

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

ANNA CZERWINSKI

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Nora Levin  
Date: June 24, 1983

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*ANNA CZERWINSKI [1-1-1]*

AC - Anna Czerwinski [interviewee]

NL - Nora Levin [interviewer]

RC - Roman Czerwinski [son of interviewee]

Date: June 24, 1983

*Tape one, side one:*

NL: This is Nora Levin, interviewing Mrs. Anna Czerwinski of Pomona, California. The date is June 24, 1983. Now, Mrs. Czerwinski, would you please tell me where you were born and a little about your childhood.

AC: I was born in Radom....

NL: Radom. In Poland?

AC: Poland. In 1906.

NL: 1906. And can you tell me a little about your first memories as a child in Radom? Your parents?

AC: Yes.

NL: What work did father do?

AC: My mother was a designer in this time, my father was a watchmaker. He was living in a house years and years with neighbors, and I grew up with my two sisters and my brother in the house.

NL: Was there a large Jewish community in Radom?

AC: Yes, in this time, yes. Across the street was a big park, and I had more friends, and I remember the time when I was six years old. We come home from lunchtime, I and my sister, and my father was at home, and he makes two supper for us, and we go back to the school. And I remember...

NL: You had Jewish and non-Jewish friends?

AC: Only Jewish.

NL: Only Jewish.

AC: Only Jewish friends.

NL: Was the house traditional? You celebrated holidays, and father and mother went to synagogue?

AC: Oh yes, oh yes mother. Father, no. I don't remember father as going.

NL: Mother went to synagogue?

AC: Yes. It was kosher. It was a good home. I grew up in a very warm home, a good relationship between my sisters and my brother.

NL: Were you sisters older than you?

AC: Oh, yeah, I am the youngest.

NL: And what were their names, your sisters?

AC: The oldest sister is Hinda, and Lala, and my brother Folush. My maiden name was Pomrok.

NL: Pomrok, yes, Dr. Czerwinski told me that. And life was pleasant for your family during this time?

AC: Very pleasant, very good.

NL: You didn't feel much antisemitism?

AC: We left from Radom when I was six years old.

NL: To?

AC: Lublin

NL: To Lublin.

AC: Yeah, where my grandmother had beautiful stores, very rich, and my mother opened a store in Lublin.

NL: She was a dress designer?

AC: A dress designer, yes. But at this time there were no machines. You did everything by hand. You know, you hang something here, she look at this, she make a pattern, it is very hard.

NL: And so the family left for Lublin in order for mother to be able to open the store?

AC: Yes. Because in this time, my mother told to my father, I remember I was six years old, Rifchik, my mother, "Yanchiv," [Polish] "let us go to America." We have money. And he was scared.

NL: She was already thinking of America then?

AC: Yes. She was thinking about America. Let us go. I don't want to go to Lublin. He tell no.

NL: He was attached to Poland, he didn't...

AC: No, he was a type-- my mother was fast, energetic, she give the foundation for life, yes, and he was quiet...

NL: More passive.

AC: Honest, but very seldom you find this. Oh, my father was more like a rabbi...

NL: A sweet saintly man.

AC: ...sitting by the table, he could talk from Torah hours, hours but he no was too much religious. The *seder*, when he make, was two *kittles*, [unclear]. He in a white *kittel*. This I remember, the [unclear] was made from, had real pearls, when my mother was young, she prepared this by hand, everything.

NL: It must have been beautiful, beautiful. And how was life in Lublin? Was that pleasant for you as a child?

AC: I was studying.

NL: You were studying.

AC: I was studying.

NL: Did you go to a Polish government school?

AC: Only Polish, only Polish. By us in house, the father speak from time to time Jewish to my mother. But the children were not allowed. Only because the language must be clear, clear.

NL: Pure.

AC: Pure, pure, pure. And in this way, I was born when the war was. And they never recognized I am Jewish.

NL: It was a godsend for you.

AC: Yes.

NL: Yes. And you went to school until what age?

AC: I was to school about 16 years. But my mother sent me to a private lady to study French. We were very rich. Money was never a question.

NL: Mother's store was successful?

AC: Yes. And father was working in the best place, a store. And at home was always a maid. But I remember when my oldest sister grow up and finished high school, and she went to the college in Lublin, they told her, "When you change the religion, when you [Polish]...

NL: Convert.

AC: "Convert..."

NL: Yes.

AC: "We accept you. If no, then you will have no place here." Then my mother felt-- my father was very, you know, in his opinion, a woman must dress with a blouse with long sleeves, a housewife. When she left to Warsaw in the college, was a tragedy for him. He was, you know, old fashioned.

NL: Well, that was his attitude. So your sister did go to Warsaw, to college?

AC: Yes.

NL: That was Hinda or Lala?

AC: Hinda. Lala left to Israel. I don't remember the year.

NL: She was a Zionist?

AC: What?

NL: She was a Zionist.

AC: What is a Zionist?

NL: She wanted to go to live in Palestine?

AC: No, she didn't want to think about this. But her husband, he came from a religious home, and he was living in a Jewish section. And they feel the antisemitism. What we never feel. We lived in a Polish section. The clients was Polish, you know. Money no was a problem. But in general, the people that they were working for us, they were poor, and they were scared about the Catholics. In Lublin was a big antisemitism. But you don't feel this, you don't feel this. Everything in the Polish section, the name was Polish, too, Pomrok.

NL: Pomrok, I see. So perhaps some of the people didn't know you were Jewish?

AC: Oh no, we was proud about this.

NL: They did know, but it didn't affect you.

AC: No.

NL: And fath-- mother still continued to go to synagogue?

AC: Oh, yes, every year, every. My father passed away when I was 17 years old.

NL: And then she had to support the family?

AC: Never a question. We were rich, but she worked.

NL: She continued working.

AC: She continued working.

NL: And what did you do, Mrs. Czerwinski, after you left school at 16. Did you start working?

AC: I was in a *moshava*. I would go to Israel.

NL: Oh, you were a Zionist?

AC: Yes, yes. But you know in this time, I know my husband.

NL: You were already married?

AC: No, I met him.

NL: You knew him, you met him. I see.

AC: I was in a *kibbutz*, not a *kibbutz*, a *moshava*. From about high school, girls and boys. Then I see, I find this, what I was thinking about this. I was an idealist, you know? Idealistic. I go, I study Hebrew. I finished bookkeeping. I was doing something.

NL: Very industrious.

AC: Oh yes.

NL: And you met your future husband during this time?

AC: This time, you know, and I felt that the *kibbutz* is not for me, the *moshava* is not for me.

AC: And I come back from the *moshava*. I was three months. I was working everything doing, everything doing.

NL: On the farm?

AC: Yes. And I was very happy in the *moshava* because-- always they tell, "You, you rich, you are nothing, and I tell, "I like the job." I kept the toilet clean. I was like this, I don't know why.

NL: You liked to accomplish things, and work with your hands.

AC: Yes.

NL: Did some particular person influence you to want to go to Palestine?

AC: No, this was a dream inside me.

NL: And there was a youth group, a young people's group of Zionists, what *Habonim* or *Hashomer Hatzair*?

AC: I don't remember. *Hatzair*, I think. It was a big organization, a very big organization.

NL: So you then began to think seriously of getting married, I suppose?

AC: No, but I find out that the boys, they want love, you know. And I was very clean, and I liked my, he was...

NL: Your friend.

AC: Yes, he's for me.

NL: He's for you.

AC: And I [unclear] go.

NL: And you married...

AC: Later, later, later.

NL: '30, I believe?

AC: What?

NL: You were married in 1930, I believe?

AC: No, 1932 was my daughter born. I think it was 1930.

NL: I think Dr. Czerwinski told me that. And, your husband's name was Lucien?

AC: Lucien, yes.

NL: Yes, and can you tell us a little about his background?

AC: My husband is from Warsaw.

NL: Warsaw.

AC: Yes, also Warsaw. His father was a lawyer. The mother come from a family, how you call this, [Polish], Jewish, you know, aristocrat?

NL: Assimilated.

AC: Assimilated aristocrat, very rich.

NL: I see.

