

Abram Gamer	Russian Vets
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Abram Gamer 1
Duration 2:38

- 00 00 My name is Abram Gamer. "Gamer" indicates our family's German roots. But we lived in Belarus for 600 years. 00.10
- 00.10 My grandfather's last name was Sandler. When the war began in '41 I was 3 years old. I was born in 1938. Rather I was 3.5 years old.00 21
- 00 21 My father was drafted into the military as soon as the second day of the war. Several days...2 days after the war began, the Germans invaded Minsk. 00 31
- 00 31 We lived on a farm as they call it. We had a horse, we loaded our stuff on the horse and were on the road. We were six: my mother and 5 children. 00 39
- 00 39 My oldest sister was 17, next child was 15, my brother was 14, another sister was 8 and I, the youngest, was 3 years old.00 47
- 00 47 The Germans had cut the road off. They forced us to turn around and go back to Minsk. When we reached Minsk they separated the Jews from the rest of the crowd to direct us to the ghetto. 00 58
- 00 58 They divided the ghetto in Minsk into 2 parts: specialists and non-specialists. Minsk was an important supplies hub for the Germans. They had hospitals there. Minsk was a rear logistics base for the Germans. 01 12
- 01 12 Therefore they needed work force. That's why they moved so-called Jewish specialists into one part of the ghetto, and non-specialists were moved into the other. 01 20
- 01 20 My brother, Bonya Gamer... he was 15...he was placed into the specialists part. The Germans called him "kleine Buby Glaser" – a little glazier boy. 01 29
- 01 29 He was a blue-eyed blond. He was very bright and smart. He had access to any part of the city where his glazier services were needed. 01 39
- 01 39 He got in touch with the partisans through our Belarusian friends and acquaints. The partisans started giving him assignments – taking former party workers from Minsk into the woods. 01 52
- 01 52 He used to take high-rank military officers out of the encirclement. He also used to take out medical doctors, specialists, weapons. Over the entire period he saved more than 200 men and women. 02 05
- 02 05 His activities are described in detail in many books. He was only 15 years old. Once when he was taking people into the forest there was a blockade. The Germans surrounded the partisans intending to destroy the detachment. 02 26
- 02 26 The partisans were bothering the Germans: they were blowing up railways and caused other damages to the Germans. My brother hid in a burnt house

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in an isolated farmstead in the woods. (Wait a second) 02 38

End of file

Abram Garner 2
Duration 19:12

- 00 00 They hid in the basement. My brother kept everyone inside not letting them get out – he knew the Germans were around. 00 08
- 00 08 And then he fell asleep. The people hadn't eaten for 3 days. They got out of the basement. The Germans were sitting around the campfire. They caught them. 00 14
- 00 14 One of the partisans was thrown a pot with boiling water at. He showed them where the rest of the partisans were hiding. 00 20
- 00 20 One of the partisans managed to run away and hide. He saw what happened. My brother started running away. The Germans surrounded him. He started shooting at them. 00 28
- 00 28 He had seen what they had done to the other guy. And so he killed himself. 00 32
- 00 32 At that time we were with the partisans. Suddenly 3 or 4 riders came galloping to our camp. They were partisan commanders. They lined up the detachment and called my mother. 00 46
- 00 46 They said "Don't cry mother, your son was killed, he acted like a real hero". They threw down 2 sacs of flour and galloped away. 01 01
- 01 01 Now let me tell you about the time when the war began. My father was drafted to the military. I don't remember him. I was only 3. 01 10
- 01 10 When we were placed in the ghetto my 3 sisters were with us. My brother supplied us with food and whatever was in his power. There were "polizei" Jews in the ghetto too. 01 26
- 01 26 People in the ghetto knew that my brother was involved with the partisans. However even the polizei were afraid to touch us. They knew that he would simply kill them if they had touched us. 01 35
- 01 35 That was the reason we survived. And then one fine day... let me tell you a few stories about the life there. Living there was like walking on a thin ice, especially for a child. 01 48
- 01 48 I was almost killed on several occasions. The first time I was about to be killed when we crossed the line between the specialist and non-specialist zones. 02 02

