

LOLA EBERT March 25, 2013

Zelda: The way I'm gonna do this is there are three parts. The first part is before the war just to see who you are. And then a little bit, very little bit on the war. Then the second part actually is after the war; what happened after liberation. And the third part, and the key part and the main part is when you come to Canada.

[talking to male]

Zelda: **The first part is when you were born and where you were born**

Lola: I was born in a little town 42 kilometers south of Warsaw in Poland of course. And I was born the 15th of October, 1922. The name of the town I'm not sure if you want to know

Zelda: **Sure**

Lola: But you want to know

Zelda: **Yes**

Lola: It is G-R-O-J-E-C. It is called Grójec. A small town of 15 thousand inhabitants of which half of the inhabitants were Jews

Zelda: **Okay. And what did your parents do?**

Lola: My father was a tradesman and my mother well worked –

Zelda: **What did she do?**

Lola: She was a seamstress.

Zelda: **So before the war, let's say just a couple years before the war. So you were about 13/14 years old?**

Lola: No. When the war broke out, I was not quite 17, but I had managed to finish primary school and so-called gymnasium. I'm not sure if you're familiar with the system in Poland, so you would know. I finished the four years of gymnasium exactly in 1939 in the summer of 1939 before the war broke out. The war broke out the first of September 1939. The Germans occupied Łódź [2:49] which is the city to which we moved in 1934.

Zelda: **Okay, so you were at Łódź?**

Lola: Yeah, we lived in Łódź from 1934 till the outbreak of the war. My parents perished in Łódź ghetto. And so, my 2 sisters, they were also there for 4 years, but they survived. Later, they were in concentration camps.

Zelda: Okay, so you were in high school and did you have, if there was no war, would you have had plans to continue?

Lola: Yes, I had great plans. I had plans to become a psychologist. It wasn't very popular at the time, but this was my idea. Because they opened in [0:3:40] a few years before the war – a Psychology Jewish Institute. And bright kids who were in primary school could – I'm talking about all of the Jewish community – were sent by their teachers to that school for evaluation, a psychological evaluation. And for what was this all done? Because at that time, gymnasium you have to pay for being a pupil in the gymnasium and my parents wouldn't have afforded it. So I was sent also to such an evaluation. It must have been – I must have passed it because I got the scholarship to high school. And this institute paid for the school; all the 4 years. And [0:4:45] I was [0:4:46] psychology this and that and I thought, this is what I am going to do. And when I was in grade 3 of gymnasium, a girlfriend and I – idea was mine – wrote a letter to the President of France, Mr. Blum, whether he could help us after gymnasium to come to France to study psychology because we knew that in Poland it would be impossible. But of course, we never got an answer. We never knew what happened to the letter. At the time we were in grade 3. Our French wasn't great but we studied French. Both of us studied French for these 3 years so we could write a letter. How many mistakes there were, I don't know. But the fact is, whether it did arrive I suppose so this was this much I had about it

Zelda: So what did you speak at home?

Lola: Yiddish. My father belonged to a socialist Jewish organization, The Bund. I belonged closer to the young part of this organization. And my father and my mother – at home it was spoken Yiddish and outside it was spoken Polish. We were all very bilingual at the time.

Zelda: So I imagined because you belonged to The Bund, you were not a religious family at all.

Lola: No

Zelda: So it was totally secular

Lola: Yeah, it was completely secular. It was a problem for my mother because she comes from a religious home, and before she fell in love with my father, she was a religious girl. But, well it changed. And still, we would never have any pork in the house. Such things were absolutely out because my father didn't care. So this is how it was. But my mother would always take her mother during the holidays to the synagogue, but not my father. Though he was very well read in the scriptures.