AC: She speak three languages in this time, German, French and Polish. Yes.

NL: And your husband was also somewhat assimilated? More Polish than Jewish?

AC: No, no, no, he don't speak Jewish. He grow up in a home where the father bring the rabbi at home. And she pay him, go, go. In the time, there was the war. And after the war, he need the language, the Jewish, [unclear] Yiddish. I no write, but I read very good. This was [unclear] from him something.

NL: And was he working by the time you met him? Or was he still in...?

AC: He was in the military.

AC: In the Polish military.

AC: In the Polish military, two years.

NL: In the army or...?

AC: In the army, in the army, in the army.

NL: In the army, I see.

*ANNA CZERWINSKI [1-1-6]*

AC: He was, he was educated, he was like a teacher in this time, in the army. And I have a good time every evening he come, we go. Oh God.

NL: It was joyous, then?

AC: No, was a real love, you know, kindness. This is only the one time in life you can find this.

NL: And you were married, and then began to live in Warsaw.

AC: Yes.

NL: And what did your husband do after he was released from the army? What work did he do?

AC: He, in this time, he was not rich. But later on, when we married, he have two taxis, and two gasoline stations.

NL: My.

AC: Yes, we were rich, we were rich, yes.

NL: He was an ambitious man.

AC: Very energetic, very strong. In the wintertime he was skating and swim like a fish. Cheek...

NL: Red.

AC: Pink and strong, strong inside and outside. The war break him down.

NL: Well, it broke many people, of course. And how did you find life in Warsaw? It was good in the early '30s? You didn't work.

AC: No, no, no, no. When you go in the Jewish section, you see the difference. It was a big antisemitism.

NL: In Warsaw.

AC: In Warsaw, big.

NL: In the '30s, yes.

AC: In the '30s, yeah.

NL: And you lived in the Jewish section? Or...

AC: It wasn't--this was not a Jewish section, but it was a commercial place.

NL: A commercial place. But you knew, you were aware, of antisemitism? You knew there was antisemitism?

AC: Yes.

NL: Did you feel it yourself, Mrs. Czerwinski?

AC: Me, a little. My husband, no.

NL: Your husband not at all?

AC: No, no because his best friend was Catholics, you know.

NL: I see.

AC: And he don't feel this growing up.

NL: I see.

AC: Because it is inside when you...

NL: Are small?



AC: Yes, when you're small and I have a Jewish home. I made the home, not kosher, but the home, the holidays, with a holiday, like I grew up. And up today, Passover is a Passover. All holidays, this is for me holy. I brought this from home.

NL: Yes. Yes. And you said that your daughter was born in 1932.

AC: 1932.

NL: And when did you begin to feel uncomfortable in Warsaw? Was it sometime before the war or...

AC: Before the war. We moved back to Lublin.

NL: You moved back to Lublin from Warsaw?

AC: From Warsaw.

NL: Why did you do that?

AC: Because I was very close to my family.

NL: I see. They were still in Lublin?

AC: Yes.

NL: It wasn't business or...

AC: No. In this time, we sold the taxis because years is going, it is not so profitable. He opened a store in Hotel Europejski, and he have a factory.

NL: And did you-- were you comfortable back in Lublin until the war? Did you feel comfortable there? Or were you...

AC: No, I began to be sick in this time.

NL: Physically?

AC: And my husband...

NL: Physically sick.

AC: I don't know. Something happened between the family and me, and I laid down, but my husband cured me.

NL: I see.

AC: He cured me.

NL: One sister, I understand, went to the Soviet Union in 1920?

AC: No, my, my sister, my sister, one year older from me.

NL: Yes.

AC: She went to Israel.

NL: She went to Israel.

AC: Israel with her husband, when she married him.

NL: I see, I see. And the other sister?

AC: The other sister, her husband was a lawyer, and he made great business. They built a beautiful house. Every year, they was in Vienna a half a year, three months. She has one son. Everything was-- we don't feel anything, you know?

NL: You don't feel any increase...

AC: No.

NL: ...in antisemitism in Lublin?

AC: In this time...

NL: In the middle '30s, '37, '38?

AC: Yes, yes.

NL: '36?

AC: Yes, yes, in the stores by my mother, she begin to feel this. She begin to feel this. "Not go to a Jewish store," two boys are standing here.

NL: Boycott.

AC: Yeah, "Don't go to a Jewish store, don't go to a Jewish store," like this.

NL: Did your husband feel it also?

AC: No, because they don't know this is a Jewish store. My husband never speaking like a Jew.

NL: He spoke Polish perfectly...

AC: Yes.

NL: Yes. Now, at the time of the invasion of Poland, in September '39, around that time, did you have any feeling that the Germans would invade the country? Did you or your husband have any suspicion about this?

AC: In this time, his father was in Warsaw, the lawyer. He was by himself, and he wrote a letter to us. Something happened. People make passports and go away.

NL: I see.

AC: Maybe you make this. Something is in the air. But my husband don't believe and finally, in '39, they called him to the military. He was an officer, and I was by myself, pregnant in this time.

NL: You were pregnant with Roman?

AC: With Roman.

NL: Yes.

AC: And I go to doctor's, and they tell me, Mrs. Pomrok, Mrs. Pomrok, they called me by maiden name...

NL: Maiden name.

AC: When you will be alive, your child will be alive. And I go to another doctor, and he repeats the same. It's too late to make. And finally I go to him. This was the happiest day in my husband's life. We have a son.

NL: When Roman was born...

AC: The happiest day in his life, he want to have a son.

NL: This was what month?

AC: '39, February 24.

NL: February 24, 1940.

AC: Yes.

NL: Yes.

AC: We was living in the Jewish section because that they-- the moment when the German come in, the Jews must move from the Polish section to the Jewish section.

NL: The Jewish section.

AC: And my husband-- my sister's husband was a lawyer, and he had an office, four rooms. When I moved from the Polish section, my sisters moved with their sons [unclear], my mother moved, and my brother's, and my brother's wife. She was pregnant like me. She born a child two months before.

NL: And you were all in Warsaw?

AC: This is all, this is everything in Lublin.

NL: This is still Lublin. Excuse me, yes. I'm sorry.

AC: We were living separately.

NL: Separate.

AC: Everybody had a [unclear] to make at home. Everything was normal. And I was thinking, something come happening.

NL: And your husband was in the army until the surrender...

AC: No, he came back. He came back. Everybody gone all the way. How do you call this?

NL: A quick exit?

AC: No more exits, like the military, the Polish military. He come home. Most of people going to Russia, they think about-- because they told, they make only bad for the men, never for the women.

NL: I see.

AC: But my husband was thinking I am pregnant. He come back, he come back to me. And I thank my husband I'm still alive because he was a very good strategic,

NL: Strategist.

AC: Strategist and he give me instructions, what to make, where to go [unclear]...

NL: What did he tell you do, Mrs. Czerwinski, for instance?

AC: When we were in Lublin, "Let us go in a small town, where the poor live."

NL: Peasants.

AC: "We take a room in the stables." Look, he has everything like to go. He was working like a mechanic.

NL: Mechanic.

AC: And one time, by the work, I don't remember who was it, a big officer...

NL: In the Polish...

AC: In the *Gestapo*, from the *Gestapo*. He was working like a mechanic during the war, in the beginning of the war. He was something fixing, and the officer give him, make him boots in the face. The next day, he never go to work, and he tell said, "Something is in the air. Let us go where it is the town, where no Jews."

NL: And so you left Lublin.

AC: Left Lublin.

NL: After Roman was born?

AC: After he was born.

NL: And where did you go?

AC: Mine brother married to a big farm family, rich, they have horses, they have this and they rich people. Near the farm was a small town, and you come to this small town. When you were in this small town, my husband find out the-- is no good in the air. Something happened, something happened.

NL: He has a feeling.

AC: Yes, he has a feeling because we have a [unclear] on it, in the apartment, in the room, by the family. And he was watching in the night, lights, the military going and going and going and going and he tell to me, "See the light, when the light turn off, turn off, there will be a war between Poland and Russia."

NL: Oh my.

AC: He was like this. And from this time, he tell, "Let us to go in the small town. [Polish]"

NL: Yes.

