

Interview with Dr. Jerzy Lubelfeld

Series Survivors of the Holocaust—Oral History Project of Dayton, Ohio

Interviewer—Carole Erich

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Q: My name is Carole Erich and I am in the home of Dr. Jerzy Lubelfeld (CE verifies the pronunciation with JL) at 441 Mandrake Dr. in Huber Heights (a city just north of Dayton) Ohio. It is Wednesday 10.A.M. June 10, 1981. I am going to interview Dr. Lubelfeld in connection with the Dayton area Holocaust project. OK, Dr. Lubelfeld, I want to start by asking your age.

A: My age is 73, going on 74.

Q: What is your birth date?

A: Oct 29.

Q: Of what year?

A: Are you asking me for the nearest anniversary, or my birth date?

A: Your birth date!

A: 1907.

Q: Where were you born?

A: In Warsaw, Poland.

Q: OK and I would like to ask you your parents' names, please.

A: Benedict and Regina.

Q: Your mother's maiden name please.

A: Lilienthal.

Q: Was you mother Jewish?

A: No.

- Q: Polish? How long has your family lived in Poland?
- A: I left Poland not of my own will, but forcibly on Sept 19, 1939 when I was taken Prisoner of War by the Germans.
- Q: I don't believe that you heard the question which I asked, or maybe you didn't understand me. I asked "How long has your family, meaning your background -- ancestors -- lived in Poland?" How many generations back do you think?
- A: As far as I know at least 400 years. (That means in the territory called Poland since Poland, itself existed only sporadically.)
- Q: Is that right?
- A: Yes!
- Q: What did your family do for work, to earn a living?
- A: My father was an accountant and my mother was a housewife. In those days there was no work (for women) outside in large numbers (at least not in the middle classes). This of course has nothing to do with the main thing we were talking about.
- Q: No, but we are trying to find this kind of information as background. Your father was an accountant; do you know whom he worked for?
- A: In the last job he had he worked in the Italian embassy. No, it was not an embassy because it was already under the German occupation. He worked for the Italian consulate. Actually I am not really sure because I was already in the prisoner camp, at that time.
- Q: I would like to ask you now; how many children were there in your family?
- A: Three. I was the youngest.
- Q: Who were the other two? Were they boys or girls?
- A: My sister, who is still in Warsaw, and my brother, blessed be his memory, who died long before the war, when he was 21.
- Q: What is your sister's name?
- A: It is Irena Chechanofksa. Do you want me to spell it?
- A: We will get to that later. What was your brother's name?

A: Joseph!

Q: When you lived in Poland, as a child, in Warsaw, did your family own your own home or did you rent?

A: Most of the people we were in contact with rented apartments.

Q: In the neighborhood where you lived, was it primarily a Christian neighborhood?

A: Yes; but there were no restrictions. Jews, in Warsaw, had their own quarter. This was sort of a historical remain from the past, but Jews lived elsewhere also. If they wanted to. There were no objections, at least none that I knew of.

Q: Do you remember, from your childhood, whether the Jews who were in Warsaw at that time, you said that they had their own quarter, were segregated in any way, as far as school children were concerned? Did you go to school with these Jewish children? (Several other Holocaust survivors told about strict segregation in classrooms).

A: I had a number of Jewish schoolmates. That was nothing special. In every school there were Jewish children of the families who lived in that district. They walked to school or rode a streetcar. I had some Jewish friends. A few people, in this country knew, for example, that religion was taught in the schools in Europe and, since the majority of the children were Catholics -- they were about 60% or 70% -- we remained in the classroom and the priest would come and teach religion. At the same time these few who were Protestant, who were in the class were directed to another classroom and there was a Lutheran pastor who would come and teach them the Lutheran religion. I remember a very peculiar looking elderly gentleman who would come and teach the Jewish children their religion. This is how the non-discrimination against religion and not establishing a religion was understood in Poland, in these days. It worked!

Q: You spoke of a peculiar looking gentleman. Would you describe him for me?

A: To me he was big, because I was small. By the way, I am not very big, even now. Anyway, he had a very dignified demeanor. He must have had some license to teach the Jewish religion, but he was not a rabbi.

Q: Did he wear the traditional side locks?

A: No, you would not have been able to tell whether he was Polish, French or whatever. He was dressed the same way I am, in street clothes.

Q: So there were no outstanding characteristics?

A: No he was not wearing orthodox clothes. Many of the Jews, as far as I know, had their own schools. I am very well informed about this situation of Jews in Poland, since, because of my name, I am always asked, "Are you Jewish?" I have always been interested in these variances of population, in my own country. So I read quite a lot about the matter. It took me a long time until I finally found out enough to satisfy my curiosity. That does not mean that, if I found a book about Jewish things now, I would read it saying, before I read it, that I knew everything. The last book about Jewish things which I read about two years ago, is "The Book of Jewish Knowledge." A kind of an encyclopedia, but it has nothing to do with our interview.

Q: Actually it does, because it sort of demonstrates your own background on the subject and that you can talk very well on it. You said that you had been, because of your name Lubens.

A: Lubelfeld!

Q: Lubelfeld, that you had been, from time to time taken for Jewish.

A: I might have had some ancestor who was Jewish, but a Jewish name would have been Lubel.

Q: Is that a typical Polish name? It sounds more German!

A: No, it is a German name. There were many German names which were considered Jewish names. For example one of Hitler's cabinet minister's name was Rosenberg (Alfred Rosenberg was the philosopher of Hitler's, the German Nazi party. He had been born in Estonia, became Minister of Germany's Eastern occupied territories during WWII. He was convicted at the Nuremberg War Crimes trials in 1946 and executed). I remember that I saw a stationery shop, on the street where I lived, and the name of the owner was Rosenberg. He was a Jew!

Q: You were never able to trace your family, with all the studying which you did, including your mother's maiden name, that there were any Jews, Lilienthal, again, sounds as if it may be Jewish, if you trace it back to a German heritage.

A: All I knew from the tradition in my family, is that my father's family originally came from either Latvia or Estonia. When I was in the prison camp I did not think about it or I didn't remember it; but somehow it had sunk in my memory. One day a German professor of Socio-Anthropology came and did some research and measurements. Of course he never came to any agreement on it but, for this anthropologist, who needed such a mass of people for his research, that was just like being put into some kind of paradise. So, when he examined me he said, 'Ostbaldischi!' this means from the eastern portion of the Baltic Sea. Then immediately, the story of the origin of my family came back to my mind from

under the threshold of consciousness. I sort of agreed. Finally, there is another thing which pertains to what we are talking about. This anthropological thing; the second person who brought my attention to this thing was my wife. She is British. She said: "All Poles, all the people from Eastern Europe, you can recognize on the street immediately." I said: "Why? Do they swear in their language of origin?" she said, "No, because of their flat heads!"

Q: That is interesting. I myself am very interested in anthropology, I have a degree in it. So I will get back to that research which was done while you were in prison. I may ask you more questions on that subject. I would like to return now to an earlier point and ask you, since that should be established, whether you are a Catholic.

A: Well, I am a Catholic, but since my wife is Anglican, we go to the Episcopal Church , to Christ Episcopal Church. Our son is an Episcopal priest in Lansing Mich.

Q: However you were raised as a Catholic?

A: Yes.

Q: Was your family religious?

A: Not particularly, just like the rest of the Polish intelligentsia. We went to church on Sunday. We observed the religious holidays. We observed the church laws, in general. We went to confession at least once a year and took communion. I was introduced to religious life by my mother and father. This I think is the normal way of doing it. That was the case, at least for me, for the environment from which I came. I can see that you are an anthropologist because, when I talk about these things your eyes, which are radiant anyway, become a little more radiant.

Q: Let's get back to Poland. I would like it if you could make some estimates; can you judge what class your family fit into at that time. would you say middle-class?

A: Middle class!

Q: You called them intelligentsia. Were your family intellectuals? Was your father university educated?

A: Yes, he had a college education. He had a degree in accountancy. He was what you would call here a Certified Public accountant (JL uses the term Chartered Accountant!). I don't know if he was certified or not. I did not think about these things then. I never knew how the second part of my life would turn out. it came from nothingness.

- Q: I don't know if you answered my question about what class of people you came from, I got so interested in your answers. You said "middle class?"
- A: You could say, upper middle class.
- Q: Was your family politically oriented? Was your father involved in the politics of the time?
- A: No, not that I remember. I don't think that any political issue deserved attention in the opinion of my father. My father and mother would be at a table and things were happening in the world and they discussed it all the time. We children were asking questions (JL was 32 years old in 1939, so he could hardly be considered a child then). This kid asked most of the questions, he was always sort of on the lookout to get more than he was being given.
- Q: That leads me to the next subject. I would like to know if you can recall, as a child, what was going on economically or politically, in your country prior to the onset of the Germans? Now that goes quite a bit further now, that would make you a bit older. What was taking place politically and economically in Poland during WWI and even before WWI. That was the time when you were a small child.
- A: When WWI broke out many people in Poland prayed in gratitude. One of the Polish national poets prayed for the Universal War of Peoples Recognition by the Lord. Poland, from the end of the 18th century until 1919 did not exist on the map of Europe as an independent state. It had been partitioned, at the end of the 18th century between Prussia, Russia and Austria. Reunification and the establishment of Poland as an independent country was possible only by some miracle who thought about these things. Some cosmic catastrophe happened and these three great powers collapsed simultaneously. The 19th century was the time of two Polish uprisings against Prussia in 1830 and in 1863. They ended in catastrophe. To make a very long story short, or shorter, for the purpose of this interview, I say that one of the questions which I remember I asked, as a kid, was "Daddy, why do policemen speak Russian and not Polish?" Then I received my first lesson in Polish history from my father. Now the result of WWI was miraculous for Poland, because all three participatory powers collapsed to such a degree that it was permitted for Poland to reunite and even to win the war of 1920 against Russia (Aug 1, 1920 found the Russian armies under Trotsky 75 miles from Warsaw but by Aug, 23 Polish Marshal Pilsudsky had repeatedly defeated Trotsky and had even encircled three of his armies). As a pre-teen boy I remember that the Russians, the Bolsheviks, had their big offensive and they came up to the suburbs of Warsaw. The commander in chief of the Polish army was Marshal Pilsudsky, by a very ingenious tactical maneuver (and the armament from England and France) which in the military schools of several nations has been given as an example of military genius, did organize an attack force which hit the Russian left flank, broke them and went on to their back. All these Russian