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- 02 02 My 12 year old sister and I went to see my cousin. My sister's name was Luba. She was 8... rather 12 at the time. When we came in he was sitting and drinking boiling water just to fill up his stomach. 02 17
- 02 17 His name was Misha, he was 7 years old. We didn't stay long with him and soon we were on our way back. At that time a pogrom had already started. 02 27
- 02 27 We looked and see a detachment of mouse-grey uniformed men at the other end of the street. As far as I understood they were Lithuanians. We rushed to the barbed wire to squeeze through and escape. We saw a polizei standing there. 02 38
- 02 38 To our luck the polizei was a Belarusian. Belarusian men were OK. He let us squeeze through under the barbed wire and run away. 02 44
- 02 44 If not for the Belarusian man, my sister and I would have been dead. That was the first time I cheated death. 02 50
- 02 50 The second time I cheated death was at the time we decided to join the partisans. My brother was the organizer. Everyone was saying "You know, leave the younger kids behind, you are under surveillance. If the younger stay behind, nobody will know you've left". However my mother said: "No. We all go, it's either all of us or no one". 03 11
- 03 11 And so we started walking. And while we were on the road someone informed the Germans. They made an ambush and started shooting at us. Someone who was carrying me dropped me down. I started screaming in Belarusian "Good people, please help!" . 03 25
- 03 25 My sister was near me and she picked me up. So that was my second narrow escape from death. Another time, before that, there was a pogrom. They started cleansing the specialists. 03 39
- 03 39 We hid in a boiler room at the Infectious Diseases Hospital. The Germans were afraid to enter the Infectious Disease Hospital. That's how we survived. 03 47
- 03 47 There was another pogrom after that. It happened on March 3rd. Again we ran to hide at the Infectious Disease Hospital. But that time we were not let in. Everyone knew it was a hideout and the hospital was packed. 04 00
- 04 00 And so we had to return to our house. We hid in the shed basement under wooden logs. That time the Germans burned down the Hospital full of people. 04 14
- 04 14 The Germans entered our shed. One of the Germans kicked the logs and one of the log hit me on the forehead. Here's the mark on my forehead. My brothers puckered up my mouth, nearly making me suffocate. 04 28

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- 04 28 There had been accidents where children had been suffocated in similar circumstances. One of the Germans heard me uttering a scream. Apparently he was a human German. 04 37
- 04 37 He was asked "Anybody there?" He said "No" and went away. Some of the Germans were human. That was another time I escaped from death. I was 5 or 6 at the time. 04 51
- 04 51 Later, in '42, when we were with the partisans, the Germans surrounded the partisans' camp. We were fleeing walking on a very thin wooden plank over the swamps. 05 06
- 05 06 Stepping aside meant death. And so we walked one after another. But my mother wasn't a big woman. She had 2 children with her. She couldn't carry us in her arms. 05 18
- 05 18 A man near her threw away his gun and picked my sister and I up to carry us in his arms. He said to us "Bonya saved my life and I'm going to save yours". Bonya was my elder brother who saved his life. That's how we survived one more time. 05 37
- 05 37 The Germans started their retreat through the woods at the end of the war. My mother could bake bread as she had lived at a farm for some time. Also she could milk cows. And also because she had such a son she was assigned to manage a bakery. 05 57
- 05 57 She made bread to feed over a hundred people. One day they loaded dough into the oven. At that moment the Germans started shooting. And the fight was going on right above her. 06 10
- 06 10 She didn't leave as it would have meant leaving 3 or 4 hundred people without bread for several days. And so she finished baking bread under the fire. 06 21
- 06 21 Later they were giving her medals... for different reasons... but she never took any, never. At the same time many people knew her. I am going to tell you a story about my 2 sisters. I had 2 sisters there - Dora and Dina. 06 41
- 06 41 My sister Dora graduated from high school with gold medal before the war. She was 17 at the time. And Dina -- I named my daughter after Dina. My granddaughter's name is Anna. 06 56
- 06 56 We registered her birth at the synagogue. We registered her under the name of Hannah, after my mother. And I am telling this story to my granddaughter. I have never told it before. 07 08
- 07 08 Basically they used to go to the railways to blow up the rails to delay the Germans. That was very important at the time of the war - delaying and stopping the trains from moving. 07 22