AC: Small villages.

NL: Yes. And you still had some money, some resources, so that you...

AC: My father was very rich, but when I was in the town, I come back to my sister, because my husband met one man, and he was a little cultured and he tell, "I can make a place," [Polish] nakele.

NL: A cellar.

AC: A cellar, yes. He built the cellar, and [unclear] come in my mother, my sister's husband, my sister and the boy in the cellar. In the night, they can go for fresh air, and nobody know with this. But I want something for this. When I come to Lublin and I explain everything to my sister, to my mother, no, no they won't...

NL: They don't want to...

AC: They don't want to. They no trust. They no want because my sister's husband was very good in German. He finished his law in Vienna.

NL: I see.

AC: They have still a car. He was, I think, working, too, like this.

NL: So they stayed in Lublin?

AC: They stayed in Lublin. Later I go to mine husband. My husband wrote a letter to his father. Come to the town. Go, he was told, not looking very Jewish, very tall man, beautiful. Take a stick, and go from one village to the other village, by feet, good shoes, like a-- better, and you can come to us. "Oh, is so good is Warsaw, I no must come.

NL: This was 1939?

AC: Later.

NL: '40? And he said it was good in Warsaw?

AC: Yeah. In this time it was before the...

NL: Oh, the phony war they call it.  
AC: Yes.  
NL: Before the invasion of Russia.  
AC: Yeah, you never know him. Then I go to my brother's wife, and I tell her, "Adela, come to us." She tell, "You go in the mouth from a tiger when you in a small town." She told me like this.  
NL: Oh my.  
AC: After the war, I was looking for her son. I cannot find my brother's son.  
NL: And what was the name of the town where you were?  
AC: Opole Lubelskie. I wrote this in this.  
NL: In the memoir.  
AC: In the memoir.  
NL: Opole...  
AC: Opole Lubelskie.  
AC: Was this far from Lublin?  
AC: No.  
NL: No.  
AC: Not far, not far.  
NL: And how long did you stay with this family in the cellar?  
AC: We no was in the cellar.  
NL: You were not in the cellar.  
AC: No.  
NL: No.  
AC: I want to prepare for my sister.  
NL: Oh.  
AC: Begin to be very danger.  
NL: Dangerous.  
AC: My husband was looking like Catholic. Her husband had a real Jewish  
nose.  
NL: I see.  
AC: You know...  
NL: Yes.  
AC: It was not easy.  
NL: And did your husband then use the Polish name by this time?  
AC: Yeah.  
NL: Did he call himself Czerwinski?  
AC: Yes, yes, he changed the name.  
NL: He changed the name. So you were living above ground. You weren't in the cellar. You lived...  
AC: No.

NL: In a regular apartment?  
AC: No, no, no in this time, it was in our Jewish name. But later on...  
NL: Oh.  
AC: When the war-- I wrote this everything, years later, two, three years later...  
NL: Ah, yes, but it's in Polish?  
AC: Yes, in Polish, in Polish.  
NL: But now, when you were in this little village of Opole...  
AC: Yeah.  
NL: Where did you live with your husband and the children? In this friend's house?  
AC: No, no, no.  
NL: I see. In a separate place?  
AC: No, no. We paid for this. We paid for this, one room.  
NL: One room, one room. And were you able to go out from time to time?  
AC: Oh yes, in this time, you could. But it was very danger. You know then, you may-- I wrote this, it is hard for me to explain...  
NL: But you're doing very well. Are you getting tired?  
AC: No, no. I am very proud for you to come here...  
NL: I am so happy you are up to it. What did your husband do? Did he work while you were in Opole?  
AC: In Opole, no. Later on, he was like-- he go in a place, his friend, a Catholic friend, recommend him like a watchmaker. He learned in this place...  
NL: The trade.  
AC: The trade. And he was not far away from Warsaw working.  
NL: And how did the children spend their time, and how did you manage?  
AC: When we was living in this small town, every time my husband went to the forest for wood. And Dana was with him. He was maybe eight months, or nine months, and he teach her grammar and arithmetic. And I tell, why make like this? Never know what come tomorrow. She need this.  
NL: She was about eight or nine years old, Dana?  
AC: She was seven years old.  
NL: She was seven years old. Did she play with any other children?  
AC: Oh yes. Was a very good relationship between the Polish children and her.  
NL: I see. I see.  
AC: Yeah. Singing, dancing together.  
RC: But they didn't know that she was Jewish.  
AC: No, they know, they know she is Jewish, in this time.  
RC: In that time...  
NL: They did know she was Jewish.

AC: No, no, they don't know she's Jewish.

NL: They don't know. Did you have to pretend that you were Catholic? Did you have to go to church yourself?

RC: She has to pretend. She doesn't understand the word, pretend.

AC: From time to time, when I feel like to pray, then I go.

NL: Then you go to church.

AC: Sometimes to pray, when I felt like praying, then I would go.

NL: Then you would to church.

RC: You had to live like a Catholic.

AC: I learned everything to prayers and everything, everything.

RC: Ave Maria, you know, she knew that very well.

NL: And were there any other Jews hiding the way you were, as far as you knew, in this place? You didn't come into contact with any other Jews?

AC: It was very danger.

NL: Dangerous. You had not trouble getting food?

AC: Was a time when in the town, I was a teacher in the school.

NL: You were a teacher in the school?

AC: Yeah, in the school. In this time, my daughter, he was maybe two years old and my daughter, Dee, was at home...

[Tape one, side one ended]

*Tape one, side two:*

NL: This is side two, tape one, continuing our interview with Mrs. Czerwinski.  
AC: I was so thankful you found me. I was dreaming about you.  
NL: Thank you for doing this for us. And so, you were telling the children to listen...  
AC: Yes.  
NL: And...  
AC: Always my daughter was like this. When somebody come, a neighbor to us, I tell, "Did they recognize you are Jewish?" No, no. She was hungry, because they baked the bread one time in two weeks or one week, I don't remember. She say, "Mommy, when I no be hungry, I'm hungry, I'm hungry."  
NL: So you did have a shortage of food?  
AC: Oh yes, oh yes.  
NL: Where did you teach? In Opole?  
AC: No. In Opole Lubelskie, in a small school for children.  
NL: I see. And how long were you able to keep that job?  
AC: Oh, I left from the job because somebody, I met somebody, working one time to make [Polish]...  
RC: Where they make flours.  
AC: To buy the flour...  
RC: A mill.  
NL: A mill.  
AC: A mill, to buy the flours. And going back, was up in the mountains a little, far away where I was living, I see a man is standing. [unclear] I was thinking he is a Jew. But the Jews you could find only in the ghettos. What are you doing here? I was young. I tell I am a teacher in the school. You have children? Yes, I have two children. Husband? Oh no.  
NL: You said you didn't have a husband?  
AC: No, no husband.  
NL: Was this a Polish policeman?  
AC: This was a [Polish].  
RC: A spy.  
AC: A Polish spy who speak very well German. Going back was far away, I met one man, what I was living like a Jew by him. His name was Joseph. And when he see me, then, "What are you doing here?" I tell, "Don't ask, and don't tell," in the company from two men, "Don't talk to nobody. I wish you the best."  
NL: He recognized you?  
AC: Yes. I recognized him, he recognized me. When I got home, I said tomorrow can come the man. I was scared, I was scared. I began to pack what I could,



you know. And I go to the man where they give horses and the wagon, I go to him, and tell "I have a very good position in Falenica"<sup>1</sup>...

RC: Suburb of Warsaw.

AC: Suburb of Warsaw-- "and I need a horse, two horses and a wagon."

NL: You were able to pay him.

AC: No, nothing, nothing, this is the obligation what they have in this time. Because I was a teacher, and I have a better position. My husband know I am coming to Warsaw.

NL: Where was he at the time?

AC: He was in Mińsk Mazowiecki near Warsaw.

NL: Near Warsaw.

AC: Yes.

NL: Were you able to keep in touch with each other?

AC: He wrote me letters and sent me the money.

NL: Sent you money.

AC: Yes.

NL: So you got on the carriage with the horses.

