

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Stefan Czyzewski
September 14, 1998
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audio taped interview with Stefan Czyzewski, conducted by Katie Davis on September 14, 1998 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Minneapolis, Minnesota and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview

Interview with Stefan Czyzewski
September 24, 1998

Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Jeff and Toby Herr collection.

This is an interview with Stefan Czyzewski, conducted by Katie Davis, on September 14th, 1998, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This is a follow up interview to a USHMM videotaped interview, conducted with Stefan Czyzewski, April 8th, 1998. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum gratefully acknowledges Jeff and Toby Herr for making this interview possible. This is tape number one, side A. Good morning.

Answer: Good morning.

Q: I wonder if we can begin with you just stating your name and telling us whether or not you ever spelled it differently?

A: Yes. My name is Stefan Czyzewski and I never spelled it differently, except for duration of 1941 to '45, I carried a different last name and I was a-at that time, I was Stefan Grot, G-r-o-t. And reason for change, that none of us in the -- in my fighting group carried his own name. In most cases, we just had one word pseudonym -- pseudoname. In my case, I carried a full name, but my last name was different from the original.

Q: Before we get to your work in your fighting group in your resistance, during the war, I've heard that your father hid a Jewish family, or hid Jews and I wonder if you can tell us that?

A: Yes, we -- my father hid a friend, whose name was Ithzac Visipka and his two children. One was about eight, one was about 11, a boy and a girl. And the tragedy of my father's life was that they were killed, very close to the end of the war. During one of the pacifications, Mr. Visipka just couldn't stand it, sitting in hiding, so he took off and ran and was caught in a field -- in open field by pacification squad, the German SS group and he was killed and his children were killed. And the bad part of it is, too, that they were shot only once and were -- they were dying for a long, long time. They refused to shoot them second time. And of course, later on, they came and took my father. Somebody apparently reported and my father, he had to dig a grave for them and bury them. And they also were going to shoot my father -- father, with them, but my father was a foxy old man, so before he went there, he went into a closet, he pulled ours -- out his Isen cross that the Germans gave him in the first World War, pinned it up on his jacket and dug the hole. After he buried this -- I mean, after he laid these people in, he even put his jacket over their faces. And they said, "Now it's your turn." So he turned around and said, "Do you want to kill a German hero?" So they looked, and he had a -- his citation with him, in his pocket. They read the citation and said, "Old man, you escaped this time. Don't let that happen again." And they let him go.

Q: Can you tell us how your father came to hide them? What were the circumstances that led to this? Did -- did they --

A: Was very -- very simple. Everybody -- just about everybody I knew was hiding a Jewish person or two or three. Just about everybody in our -- in our village -- in our village of 52 household, we had probably 20 or 30 Jewish people being hidden. Some survived, some did not. One person that we hid, did survive. She was a young Jewish woman and she did survive. Later on she served in the Polish government. I don't -- I know her name was Maria, but I don't re -- know her -- never knew her last name. She was a friend of Mr. Jebbe, who was a tailor, who was also with us for some time, but he was killed during one of the pacifications.

Q: So this hiding occurred in Leshganorra, your village?

A: Leshnagorra, yes.

Q: Do you know when it began, the hiding of th-the father and the two children?

A: It began in late 1941, when the ghettos were established. Mr. Visipka's wife decided not to go in hiding. She decided to go to the ghe -- stay in ghetto and she even decided to go to the Warsaw ghetto, where she perished, apparently. But Mr. Visipka did not want to stay in ghetto, since he was used to roaming the villages. Before the war, he carried bundle for his mother, Golda, who was a peddler and he knew everybody and everybody knew Mr. Visipka. So he thought that he would survive among the Polish people.

Q: Do you know if he came to your father and asked him, or if your father offered?

A: I don't think he ever asked. He came one night and father -- he -- we talk and he -- father and he talked and father found him a place to hide and when I came back from the Middle East, in fall of 1941, I made Mr. Visipka a good hiding place. And he stayed there forever and a day.

Q: So you made the hiding place? How did you do it, tell us?

A: There was an big attic, huge, huge attic above the cow barn. And the attic was full of straw, bundles of straw. So, I made a little trap door in a ceiling of the barn and I made a chamber among the straw above that trap door. It was nice and warm. It was stinky, of course, but who cared about stink at that time? And Mr. Visipka stayed there, on and off. He would go places. He -- we would go to work in a field for some of the farmers who had so-called farms on outskirts. He could not work on our farm, because our farm was within a village and too many people would have seen him. So he went to work for people who -- who were all alone somewhere on the side of -- on the edge of the forest. And he would stay and work with them. Then they will come back, he will get -- bring some food. And of course, food was never short in our place, so he didn't have to worry about that.

Q: Were you there when he was discovered and killed?

A: No, I was not. I was with my fighting unit. But I heard story after I came back. My father wouldn't talk, but some people talked.

Q: You father wouldn't talk about it?

A: No. He felt very bad about it. And we had a -- we had all kind of moments. Funny moments, laughing moments, was horribly scared. We were worrying. There was one moment -- we were notified by somebody who knew about the pacification squad coming in, so we told Mr. Visipka, "Get in and stay there and don't peek out." Well, Mr. Visipka left his children. He couldn't stand it, he ran away. Later on he said, "I didn't want to be found and have all of you killed." So he came back next -- next day, wet, muddy, cold. And he said, "No panyan. I had three lucks. The first luck was the German didn't kill me. The second luck wa -- luck was, your dog didn't eat me." We had a big, big dog. "And the third luck was, I didn't drown in the mud." He ran into the forest, just about 200 feet from our barn and hid in the mud there. He said, "The third -- third luck was, I did not drown in the mud."

Q: An-and -- and the woman, Maria, who stayed with you, was she staying at the same time and where was she staying?

A: She was staying just about the same time and even before and after. She did not stay with us permanently, but she would come and stay for a week or two and then she would go her own way. We didn't want to know where she went and she didn't want to tell us where she went. She apparently had many places to stay. And after the war, she worked for the Secretary of the Interior, Mr. Minz, in the Polish government. And she was twice, I think, instrumental in saving my father from the Communists.

Q: What do you -- what do you know about that? Can you tell us anything about that?

A: I didn't know very much, because I wasn't there, but later on my sister brought me there. They wanted my father to join the collective and he said, "Damn you, forget it." So, they had a local Communist who was forcing and encouraging everybody to join the collective, give the farm away. So my father went and threaten him, so they ha-had him arrested and beat him up and of course, Maria came and saved him. And a couple weeks later, somebody went out at night and shot up the house of the person who was forcing everybody into it, and I know who that was. My father was a [indecipherable] was short-tempered. He has a gun, he had a machine gun. He could do almost anything, within reason.

Q: Your father did that?

A: Yes, of course. Of course, he was arrested immediately after that. But he was released and the police -- for their pains, the local militia almost got executed by the Soviet general.

Q: Why did they almost get executed?

A: Well, during the war, there was a dirty old -- dirty old, well, he was -- looked old, he was in his probably late 20's or early 30's -- Russian hiding with us for man -- I mean, for weeks and months, at times. And my father spoke Russian very well, because he served in south imperial army, and they became friends, and that Ivan, as we called him, came and went. After the war, we discovered that he led all the Communist partisans in our territory and he was sa -- and he was a general in charge

of an Russian pantzer division in a town of Minsk, which was about 10 - 15 miles from our farm. So, when my father was arrested second time, my sister went and tried to talk to the man in charge in Minsk. And of course, they wouldn't let her talk to him, but eventually she prevailed. She just sat down and wouldn't move and talked to Ivan Ivanovitch. I don't know if it was his real name or not. He came storming in, in an army car with two soldiers and a -- and a driver and he came to the county village. He took the police, put them against the wall and ta -- got my father out of jail and said, "Yanna, do you want to shoot those son of a bitches?" And father said, "Oh, no, they do their work. But they beat me up, so I want to hit them few times." So, he hit them few times. And they were warned, they were told, "If you ever happen -- anything happens to John ever, I'll come and shoot you, you [indecipherable] and so and so."

Q: So there was a lot going on at your house.

A: Well, of course. We had a lively life.

Q: I-It was -- it seems that it was a safe house for at least two Jewish families -- well, one family, one woman, and then a Communist partisan, who happened to turn out to be an important leader?

A: Yes, it was. Of course, there were other people who came in and out, hiding. People from the Polish underground, some of my boys who were hurt, who were shot, stayed for a few days, couple weeks. As you -- as I mentioned previously, I think my mother - - my mother, my grandmother, was a witch doctor. She had weeds, she -- she -- she

had herbs, she had all kind of stuff and she could cure almost anybody out of anything.

She couldn't grow legs or arms, but she could do almost anything else. So we had many wounded partisans come and stay and hide.

Q: So, if something happened in your fighting group and someone was injured, you would e -- you might take them to your house or tell them how to get there?

A: Yes, we did.

Q: And then where would they actually stay, in the house?

A: Oh, we had a small closet, we had a kind of a storeroom. Course we had a barn with all kind of hid-hid-hiding places, they could stay there, too.

Q: And the word never got around that this house of the Czyzewski's was a house where there were many partisans in and out and --

A: Well, the wor --

Q: Jews hiding and --

A: -- the words got around and we had many visits from the Schultz Politsi, even people from the Einsatzgruppen came to visit few times. They beat my father, occasionally. But never shot -- never killed him.

Q: Did your father or your sisters ever talk about feeling afraid during this times?

A: Yes, they were. They were shitty scared at times.

Q: How did they tell you that?

A: Oh yes, we're afraid, we shook. We cried, we yelled a lot wh-when they hit us. So they just left us alone and went away.

Q: Your sisters were hit, also?

A: My sisters were hit also, especially my younger sister, who would te -- who would -
- who was outspoken.

Q: I'd like to turn now, to fill in some gaps, turn now to your training as a -- as an underground fighter. And I'm talking about the period -- the six month period where you left Siberia and then you walked in to Iran. And I'm wondering if we could talk a little bit about that. What did the camp actually look like when you finally got there?

A: It was a tent city, close to Teheran, out in the desert. There was cold at night, there was hot during the day. The hamsen blew occasionally. The sto -- sandstorm blew occasionally. And the British fished out a small group of people and since my whole life practically went by seventeens, there were 17 young Polish boys and there was a British -- Commander Thompson, we called him. He went -- he ran the guts out of us. We went on long marches, with heavy loads. We went infiltrate and exfiltrating from objects -- military objects -- camps.

Q: What do you mean by that, infiltrating?

A: Sneaking in and sneaking out, without being caught.

Q: For instance, how would he have you do that, in a training exercise?

A: We would burrow under the wires. The camp had wire -- barbed wire round. We would get in, we would steal things to tell -- to tell that we were in. And the camp guards, who had put an especial -- they were receive special efforts that somebody is going to infiltrate here and we were caught couple times, but we were caught about two -- two out of 10 times. Most of the time we were lucky to get in and get out without being caught.

Q: So you would be outside the camp and you would have a mission to sneak in, steal something and sneak back out?

A: Yes. And at times we just went in carrying nothing and times we came -- we went in carrying arms. At times we went in carrying heavy loads, in preparation for later times, when we had to carry explosives, things. And we went on long marches, we went on a -- we took in a -- took part in a firefights. We took part in firefights being surrounded by superior forces. And that really helped us later on, when I came back to Poland.

Q: What -- what strategies were you learning in those exercises? What do you do when you're surrounded by superior forces?

A: You divide your group in two or three subgroups. And one group opens heavy fire when the -- the other group proceeds ahead of it. Then this -- then the group that went ahead of you opens heavy fire and you catch up with it. And then in -- both of you open heavy fire in every direction when the third lit -- group comes to you. And for a

time we made efforts not to get surrounded by the Einsatzgruppen that we went to fight. Later on, when we -- when we received our good armament, especially after we bought whole lot of -- after we bought a whole lot of Schmizers from a German supply officers, were so heavily armed, that the Germans had no chance with us, whatsoever. As I mentioned in my previous interview, the 75 to 120 people in a German Einsatzgruppen would have four automatic weapons and rest would be manual rifles. My group of 17 plus two, carried 27 Schmizers, because 10 of my boys did not trust the damn German weapon, they wanted to have two. So, we had a su-surplus of it, so each of them carried two. And we had such a enormous firepower that he, on purpose wanted to be surrounded so we could get into fire -- a real firefight and get out of it and well, knock out more people than we normally would have.

Q: In the training sessions though, what kind of ammunition were you firing? Was it live or blank?

A: We always used live ammunition. Work it -- were -- were wounded sometime, but it was realistic, we always used live ammunition. If you stuck your neck -- head too far, you got hit. So you don't. You keep your head down.

Q: Did anyone ever get killed in training?

A: Yes. I'm -- I don't want to talk about it.

Q: You mentioned that when you first got there, there was a period of indoctrination, psychological or philosophical. What -- what -- what were you learning in that period -

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A: Was it in --

Q: -- from the British?

A: -- in a Soviet camp, or in --

Q: Not in the Soviet camp --

A: -- in British.

Q: -- in the British camp, when you were being indoctrinated to become an underground fighter. What was the philosophy that you were being taught?

A: Well the -- first of all, the British wanted to re-brainwash us after we had been brainwashed by the Communists, which didn't take very long. And later on, we had British and we had Polish office -- political officers coming and talking to us, invoking great Polish patriotism, which was unnecessary. We were too patriotic as it was. As a matter of fact, we were chauvinistic. But mostly it was the philosophy of hitting back, philosophy of saving people. Philosophy of making the Europe free of the Nazi scourge.

Q: And was there any talk in this indoctrination period of what -- of what else you were fighting for? What was the end goal in terms of Poland?

A: The end goal of -- was a free -- or free Poland. Independent, free Poland. It turned otherwise, but we really wanted to fight for the free, independent Poland.

Q: And wa -- was the training camp allied with any of the underground movements? In other words, you were training in -- in Iran. Were they telling you, we want you to connect, when you get back to Poland, with one of these specific underground armies?

A: It was suggested, but it was not told to. When we came back, the most powerful group was the ZWZ and we joined it for a time. Then, that was evolving into the home army, the AK. And also in the NSZ, the nationals armed forces. So some of us -- some of us were given groups of fighters from either AK or NSZ and in my case, my sympathies were with -- were with NSZ and they gave me -- supplied me with some ammunitions, some arms, some explosives and gave me 17 people, plus two. That was that ti --

Q: You were going to say, I think you were saying it was a right wing?

A: It was a right wing Polish underground.

Q: And I want to talk more about that, but I just want to get clear on one thing. When you say that it was suggested that you make a connection to a certain group, what -- what were your leaders in the British training camp? Which group were they guiding you towards?

A: The -- not the British, but the Polish political officers were guiding us toward the present and the future home army, because the home army was under jurisdiction of the Polish government in exile in Great Britain.

Q: And how would they suggest? What would they say?

A: Well, they would -- they would talk a lot about it. This is probably the best middle of the way group. They don't discriminate against anybody and they don't fight -- fight any other group, they even tolerate the Socialist, Communists. And this is probably the future of Poland, we will have to live with that, Soviet Russia. And this probab -- this government probably will be the most likely to survive and continue. And we were told -- also told -- we were warned against my future, NSZ, those people have no future because the Soviet Russia will never allow it -- them to exist. But, of course, if you are 17 and 18, you don't believe it, you are omnipotent.

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning of Tape One, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Stefan Czyzewski and this is tape number one, side B. If you could just tell us a little bit more about your personal allegiance to the underground group that -- that you chose, the NSZ?

A: They just happens -- happened almost by happenstance. They were in ma -- in a neighborhood where I was. I was available, they were receptive. The AK, the army

akaioaba already had a group like mine from that neighborhood. They took one of my friends who came with me, as a leader. And the NSZ people had better armament that they could provide us with and also they were very much against the Soviet Union. They hated the damn Communists. And of course, after spe -- having spent a year in a Soviet prison camp, I didn't like them much either. So, that was probably kind of a combination of reasons why I did join the NSZ.

Q: And as you've described and y-y-you described them sometimes as right wing and in fact, in some cases, they were known for being very anti-Semitic. What were your thoughts about that?