massed forces, which were on the road to Warsaw, were cut off from the main body of troops of the Russian army. This was Aug. 15, 1920 and that was also one of the religious holidays so that people in Poland called this victory over the Russians: "The Miracle of Vistula." That was a battle which lasted three days. The Russians had to move back, to withdraw. The Polish armed forces, which was a conglomeration of former soldiers of three partitioning powers were then on the bank of the river Neman. The Polish forces caught up with the withdrawing Russians and they fought a battle and that was the end of the war. Then there was the Treaty of Riga, which politically and legally established the Polish State, the Polish republic, the Polish Commonwealth. Until Set 17, 1939, when the Russians broke that agreement there was peace. I even remember some friendships. I remember a courtesy visit by the Russian fleet. There was a battleship the "Marat" and some other smaller units, to the Polish navy in Gdynia. By the way, I was a career officer in the Polish navy, a regular navy officer. This is why I remember these things better than other people, who just looked. So Poland was finally independent, after more than 100 years of being non-existent as a political unit. Then we had too many political parties. Poland wasn't ready for this kind of democratic political structure. Finally this Marshal Pilsudsky, who was retired, at that time, made a coup d'etat (On May 13, 1926 Marshal Joseph Pilsudsky arrested President Wojciechowski and then, on June 13, the Marshal settled for the job of Permanent Commander in Chief of the Armies, regardless of who would head the government, as a means of controlling the country). In 1926, if I remember correctly, is when it happened. It was illegal, but it was effective. During those 20 years of Polish Independence the nation, the country demonstrated to all those who wanted to see the truth, in Europe, that the Polish Nation had not been really defeated in the partitions. To us, to the kids who grew up in this period of freedom between the wars it was a time to be appreciated. Whatever most of us are today, to most of us, it is the result of being a free country which we had then. Becoming a free country after 100 years or more of not being free, was an event which cannot be wiped out, even by being a Communist country. There are some good things which, in spite of all the bad things which the present regime has introduced, are enjoyed by the people. Now let me get back to your question; all the events which were happening around us, and in which we were involved, affected our lives directly. There were continuous discussions about them and interpretations about the events. My father had perhaps a somewhat leftist slant in his views, so naturally I had the opposing views. Naturally! However neither of our views were very strong. There was one thing about which we did not have a clear vision. Because Polish people had always trusted everybody, we fought the German aggression with the weapons of 1920. Polish cavalry against German tanks. That was ridiculous from the military point of view, but it is one of the things which lives in the memory of the people. Poland remained faithful to the principles which are living in Polish history. One British historian whose name escapes me right now, recognized that. He told me about the battle of Warsaw in 1920 as one of the battles deciding the history of the world, he did that because, to think humanely, I know that this theory is ridiculous but, just for a moment let's say: "If Poland had

fallen to the Russians in 1920, the Russians would have marched into Germany, which had a communist revolution lingering. They would go through Germany to France.' So the history of the world would have been completely different. Now I understand that "if" in history, just like in individual human life, is ridiculous and I don't pay much attention to it.

Q: You skirted the issue, and I wonder if I could direct you to it, at least a little bit, it is about Polish Nationalism. Even though Poland was part of Russia and Prussia during the last 150 years, or so. Can you speak of the nationalistic feeling of the people? I assume that they felt themselves as Poles, rather than Prussians or Russians during that period. Do you have any sense of that type of fierce nationalism which people felt?

A: They knew that they were Polish and the partitioning powers respected it and sometimes fought it. For example, Bismarck introduced a "Germanizing" policy in the Western part of Poland. So, in Polish history, Bismarck is a bad guy. The least oppression was from Austria, the Austrian-Hungarian government, in the south. They permitted the Polish language in the schools. The Russians, they were at times, this way and then that way. There was a Polish language in my time, but there had been attempts, in the past, at Russification. One had to live, so, since Polish hopes were a prayer for a "Universal War of People Recognition" about which I talked, from the practical point of view and from the point of view of what was then existing, it had little possibility of being answered the way the Polish people imagined it should be. It was speculation anyway! So there were many Poles in the Russian military service. There were Polish generals. Somebody even said once that, if Russia had not seized the part of Poland which they did, they would have lost the wars which they had with the Turks and with the Japanese even worse than they did. The result was that, when finally, Polish armed forces were assembled in 1919 you could see people who spoke Polish with a very heavy Russian accent, and others with a German accent. It was not only a German accent, but a German accent with a passion. There were also some from the Austro-Hungarian former forces with the "Gemutlich" little slant in their German. However they were all Polish when the war with the Bolsheviks, the Russian Communists, started turning a little faster. You could see that these people who might have been culturally, in the external things, German or flavored Russians or Viennese, they were basically Poles. This perseverance in remaining Polish was to a great extent supported by religion, by the church. Polish history is such that being Polish and being Catholic, even now, means the same thing. That is a historical fact which is well understood because, after all, Poland fought with Turks as defendants of Christianity. Poland fought with Russia for the hegemony of these parts which are now in Western Russia and were then Eastern Poland. Sometimes I lose the continuity of what I am saying because I am an old man. Five years ago I would not have made that brag, I just made; so you will have to forgive me for that. So, even the names go with it. For example Russian Gen. Marinevsky has a Polish name, Marshal Rokesovsky has a Polish name. the founder of the KGB, which is the Russian secret police and the terrible NKVD,

Cheresvokaika, who was the organizer and founder of it? Cherchinsky! (Transcriber wrote these names down phonetically but is not certain of the spellings). The monument of Cherchinsky stands in front of one of the Polish government buildings on a square in Warsaw or at least it was there in 1974, when I was there and saw it. There are some people in Poland who say, even, that Cherchinsky was exterminating Russians, whether they were Communists or not, with his NKVD. So, all these things which were going on were discussed in this patriotic, highly emotional atmosphere, which was also inherent in the Polish history. Polish people in their history, if you look at it from the ordinary or average Western's point of view, you could say that Polish people were stupid and impractical. You have such events in the Polish History like 1683. That was the year the Turks were besieging Vienna. The emperor of the Holy German empire (at that time the Holy Roman empire extended from Rome to the German coast and was ruled by the head of the House of Hapsburg who was routinely "elected" emperor by the Electors meeting in Frankfurt on the Main). Of the German nation, governed out of Vienna. The Pope sent some representatives to the Polish king, John III Seviesky, who had been the conqueror of the Turks in several battles, saying. "Please come to the rescue!" So John II gathered about one hundred thousand men into an army, no strings attached, no lend lease, no "play now -- pay later" schemes, just for the heck of it, went to Vienna. He defeated the Turks and relieved the siege of the Emperor. For this fact the Austrians have reciprocated one hundred years later by participating in the Polish partition. However that is how the cookie crumbles. That is what I would like to point out here is that, just for the heck of it, the world may beat them out. There was the Napoleonic War period when the Polish Court served in Napoleon's army, because they hoped, without any real reason for it, that Napoleon would rebuild Poland. A few Polish people did realize that Napoleon was another plain crook, the only thing which they had against him was that he was short in stature. Polish commanders were usually tall.

Q: Don't you think that Polish people, as a nation, were militarily naïve about their aggressors?

A: Politically naïve, not militarily! This was the last Polish victory in the Napoleonic period. Another event, which is written about in Polish history books, because it is something to be proud of, comes from the Peninsular Wars. These are the wars where the British Expeditionary forces (under Wellington) helped the Spaniards fight against the French. The battles which were being fought, mainly by the Spanish guerrillas included a Polish detachment (on the French side). There was a battle at a place called Somosiera(undoubtedly this is Puerto de Somosiera). They don't teach about that outside of Poland, in the history books. Somosiera is kind of a valley or ravine. There were four Spanish batteries there blocking its entrance. Napoleon said to the Polish forces: "You can do anything! Go and beat up these batteries! Attack them!" So the Polish cavalry, that was light cavalry, attacked. If I remember correctly, almost all the officers were killed, but the few survivors finally killed the last cannon crew. They won the battle of Somosiera

and we are proud of it! In WWII there was Monte Cassino (on May 18, 44 German troops evacuated Monte Cassino). It was Polish troops who finally took Monte Cassino! In how many history books, through which I browsed, in this country, it is all written as if Eisenhower, himself, did that. (The book: "Chronicle of the 20th Century" by Clifton Daniels, on p. 568 gives joint credit to Polish and British troops for that conquest which allowed breaking out of Anzio beachhead and continuing the march on Rome). Then, again, why do I mention it? It is because, who the hell needed to take Monte Cassino, in the first place? It could have been passed by. Now for the Polish people that was another occasion to show how we go up in the smoke and shave them off. Finally the tragic Warsaw uprising where the Soviet army stopped on the Eastern bank of the River Vistula and watched how the Germans systematically slaughtered the Polish defenders. I don't remember how long this Warsaw uprising lasted (it lasted 63 days from Aug 1st to Oct 3rd 1944) and how they were able to live. That was again with technology beating this Polish uprising. The Poles wanted to liberate their own capital. However it was decided that the Russians would be the liberators.