AC: Yes.

NL: And...

AC: And I go to the men where they helped to make the papers. When I come to the...

NL: The false papers?

AC: False papers.

NL: False papers.

AC: Yes.

NL: Was this person Polish?

AC: Polish.

NL: And you knew him?

AC: No, never, never.

NL: But you knew there was such a person?

AC: No, somebody made this for money for us.

NL: I see. And so you received false papers?

AC: False papers. It was very danger, but I go by myself, I sign the name, and my husband's friend is waiting in the steps maybe something happen to me.

NL: You had arranged all this?

AC: Yes.

NL: And you were with both children at the time?

AC: No, no, I go by myself.

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<sup>1</sup>Presumably same town that is mentioned later, see page 45.

NL: You went by yourself.

AC: Because my daughter was a little looking like a Jew. I had very big problems. And he [Roman] no, because the hair was blonde, cheeks was red, and beautiful black eyes.

RC: I had [unclear] hair [unclear] black.

AC: [Laughs]

NL: Did you dye his hair?

AC: Yes, during the war.

NL: I see, I see.

AC: I make everything that I could.

NL: And so, where did you go after you got the false papers, Mrs. Czerwinski? You moved to another place?

AC: No, I tell you [unclear]. I come to the parents that they was living near us, from the men what they made the papers. They shown me so "Go in the forest. What are you doing here? They burn my house. Out! [Polish] *Żydu*."

RC: [Polish]

NL: Oh.

AC: And I tell, "Shut your mouth." And I go into the house, and I went to the living room, with his wife in the living room of this man. I bent my knees, and I had a big diamond ring, and I tell, "Take me to the station, because I go," this was Lublin, near Lublin. "Take me to the station, because I am going to my husband, to my"-- you know, in the time when she was in the wagon, she was four or five times down, because she see the Germans men when they find out. And I told Roman, "Put your head down, put your head down." I was looking like a Jew, with the child here, and I had courage, I don't know how...

NL: Self-confidence?

AC: How did this come in this time?

NL: It's a mystery, partly from your mother, I'm sure. Her spirit.

AC: I was very strong.

NL: You were very strong as she was, yes. And so, where did you go from there?

AC: My husband, where he was living here, he had one room...

NL: In Minsk.

AC: No, Warsaw. Ah, later on, later on he was working.

NL: He's still in, he's still in Warsaw.

AC: In Warsaw.

NL: I see. Okay. And you joined him?

AC: I come to the home. He told the neighbors, "My wife and the two children are on vacation. They come back." It was looking beautiful, you know with the sun was shining. I am so tired, you know. I wrote about this in Polish.

NL: Let's stop for a little bit...  
[Long pause before interview resumes]  
NL: Now, you are now meeting your husband in Warsaw.  
AC: In Warsaw, yes.  
NL: And you have the children, and your husband has an apartment...  
AC: One room.  
NL: One room.  
AC: Yeah.  
NL: And you're living in the Polish section, of course.  
AC: No, this Jewish section, but this was the end from Praga. This was the end from Praga at the end stop from the...  
RC: Tramway.  
AC: Yeah.  
NL: Trolley.  
AC: Yeah.  
NL: Are you near the ghetto? Can you see the ghetto?  
AC: No.  
NL: Quite far from the ghetto.  
AC: Quite far from the ghetto.  
NL: Do you hear anything at all about your parents at this time?  
AC: No.  
NL: No word at all. Do you know what is happening to Jews elsewhere?  
AC: Oh, yes. Oh yes.  
NL: How do you hear about this?  
AC: Because when you go in the street in Warsaw, they kill a Jew when they find a Jew. They burned the ghetto.  
NL: So you know.  
AC: Terrible.  
NL: Terrible.  
AC: One time, in general, I no see nothing bad, like the people who were confined to the concentration camps. But one time, I see a big truck, and on the truck were Jewish men going to work. In the middle from the hair...  
NL: Cut.  
AC: Cut to be a mark, they cannot go no places. And the eyes was [pause] scared. This I open my eyes, man, I see these, I see the eyes.  
NL: And you knew how they were suffering?  
AC: Yes.  
NL: So what did you do in this one room with your husband and the children?  
AC: He was working.  
NL: He was still working.

AC: Yes. To live in that apartment, in one room, very big, he was in, in a place where they go to the bath, a register, he was. He was a Jew. In Poland, the Jews...

RC: Circumcised, yes.

AC: And he was circumcised.

NL: Yes, of course he was circumcised.

AC: Yes. Then he take a towel and cover himself.

NL: I see.

AC: Imagine the...

NL: Fear.

AC: How he fear. Every week he did this. And I have papers for bread, for sugar, for things I was at home together with him. But when he left to work, he tell, "Every day hang up a piece of white cotton..."

RC: Rope.

AC: "Rope. Then when I go home, when I see this, I know everything is fine."

NL: I see.

AC: Yeah. And one day I forgot. He come at home like a fire. He was really scared, very scared.

NL: Of course. Of course. But people never found out that he was a Jew. He concealed that.

AC: Oh, several times he jump from, from one place to the other [unclear].

NL: And then he runs.

AC: Yes.

NL: Was he working for a Polish employer at this time?

AC: Yes, yes in Warsaw.

NL: In Warsaw. Still as a watchmaker or mechanic?

AC: No, watchmaker.

NL: As a watchmaker still. And you had food at this time still?

AC: Yes.

NL: This was what, '41, 1942?

AC: When the ghetto was, when they liquidate the Jewish, the ghetto. I don't know the years.

NL: 1943. April and May of 1943. Did you know anything about the uprising, the revolt? Did you hear anything about the fighting, the Jewish resistance?

AC: Oh yes, this I know.

NL: How did you hear about that?

AC: Because from time to time, I was Catholic.

NL: I see.

AC: Yeah, and I see this place is [possibly - dead] from the ghetto, this place is [possibly - dead] from the ghetto. I saw all this.

NL: And you were able to travel then on the trolley?

AC: Yeah, I had my pass. I had my...

NL: You had your papers?

AC: Yes, yes.

NL: And did you have Polish friends you could go to see?

AC: Yes, these were my husband's friends who the help us.

NL: They helped you?

AC: For money.

NL: For money? Always for money.

AC: Always for money.

NL: Only for money.

AC: They was the best friend, but during the war.

NL: Only if there was money to be passed.

AC: Yes.

RC: How about the times [unclear] stayed in the doorway...

NL: Well, we'll perhaps come to that. How long were you able to stay in this one room, Mrs. Czerwinski, for several months or...?

AC: One day.

NL: Until when, when did you have to move out?

AC: I think a few months we was living in the house.

NL: And when did you have to leave?

AC: One day, somebody find out he's [unclear]...

NL: Circumcised.

AC: Circumcised.

NL: Yes.

AC: And the super from the house came to me, "Mrs. Czerwinski, you know the shame, you have a Jew, is danger for us." Like this. And the neighbors begin to talk. Then, was one lady, and she tell, "Mrs. Czerwinski, tomorrow, after tomorrow, the Gestapo are going come for us." The people was like this in Poland. [pause] My husband's friend Fornatski [phonetic] take my husband and he left.

NL: By himself?

AC: Because he was a Jew.

NL: Afraid.

Ac: Yeah, he left.

NL: Where did he take him to?

AC: To his home, I think, for a short time. I tooked the two children in a small, tiny luggage, going to the last stop from the...

NL: Trolley.

AC: Trolley. In the way going, they called, "Jew, where are you going? Jew, where are you going?" But I no look at them. I take the two children and I go. Was empty. Ten minutes later, many people come in, and I was sitting. I had with me few

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monies from gold, five rubles, ten rubles, and I was thinking, if something happen, I give everything before I-- and I was sitting like this, and in the car somebody passes my hand and tells to me, "Don't worry, nothing happen to you. And don't be scared."

NL: Who was it?

AC: And this [unclear]. In the middle of the way, when this was moving...

NL: Trolley, yes.

AC: One pushed the other. Two mens. This was two brothers. The mother was living near our home, when she know what happened to us, she called the man and she tell him, "Save the people."

NL: Oh.

AC: And he was the man.