A: That was probably the only aspect that I didn't cherish. Also, in my very neighborhood, in my very group, we were not. As I previously mentioned, I had two people in my group who survived the whole schmier. Out of the four, who are left out of the 20, two of them were Jewish boys. Isaac One and Isaac Two. And we had -- I have known another probably half a dozen Jewish young men who were in a group. Some even were in a command. So even though the NSZ was at times quite anti-Semitic, everybody had a Jew he liked. And he wou -- whom he would protect and save and wanted him to come and fight with him.

Q: Tell us, how did the group express it's anti-Semitism, if in fact, sometimes Jews were in the group? How was it expressed, the anti-Semitism?

A: In most cases -- in my group, we never talked about it. We -- our talk was always how to hit the da-damn -- damn Germans and hora and whit and how to be most effective. And my two Jewish boys had con -- had connection with people in a ghetto - - in neighboring ghettos in two or three towns and had some conva -- kind of a uncanny ability or foresight. If we wanted sometime to go one way, they would -- one of them would say, "Walcheem, no we don't want to go that way, we want to go around." So we went around and we discovered later on if we went that way, we would have gotten knocked out. So it was more on a personal level than on a ideological level. They trusted you, you trusted them. And sometime you trusted them more than you tru-trusted your -- your -- your own Polack in your group. It was mostly personal and we hardly ever talked ideology during our fights, during our existence -- throughout our existence.

Q: I want to go back a little bit, to the training camp. You have told us about how you learned how to infiltrate. How did you learn how to -- for instance, to do certain acts of sabotage, how did you practice them? Perhaps derailing a train, if you could explain to us how they gave you that training?

A: The sabotage part of it was probably the most extens-extensive and took the longest time. They taught us techniques -- how to use old dynamite, which was the only explosive that we could fi -- get in Poland for a long, long time. And how to build that plate -- carry and put metal plate on the -- under the explosives, under the rail. They

taught us, if they -- we did not have explosives, they tol -- they trained us how to loosen up a rail to detrain a train. But in most cases, the most effective would have been explosives. They told us how to use batteries and since we did not have good equipment, we -- you just hung up to two little wires in your hand. Your hand shook and you wondered if y -- if you are going to blow the damn thing on time or after the train went by, which sometime it happened. My commander was mad at me at ev -- every time I missed that thing, he wanted to court martial and we -- he threatened to put me against the wall and shoot me if I missed. But of course, later on he told me, "I would never shoot you, because you are useful. You are a good tool." Well, I don't know if I was a good tool or not, but I tried my darnest. They told us how to attach explosive to doors or to gates or to the brick wall. How to remove a brick from a brick wall, surrounding an object or how to dig out quickly, break out of a brick building and put explosives in it. And how to stretch the wire, how to use -- how to use fuse. How long each fuse would burn -- how many feet per minute it would burn. How many meters per a minute it would burn. How far you had to be from an objective if you blow it up. Which side of the object you were blowing up, you were supposed to be on, if possible. If it's not possible, how to hide, what to hide in, how to best hide. The best pla -- best place to hide was to dig a foxhole. You didn't have time to dig the foxhole, so you hi -- you were kind of in a halfway quandary and great excitement and being scared and being perplexed. And strange enough, I can't believe it, but most of

the times, perhaps seven out of 10, maybe eight, sometime nine out of 10, we were lucky and effective.

Q: Were you often, when you did go through with an action and blow something up, were you often within hearing distance of it?

A: We were always within hearing distance. Sometime we were within -- within a harm distance of it, except that if you put yourself behind a big stone or in a small ditch or behind another wall, you were not harmed. But sometime you were. I had bricks -- brick wall fall on me. The object was probably 200 feet from where I was, that blown up and I was hiding behind a good brick wall that turned out not to be a great brick wall, because it fell apart and I got knocked out, practically.

Q: You had said in your prior interview that the Polish and the British commanders chose you the best of the best. When they said you were ready, was it clear -- what did they tell you and were they putting you, Stefan Czyzewski up as a commander that when you got into Poland, you would command a unit, was that clear?

A: That was clear, but I don't think I mentioned it to [indiscipherable] of the best.

Those 17 of us, all of us were the best. And we ca -- we were sent back to Poland with an understanding that when we reached there, we are the only people who are trained and we automatically would assume command of small wet works groups.

Q: That is what I meant --

A: Yes?

Q: -- that the group was the best of the best.

A: The groups a -- wa -- the -- was the best of the best.

Q: So that you were, in essence, an elite group who had had more training than most, so that you could go back and then lead 17 other, smaller groups?

A: Yes, that's right. Yes, we -- we -- later on we did train some people in Poland, back in, especially after some of us got killed. We didn't want to run out of people who knew enough. But resources were skimpy. The territory was not always safe. So we had a difficult time training more people in Poland in the system that the British developed for us.

Q: Now, I know you've told us the story of how you got back into Poland and your crossing water, and the boat. Did you have ins -- what were your instructions once you got into Poland? Where were you supposed to go? How were you supposed to know where to be?

A: We were told to disperse and since we -- individuals who are from a different part of a country were told they -- to go into your own territory where you know people, where people know you. Perhaps close to where your family is and search out underground groups and join them and tell them who you are and what you can do.

Q: So tell us how you did that when you got back near to -- to Leshnagorra, your hometown, how did you do that?

A: Yes, I came to my hometown, I joined my family, I stayed with them and my friends from the original -- original group, the OP, the defenders of Poland, which was already incorporate into ZWZ, appro -- came to talk to me within probably two days after I came back and say, "Hey, [indecipherable] want to rejoin?" "Well, tell me who and horah." So we had a few meetings with local people and then we went to meetings with the so-called overall command and we identified -- I mean, I was the only one, I identified myself and told them what I could do. And if they had any -- had a job for me, all right, if not I will find somebody to join me. And of course, they accepted me. I went through interrogation. They, at that beginning did not trust me, but eventually we developed affinity. And after I told them what I went through and identified places where I was and the training I went through, then they tested me. They gave me -- I joined a small fighting group who went on a few jobs. And I became an advisor to the young man who ran -- who led that group. And about -- within -- probably within two months, they gave me my own group and I became completely independent from everybody. I had supervision. I had a commander of the district to whom I reported and who collected information on what we did and who would provide us with places to hit. And that was on and on and on and on, until 1944.

Q: What was your attitude when you first got back? You had all this training. Were you very eager to get going right away and for people to recognize that you knew how to do this? What was your attitude about the process of being accepted?

A: Yes. Well, first of all, I was cautious. I didn't know who was who and who might be working for the Germans. After I discovered that nobody was working for the Germans, except those who openly were Bolstoitch people, a supervisor or those who ran the county or those who collected taxes and those who collected food and items for the Germans. Then I was eager to join whoever I could, to join to go and fight. I wanted to -- I mean, I was bragging about no end, I told 10 times more than I knew. I never unlearned to exaggerate. I still don't know how not to exaggerate. So what I say, sometime, you should take with a big handful of salt, because it may be exaggeration.

Q: Tell us a little bit about actually being back home. Wasn't it unusual for a -- a young Polish man to be home? In other words, wasn't it suspicious that you had been away and wouldn't that call attention to you, possibly as being an underground person? I'm wondering if you can explain the atmosphere to us. Could you, as a young Polish man, just walk around normally, or did it -- that raise questions for the Germans?

A: Well, th-they --

Q: And make you --

A: -- they did not -- the Germans did not have a close supervision over a countryside. Ours was a small village, as I mentioned previously, 52 household, built along the -- one long street and everybody knew everybody and most of the people were very patriotic. There were some people there who were members of the home army. There

were some people who were members -- I mean, young boy -- young men who are members of the NSZ. We've only had two people in our district, one from my village and one from a distant village, who were members of the AL, the Communist partisan underground. Two, a whole two out of about 25,000.

Q: So did you carry false documents? Did you have some sort of cover of what you did?

A: No, at that time -- at that time, I did not carry false documents. Before I came -- before I came, every Polish person would receive a so-called cancarity -- a document with your picture on it. You live here, you a farmer, you are this, you are that and if you wa -- if you go anyplace, you had to carry this with you. So when I came back, a friendly person in an administration, made the cancarta for me with a pre-date, so I was just somebody who was here all the time, never left, never was any quar -- just a young peasant, living in a small village. Not exactly illiterate, but not exactly bright. And one who brags a lot and one who likes girls and goes to dances and go places and works hard on the farm. And of course, shortly after that, somebody apparently was reporting and the German police would come and look for me and of course, they never -- I was never in and they kept coming and pushing my father around. He said, "When you came first time here, he got scared of you so badly, he just ran away, never showed up again. I don't know where he is." So they would beat up my father slightly, not badly. I mean, they didn't break his bones, but they would make him black and

blue and let be at it. And that was the duration. I would come for a visit occasionally, talk to my father and he would say a few things and he said, "Okay, you can go back, give them hell." That was -- kind of a -- became everyday life. Like a life in a concentration camp -- in a death camp became everyday life -- normal everyday life, that also became normal, everyday life.

Q: Did you have a small bag of things that you always carried with you, since you were on the move so much?

A: Yes, I had a backpack. I carried my stuff with me.

Q: And do you remember what was in that?

A: One pair of underwear, one pair of socks. And of course I had my Schmizer with me. I also had a good American six shooter. I cherished it, because it was so dependable. In a short encount -- in a -- in a close encounter, that was the best.

Q: Do you remember the make of the gun? The six shooter?

A: Actually, it was a ru -- it was a Russian nagant, n-a-g-a-n-t, but it was built like an American western six shooter.

Q: So you had a German weapon and a Russian weapon.

A: Russian weapon, I had the Russian nagant, and Russian nagant, you could bury it in the mud, pull it out and it would not malfunction.

Q: Do you remember it -- what else was in that knapsack -- the little rucksack?

A: Well, I carried couple books to read and I -- well, I had a towel, I had a piece of soap. I had a razor -- straight razor, which served as a razor and a couple times I used it on somebody else.

Q: As a weapon?

A: Of course, yes. I was in couple close encounters and I used my razor.

Q: Do you want to tell us about that?

A: Oh, I had it handy, I had it in my breast pocket. Had a little pocket sewed up in my jacket and I had it always ready. Yes, the SS man that met me once on a dark street and tried to identify me and pulled out a gun.

Q: Where was that?

A: It was in Shedilsan, little town of Shedilsan, nearby -- oh, probably 30 miles from -- from my -- my -- from my village.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about your -- a little bit more about your commander?

This is B dad --

A: The o -- dom -- Be Dom.

Q: Be-Be Dom, the old oak.

A: Yes.

Q: How often did you see him?

A: I would see him every six weeks, every eight weeks. Sometime every two weeks.

And I would get a -- it was a grapevine, "Hey, you are supposed to see -- go the Be

Dom.” “Where?” “Well, you go that place, or that farm or that village. Go to that house.” I would go to that place and there would be somebody waiting for me. He said, “Okay, let’s go home.” So I would be taken to wherever he was, not the place where I was supposed to go first. And we’d have a talk and I would hand in my report for the last two or three, four weeks, five weeks. He would give me one or two or three assignments and he would always say, “If possible. Do it if possible, but you better.”

Q: Di -- were they written reports that you gave in, or verbal?

A: Verbal. I wo -- they would be written. I would read them several times and I could even carry them for a day, but I would -- to destroy them, I would eat them most of the time.

Q: Tell us a little bit more about him -- be -- as a commander, sometimes hearing you talk about him, he was very harsh on you. What was your feeling towards him, or you just --

A: I felt toward him like my grandfather. He was very harsh, he was foul mouthed. Oh, could he swear. He was almost as bad as a -- as a good Albanian. Good Albanian can swear for 15 minutes and not repeat himself. Mr. Dom, I don’t know how long he could swear without repeating himself, but could he swear. And he would call me names and he would call -- call me horrible names and he would threaten me with execution every second time we met and then after we -- when we parted, he would give me a hug and we both cry.

Q: How long was he your commander?

A: The duration. From the fall of 1941, until spring of 1944.

Q: Did you ever meet him again?

A: No. Never met him. Never knew who -- who he was. Never heard of him again.

Q: Did you ask about him among friends?

A: I asked about him. I asked about him. I don't know what happened to him, if he survived, if he didn't. By the way, he went on wet jobs, too.

Q: He went on your jobs?

A: No, he went --

Q: Oh, went -- wet --

A: -- he -- he went on --

Q: -- wet works?

A: On wet works, also. He was not supposed to. He was not supposed to, he was called on the carpet several times after he participated in -- in a -- in action.

Q: Did he tell you why he did?

A: [indecipherable] He said, "I don't want to be completely useless."

Q: How many actions do you think you were involved in?

A: I can't count.

Q: It's that many?

A: Some months, one a week. Sometime twice a week. Sometime once a month.

Sometime once every two months. I couldn't count. 45 - 50, maybe 60, maybe more.

Most of it -- most of it I obliterated. Most of them. I recall almost everything, but most of my a -- most of our actions blend together and most of them I don't want to remember. They were bad.

Q: Can you say what was bad about them?

A: People mutilated, people wounded and screaming. People with their arms blown off. People with their legs blown off. People with belly wounds, spilling out. Some of my people, some of the other people. One thing I know -- only remember, the -- my friend, whom I carried --

End of Tape One, Side B

Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Stefan Czyzewski. This is tape number two, side A.

A: Yes, one person I remember -- I think I mentioned him previously. We were surrounded, we were in a -- in a firefight and we were running and I did get hit. The top of my head, I did get practically scalped and he was hit in a side of a head. And of course, I didn't know what happened to him, but I grabbed him and I ran with him. I don't know how far it was, but it was a long distance. And he was about twice as heavy as I am -- as I was. And I carried him, his rucksack, his Schmizer. Then I dumped him and two of my boys came and I said, "Come on, let's get him out of here." We were out of the immediate danger. I said, "Come on, let's help him." Man said, "Forget it." His top of a head was blown off. That I remember quite vividly.

Q: What had you been doing? What was the action that you were doing at that point?

A: We were surrounded. We all -- we were surrounded almost on purpose. We just let ourself be surrounded, we were trying our tactics with our new weapons. And it worked, except --

Q: Do you remember his name?

A: I don't. I think his name was Roman, but I couldn't be sure. He wasn't with us for a long time. He replaced somebody who got killed and -- but he was good and he and I became friends.

Q: Early on, when you first take your command, you talk -- you talked before about a period where you lost 11 men in two months and then you describe saying, "Look, we've got to do some training if we want -- if we want to stop this." And then you did do training and I'm wondering if you could tell us about what did you do with those men to get them in better shape?

A: We did what we -- what was done to them in Persia, by the British. We went through all kind of eventualities, being surrounded. We called on a large group of the Enerzet and we -- they had places in forests -- camps in forests, so we would infiltrate into the camps and exfiltrate. We would go and blow up objects. We would -- had a firefight with them. Of course, live ammunition and we were lucky, nobody got shot. Nobody got even scratched. And we would go -- go on forced marches at night. We would walk 10 - 15 - 20 miles with a full pack, 75 pounds. After that, we became almost invincible. We were not losing -- well, we were losing people, but maybe one every two or three months. But not 11 in two months.

Q: What was your way of being with the -- the other troops that you commanded? How did you get them to do the work they had to do, which was dangerous?

A: Well really, I didn't command them. I was with them and I told them, "If you want to be effective, imitate me." And they tried to. I told them, "I just -- either as good or as bad as the rest of you, but I know something that you don't. So, first of all, we will train," as we did. "And second of all, watch what I am doing, because some things I cannot explain." Which -- some tried, some didn't. Some were lucky and survived. Some were not lucky and did not survive.

Q: Where do you think you got the self-confidence and immense courage it took to do many of these things?

A: I got an e-enormous ego. My ego was 10 times bigger than I was. And regardless how hopeless a time it was, it never was hopeless in my estimation. And I think that courage and bravado is contagious. And courage and bravado -- bravado, that was -- we lived upon it for the duration those two and a half years.

Q: Tell us a little bit about just how you took care of yourself. Where did you sleep? How did you eat and bathe? When did you have time to do these things?