Q: They would get credit for the liberation of Warsaw, rather than the Polish people?

A: I cannot blame them. from a tactical point of view it was ridiculous, but taking into account all the factors which came into play in this situation, and that considers psychology of the people, economics and history of the past; it seems terrible now. All these things were spontaneous things! Even if they had known that no one would help them they still would have fought. I think that if the Polish people have learned anything from this, being under the Communist regime, I think that they finally learned political and practical reasons and they have demonstrated it now, (On Jan 24, 1981 millions of Polish workers stayed away from their jobs in support of the Solidarity Union's call for a five day work week) However that is not the leading layers of the society, not the intellectuals but the workers, who were affected and who were effective. Can you imagine the worker who is, in the Communist world, supposedly the source of the power of the State? Here, at the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk they are all kneeling at the gate and they are getting the Holy Communion! You know that "Religion is the Opiate of the People?" (That was a statement made by Lenin). Don't they know that? Of course they know! However they held in contempt the people who think this and who want to take this as a basis. In Poland, now, even communists go to church, particularly those who want to join the Communist party just in order to satisfy the conditions for eating, drinking and sleeping. I know about one person who is close to me and is in Poland. He is a very important engineer in the Polish industry. He has a very fine position. I am not going to mention his name, and what relationship he has to me. Before he was promoted to this elevated position, which he has now, he had to become a member of the Communist party. So he filled out the application, the form, and went for an interview. I know this as a fact from him. He told me. So I asked him: "How did this interview go?" He said: "This interviewer asked me: Why do you want to join the Communist

party?" and I said to him: "For the same reason that you joined the party!" The interviewer said: "That is fine, that is reason enough, you are accepted."

Q: Let me take you back to WWI. I like to ask you basically: "Did your father fight in the war? Was he in the military?

A: In my family there were some younger people, older than I, who were in the armed forces.

Q: Was there no military tradition in your immediate family?

A: No! I was the only militarist.

Q: Can I ask you: You did graduate from high school, didn't you?

A: Of course! After I graduated from high school I went to Warsaw University. I don't like to talk about this because it sounds like bragging, but I was sort of a bright kid. I applied to the Polish Military School. I was attending the University and, at the same time, I was a student in the Military school.

Q: What years are we talking about here?

A; 1926!

Q: You were attending both the University and the Military School?

A: I was a student in absentia. In the European system you had to come to the University only for examinations. So I worked hard. I didn't go on dates so much.

Q: What type of a degree were you working on at the University?

A: A diploma in engineering.

Q: And at the military academy?

A: It was rather like AFIT here (Air Force Institute of Technology, which is located at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton, prepares mainly U.S. Air Force Officers generally for an advanced career in Science or Engineering). Do you know what AFIT is?

Q: Yes.

A: It is the Air Force Institute of Technology.

Q: It is very difficult to get in it.

- A: That is the place from where I finally retired. I was a professor there for 24 years.
- Q: We will eventually get to that, but I kind of like to know first of all: do you recall the name of the Military Academy which you attended?
- A: It was the School of Military Engineering, you would say here.
- Q: In other words; you coordinated your engineering degree from both schools?
- A: Yes!
- Q: Now, this was in 1926. Was this education which you were getting, at this point, being overseen by Russians or Prussians?
- A: No, that was independent Poland!
- Q: That's right, they had gained their independence in 1920. So it was a Polish.
- A: Polish Armed Forces School!
- Q: OK, fine! Did anything significant happen during this period to you or your family, in this 1926-28 period?
- A: Only that my brother died. No, nothing else special, just routine.
- Q: At that time there were a lot of new developments in Poland.
- A: Yes, at that time Poland, from being an agricultural country built an industrial, you could say, might, it was not that big, but the country became more industrialized, in that short period, than it had been before. We built an industrial base and a port in Gdynia. Gdynia has become the largest port on the Baltic Sea. That was created out of nothing, just out of a small fisherman's village. (Poland needed an access to the sea which it had control of since Danzig or Gdansk was an international city). In that part of Polish Silesia, industry was developed, there were different industries. The area was diversified. Of course, after WWII, under the protection of the "Great, Benevolent Older-brother from the East" they industrialized Poland even more. Whether that is really good, in every respect, I don't know. I knew that, in one respect, it was not so good. I asked my sister in 1974: "Can we go to the River Vistula to swim?" She said: "In what? In that dirt?" The river is completely polluted.
- Q: When you graduated, that would have been about the year 1932?

A: I think that it was in 1931. That year I was through with my formal education. I have an advanced degree (probably that was a PH.D degree since JL calls himself Doctor). Then I was assigned to different schools, army and navy schools. Finally I was transferred, as an engineer to the navy. There I was head of the signal Department in the Naval Technical Training Center. In 1939 I was a Lieutenant Commander in the Polish Navy.

Q: Could I ask you how many languages you speak?

A: I speak Polish, naturally. I also speak English. If I am socially with people, who speak French, I speak French. I also read German and Russian technical books. I recently discovered that I remember more German than I thought I did. I have a pen pal in Germany. He writes to me in German and I write to him in English. We understand each other. He uses a dictionary and I use a dictionary.

Q: When you graduated, in 1931, the Germans and particularly Hitler, who had spent some time in prison, were basically moving out with their program.

A: Hitler came to power in 1933.

Q: Right! He had been in prison. Wasn't that in 1926 or 28 that he had been in prison? (The attempted coup, in Munich, took place Nov 8, 1923 and he was arrested on Nov 12, 1923).

A: I think that he was in prison when he wrote "Mein Kampf" -- "His Fight." (Hitler dictated that book, the synopsis of what he planned to accomplish with the thousand year Reich to Rudolf Hess before his release from prison in Dec 1924).

Q: Were the Polish people, particularly you as a young intellectual aware of what was taking place in Germany at this time?

A: Yes!

Q: Were you aware of Hitler?

A: Yes, but you know this Polish wishful thinking? Public opinion was divided. Some people thought that the final attack of Hitler on Poland is unavoidable. Some other people thought; "No! We will go against Russia together. He won't do anything to us." As time went on the first group was increasing at the expense of the second.

Q: Then you were well aware of what was taking place in Germany?

A: Yes! What I didn't know was how strong they were. I thought that we were a lot stronger than we really were. If we use the word "If, If, If" clause again, talking about historical events, the weather during Sept 1939 was the kind of weather the

people who go on vacation pray for. There was not a drop of rain. The moment the war with Poland, that September was finished, it started to rain. If that rain had come at the beginning of September the German tanks would have been stopped in the mud, and who knows? However, you can always say "If" and "Who knows?"

Q: What happened to you after that? I know that you talked about being transferred to the Navy permanently about 1932.

A: In 1933!

Q: By 1933 Hitler had come to power in Germany (on Jan 30, 1933 Hitler was voted in as Chancellor by the Reichstag and, on Mar 23, 1933, he was granted dictatorial powers) and you were a young naval officer. During the period where Hitler was gaining power, in the 1933 through 38 period, what was taking place in Poland and how did it affect you? In other words, while this was going on, what was Poland doing and what were you doing?

A: Poland had a non-aggression pact with the Russians and a non-aggression pact with the Germans. We trusted these pacts; but before 1939, I believe in 1937, but I don't remember the exact date, the Polish navy got some more ships, some smaller units, which had been built in England. I remember those destroyers being welcomed in Gdynia, but that wasn't enough. The navy's objective, during the war was to defend the coast. My mobilization assignment was to be Associate Signal Chief of the coastal defenses. That is how I became a prisoner of war on Sept 19, 1939. That was when they caught me. They made me come out of a hole in the ground. I must say that I was taken as a prisoner of war by the Wehrmacht(the German armed forces).

Q: We won't get into that yet! I want to cover a little more of this period before we go on.

A: Until the last moment we were proceeding with our work as usual.

Q: What was taking place? Were you aware of what was taking place with the Jewish population of Poland during that time?

A: The Jews who had money and had sense were emigrating from Poland. Many of them stayed. Their families, the families of some of them had lived in Poland for 600 years. The great influx of Jews to Poland was in the 14th Century.

Q: When you say influx, did they come from a particular area?

A: From Germany! Most of them came from Germany, because they had been persecuted. I just read a book recently and I am trying to buy that book but it is out of print, with the title "Thy Brother's Blood" and the subtitle is "Christian

Roots of Anti-Semitism.” The book is written by Malcolm Hay (the spelling may be wrong) who is a Catholic, a Scottish aristocrat. I read that book and, from it, I learned things which I had never heard of; that there was always some kind of dislike of the Jews. That was both here and there. Some people have Jewish friends. They like them but dislike the other Jews. So this Polish anti-Semitism was probably the least virulent compared to other anti-Semitism.

Q: How did it manifest itself? You said that it was the least virulent. How did it manifest itself, would you say?

A: In Poland proper there were no pogroms (that ignores the Lodz pogroms of June 5-6, 1905, and the show trials in Warsaw in Feb 1930, amongst others, which are documented). There were pogroms in the Ukraine, including in the Polish part of the Ukraine and in Lithuania. The word “Pogrom” is a generally Slavic word, common to the Polish, Russian and Ukrainian languages. Polish nobility, landed gentry, employed Jews as administrators of their estates. When you asked somebody in Poland, “You don’t like Jews, do you?” they will answer “No, they are different!” So, this is a general human trait that if somebody is different from you, the first reaction you have is that you don’t like these people.

Q: Were they able to practice their religion?

A: The Jews?

Q: Yes.

