

Interview with Eugene Miller  
April 10, 1992  
Rockville, Maryland

Q: Dr. Miller, could you please tell me your name, your name during the war, your date of birth, your place of birth, and anything you possibly can about your childhood and your family.

A: All right. I was born in Poland, October 16, 1923. My family name was Rosenblum, Eugene in Polish, it was Eugeniusz. And I grew up in the city of Lodz. Lodz was an industrial city. It was used to be called Polish Manchester, of about 600,000 inhabitants. Today is about 1,000,000 people. It was 2<sup>nd</sup> largest Jewish community in Poland. It was inhabited by about 200,000 Jews. It was a vibrant Jewish community. My parents came to Lodz after fleeing Russia. They were married in Russia. My mother was studying at the University in Russia. My father fled Russia with my mother in 1923 during the Gurinsky regime. \_\_\_\_\_ which was really the forerunner of KGB. They were arresting all the people who were by them the \_\_\_\_\_. So my mother went to Lithuania, to the border, 1923, she was pregnant. \_\_\_\_\_, she's going to parents to wait for birth and my father crossed the Russian-Polish boundary and he was wounded by the way the Russians were shooting when they were crossing and arrived in the Polish city of Lodz. My mother joined him. There where I was born. I was born in middle class family. My father \_\_\_\_\_. We lived in a very nice section of town.

Q: Do you know the name of that section of town?

A: Notobicuk 41. Well, at that point, I better tell you something about Jewish community in Lodz. It was divided largely three different segments. The Orthodox Jews which occupied section of town. They wore Hasidic garb. That was about 40% of Jewish people in Lodz. That was a large section of the working class people and that was \_\_\_\_\_ substantial amount of the middle class or upper middle class Jews who were rather prosperous and they lived, for lack of other words, in the nicer part of town. Most of the people lived in apartments. In Poland, you didn't have the \_\_\_\_\_, the land was too expensive so you have big apartment buildings. We had about five or six room apartment and like all of the people who live in this section of town, we have a maid, a live-in maid. We have a girl who came to cook and you always have somebody who came to the door, no washing machine, ever so often and done the wash. I was attending private schools. I was going to Hebrew gymnasium. It was one of the few gymnasiums in Poland from which one could go straight to Polish University with government rights. We didn't have to pass any exams. At the same time, when they issued the anafamatura which was probably the closest to it in the United States is the regents exams that you get in New York. When they issue the certificate of completion. It was also recognized in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and you could enter right away the University \_\_\_\_\_ to pass a special examination. There were three schools, they called it 1<sup>st</sup> gymnasium and 2<sup>nd</sup> gymnasium. They were just across from each other and there was a girls gymnasium. As I grew up, we participate most, most of the children attended the school were members of Zionist organizations. At that time, probably what organization you belonged, it wasn't determined by your political views because we were just taught at that time but it was determined by the shahim the representative of the kibbutz movement, who was a better organizer was able to attract more children. I belonged to Hashoma Hatsayeer, although my parents were well off, it was left wing organization. Poland by itself, even before Hitler, was anti-Semitic state. When we were going to school, I remember very often we have to cross the so-called people university, and we went through a hail of stones thrown at us. I remember when I was growing up after the dictator of

Poland \_\_\_\_\_ died in 1935, who understood that Poland needed the middle class and Jews were the middle class. They were the profession, they were the merchants, they were the manufacturers. After he died, Poland became openly anti-Semitic. When I went to school, oh it was about 15-20 minutes walk, I passed at least five or ten intersections and there was always scribble on the corner, "Jews to Palestine". So, since Poland was verantly nationalistic and they were afraid of Russia, it bordered on hysteria how they were afraid of Communism. Jews, even from affluent home, just as a purpose of what they saw and the atmosphere in which they grew up, were drawn to left wing organization. And I find myself Hashoma Hatsayeer where we all realize although we were children and I was fifteen and a half when the war started, we all realize that there is no future in Poland. My parents wanted me to go to France, my father had a brother over there who was manufacturer, a silk manufacturer, he felt he wanted me to go and study in France. Polish Jews were not admitted, there were some Polish University but there were numerous clauses. Numerous clauses mean restricted quota for Jews. It was very hard to get, so most of the Jews went to a university town of Nance near Strasburg and they lost a year. They learned French and they got the degrees there. I was slated to go over there. My childhood was a happy one but we knew there was no future in Poland.