A: Well, we were not as bad as the kirigas people in Siberia, who take a bath every six months if they have to or not. We did wash in rivers, in streams, in ponds. If we would stay in a farm on outskirts of a forest, we would take a hot bath. The family, they would boil a lot of water and put them in a big wooden tub and one by one -- we did not change water, forget it. If we got a big tub of hot water, all 17 of us would take a bath. And regardless how dirty the water is, you still can wash in it. We cooked on

open fire. We frequently would get a loaf of bread from a farmer here and there. We would get a bottle of milk. Mostly we lived on bread and milk. We would get a good, cooked meal in somebody's farmhouse, maybe once or twice a week. We carried the dry bread in our backpacks. That's what I carried in my backpack, probably two pounds of dry bread.

Q: At the farmhouse they would feed 17 of you?

A: They would feed 17 of us. Matter of fact, many times when we came to a farmhouse -- when we wanted to visit the farmhouse, the farmer will kill a pig and we would pig out.

Q: Would you pay them or were they offering this as a manner of support?

A: In most cases -- in all cases, they would not accept payment. Sometime we paid. Matter of fact, after we highjacked a German bank, we spread money all over the countryside. And to some degree, that was our undoing. We had to move into a different territory.

Q: You left a trail.

A: We left a trail. The German -- the Germans were wondering where tho-those marks are coming from that these people have in this neighborhood?

Q: You talked about at one point you -- you got a break from your fighting unit and you went somewhere to study psychological warfare, or you -- could you tell us more about that? What -- where did you go and what were you learning?

A: In a -- there was a course given for Akar and also Enerzet in Warsaw, in apraga district. It took about six -- six weeks, four days a week. There were professors from Polish -- Warsaw University. There were some propagandas from Polish underground. There was one British man who spoke Polish and nobody could understand him. And they talked a lot. It was mainly given for people who were employ -- I mean, who were publishing Polish underground papers. But they also took some of us -- some of the commanders of small groups in the countryside to go through this, so we would know -- be more conversant what was really going on in Poland -- in the world -- in a - - in a war in the west, in a war on the eastern front. And how to act against Germans of this kind and that kind. How to browbeat them, if you could --

Q: There -- they actually had like a day where you talked about browbeating?

A: Browbeating them. How to be --

Q: How would you browbeat someone?

A: -- how to be ornery to them and still don't get shot.

Q: Do you remember any of the advice they gave you in that?

A: Well, they gave us advices. You talk to a German and he runs the Poles and you tell him, "Why do you run the Poles down? My grandfather was a German general and I am Polish now and a lot of us are de-descendants of a German people. So you watch out. A lot of Poles are just like you Germans, sometime even better." So some of them would accept it. Some of them would rail against you, some of them wou -- might

even hit you, but in most cases they would listen and said, “Uh-huh, yavolt, yavolt, yavolt.”

Q: And apparently you learned something about forgery during this time?

A: Yes, I learned how to wash and how to make documents.

Q: How to what?

A: Wash the documents.

Q: Wash the documents.

A: Wash the documents. And how to remake them.

Q: How -- how -- how do y -- can you tell us about that?

A: You use chemicals to -- to get off -- especially if you write something and -- most of the documents made there were not typed, but were written in ink. And there was a chemical, you can wash the ink out nicely and you can dry it and use another chemical to neutralize it and then you can write again. Somebody's else names, somebody's else data. And I do that after the war in Germany, for people who are escaping from Poland, who could not get admitted to the displaced person camp.

Q: You helped make documents so they could get admitted?

A: So they could get admitted into displaced person camps, so they would not be vagabonds, staying in -- I mean -- fa -- I mean trying and stealing and robbing and doing things for themselves and getting, eventually, caught -- arrested and sent to jail.

Q: You -- you said at one point in the previous interview, that when you got to the camps, that you could almost describe that experience as mild, compared to your experience in the underground, in terms of the danger and the intensity that you experienced.

A: Yes, the experience getting into the first camp, the Gross-Rosen camp --

Q: That's not what I'm asking, I'm asking -- what I'm -- I'm saying is that -- you said the camps were almost easy after being in the underground, that the underground was so dangerous and hard. And I'm just wondering if -- if you couldn't say a little more about that.

A: Yes, it were -- in a camp you were not -- before you got to know what was really going on, you felt almost a relief, because my interrogation after arrest, was very intensive. I was badly mistreated. My last few weeks in Polish underground were very intense [indecipherable] very dangerous. So, first coming to the camp and getting shaved and getting washed and given a uniform and being little chased around, occasionally hit, but not badly, did not feel too bad. Eventually, you learned how horrible it was, but it was later -- later on. The first impression was, was not exactly summer camp and a bet -- but better than prison, because you did not sleep, 17 of you, in a two person cell, as I did in a prison before, during my interrogation and after my sentence. So, first it was almost a relief that you were in a place where you could almost survive. Later on you learned otherwise.

Q: What was so intense and difficult about the last few weeks of your underground time?

A: We were very active. We did get into several firefights. We blew up few objects that mis-blew, either blew in our direction or else were mishandled. I was called on the carpet couple of times and threatened with execution, because you messed up the job. Combination of all of it can get you down, occasionally. Even the -- I was not as rambunctious as I always was, during last few weeks.

Q: Was that a real possibility? Did you feel that your commanders might execute you if you did something that they really --

A: Yes.

Q: -- felt was wrong?

A: Yes, executions happened. I don't -- I didn't think he would, but executions did happen, not only for treason.

Q: Simply for not executing an -- a job correctly sometimes?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Did you think that was a fair method of treatment?

A: No, I didn't think it was fair, but I thought was -- it was effective. Fairness -- fairness has nothing to do with it, effectiveness did.

Q: You said that sometimes after you would do an action that everyone's nerves were very jangled and you needed to just go into the forest and be quiet for a day or two.

What would you do? Where would you go and what would you do as a group to calm down after a very intense action?

A: Some people would be allowed to go and visit with friends and relatives. In most cases we just stayed at the group. We were so tightly knit. We would tell jokes, we would get drunk. We would sleep a lot. If we had food, we would eat a lot, would pig out completely. Then we would drink again and after about a week or so, was good as new.

Q: Would you ever sing?

A: Of course, oh, we sang a lot. We sang a lot. Polish patriotic song, bawdy songs, just about anything. We even sang Lily Mar -- Lily Marlin. We even sang Soviet songs. We would sing the Internationale.

Q: And would you --

A: You know, the Internationale has a very rousing melody and a -- and great words.

Q: Can you tell us some of the names that you remember of these people that you fought with?

A: I knew their pseudo-names. I did not -- well, I knew probably one or two or three people who were from my neighborhood. I knew their first and last names, but in most cases, I would simply forget them. We would have our names -- occasionally the names were changed and you would talk to one of them and said, "What was your

name again?" So he would tell you. "That was your -- your name last week, what's your name now?"

Q: When you went to relax, did you ever meet other underground groups and were there ever women in any of the other groups, or in your group?

A: Not in our neighborhood, there were no women. We very seldom met other underground groups. Sometime we met with other underground groups to -- to -- to make comparisons, to get information, to tell how to do things. How we do it, how we -- do you do it? Can we be more -- may we be more effective if we do it your way? May you be more effective if you do -- do it our way? What are the similarity of objects that we attack? What are the differences? How to approach them better? You know, 40 minds are better than 20 minds. We would argue, we would tell them, "You don't know a thing. You do it my way, you will survive." He would tell -- they would tell you, "You don't know a thing, you do it our way. You lost two people, we didn't lose anybody." "Well, of course you didn't lose anybody, because you didn't do anything." It was a constant bickering. Some of it was serious, some of -- most of it was just jokingly doing things to relieve the tension.

Q: And would this be a group that was part of the NSZ, the same as your overall group, or just any other?

A: It would be, most of the time, the NSZ people. We would occasionally meet with the Akar people, but only formally and sometime to exchange information. They

would frequently tell us -- tell us about certain objects that were too difficult for them. Sometime we would tell them about certain object were too large for us. They had larger groups -- they could form larger groups quickly, because they were more numerous in this particular neighborhood, so they could form -- occasionally -- occasionally, but very seldom, we would have a combined operation. But we never really thought much of it, because our tactics were different from their tactics.

Q: How were your tactics different?

A: Our tactics frequently were just a direct attack. Their tactics was go from behind and hit and run. Our tactics were mostly, go out, hit and fight. Because if you hit and run, you may wound somebody, you may scare somebody. If you attack and fight, well, you probably will get few. Matter of fact, sometime you get quite a few. So that was our tactics, constantly and my commander Be Dom always said, "Hit fast, hit hard and if you have to run, run. But if you don't have to run, you better not. Stay and fight."

Q: Where were you at the time that the government in exile called for the -- the Warsaw uprising by the underground?

A: I was in a concentration camp, yes, by that time. It was in summer of 1944. It was my one, two, three -- it was my fourth month. I was much affect -- I was in Vienna at that time, in a sub-camp of Mauthausen, in Vienna, working in a Ostermunzowerverk, building Tiger tanks.

Q: Can you tell us about a friend you had, her -- her name was Nellie and apparently she was a courier?

A: Yes. She was a courier for the Akar and she was lucky. She spent four years carrying stuff. Propaganda, explosives, ammunition. And she made it.

Q: How did you know her?

A: I met Nellie when she was about seven and I was 10. She came as a beautiful, young, city girl to have a vacation in a small, small village. And I was the peasant boy who met a beautiful princess. And we stayed friends ever after. She would come every year for about month and a half, two months. We would talk, we would go skinny-dipping. She would ride my horses and I would listen to her music. She played good violin. When she was about eight, she played very good violin. And she spent her lifetime being a musician.

Q: What part of the underground was she attached to?

A: She was attached to the A-Akar -- to the home army.

Q: And can you tell us about seeing her once you were back in Poland as now a -- a resistance fighter? When you were back, how did you see her again, or hear of her?

A: Yeah, we met, we met. She was still coming for a vacation. She went -- she was still in grade school. She -- as a matter of fact, she was just finishing grade school and she immediately became a courier. Even when she was in school, she was a courier on a small scale. Then she was going to underground middle school and we would meet

in Warsaw when I was there, occasionally. She would occasionally come to our village and we were it. We thought we would never forget one another when we grown up and the war ends, we'll surely marry. We knew how many children we're going to have and everything else. And I really should write to her presently, I know where she is. She married after the war, they had one son. Tragically, he died in his mid 30's. And both she and her husband played in a symphony orchestra all their lives. They retired just recently. Their son was a musician, too. He played in a symphony orchestra. And at -- I heard -- I have it second or third hand from my first cousin, who started corresponding with her after I mentioned her once in a letter. And I should really write to her and -- but, you know, it was so many times, so many years. We live our own lives. Hate to open the old wounds. But I really ought to write her. She was a beautiful girl and a beautiful person. She had the greatest hair you ever saw. She had an enormous amount of hair. When she [indecipherable] she could sit on her hair.

Q: What color?

A: Dark brown.

Q: What did you say to her when you found out that she was carrying documents for the underground? What was your reaction?

A: Well, I said, "More power to you, but be darn careful." And, we talked about things. And I had misgivings. I had misgivings about my work, getting so many bystanders and so many people who are not real Nazis, killed, mutilated. And we

talked about it and she wrote me, saying that, “Don’t feel guilty, because I don’t.” She said, “I carry stuff that blows up people and I don’t feel guilty.”

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

Q: How did you eventually come to terms with that, or make peace with that part of what you did?

A: For a long time, I did not. I had many, many sleepless nights. My conscience was really upset that so many people who did not have to die, did. So many people who did not have to be mutilated, did. Both on my side, on the -- on the other side. But eventually, time heals. And I still feel somewhat guilty. I have twinges of conscience. But I talked to people, I talked to a Catholic priest, even con -- in a concentration camps and I had misgivings about it and he said, “You should just simply forget it. It was a necessity.” Oh, by the way, Nellie married a Jew. Nellie married a Jewish man -- Polish Jewish man who survived a concentration camp, and lived happily ever after.

Q: Did your faith in God play a part in you sort of making peace in yourself with -- with these things that were bothering you?

A: Greatly. Mostly. Also, I have known many people, in Siberian camp, in the German death camp, even religious people who lost their faith, say, “If God existed, nothing as horrible as this could happen.” I had no problem, I never lost my faith. I don’t think it’s my virtue, it’s a grace. Never had any misgivings about the existence of God, or

His/Her direction of us. Recently I had a -- ordered for somebody a book called a Lectionary, you know, gospels read during the mass? It was a Methodist Lectionary and the gospels, they made it into inclusive language and whenever it says God, it -- personal pronoun, it always says, He/She, He/She, He/She. It made me sick to read it. It's awful, it completely disfigures it. We don't know what God is. He may -- He is not He, He is not She, so He is -- I mean He -- It's a God. But to put something like this in the Gospel, it's just outrageous, especially the first -- the first paragraph in the gospel of John, with about 11 personal pronouns. I'm sorry, I'm diverting.

Q: That's funny. Did you ever do an action with Nellie?

A: No, never did. She did not go in action. She carried stuff. And in most cases, that was more dangerous than being in action. Carrying a suitcase of dynamite, you endanger not yourself, but everybody in that compartment. They found it, everybody on spot would be executed. Oh, she -- many times when the train was crowded, she would bring -- pack her two suitcases and go into a German compartment and she would make the apologies, "I'm sorry, I -- the -- so tired and so hot and so crowded there, could I just sit on the floor here?" They say, "Oh no, floor, come on, sit -- sit on the [indecipherable]" They would sit her on the seat, they would give her so -- chocolate, they would give her some coffee to drink. They put her suitcases up in the rack and she would say, "Watch out, watch out, there's some eggs in there."

Q: I'm sure you were in situations like that too, where you were right looking, staring into the face of someone who, if they discovered you --

A: Well, of course.

Q: -- you would be in big trouble.

A: Well, of course. Zillion of times. Sorry, I have to wipe my eyes now and then.

Q: That's all right.

A: My glaucoma makes my eyes -- eyes run and I have to live with from now on.

Nothing to it, actually. I can see, I can read. And my doctor said, "I'm going to keep you -- I'll keep you seeing until the day you die."

Q: That's important, because you love to read.

A: Oh, I love to read. I read about 10 hours a day.

Q: Go to the library and you get the books --

A: Oh, of course.

Q: -- every week.

A: I work in a bookstore.

Q: I know, I know.

A: You will see my bookstore [indcipherable] go downtown.

Q: Yeah, I want to see it, I do want to see it. You had an uncle who apparently, in an argument over food with a Communist, was murdered?

A: Yes.

Q: I'm wondering if you could tell us that story?

A: Yes, my Uncle Brunusnous was a soldtis, which was a head of a village. It was a elected office -- non-paying elected office, but if you got elected, you became a prominente -- you become a prominent person. And he had -- he was in the Akar and he went with me on a few works -- he went with me on a few jobs. Also another person -- a cousin of mine -- first cousin -- his nephew and my first cousin went on a work with me. He had an encounter with a Communist. They didn't appreciate what he was doing. And at one time the Communist group went on a robbery spee -- spree. And he investigated them. He did not report them to the German authorities, but they didn't like it, so they came and shot and killed him. My father kind of tried to defend him, so they beat hi -- my father was badly, badly beaten.

Q: Your father was there when this happened?

A: My father was approached then and tried to defend him. And there was -- they are pushing one another and then one of them shot him twice. They killed a-another of my relatives in a -- a second end of a village, who had two sons who were fighting against the Communist underground, they killed him. And --

Q: This -- the uncle who was killed was killed in your village, Leshganorra?

A: Yes, in Leshnagorra.

Q: Leshnagorra.

A: Yes.

Q: Do you know about when this happened?

A: That was in -- in 1943 -- in fall of 1943.

Q: And this was your father's brother?

A: My father's brother. They live in the same house. One part was his, one part of my father's.

Q: So this was someone you knew very well?

A: Yes. And of course, before he was killed, he took one of the -- arm of one of them, with a hatchet. When he out -- went out at night, he always had a hatchet under his belt. He had a big overcoat on and he knew that -- just before they shot him, he whipped the ha-hatchet and took arm off one of those attackers.