Zelda: **And culturally, what was your life like?**

Lola: Culturally, we are very involved in Jewish culture. And when I started to go to a general school because the Jewish school, what I attended closed in grade 4 actually so I switched to a regular Polish school. It was really Polish. Only all the teachers were Jewish and we didn't go to school on Saturdays so this was the called the [0:7:38] private for everybody. Primary school for everybody. But I interrupted there in grade 6 because we moved to Łódź. In Łódź* [?: 0:7:50], I finished grade 6. In Łódź, I finished grade 6, and from there to gymnasium and like what I told you

Zelda: **Why did your family move to Łódź?**

Lola: We moved to Łódź because my mother's family on her side – two brothers and her sister – were there. And then, don't forget, from 1929 till the war, there was a very bitter time in Poland, like it was in Europe. You called it the years of – how is it called in English – in America, from 1929

Zelda: **oh The Depression**

Lola: Depression, right. In Europe, it was called The Crisis. So the whole way of life changed. I mean financially, economically, very very different especially that my father worked in buildings. So it all stopped and it was very very difficult time financially. Mostly it was my mother who supported. And we expected that in Łódź, because a big city – it became easier in Łódź. It was better. Mother had said her family so she feels only [trails off]. For my father, it's now when I became grown up I realized that it was a kind of crisis in his life because he was a very important person in Grójec and in Łódź. It all stopped, you see. He was out there, he didn't know anybody in these 5 years. I was also very sorry to move because I lost my friends, but I was at the time 12 years old. So you know I felt after 3 weeks of crying at night so mother wouldn't hear anything so I adjusted very nicely and had a lot of friends and everything went for me well. But actually, not for them.

Zelda: **What was your family name?**

Lola: Finkelstein

Zelda: **Finkelstein**

Lola: Now, you don't ask about my siblings?

Zelda: **Sure**

Lola: Not yet? The time will come [laughs]

Zelda: No no, I was actually gonna – how many did you have?

Lola: Well, I had 2 sisters; one was 7 years older than I was; and the other was 3 years younger than I was. My parents lost 2 children when they were very young; they were toddlers actually. A boy who died in 1914 on the day when my father was called to the Russian Army during the first war. He was 2 years old. Then my sister was born in 1915, the older one. And between me and my sister, there was a little girl who died also at the age of 2. It was actually the fault of a – not a doctor – I don't know how I could translate into English. This was called a [0:11:13]. And a [0:11:14] was somebody like in the arm you have a medical man or

Zelda: A medic

Lola: A medic, okay. So this was maybe on a little bit a higher level. The child had terrible stomach ache and he was cold. He told my mother to give her something which will [quease? 0:11:37] your stomach and she died because everything chased her. It wasn't simply that, and she died. So we were three at home. Only there was a big difference, 7 years, with my sister so she's grown up and so

Zelda: Did she move to Łódź with you?

Lola: She moved before. When she finished the primary school, was supposed to go to –the times were still financially better and my parents could afford it. It turned out that she didn't want – she wanted to learn a profession so she would be able to earn money so she became a hairdresser and was very good at it. But, my parents insisted that it's not just enough that she learn, that she has to a school. So they sent her to Łódź when we were still living in Grójec. They sent her to Łódź to go to board school. You know board schools were all over Europe and they had all kinds of specialties as [0:12:50] is concerned. And so she was – and of course she didn't come back to Grójec. She met her boyfriend and got married later on. So she came visiting or we came visiting going to Łódź while we were still living there, but she didn't come back. So finished school and became a very good hairdresser.

Zelda: And your sister was younger so she never did high school?

Lola: My sister, she was 13 years old. She just finished 7th grade of primary school when the war broke out. Schools closed. I don't think that she was able to finish even the 7th grade. I'm not so sure. Maybe yes, because it was the beginning of the 1st of September. Yes, she could've finished. She was not quite 13.

Zelda: **Ok. So, I imagine the first few years you were in the Łódź ghetto, right?**

Lola: I?