Q: What can you tell me, was your family observant?

A: Well, it was maybe in sense of American values. There was on big, great synagogue in Lodz. To Orthodox Jews, it was probably worse than going to a reformed synagogue here. But yet, the women were on the balcony, the men sit on the first floor and my parents attend the high holy days.

Q: Did you keep kosher at home?

A: Quasi kosher. Because of my grandfather, was quasi kosher. We are not a very observant family in the usual standards of Polish Jewry but still I went to Hebrew gymnasium and culturally we were very much Jews but quote, unquote emancipated Jews and not religious Jews. My father belonged to Hartzerarde. In Hebrew this is \_\_\_\_\_. That was the \_\_\_\_\_. My mother worked as a volunteer for ORT which organization supported the teaching of trades to the Jewish kids who didn't have the financial means to go to gymnasium. Not that many in Poland, a very small percent of children went to gymnasium. Probably, no more than five or ten percent. By Jews, much larger percent. I cannot put the exact percentage but most of the children did not finish gymnasium. This kids were trained by ORT, they were in dire straits and so forth. Naturally, the religious Jews tried to educate their children in the religious schools, did not have government rights.

Q: What language did you speak at home?

A: My parents spoke Russian among themselves, that was the language they knew the best but they spoke fluently Polish. As a matter of fact, my father spoke fluently Polish, German and Russian. So did my mother. My mother also spoke French. But to me they spoke Polish. I didn't know that much Yiddish. I don't know for the purpose of a background maybe, the Zionist begged the parents not to teach the kids Jewish, to teach Hebrew. I went to Hebrew gymnasium. I learned Yiddish already from my father-in-law a little bit after I got married and in ghetto but no, no, we spoke Polish. We spoke probably Polish better than Poles because the way they were able to recognize that a girl which had Aryan look but was Jewish that she was Jewish. Jews spoke pure Polish without any regional inflection. Almost every Pole had a little

bit regional inflection. Our Polish was colorless or classic. So we spoke very well Polish. I liked the language. I don't like the people but I still like Polish literature, and so forth. But our orientation was very much Zionist, because in our mind there was no other solution to the Jewish problem in Poland but to immigrate; immigration to Israel, to Palestine was restricted so probably most of us knew we would have to go to \_\_\_\_\_ some countries but Poland was not in our future. When the war started, I was fifteen and a half years old. Polish radio started to broadcast the third or fourth day of war, urgent appeal all men should go in direction of center of Warsaw which is about 120 kilos, that's from Lodz. Most of the men left. I went together with my father. We reached Warsaw before the Germans were able to lay siege around Warsaw. We lived through the battle of Warsaw. When I returned home, we were not allowed to have a maid. No gentile could work for Jew. But, we still had our apartment. I had a big dog, a Great Dane.

Q: What was his name?

A: Rex. The dog was seven or eight years old at that time. I remember it was two or three weeks after we returned. It was still probably middle of October or end of October. My mother took all of her jewelry except one small ring off of her hands and somebody knocked on the door. My mother opened and a German, a German non-commissioned officer pushed the door open, grabbed my mother's hand and tried to take the ring off. He didn't see the dog. The dog jumped. The dog was 140-130 pounds Great Dane. He went to the floor and he went to his throat. He pointed the gun at my mother and he told to me you won't take the dog away, I'll shoot your mother. I said "put your gun away and I'll try to take the dog but don't move". I took the dog away and he told my mother should take her coat, she is going to the criminal police and he will charge that we instigated the dog to attack a German soldier. Well, my mother spoke very well German. She told, "all right, I want also to ask if the German soldier is allowed to act as common robbers if all that we have belongs to the German government, you certain of the German government". Well, after long negotiations, my mother gave him some valuables. He relented but I had to take the dog down and I had to tie him, that was a contraption that was used to beat the rocks, clean the rocks and I had to tie the dog. And he shot the dog. That was the first thing I lost. I was sick for three weeks. That was the first loss of somebody I love. I loved the dog because I grew up with him. Well, things got worse. We were ordered to put Stars of David, the yellow patches in the shape of the star. We wore one on the left breast and one on the back. I said I'm not going to put it on and I went out and I was caught and I was very badly beaten. When I came home, I told my father that I wanted to go to Russia. At that time, to Russia occupied zone. At that time, Russia allowed every few weeks, the people who come there divided demarcation line to cross Russia occupied part of Poland. My father told me he doesn't have the strength or inclination to go. He said son, you might not realize but to go to Russia is one-way ticket. You will be able to get in but you will never be able to get out. I fled from there. I'll take my chances with Germans. And that wasn't just my father. To them the Russians were the occult Bolsheviks and this and they still felt the Hitler regime was aberration and whatever will happen, they'll survive the war and things return to normal and they will live in free Europe. So they gave me some valuables and sent me off. My mother told me when I was leaving on my way to Russia, "Son, take a good look at your parents. You will never see them again." And I went and I was an only child, 16 years old, never away from home except when I went to summer camp. And these words, I could hear the words in my ears to the entire way I reached the Russian boundary and they were supposed to open the day before. I waited for about three or four days. I decided, well whatever is going to happen is going to happen to me and my parents and when I returned, they were already in