A: Oh yes! They had synagogues. The Jewish religion was taught in the schools in Poland, as I already told you. Whereas there were isolated cases of anti-Semitism and the dislike of Jews, generally speaking, there was no, at least by comparison with what was happening elsewhere, Polish-anti-Semitism, in my opinion. There were people who had Polish names which were obviously dating from some three or four hundred years earlier, of Jewish ancestry. That was in Poland, before the partitions of the 19th Century. In the pre-partition Poland there was a law, if I remember, that if a Jew was baptized, i.e. accepted Christianity, he was admitted by one noble family and given a coat of arms, he became a nobleman. He was given land and he could serve in the armed forces. You could tell the descendants of these people only because the names went something like: Shezan, Sherz, Shezanovsky, since Shez means Cross in Poland. So if there was a name with this term Cross in it then you could say; “Well, perhaps some ancestor took advantage of this very good offer.”

Q: So that really meant that they had to renounce their own religion and religious background. Their names were apparently changed to include the term for “Cross.”

A: Yes, but there were other things as well. In the history books, that is in the history which was taught when I was in Poland, there is a character: Barakio Joslevitz (not certain about the spelling) who was a provider for a large Polish detachment during one of the Polish uprisings. There was a Jewish assimilation in the Polish society, at least to some degree. However, even apart from that, within Jewish society, itself, there was a cultural explosion. I think that it was in the 19th Century, in the eastern part of Poland, they had kind of a good period for the development of Jewish culture. I got this from the “Book of Jewish Knowledge” (that was the time when Hassidim was developed) which I bought.

Q: When you were in the military, did you serve, in the early and mid-thirties, with Jewish-Polish military men?

A: In the Polish navy there were probably six or eight high-ranking Polish naval officers who were not even Christians. They were still Jews. I also remember that I attended a Jewish wedding once. It was of a colleague of mine from high school. He was getting married young. At that wedding I wore my gala uniform, complete with the lovely belt and trousers with all kind of fancy stuff. I was a lieutenant at the time. Then I saw, amongst the guests, an officer from the Polish cavalry. The Polish cavalry was the most aristocratic of the Polish armed services because of the old tradition of cavalry in Polish history. They were very specific as to who they would serve with, as, for instance, if your family did not remember King John V Soviesky, or such, then you were not one of them. Anyway there was that cavalry officer in attendance. He must have been a captain. He must have been a Jew, a relative of the family, since he was there. So we were the only two military people at that wedding. There was a general who was a Jew, not a Christian. That was Gen. Mona. I even remember some of the names. He was Commandant of the Cracow Military district. He was an old soldier from Marshal Pilsudski's early times, when they had the Polish Legion in the Austro-Hungarian army. He was one of the boys! The reason why I don't remember too much of that is that “Who the hell cares!” People don't remember things unless they come and contrast against a background which is different. They just didn't.

Q: In your background it apparently didn't. The noticeable segregation on the part of the Jewish community, despite the fact that they got along, was that a self imposed segregation, by living in the Jewish community, would you say?

A: No. From the book which I just read and about which I was talking it seems that the ghetto, in Europe, was a legal arrangement by the governments of these countries to limit, as much as possible, the relations, the intercourse between the Jewish people and the population, in order to save the population from the Jewish influence (The World Book Encyclopedia states: The compulsory ghetto died out with the intellectual and social movements of the Renaissance...” That is what is written in that book, however there was no restriction in Poland which required the Jews to live in a ghetto; however in the Jewish law, this is in the old testament, I don't know exactly where it is, I would have to ask my son to find

that place, the Jews are forbidden to travel a distance greater than a specified distance on the Sabbath, so naturally they had to be not far from the synagogue, or else they could not go to the synagogue on the Sabbath. This meant that where there is a synagogue, Jews cluster around it. That was a practical thing. Besides that, it was a human thing. I suppose that this is my own explanation, that they like to live together like Poles like to live in the Polish community near Detroit, in Hamtrack(just northeast of downtown Detroit). I don't know where it is in Dayton, but there is a Polish grouping not far from St. Adalbert Church on Valley St. People cluster around it. However they drive so they don't have the same problem which the Jews have with the Sabbath walk.

- Q: That is very interesting. Now let us get to the point where the Nazis have taken power in Germany and you were apparently aware of that and of what was going on. They were gathering Jews at that stage. We are talking about the latter part of the thirties. At one point they basically drove them (actually the Nazis selected the Jews of Polish descent for that) to the Polish border and dumped them off, are you familiar with that? The Polish government did not necessarily participate.
- A: I don't know anything about that, but it could be. I never heard about it.
- Q: They were more or less herded together and dropped at the Polish border because, I believe, they were Jewish people of Polish descent who were in Germany.
- A: That might have been some isolated incident. I don't remember reading about it in this book, and they write about everything that even is borderline between anti-Semitism and history. They probably would have written about it, but who knows?
- Q: They were forcibly deporting them to Poland, just before the Germans invaded. OK, so the next point we should get into is that of Poland and Germany, at the time Germany was invading Poland. At that time you were in the military. How did this manifest itself as far as what was happening with your life, when the Germans started invading Poland?
- A: I was in the place where the first German bombs fell, in Gdynia. There were many places in the world where they did not know it, but I knew it, however I thought that there is an army group, under the commanding general, and they will show them where to go. There was a great patriotic fervor. Of course we believed that the British and the French, who had signed a treaty with Poland, that they would assist us, would help. I remember the words when we were gathered together by the Germans, as prisoners of war, by our commanding officer, who by the way was given by the German unit who caught us, as a sign of respect, a chivalrous gesture, that he could carry his saber. We were captured by a Bavarian regiment and they honored our worth as soldiers, for these 19 days of battle. They gave our commanding officer the right to carry his saber. Of course when he got into a camp they took the saber away from him.

- Q: Do you recall the date of the first bombing?
- A: During the early morning of Sept 1, 1939.
- Q: You said that the battle lasted for 19 days, before you, personally, were captured?
- A: Yes! 19 days was the time during which Polish coastal defenses fought on in Gdynia and in the complex around Gdynia. However that was not the entire coastal defense because north of Gdynia there is a small peninsula. There were some artillery encampments and detachments and they fought on for, I believe another ten days before they finally had to surrender. The fire against them was from a German battleship and from smaller German navy units, from the Luftwaffe (the German air force) and the ground forces. How long can you take it?
- Q: Can you recall exactly where you were? You said that it was early in the morning of Sept 1. Can you go into a little detail about the situation, as it was during these 19 days? What was taking place, realizing that you had been bombed? What is happening to you?
- A: I suppose that what was happening to me is the same thing which happens during a war, during combat, to any person wearing a uniform and has a weapon in his hand. You don't have time to think about historical developments, political developments, you just do your job. The first of September I was still in the Technical training Center where I was head of the signal department. Then I went to my mobilization assignment as Deputy-Chief. I was second in command, of signals in the Coastal Defense Command. Then my job was just to make sure that there is liaison, a communication channel between us and Warsaw. There was an underground cable which was never destroyed during that war by the Germans. We had communications all the time with the Chief of the Admiralty, in Warsaw, and the Polish General Staff. So I was just doing the thing I had been assigned to do, working on the communications such as; "This line is broken, so you put the radio here and built another line over there!" The usual thing which is concern to the Signal Officer. That was a land assignment. (Warsaw surrendered Sept 27, 1939).
- Q: Were the casualties great as a result of this initial attack? How were you holding out as a Polish defense unit?
- A: There were several battalions of infantry, some units of artillery, and I believe two airplanes, which were shot down by the Germans early on the second day, if I remember. They had a regiment, a Bavarian regiment, tremendous artillery, many times bigger than ours, and they had the air force, the Luftwaffe, and the German navy. They had this battleship, I forgot the name if it. It is a funny thing how the unpleasant things fade away, in one way or the other; you remember only the

funny ones. The first political analysis of the things started when the commanding officer, where we were, gathered the officers together after we had been taken prisoners and said, "Well, we did our job, we were fighting alone." By that he meant that the British didn't help. They couldn't, they were disarmed! The French thought that just by having the Maginot Line (that was the French fortifications facing Germany from Luxembourg down to Switzerland which were bypassed by the Germans in May 1940) they were safe. Often repeated in different historical backgrounds, one of the most stupid things which can happen to any government, was for the direction of the armed forces, not to take into account the experiences of other armed forces, of other nations, with the same enemy. The Polish people who, after the September war was finished, escaped through sometimes very complicated means to France, they told the French government about it. The French didn't take it into account; they said; "France fights well every second war!" So they won WWI and they were going to win WWII. They had more air force and more tanks than the Germans had. But nothing! They didn't realize that the people who don't want to fight put themselves in the situation in which they have no choice; either fight their enemy far away from their own country, because the beginning is always outside of your country, since the assailant comes from outside your country, so, if you fight when he is still in his own backyard, that is better than when you have to fight him in your own backyard, which is the other alternative.

Q: I think that this is probably a good place to stop the interview and we will continue next time. Then we will go into the period where you get captured and your life as a POW (Prisoner of War).

A: As you wish.

Q: The date is July 8, 1981. It is 10.10 AM. I am in the home of DR. Jerzy Lubelfeld to continue our discussion on the Holocaust Project. As we ended last time I said that, this time we would start with your capture by the Germans. I was just wondering if you could recall in as much detail as possible the events which took place after your capture as a Polish POW of the German army. Just go into that experience, if you please.

A: I don't think that this is anything specially unique. We fought for 19 days on the shore in Gdynia. We were facing tremendous German power. We were outgunned by every kind of weapon; by the Luftwaffe; there were, I believe a couple of battleships and some smaller units of the German navy. It took them 19 days to finish us off. So, on the 19th Sept, 1939 I came out of the hole in the ground and joined the other fellows. They put us together in one place, in a very gentlemanly fashion.

Q: Had you been in a bunker of some kind? or did you dig a foxhole?