Zelda: **Yes**

Lola: No. This was completely – I was never in Łódź ghetto. I was the only one who took another road. I was with the occupiers for 3 months. Then, the months after the Germans came to Łódź, on the 10th of October, then start to come on the real laws. So, Jews were not allowed to be after 5 o'clock in the afternoon outside. All Jewish schools were closed. First of all, Jews were not allowed to attend Polish schools, gymnasiums like I did attend one. And all that. So, I didn't go to school. And for me, this was absolutely disaster. And the humiliation what I saw on the street once I went with – there was existing one Jewish high school which still they allowed to be open for a very short while. And I wanted to go to enroll in this high school, and my father took me there. On the way back, they are taking men off the street to take them to special kind of work, so we started to run. It was a disastrous situation. If my father wouldn't have known the city better than I did and to go ways to our house, he would've been caught at the time. Lucky we came, and this fell through. No school anymore. And then, not only I but others, when Warsaw fell – because they tried for weeks in September there was still an army around Warsaw and a mobilization of all the people who lived there and so there was going on a war. It was known that it would not succeed of course. Warsaw fell. When Warsaw fell, they kind of occupied all the part of Poland which, as you know, they wrote an agreement with the Soviet Union that the Soviet Union gets a piece of Poland and they get a bigger piece of Poland. So they occupy there, and there was any border between Poland and at that time, Russia, who was still being a friend [? 0:16:49]. Well my reaction to what was going on was absolutely terrible. I just could not accept the humiliation which was going on. What I seen on the streets and all that. I don't know whether you want for us to go into it. It is not actually what you want to do so I'll skip it okay. I'll say it in a few sentences. And I knew that I just cannot stay there and just see what will happen because nobody thought at the time what really is going to happen. Because first of all, three days after the first missile – on the third of September, France and Germany declared war on, sorry, France and England declared war on Germany. So we were thinking that such very strong 2 armies of course it'll come the time that they'll be at war. It is not more than 3 months. And it is how grown ups were trying to convince me that this is like that. I did not believe. I must say, I don't know an instinct or whatever. I did not believe that it is only such a short while. This whole

business of occupation and all that. So, young people especially started to go out of this occupied part of Poland on the other side

Zelda: To Russia

Lola: To Russia. And I wanted to go and my parents were – I wanted even that everybody with us, it wasn't possible. My sister had a little boy of a year and a half. And the husband was in the Polish army who didn't know anything; where he is, whether he's alive or he's not alive whatever happen. Again, the same. This wasn't – they didn't think that this is a possibility, this is an option. I hope they would, but they didn't. So, I said but I will go because a lot of people are going and I would go myself. At least I'll be able to go to school. This was my argument. And then indeed there was a friend of mine who's sister got married to a – she was very young, she was 18, not quite 18 years old but her husband was 10 years older so he's the grown up. And he came. I knew him well and of course I knew his wife. So he came to my parents and tried to convince them that he'll be the one who will go with us and he'll take care. He had a hard time taking care of himself so, but at least the organization of the going; you had to have a guide; you have to bribe the Germans at the river which you had to cross and so on. So, my parents agreed. And so I left. And I left on the 27th of November 1939 after more than 3 months; 3 months being in the occupied Łódź. The situation on the trains were awful. It was very difficult to get on, but somehow we came to the border. And the guide took us through the river and we were on the other side of it. We have to be very careful so the soldiers on the other side, the Soviet soldiers don't catch us. Because when they catch, they took us, arrest us, arrest everybody who they catch. We had another one, a Polish peasant who took us for the day time into his house and during the night he'll take us to the closest station and take us to a big city which was before Polish and now it became Soviet, called Bialystok. So it's a known city because of what happened later. Anyway, this was the plan. And we came to the house of that peasant and we just sat there to sit through the night. And he started to say that we had to give him everything what we have; money, whoever has everything because otherwise he is going to report us to the Russian [21:50]. Well, so we did. We didn't have any other choice. We didn't have much, but other people had watches this. I didn't have anything except I remember 75 zlotys. It wasn't much but it was all what I had. So somehow he got [trails off] – we still didn't know whether he's going to bring us to the [22:23] or not. But he didn't. He brought us to a station, and we arrived in Bialystok. I don't how much you are interested in this part of it

Zelda: I'm interested in, you spent the war there or you?

Lola: No. It wasn't so simple.

Zelda: Yeah. Theresa told us a lot about being transported to prisons and trains moving through Russia up and down and back

Lola: She had it much harder. I didn't have it so hard as she did because in her case she didn't have much of a choice. They came, they arrested the whole class. So, she didn't have a choice. In my case, when I was in Bialystok so I met some people from Grójec whom I knew. And they helped me get – they even offered [trails off]. And I couldn't get inscribed in school because I didn't have an address. I lived in the synagogue, where all the while as you know all the synagogues were given over to – because the city had not even quite 50 thousand inhabitants but at that time, it had 200 thousand or even half a million people. And every day, they're coming more and more and more. The situation there was without any hope that we could get out of it because we had absolutely no help, no money, nothing whatsoever. There wasn't a community which was [24:14]. Although I shouldn't blame them. There was a time I blamed a lot, but in retrospect, maybe they were so overwhelmed with the amount of people that they became really very hard skinned. And they get very little. So, there was no prospect of anything especially for the younger like me. What could I do except go to school. I mean I could if I wanted to, but this was my whole idea of coming. Otherwise, I wouldn't do that. But anyhow [sobbing]. I'm sorry.