process of setting up ghetto. The ghetto, I think, was established in the first month, I don't remember the exact month, sometimes around April of 1940. The ghetto boundaries were already established and the Jews were encouraged to move there. Nobody was moving. At that time, the Russians had deported or repatriated rather, the German population from Latvia, from Volhynia, from the parts of Poland, in part, they were mostly by Germans, in the states which Russia occupied after 1939 and they were given the choice of Jewish apartments as we lived in the nice section of town where one of the parents were to go. Two German officials came and told us we had one hour and we could take whatever we could carry plus \_\_\_\_\_. (couldn't hear) to go, so we went. We were able to get a room in one of the two or three homes which had modern conveniences like water, flush toilets and so forth. The ghetto to which they press around 150,000 -- 160,000 Jews, was occupied before probably by 10,000 -- 15,000 people and that was the worst slums \_\_\_\_\_ by looting. There were very few buildings which really resembled anything we know before we got the room in one of these buildings. They closed the ghetto and in the beginning it was already no more horrors by the Germans, there were no more beatings, there were no more shootings. The ghetto started to organize itself but almost from the beginning the rations of food became much smaller and we got progressively less and less to eat. I didn't finish gymnasium before the war. I finish in ghetto. Polish didn't have right. They forbid Polish to have any kind of schools. They close all Polish schools. Somehow, they probably knew they were going to liquidate the population sooner or later they pay no attention so schools open in ghetto so I finish in ghetto. What happen in ghetto in beginning years, it was a slow starvation. The \_\_\_\_\_, a man in his early 60's, he was a minor official in the Jewish community. He was active in Jewish orphanages. He never had children. He raise quite a bit of money for the orphans. He was one of the few people who didn't flee when all the men left Lodz and went to Warsaw. When the Germans came and he was there and they told him he is the alderman of the Jews. He started to organize Jewish life. The men were already had their blood which he bought by the grave of his wife which was buried there. He was really widening up his ears. Evidently, all the power of the Germans was vested in him. He became absolute ruler of the ghetto and to us he seemed like a man that was drugged with power. On the other feeling of course was that if we are going to make useful our services to the Germans, good part of the Jews might survive. No bodies even worst fears believed that the Germans would try to physically annihilate every woman and child. Well, he establish schools. He started to establish so-called "arbisin", they were shops which manufacture various things with the Germans farvartung with the Germans were the people who administer the ghetto brought to the ghetto and they have a large number of people working in the resorts and in exchange they were sending food to the ghetto. What I remember from now on, I was still young but was rather a shielded childhood and we grew up in a hurry. What I remember was hunger, terrible hunger. And it started very, very slowly by the people who were middle aged. And I say people after 40, 45. They had started to deprive. More and more you saw people who had swollen feet, swollen hands. The winters are very harsh in Poland and there was nothing to heat their apartments with or the rooms with. There was very little even wood or coal briquettes to be able to cook something. People were very hungry. A lot of them tried to crumble the bread and cook the bread and make a soup out of this so that physically they could pacify their hunger pangs. But, they consumed a lot of liquid and the heart was not able to pump and the water settled in the feet and people started to die out. And we had 60, 70 funerals a day. 50 funerals a day will be 1,500 people a month. That was in the beginning. In the beginning, the funerals resembles more or less which were held before the war but sooner or later there was only mass grave. Well, like a mass grave, one mount under the other unmarked graves. My father was taken 1941 to Gestapo. They had the registers. \_\_\_\_\_ (can't understand). He came very badly beaten and he died a few weeks later. I