- A: No, it wasn't. It was just a hole in the ground. It was not a previously prepared bunker. We knew that it wouldn't last very long.
- Q: Were you alone in this particular hole? Had you found it by yourself or were you more than one person in it?
- A: It was a signal point. In the hole some technical communications were concentrated. There were a telephone and a radio station (probably a transmitter and a receiver) and so on. In that particular place we did not surrender, we were just taken. In some other places, when the Polish commander saw, that further resistance was useless they would surrender. We had a stubborn commanding officer. When the Bavaria regiment took us prisoner, they expressed their appreciation of the knightly virtues and they let the commanding officer have his saber. Of course the reception committee took away that saber. It was a nice gesture. Also the German chaplain of that particular regiment helped our chaplain in the execution of his duties. So, in the beginning it was not so bad, at least not until we were gathered in the railroad station. The German train arrived and we were to go to the camp with that train. The first negative note came when the railroad engineer, in the locomotive, looking at us, spat and said "Schweinhunde" (an insult in German literally meaning "Pig-dogs" or "Filthy Pigs"). It means literally Swine-dogs. Of course I imagine that the scientist who, in practice, would develop such a highbred animal would get a Nobel Prize for it. Anyway, it was just an ordinary thing, typical of wars, with certain small differences. The German administration of the camp had to obey the Gestapo (Geheime Staats Polizei or Secret state Police) and the SS (Schutz Staffel, the black shirted elite guard of the Nazis). They tried to make the whole thing according to the Geneva Convention. Of which the Germans were signatores. However sometimes they had to obey the Gestapo and the SS. For example, one day, all of a sudden there was an unexpected roll call, in one of the camps where I was. The Germans said; "All these actors who play in the prisoner's theater" we had organized a theater by the prisoners amongst other things "as well as lecturers who lectured at the camp university should step forward." We had organized such a university as well, but I will explain later. Then they proceeded to read the names of some faculty people, and I was amongst them, as were some staff officers, who were known to us, and obviously to the Germans and whom helped keeping up the morale of the prisoners up. The Germans who did not like that, which was a sign of their stupidity, since the higher the morale the better, since that makes it easier to administer the camp. Then they read the names of the Jews that means those who had obeyed the German's order and had admitted that they were Jews. They had asked us, the Polish officers whether they should admit that they were Jews. Our senior officer told them; "You are under the Geneva Convention! So all you have to do is to tell them your name, your number and your rank, but nothing else. They have no authority to ask you your religion, if any." Some of them did admit their Jewish origin and that they were Jews. So about 400 of us were gathered together, put on a train and taken to another camp. This camp was in Westfalen (the area of Germany which includes the Ruhr and Bonn). Here comes a little

philosophical excursion outside of our topic. Very often, in human life, something happens and we think that the world is ending, that everything, including God, is against us, that a terrible thing is happening to us, then after a year or two, three or four, by comparing our feelings of that time to the actual historical events which have taken place you see that it was a blessing. In this case, for example, this transfer to another camp resulted, later, in 1945, in that the Germans didn't have the time to evacuate us and to push us east. Therefore we were liberated, not by the Russians but by the Americans. However "If" and you can insert many of these "If" sequences, but it may have been such an "If" clause here which may have sent us into Euphoria and wind up tantamount to hell.

Q: We are now coming to the end of this tape. Let us stop at this point and continue on another tape.

This is the continuation of the second part of an interview with Dr. Lubelfeld. I like to continue by asking you a question: first of all do you recall the name of the prison camp to which you were assigned?

A: Yes! The first camp was Prenslau, not far from Stettin (today this is the Polish city of Szczecin) which is a harbor at the estuary of the Oder River. This is now part of Poland. The second camp was in Neu Brandenburg, not far from Prenslau, in the same general region. The third and last camp was in Dessen near Farburg in the eastern corner of Westfalen (transcriber could not locate these towns). I do not know if this is of interest to you or not, but I have found a German historian, or rather, he found me, and we have been corresponding for several years now. He is working on German prison camps during the war. That is his area. He sends me all kind of literature. He sent me photographs of his last camp. In this last camp, one night in the fall, a British bomber, which had been hit in a raid, discarded useless weight and, in the process, dropped two bombs in our camp. More than 90 officers were killed and about 200 were wounded. The German priest, in that village, was most helpful, not only during the remaining part of the war with hospital services and funerals but he kept the entire cemetery in perfect order. He also maintains correspondence with a club or an association of former POW from that camp. These former prisoners are located in Poland, of course. The son of this lady, the lady lives in Warsaw, was one of the victims of that bombing. This priest sent her a picture of the tombstone, the grave and the flowers. He takes care of all these things for this, amongst other graves. This lady could not travel, so she did a very good thing and wrote about it to that priest. I know about it because a friend of mine sent me a copy of that letter. This lady has found and takes care of the graves of several German soldiers located not far from the place where she lives. Of course everything, between the Caucasus and Berlin, is covered with German graves. Nobody has been taking care of these graves, except for people like this lady. Of course soldiers are soldiers and they carry out orders. Of course the German soldiers, with their accuracy, exaggerated somewhat. This example shows that a good thing very often brings, from the other side. Something good as well.

- Q: I would like to ask you one question about that incident, then I would like to go back and ask you something else, entirely.
- A: I am sorry, but when we start something on this, the conversation opens up. After all this is a great event on the historical scale.
- Q: That is right! That is what this is all about. I want to record what your feelings are about this and you are to express your thoughts. I want to ask you though, in regards to this particular incident; they were apparently able to document the fact that it was a British plane and that it was an unintentional bombing?
- A: that must have been investigated by, I would think, the Polish government. (During most of the war there were two Polish governments, one in England, which included several pre WWII cabinet ministers; and one located in Russia, which included military officers and members of the pre WWII Communist party). That was so because, under the Communist-Russian inspiration, they would like to blame anything on their former allies, if they could. I don't have any details as to how that was discovered.
- Q: Let's go back then and start over with the first of the camps in which you were. I would like to know, first of all, was it an international camp, or was it a camp for Polish prisoners?
- A: It was uniquely a camp for Polish officers who were captured in the war. We had some transients of other nationalities. These were POWs passing through and staying in the camp for a few weeks. Some were British, some Yugoslavs. (That appears highly unlikely, due to the timing suggested by JL. Belgium entered the war on May 10, 1940 and Yugoslavia on Mar 27, 1941, by then he had changed camps.)
- Q: How many were there in there, do you recall how big a camp it was?
- A: If I remember correctly, it contained between two and four thousand but I am not sure.
- Q: Can you give us an idea of the average daily routine, of what you were entitled and expected to do. How did your day go? How did you pass the time?
- A: As far as the Wehrmacht was concerned everything went according to the Geneva Convention. They really tried to observe it! Of course there were some psychopath amongst the guards, some sadists. You see the Polish armed forces, during WWI were nonexistent as such, however there were those Polish Legions who fought on the side of the Central Powers -- i.e. the Austrian-Germans -- or on the side of the Russians under Marshal Pilsudski. For that reason the Polish armed forces included certain things which could be equated to the Germans, in

such things as military rules. There was no history if war with Germany and the German empire for a thousand years. The last time in history when there were some wars between Poland and Germany was at the beginning of the eleventh century, however there were the Teutonic knights who were a German military order and, with them, there were fights during several hundred of years. Finally the war with the Teutonic Knights ended in 1410, when there was a great battle during which the knights had their power broken. Then it took almost another hundred years to wipe out the Teutonic Order, however their spirit was not wiped out. I believe that in 1525 the last former Master of the Teutonic Order , who happened to be a nephew of the Polish king accepted the Lutheran faith and became a lay prince. According to the feudal customs and laws he came to Cracow and paid homage to his uncle, the Polish king. The name of this latest Master of the Teutonic Order was Albert von Hohenzolern, who turned out to be the founder of the famous house of Hohenzolern (that is the house to which the kings of Prussia belonged). So the Polish people really had a bad feeling against the Germans who became the substitute of the Teutonic Knights. The cultural, economic and other relations with the Germans were good. After the invasion from the Mongols of Russia and Poland and other parts of Europe had depopulated Polish towns they were repopulated again by invitations which the Polish kings addressed to the Germans and others. Many Germans came to Poland. That is why you see, in Poland, many Poles with German names.

- Q: You believe apparently that there was a great assimilation between German and polish people.
- A: Until the partition of Poland at the end of the 18th century it was a yes and no relationship. For example the Prussians, the heirs of the Teutonic Order, were on the side of the Swedes when the Swedes invaded Poland, in the middle of the 17th century. There are good books on the subject.
- Q: You didn't really answer my question which concerned itself with the routine of camp life.
- A: Considering everything, it wasn't too bad. We were a little envious when we compared our conditions with the POW camps of Americans and the British on German POW. With us it was just the lowest level of the Geneva Convention.
- Q: You were discussing the routines in camp. What type of things did you do during the day? Did you have to answer roll call?
- A: I will tell you what was available. Things which we had to do was to attend the roll call. There were three a day; the morning, the mid-day and the night calls. We had sports, we had a library which was well provided with books which the Germans had appropriated in those western territories of Poland which they incorporated "for ever," as they thought, into Germany. There were books from Polish libraries. We had the priceless "Camp University." We had it just because

there were a number of academic teachers amongst the prisoners in the camp. Then according to the practice of Polish schools it was a natural thing to organize a "Camp University." The Germans loved the idea because they thought that this would keep the minds of the prisoners concentrated on things other than escape. They hated escapes because it would throw a bad light on the commandant of the camp. There were escapes, of course, I taught at the Camp University until the Germans forbade teaching electronics.

Q: Why did they do that?