Q: So these Communists are Polish Communists?

A: Polish Communists.

Q: And -- and they're underground at this point, too?

A: They were in the underground at point, too.

Q: So what was the reaction of your father and of you?

A: Well, those three people who killed my uncle did not survive more than about two months. They were killed, one by one, by my cousin, the son of the -- of my close relative who also was killed. That young man was a poacher. He could tra -- track -- trace any animal to any place, any time. He was hunting birds with that 22, because shotgun was too expensive to use. So, one by one he traced them to place where they

were, he shot them, he brought the bodies to the German authorities, say, "Here, one more." Then a third one was very difficult. H-He shot the first two -- the Germans provided him with a rifle, because he went and he said, "My father was killed, I know who those people were. Those were the people who are robbing and killing and raping this neighborhood. Give me a gun, I'll dispose of them." So they gave him manual rifle, one shot rifle. He killed the first one within next -- first two weeks, the one who had arm -- well, he was atta -- I mean, it was comp -- not completely detached, but he were -- had it bandaged. He killed a second one -- a second one next month and a third one he had a hard time getting. So he went on a mission. He ate and slept in a hedge nearby where this person's wife lived. It was middle of a winter. He froze, he was hot, he was cold, he was hungry. Eventually he came to visit his wife. So, he got out and shot him, put him on the sled, brought his body to the authorities.

Q: So, in that specific incident, there was some cooperation with the Germans?

A: Yes. It was the Polish blue police and there was one German policeman who was with the Polish police. It was a cooperation with a -- kind of a anti-crime cooperation with the Germans.

Q: What was this cousin's name?

A: His name was Marion Borudes and he developed bad habit. He was very poor man, he had a beautiful, young wife and a little boy. He went robbing Jewish people who were in hiding. And the two boys from the Polish underground came in one day and

shot him dead. Matter of fact, he was coming from a county village to the -- to our village. He entered our village. There were two boys on bicycles, said, "Marion?" "Yes, I am Marion." "Marion Borudes?" "Yes, I am Marion Borudes." They whipped out pistols and shot him to pieces. They shot him about 17 times. They got in the bicycles -- they took his boots off, he had a beautiful cavalry boots and they took his boots off and ran. And two of his older brothers ran out with rifles and [indecipherable] village, they were like maybe five -- half a kilometer -- close to one kilometer away and they got in the France and they were shooting in them. So they dropped the boots and ran away. They didn't get hit.

Q: How do you know they shot him for the stealing from the Jews in hiding? How was that made clear?

A: It was an execution -- underground court has a execution -- were notif -- people were notified. Matter of fact, there was a document left on him for the -- they read hi -- they read him the sentence.

Q: Well, I think I have covered what I wanted to cover about your time in the Resistance and I'm probably going to move on to the post war ins -- I thought we could maybe take a break now.

A: Okay, let's take a break.

Q: An-And just -- but does it seem like we covered the --

A: Yes.

Q: One last question about the training you received to become an underground fighter, and this is when you were still in Iran and it -- can you tell us about your farewell party?

A: Yes, at the end of our training, just before we were sent on a trip back, a local -- I don't know if he was a nomad, but I know he had a beautiful tent in the desert, nearby our -- our camp. He apparently was a person of consequence, because he had a beautiful tent, he had several wives and a lot of children and he had a party for us. And for some reason or another -- I think because I was the smallest one -- so he gave me the biggest two pillows to sit on and I must have become some kind of a prominent person in his estimation, because his beautiful wife was serving me and she sat -- even sat next to me couple of times. And then, when the main course came, or the most important course came, which was sheep eyes, it was a big dish of sheep eyes, he handed them to me and he said, "You eat as many of those as you can." Because that was an so-called honor dish. So I said, "Well, I thank you very much for your recognition, but I would like to share it with all of you, so you are the first one to share with me." So he took one and even -- I sent it around and everybody took one. By the time it came back to me, there was only one eye left. So I put it in and I swallowed it, almost choked on it. And, you cannot chew a sheep's eye, just like a little billiard ball. You swallow it And I did choke at the end, of course. Then, there was a cumis to drink. And cumis is an Arabian and Persian drink that is made of 100 percent alcohol

and mir -- milk. They put it in a leather bag, a man gets on a horse and he rides out of a des -- in a desert -- in heat, whatever. And he rides a long distance there and a long distance back and that thing gets way -- well shaken -- well mixed. Then they cool it off and you drink it. And is the smoothest drink you have ever drunk. And if yo -- and it's -- it goes in so neatly, but man, the katzenjammer you get. That was the worst hangover I ever had. After I drank the drink, I almost dropped. I sat for the rest of the party, I didn't know where I was. I was sick all night. I was mo -- sick most of the next morning and I forswore alcohol forever and a day. Well, of course, I didn't drink for at least four weeks after that. That was the greatest party I ever went to and I don't remember much of it after the first drink.

Q: Okay, I'd like to move into the post war period. Initially, you are -- recuperate in a sanitorium and then, can you tell us about when you're first taken to Wildeflecken?

A: Wildeflecken, yes. To quickly go through it, from Gusensfite, those of us who were half dead, were immediately transported to Hokenfelds, which was in West Germany. It was in early May, shortly after liberation. They stabilized us, we did get a little milk mixed with water and a gruel, kind of like a baby food, for some time. So I was in the field hospital in Hokenfelds for a short time, then I was transported to Statische Hospital in Bamberg, West Germany, Bavaria. It was in June and I was there until October, 1945, with a bad case with tuberculosis and a bad case of starvation. By October --

Q: At this point, when you're in the hospital for these various months, from June to October, what are you eating at this point?

A: We were -- received very light hospital food, mostly soups. Very little bread, very, very little meat. If there was a meat, it was a kind of almost like it was pre-digested. By October I could sit, I could even walk. I could even walk to the bathroom all by myself. I could go hide in a bathroom, lock my door and smoke. And sister will -- soon I would come and bang on the door and say, "Stefan, doshturb. Steve -- Stefan, you are going to die. Don't smoke. Nicht rowken. You are not supposed to smoke." And I think I owe her my life, because she made me stop smoking and I never smoked since. Anyway --

Q: And this was --

A: It was in a state hospital.

Q: Her -- her name was?

A: Sister Ursula. She is in my --

Q: Sister Ursula?

A: Ursula. She is in my previous -- in my previous interview. I even spell her name on the form later on. Then I was sent to TB Sanitorium in Foreheim, which is also in Bavaria. I was there from November '45, to April, 1946, eating mostly dairy food. A lot of butter, lot of cream, lot of milk and white -- white bread. My stomach recuperated completely. Actually, before I left -- before I left Bamburg Hospital, my

lungs -- the liquid collecting in my lungs was pumped out of me and my stomach was also pumped out. Don't ever let your stomach be pumped out, that's the most horrible feeling you ever had. From Foreh-Foreheim Sanitorium, which, when it was liquidated in April of 1945, we were transported to Lohr, L-o-h-r, also in Bavaria. I was there for sh -- very short time in July, 1945 -- I'm sorry, 1946. Then, I completely recovered and was transferred to displaced person camp in Ashafenberg. It was Eyager Casernin, former German army camp, close to the city. I work part time as a kitchen help, part, later on, as a accountant in kitchen accounting department. And then I became a glorified long distance runner, between three local camps, delivering messages from the camp authorities.

Q: Literally running?

A: Well, a bicycle -- bicycle, on foot. Later on, I traveled to ash -- to Swineferd on a motorcycle. I had the best American motorbike you ever had, it was Harley Davidson, 1941. Biggest ever, 407 -- 750 cc's, at that time it was the biggest. Now, the biggest one is about three times as powerful. So, I was in Ashafenberg DP camp, from 1946, July, to sometime in 1947, or early 1948. In 1948, the camp was liquidated. The camp was liquidated and you were sent to Wildeflecken. It was an e-enormous Polish DP camp. It was also an army camp previously, where SS mountain troops were being trained. There were a lot of skis, so we did a lot of skiing. I ran out in many trees going down the hill. That time I worked as a -- beginning as a stenographer and for the

duration, I worked as a detective in crime bureau and also part time, I worked with a American army CIC with Captain Vulcanovsky.

Q: Okay, good. I think that's a important summary and then there are a few places I'd like to revisit and s-spend a little more time on.

A: All right.

Q: If you can think back to the displaced person's camp that -- the one -- the second to the last, where you were at from 1946 to '48.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: Yeah, it is -- so it was in Ashafenberg, the Yagercaserra -- Yaggercaservna. Like --

Q: Tell us what -- what that was like? What did it physically look like, and when you were brought in, where were you settled?

A: It was an army camp. There were brick buildings, three, four and five story high. The rooms were small and each room would have a family or several single people. In my room, there were two families. There was a husband and wife. There was a lady with a child and I was the fifth person. We had bunk beds. We slept, we ate there. The food was given in a camp kitchen. You went with a container and he brou -- you brought your tea in the morning with a slice of bread and some margarine. You received a soup at noon and you received a soup at night, also with some tea. Many people would be given some non -- unpaid service jobs. Matter of fact, everybody had

to do some work on maybe half a day a week or a day every two weeks, to clean, to sweep, to dig, to shovel, to do whatever. Some people were employed full times; those who worked in a kitchen, those who worked in a public works, those who served as a camp police.

End of Tape Two, Side B

Beginning Tape Three, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Stefan Czyzewski. This is tape number three, side A. B-Before we go a little further with that, it occurred to me, were you surprised that you were able to recover? I mean, your body, when you were in the sanitoriums or in the different hospitals, were you worried that maybe you weren't going to --

A: Yes, I was.

Q: -- get your strength back?

A: Yes, I was. I was so debilitated, I didn't think I would ever surprise -- ev-ever survive. When I did and became well, I was just flabbergasted. First of all, it was freedom and second of all, I was healthy. I was very healthy. I could run, I could do things. I could climb. I could just about -- li-like my previous time. I mean, my young age. I was small. Big kids beat on me. I could always hit somebody and run fast and nobody ever could catch up with me. And the thing -- and this condition came back after I recuperated -- after I got out of the sanitorium.

Q: Did you notice some things that didn't come back? You didn't quite get your full strength back?

A: Not really. I did not. I not. My hair grew up. My -- I had my teeth repaired; some of them were knocked out. And matter of fact, I still have one bridge -- stationary bridge of steel teeth, that was made by the German doctor in 1947. I still have it.

Q: What had happened to your hair?

A: Well, our hairs were shaved, or clipped. And in the middle of a he -- from the front to the back, there was a inch and a half strip that's all shaved every week and they -- we used to call it Adolf Hitlerstrasser. If you escaped from a camp, people could recognize it, you were an inmate.

Q: When you were recovering, were there foods that you really wanted, but you weren't able to have?

A: Yes, there was a lot of food that you really would have wanted, but you ate what you were given. The food was scarce at that time and hospital food was kind of awful, but it was nourishing. Sanitorium food was just great. There was a good, white bread. There was a lot of butter and a lot and lot of milk and even little meat. And also, we did get Red Cross packages. Each person received one every two or three weeks, which were greatly helpful. There was some little American sausages, little wieners that were the most -- I can close my eyes and I can taste them, how great they were. And there was a chunk of chocolate. And I always was crazy for chocolate. I think I mentioned a previous interview that one time the packages came and the chocolate was moldy. So I traded with everybody and I did get probably five, six, maybe even

10 big chunks of chocolate, probably four or five ounces each and I ate myself sick.

And I couldn't look in a -- chocolate in the face for next two months at least. But I went back to it.

Q: Do you still like chocolate?

A: I'm still -- I still like chocolate very much.

Q: I've heard a lot about these packages, particularly everyone mentions the chocolate.

A: Well, of course. We were starved for chocolate. Chocolate was not available in Europe -- Europe that whole war time. Five, six, seven years. The Germans would sell their soul for a piece of chocolate. A lady would sell her daughter, I mean, a husband would se -- would sell his wife for -- for a package of American cigarettes, or a chunk of chocolate.

Q: And when exactly did you quit smoking?

A: In 1945, in summer, in Bamberg shtatecha hospital. And Sister Ursula was it. She was an old German nun -- nun, and she was very persistent and she watched me like a hawk. She made me smo -- stop smoking.

Q: So it really was because she was hounding you about this?

A: Yeah, she was hounding me. She -- she wi -- told me, "You will die if you smoke. Your lungs are so bad. You are full of liquid, you cannot breathe and you smoke? You a stupid kid. Du fareek da kind."

Q: When you were in the sanitorium and then the Di-Displaced Persons camp, how -- what was your attitude towards food? Did you trust that food would be there or did you find yourself wanting to take it back to your room for instance?

A: In some -- some camps, you could take it to your room. You went and the -- in -- in Wildeflecken, there were -- there were eating halls that you went and ate, especially for the people who worked. Starting in Ashafenberg, later in Wildeflecken, I always had a job. So those of us who worked had a special dining room. The food was not diff -- any different from the rest of the people's food, but the room was nicer and we ate there. There even occasionally was a dessert. And I had two friends, Captain Psheckfass and Lieutenant Penjik. And whenever came to a dessert, Captain Psheckfass started talking about those horrible bodies being carried out of a gas chamber, to the crematorium, to the cooler room and so on and so forth. And Mr. Penjik, who'd said, "Disgusting." He would toss his fork and walk away and Mr. -- and Captain Penjik, who'd ate Mr. -- Captain Psheckfass would eat Mr. Penjik's dessert. Never failed, it always worked.

Q: And you were sitting there laughing?

A: And I was sitting, eating my own and laughing. Sometime before Mr. Psheckfass -- Captain Psheckfass grabbed Mr. Penjik's dessert, I grabbed it first.

Q: What were dinner conversations like a-at that table? What were you talking about?

What were people talking about when they weren't working at the camp

[indecipherable]

A: Well, they were -- they were worrying about their relatives -- friends and relatives back in Poland. They were worrying what they are going to do. They were worrying if they were maybe -- if they may be forced to repatriate back to Communist Poland. They were discussing possibilities of emigration. At that time, all in 1945, six, even seven, nobody dreamed that he -- they would be able to go to America. America was kind of a seventh heaven somewhere way up there. Nobody thought they would ever be able to reach it. So, many people started emigrating in 1948, to Belgium, to work in the coal mines. To Great Britain to work in the coal mines. Later on, when emigration became available to Canada, many people -- many, many people went to Canada. Then eventually, U.S. legislation passed a special bill that allowed the refugees from Displaced Person camp to come here outside of the quota. They still ha-had kind of a quota and people from certain countries had easier time coming here than from others. And the Polish people especially, were given certain preference. So, a lot of Polish Jewish people were coming to America and a lot of Poles were coming to America. And a lot of Russian, Ukrainian and White Russian people, falsify a doc -- their documents as if they were Polish citizens, and also came in here. So the conversations,

a lot of it was, "Can I go to America? Can I go to Australia? Oh, can I go to Canada?"

But everybody wanted to come to the seventh heaven, which was America.

Q: Were you -- who else was in the camp? The way you just described it, it sounds like there were other Poles? But who -- who made up the camp population?

A: The Ashafenberg camp was a mixture of White Russians, few Russians, some Ukrainians and Poles, but Poles constituted about 90 percent of the population in -- in our Ashafenberg camp. The other two camps in Ashafenberg, Displaced Person camps, one was strictly Ukrainian and one was strictly Russian and -- and White Russian.

Q: So, is that why you were sent there? To Ashafenberg?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Okay. Mm-hm.

A: Wildeflecken was strictly a Polish camp. There were some Latvians and Estonians and a few, very few White Russians. But there were no Ukrainians and no Russian Russians. Probably Poles were there 90 -- probably 98 percent Polish people.

Q: Now, when you were in Ashafenberg, it was '46, '47, until early '48. This is a pretty long time after the war has ended. How -- what were people's feelings about that; that they had been li-living in Displaced Person's camps for so long?