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- 07 22 On their way home they fell into the ambush and were killed [crying]. Only my younger sister and I survived. My younger sister worked in a hospital. She was 12. 07 37
- 07 37 She was awarded with a bunch of medals. Just think of it – a war veteran at 12 years old. [chuckling] She worked at a hospital. That’s how we survived the war basically.07 51
- 07 51 Speaking of the ghetto, I’d like to tell you one more story, a very important one. There was one more ghetto within the specialists’ ghetto. It was called a Hamburg ghetto. 08 02
- 08 02 Jews from Hamburg were there. They were cream of the crop of European intelligentsia in Hamburg. And they were there. They lived close to where my family lived. That’s why I remember about them. 08 15
- 08 15 Their life was even more horrible than ours. We lived a horrible life. They were being cheated all the time when they were trying to exchange things for food. 08 26
- 08 26 I don’t know how they ended up. For sure all of them killed. I don’t know if a single person survived. I tried to find out but I don’t have enough stamina for that – to do a research and find out. 08 41
- 08 41 I will always remember them – the people whose life was even worse than ours. I am saying this hoping that someone knows about them. I want to stress on their being cream of the crop of Europe’s Jewish intelligentsia. 09 01
- 09 01 I have told you my ghetto stories. Afterwards we joined the partisans. Being with partisans we were several times surrounded. We survived by miracle. 09 14
- 09 14 Yes, we survived! I can’t tell much about the ghetto – it was horrible. I can’t tell about it. It wasn’t easy telling you about the ghetto and I have told you all I could. 09 26
- 09 26 (Did your family survive?) The entire family, except mother’s sister and cousin were killed. The only survivors were: myself, my sister, my mother, her sister and her cousin. She had come to us from Leningrad. She was a nurse. 09 47
- 09 47 She worked at a partisans’ hospital. I wanted to say and I’m saying that 6 million Jews were killed during WWII. They say we are victims. That’s true. Everyone knows: That was the Holocaust. 10 05
- 10 05 At the same time I wonder why the world doesn’t speak of those Jews who fought, like my family. My father fought for Leningrad... rather Moscow. He was a lieutenant, artillery. He was killed. 10 19
- 10 19 My brother saved 200 lives. He was killed too. 2 sisters were killed while blowing railways up. In fact my mother fought in the war too. My sister too – all of us! 10 29

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- 10 29 We fought in the war and we won it! We were among those who won the war – for sure! We weren't just victims. (You were with partisans as a little boy. You participated too) 10 40
- 10 40 My participation? Well I participated morally. I supported the women; there were no men in our group. It was Zorin's #106 partisan detachment . It was a logistics detachment. We had a hospital, we baked bread... everything. 10 59
- 10 59 (Did you work as a little boy?) Yes, I worked as a little boy. I accompanied the women in the night carrying a torch in my hands. I soothed them. I was busy all the time. 11 10
- 11 10 I helped my mother bake bread. I was 6 and busy all the time. I didn't fight of course. But I did participate. I helped as much as I could. I was grew up and matured fast. 11 26
- 11 26 They called me in Jewish "Alte kopf": I knew what was going on, I saw everything, my memory was excellent. By the way when the war was over I profiteered selling cigarettes. I used to buy a pack and sell one cigarette by one. 11 39
- 11 39 There is a famous Yiddish song "Kupite papirosy" which translates "Buy cigarettes". It's a song about a boy selling cigarettes whose father was killed in the war. I think the song was about me. 11 52
- 11 52 When the war was over we returned to Minsk. Like many of the Jews I had talents. I graduated from a Radio Technical Department of the University. I defended a Master's thesis in "Solid State Physics" as they call it here. 12 16
- 12 16 I also defended a Ph.D. thesis in information systems. I had publications and patents. My Ph.D. degree was recognized here in Canada based on my publications and patents in the country. 12 28
- 12 28 I belong to the circle of the Canadian scientists who helped creating a base in Canada and the USA. For instance I made... I was involved in the group that created... there are hearing aids for the deaf people ...12 44
- 12 44 The hearing aids that reinforce sound. However it wasn't clear where the sound came from. Just reinforcing. I coordinated the work of the group of scientists. We made a hearing aid that was able to pick up the sound and identify where it comes from. 12 57
- 12 57 It was very important for the deaf and those who had hearing deficiency. When I tell those people I was involved in its creation they start kissing me. I have accomplished a lot of things in my life and I am proud of it. 13 08
- 13 08 I am proud I helped people. I have never worked just for the money. I lived such a life... But what really mattered I survived. President [inaudible] was a small boy during the war, he survived. 13 33