was left with my mother. Things got even worse as far as the food was concerned. But yet the younger people organize themselves, called Self-Help Organization. The morale was, well, we still felt that we had a chance to survive. This had changed in 1942. In 1942, the runcoston had a \_\_\_\_\_ assembly. It's 92, 50 years before and I still remember. He said to us, he stand before us as broken man, that he devoted all of his later years to helping orphans, he organized orphanages even un ghetto and he tried to give him as much resources to survive as he could and yet he was ordered by the Germans that he was to deliver 24,000 Jews. Jews over 60 years old and children under 10. He told us, you have a choice. Our police would take them and it would be dark in semi-orderly fashion or the Germans would come and take them and it would be much worse. If we want to survive, the 100,000 Jews which at the point were locked up in the ghetto want to survive, they have to give up 20,000. Well, the chorus arise, no, no, we all go. And if the reaction was the people concerned to this, it was emphatically, no. Yet, they declare curfew and nobody was allowed out of their homes and the Jewish police went from house to house and there were some doctors among them and they make the selections. All the sickly people and the older people and the children were taken away. But what the Jewish police did was not good enough for Germans and they came. Some people were shot. They tore the children from the mothers' arms. They beat the people. The mothers who resisted were shot on the spot. In most cases, the women remained frozen when the Germans took the children away. Only when the child was already on the horse drawn wagon, they realize what happen, they start to chase and cry. Well, they took the 20,000, 25,000 people. And from then on, almost every able -bodied man or woman or teenager or this, had to work. The food supply didn't improve -- deteriorate, more and more. There was a lot of mismanagement, in ghetto. He tried Rumkoski tried to store some of the potatoes, you know, which were supposed to be rationed to the population. And the whole thing, the entire crop got spoiled. In 1942, I think, 1943, the Germans appointed Gertler, who was one of the collaborators in trying to extract as much valuables and this from the Jews, from the Germans, he appointed him head of the so called sondokommando. He tried to bring some order to the ghetto. In a way he did. He made the thing look a little more efficient. In the meanwhile, more and more, the demand for more \_\_\_\_\_ were given and people were left in apartments. 3,000, 5,000, 10,000 and when you walk the streets of the ghetto 1943, 1944 you saw, they used to call mussermench, \_\_\_\_\_ because the people pattern of working and bending looked like a praying Muslim. The people became living skeleton, some of them were swollen, some of them looked like skeletons and you could see a good part of the population was so emaciated that the war is not going to end soon, they are going to die. Well, the ghetto lived until 1944.

Q: What were you doing this whole time?

A: I was working. I was working in the office of a sort of a shop getting my rations. In 1943, my mother died of starvation. She lost weight progressively and finally she was not able to walk any more. She stayed in bed constantly. \_\_\_\_\_ (very low -- can't hear).

Q: Had she been working?

A: Well, she had been working until she got sick. She did \_\_\_\_\_ in a shop. Then she got sick. She got the typhoid fever. She got sick, she never recovered. She died. I was left alone. In 1944, the Germans started to evacuate the ghetto. They ordered that people will report, about 5,000 people a day, for deportation. Of course, they refused. So to give the order for deportation. So the Germans took the enlight the head of the ghetto administration, went from shop to shop promising that people will go into Germany, living conditions would be better,

they will be better fed and so forth but nobody trusted him. People tried to avoid deportation as long as they could. I left Lodz in August 23<sup>rd</sup> 1944. We didn't know where we go. Probably if we would know where we go and what Auschwitz is, we would get vicious to board the trains and probably shot, but that would be at least passive resistance but we really didn't know.

Q: Had you heard about the camps at that point?

A: Lodz ghetto was the most isolated ghetto in Poland. Every hundred feet you get a German guard. We didn't get no papers, nothing. Supposedly, few survivors from Chedno were able to escape \_\_\_\_\_ but the population didn't know. We knew that clothes came back to the ghetto from the people who were deported, the old and the sick people and people had foreboding that nothing good comes and they probably perish but they didn't know that systematic extermination and this. Well, we boarded the train. There was hundred people in a cattle car in which we were transported. We went for about three or four days.