NL: I see.

AC: And She told to me, my brother is a, a [unclear], and I throw him out from the...

NL: Trolley.

AC: Trolley. When I came get the children from the capital, from Warsaw with the two kids, and he was in the street this time. I go to the railroad station and I sit down between the Germans. I was so scared. I go outside and I ask, "I missed my train. Maybe somebody know where I can sleep this night [unclear]," I'm tired. I will...

NL: Tired.

[Long pause before interview resumes]

NL: So you were saying, Mrs. Czerwinski that the children had whooping cough and diarrhea while you were still in Praga.

AC: Yes.

NL: And what did you do?

AC: I tried to cure them. And the time when we left from the house, I was with two children in the street, and then I go to the hospital. And I come to the hospital and I say, "My daughter is sick, I want to take in the hospital." No room, no place. Then I tell *zakaźne* [diseases]...

RC: Infectious disease section.

AC: Infectious disease section with her. And we both were in the street six weeks, and she was in the hospital, hungry, but the health is coming back. And later I founded a job, but I had...

RC: [unclear]

NL: What sort of work did you do?

AC: What? Me?

NL: Yes, what kind of work?

AC: I was in a, it was in a big bakery. They make beautiful cakes and everything. She was very religious, Catholic. I was walking in the street with him, and he come to the window and he tell, "Look, I want this cake like a finger. Looking, I find

they looking for somebody to work. I come into her and tell her I am looking for a job. She accepts me, but I must have recommendation letters. That my husband's friend, give with all his what he have and volunteer, I am very honest and I have the job. They want when I sleep in the job. I tell, "No." because he was-- they discover he is a Jew.

NL: Circumcised.

AC: That every day, I was traveling from Praga. On my back here, going home again on my back here.

RC: Tell them about the tramway that was only for Germans, and you go there. Tell them.

AC: One moment. Traveling in the, in the [pause] how you call it [Polish] *tramwaj*.

RC: Tramway.

NL: Trolley.

AC: Trolley, yes. You cannot go in. It was a special section for Catholics, for Germans. I tried to be near the Germans. I always feel safe. From time to time, they take, the boy, I hold him down. Red checks, blonde hair, beautiful eyes, good dressing, a German can take him and give him chocolate, give him an apple. One time I was in the traveling, and I put my leg, to here you can go, but not here. Somebody found out that my leg is here, "Go down." I take Roman. "I am going to work, I must go to work." They tell me, "No, you go with us." I was thinking they kill me, far away they take me. And this time I got to work late. But thanks God they don't kill me and my son.

NL: These were Germans or Poles who took you?

AC: Poland. Poles, Poles, Poles.

NL: Poles. They suspected you of being Jewish or...?

AC: No, oh no, oh no.

NL: Why did they take you?

AC: Because the Catholics cannot go again. None Jewish were in this time.

RC: Not Jewish.

AC: Only Catholics.

RC: Only for Germans was this place...

NL: I understand.

RC: But you did take the German car sometimes? The *tramwaj* only for Germans, no?

AC: No, it was a special section, yes.

NL: And where did you live while you worked in the bakery?

AC: I was living far away in Praga.

NL: And you had this long distance to go?

AC: Yes.

NL: And who took care of the children?

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AC: No, my daughter was working in this time, and I was only with him. He was sitting here. I was working here, and he was sitting here.

NL: So you took him to the bakery every day?

AC: Every day. This was my eyes what I was watching.

NL: And what sort of work could Danna do?

AC: It was like this. In the bakery was working a big manager, two workers, she has a husband and three children. One was a teacher, daughter was a crazy woman, and the son, he was like a priest, very religious. I cooked for them in this time and was, she was very economized. When I have time, I was peel potatoes, and they put potatoes in the cakes, in the bread, in everything.

NL: Yes.

AC: I was sitting, and Roman was sitting on the floor near me.

NL: Uh huh.

AC: I told him every time, when you need pee pee to make, call me. Don't go alone.

NL: He was then about three, four?

AC: No, two and one-half.

NL: Still so young, yes, two and one-half. You don't remember any of this do you, Roman?

RC: I only remember because she has told me these things, but-- and when they-- remember they-- you missed the day of going to work.

AC: Oh, this was something.

RC: Go ahead. Tell this.

AC: One time he was sick, inflammation in the ear. I call up the place where I was working, I not coming today. The next day when I come, the owner told me, *Gestapo* was here looking for a Jewish girl. "This was not for me, I'm not Jewish." But imagine, I no have place to go, and I stayed by her and I worked by her.

RC: It was a lucky day that she missed...

NL: That she wasn't there.

NL: ...yes, they might have picked her up, yes.

RC: ...because somebody was denounced or...

AC: In this time, when I was working [unclear] everything, this was a job. The table what I was washing was from wood, all wood, and a piece of wood come to here. The next day, I go to the hospital, waiting on the line. When I come in, they told me they put me on the table, and they make an operation. They take off the nail.

NL: Oh, the nail.

AC: And they put me...

RC: Anesthesia.

AC: Anesthesia. I dream a big cut, cut my hand how painful this was, and...

NL: How long did you stay in the hospital?



AC: Next day I go to work. The same day I left work because it was early in the morning. This was the left hand. With the right hand, I could make everything. The pain was so big, and I was praying. I no tell, *oy vey*. I tell Jesus, Maria! Jesus, Maria! This was one thing. When I come out, the people were stand in line. "How strong you are and why was so shouting?" A blessing. I no talk in the Jewish. *Oy vey*, I talk Jesus, Maria!

NL: Remarkable. Under anesthesia?

AC: Under anesthesia. How this was in me.

NL: You conditioned yourself.

AC: Yes.

RC: And one day, she wanted to check that if you're Jewish, so she asked you to-- tell that.

AC: In this time is in every house, it was like a church, a corner of a church. And in the morning, when I come to work, I must bend, stay on my knees and then to pray. The Catholics prayed. And the owner from the house, every day she look at my mouth if I make all this good.

NL: Make a mistake.

AC: Yes.

NL: And Dana was working in the bakery with you?

AC: Never.

NL: No? What sort of work was she doing?

AC: The work what she had is to [Polish]...

RC: Take the geese around.

NL: Oh, the geese?

AC: Yes, many geese. No was good. No food. She was always hungry.

NL: Always hungry.

AC: Later, she was by two cows, big and small cow. Every four o'clock in the morning, when it was dark, she dressed herself, and she does one thing what she had was the sunshine, and she warm it up.

NL: And when did you have to put her in the convent? What happened so that you had to put her in the convent?

AC: In the convent I put her, when she was in the hospital, I think, after the hospital, I think so, yes.

NL: She had the whooping cough?

AC: No. I, I, Michal Fornatski [phonetic] told me, go in this and this street is the convent. Go to him, he's a stranger here. He is not living here. He's temporary here. Go to him...

RC: He's a priest.

AC: A priest, yes, go to him and talk to him. So when I come, the porter opened the door and asked me what I want. I was to with him [Roman]. I tell I have a

recommendation letter. "May I take this?" "No, I must personal deliver it to him." And the envelope was empty. Nothing was in the envelope. He goes to the priest and ask me to come tomorrow. Tomorrow I am coming, and I opened the door, he put me in his room with my son, and I tell him, you know, "I have two children. The German tooked my husband. He was by war, and something happened. I am waiting when he come back, thinking one month, six weeks later. He will be back." "I can't do anything for you!"

RC: [Unclear]

AC: "I can no do nothing!" And I stay, I tell, "You can make," I title him, "You can make..."

RC: Your honor.

AC: "Your honor, you can make for me," more like, in Polish I am very-- it is very easy...

NL: Of course.

AC: ...and I stay, and I look at him. A tall man, beautiful big, good eyes. He look at me. I don't know what happened. He left. He come back, he give me a letter to the sisters, to the nurses [perhaps means nuns]. I come to-- I go away from my job and I go to the, to the-- can I talk to them. You come in, you see so cold everything. So cold. And the older sister, what she come, you see, how the priest make a good expression of me. She make terrible, you know. I was shaking, I was shaking.

NL: Harsh.

