

This is, in English, is a Vistula.

Vistula, yes. Yes.

Mine is not so bad.

Right.

So-- the war beginning, it was September 1st.

1939.

1939. I remember.

Friday, in the morning.

Now, until-- before the war, did you-- you lived in a Jewish area.

Yes, mostly Jewish area.

Was there any difficulty with the--

There was 10,000 Jewish people in town.

It was--

The synagogue was a difference, and it looked like, in America, very different.

Was there any relationship with the Gentiles, with the goyim in that area? Were there many around? Did you have any-- did they--

No, was free. No. It was free. It was capitalism there. It was, in Piłsudski's times, Just in 1933, after Piłsudski died is going to be much worse for the Jewish people because the name it Endek, antisemitism was born there after Piłsudski dead. So when the water's been running it was very bad. I was in the street, and I saw my grandfather, my mother's father, a Jewish, really, with a beard, a Hasid.

Yeah.

And the German, they--

They pull the beard?

The beard. And they told him to dance in the street.

Now, the Germans occupied you town.

Occupied in this town, yes. It was two weeks after the war began, they occupied the state. It was terrible. And my father, I was [INAUDIBLE].

How old were you?

20 years.

Oh, yes. Uh-huh.

Really 20 years because I'm born 1919. Was then 20 years old. And my father, he told me, go into Russia.

Save your life. Sure, my friends, this now, they're still alive [INAUDIBLE], New York, and Rome, and Canada, from my state Płock. They got it in New York as a [? associate ?] from Płock. A big [? associate ?] it's the same guy. Was a nice to people.

So much, much younger people went to Russia. And I was with them. It was in December. It was winter, very cold winter.

Now this was December of 1939?

Yeah.

Oh, so you left right after--

Yes, I left Poland in the night, the middle of the night. In the woods it was the German and the Soviets, the border.

Yeah.

So the Germans, they just take off everything from us. They live like high end. And so I came to the border, to the Russian.

Now, were you alone, or were you with--

No, with a group, from my friends. After, I lost them in the woods in the night. It was so dark. So I came to Lwów, Lemberg.

Yeah, Lwów.

Yeah. I got some friends here in Lemberg. So I came to Lemberg. And I lived with my friend sometimes. It was very bad. It was starting in this time because Russia occupied Lemberg. It was Russia. Before it was Poland, and there was Russia. They were so--

In 1939, that was Russian though.

Yeah. September to--

So you got over into the--

Yeah, because they-- they share this. Half take Germany, take it. [? Polonia ?] half, they leave to Russia from a [INAUDIBLE]. And in the beginning 1940, they send me to the deep Russia. They ask me.

Who was?

If I want to go back to Poland, if I go-- if I go with some friends answer the Russian [? order ?]. They will go back to Poland. So they sent them to the Siberia. To the--

Yeah.

To the camps because they didn't like them. I hear that, so I'm afraid. So I thought I will go to deep Russia. So the send in a very, very little town so the--

So the Russians-- the Russians don't take good care of the Jews either.

No. No.

If you go back to Poland, so you didn't like it then. So you are enemies of them. Everybody who don't like them is an enemy with them. So they sent me to [PLACE NAME] here the state is the miners, the coal--

Coal mines?

Coal mines.

Yeah.

They send me there. Was 1940, in March. And I didn't understanding nothing Russian. I didn't speak any Russian. I spoke in Jewish and find Jewish people. They helped me to find work not in the mines because much difficult. The mine, this was terrible because intelligent people never learned the hard work. So I got a little luck, and they sent me to a store, to a market. So I used--

Was this-- you were in a small town in Russia?

Very small town-- only was the miners.

What was it called?

The people was the mine workers.

Yeah. What was the name of the town.

Yes. In 1941, the war is beginning again. In was in June 22. So they, the Russian people, they sent me to-- I don't know the words-- making this-- so the tanks-- tanks?

Tanks, yeah.

--can go. I back to that deep, so the tanks can came.

Right. Yeah.

They sent us is was the worker armies.

Yeah, so they could make ditches.

Yeah. They didn't have absolutely nothing. They didn't have, because it's just a back. They can-- this is a-- I came back to this, to the little town when I was in was Donbas.

And that's still in Russia.

Yes, in Russia. It's nine months, the Germany was in this state, and the Russian in this state. It was terrible times. They sharpen all their own knives and was fighting. After, when the German occupation, this town, I think, my parents-- I don't know this time. It was 1942. I didn't know they killed the Jewish people in Poland. We did not know nothing. I didn't listen.

This was not the newspaper and not the radio. So I think so. I mean the German is here. The German is in Warsaw, so I will go back. So it was terrible in there, in the train. It was they put the coals. I was in the coals, and so I-- I want only to be together with my family. I didn't know they--

You thought they were back home?