The fact that we survived these times is always because there were some people who were good. When the occupation – I mean, right away when the Germans came, they – in Grójec, they collected all the men. People didn't know so they came to the marketplace and they registered, no without registration, they took men, only men and young boys. They took them on buses, oh no on the train for 4 days who knows somewhere into Germany without water without anything. And then when they brought them back, for some reason they let them walk maybe, 10, 15 kilometers from Łódź. And, they let them out of trains and they told them to run, and they shot after them. And there was between these people was a young boy from Grójec who knew that because he was landing the same trade my father had, he knew that my father moved from Grójec to – and we was going around any store which had anything to do that trade and asking whether they know where. And finally he found – he came to us. He stayed with us in very terrible condition. It was very difficult but we accepted him. He had no place where to go. And he stayed till there was this law that whoever keeps non

people who are not registered, their houses will be shot. And then he decided to go back to Poland. And a friend of mine was saying to my mother how come that you do that. Look at such terrible time; we don't have bread. So she said like that [sobbing]. I'm so sorry.

Zelda: **Don't be sorry. You don't have to talk about this if you don't want.**

Lola: [inaudible because of sobbing] She said that the war going on, nobody knows maybe where my children will be and maybe they'll find somebody who will help them. I'm saying that because there is no survival with any kind of help. In both cases; in my sister's case and in my case, it just wouldn't help.

Zelda: **So who helped you in Russia?**

Lola: Who helped me? First of all, I was ready to go back to Russia because my situation was absolutely without hope. And, I was going to the station to buy a ticket and go and I met a young man who used to come to us because he was in the youth organization and he had a lot to do with my father. He knew me well, and apart from that he was a far relative of my mother

Zelda: **What was your mother's name?**

Lola: His name?

Zelda: **Your mother's name**

Lola: Bitter. B-I-T-T-E-R

Zelda: **And your father's name?**

Lola: Isaac

Zelda: **Okay, so you met this man**

Lola: Yeah. His name was also Bitter because as I said, he was my mother's distant cousin. And he said, where are you going. And I said I'm going to the station to buy a ticket to go back to Łódź. What, he said. Your father – after the war, your father would never if he were here that I met you and I let you do that he will not want to talk to me. That I allowed you to [inaudible because of slight sobbing] normal times, the war will finish. Everybody will be as it was, fine. So I said what can I do, I don't have a place to live. I live still – it was a week after coming– I lived still in the synagogue. I cannot go to school. I cannot do anything. So, he said okay, there is another friend from Grójec who is a baker by profession and he works and he rented a big room and we have 10 young men there and you'll be the eleventh. So you'll come and live with us for the time

being. And I went. So this was the first. Then when I was already, I had an address and he was a baker, there was bread. So I could enroll in school, and started school. And I did these two years what I missed of lycée there. Only the first year wasn't – not a year – a few months on because right after that broke out the war in 1941 between Russia and Germany. So this changed again. And there was a very important time at the time because they registered everybody. All the refugees they registered. Whoever wanted to go back to their former places where they lived and whoever wants to stay in Russia had to take out a Russian passport. And I decided that I will not go back. And this decision was, like the future showed, the right decision. So I had the right to stay in Russia, not in the city because my passport had a special something that part which said that I cannot live in the city, which is a hundred kilometers from the border and who has, I don't know how many, 50 thousand inhabitants. So I had to move from there, but this is not important. We came to the small city. One thing is that studying in Russia if you have that very important document was easy; was easy in a sense that they helped you. So we went to the school, I don't know whatever