A: They said that we were making a transmitter and receiver out of the things which they gave us. They thought that we would be able to communicate with Churchill (British Prime Minister from May 10, 1940 through July 1945) or something like that. There was another victory of order, strict German order, over common sense; they forbade teaching of the German language. That was because they thought that, if we learn German, it would be easier for us to escape. From all the escapes which I know about, the most successful, the most brilliant, was by a guy who did not speak a word of German. Because he couldn't communicate with civilians, he avoided them. That was a contribution to his successful escape. He escaped to Yugoslavia in the fall of 1939 and, for Christmas, he sent a Christmas card to the German commandant of the camp. He also mailed one to the Polish senior officer in the camp and to the guys in his barrack.

Q: How did they get through the censors?

A: Escapes were possible because some of the people were traveling outside of the wire fence for certain things. Not all the services were located within the barbed wire, some of them were outside. We managed! It is written in another book how they made their escape.

Q: How did the postcards get through the German censors?

A: Correspondence was according to the Geneva Convention. There were special form letters which were given. There was a specific number. I believe some which we could send anywhere we wanted, others were restricted to specific recipients. Of course they were censored! We knew what we shouldn't write and we knew how we could put between the lines what we wanted to say without them getting wise to it. Our families wrote to us on ordinary stationery. They were censored as well. We knew how to get the messages we wanted through the censors.

Q: Were you ever personally involved in an escape attempt?

A: No.

Q: Was there a reason for this?

A: Yes! It was because I didn't really believe that the war was going to last that long. I thought that I was naïve and silly. I did think that in 1940 this powerful, mighty French army -- the French had more tanks and airplanes than the Germans, as well as artillery and everything -- would squash Germany like nothing. They were missing one component for any military action to be successful; they didn't have the will to fight. They just didn't want to fight! I truly thought that they would. I was even making bets with my friends in camp that in the summer of 1940, we would be free. In the summer of 1940, France was conquered! We didn't know that the British were disarmed. Churchill was a blessing for Britain, but he was a little late blessing. They called him a warmonger! The Germans word for that is "Kriegshetzer." Then it became a risky attempt to escape. The Germans announced that any Polish POW who would be caught outside of a camp would be considered a spy and that he would be shot on the spot. From the escapes, which I know of, half of all these who were caught were actually executed. I considered all these things together and I had a feeling against doing it. I didn't really believe that my contribution to the war was worth the risk. Maybe I was scared, which is a normal thing which military people have to live with, but my feelings were not uncontrolled, so I don't worry about that.

Q: Were there any apparent cruelties which were carried out in the camps toward the POWs? Were the Germans mean to the prisoners?

A: I haven't seen anything like that. I heard of some trigger-happy guards shooting somebody who came too close to the wire, but I didn't see anything like that.

Q: How about the food? were you adequately fed?

A: We didn't get enough food! If it hadn't been for the food parcels from our friends and families in Poland and our comrades-at-arms in England and of the people whom we knew in the world were sending food parcels to us, as well as to the International Red Cross, which gave us American Red Cross parcels, I doubt if anybody would have survived. The food which the Germans provided us with was just water and rutabaga, and, of course, small portions of everything. However, even that paucity of nourishment had its good side, at least personally for me. Before the war I walked like Napoleon Bonaparte with my hand on my stomach, here. I had hyper-acidity. I was on the road to ulcers. Three months in prison camp cured me of that and it has never returned. All I had to do to cure myself was to be hungry, and I was hungry for several months so that cured me and even had some good points. As the time goes on, all these small unpleasantnesses, including the lack of freedom, one feels that one has the right to freedom, get out of focus. After five or six months of imprisonment you ask yourself: "What do you want to be free for?" and "What can I do with freedom?" you wonder, at the same time what you did with your freedom before the war and whether you are sure that it was something you can be proud of. There were

things available which I would say led to spiritual improvement, in retrospect. As everything else in the world, it had its price. The price of that spiritual improvement was the blasted nuisance of being a POW.

Q: Were you ever, or did you know of prisoners who were ever interrogated by the Germans?

A: Oh yes! Everybody with a German name was. Actually, I don't know whether everybody was or not. Many of us who had German names were interviewed. They were propositioned, and I use the word advisedly, to declare themselves as "Folksdeutscher," otherwise said of German ancestry with the reward for it being that you would be put into a separate part of the camp and get good German food in abundance. Later you were going to be put into the German armed forces, get to wear a German uniform and to swear allegiance to the Führer (i.e. to Hitler). Then you would go to fight for the thousand-year German Reich and for the glory of Europe with the Russians (Germany and Russia were allies from the invasion of Poland on until the invasion of Russia in June 1941). When my turn came the fellow who interrogated me was a German staff sergeant. He said that he had a degree in sociology from a German University. He tried to convince me that I should do this. I said: "No!" he said: "Why?" Then I started telling him what would happen, and I was a prophet! I told him that very soon -- and that was before they attacked Russia so he could not know that --he couldn't use that argument any longer because the Russians had their allies at that time -- so I told him that either the Russians would jump on them, or they would jump on the Russians. He didn't believe me, but I think that I was very close to converting him.

Q: Was anyone convinced to go over to the Germans?

A: Maybe, of those two or three thousand people in the camp, if there were one or two officers who were converted, at least temporarily, that was all. I don't know of one single fellow POW, of mine, who would not believe that in spite of all the victories which the Germans had had then, they would be defeated. We had this feeling Lord knows where it came from, this irrational conviction, that they would be defeated. Of course it was irrational, because the Germans were very closer to winning the war. If Hitler had not been so stupid they would have won the war.

Q: Were you ever bothered by the possibility that someone in the camp may have been German, or placed there by the Germans, as you see so often in the stories, as a plant of any kind?

A: No! No!

Q: You never had a problem that way?

A: The utility of such a plan would be only one; that he could find the people who were planning to escape. This was so because the Germans knew that they would not find anybody in the camp who didn't believe that they would lose the war, so they didn't need any plant to find that out. so, the only thing a plant could find out was who was planning to escape; however, if the plans were made truly methodically even those who shared the room with the planners didn't know about it.

Q: Now, you were actually in three separate camps. Was there any distinguishing feature about each camp which made one very different from the others?

A: The differences between the first camp and the second were insignificant. Practically there was no difference between them. The third camp was slightly different in one way, in its composition. A large number of senior Polish officers, many of the retired or reserve, when they saw what was happening, they escaped from Poland to Romania. (Romania first lost a province to the Russians through the German-Russian treaty of 1939 and then was awarded that province plus a major portion of the Ukraine by the Germans, as the Russians retreated). They, according to international law, were put into internment camps by the Romanians, and, when the Germans occupied Romania, the Germans forced the Romanians to give up all these Polish old folks. I call them that since most of these Polish people had an average age between fifty and sixty, and up. They were waiting for us in that third camp (this means that it wasn't until after June 1941 that JL and his fellows reached that third camp) in Westphalia, when we arrived there. They actually were the first battalion and we, the youngsters -- even I was a youngster at that time -- formed the second battalion. So there was this difference of the ages between the two. Half of the camp were old people, many of them pessimistic, but quietly so, the others were the youngsters who were doing all kind of things. I think that these were good things which they were doing for themselves and for their country.

Q: As far as the camp was concerned what was the reason for you, or for your group of people to be transferred from one camp to the other and then to the final third camp?

A: In Prenslau we were in a camp which was located in Germany army buildings. There were not just huts, they were true buildings, some "Kaserns" (these were the typical three or four story brick buildings used for permanent camps since the late 19th century). This was a place where the German army normally was stationed. After a while they needed this camp for the second wave of German soldiers, which they started to train. They needed the space! So they transferred us to another camp which was located near Neu Brandenburg. This second camp was in big garages, also of the German army. After a while they needed that also and some of the Polish POWs were moved out into some provisional huts. I think that the last transfer, this is all speculations, because I don't really know, was because they wanted to get rid of people who were bitching about thing, who

were dissatisfied with everything and said so in a loud way. Actually none of the prisoners knew for certain, why these transfers were made.

Q: You mentioned, during our first interview, an incident into which I want you to go a little more in detail now; about the German anthropologist who visited one of the camps.

A: Oh yes! The German anthropologist asked for, and was given, by the German army, the opportunity to make some anthropological measurements of the Polish POWs. He wanted to see the ratio distribution of different anthropological types and other experiments (this was completely contrary to the Geneva Convention). It was a funny thing, when he examined me he decided that I was "Ostbaltisch". That is coming from the east Baltic area. That reminded me of something which my father had told me long ago, about our relationship with the Estonians and Latvians and such. That was not important, but one thing which it would be worthwhile to mention is that, generally speaking, in my lifetime I will not consider these five and a half years during which I was a POW in a prison camp as a loss. By considering it altogether I think that the net value of that POW time was positive for me. Of course I don't mean that it was of practical value, so that I could sell it, but that it was of value to me philosophically and spiritually. That of course does not mean that, if history could repeat itself I would volunteer to stay at a POW camp. If I did it would put me in a special class, that of those who are nuts.

Q: Did you form any personal, long lasting relationships, while you were in any of these camps?

A: I became very close friends with some of these people, but then we were physically separated. Most of them went back to Poland, after the liberation. Some went, as Displaced Persons (DP) to different countries. Sometimes I hear the names of people from the Polish navy. We still keep in touch. We have a Polish Naval Association, which is a worldwide organization with headquarters in London, England. We get a quarterly publication which gives information about people and events.

Q: Can I ask you at what point, during these five years, when you were a POW, did you realize that things were not going well for the Germans? Did you realize that there was a turning of events so that, maybe, one could see the possible defeat of the Germans?