A: Well, they didn't have chance to get jobs in Germany. There was hunger, privation and no jobs to be had. Also, we were not allowed to apply for civilian jobs. So they

were kind of kept caged. If you wanted to go out, you had to have a permission -- written permission to go out, with a hope of emigrating somewhere. Some Russian and some White Russian people were forced to repatriate to their respective countries. And of course, we heard later on that all of them were dr -- went directly to si -- to Siberia. And Polish people, Czech people, Hungarian and Romanians and the Baltic countries, people were not forced to repatriate, so they just waited. Sit -- sat, vegetated in Germany. Developed bad habits like not working, or drinking and waiting for the heaven to open somewhere. And eventually, most of us emigrated. Most of us came to United States, a lot went to Canada and Australia. Some to Great Britain, some to the low countries to get the most menial jobs that nobody else wanted to take. I had a friend who was a black market operator in Wildeflecken camp and when his half a day a week assignment came, he never showed up. Or else he would pay somebody to go and do his shoveling or splitting the wood. Eventually, he was called to a camp administrator who was -- who was American -- who was American lady. And he was questioned and said mer -- she said, "Mr. So and so, I heard that you have not gone last week and this week to -- to your assigned work. What is the matter with you?" And he said, "Lady, that's a lie. They are schmearing me. I have never went to wor -- begun to work. I have never yet did any work. I pay people to work for me." "Well, how can you afford it?" "Well, see, I'm great black market operator. And I'm lucky because I never get caught." So that wa -- she laughed and she let him go. By the way,

the administrator of Wildeflecken camp was Miss Catherine Hulme, H-u-l-m-e. And there is a beautiful book written by her about the Wildeflecken camp. It was called, "The Wild Place." It was published in 1950's and I had had a copy and I loaned it to somebody, never got it back. Has been out of print since about 1960's and I can presume that the museum might have a copy. If they don't, they should really search for it and find it. She was a good writer, especially when she wrote about Mrs. Captain. There was a tough underground captain, lady from Polish underground army, who ran a block -- a barrack -- probably couple hundred former prostitutes. She put them all on a -- on a s-straight and narrow. None of them ever did any trade in Wildeflecken when -- when the Mrs. Captain was there. She was just like a god, like a block as -- altester in a concentration camp. Watch out, don't cross Mrs. Captain. She was an old lady, she was big, she was bowlegged. She -- when they had a parade, she would walk ahead of her troops. She was a --

Q: Her troops of former prostitutes?

A: No, sh-she ran the group -- I mean, she supervised a group of former prostitutes.

Q: Yeah, okay, right. But tho-those were her troops, right?

A: Those were her troops.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: She had trained them, she had uniformed them and she d-dared them, "Any of you to play your trade, you are going to be brained." And when they marched down the s --

down the street in a parade, you could -- I mean, you could just hold your stomach and laugh because she was kind of biggish and she had very bowlegged legs and she had the army boots on and she had very short army skirt. She was a sight.

Q: Why do you think the author, the -- the former director of the camp called it the wild place?

A: Because Wildeflecken means the wild place.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: Yeah, Wildeflecken is the wild place in Germany.

Q: Were there moments of real lightheartedness in the dis -- in Wildeflecken?

A: Nine out of 10 hours were lighthearted. Everybody was drunk with freedom.

Everybody was completely intoxicated with freedom. When you thought back what was there before and what was then, it was just unbelievable. And when we talked or when I reflected occasionally, I saw myself in Gusensfie, getting off the train and walking under the viaduct to the tunnel, to dig and work. And over the viaduct, passing trains would be going on and people standing in the windows, leaning out of the windows, eating and drinking and billing -- being free. And saw those beautiful German, blonde girls leaning out and looking on them and you heart was so sick looking at that freedom those people had and looking at yourself, that you were going -- may be killed today or tomorrow or starve to death or drowned tonight by a capo or ha -- you head to -- was -- to -- bashed in that night by another capo. So then

frequently, when you later on thought about this and about what was then, after liberation, you just were completely intoxicated with that freedom.

Q: Were people talking about what had happened to them? Is that something that people had a need to go into detail about? Did you?

A: A lot of people did. Lot of people shared. Some people couldn't. And many of us were quite abnormal. We hoarded food. We picked up every scrap of everything on the street. Even now, when I walk down the street and I see a penny, or a piece of paper, or an old shoelace, I pick it up. We just hoarded everything, because well, you never know. Maybe tomorrow you are going to be hungry or maybe I want to tie my shoes and I wouldn't have anything to tie them with. And most of us kind of outgrew it and adjusted. At least, I hope I adjusted. I have some strange custom and habits and thoughts occasionally, but I don't rave and don't -- well, don't seem to be abnormal. I had a wife who lives with me forever and she somehow stands me. But many of us became quite abnormal. I think I mentioned previously a father of a young girl I met here, who came to talk to me about the life there and I discover later on that he was a Jewish man. And I told her that she should ask him to tell her what happened to him. He survived the whole war in a Polish forest with a group of partisans, or by -- and by himself. He does not want to talk about it, not a word. He doesn't want to talk, so I ask her to wor -- "Well, ask him to write it down." "He doesn't know how to write." "Well, ask him to write in Polish." "He doesn't know how to write in Polish." "Well,

how about Yiddish?" "He doesn't know how to write it Yiddish." He's completely illiterate and he doesn't want to talk about it. After all that time.

Q: Can you tell us when and how you be -- you -- you became a stenographer for the police and I believe this was in Wildeflecken.

A: Yes, I took a st-steno course in Ashafenberg just before I left and just before I left, I applied for a steno job with the police or the camp administrator office. And my best friend, Captain Pscheckfass, who was a police commander there, he negated my application. Then, when we were transferred to Wildeflecken --

Q: Do you know why he did?

A: He thought I was too foxy. He knew a little about my document washing, or else he had heard a rumor about my document washing. He was afraid if I have access to documents, especially to the copies -- I mean, to the f -- blanks of documents, I may sneak some out. By -- when I -- when we moved to Wildeflecken, he tried to do the same thing, but he was overruled by Captain Jaigiss, who was a liaison officer with the American army. And Mr. Jaigiss made he -- me his personal stenographer and he put me into the investigation -- into crime office. Made me into a great detective, which I wasn't.

Q: What did they know about your background, in terms of the war and the -- the -- your resistance?

A: They knew that I was a former prisoner. They didn't know anything about my resistance work.

Q: And you didn't tell them?

A: I did not. Occasionally I mentioned that I did some work before I was arrested.

Especially, I -- well the -- they di -- "You got arrested, didn't you?" "Well, yes." "Did you steal a car? Did you steal a chicken?" I said, "Well, yes, something like that." But there was no time to brag about that time. But later on, when they asked questions, I mentioned that I served in Polish underground. And especially in 1948, when I was in Wildeflecken, a British man came -- missions were coming, visiting camps and British man came for a visit and I was in the office and he came in the office and we recognized one another.

Q: Where was he from?

A: He was my trainer in Persia.

Q: And his name was?

A: Captain Thompson. Well, he were -- by that time he was Brigadier Thompson.

Q: Can you tell us about that? Seeing him, talking to him?

A: Oh, we had a short talk, then lunchtime he went to -- to our dining room and we sat and talked during the lunch time. And he said, "Well, not much I can do for you, but I reread your reports just recently and your little group did as my -- as much damage as my brigade -- OSS brigade did. So I'll do something." And he actually did. The Polish

authorities in Great Britain sent me a form to fill out and they wanted to give me Polish vertudtimilitary and I sent them a letter back, telling them what to put it in, where to stick it. Because, when we were fighting in Poland, they did not want to give any help to that part of underground that I was in. And later on they wanted to share in the glory.

Q: Who didn't want to give any help?

A: The Polish government in exile in Great Britain. They helped only the Akar, the home army. They did not -- did not want to help the NSZ, because we -- we were the - - well, kind of perhaps, according to them, chauvinistic group. They didn't want to have much to do with us. They would accept our reports. They would accept our reports, especially my group and two other groups, they would accept the reports and send -- and give them to the British authorities, but they would not help us.

Q: What kind of help did you need that they didn't give?

A: Plastic explosives. Some arms and ammunition, especially British sten guns. They were very, very good, they were almost as good as the German schmizers. We did not get any -- get any out of them. We did get some occasionally, but it was buying, stealing, smuggling.

Q: What other things did you and the Brigadier General --

A: Thompson.

Q: Thompson, speak of?

A: Oh, we talked -- he talked about his brigade, working -- sending un -- sending -- flying people and dumping them in Germany behind the front lines and in occupied France. His brigade was fighting in Belgium. They would drop behind the German lines. And we talked about -- we talked about, especially about the V2 that my group fished out o-of Aboog River and the British sent a plane to ta -- to take it to Great Britain. The German flying bomb.

Q: That's the B2?

A: V2, yes.

Q: And he -- he knew about what you had done?

A: He knew that. He knew it must not -- it was my group who did it.

Q: Did he recognize you right away when he walked in?

A: Yes, he did. I recognized him, mainly. But I said, "Man, you got bald." And he said, "You don't have many hair, either." He was a big, big man, probably six foot four or six foot five. And I reach about [indecipherable] just about to his -- to his hip.

Q: And did you speak to him in English?

A: No, we spoke German.

Q: You spoke German?

A: Yes. I knew -- I knew some English, but very -- we tri -- I tried to try my English on him, but he said, "Oh, forget it. Let's pick German." And he knew little Polish, too. We spoke German -- a gibberish of Polish and German. And I said, "Oh, Major

Thompson.” He said, “Brigadier Thompson for you.” I said, “What happened to you? How do you get to be a Brigadier? You were just a Major. I don’t th-think even you were a Major, I think you were Captain.” “Oh yes, yes, I was a Major.”

Q: But it was a good meeting?

A: It was a good meeting, yes. Oh, he gave me si -- hi-his hat. He gave me his beret.

Q: His beret?

A: Yes. And I had it -- I wore it out completely. Then short -- shortly -- I mean, a few years ago, I got one identical one.

Q: What did he say when he gave it to you?

A: “I -- there’s nothing I can give you. Why don’t you have my hat at least?” “But you are bald and your head when you -- you are going to be cold.” “Never mind, I got one -- I got another. I have a formal one in my baggage.”

End of Tape Three, Side A

Beginning Tape Three, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Stefan Czyzewski. This is tape number three, side B. So tell us a little bit about your job as a stenographer for the police department.

A: The liaison officer would dictate to me and I would transcribe and he would -- letters to his -- people like him in the various different camps. He was kind of a head man of all of them and he would receive letters and he -- then he would write a lot of

memos, which I would write -- write and transcribe, then put in a file. And later on, when he relinquished me to the police department, I would participate in -- in-interrogation, when a few people were interrogating somebody, I would write it down and later transcribe. Then, when I interrogate -- later on, when I became detective, an interrogator myself, I would write in the shorthand and later transcribe and make them -- I mean, ask them to sign, if they were willing. If they were not willing, they had to sign anyway. Little arm bending always helps. And later on, when I participating in some interrogation of Germans by the CIC people, I would take short hand, later transcribe it in Polish or German and somebody else would translate into English.

Q: What kinds of police matters were being looked into in Wild-Wildeflecken?

A: Thefts, robberies. Occasionally a murder. Then, there was a lot of medical malpractice, people who were killed in abortions. Some suicides at the -- there was those ber -- bring -- that were suspected of -- as -- as murders. There was one some -- there was some fathers who abused their daughters sexually, and such.

Q: So you would be asked to come in and take notes during an interrogation?

A: I would have police bring that person to the office and I would interrogate them and write it down and then talk to them again and ask them if they were willing to sign whatever they told me. And in most cases, they were willing to sign.

Q: Were you interviewing witnesses?

A: Inter -- witnesses and perpetrators.

Q: And perpetrators?

A: Yes.

Q: And how long did you do this for?

A: Well, '48, '49.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm. And can you tell us a little bit about how -- how you made the transition from initially being sort of on the sidelines of events to actually being the person to do the interrogating? How did that happen?

A: We had a -- we had a criminal judge who ran the department and we would -- each day, at the end of the day, we would be given an hour lecture on procedures and ways and -- and means. So, after a few months of that, most of us became quite adept interrogators and detectives. Went in the field work, had a shoot out occasionally with some people who were robbing and stealing.

Q: In the camp?

A: Outside of camp. People from camp -- young men from camp would go into German countryside and rob and steal.

Q: What -- how did you feel about the work? I mean --

A: Well, sometimes it was kind of difficult to go against your own and for the Germans, but this wa-was not the war any more. That was freedom, that was a free country and a perpetrator is a perpetrator and consequently, you -- you don't feel guilty about sending them to jail. Also, very few of them went to jail. Many of them

were kept in a -- in a camp jail for a few weeks, few months, but they were not sent to German prisons. And there were some very humorous things occasionally, like for instance, a group of boys went and they stole a cow. And they made the cow walk to the fifth floor, into the attic. They slaughtered it and were selling the meat. Somebody reported them and of course, I was assigned to it. I grabbed three policemen and we went up and we looked and we searched the whole block, we couldn't find it. Then we went with an attic -- in the attic and sure, there was a whole lot of meat still left, a lot of bones. "How did you get the cow up here?" "Well, she walked up the steps." And later on, when I interrogated that [indecipherable] perpetrators, said, "Well, I didn't see the cow. The cow just came to a block, walked up the steps. I couldn't make her go down, so I had to kill her. And why waste all that good meat after I killed her? I got to do something. I couldn't eat it all -- all by myself, so I had to sell some." We heard many tall stories. And that was the tallest story ever.

Q: Wh-What happened to him?

A: He -- He got two -- two weeks in -- in camp prison, but he was released second day and made hard labor, chopping wood in the wood barn.

Q: Can you talk a little bit more about making that transition from being in the war time, to actually then going against your own, as you said, or actually working with the Germans? How did you make that transition in your mind?

A: Well, we actually, we never worked with the Germans. It was within the camp, working with the old people, the administration of the camp was Polish. The police was Polish. The hospital doctors, medical people were Polish. So, you kind of worked against the element -- disruptive element in a camp that rest of the people did not approve of. Thiefs and robbers and there were a whole lot of -- well, quite a few cases of fathers abusing their daughters. Quite a few. Quite, quite a few.

Q: How would you hear about those?

A: Well, felt horrible. Matter of fact --

Q: How --

A: Oh, how you heard --

Q: How did you hear about them?

A: People tell stories. In a close community, people know everybody's else's sins. Somebody would get mad with that person, report him and you went and called him in and if he didn't want to come, you sent a uniformed policeman to bring him in. You talk to him, question him. Eventually, he would -- people have need to confess in many cases. Many of them would confess.

Q: Is that something that in a small village in Poland, people would have reported on?

A: They -- They might --

Q: A -- an abuse of a -- of a daughter?

A: They might have, but I had never -- never heard of an incident. Never heard of an incident back -- it must have existed, because in any community, things like this do exist. But, it was never reported, it was never disclosed. I never heard of it.

Q: So what would happen in a case like that?

A: Well, he would get a jail sentence. In some cases, they would be sent -- he would be sent to a German prison. There was one father that I had a case of, he was sent to a German prison for five years, but they let him out after one year. Matter of fact, his daughter came to America. I think is still living in Minneapolis, was a beautiful girl. Married somebody here, were -- lived happily ever after.

Q: Were there trials or was it decided more amongst the police?

A: It was a trial. The camp administrator was a judge. There would be attorneys appointed or else, well, just called on, and there were some attorneys in the camp. They were -- would be my old chief -- or chief [indecipherable] instructor in the investigation department, he would -- he would be a prosecutor. He was a trained, Polish, pre-war prosecutor. Good, old man.

Q: Wh-Who was this?

A: A good -- a -- he was -- I mean, he was a good old man.

Q: What was his name?

A: His name was Mr. Clem Camage. And he talked blue streak and he made a lot of sense always. And he -- God, he was old, I don't know how old he was, 50's, 60's,

70's. He was old and he was so proud because he lived with a pretty, young girl and he made her a baby. Well, those were times, you know, everybody lived with everybody. A lot of men had wives back in Poland, they didn't intend to go back, so they hitched up with somebody, sometime they did get married, sometime they did not. And they lived happily ever after, or for a short while, anyway.