Zelda: **What city was that?**

Lola: This was a little city. It was called [0:33:07]. It will not tell you anything because it was very close to the former border, the former Russian border and now it was the Russian territory. So in this city I was a few months on the [0:33:26], going there to school and I go to school. When I was in school, from Bialystok, I traveled with 2 of my friends. We were together. And we came to that city, finished grade 9, which was one grade before the finishing of high school Russian style. So then something happened that my brother in law about who we didn't know anything wrote a card that said – at that time, there was French-Russian-German friendship; you could write postcards home. So at that time there was already, it was 40, there was already the ghetto in Łódź but you were allowed to write a postcard and they could write you back a postcard. So a very small postcard with a few words whatever. So my brother in law, who came in a neighboring city. Turned out he was staying in prison by the Russians, but he escaped and he was in a neighboring city. And he wrote home, and they wrote me where he is. I got in touch with him and I went to the city where he lived. Another eastern Polish city which now was Russian. And there I went to school. He had a room in a Jewish home. And I didn't have a room, but I had a little bed which was put out in the dining room at night. But I had a kind of a place and so I finished high school there. Theresa was wondering how you said you finish high school, how is that possible because she was in

another situation. Anyhow, I finished and then the war broke out. And I knew because of my experience and I knew that I have to run again. And there was a group of friends I met there but one of them I knew from Łódź. And we went again to go into deep Russia. And we came, I don't know how many hundred kilometers east of Kiev. We thought the Germans would never come here. How naïve could you have been, but we were. We stayed in the city a few weeks. Most of the group of friends were men, young men so they were afraid. So they had to go and register into the army cause otherwise they would be taken to prison. So I was left completely alone. Also just through one of the other my friends, I met a woman from Łódź. She had a little daughter; 2 ½ years old daughter. Her husband – she lived in that city where I was. Her husband was denounced by a communist on the street that he is a bundist and they sent him away to a camp. So she was all alone and I was alone so we kind of joined together. We knew we'll have to run again and this is what is. When the city was bombarded already and burning actually and the station was gone completely brought to, I don't know. So we – at that time we were waiting to get on a train but we did and for 2 months we were traveling in very very difficult condition to middle Asia. There, in a little Uzbek village outside of Tashkent more than a hundred kilometers, I was working in the fields. We both worked and did whatever was possible to feed that little girl in very difficult conditions. And then, I find an old piece of a paper with an ad for a technical university in Tashkent is looking for students. And they're opening because the boys were on the front so they opened in March. At the end of March they opened beginning the first year. There was a law in Russia that if you finish high school with all the highest mark in every subject, you can apply to any university without an exam. So I had such a report. So I sent them – I had to send the original because they demanded the original. And for a month I didn't get any answer so I thought to myself finish. But after a month came a telegram – the telegram they are sending, it's like Theresa told you about communication how it worked. Everything worked like that; everything. So anyhow, this started a new epoch in my life at that time

Zelda: **So you were able to go?**

Lola: Yeah. And for 4 years I studied there and in the meantime, the war finished. And I got married

Zelda: **You met someone there?**

Lola: Yeah, in Tashkent. And I went back to Poland. There was no other way; the only way out. I didn't have my diploma. I had

to write my diploma work, the project, what you make in the technical university.

Zelda: **What was your project?**

Lola: I was studying engineering and it was building roads and railroads. So I didn't want to wait because I was afraid if I get stuck when the general masses is going back, I will not be able to get out.

Zelda: **What was your husband, was he Jewish?**

Lola: Yes, Jewish.

Zelda: **And a student at the?**

Lola: No no no. He's older and he had finished his studies before the war. So anyway, this was the story. And in 1946, a year after the war ended, we were able to leave; leave Russia and came to Poland. I gained a new story started because the adjustment in Poland wasn't easy. Again, the same thing. But it wasn't so bad. It was bad enough but not

Zelda: **So did you go back to Łódź?**

Lola: No, I didn't go back. I mean, I went back to Łódź, but I didn't have anything in Łódź that I could find an apartment or live or whatever. So my husband had a cousin or somebody who lived in a small city on the new territory what Poland had from Russia when the border was moved. The other part, the eastern part of Poland was forever Russian now so they gave a piece of the western part as compensation. So, in this small city, he was a director of a factory or something of else and he said that he would be able to live so we moved there and lived in that. And I was there a teacher and they opened a net of Yiddish schools and for a year I was a teacher in that school. And then I decided to get my diploma in Tashkent. Back in [0:0:24], another city on this new territory

Zelda: **And as a teaching diploma?**

Lola: No no no, engineering diploma.