A: Yes! We had a whole group of strategists and practical analysts. We had some senior staff officers in the prison camp. They would give a lecture about conditions and about how they changed, what the situation was and so on. Besides that we could read from the German newspapers, we actually learned to read between the lines. In addition to that we had a secret radio, as a matter of fact, we had two in the last camp. So we listened to the BBC (British

Broadcasting Service -- the BBC served as a prototype for the Voice of America - - the BBC broadcast into Nazi occupied Europe in various languages at regular times every day -- listening to it was a major offense). The first thought, which was an intellectual back up to the otherwise emotional feelings of the bias that the Germans just had to lose the war, because we wanted them to lose the war. The first rational thing to support that emotional thing was when the winter came in 1941 and they failed to take Moscow. When they were not able to take Moscow we knew that, no matter how long it would last, this was the end. There were some German officers who knew that also. The German commandant of one of these camps was a German general, the old Imperial German General type, with dignity, a gentleman. It just so happened that when that general, during WWI was a major or captain he had been together with one of our Polish colonels, who then was also a youngish officer. They had been friends in the German army. Quietly that Polish colonel was escorted to the prison commandant's quarters. Probably the general would pretend to interrogate the colonel. They had a very good time together. Later the colonel would tell us that the general did not believe in a German victory.

- Q: Basically you were well informed as to events outside of camp!
- A: Yes! We had the newspaper and we listened to the radio. We learned to read the German bulletins by reading between the lines. The fact that we knew that Russia -- and we have more than one thousand years of experience with the Russians -- would be hard to defeat helped. We had a feeling for all of these things, when they couldn't take Moscow. Russia can be conquered only if the attacker goes along the meridians, because it is the meridians which divide different nationalities and ethnic parts. People who go on parallels into Russia will have the same fate as Napoleon and Hitler. Naturally there is no principle without exceptions, so, for example if the parallel attack by Hitler could have succeeded in getting Moscow; there was only one place east of Moscow where they could have regrouped and that was Kujbysev. However no one knows whether they could have recovered from that blow to their morale. Moscow was already evacuated (the city was actually only partially evacuated and Stalin and his lieutenants never left), the government left Moscow, so it was already the beginning of the end.
- Q: It took five more years until it was really ended.
- A: Some entities take long to die. This does not mean necessarily that they deserve that kind of a break.
- Q: Before we come to the part where you were liberated from these camps, is there anything which you would like to disclose about the details of the camp experience now, on tape, before I ask you questions about the liberation of the camps? Is there anything which you would like to say about the camps themselves, something which has not been included?

- A: I really believe that I made a summary by saying that the general experience which I had evaluated as being positive. That may however not be the opinion of other former POWs if you talk to them, especially if one, after the liberation had his life affected in a different way, not in the positive way, as it was with me. Another fellow might have another opinion and he may have different feelings. I don't hate the Germans! I have not killed a single German in my life! I have some German friends here. They did terrible things in the Holocaust! Now, as I read more and more, I know how terrible the Holocaust was. I knew that even before I read the books. However I don't believe that the Holocaust was the only Holocaust with the emphasis on the Jews.
- Q: Note: Here again some discontinuance is present as the tape goes from forward into reverse. Some portion of the interview appears to be missing, but it does not seem to be crucial. It cannot be helped! It appears that the interview resumes after the third POW camp had been broken up, while the Germans were in full retreat.
- A: We were trying to keep from being hungry, now that the German transportation system had been heavily damaged by Allied air raids. Now our food parcels did not come so often, so we went slowly. We came to a German village, I remember the name, called Borgentreisch, and the Germans put us into barns. That was a luxury situation we were not sleeping in these bunks, in these terrible beds, but in hay. At 8 o'clock they woke us up, however there was something unusual; we saw German officers of the camp crew loading the trucks and going away. The German guards, the German soldiers were fraternizing with the Polish prisoners. So we get out of the village and we see these soldiers giving their rifles to the POWs; so we see that this is the end. We see one of these reconnaissance planes, American planes, making the signal that there is a unit of SS (the black shirted Nazi elite guards. SS stands for Schutz Staffel or Protective Group. They provided the guards for the extermination camps and similar duties). ahead who are trying to put up some resistance in the way of the American advance. The American advance there was spearheaded by the second armored division. They started shooting at each other. This was already April 1, 45 Easter Sunday! There was a light rain, actually a drizzle, but we call it, "Sauer-kraut soup." So we were caught in this drizzle and they were shooting over our heads, that is both the Germans and Americans. Naturally we just plopped in the mud and waited to see what would happen. After two hours we see the first American tanks and there no longer is any shooting. We are free! Of course our senior officer was Gen. Berbetzky (at least that is what it sounds like) and he sent a delegation to the advancing American unit, some envoy with a white flag. The envoy was to explain to the Americans that these were POWs, however they knew that already. So, as a result of that, there is a free for all. Which means that you can go wherever you want. The Americans said that their advice is for us to go back to our camp where we have a place to stay for the time being instead of camping in the open. The American tank crews threw us chocolate bars and cigarettes and

passed. I found the chocolate bars OK! As far as cigarettes are concerned, I don't smoke but nobody knew how handy they could come in. I walked back to the camp, about eight km. away. On the way I found a nice German farm. I went in there and explained to the farmer that I wanted milk. He gave me a bottle of milk and I gave him, I believe, five Camel cigarettes. He did not want to take these Camels, but I insisted that I should pay him for that milk. I analyzed later on that by insisting that he take them it kept me in the dignity of not being the heir of someone else's effort. The Americans defeated the Germans so I get free milk? Hell no! I pay for the milk!

Q: How many prisoners were together at that time? Now I am going back to the point where you were liberated, after the shooting stopped?

A: The whole camp?

Q: How many was that approximately?

A: 2,500 or 3,000 people!

Q: OK! So you had basically been turned loose to do what you wanted to do?

A: Yes.

Q: Were you in any kind of prison uniform?

A: No! We had, on our backs some kind of sign. I forget what it was. It was on the back of the coat. Other than that we were wearing military uniforms. (He does not explain how these lasted through five and a half years).

Q: You remained in these uniforms?

A: Yes, we didn't have anything else to wear.

Q: I just thought that there were some devices to separate you from the Germans.

A: The summer uniforms were different, but you could recognize them.

Q: OK. When you went back to the camp and had gotten the milk, were you alone?

A: Yes, I was by myself. I walked slowly because my ankles already started swelling, although I was a young fellow. Anyway I opened the bottle and drank about half of it. It went through me! My stomach had been completely delined. The lining in it, which is necessary for the process of digestion, wasn't there. However I was pleased with myself. It was, at last, the first tangible act of some free choice. When you are in a prisoner of war camp, one of the experiences is that you know for certain that, whatever happens to you, is an unadulterated,

direct, God's well, since you cannot contribute anything significant to what is happening to you. Obviously that is still God's will, but in a completely different modality. This bottle of milk restored my ability to philosophize. In any case the Americans gave us their rations and all the latrines in the camp were out of order for three days. So they gave us, then, half rations. Then the Americans moved out and the British took over this part of Germany as occupation force. Still the same week, the week after Easter, two Messerschmitts (German military planes) came and started shooting all over the camp. When I saw the Messerschmitts shooting I had the purely irrational reaction -- there was a trench. It is true that this trench wouldn't give me any physical protection, but I saw, a couple of feet on my right side, bullets hit. The Messerschmitt was shooting at me! But he was a lousy shooter! Thank God for that! There was one fellow prisoner killed during that shooting. He had attached his little mirror to the window and he was shaving. He was shot!

Q: How many prisoners actually returned to camp? Would you say that it was a majority of them?

A: All of them! Some of them immediately started to make approaches to the American command. Some of them obtained rifles and joined the American forces as guards for the German prisoners. That was good for young people, not for me. I was too old for that!

Q: How long would you say that the Americans stayed, before the British took over?

A: About a week or two. The next big news was that the order came from the Polish Admiralty in Britain, that was the Polish navy under British command, calling all Polish naval officers, who had been POWs to go to England. They sent special trucks and we got on these trucks. They took us to Belgium by the land, which had been desolated. There we saw the results of the aerial bombings and the artillery fights. We saw a great number of German armored vehicles -- and some allied ones too -- which had been incapacitated. These were the remains of the war!

Q: Physically, how were you during the trip? Had you recovered sufficiently to make a trip like that without too much discomfort?

A: I didn't even think about physical discomfort, because the balance for my feelings was provided by the actual fate towards which I was going. The past was left behind me. That is however probably part of my disposition. Even now, when I am an old man, I don't look too much behind me. That is why I have forgotten so many things. Now, there isn't much to look forward to! but whatever it is, I am still looking forward to it. To get back to my story, we boarded a British destroyer which took us out of Europe. I believe that we boarded it in Ostende, Belgium, and it took us to Tilbury, better known as Gravesend, England which is part of the port of London. There we were welcomed by a group of people who

were headed by Adm. Unru (the spelling is uncertain), the commander of our fleet who had also been a POW in Germany. He had been liberated somewhat earlier, maybe two or three weeks before us. After he received us, they sent us to Brighton, which I on the Channel for recuperation. The next thing which happened was that, in Brighton, tailors came to take measurements for our new uniforms. Then I was assigned to the Center at the Training College. Of course I first had to attend some refresher courses. It was a good thing for that I knew English. The course was in the harbor of Plymouth and that is where I met my wife. Did I ever tell you how I met her? No? Well, a friend of mine who is now in Buffalo and I had a few drinks at the Officer's Club. Then he said: "Do you know what? Our Polish society has a ball in the City Hall, let's go there and see!" so we went there and we saw some ladies sitting against a wall, waiting to be invited to dance. So he asked one lady and I asked another, I said to my dancing partner; "Young lady, I could be your father!" She said: "Oh, well, that is very interesting." After the dance I brought my partner back and he brought his partner back. Then I asked the one he stopped dancing with for the dance and he asked the one I had been dancing with. I started the same routine: "Young lady, I could be your father!" She said: "Oh, I have to ask my mother about that!" That is how it happened.