AC: Harsh. I-- this the recommendation letter what the priest gave to me, and she look at me, and look at him. So, not friendly, very unfriendly...

NL: ...cold.

AC: ...very unfriendly, cold. She said, "All right. When you take away?" Two weeks, three weeks.

RC: When you take away Dana?

AC: And I kissed Dana, but she gone but she has a home. She is not in the street, she is not in the hospital.

NL: Could you visit her there, Mrs. Czerwinski?

AC: I make a mistake. I don't know about this. I must send packages. I don't know about it.

NL: You don't know.

AC: I don't know.

RC: So what happened, did she stay there a long time?

AC: One day, going back home from work, I go to-- I call up my husband's friend Fornatski and I told him, "I had a terrible dream in the night. Something happened to my daughter." [He says,] "Come on, in the last room she is." And this was the time when she was by the nuns, one girl called her, "You're Jewish." With all her power in the hand, she hit her, because I learned her, when somebody calls you Jewish, hit. She

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said, "You're Jewish, and I am not Jewish." She told like this. Something happened between the nuns, I don't know what. They told her to dress, and one nun took her, she took her to the center...

[Tape one, side two ended]

*Tape two, side one:*

NL: This is tape two, side one, continuing our interview with Mrs. Czerwinski. So, the nun took her to the center of Warsaw...

AC: And the street was Marszałkowska. She was very smart, and she remembered the address from my husband's friend, Fornatski [phonetic], and she was by him. I find her in the last room.

NL: The nun just left her...

AC: On the street.

NL: On the street.

AC: On the street. And she told her, "Jew, you're a Jew. Go where you want."

NL: How long was she in the convent, Mrs. Czerwinski?

AC: I think six months.

NL: Six months?

AC: Six months or four months, I don't remember.

NL: Did she tell you ever how she was treated?

AC: Yes.

NL: Did she get enough to eat?

AC: She told me she was, when she find a tomato in the backyard. She was always hungry. And she had, how you call this, lice...

NL: Lice?

AC: Lice, when she come home, she was lice, she had a terrible cough. A terrible cough. I begin to cure her. I give her good food. And she tell me what happened, everything.

NL: It was a bad experience.

AC: Oh yes. And I was scared because I was thinking, oh my God, maybe the super recognized she is Jewish. But I was very smart. In the bakery what I was working, every night when I come home, I bring cakes, I bring bread, everything. You know, it was very friendly.

NL: Oh, that was a blessing.

AC: And I later I find a job for my daughter.

NL: And this Polish friend, then, gave you your daughter back, and you continued living in Praga with both children?

AC: Yes. But I come to the sisters, to the brothers, I knock on the door and tell "Look, take my daughter, let her be a maid by you." "Oh no." Then I go to his brother, I tell, "Look, the same age as your son, your daughter. Take my daughter." No. Nobody accept. Then I find a job for her.

NL: What sort of job?

AC: [Laughs, unclear]

RC: No, no, no you found a job. She was, I think, carrying some [unclear] or...

AC: The first job was...

RC: Goose, no, the goose, you told that already.

AC: No, later...

RC: How about in Warsaw? Did she have a job in Warsaw?

AC: She has a job in a restaurant. In this restaurant, I find the job to serve to the tables, to clean the table, like this. And one day come a nun for the lunchtime, and she recognized my daughter.

NL: Oy.

AC: She go to the owner from the restaurant, and she tells, "How you can have a Jewish girl here?" They call me up, I come, and the owner told me, "Mrs. Czerwinski, I have very good job for you. I know you make this with all your heart because you want save the Jewish girl." I told him, "This is my daughter, she is not Jewish. What happened to you," I tell. "But thank you. She is not working anymore by you." And I took her out.

NL: You took her out.

AC: After the war, my daughter told me, "Mommy, let us go to Hotomel [phonetic] and make them something that would put them in jail. I said, "No, God punished them." It is so.

NL: Did you hear from your husband during this time, Mrs. Czeerwinski?

AC: Oh yes.

NL: Was he still working?

AC: He was still working. Every two weeks we meet together. I was with Roman, Dana come from where she was working, and my husband come. From time to time he was late...

NL: Where did you meet?

AC: In an open place in a park.

NL: In a park.

AC: In a park. We stayed very short.

NL: Of course.

AC: Because we all were scared. He brought me some money, my husband. You know, is a feeling, my son, when he see my husband, he don't know is my husband. He don't know. No, no.

RC: I called him uncle.

NL: You called him uncle.

AC: He jump with him.

NL: A feeling.

AC: So warm. He feels something. This was something for him.

NL: Yes, Dana knew it was her father?

AC: Oh yes, she was older, she was older.

NL: She was by then what, 12 or so?

AC: She was 12. I was praying to God when she is 13...  
RC: Thirteen.  
AC: I was praying to God, when she is 13, 13 years she can go in the factory and work.  
NL: I see, I see.  
AC: And be with people.  
NL: So you stayed in the bakery then through 1943...  
AC: Till the last moment.  
NL: ...until the end of the war?  
AC: No, still was the war. I was living in the house, Dana was working, I was living in the house with my son. And my husband was still working in Mińsk Mazowiecki, not far away from Warsaw. One day was a big rain, and somebody knocked on the first floor in the window. I recognized my husband, and he tell-- he was in a bicycle, he tell, "I give a watch to a German officer, he sold me this bicycle." I come to you, "Take the children and go far away from the water." Visla...  
NL: Vistula.  
AC: Yeah, because he had be at war. He was an officer. He know everything.  
NL: This was still in 1943?  
AC: When the Germans still was in Poland.  
NL: '43 and so, you want to think for a minute? [pause] So your husband was afraid that you would be in a war zone?  
AC: In danger. The capital, to be in Warsaw is very bad. Go in the towns.  
NL: So you had to leave your job?  
AC: When I talked to the owner. "Tomorrow, I am looking for a room in Okfokst [phonetic] or Falenica<sup>2</sup>." She tell me, "Anna, where are you going? You have a cellar, the war is one year, two year, you have everything to eat, you feel like at home. Why you are going?" I said, "Mrs. Dorman, I must go." I no tell her why.  
NL: No.  
AC: Finally, I come in the last train what is going. Is a choo-choo train is going to Falenica. I find a room...  
NL: Why did you go to Falenica? Did you know the place?  
AC: No. But I go because my husband told me not to be in Warsaw.  
NL: How far from Warsaw was this?  
AC: It is with the train to go a half hour.  
NL: Just a short distance.  
AC: Just a short distance.  
NL: And what did you do in Falenica?

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<sup>2</sup>The pronunciation sounds like Falenitsa.

AC: In Falenica, when I come, I find a room. No was places. But exactly one German lady left, she was scared and she left, and I had the room. Roman was two and one-half years in this time, not old, a baby. I prepared in the house, I remember like now, it was very poor. I wrote on the tree, on the wood from the trees, "I am here, I am here, I am here, I am here, I am here," when he come. And I put a sign on the door where I was living. And one day he come back.

NL: Oh my, like a treasure trail. [laughs]

AC: I can remember like now, my husband was [unclear] because no money, nothing and he pick potatoes.

NL: He wasn't working then?

AC: No, in this time he cannot work. In this time...

NL: I see.

AC: He brought a little sugar, this I remember.

NL: But he wasn't working.

AC: No, later on he's beginning to work. And I prepared a soup from potatoes. I was so happy. And Roman at two-and-a-half years, and not far away was the soap. He put the soap in the soup [laughs]. I said...

NL: [laughs] Oh my.

AC: It is a good memory when you can laugh now from it.

NL: When you can laugh. And were you able to find work in Falenica?

AC: No, I no work in Falenica.

NL: So what did you do for food? You had a little money saved?

AC: My husband begin to travel on the bicycle to the capital in the place where they have a lot of chocolate, and he brought us to the store, going back and now. Very danger, because in this time was the war between, but he take a risk...

NL: Yes, the Russians were coming west...

AC: Yes and the Germans still was in Poland.

NL: Yes. Well, did you have to hide your identity?

AC: Oh no, oh no. I am Jewish. In this time, you find people what they was...