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- 13 33 US Secretary of State Albright was a WWII survivor too. She was also a little girl during the war. A few of us survived. (Did you by any chance speak to young Canadians about the war and how you survived?) No, I didn't. 13 57
- 13 57 No, it's too hard for me. I spoke with Grisha about... you know he invited me re. pension... I started telling him... He found information about my father on-line. You can find anything on-line. He found that my father was killed near Moscow... also he found out about my brother...14 15
- 14 15 I got so upset, I didn't go there any more. I haven't received the German pension. I was making good money here in Canada. I didn't need those \$300. Besides, my conscience wouldn't be clear: what for would I be given those \$300. 14 26
- 14 26 For my brother? For my sister? What for? So I haven't. Everyone is saying I'm a fool. Maybe I am. After the war I didn't have a heart to go to Germany. I was "allergic" to Germany. 14 48
- 14 48 Many years later I did go to Germany. They were normal people like any one else. I cooperated with them. They are just normal people. It's not easy to grasp the history. 14 57
- 14 57 I'd like to take this opportunity and to thank the Belarusian people. Thank you so much! We wouldn't have survived if not for them. We lived among the Belarusian people for 600 years. 15 13
- 15 13 Of all people involved in pogroms... there were West Ukrainians and Lithuanians, but never Belarusians. Even those Belarusians who served as polizei were normal people. 15 29
- 15 29 There were Jewish polizei too. One of them survived. He came to our partisan detachment. He said "I did help you when I was a polizei". 15 42
- 15 42 But Zorin said "You did it for money. You set people free for money". He was then tried by "Troyka" and executed by the shooting squad in front of the line of partisans.15 51
- 15 51 After the war the authorities were about to try Zorin in court. He was afraid to go to Israel because the man's family would have put him on trial. The war is a mess, who is going to figure it out? 16 02
- 16 02 But in the final analysis the man sent to death a lot of people. And eventually he was executed by the shooting squad. 16 06
- 16 06 Whom else do I thank? My brother of course. Oh and I forgot to tell you this story. Belarus was a partisan republic. My mother... my brother saved many lives... and although she didn't take any medals people remembered about that. 16 31
- 16 31 They became a high rank officials. They were high rank officials before the war. Once I had appendicitis. If my mother called one of them they always helped her out, right away. 16 42

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- 16 42 I had appendicitis. An ambulance took me to a major hospital. The General Manager's name was Shub. He had all the possible medals: Hero of the Socialist Labour, Hero of the USSR, every possible medal. 16 59
- 16 59 He said to me "Your mother called. Is your name Gamer?" "Yes, it is". "Did you eat pancakes?" "I did". "With sour cream?" "Yes". "Don't worry, I'll remove it right away". 17 10
- 17 10 He conducted the surgery himself. And I was placed in a private ward. My bed was next to a big party boss. Shub came to see me. He started talking to me. 17 21
- 17 21 He asked me how I was. He was accompanied by a huge entourage in attending. The party boss goes "Why are you talking to him? He only has appendicitis". 17 27
- 17 27 Shub goes "Did you have a brother by the name of Bonya Gamer?" He goes "No, I didn't". Shub goes "He did". 17 35
- 17 35 What else can I say? (Crying) People...There was a German who in fact didn't kill us. There were Belarusians who helped us out. There were Ukrainians who fired at us point blank. 17 53
- 17 53 What a mess! It happened exactly 70 years ago. I survived and I've had big accomplishments in Canada and in Russia. I did everything I could. People like me built the country from scratch. 18 13
- 18 13 Speaking about the Google creator. His father and I are from the same area. Well, he wasn't in a ghetto. But had the Nazis captured Moscow there wouldn't have been any Google because that man, that Jew would have been dead. 18 29
- 18 29 Google creator is his son. What I'm trying to say, just to wrap it up... I have never told anybody about that...And I don't think I'm going to tell anyone else about it. 18 38
- 18 38 I haven't received the German pension and I don't think I will. I am making enough to exchange for those \$300. My mother never took any medals. She used to say "What for?". 18 51
- 18 51 "What for? There was the war, the horrible war. Thank God it's over now". Thank God I have this opportunity to tell everything I know. I hope my granddaughter will hear my story and will know what's what. 19 06
- 19 06 I have a wonderful granddaughter. She is 10. That's it. (Thank you so much!).

End of interview.