the same time as he lived with my mother. And then he died.

Q: You said you have three sons?

A: Yes.

Q: When they were younger did you talk about your experiences when you were a child? Did you tell them?

A: Actually no. What I did, it was since I mentioned before that was once a meeting of the family and we spoke about the past and we made (sound break)

So then I read what I wrote and I read for them some of my experiences (sound break)

Lately because everybody is busy with his own (sound break)

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[about 3 minutes from end of recording, sound breaks up and then stops completely and continues 2 seconds from end]

A: Maybe because I was so childish. I don't.

(end?)