Q: Can I stop you? I want to flip the tape over.

(END OF SIDE A)

A: All right. So, when we boarded the train, there were 100 people in our, whatever you call this, and what they gave us, there was one bucket which was supposed to serve if people wanted to relieve themselves. There was no water. A little bit of food we took with. I think it took us about four days out to reach Auschwitz. We came at night. We were allowed to take hand baggage. When the doors opened, we saw people pointing to us looked like a fine striped pajamas uniforms. But they spoke to us Polish and told us, "please leave all the things inside the car. Just get out, get out, get out." Before we could do anything else, we form a line, we saw a lot of SS running with the pistols and with guns, whipping people and we were marching top a well lighted platform and Mengele was standing there and conducted the selection. And with a flip of the hand, some went to the right, some went to the left. We had no idea what it means. I went to the right. They took us, they took all the clothes away, they shave us completely and they give us the striped uniforms and a number and we were led to a barracks. Barrack that were former quarters of Austrian cavalry from before WWI and when you slept over there you could lay down on one side but we were pressed so much that there was no place to turn around. I still have, 50 years, I have scars about size of half dollar because we were all bones at that time and laying and pressing, the bones were pressing against the wood and the things got infected. I was about two weeks -- I wasn't in Auschwitz, I was in Birkenau. Birkenau was part of Auschwitz complex but there was, people didn't work over there. People were either sent to the gas chamber, either sent out to other German concentration camps at that time. You could see when we went to the barrack, the flames shooting and the block leader told us what it is, that the people from the selections are having appointment with their forefathers. Well, anyway, I was there for two weeks and I was selected and put into a transport and I met one of my former classmates, Jerry Malikoff and we decided that we stick together. And we were, together, almost to the end of the war. We were deported to the \_\_\_\_\_ commander of Dachau. That was a separate \_\_\_\_\_ camps of Dachau. Dachau was much minor camp in comparison. \_\_\_\_\_. There were just camps in which the Jews worked until they dropped dead and they send us more and more and more people.. I was in the lager 4 which was \_\_\_\_\_ I was in lager 11 which was \_\_\_\_\_, and we work on Commander Morris. All day we had to carry 50 pounds cement sacks from early dawn till it got dark and we always carry number of people who died. If you couldn't work, they beat you to death. And we had to

carry the dead bodies back because they have to count every day. We stood on the appell platz, that was the place where they counted the prisoners and the number of the prisoners had to tally, even if we stood late in the night. I was lucky for a short while to get the job \_\_\_\_\_. Then they used us to take care of other prisoners. When you are sick, when you get your slice of bread you couldn't eat everything and there was a lot of bread left. At that time, I gained some weight but after a while the Germans got tired of it and they took away with the transport all the sick people, the block was liquidated and we went back.

Q: You weren't too sick to leave, you recovered?