Q: How many cases did you come across of father - daughter sexual abuse?

A: Well, I rememb -- I could recall about s-seven during two years, but personally I had only one case. Mr. Psheckfass, who was by that time -- Mr. -- I mean Captain Psheckfass there, commander of the police in Wildeflecken said, "You are too young, you shouldn't ca -- take cases like this."

Q: Can you tell us a bit about how you had an opportunity to become a detective?

A: Mm-hm. It cas -- kind of happen almost by it's own violition. It -- they had a group of detectives, some were trained, some untrained. So, then Mr. Clem Camage looked once and he said, "Why don't you come to my lectures? Why don't you stay after work to my lectures?" I stayed a few times and I listened. And he said, "Wouldn't you like to work as an investigator?" I said, "Well gee, sounds interesting." So I kind of drifted into it. And then especially, shortly after I drifted into it, the CIC people came and talked to me, asked me if I would like to work part time for them.

Q: This is the United States counterintelligent corps?

A: Yes, yeah.

Q: How -- can you tell us about that meeting, the first time you met those people?

A: They came frequently to the camp and whenever they came, they came to the police office -- offices and walked around and talked to various people. They had some business occasionally. Sometime they had no business, just came socially and one time Captain Vulcanovsky came to my room to -- well, they were -- my room, it were three of us in that room, three detectives and I was questioning somebody. So I stopped and he said, "Nevermind, nevermind, I'll just sit here, keep talking." So I kept talking and then after I had that person sign his testimony -- I think it was a witness -- and leave, and said, "Would you like to work for us?" "Doing what?" "Well, you know, catching the German criminals -- Nazi criminals and questioning them, would you like to help us?" "Of course, but only part time, cause I'm working full time here, I get paid here." "Okay, I'll call on you." So, every fi -- week, every two weeks, they would take me away for a day or two. I would get the permission from Mr. -- Captain Psheckfass to go. And sometime was on -- sneaking to East Germany and bringing back somebody or another. Sometime it was interrogation. Some of the -- who were questioned, were of Polish German -- so Polish descent, so they gave me those especially to -- to question. So I would spend five, eight, 10 - 15, up to about 20 hours talking to them and, "Well, you know, your method works." "Of course it does." Give them lot of water or coffee. Don't let him go to the bathroom for the duration. Let -- let him do what he has to do right where he sits, he will tell you everything.

Q: That was your method?

A: That was my method.

Q: And where had you learned that?

A: Well, two guesses. Gestapo. Cause the Gestapo beat me, too. We were not allowed to touch those people. Don't let him sleep for a couple days, then I'll come and talk to him. Take his belt off, whenever he gets up, his pants fall down.

Q: Can you tell us about going into East Germany and bringing someone back? How -
- How did you know who to bring back and how did you do it? Did you have a
weapon with you? How did that work?

A: Yes, w-we -- we went -- went in armed. We'd normally drive to the border at
nightfall and walk across. And they knew who they were looking for. They had
intelligence in East Germany. Sometime they would legally drive into East Germany
and bring somebody across. Or go and talk to that person and tell him that, "You will
be taken to West Germany, do you want to go willingly?" Many of them went
willingly, because by that time, life in East Germany was bad. In West Germany was
wor -- bad, but better. And some who didn't want to go, were kind of encouraged to
go. Hom -- some who refused to go, next day somebody would be sent to shoot them.

Q: How did that work?

A: Well, I -- I was not asked to go and shoot. Anyway, I heard -- if it was true or not,
but I heard that. Captain Vulcanovsky would come in, "Oh, that so and so that we

went to talk didn't want to come." And I say, "Yeah, I remember him." "Well, you can say a prayer for him."

Q: And who were -- who were these people mostly? What -- what were they wanted for?

A: They were SS guards, they were co -- gareekt -- court judges. You know, they had Na-Nazis appoin-appointed volk gareekt judges -- anybody, picked them up to -- to give death sentences. Anybody who comes, death sentence, death sentence or concentration camp, whatever. They were just local, rabid Nazis who judged people for almost anything, any little trespass. If you were foreign worker, you -- they would send you to concentration camp or have you hunged. If you went to -- slept -- if a German woman encouraged young Polish or Russian boy to sleep with her, it was found out, death sentence immediately. Took him out and hunged him on the nearest tree. But it had to be cour-court case in a gareekt loytemp people -- people would mete out death sentences. So, many of those were apprehended and information on them collected. And some of them were de-Nazified, th-they were interrogated and found that they were not really great perpetrators, they were just mitlowfers or kind of helpers uppers, but not really criminals, and let out. And all of them were glad to stay in West Germany. But some were sent to prisons, went through court system.

Q: And tell us a little bit about the experience of sitting across from some of these people who were SS guards or -- or judges, who'd had a part in the violence and

oppression that you experienced, what was it like to sit across from them and ask them questions?

A: Well you -- you tried to question this person as a person, but you felt about him like a vermin. In my case, I knew what happened -- what was done to me by mine interrogator and two or three of his henchmen, who beat the bijesus out of me. And you -- you could see that those people might have done, so you question them and question them and question them and if there were any witnesses, you questioned the witnesses and you confronted them with the witnesses and you felt like bashing their heads in, but of course, you were not allowed to touch them, so you kept them for 18 hours talking and you give them a lot to drink and, "I want to go to the bathroom." "Forget it. You go to the bathroom when I tell you to go to the bathroom." It didn't feel so great. You didn't feel good humiliating them, but you felt like doing it. You felt like that was your duty to -- to really find out if he is innocent or if he really was guilty and if turned out that he really couldn't prove anything against him, that you felt bad because you mistreated the person. You made him wet his pants many times when he sat in the front of you.

Q: Was it something that you wanted to continue doing?

A: An -- I did not want to do it again, ever, in my life. But at that time, I was interested in it. I wanted to do it and mainly I wanted to help, to weed out those who were real henchmen, murderers, criminals, who would -- who should not be fr -- walking free.

But, of course, the sentences they received were just nothing. Four years, five years, 10 years. He would serve 12 months and would be released in a good behavior. It was just -- I mean, it was almost -- almost a joke. But, we thought, well, at least something, at least -- at least something. There's going -- going to be a black mark on his documents and he would not be allowed to perform within the population. For instance, getting -- be-becoming important person, or -- or getting a job. Forget it. Every one of them got a good job later on. They helped one another. One did get in, he pulled all 10 of them in. There were a lot of German police in the German army -- West German army. There were a lot in -- in -- in -- in intelligence, a lot of former perpetrators were with Gellen in -- outside of Frankfurt, helping Americans against the Soviets.

Q: How did this affect or shape your idea of justice after the war?

A: I was quite skeptical. First I thought we are performing great service and kind of making them pay. Later on, it became a big joke and you became skeptical. But things of the world are as they are. It is next to impossible to punish somebody for crimes -- cruelty, or else whatever they did. It was next impossible of punishing them, except sending them to the holy inquisition. Putting them in a wheel to stretch their arms, break their joints and so on and so forth. And of course, nobody was allowed to do that. There was one American, Captain Bollack, he was from Hammtrack, Michigan. He would get occasionally short tempered and he would hit wildly. But after one or

two times, I didn't want to be with him any more and when he -- when I interrogated somebody, I ask him, "Please, Captain Bollack, don't come." Because he would hit.

Q: Was -- how did you come to a decision that you didn't want to hit? Because certainly, in your first interview, you told the story about coming across your German interrogator, and you could have hit him.

A: I could have, yes, yes.

Q: Ho-How did you come to that decision, if you could talk a bit about that?

A: Well, I cou -- looked at him -- him, I looked at myself. He was a big, strong man. I was a little, tiny sprout. And him mistreated me as he -- as he did, I said, "Do -- Do I want to be like you were? I don't." So, when I questioned him, he said, "Well, I was doing my job." "Did you have to do what you did to me?" "Well, I was doing my job." So, he say, "If you have to do your job, you can do it to me anything you want to." Yeah, he was quite resigned by then.

Q: This was Hans Christian.

A: Yes, Hans Christian [indecipherable] name Mr. Meyer, or whatever he called himself. I don't even know if his na -- real name was Hans Christian, but I did find his transcript of his Ph.D. degree at the -- at the Heidelberg University. He had a Ph.D. in criminal justice and Ph.D. in Christian theology.

Q: Okay, let's see. So how long did you do the work for the counterintelligence corps?

A: From 1940 -- early '48 through 1949, until I left in September for America. About -
- almost two years. Maybe little less than two years, maybe a little more than two
years.

Q: I want to ask you something about the camp and people's sexual behavior, really.
You had mentioned the -- the former prostitutes, but that they were under control.

A: Oh, were they ever.

Q: And then you mentioned that people were living together and then you mentioned
the fathers abusing the daughters. And I guess what I'd like you to talk a little bit
about is, what was the atmosphere generally? People's sexual behavior in the camps?

A: It wasn't any worse than it was in a -- in normal, general population. At the
beginning maybe it was little worse, because there were a lot of young, unattached
people who paired on and paired off, but the influence of the Catholic church was very
strong in the camp. There were priests, there were chapels, there were churches. And
people went to Confession, people went to Communion. People went to Mass. Hardly
anybody ever missed a Mass, except some hooligans who thought the -- there was few
concentration -- former concentration camp inmates who lost belief in God, because
they said, "If something like this happened, God does not exist." But very, very few,
so it wasn't much worse than anywhere else. And, since li -- people lived in such a
close proximity, you know, five, six, seven, well, the room I was in was smaller than
this room. One room, there were five of us living in it. Some-Sometime 11 people

lived in a room -- room of this size. Everybody knew everything about everybody else. So, if something happens, well, watch out, you get deported and a priest would come to talk to you and say, "You inferial so and so, you better not do it." Well, some people lived together and it was -- that was kind of almost semi-accepted. They are lonely, they have nobody else, they have somebody to take care of them. And many people who were supposed to be leaders or else people to give good example, or people to enforce the proper behavior, did not behave properly themselves. Like my immediate superior of a investigation department, a judge Clem Camage, he lived with a pretty, young girl and they had a baby and he was so damn proud of that baby.

End of Tape Three, Side B

Beginning Tape Four, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Stefan Czyzewski. This is tape number four, side A. Did you live with anybody?

A: I didn't. Sorry to say. I was extremely fond of many girls. I fell in love with a French doctor -- lady doctor, who was my doctor. Beautiful, young girl who just got out of medical school. She volunteered to go and she was in Forheim sanatorium, she was my doctor. We became very friendly, she -- we went on a trip, she me -- requisitioned a Jeep. We went to see her family, stayed for a week, 10 days in Versailles, outside of Paris, saw the sights, came back. When I went to a different sanatorium, well, she came to see me a few times, but nothing developed. And, I don't know. All my childhood, I always was very fond of girls, just extremely fond of girls. I always had three steady ones and maybe two extra. After the war, I was, for a long -- some time, very friendly with a Russian girl, then I was quite friendly with the Italian girl. Then, when I came to Wildeflecken, a lady secretary in the next office, said, "Banya Stefanya, why don't you come and visit us?" "Well, I'll be glad to visit you, but why should I come and visit you?" "Well, I have a beautiful daughter." "Oh, when do I come?" So, of course it was -- it -- Good Friday came and she said, "Well, why don't you come tomorrow? Have a light lunch after work, we leave at noon. And so we can go to visit the -- the tomb," you know, we're going into the church and -- and

praying in the front of the effigy of -- of Christ. "We can have lunch and you -- you and Hanka can -- Hanka can go and visit the tombs." So I went and visit the -- I had a li-light lunch and I went with Hanka to -- to visit the ...

Q: I guess -- I want to ask this. I -- I've read about the camps and in some cases, people are really just sitting and waiting. However, speaking to you, you are so engaged with your life, the immediate life that's around you. You're working and you're -- you're being promoted from a stenographer to a detective. How did you feel at that time about your life and what -- what was ma -- what you were maybe going to end up doing?

A: I felt very lucky to be able what I did. And apparently, people who -- people who helped me apparently thought that I was worth a little. Also, it will probably seem pathetic, because those two people who helped me the most, spent time in a concentration camp also, or else a prisoner's of war camp and those two people, Captain Psheckfass and Mr. Shimienski, who was a camp commander -- police commander in Ashafenberg and also worked in a policer in Wildeflecken, was very sympathetic and very helpful. Later on, when I got to know Lieutenant Penjik, he also helped me survive in the -- in the police department. He was one of the dignitaries there who did not very much, but was a very elegant person, a well-spoken person. The drinkit -- drinkest person I ever met and we were very close friends and they always thought, "That little boy, I got to help him." And they did. So I felt very

fortunate and I tried to do my best whe -- in whatever I did and in most cases, apparently succeeded because I was never canned. I was never fired. I was called on the carpet from time to time and told what should not be done and what should be done, but never was really punished, as my document states. He is going to United States and he was never punished, except before.

Q: When you look back at your time, particularly as in the underground, how do you account for your choices? Your choices which were almost instinctively to fight and resist, versus just obeying the Germans or trying to wait it out. How do you account for those choices you made?

A: Well, I thought that -- I thought it was inborn, because all my forefathers were fighters and active. I had a grand-grand-grandfather who fought the Soviet -- the Soviet -- the Russian Souse regime and ended in say -- with a death sentence and later on was commuted to 25 years in Siberia. I had people who fought with the Polish legion during Napoleonic wars. I had forefathers who had served in diplomatic service and were active. I had my father, who wore -- fought in the first World War on three fronts. He fought with the Russians against the Prussians and with the Prussians against the French, with the -- with the French and Polish against the Germans. So I guess, if it wasn't inborn, at least I could think back about it and act accordingly. Didn't want to be bystander. And of course, my ego was enormous. I knew I could do almost anything, and went and most of the time I didn't, sometime I did.

Q: An-And if you could talk a little bit about the Polish culture in terms of how to react to authority. A German survivor -- I read that she said as a German, she just -- just obeyed when they -- when the SS told her to do something, she did it and she -- she went to camp and she never considered saying no. What about the Polish culture and -- and within your own family, what kind of things were you taught?

A: Polish people in the first place, are very contrary. Also very disputatious. You would say -- have four Poles dis-discussing certain set of ideas. They would have seven ideas and nobody gives. Consequently, when we get hit, we hit back hard. Poland, in history, was overran many times by neighbors who were 10 times more powerful. Poland was divided and subdivided by three neighbors who were -- each one was three times as big as Poland and being under occupation of Prussia, Austria and Russia, Poland had, oh my God, probably half a dozen really heavy uprisings and probably dozen and a half of smaller uprisings. They were being killed, they were being hung, they were drowned, they were sent to Siberia. They were -- spent time in Magdaburg -- German citadel prison. Polish -- creator of Polish state, after first World War, Marshall Pisoutski spent couple years in a German prison in Madgaburg. So, we kind of thought that we are the fighting people and we tried to prove it. Most of the time we did not succeed, at times we did. That was probably kind of loyalty to -- to your state, loyalty to your nation, especially, and acting upon it. And probably most of the -- most of it is that we are qu -- we were quite foolhardy. When I corresponded

with my first cousin, who spent about 10 years in a Communist prison -- after she was released, we wrote to each other before she died. I said, "Well gee, why didn't you go out and fight [indecipherable]" And she said, "We have grown now. We want to conduct ourself properly, we want to go by vote, we want to go and work hard and perhaps we will succeed. We must have grown." Well, when I knew Poland and when I knew myself and my se -- environment during the war and before the war, looks like we have not grown yet, we just went and hid and fight -- and fought.

Q: I want you to think back to the point when you were in the dis -- in -- in Wildeflecken and when you found out -- no, let me ask you this first, why did you want to emigrate to the United States?