Yeah, home. This was terrible [INAUDIBLE]. So I came to a town Kovel. Its name is Kovel. And I go to the government. I got a Polish paper. I go to the German government. I told my story. I'm Polish. That's it. I find-- I lost my papers, and I got a Polish paper. So and I got a very-- and my face is Jewish. So I then, and the Kovel, they stopped me. It's a river book. It's the border.

They think that is of the papers. And the Poland have this book. It's Germany. It's like Germany.

But it's both occupied wasn't it?

Yes. It was occupied. Now, they think in this side of the book is occupied. It in this Warsaw is just Germany, the writers, writers. So I started from this town. I started. And after I think I'm so terribly afraid, I'm Jewish. I think when I came-- and this terrible thing was, in the Kovel, is a little--

It was Poland before. Now it is Russia. I went to the street, And I saw the Jewish Talmud book on the street. Papers, papers In this-- the town was like dead. Bombed, I understand.

Now this is where you came from?

Yeah. Then i understand. I was out on the street, only I saw. It was a train station. I go outside, and it's all a backstage covered in the papers, the Jewish Talmud paper on the street. So then I understand. It's not more Jewish people.

And I was thinking, I'm the only person in the-- in [? the Europe ?] alive. I don't think we-- that was still a part of ghetto. It's terrible. And yesterday, when I was in the capital center, and I saw so much [? horror of ?] Jewish people, I am reminded this moment, they leave us alone in the own world.

So then I walk in the-- this is October. October it was. I think it was October '42. So I go to a village. And I find that I--

Now you are all alone now?

Alone, alone, like a finger alone. Inside is terrible. And went to the village. And I was so terrible hungry. And I ask them to give me to eat. They give me. They saw I was so terrible thin. I was so hungry. But then--

Now these were Jewish people? No.

No. No matter. Only the Polish people can [INAUDIBLE] I speak Polish perfect because I-- so they advised me to stay for the winter with them. So I stayed the winter with them. In the April 1943, I left them in the night alone. And I go to the woods. And I went six day in the woods.

Now why did you leave them? Why did you go?

Because I want to find the partisans. I know there's partisan. I hear, in some woods there is partisan. And I will be with the people together. I will fight with them, I was young. So, it's terrible. In the Ukraine there's people, was Ukraine. They didn't like the Polish people. So I speak in Polish. In Ukraine, if I can speak so-- ah, Polish. And they take me to a tree. And they send up a boy to kill me.

Who? The Ukrainians?

The Ukrainians. It was the Banderovci then, Banderovci. I mean, this is-- And the boy, it was a dark night in the woods. And I stand by the tree. And he will kill me. And I cried so much. And I told them, I'm so young. I have all my life. Take it, and my mother when I lived, she give me some rings. So I was a little just he can kill me to take the rings from me.

So I give you the rings if you would save my life. I'm so young. So he told me, OK, give me the rings and rush. Rush so nobody can find it to from the [INAUDIBLE]. So I rush, I rush, I rush. I find the partisans.

When I cam in the partisans, I was so afraid, if you ask me the truth, told the truth, who you are, I say a Jewish man is in there, that are committed. He was a general, was a captain. So I tell them the truth. And I beg them, don't tell the people everybody partisan because I'm afraid. I didn't trust nobody. So I tell him, my true friend, my name is Guterman, not a-- I find a Polish name. So I was with the partisan. It was terrible, this.

Now what did they do?

Five day-- five days I was starving. I was nothing to eat. I was naked. It was winter. I was naked.

What did they-- what did the partisans do?

They make-- they fight with the-- I was in the action. They gave to them the train, and they put the bombs. It was terrible. I crawled in the-- I crawled. And they put the bombs. And the train go with the weapons. And they--

They'd blow them up.

Explode. Explode.

Explode, blow them up. Yeah.

That was-- they make it all time, make this. Much peoples was killed.

How many people were you with in the partisans?

500.

Oh, there were 500 now.

Yes. I got the papers I was a partisan.

And, now they stayed in the same area all the time?

No. The Bandera, they change-- only the woods, all the time , only is in the woods. Somebody went into the villages, and they taken some food to eat. Now we didn't got meat never, fresh.

Were they political? Were they Zionists? Were they socialists? The partisans. Or were they-- are they just were partisans.

Just fighting because they didn't like. It was the Ukrainians did, you know. it was the Russian people.

Were they mostly Jewish?

No. Jewish was the-- he was a secretary. And that's only this a Jewish, not a young man. he only-- he was Jewish, and I was Jewish. Only two people were Jewish in this, in the partisans.

And they were from for Russia? They were Russians and Ukrainians?