A: That's right. At that time, I got infected feet and I got blood poisoning and they took me and doctor \_\_\_\_\_, the physician was later -- he attended at our wedding. My wife went to nursing school and he was director of nursing school after the war. He attended our wedding. He told me, you come son, I have to amputate or you die. And they didn't have no anesthetics and he told me "but look, you'll be in pain but you'll faint". And few people put me on the table, they help me and I just realize at that moment that they are going to take away the toes of my foot. They are going to amputate, I'll be sent away to the gas chambers. So with all the strength I have, I tore myself out and I run away. I run away and I went to the working detail. At that time, I had no feeling in my foot \_\_\_\_\_ and I must have stepped on a very sharp stone and it cut deeply but that saved me and the pus and everything started to drain. After the war I still had operation and I had pieces of bone taken out of my toes but I survived this. When the Allies started to come in and they started to come in direction of Dachau from Ausborg, which was miles away, they put us all on the trains. Then they started to gather all the prisoners into the main camp in Dachau, although we were probably no more than twenty, thirty miles to Dachau, everything was bombed, and I was in transit for about four or five days. There was no water, there was no food. Some people went crazy and they drank their own urine. When my train came to Dachau, they unloaded \_\_\_\_\_ boxcar. They unloaded my boxcar. That was the last boxcar they unloaded. There were more dead than alive and when the American army came two days later, they found the entire train, say the first five boxcars, boxcars full of dead prisoners. Well, and what the Americans done -- they put us. I was in the hospital for quite a few months and I decided to go back to Poland to see if anyone had survived. We had, during the war, when we knew that they are going to take our apartment away, that sooner or later we had to move to ghetto, we had neighbors. Their name was Mitchelene, they were Poles. He was, the father of the man was Italian and the mother was Polish but they lived in Poland and we knew them very, very well. As a matter of fact, the woman was carrying \_\_\_\_\_, my mother was carrying her \_\_\_\_\_. I knew the people for fourteen years, from the time I moved in the house to the time I was deported. My mother took all the crystals, all the china, all the silver up to them and said, "Look, I doubt if we will get alive from the ghetto. That's all yours." We survived. We didn't expect. Well, I went over there when I came. I went with the transport to Poland, Polish transport of course, repatriated to Poland, it was very easy to get on the train. I came over there, I went on the tenth floor. I knocked on the door. A woman opened the door and she tried to slam in my face. "We have nothing, we have nothing." I was just able to hold the door open and I said "look, I don't want nothing from you. I came from Auschwitz and I saw the silver and the money and the crystals all mingled with blood. All I want to know, did somebody from my family, my cousins, did survive, look for me". She said "nobody" and she slammed the door in my face. I was three days in Poland and didn't find nobody and went back. In the beginning, the liberated prisoners who were \_\_\_\_\_ in Munich, which is twenty miles from Dachau but I \_\_\_\_\_ north to Frankfort on Meine and \_\_\_\_\_ opened and I enrolled \_\_\_\_\_. (Couldn't

understand him).university and started to study pharmacy. I got married in 1948. My wife was in nursing school at that time. We came here. Well, my story is for all the people who came displaced persons, who came to this country. We worked for a couple of years and then I went back to school. I got my PhD from medical school from the University of Chicago and came to Washington, started with the government. For the last ten years before retirement, I directed the \_\_\_\_\_ research department that was the only large animal \_\_\_\_\_ where my medical research was conducted. I retired in 1989.

Q: Are there any other things from any time in your life that you would like to add? Do you think maybe you have thought of anything from earlier back?

A: You mean from before?

Q: Before the war, during the war, episodes that stand out? I know you told me a number of them.

A: Episodes that stands in my mind was the deportation in 1942. It was a nightmare. The cries of the people; the children torn from the mother's arms. The old people who went in such a resigned way, with the look in their eyes -- they know that that's their last trip. They didn't know what's going to happen to them. But they knew that that's the end. That was one. The second was the shock of coming to Auschwitz. The selection. The realization. The flames that were shooting toward the sky when we were told that all the people who went to the left side were selected by Mengele. This probably I remember still most deeply. I saw Mengele for about ten minutes. Pass the line until I pass him by. I probably, if he would look like he looked then, I would recognize him immediately. The other thing which I remember was the will to live. People wanted to survive. People wanted to survive. They wanted to tell the story. We never believed at that time that the world really know what's happening to us. People were clinging to their lives and they wanted to preserve something. The other thing, I never attended synagogue till my daughter was born and she was about six or seven years old, we lived in Chicago. One day, \_\_\_\_\_, she came "Daddy, Daddy, look, sisters are coming". I said what are you mumbling, what sisters? I look and I saw two nuns. And I said, "Judy, tomorrow you go to Sunday School." And I took her to Sunday school. But it took years for us to reconcile and regain some kind of emotional balance although we are outwardly very, very well balanced, but the whole coming to the United States, trying to work, trying to get \_\_\_\_\_ degree. Well, people were really subconsciously trying to do, they try to do that many things, that they went finally to sleep, they collapse. There was no time to think. It was, I don't know, I know there was no neurotic drive, only that there was self- preservation. But people tried, not to forget, but people simply were haunted. It was almost in everybody's mind, the question, people question "Why did I survive? Why didn't the other one survive?" And you know what was probably the most painful question was when you talk to people and they didn't meant nothing. We did hear, just very innocently asking, "Why and how did you survive?" We couldn't -- it helped them. We couldn't answer the question ourselves but people felt guilty without being able to explain to themselves that they are not guilty of nothing and it took number of years. It took quite a few years until, you know, the children came and life went on, and we're young and the things which happened receded and \_\_\_\_\_ accepting from God then, life went on and we raised families and we became part of American society. And I hope we contributed.