Q: What is your wife's name?

A: Joan.

Q: Please, her maiden name?

A: Elliott, her full name was Joan H. Elliott.

Q: Were you married in England?

A: Yes, but not until I already had a contract for a job in the U.S. It took three years for courting and for trying this and trying that. I wouldn't even declare my feelings, which she knew without declaration.

Q: Was she of English or Polish background?

A: No, No! She is English! She is British because she has Scottish and Irish as a mixture, and also some English blood. The only Polish she speaks are the words pertaining to cuisine and love, for obvious reasons.

Q: How long did you then stay in the Polish navy?

A: The British government, together with the American government, refused to consider the Polish government in exile in London, as the real Polish government (this resulted from the division of Europe at the Yalta conference as it was reported, on March 17, 1945). They gave recognition to this Communist

government which had moved from Moscow to Warsaw. For that reason all the Polish armed forces in Britain were given an opportunity to declare whether they wanted to go back to Poland, and many did, or of they didn't want to do that. Then the forces were reorganized. Those who didn't wore the same uniform and got the same pay and formed the, so- called "Polish Resettlement Corps." So, if anybody says anything against the British (about betraying the Poles who risked a lot to fight for them) that person must be either uninformed or plain darn stupid. The reason for that is that the British, even for me who, although I was in the armed forces, was with them only at the end of the war, they gave me, as they did to all the members of the armed forces, including those who fought with their very lives, some pretty good gratuities. They gave me something I didn't expect. It was not an awful lot, but it was a nice little round sum to start a new life with. Anyway the Training Center, where I was, changed into a school with different departments and I was made the head of the Electrical Engineering Department. I knew that, unless they had some attachment to some existing educational system in England, that way or returning to civilian life would really not be of any value. For that reason I got the approval fro my superiors to look around. I don't know if I should tell you all these things because this sounds like blowing my own horn, but I went to London, contacted the right people and, to make a long story short, I made the arrangement that our program would be exactly the same as that of London University which gives so called; "Kids and City of London Institute Diplomas." These diplomas are in different fields and, in this case, Diplomas in Electrical Communications. The representatives from London University would come to our school with the final examination papers. That was in 1946 and 47. In 1948 the last graduates left and I started writing applications to all kinds of schools all over the world, including British schools. I received all kinds of answers. I wrote even to Abyssinia, also called Ethiopia. The best answer, to my applications, I received, was from the University of Detroit. They sent me a contract! Since I had my undergraduate degree in Math, I offered that I could join the Math department. They offered me the job of Assistant Professor of Math. With that contract, it was easy to get the "Non-quota-visa" and to get married. Now I didn't speculate or hope on thin air. I had something tangible. We were married in 1948 and we came to Detroit. The British government paid for the transportation. I remember the first days on that ship! At that time Britain still had those restrictions with food. My bride was laughing at me when I was reading the menu this way and that way (on ocean going ships it was customary to provide passengers, free of charge, with any number of desired dishes, at every meal). I could say, with the advance knowledge that, what I am going to say, is stupid, that this whole Holocaust, this whole bloody WWII was fought for one and only one reason, to make Jerzy Lubelfeld a happy man. When I say this, I realize how stupid it is, the only accompanying thought, which I can add to this is the great gratitude to the dispenser of happiness and unhappiness in the world into whom so many people do not believe.

Q: You have one son?

- A: Yes, one son, but he is the large economy size, so to say. He is six feet, two and a half inches.
- Q: Where was he born?
- A: He was born in Detroit, in 1950.
- Q: I have a question which I would like to ask you about the raising of your son. You have gone through a rather traumatic life, prior to getting married and having him. I like to ask you; if this experience, which you have lived through, has in any way maybe altered the way in which you would have raised your son, otherwise? In other words, did this experience as a POW, lead you to raise your son in a particular way, because of your background, or do you think that you would have raised him the same way?
- A: It must have done so because it is impossible, in life, not to be affected by the experiences of yesterday, in the life of today. The now is always built on what was yesterday. However I would not say that this was done in some kind of an explicit way; it must have been somewhere in the background, of course not the details or the particular events, but the whole flavor of it. The whole part of human destiny is placed in the general Divine Providence. Definitely the kid had a religious upbringing. This upbringing did not change his attitude towards philosophy and religion. He still kept an open mind. I think that the Lord has blessed us, praised be His name, that our son never said that he had a generation gap or something of the type. He said; "I never had a generation gap with my folks!"
- Q: That is very interesting. Now you were in Detroit, in 1950, when your son was born, did you come directly to Dayton from there?
- A: Yes! When I became a U.S. citizen, in 1953, I tried to get another job. I will make a long story short. I wanted to return to my proper field which is Electrical Communications, Electronics. I wrote to AFIT. The next thing I knew was that I had an invitation to come for an interview. The next thing I had was a contract. You know, when I look over the past there are some points, markers, which divide one part of my life from another. When I leap over that particular frontier, between one part and another; I go through it without knowing that there is anything special which happens. That is with one exception in my life. When I was returning to Detroit, from that first interview with AFIT, I stopped in St. Joseph's Church. I believe that it is in Findlay, Ohio. I prayed for this appointment. I only prayed that I would like it; I had a warm feeling inside of me that it was going to happen. It must have been in the modality of the Providence, which can be sensed.
- Q: So you did come to Dayton to work at AFIT? I believe that you stayed with the Air Force Institute of Technology for almost twenty years.

- A: For 24 years.
- Q: What year did you retire?
- A: In 1977. However they rehired me then for another six months to finish the supervision of those students who were doing their thesis under me.
- Q: We just have a very little bit of time left on this tape. I was wondering if I might use this last bit of time to ask you about your feelings of what is going on in Poland.
- A: I am glad, of course, and this is consistent (Pope John Paul II visited Poland in June 1979; Lech Walesa met the prime minister in July 1980; that same month dissident leaders are arrested, then, the government gives in to the strikers and a 17 day work stoppage is ended; Sept 1980 sees a further strike settlement, the change of the prime minister and the organization of Solidarity, a further strike, this one involving millions of workers, occurs in Jan 1981; Prime Minister Pinkowski resigns and is replaced by Gen. Jaruzelski in Feb. 1981). with the knowledge of Polish history. It is good. I think it is good, if you look at it not only from the Polish point of view but the general point of view; look at the picture when they started to have strikes in the Baltic ports of Gdansk and Gdynia. You see the Polish workers, who are supposed to be Communists or Socialists, you know that they are supposed to be against capitalism, and they are meeting and getting Holy Communion. They truly want, when all these things which they ask for are finally reduced to a minimum requirement, they want to have honest rulers, and people who do not abuse their power, an honest government. They don't care whether the government is Communistic, or what. These are not the workers who put at the top of their dreams that they have to have higher wages, higher benefits, all through strikes; they treat all these other requirements for wages and freedom and recognition of their union as means for bringing about, in the rulers, honesty. They just succeeded! I think that Stanislaw Kania, the present head of the Communist party is an honest fellow. The Prime Minister, Gen. Jaruzelski, is an officer. He must have some soldierly virtues and other virtues. He is an honest man. American readers probably don't see these things, when they read about these trouble in Poland, but I see it.
- Q: Have you been back to Poland?
- A: In 1974 after 35 years of not seeing anybody, I finally went to see my sister. I spent three weeks in Warsaw in May of 1974.
- Q: You have basically been here a long time. You have been away from Poland for a long time. Do you have any desire to go back there to live?

- A: No! No! I would not go back because I have strong ties here, specifically my wife and my son. I don't have to live in Poland to be useful to the Polish ideals. In a small measure I still think I am that.
- Q: I was going to ask you about that ring. I noticed it some time ago. Can you describe what it is and why you wear it?
- A: Yes! It is the Polish naval emblem! This was made by a sailor. He made two rings like that. They are made out of a Polish coin, of a silver coin, the size of a half dollar,
- Q: Did he make it for you?
- A: it is very laborious work, time consuming and hard work. I saw it and I said: "I'll buy it!" He hesitated for a moment then he sold it.
- Q: Was that before you became a POW? Is that something you have had always?
- A: No, that was in England, after the liberation.
- Q: Is there anything which I have neglected to ask you during this interview? Again, as I said, we are coming to the end of this tape and the end of the interview, so is there anything which I should have asked you, which you would like to comment on, at this point?
- A: The only thing which I would like to emphasize again is that this entire thing is supposed to have a connection with the Holocaust. Now, from the way I talk, the connection with the Holocaust is only a tiny dimension. It is because these things happened when the Holocaust was happening. It is only a topical or casual connection. I don't know if there is more, I don't think so. Of course it is absurd to think that the world would have to go through WWII, in order to make me happy. However is it? Look at the universe! Probably we are the only Homo sapiens in this universe! Then the question comes; well, maybe people will say: "This is absurd! It is impossible!" Even the religious people will say: "The Lord is too generous to make only people!" Let's investigate this whole thing; the entire planet earth, the solar system. Without the solar system and the planet earth, such as they are, there would be no people, no human beings. Therefore it is not completely stupid to say that this terrific solar system extending in space and in time for tremendous distances was created to make people. Some will say; "Oh! It is just a coincidence!" but I don't believe in coincidences. A coincidence is a thing which we cannot explain rationally. If we don't know the reason, we can postulate any reason which would not be inconsistent with the whole picture, so maybe this philosophical question: "Is WWII only to make Jerzy happy?" is not so stupid after all, providing it gives you an entry into a wider, universal plane of application.

Q: We will end with that thought. I would like to thank you very much. I have enjoyed meeting you.

A: Thank you for coming here and squeezing all these things out of me.

Q: My pleasure!