Yes. Russia, Ukrainian.

But they were all against the--

And I was one from Poland. I was only why I start to speak to them in Russian. So I'm self-educated in Russia, right? That's right? Self-educated in Russia. I never went to the school, Russia.

When I came to America in 1979, they sent me to the [INAUDIBLE]. Six months I am studying on English. They paid me money too. I would say work until I say, you know I've got a granddaughter. I'm babysitting and studying.

So what happened when the war was over? So, you were in the-- you were with the partisans until the end of the war?

The war, from us, they liberated the territory in 1944.

That's when the Russians came in.

Yes, the Russians-- liberated from the Germans, when they occupied. So I was free. So they sent me on a farm now, to Lemberg, Lwów, Stryj.

That's where he went originally.

Yeah. I came now from this town, from Stryj.

Yeah.

And I lived in Stryj from 1944.

So now did you ever go back to where you were-- to where you came from?

Yes, sure. 28 years I was waiting for the permission from the papers. 28 years they didn't permit me to go. I begged them terrible, write letters to them, to Moscow, because I don't find some things from my parents and big family. So it was after 28 years, and the first time I got to Warsaw.

That was in 1970?

1966. I first came back to my-- and I found my aunt, Pandore. Another Dore, and I've got a cousin here. I got a cousin from Jersey now. I got that cousin. So I came to [? think ?] my cousins first time and everything.

But they stayed in-- they were still there when you came back in 1966?

My family?

Yeah, you say your--

No, only my two aunts. My aunt, she's there. Now they're in Israel. They left Poland. It's not much Jewish in Poland now.

No. But they managed to survive.

Not in-- yes. Some, the-- my uncle, his wife and his son-- his son is now in Israel. His son is killed in the Lebanon war, 20 years from the war.

The Polish people said they left.

Oh. Mhm.

The nuns. The nuns. The monastery-- where the nuns live.

The nuns live in a monastery.

Monastery. They have taken them-- their lives. They're alive. And I got a relative, a cousin, Passaic. He's a professor. And I got in Israel, relatives. And my dream is to go to Israel. I dream--

[INAUDIBLE]

Really, I appreciate America. I came here. I do nothing for this country. In Russia, I didn't get it, Social Security. They don't have money. Because Russia, I'm going on 55 years. She's supposed to get the Social Security, the pension. They didn't give me because I don't-- it's three months I am not working. I'm

supposed to work 25 years. I don't-- I work 24 and nine months. I don't got it the three months. So they give me nothing.

But here I got Social Security. And from there, I got an apartment. My daughter, she bought our house.

Yeah.

Is wondering. God bless America.

Yes. Yes. When the war was over then, you went back to Lwów, you said.

But it's Russia. It was Russia. I was in Lwów. And it was Russia. And I stayed there because I got a trip. And I got a trip there.

Now, did you-- you left your parents. Did you ever find your parents?

I know. They was killed in the Warsaw ghetto. They put them in the Warsaw, [CROSS TALK].

[CROSS TALK]

And all people, my grandmother, my grandfather, my aunt as well, big family, and my two sister and brothers. My father and my mother and my sisters too, and a brother, they took them to Auschwitz. And my grandmother, she was all the time in Warsaw. My grandfather [INAUDIBLE]. My aunt with six children lived the ghetto.

And my parents in that house, I got witnesses. They live now in Rome. They was with them when they put them into the-- to the train to Auschwitz. My friend, she-- somebody pushed her. She didn't go to the train. She hid herself. She's alive. She's in Rome.

But your uncles, you say that he stayed in the monastery or stayed with the nuns.

During the war, yeah.

Were the neighbors--

[CROSS TALK] he was kidding that, because he was maybe a here, is in Warsaw. After the ghetto, the Warsaw, they make it like a revolution, the Polish people. You know what is? So he was in this fight, and they killed him. Now, his wife and his son they was alive, and they went to Israel in 1946.

And now this son is killed in his war. The father it's killed in his war. The son is killed this war. So it's [? terrible ?] the Jewish people, I think. Liberation [? generations ?] it's a very hard for Jewish.

But I guess the worst part was going on the train and seeing the town deserted, wasn't it? When you came and saw the-- so you came off the train, and nobody was in the town?

That is not [INAUDIBLE]. But yesterday, when I saw the people. It's maybe-- I don't know how much people was yesterday.

20,000, 10,000 left.

More, I think. Oh, it's Jewish. And I saw the [INAUDIBLE]. You know, also [INAUDIBLE] to the Jewish people. Never go back and think I am the only-- Why am I lucky. This is what allowed me--

So where did you meet your husband?

Where did I meet the husband? I met my husband in Stryj, in the state what I was.

What?

In Stryj.

Oh.