A: For the simple reason that, as I mentioned before, that was a seventh heaven. And everybody wanted to go to America. And I had had friends -- close friends and the wife of the family worked for the emigration office to America and he hel -- she helped to put me on the list. And eventually my name came, my number came, I was called in and was asked to collect documentation and went through the doctors and -- and all kind of commissions, question this and question that, went through the consulate. Especially I had a hard time with a doctor or else I didn't have a hard time with a doctor, but Captain Vulcanovsky said, "Well, you have -- your lungs are scarred. You'll never go to America. Come on, let's have your documents." So he took my little card with the x-ray on it and he said, "Here, stick this one on." "What is

that?" "This is my x-ray, I never had any problem with lungs." That was it, I came under false pretenses. I came here as a former tuberculosis patient, almost dying there and I haven't been sick a day since I came here.

Q: But your captain put his picture?

A: His -- His x-ray --

Q: Instead of yours?

A: Instead of mine. Even though they still -- there was still that little typed line that I could not -- I could not launder. It says, "Pleveredes maxudatevair." So then doctor -- American doctor looks and say, "You had the Pleveredes maxudatevair here. How come your lungs are so clear?" I said, "Oh, it cleared up." And he said, "Okay." I understood the okay. He spoke to the interpreter and my English was kind of a little --

Q: So without that clear x-ray, you wouldn't have been able to come?

A: Possibly not.

Q: I see.

A: I may -- there might have been special -- certain consideration, because the CIC people said, "If any problems you have, just call us and we'll come and round those bureaucrats down." But possibly I could [indecipherable]. Americans at that time were deathly afraid of tuberculosis.

Q: Who paid for you to come?

A: Government funds paid for the crossing of the ocean. We came on a troop ship. Troop ship that normally took about 400 people, had 17 people -- hundred people on board. Were kind of --

Q: 1700?

A: 1700. And our trip from New York to Saint Paul, Minneapolis was paid by U.S. Catholic Conference. Later, I repaid them. Later, I called on the -- on the Immigration Department and ask me -- asked if I could repay the trip -- the trip across the ocean, they said, "Forget it. U.S. governor paid for it, you are going to pay in taxes." So when I worked the first three months in that year and I never had anybody do my tax return, I did it myself. I did it with a dictionary and things and I put a wrong word there on the first tax return. There was a clause that said, "Do you owe any taxes for the previous years?" I said, "Yes." I was getting official letters for months and years. "We have searched and we cannot find that you owe any taxes, can you enlighten us?" It finally dawned upon me what I did and I wrote a great letter of pol -- of apology. I said I was a greenhorn, I did it all by myself and I made a mistake. Because, you know, working only three months in that year, I got all my taxes back. But I made a mistake that I owe taxes for the previous years.

Q: Tell us the name of the ship that you came on.

A: General Hersey -- Hersey.

Q: Can you tell us where it docked -- where it came into port in the United States?

A: Yeah, it started from Bremenhoffen in Germany. Oh, I'm sorry, started in Hamburg Altoona. We were going to Bremenhoffen, but we did not, we can -- started from Altoona and it came to New York and docked just close to the Statue of Liberty, I had some pictures made of it in a -- in a kind of a hazy light. And were processed right in the dock and local Polish committee people took us to the train, we had train tickets. I went on a train and got to Chicago. From Chicago --

Q: Oh, I want to ask -- do you remember co-coming in to -- do you remember New York coming into sight and the Statue of Liberty?

A: Yes, it was -- it was just about four in the morning and the Statue of Liberty was kind of visible, you know, in a fog [indecipherable], "Oh, my God, look at that darn thing standing up there. Oh, how tall it is, how big it is." But we docked quite a distance from it, that -- the -- I can't remember what dock it was. But we surely saw the Statue of Liberty. I have a -- somewhere, a faded picture to prove it, standing on the side of a ship and somebody took my picture with -- with the Statue of Liberty in the background.

Q: What were your first impressions of -- of the United States as you came off the boat?

A: Oh, the noise. A lot of people, traffic. Oh my God, the traffic. When we -- I think there was a old Polish committee lady who took three of us and I don't even know which train depot we went to, but oh, the traffic, we were just ogling the traffic and all

the -- all of the people on the sidewalks and all those buildings and all this crowdedness. But especially all those cars and everybody drives at a breakneck speed and everybody honks their horn. It was just flabbergasting.

Q: So someone met you, took you to the train station and put you right on the train?

A: Put on the train with a ticket and -- and a tag saying that if -- “This person speaks no English, if you can help him, please do.” So of course, pretty soon a pretty, young woman came and sat next to me and she spoke little German. Asked me who I was and what I was and we talked blue streak all way to Chicago. And then I had a stay over in Chicago, about two hours, so she took -- we -- she was from Hammtrack, Michigan, I -- she -- I think. She was changing the trains, too. So, she went -- I -- we went out, she bought me a lunch. We went walking around and we took a train -- se -- se -- streetcar and we went to a certain direction, came back a different direction. And then she put me back on the train and that was it. I even have a picture of her somewhere.

Q: She sort of took you on a mini sightseeing trip?

A: She took me on a mini sightseeing. It was plump, young lady. And I said, “Well, gee, are all American people fat? Look at that beautiful, fat lady.” And the boys who were with me were so jealous. “Gee, why couldn’t she pick me up? It’s you, you are nothing. I’m a good looking, tall, blonde man, why does she have to pick on you?”

Q: Was there a point, or at what point in the trip -- perhaps it was when you were getting on the boat, or you were on the ship coming across the ocean, or somewhere

else where you -- it began to sink in that you really were coming to the United States, embarking on a new life?

Q: Well, I -- it didn't come to me until I landed in New York. Say, "Oh my God, what I'm going to do this busy country?" Before, it was just like a dream, you know, taking off and going somewhere, like flying, you know, bird flying. And I looked and I was so lucky because I didn't get seasick. I ate myself sick couple times -- ate myself sick. But I wasn't seasick. Everybody was not able to eat and they're going over -- over the side and doing things and I even got a job. I became a typist. There was a Polish paper being published on the ship. So I typed the art -- somebody dictated, I took shorthand, I typed the copy of it and then corrected it and pretty soon there came a little two page paper for the Polish people.

Q: Do you have a copy of that?

A: I don't. I wish I would have kept a copy. I did not.

Q: So, continue telling the story. Then you got -- you were in Chicago and you got on another train?

A: Chane -- the train came to Saint Paul and there were some people waiting for us from the Polish American club here.

Q: You're still with your two friends?

A: Still with my two friends.

Q: Okay.

A: Yes. Actually, it was -- one was to disembark in Chicago. Another boy was coming here. And then we met a lady -- older lady who was coming also here. She was a refugee, too. So we came to Saint Paul and there were Polish people from the Polish American club. And there was an attorney, Mr. Nahourski, who came also that day. And one of the Polish people walked me to a barber shop downtown, where my sponsor was a barber. It was old Mr. Proekopovich who was my sponsor. He was asked -- people were asked by the U.S. Catholic Conference to sponsor certain people. So he and his wife signed up [indecipherable] want a young man to stay with them and they would provide you with room and board until you found a job. And so I went on a streetcar with Mr. Proekopovich -- no, I'm sorry, he had an old, beaten up jalopy. God, was about 20 years old, was falling apart, but he was so proud of his own automobile -- driving. I remember his [indecipherable] his knuckles were white on his steering wheel and he was tall and looking straight ahead and driving and honking the horn.

Q: And this, what year is this?

A: It was in 19 -- in September, 1959.

Q: No. '59?

A: '59.

Q: No, no, '49.

A: I'm sorry, I'm sorry, '49. Oh my God, 10 years before. No, '49.

Q: September 1949.

A: 1949, yes.

Q: Okay, good. When you were coming over on the boat, or perhaps on the train, was there talk -- well, what -- what were you talking about with the other refugees?

A: We just wondered who we meet, who we are going to stay with. The trepidation of -- of -- of not knowing the language too well. Also, I could write and read English quite well by then, but before I left, my British girl teacher said, "Well, you are going to America. Those people haven't spoken English for last couple hundred years. You will have a hard time with them." I did, for about six months. We swallow a lot of suffixes, we don't enunciate properly. We -- We garble sentences, according to the British. It took about six months to adjust to American English. I still spoke broken English when I met Sylvia. Every -- every -- every pot I used to call jar. Frying pan and -- and -- and a cooking pot, everything was jar as far I was -- I was concerned.

Q: What was your first room like with your sponsor -- your sponsors?

A: Well, the lady of the house had a big supper waiting and well, I wasn't very hungry. Also, I hardly ate anything on the train. I was given five dollars in New York and I brought the five dollars to Saint Paul. The American lady bought me a little lunch and she bought me a sandwich on the train and the little lunch -- I think it was a hamburger that we ate in Chicago. And the lady of the house made a big supper. Was a meat roast and a lot of potatoes. And they had big, black olives. And I was sure those

were plums, so I took quite a few. And I can't stand olives. At that time I didn't know what olives were. I still can't stand olives. And I choked in and ate those three, huge, black olives. I just didn't dare to put them back. So I choked them in. I almost felt -- I felt sick after eating those -- those -- those big plums.

Q: What did they tell you about the country that you had just arrived in? What kind of advice did they give you?

A: Well, they told me all kind of things. "Well, you will be a greenhorn here for a long time. People call people like you greenhorn." "What is greenhorn?" "Well, you know, jerno nerogie, young bullock with -- with green horns. And they will call you names, they will call you Polack, they will call you this, they will call you that. But lo -- don't let it worry you. Most of them are quite stupid people."

Q: They said that?

A: They said that, yes. Like, "Most people are stupid. Those who will call you names are stupid people, so don't pay attention to them. The people who know, won't bother you."

Q: And can you tell us about what you did then?

A: Well I -- I was in with them for about three, four days and I cleaned up and washed up the whole basement. It was just reconverted from coal to oil heat. And I whitewashed it and I washed and took all the rust off the old car and repainted and repolished it. It was gleaming like a -- like a newly born baby. And I mow the grass

and I made my 50 -- first 50 cents. Next door lady was cleaning a house. I went, help her clean it up and I took her carpets out and put them on a fence and beat the carpets and I made whole 50 cents, big 50 cents piece. And my neighbor was a post -- mailman. And he was making the lordly sum of 50 dollars a week. And I said, "Oh my God, if I ever make 50 dollars a week in America, I will never want any more." Ha. And then, about a week later, I met -- well, few days later I went to Polish American club and made -- make -- made-- met some local people. There was one person who said, "Well, I'll take you with me. Come tomorrow morning." So he took me to his factory. It was a cabinet shop. It was a casket company. He said, "Ernie, the man who owns it and runs it, is an old Deutschman, so I'll let you talk to him." So I went and spoke to Ernie, who was a Mr. Rife, a very dignified old gentleman. And he asked me if I spoke German. "Selps forshtanley, I speak Deutsch, I speak Deutsch." So we talked. He said, "Well, actually, I don't have a job here for you, but you just come, I'll give you a job." [indecipherable] workers having do a certain kind of work here, which it was -- I sta -- "Just come to me every noon on your lunch hour and we'll talk German." So, we went every hou -- every lunch I went to his office, which was like a museum and we talk German and pretty soon I -- they found me something to do and I stayed there until the place closed, which was about a year later. He employed people -- some of his people in their -- in their 70's and 80's, who slept most of the time, didn't produce very much. So, the place got broke.

End of Tape Four, Side A

Beginning Tape Four, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Stefan Czyzewski. This is tape number four, side B.

A: So Mr. Rife, after he closed the place, he kept the superintendent there, and me for about six more months, liquidating the place. We were cleaning up, taking stuff out. He had in his office a Indian and first American artifacts, probably more than the Science Museum had in Minnesota. So he donated most of the stuff there and some of it he took to his ranch that he had in Wisconsin, or to his big home in north Saint Paul. And eventually he had to let me go and gave me a memento or two. So that was my first job.

Q: And then what did you do? Did you [indecipherable]

A: And then --

Q: How old were you?

A: I was in my mid-twenties that time. 25 - 26? Then I found a job, I became a gandy dancer on a railroad. I worked there for almost a -- about a year.

Q: Remind us what a gandy dancer does?

A: Gandy dancer is the person who fixes up the track when you lay a new tie under the rail, it is loose. So you keep pouring crushed rock and keep -- and you put your heavy shovel among the crushed rock and you hold it up or top with your hands -- the top of

the shovel. And you put your foot on the shovel down below and press on it and you rock back and forth, back and forth, pushing the stone under the tie, so eventually the tie becomes tight against the rail. So people doing this kind of work were called gandy dancers. I was a gandy dancer on a railroad section for almost a year.

Q: Did you like that work?

A: I didn't dislike it. It was healthy, it was outdoors. Although, when Minnesota winter came, it was a little oppressive. When I was coming to Minnesota, I thought it was wine country, because Minnesota in the same parallel that is Matz in France, which is a wine -- wine -- Champagne country. When I came here, I found Minnesota to be identical to Poland. Same summer, same winter except in Minnesota, winter is month and a half longer.

Q: How did you feel? Did -- were you making friends or did you feel isolated at all in those first two years?

A: No, I didn't feel isolated at all, because all the newcomers are going once a ni -- week -- a night -- one night a week to the International Institute, which is in -- well, it's kind of all over the United States, who teaches English to foreign born and helps them to gain citizenship if they're interested. So then I met a lot of Polish Ukrainian Russian boys and girls who came almost the same time or just about that time. Many of them bought cars, so we would go get into cars and we would go to the park and play tennis and go swimming and go girls -- girls chasing and do all kind of guy stuff.

Q: And how did people in the city treat you? Americans in general? You were someone who didn't speak English fluently at this point. Did you ever feel unwanted?

A: Not really. No, sometime I felt intimidated. But I haven't met anybody who would misstate me. My boss at work in the casket company would call me, "Hey you, greenhorn, come on here. Do this and do that." But he was kind of a tough fellow, but he was goodhearted. Next hour, he would come and give me half of his sandwich and say, "Come on, hide over there and eat it, because you look hungry and you so skinny. Why don't you eat some more?" And I never felt mistreated by anybody. Later on, when I developed -- learned my halfway decent English and did get my present job, I felt, you know, good about myself, because there were people who did not have as good a job as I had, even though I was always paid poorly and still am. But I did not make here to make fortune. I came here to gain freedom. I wake up in the morning and I think about it, I say, "Man, I feel so free." Which I do. And say a prayer.

Q: How often d-do you have a flashback to the war and to the time that you didn't have your freedom?

A: Occasionally, but very seldom. Occasionally when I -- I do go and give talks to schools -- high schools, colleges and places -- groups of people, I'll talk about the Holocaust -- about the war time, and so on. I have flashes occasionally after that, and that -- until we met last time in May, whenever I went to give a talk, I had some sleepless nights after that, you know, the things were coming back. But when we

talked for six and a half or seven hours last May, I said, “Oh my God, I won’t be able to sleep for next two weeks.” You know, I slept like a log. It must have been therapeutic. And things hardly ever flash back. Occasionally -- occasionally, I think about people who were worthy of survival, worthy of a good life, but did not make it. A lot of them. There were a lot of people who were better than I and they were worthy people, educated people, great people even. They couldn’t make it. I frequently think of those people and frequently say a prayer for them.

Q: Are the feelings guilt feelings that you made it?

A: At times I feel guilty. At times I feel [indecipherable]. I should have helped that one, that time, I should have helped this one, this time. Was I able to help him? Was I able to help him without forfeiting my life? At [indecipherable] I think that I could have and I didn’t and I do feel guilty about it.

Q: But when you said you wake up and you think about freedom, that is something that you think of every day, but that is not necessarily in relation to your lack of freedom, it’s just that you’re aware of having freedom when you wake up now?

A: Very much so, yes. I felt a [indecipherable] of it after first day when the Americans came. It was the most exhilarating experience you ever could have had.

Q: And you couldn’t even get out of bed?