RC: In Falenica? She's talking about after the war.

NL: Oh, no.

AC: After the war.

NL: No, during the war, in Falenica. You were still a Pole.

AC: They don't know I'm Jewish, no.

NL: They don't know you're Jewish. And how long did you stay in Falenica then?

AC: We meet people who they went underground, families, children and they come out. You have a little friends. How long did we stay in Falenica? Not long time.

NL: Did any Polish people help you?

AC: Only the friend from my husband.

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NL: Still the friends from your husband?  
AC: Yes.  
NL: And they provided for you?  
AC: Yes.  
NL: And so where did you go from there?  
AC: From there we went to Lublin.  
NL: Oh, to Lublin.  
AC: Yes.  
NL: Why did you leave Falenica, Mrs. Czerwinski? Did your husband...  
AC: This was temporary, this was temporary.  
NL: I see. I see. And your husband suggested Lublin?  
AC: He no suggest it, but, no, first he is going to the capital, my husband, looking for the family, for friends. He no find no Jewish friends, no family, nobody.  
NL: No, no.  
AC: Then I tell "Now, I am going." I come to Lublin looking for our people. I no find nobody. Then I went to the cemetery where my father was. They tooked the plate. You know what I am talking...  
NL: The stone.  
AC: The stone.  
NL: Nothing.  
AC: Was for him only something, only to ruin, ruin, ruin everything what is Jewish.  
NL: Nobody knew what happened to your family? No one?  
AC: No. I asked, I ask many friends. And I go, I go to the supers from the houses where they were belonged to them. They was no living in the same-- they were living in second floors and third floors. They don't know anything, anything.  
NL: So you went back to Falenica?  
AC: Yes. We had our apartment. In this time was building the co-ops in Poland. We have our apartment.  
RC: After the war.  
AC: After the war.  
NL: But still during the war you went back to Falenica or...  
AC: No, when the war was ending, when I left to look for my family, for the people, for my friends...  
RC: After the war...  
AC: After the war.  
NL: This is after the war. But if you could go back to let's say 1944, before the war ended, you stayed in Lublin until the war ended?  
AC: Oh, no, the war was ended in Falenica.  
NL: You were in Falenica when the war ended?



AC: Yes.

NL: And you still had this one room with the children?

AC: Yes.

NL: With the children. And you never found work there?

AC: I never was working no, no.

NL: No.

AC: I had a terrible wound in my leg. A German officer hit me here. I have still black mark here. In one year, this no was cured. In the night, I was crying and the pillow was wet from the t-- from the...

NL: Tears.

AC: Tears.

NL: Why did he hit you?

AC: I was, when you go near a German, they make what they want.

NL: Just-- a brutal kick.

RC: It would just not cure...

AC: I was by doctors. And one doctor, a big doctor, because I belonged to the hospitals. I have the papers, I was working. One big doctor told me, "You see, your blood is not clear. Be happy, every day is going out [Polish]..."

RC: The pus was coming out.

AC: ...a drop of pus."

NL: Yeah, draining.

AC: And in the wintertime, terrible pain. No cure. And he went back to work, going back. And in this time, from time to time was a line from the, where they checked the people where they go home...

NL: Registration.

AC: *Raus!* Everybody must go. The moment when they see I have my son in my hands, Go!

NL: Did you meet any Russians during this time?

AC: Oh, yes, in Falenica.

NL: In Falenica.

AC: In Falenica. They was very polite...

NL: Were they?

AC: Yes and very good. They came to us, they have bread or something to eat. And they talk Russian. *Mozhno pokushet* [Russian: You can eat.] I make the tea, and they been very friendly.

NL: Friendly.

AC: With this leg, was a ambulance where they cured the people. Was a war, they were in the *podziemny* [Polish: underground]...

RC: Underground.

AC: Underground and when the war was over, finished, then I go to the ambulance. They give me some, I don't know, something to put...

NL: Medicine.

AC: Medicine to put in my leg, and in the night when I was sleeping, I wake up in the middle of the night, and I opened my eyes, I don't believe I have the children and my husband. It take about three days, and cure the leg like nothing. You know, because you must have lot happiness when you no have happiness and scared.

NL: Yes, your mental attitude is important. Your emotional well-being, of course, is very, very important.

AC: Oh, I was scared to death, but I never gave up. I had a lot of courage. I was young at this time and very strong.

NL: You still are strong.

AC: [Laughs]

NL: Oh, yes, oh, yes. So, excuse me, Roman, you wanted to say something.

RC: Why didn't you go to the ghetto? Were there no rooms in the ghetto?

AC: Oh yes, we was in the ghetto 24 hours.

NL: Oh, tell us about that, please.

AC: When we come into the ghetto, my husband said to me, "Let us go out immediately, immediately."

NL: What made you go in the first place? You were just curious?

AC: I was thinking it is a home for Jews, the ghetto. We don't know nothing. And it was so-- they, they don't give [unclear] everything. So my husband said, "Get out from here. This is not for us." He was, he was somebody...

NL: This was in 1940 or so?

AC: I don't remember the year.

NL: What impression did you have of the ghetto? What did you see?

AC: You see poverty, poverty. And the people not were like not normal people.

NL: Frightened.

AC: Frightened.

NL: Shocked.

AC: You know, the children were scared.

NL: Thank heavens you didn't stay.

RC: What about this hotel?

AC: One time, my husband's friend come to him and tell him, "Lutek, is a big hotel in [unclear] street. And the door is open for Jews. They make a passport to go to Europe and to go to America, and everybody had this, with papers and everything. Mostly very rich people come here.

NL: This was the Polski Hotel?

AC: Polski Hotel. He went inside, and he told, in Polish there is this phrase, "*Miod na muchy*."

RC: Honey for the flies.

AC: Honey for the flies. Is not for us. It takes about three months and the door was closed, and nobody never hear from them, again.

NL: They all perished.

AC: Yes. Mostly the very rich people. They wanted the money from them. They wanted the life from them.

NL: And your husband had a feeling that this was not good.

AC: My husband was very intelligent. He takes after my husband, he is very intelligent, my son.

NL: It's an insight.

AC: He came from a great family.

NL: Now, can you tell us a little more about the Russians? Did they help Jews particularly, or were they kind to most people when they came into Poland?

AC: They were very polite.

NL: Polite.

AC: Very polite, for them was no difference Jew, no Jew.

NL: Same to them. And, what did your family do then, you and your husband and the children after the Russians came? Did you go back to Lublin or to Warsaw?

AC: I told you we was in Lublin a short time. I live in my apartment. I cannot live in that apartment because in one room was living a Polish officer in that apartment. It was a three-room apartment, or four rooms. And one day my husband tell he goes to Niederschlesien, Reichenbach.

NL: Germany?

AC: Germany.

RC: No, it was Poland.

AC: Belongs to Poland.

NL: Oh.

RC: ...Reichenbach [unclear].

AC: ...belongs to Poland.

NL: Oh, I see. And why did he want to go there?

AC: He had some money, very little money, and he tells, "I must make something." We're poor. When I came back to Lublin, I was looking for the stores. In this time, you kept a store when you go to the government. I come to the government, and they looked at me and said, "Oh, you are the daughter from Mrs. Pomrok. You want back the store, you can have it." I said "No, I don't need the store."

NL: The government had taken everything over?

AC: Yes.

RC: So he went to Reichenbach...

AC: No, my husband left, and I was with my kids in Lublin. Dana was in this time eight years old, nine years old.

RC: No, she was fourteen.

NL: Fourteen, after the war?

AC: Fourteen, fourteen, yes.

NL: And what did your husband do in Reichenbach?

AC: He had a few dollars, and he was a watchmaker. He took the store and build up for us everything. We were working together. I have a beautiful home, I have beautiful crystals.

NL: In Reichenbach?

AC: Yes, after a...

NL: A few years.

AC: After a time, after a time. I was very energetic in the store.

RC: You were buying things from the Russians returning from the front, and they were going back to Germany, excuse me, to Russia. And you would buy things from them.

AC: And the Germans came and buy from the store everything. Germans, no more Russians. After the war, he have a store, and I have everything. I have crystals, I have a maid.