It's near to [PLACE NAME]. I don't leave. [INAUDIBLE] Stryj. I don't [? brag ?] I control Russia. I don't [? brag at all. ?]

Oh, I see.

It's Stryj.

So-- so when did you-- so did you come here with your family to Washington today?

This was very hard to come here. I wait so long for the permission, for the papers. And then I give the papers. I asked them to-- to go. Let me go. So they-- I didn't work. My daughter, she was work. I say was a teacher, English teacher in the school, the high school. They give here not more work.

They fired her.

They fired her, my daughter. The same day that I gave my papers, they fired my daughter. In six months, it was dating from permission. We don't know. It's yes, but no. The answer is going to be no. My daughter didn't work. I didn't work. My husband didn't work.

Is that why they fired here, because of--

Only because we-- we, like [INAUDIBLE] now. They didn't like it. That's terrible. Because if I do-- I didn't like the [INAUDIBLE] so I'm an enemy, a terrible enemy. So I can never go back. Never. [INAUDIBLE]

But she lost her job because you put the paper in, you think?

Only this. Everybody. [INAUDIBLE] the doctors-- I mean, my friend, she's an Israeli. The same thing, they left this town. She's a doctor. Her husband is a doctor, too. So they-- her daughter's a doctor. Three people doctors, and they didn't work six months because they give the papers. They're doctors, very good doctors in the town.

Now they're in Israel. They're very happy. They work. They study Hebrew. So only [INAUDIBLE]. I told you, if you don't like it, then you are enemy. They can send you sometime in the prison too. And it's very-- like Sharansky.

Yeah.

So that's it.

So that's it. So--

So that's it. So--

To make the peace, [BACKGROUND NOISES].

No, no. thank you. How long were you in the woods, in with the partisans? So we can--

From 19--

Let's see, 1942.



'43-- '42 to 1944. 1944 [INAUDIBLE].

Now when you were liberated, when you were liberated from there, you went right-- all the partisans just disappeared and went back to the town?

No, the men they sent to the army.

I see.

The women, they-- the men they sent to the army. The army [INAUDIBLE] like a [INAUDIBLE], the militia like a policeman.

Yeah.

Because they trusted them because they're fighters.

Yeah. But the women they-- Well, of course if we-- was it hard after the war was over? Was it-- did you have food? Did we ever look at that?

Well, after, it was very hard after the-- it was very hard with the food. You had to [INAUDIBLE] terribles. It was so-- you got it in-- only a half pounds of bread in a day. You got it a paper, kartochni they give you. It was limited, the bread. You got only every day a piece of--

The ration, yeah.

Yeah. It was very hard years.

But of course that was for everybody. It was not only for--

No, everybody was very hard. And everybody was very hard. And now it's not so-- it's not so easy to-- it's the lines for the milk, the lines for butter, and lines for sugar. Sugar is limited four times.

Oh you did go to Poland a few times.

Yeah, only three. After this [INAUDIBLE] in two years that they give me. [INAUDIBLE] friends They're still in Poland.

Oh, Jewish friends?

Yeah, in Warsaw. Three friends I got it. They got it a nice apartment. They're not so young. They didn't got children. And you know, in my age, [INAUDIBLE] it's not so easy to study a new language and the problems. The problems are still there, like here.

All my life I got problems. Now I get problems with the bus. I pay \$25 on the bus, and I must take it. The cabs is so terrible expensive. And I am not a millionaire. So I'm half-- this is terrible. Maybe you don't-- they sent me a letter to pay \$25 for the bus. I pay. I send the \$25. And now I didn't got the bus. I must pay for the cab. Nothing-- nobody can help. It's terrible.

Now they can straighten that out. But that's--

That's the problems here.

It's better problems, isn't it? So now you have grandchildren? [INAUDIBLE]

No, [INAUDIBLE] he has grandchild.

Did your daughter come with you from Russia?

Yeah, together. She was single. And she married a boy from Russia too. He's already had the same [INAUDIBLE] Both are home, only 3 and 1/2 years for her. And they can buy a home. He's an engineer. And she is-- she was an English teacher in Russia. And here she changed-- didn't want to go to the school to work. She's afraid of the children, different children. And this [INAUDIBLE] is not so. So she finished a school from computer. Now she's working on computer programs. She's happy.

So it's--

And if she's happy, so I'm happy because I devote my life to her. Now, and I'm very [INAUDIBLE].

So did your daughter come with you here? No?

No, she can't. She has to work. She works [INAUDIBLE] with their house. And that's easy for [INAUDIBLE]. After 30 years, she might pay every month \$1,000 from her. Save the money. She can't get a babysitter. I am the babysitter.

You're the babysitter, aren't you?

[INAUDIBLE]

So, what the--