A: Yes. I remember it so vividly. Americans came in [indecipherable] Americans [indecipherable]. There was somebody who spoke Polish, he said, “You fellows just

come and walk it off and come on out. We have some good food for you.” And a few came and a few of us just didn’t and he came to me, he said, “Okay, come on, get off.” I said, “I can’t move, I -- I can’t sit even.” “Stand [indecipherable] up.” Said, “Oh my God, [indecipherable] that bad?” I said, “Oh, I’m not so great. I’m glad that you people came. I don’t feel so great.” So he pulled me off and he just [indecipherable] me like a baby. “How much do you weigh?” “How do I know?” “How much you normally weigh?” “Oh, about 150.” “[indecipherable], you weigh 50 pounds or less.” “Oh, no, I was [indecipherable].” So he took me directly to the [indecipherable] barrack [indecipherable] hospital and some people came and washed me. [indecipherable] me and gave me a [indecipherable] nightshirt. And I don’t know, for about two days I was oblivious. I don’t know what happened. I -- I didn’t [indecipherable] dead, if I was sleeping, if -- if -- if whatever. I don’t think I ate for the first two days. And they came, three, four, five times a day with that little cup of -- kind of like a thin [indecipherable] soup. And we drank and ate it. And with all the spam [indecipherable]

Q: Okay, [indecipherable]

End of Tape Four, Side B

Beginning Tape Five, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Stefan Czyzewski. Tape number five, side A. How did you obtain your U.S. citizenship?

A: I applied for it. You -- you fill out citi -- certificate of intention or document of intention. So I filled it out almost immediately after I came here and three years later, I did get my citizenship. The place where I went to improve my English, which was the International Institute, had a special citizenship course, which I took and went through examination. And eventually the great day came. I was even the person who gave a speech. There was a group of about 120 people receiving it and I was asked to -- to give a talk.

Q: Be -- You've been -- do you hold dual citizenship, are you allowed to? Or are you no longer a Polish citizen?

A: As far as America -- as far as America is concerned, I have American citizenship and I had to forfeit any other. As far as Polish state is concerned, I have a dual citizenship. You cannot lose Polish citizenship.

Q: And what about your contact over these years, as you got here, with your family? Were you writing letters to your family? What were they saying about your experiences here?

A: Yes, I corresponded with them from shortly before I left Germany, the mail started going through and I was told by one of my sisters, or written by one of my sisters that, "If you can, we would like very much to see you. We would like to have you back, very much, but if you can, please don't come. Go elsewhere, because you will end in Piaskovo." That two, three people out of 20 who survived to the end, were sent to Siberia.

Q: This is of your group?

A: Of my group, of my fighting group, were sent to Siberia and of course, one of them came ba -- came back. Those two Jewish boys, Isaac number two and Isaac number one, did not come back. So then I stayed in Germany, recuperated, and did not go back.

Q: Has there been a point over the years where you have considered returning to Poland?

A: It never was. I have not even gone back for a visit. When the Communists ruled, I did not want to go back, because supposedly I was being look -- looked for. And my friend and neighbor, who I mentioned previously, whose name was Stefan Voiteewa, became prosecutor general of the Pol-Polish armed forces and he arrested many of the people from my part of Polish underground. And rumor had it -- which is supposedly true, that he had [indecipherable] them -- taken out and shot, without trial. There was a good encouragement of not going back.

Q: Do you know where he is now?

A: He kicked the bucket a year ago. So if I ever go back to Poland, I'll go and spit on his grave. Even though I kind of forgave him for what he did, but he was an evil person and he was part of it. He had the same name as the present Pope and his mother and his family were chauvinistic Catholics. When the first of May came, the Socialist holiday, his mother would collect apron full of stones and he will -- she will go, oh like early in the morning, at three a.m. or so, to a house of one Socialist family in the village. She would go around and she would break as many windows as she could. She was never caught, she was never punished, but everybody knew it was she who did it. And he, of course, didn't want to join the underground. He always was on a perryferry. As soon as the Soviets came, he joined. He fought in with the Polish Communist army, as far as Berlin. He was sent to be trained in Moscow and Ouro in Soviet Russia. He came back and was still in the Polish army and advanced as far -- in 1975, he became a general and he became a prosecutor in the Polish army, prosecutor.

Q: Does your family still own the house in Lesh --

A: Leshnagorra?

Q: In Leshnagorra.

A: No, they don't. My sister Eleanor married a boy in next village, which she moved there and lived with him, his family. My sister Henreika lived in our house and had our farm. When she was ready to retire, she could either rent out the farm, which was

impossible to survive on, or else she had to give it back to the government in lieu of a small pension. That's what she did. She sold the house and the lot and the house was on, to a neighbor, for very little money -- neighbor who always helped her. And she moved to a nearby town and lived with her son on a -- on a pension. She lives there presently. So the farm was lost. And a farm in Poland before the war, was like a sacrament, you never parted with it. That was your inheritance. You ne -- you -- piece of land you killed for. Presently things apparently changed, so the farm is gone.

Q: Do you -- do you have any desire to go back?

A: Slight desire. I intend to go someth -- somew -- sometime for a visit, but I'm still working full time, even though I am retired. I work only 43 hours a week and don't really want to take a lot of time to go. As somebody said, you cannot come home again. And it would be kind of difficult to go home again. Especially all those people that I knew would be old, decrepit people and I'm the only one young among them. And all those pretty girls that I knew are old decrepit women. One of them that I ran around with for quite some time, whose name was Helena, when I ask my sister Eleanor how Helena is, she said, "Helena is old and ugly and she weighs 250 pounds. One of her legs is bigger than you are. You don't want to see Helena." And Helena was beautiful, plumped, little girl that I had so much fun with. So how could I go and see Helena and enjoy seeing her when she is old and ugly and fat? She's dead, by the way, she did not make it.

Q: Can you tell us about your job, the job that you eventually got and have had for quite a long time?

A: Yes, the job I presently have, I had it for 46 years plus. It is a church goods company which has a large bookshop. And when I started working there, for about two or three years, I worked in a stockroom, shifting stuff. Candles, wine, God knows what else. But I always wanted to work in the bookstore. Eventually I did and very soon after I started working here, the manager died and his assistant became a manager. About two or three years later, the assistant mana -- the manager -- new manager, retired on disability and I became it. I been staying -- being it ever since.

Q: And the name?

A: I love books, I love reading. I like the people I work with. I really like the people that I serve. There's a lot of r -- book reading people that I serve and I still spend about eight or 10 hours a day reading. I take tel -- a lot of telephone calls. We have a telephone system that covers the whole country. We have 800 number and a lot of calls come specially to me and I fli -- field most of the calls and transfer to somebody else if necessary. I buy a lot of books, I sell some books, and I read a lot -- I sit at my desk most of the day and read. And if my boss complains, I said, "If I stop reading, I am no good as a bookman any more, so you better let me be." And he said -- he said, "Of course I'll let you be."

Q: When did you discover this passion for books? When did this emerge?

A: Just about en -- when I was three. My mother was a frustrated schoolteacher, as I previously mentioned. She was fired when she had her first baby. Back in Poland, if you had a baby, you were married, forget it. By time I was three, she taught me how to read and I have never stopped.

Q: We had just talked a moment ago about you becoming an American citizen. Why did you want to become one?

A: The ideas of America -- the idea of American freedom, the idea of opportunity and freedom for all was extremely appealing to me. And of course, being a bug for history, I knew that two great Polish people came and fought for America. And when I spent time fighting Nazis, I didn't think that I was fighting for my own country only, but for everybody else who was subjugated by them, including the Americans, who fi -- who was fight -- who were fighting elsewhere. So, the idea of America was just a completely ideal place and ideology that appealed greatly to me. May we shut it off for awhile?

Q: I have to ask you this. Tell us about your wife, how you met her, where?

A: Well, I had a friend who had a girlfriend and the girlfriend knew Sylvia. And we went on a date one time and then we -- Sylvia read books and I read books. Sylvia played good music and had a beautiful voice and I always appreciated music and a good voice. And eventually she talked me into getting married. No, no, I talked her into getting -- into -- into marrying me. I wonder what she saw in me, but she got

apparently infatuated and then st -- we stuck together forever and ever. She is the best girl I ever met. Course I wouldn't dare to say anything else, seeing that she is here, but she really is.

Q: When did you get married?

A: I'm sorry?

Q: When did you get married?

A: In August, 1940 -- 1954. I was going to say '44.

Q: And tell us about your son.

A: While we wanted several children and we were told that you most likely will not have any. But eventually we had a son. He was the feeblest little thing you ever saw. He was premature. He was in isolette for several weeks, being rocked back and forth, because -- to breathe, because his lungs were collapsed. And now he is big, he is heavy, he is fat and he's a darn good musician.

Q: His name?

A: His name is Paul, of course. So, his musical name is Paul Raymond, because nobody can pronounce Czyzewski. His middle name is Raymond and that was also his grandfather's name. So, when he had a band, first band and a second band and a third band, he always was Paul Raymond.

Q: Have you told him about your experiences in the underground and in the war?

A: Little. Little. He -- I don't know, he may be slightly interested now, but he previously was not interested. And I never made an effort to teach him Polish. When he was small, he knew few phrases in Polish, but since we speak only English at home, being th -- see, being that Sylvia is Yankee, we didn't indulge much in Polish and he did not learn it. Now, he is somewhat interested. It was kind of interesting last year. He brought a form from Internal Revenue Service. Did any -- did your parents or any of your relatives spend time in a war zone? So he was laughing it and I was laughing it and Paul -- they want me to fill it out. So he said, "Sure, if you were in war zone, fill it out." And you know, if you were in American army, you were in a war zone for a few d -- five days, a week or two, then you were pulled back and you were put in again. So he said, "Well, gee, how long were you in forz -- in war zone?" I said, "Two and a half years." "Two and a half years? Nobody could make it for two and a half years." I said, "Well, some of us did, some of us didn't." So I wrote on that form, two and a half years in a war zone. And I wrote where, at that territory and then fighting whom and so on and so forth. And I send it back and never heard from the -- from them again.

Q: Did that spark his interest?

A: Somewhat, yes. Occasionally, now, when I t-talk about it, he -- he listens and when we did get those videos, he said, "Well, gee, someday maybe I wi -- I should watch it, I should listen to it." I said, "Why? You get bored to death."

Q: Tell us a little bit about your work with the Mung refugees. You, yourself, of course, were a refugee at one point.

A: Yes.

Q: A-And -- and you and your wife work with them.

A: Well, I did very little of that work, because I had a full time job at all times and doing something else. But Sylvia was working as an instructor in a program, English for foreign born. So she took her -- went to one parish and took individual Mung people and Indochinese people out of the classes and tutor -- tutored them. Yeah, Vietnamese refugees. And later on, we befriended --

Q: It was not Mung, it was Vietnamese?

A: Vietnamese first.

A2: It was the whole thing.

Q: Okay, okay.

A: First. And then Sylvia had quite a few Mung people that she tutored -- went to their homes and helped them. And from time to time, or quite a few times, we would invite group of Mung people to have picnic with us here. And it was kind of interesting. We invite 15 Mung people and maybe five or six would show up. But also, 47 may show up. So one time, we had invited about 15 and I think we had about 40 - some. Kids running all over and they were so well behaved. I mean, you could -- I mean, neighbors didn't complain, nobody di -- did anything. We had games and we had a lot

of food and the kids went in the backyard and watched the ducks and did all kind of things. And we still meet some of the -- those Mungs. We are out of touch with them presently, but occasionally meet some of them, especially when we go to a vegetable market. There was a beautiful, little Mung girl that Sylvia was friends with her mother and her family. We see her occasionally selling vegetable and we say hello and chat. And then, just about every ti -- well, not every time, but when Sylvia went to tutor them, they would have some little thing -- little Mung thing made and there was an older man, whose name wa -- name was M-Mr. Washan. He said, "Sylvia, here's a free gift for you." So, she would get a little trinket or little embroidery square or one time she did get a large embroidery kind of a picture, made by -- as the Mung people make.

Q: Did you sponsor a family? I don't know if it was Mung or Vietnamese or Filipino?

A: Yes, we -- my -- our parish spons-sponsored two Vietnamese boys about 20 years ago. And then when parish tried to divest them -- itself over -- [indecipherable] we took them in and they stayed with us for some time. The young -- we found them jobs and the older one became independent quickly and moved out. The younger one went to a local Catholic college and graduated. And he kind of stayed on and off with us, for about four or five years. Eventually, he became independent. Three years? Okay, three years. Became independent, has a new jo -- great job, has a fat American wife and three kids. Has a big home and lives next door to us. His name is Vonsan and we

see him every day, we say hello every day and we visit back and forth frequently. And later on, we sponsored two of his brothers, who father sent out, they became boat people. Ended somewhere in Indonesia or somewhere and we sponsored those two. They came, stayed with us short time, but most of the time did not, because the -- Vonsan became independent, had an apartment. So we, of course, we visited a lot back and forth and those two boys are too married -- also married, have children and families and jobs. And we sometime visit with them, sometime see them. And there was a large group of Vietnamese boys who used to come to Milos or for a visit and they still occasionally come and see us. Even bring us little gifts, especially after 15 years, just about every one gave him a clo -- I -- gave us a clock. I have several funny looking clocks around. Gar-Garish things with butterflies and -- and crazy things in them. Holy -- Holy statues in them.

Q: Why was that important for you personally to do, the sponsoring of the refugees?

A: Well, I don't know. Sylvia is very good person and she is very sympathetic to people. And seeing that I was a refugee at one time, we kind of did little sponsoring. And also, our parish -- our Catholic parish sponsored many, many Laotian, Vietnamese and Mung families. And for a long time, we were, and then I was on a committee that worked with them, finding them jobs and places to live and collecting clothing and -- and furniture and things. Presently, we are not doing much, or hardly

any of it, because I'm old and Sylvia is catching up with me. I'm ancient and she -- she is getting old, too. She is not nearly as old as I am. Many, many years younger.

Q: When you speak with Americans about the war, or the concentration camps, or the Holocaust, what do you find? I mean, what do you find people know or think about it?

A: Well, people find it unbelievable. People are, at times, shocked. But, mostly, people that I talk to about it, is people that I go to give talk about it, like in school or college or -- or group of people that are interested. So then, they ask many questions and I answer the questions and sometime elaborate, sometime I hard -- hide a lot of stuff, because they would be too shocking for people. And most American people, sus -- especially young people, are completely uninformed and know very little about it. Even adults did not know much about it at that time, or did not pay attention toward the end of time, when the news drifted in here about the atrocities, about American army freeing a lot of dead people in a concentratio -- in death camps. Many people did not batay -- pay attention to it.

Q: Does it surprise you that people don't know the history?

A: No, it does not. Apparently schools don't teach mut -- much about it. Also, I note it was the last two or three years, all of ca -- all of a sudden, just about every school had a -- a short course on the Holocaust and a short course on the second World War. And that's mostly the pla -- those other places that invite me to come and talk to them about it. So that is somewhat gratifying. But, for a long time, people were very uninformed

about. Also, throughout all the time previously, and now, very well educated people, like for instance, college professors, tried to disprove that the Holocaust ever existed. There's a group of professor that's UCLA, who are very vocal about it, telling everybody who wants to listen and everybody who doesn't want to listen that Holocaust never existed, that was just a concoction made by certain groups of people, trying to influence us this way or that way.

Q: And -- And how does that effect you?

A: Well, if I had them nearby, I would feel like bashing their heads in, or telling them off and since I have never met one who would voice that kind of opinion, I do feel upset. But we have people who are stupid, we have people who are prejudiced. We have pe-people who are hateful and also people who are uninformed or misinformed.

Q: I guess this is my last question, which is what do you think you carry with you from the experience, especially of resisting and in the camps? Ho-How did it shape you and the rest of your life?

A: Well, I'm somewhat satisfied that what I did was not in vain. Also, I grieve greatly over those who -- who perished and I'm very grateful for having been able to survive and I frequently pray about it. And if it did me -- if it made me a better person or not, I don't know. As I previously mentioned, I have never lost my faith and in most circumstances, I am trying to be halfway good Christian. And at times I'm not satisfied with it, but I have to be.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to say?

A: No, I think we talked blue streak, forever and a day and I really don't know what else I could add that would except -- I add to it, except that I'm really glad I survived. I am so grateful being able to live in a good, free country that with all it's mishaps as -- and -- and thing that happen that are not great and not savory, still is a great, free country that lives up to it's ideals.

Q: Thank you very much.

A: You're very welcome.

Q: This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Stefan Czyzewski.

End of Tape Five, Side A

Conclusion of Interview