NL: A maid?

AC: In Germany, you need a spy. [Unclear]. And my daughter went to the conservatory and played piano. And she was in the high school. In the high school at this time, they learning English. Roman was very small, three years old, four years.

RC: I had to be five years old, because this was after the war.

NL: Still young. So in a few years, you recovered so much. You and your hard work. And how long did you stay in Reichenbach?

AC: We was short time, because I, I wrote a letter to my uncle what was in the United States, and his friend sent papers.

NL: You didn't want to stay in Europe?

AC: I was every night scared they kill my children. This is an affliction, you know. I was scared about this, and it was terrible. And I was thinking always, they kill us. Because the Catholics were very big antisemitics after the war, after the war.

NL: Now, Poland was already under Russian influence, wasn't it?

AC: Nothing to do, but they have this in the blood.

NL: And you were permitted to have a store, even though it was a communist country?

AC: Oh, we had problems with this, big problems. But finally finished, he left to Stettin

NL: Stettin

AC: Yes. And he had a very high position, my husband.

RC: Store manager.  
AC: This is not a store-- this is a store where they have eyeglasses.  
RC: Department store.  
AC: A big department store, [unclear]. Every day he came home in the lunchtime. He was somebody. Was a meeting, he talked. But I tell, "I no want to stay in Poland." I no want to stay in Poland.  
RC: He wanted to stay in Poland.  
NL: Your husband wanted to stay in Poland?  
AC: Because his one language was Polish.  
NL: One language.  
AC: One language. But finally, he decided to go.  
RC: 1950.  
AC: In 1950, we left Poland.  
NL: And did any members of the family survive? Your sisters?  
AC: No, I had one sister in Israel, but she many, many years...  
NL: ...she left before the war.  
RC: ...before the war. But father's brother survived. That's the one in the picture.  
NL: Father's brother survived.  
RC: You could tell about what he was doing. He was under a Polish name. He did not...  
AC: He no was a Jew.  
RC: He was a Jew, but he broke away.  
NL: Changed his identity.  
AC: Many years, when he was young. But he was in Maidenek, in the...  
NL: Camp.  
AC: Camp. He married after the war.  
NL: He survived Maidenek.  
RC: Tell me what he was doing.  
AC: Oh well you have the picture.  
RC: Tell what he was doing.  
AC: He was a director, theater.  
NL: In Warsaw.  
AC: In Warsaw.  
NL: In movies.  
AC: In movies. Very talented.  
RC: What was his name?  
AC: What?  
RC: What was his name?  
AC: [goes over some names in a whisper] I forget.

NL: So he remained in Poland?  
AC: Yeah, after the war...  
RC: ...yes, he died in Poland in 1958.  
NL: He died in Poland.  
AC: In 1958, and so on. But he no Jewish. He married a Catholic lady. And he was in the theater. And one day, the theater from Poland come here. And my daughter went to the theater.  
RC: This is an interesting story but from one year ago.  
AC: One year ago, not long time. And she see on the stage a man, Roman, complete Roman. But she left to him [speaks in Polish].  
RC: Director.  
NL: It's the son of this man?  
AC: Yes, of my husband's brother.  
NL: Oh my.  
AC: She came to him, and she tells, "What is your name? Your father and my father was brothers."  
NL: Oh my.  
AC: Yes.  
NL: Extraordinary.  
AC: Yes. And she told him he can write to her or something like this, but he was scared.  
RC: He was not interested because he was not Jewish.  
NL: He didn't want the contact.  
AC: But his face...  
NL: The image of Roman. Amazing! So, Mrs. Czerwinski, in 1950 you left Poland...  
AC: Poland to Israel.  
NL: To Israel.  
AC: I give up everything. I was living in a five-rooms apartment, crystal, silver, my husband had a high position. We left to Israel. We lived for about three months in a tenant.  
RC: Tent.  
AC: Tent, you know, no-- on the air. A blessing, this is my home, I will be here, but it is not going good. He cannot find a job.  
NL: It was very hard. In 1950, it was a bad year. I was in Israel in 1951, and it was a very bad time. So, you stayed in Israel...  
AC: Two years.  
NL: Two years. Did you go to any of the cities, or you stayed in the...

AC: Oh no, I was traveling. My husband no. I was in Sfad and Beersheva many times. One place that I no was, was a kibbutz. I don't know why. I was young, you know. He stayed with the children, and I go and go, and I see everything.

NL: But your husband couldn't find work?

AC: He make a test, for this, for th--. [He was told] "You are too old." And the language...

RC: ...he could not.

NL: Learn Hebrew? And the weather is so hot, all sorts of problems.

RC: We left from there.

AC: ...[unclear] I tell you about.

RC: ...before that you should tell about [unclear] what was the town [unclear].

AC: ...[unclear] you want [unclear]?

NL: Just one more point, please. So you came to America in what year, Mrs. Czerwinski? Oh, you went to South America first, didn't you?

AC: From, from Israel, we went French.

NL: To France.

AC: We cannot stay in France. I found my friend, he was a [unclear] engineer, we were together in school. But my husband no not want to renew every year the...

NL: Citizenship.

AC: Citizenship. This was not for us, we were too old. And we made the papers to go to Brazil. We were in Brazil four years, waiting for the quota to come to America. It was a very hard time for us, because they pay very little. I was working a few hours a day. My husband was working.

NL: The children were going to school?

AC: I don't remember.

RC: And then, in 1958 we came to the States.

NL: 1958? So, it was a long time before you were able to come to this country.

AC: Eight years waiting for the quota.

NL: Eight years!

AC: And they sent us the quota at the last moment. No place on the ship, no place to go. Finally, my husband find us a small tiny, we came at the last moment. Four hours later if we had come, then you cannot enter. Do you remember this?

RC: There was a ten year quota system for Polish citizens.

NL: Yes, yes. And you came to New York?

AC: New York City.

NL: New York. Did you have some relatives or friends in America?

AC: First come my daughter. She was pregnant at the time. She married in Brazil.

NL: I see.

AC: Yes. This is her son what Friday I go to..

*ANNA CZERWINSKI [2-1-38]*

NL: His wedding

AC: Yes. Only two years to finish the medical school.

NL: Oh, yes, Roman told me. And then, you eventually, when did your husband pass away?

RC: In 1964...

[Tape two, side one ended]



*Tape two, side two:*

NL: Did your husband get to like America, finally, Mrs. Czerwinski?

AC: You know, he was a very ambition man. Still, he wanted to make money, because if you don't make money, you're nothing. Very hard for him to study English. In every country we was traveling in, I acc-

NL: Adjusted.

AC: Adjusted immediately. I speak very bad, but I speak. And my husband...

NL: ...wants to speak perfectly.

AC: ...it was very hard in every countries for him. And one time, I was crying, I was thinking, "Why go from Poland?" I ruined him. Why I go from Poland?

NL: Well, you had your children to think about. It would be no life for the children in Poland today. So did he come to like America a little bit?

AC: Later, yes. He was very happy. My grandchildren were small, they could visit and everything.

NL: And when did you go to California?

AC: Eight years ago.

NL: And are you happy there?

AC: I was very happy two years, and later, I begin to work.

NL: Really?

AC: Yes, I begin to work, and I made a little money, because my husband did not make too much money.

NL: What sort of work did you do?

AC: Nurse aide. Private. In a good home, rich people, was with a maid, you know, but I didn't care. They loved me--is not to care. I am in contact with the rich people. They always call me and ask "Anna, how are you? How are you? How are you?" The people liked me very much.

NL: Well, you are a remarkable person, Mrs. Czerwinski. Really, it's been an inspiration for me to hear you. Do you have any message you would like to give to the younger generation about your life, your experiences. Any lessons that you think they should know about?

AC: Yes, to be good for the parents. And what they make, appreciate. And be good for the parents. Because is a good relationship between me and my children. We are from Europe, and this is my diamonds. The two diamonds what I have in the world, is my son and my daughter and my grandchildren.

NL: That is beautiful. Thank you very much for sharing these experiences with us, Mrs. Czerwinski.

AC: Thank you.

[Tape two, side two ended, interview ended.]