Q: From what I can see, you certainly have.

A: When I finished, I had around seventy or eighty papers and presentations on my city.



- Q: Amazing. Can I ask you one specific question that you made a reference earlier to that you went to summer camp as a child, was that a Zionist summer camp?
- A: That was school camp. Well, it was a Zionist, not by definition, it was Zionist by what permeated. I remember as children we made the campfires and we stood and we sang Hebrew Zionist songs, yes, yes. It was not a Zionist organized, but culturally it was a Zionist camp.
- Q: Thanks. Can we go on, would you mind talking a little bit about your mother now? Can we do that?
- A: Yes, sure. My mother, like most of the women in the middle class, around a hundred middle class families, didn't work. She was active, she was active in Jewish life. She traveled. As a matter of fact, my mother was in the United States attending the World Fair in 1939. She came to see her brothers. When she returned to Poland two weeks before the war started, her brother begged her to stay but you know, she said "look, I have a child and my husband over there." When she crossed Germany, the train was seeing, nobody could get, you know, she just transited into Germany, into Poland. If the war had broken out two weeks earlier, I would still have probably my mother alive. I remember in 1938, Germans expelled the Jews who were once Polish citizens. We were not that far from the border. Lodz, I don't know, maybe two, three hundred miles from the border, from the western border in Germany. We kept a young boy and I shared the room for a while, I don't remember, for half a year.
- Q: He came and lived with you?
- A: Yes. The Jewish community took the children and then his parents came and took him away. They got situated. The brothers of my mother tried to talk us into leaving Poland and coming to the States but my father was a metal agent at that time. We had \_\_\_\_\_, we were very, very financially comfortable and he felt, his reasoning was, I don't know the language, you can take no money out of Poland. You could just go as you were. What am I going to do over there? And he didn't. He didn't want to go and they paid with their lives, my parents.
- Q: Can we go back, do you know your mother's birth date by any chance? Anything, the town where she came from?
- A: Oh, yes. My mother came -- just a second. Yes, my mother was about 23 when I was born so she was born probably around 1900. She lived in a small town in Lithuania, Batinia, Lithuania. My grandfather was very well to do. He owned quite a bit of land. He owned a sawmill. He owned a flourmill and my grandparents sent us packages in 1941 to the ghetto from Lithuania. The packages reached the ghetto. They were killed -- the Lithuanians killed them even before the Germans. In the two to three days when the Russians pulled away and before the Germans occupied physically the town, the entire Jewish population was finished.
- Q: Do you know about your mother's education?
- A: My mother attended the university, in Russia \_\_\_\_\_. She was interned a year \_\_\_\_\_.
- Q: What was she studying?

A: Languages.

Q: What about the Jewish life in her home? Were they observant?

A: Oh, yes, oh yes. My mother's family certain was more, they were not Hasidic, but they were more observant. Entire generation, my grandparents were much more observant. My dad's father was much more observant than we were. But you have to understand one thing. My parents went through WW1. They lived already under the communist regime for a while, for a few years before they were able to extricate themselves from Russia. And probably just like today's generation of the people veer from the strict religious practices of their parents, they veer from the strict religious practices of their parents. In other words, the meat was kosher still at home but when we ate dinner, we could have coffee or tea with milk, you know. It was kosher but not in the strictest sense of this. We had two sets of dishes and so forth. I remember, I went for Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur with my dad to the synagogue.

Q: For Shabbat, you would work on Shabbat?

A: Well, there were candles. There were candles at home but you took the streetcar. My father rode the car, he had a car which was in Poland, there were not too many cars but he had a car. Shabbat was much more a tradition than a religious observance. We never went for Sabbath day and Friday services. The synagogue was quite a distance from where we lived and it was the only one big synagogue in \_\_\_\_\_ Lodz. Our home was a Zionist home, much more than a religious home.

Q: I understand. I was just asking. Can you tell me something more about your mother's personality? Anything you can remember?

A: She was young and she was full of life. My mother played beautiful violin. She was not a concert violinist but I remember her playing for her friends and so forth. She got active with several of her friends. I've got a large family. All three sisters of my mother and they got children, they are my cousins. From the entire family, that's what I went to look for, I'm the only survivor. She had two brothers in this country. One of them, we took the name of my uncle in L.A.

Q: He sponsored you to come here?

A: Yes, but when we came here, it is hard to explain. The only thing what we were able to salvage from the old country was the \_\_\_\_\_. I remember we came to Chicago and I already got my job. I started very low class, then I got into the lab. When I got in touch with my uncle, when he called, my wife's on the phone. All he wanted to know, if she's Jewish. After talking to her, my wife left Chicago, she was at NIH, at the time she worked as a nurse. My wife has \_\_\_\_\_ we have a large home in L.A. Why don't you come out, you will live with us, I'll put my nephew on the payroll ad he could go to school. When I came my wife was almost ready to pack. And I told her look. He has two children. In spite of what he said, the kids will say that a pair of refugees came and moved smack into our parent's home." I said you cannot have it both ways. If you want to be independent you have to stay independent. I went to visit my uncle. They were very nice to me. When I was going to school for every Jewish holiday and Christian holiday, he sent me \$100 check and he tried to do it in a quiet sort of way. And it helped, at that

time it helped. But what we did, we did on our own. We pulled ourselves up.

Q: Have you tried to find out about family members?

A: I wrote them a letter. I remember my father-in-law was a very, very bitter man. He never reconciled himself to what happened. He just could not reconcile that people have wives, family and this, you know, and his wife perish and his mother perish. I was younger, but we were also bitter at that time. We're not bitter at nobody in particular. I wrote them a letter and I said "look, I'm at the university, I'm studying, I'm not asking for nothing, I don't need nothing but you are entitled to know what happened to your family." And I wrote it. And the answer was "Look you never asked us for nothing, we didn't refuse you nothing." They couldn't understand probably \_\_\_\_\_, why the letters were so bitter. When I came here, you see this is the difference probably between the immigration, between the displaced persons who came here at that time. We spent very little, just wanted a chance. Russian Jews, and I quite active now with Russian Jews, they expect much more. They expect much from society. We were so disillusioned, that we didn't expect nothing from nobody. But, yes, I have contact with them, but I lived in Chicago, they lived in L.A. I saw them a few times. As a matter of fact when I got out from undergraduate school in Annapolis, his wife came to my graduation. My wife has a family in Chicago. They showed us \_\_\_\_\_ when we came. They are not wealthy people but the children were pretty well off. They're professionals and we got quite close to them. We finally realized that they tried to be family to us and we integrated \_\_\_\_\_ (couldn't hear) into the family.

Q: So you still have other cousins?

A: Oh, yeah, we still go to the weddings and Bar Mitzvahs and to this and that. Yes, these cousins \_\_\_\_\_. (voice faded out).

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add about your mother? Either about her personality or anything else you might know. If I'm going to write this, I'd like to know a little more about her youth or anything you know about it.

A: I was, you know, I was very much of a child before the war. I know my mother was a very outgoing person. She was quite well --, for a woman were after WW1, quite well educated. She was very musical. She attended and she liked concerts and this. She traveled a lot. Every summer she was traveling in Italy and Yugoslavia and this. While I was in summer camp, she was traveling.

Q: With your father?

A: My father joined her but not for that much because he has \_\_\_\_\_ in the business, the factory. Yes, but, so she was well traveled. Spoke languages, was active in the Jewish life. She was a very good-looking woman, she was tall.

Q: Do you know what year your parents married?

A: Oh, yeah. They married in 1922. She was pregnant in 1923. \_\_\_\_\_ (speaking very fast) because she joined my father.

Q: Did they meet in university?

A: No. My father was in Moscow when my mother started and he already had his own business. And he married my mother and they decided, he lost his business in the revolution but they realized that they are probably going to be arrested as a part of the campaign against the merchants and this of the \_\_\_\_\_ in Russia, they decided to flee and they fled. My grandfather also fled but he fled to \_\_\_\_\_ but he fled a year later. All my uncles, the brothers of my father, also left Russia and they also settled in Lodz. I have a large family. It was a family of about seventy or eighty people and I am the only survivor.

Q: Did you spend a lot of time with them?

A: Oh yes, oh yes. They were very, very close and very warm relationship.

(TAPE ENDS HERE)