Zelda: **Engineering. Oh wow. So, what happened?**

Lola: Well, a lot happened. Well, I did my diploma but the relationship was not good and we divorced in 1956. And I had a son who was at the time 7 years

Zelda: **So you stayed in Poland for a lot of years?**

Lola: 12 years; '46-'58.

Zelda: **So, wasn't that hard leaving in '58?**

Lola: In '58 was the first possibility. '57 actually was the first possibility that if you had – but I had my 2 sisters; my younger one, my older one.

Zelda: **Where were they?**

Lola: Okay, this is what I want to tell you. They were in the ghettos. You know my parents died of hunger, both of them. And the whole family of mine, of my father, of my mother dispersed, not dispersed but died except my two sisters. Since they were still youngish and in better conditions so when the ghetto closed they were taken to Auschwitz. They were in Auschwitz for 3 weeks. And from Auschwitz – at the time this was 1944 [44:00] was 1944. The end of [44:02] was when the ghetto closed when they were transported there. So they were sent to a working camp; a work camp actually not a death camp but a work camp because at the time, this was the last year of the war and they really needed manpower so they sent them both to the same camp luckily. And the conditions were not Auschwitz conditions, but very difficult conditions. They both worked in a munitions factory. So they survived after the end of the war and a group of – it was already territory which before the war belonged to Choslovakia. I don't what historic you already know, there was a little uprising, a so-called uprising really because it was nothing serious. At the very end, the ones who took place in the uprising came to that camp where they are, they were, and liberated them maybe a day or 2 before the official end of the war. And so they came back to Poland. My brother in law never survived the war. We didn't ever hear about him, never knew what happened to him because most probably he never went any deep into Russia so. My sister remarried in Germany and she didn't go back to Poland. But my younger sister went back to Poland, and she came to Poland and she came to Łódź. Some friend of a friend or an acquaintance or whatever said that she occupied somebody's – a German little house so she invited her to stay with her and there she met a man, got married and went back to Germany and from Germany came to Canada in 1951.

Zelda: **Your sister**

Lola: Yeah. My older sister came in 1948, earlier than she did. Only in 1946 when I came back to Łódź. She met a friend, I only then found out that they are alive. I didn't know because I wrote to Łódź, to the others of course. I didn't expect that there would be an answer but there was. I had an address of a community center in Łódź. I wrote to them. They said they never heard about. Their names were listed there but they still

sent me an answer that they are no information about such persons. So I didn't know. And then in 1948 already, also by accident

[phone rings]

Zelda: So you didn't want to come to Canada right after the war

Lola: Not I didn't want. First of all, I told you only in 1948 I found out where they are. I knew in Łódź when I came in '46 that they are alive because somebody met them. But I didn't know where they are. And then accidentally later on, I don't remember what year it was. And in '48 we tried to go to [48:10], but they wouldn't let my husband out. That was before we parted. So we couldn't go. And to Canada, there was no way. You had to have very close relatives in order to go. So when I found out and got in touch with them only at that time I knew that my older sister is in Canada and I had the others. And my younger sister came later on, three years later in '51 so I corresponded. But there was no way of going out of Poland. Only as I said, in '57 it became possible. And then it started. They had to send some kind of documentation that they have a job for me. And we arrived in Canada, my son and I on the 21st of October, 1958.

Zelda: How did you come? Did you fly or boat or?

Lola: We came on a boat called Batory; a very elegant boat, which was going from Poland to actually to New York

Zelda: Yes, Theresa came on the same boat, the Batory

Lola: Yeah, Batory. But she came 10 years earlier in '48. Theresa till today didn't tell me exactly what are the years there were and how many times I asked her. It's so painful it looks that she never told me. I mean, in general, in a few words I know but exactly how and what in detail, no.

Zelda: Okay, so you got to New York?

Lola: No no no. It stopped in Quebec city and then in Montreal. At the time, it didn't go to New York anymore.

Zelda: So you got off in Montreal

Lola: I got off in Montreal because it is where they lived. Well, like I said, it started a new epoch.

Zelda: Did you know English at all?

Lola: Not a word

Zelda: **But you knew French?**

Lola: If you can call that, I knew; 19 years, I didn't speak a word of it, didn't read it. I had intensively to learn Russian and studied and all that so French was [trails off]. And another thing, at the university the foreign languages what they were teaching was English and German. Since I knew that in Łódź, German was a very popular language because a third of the population was German

[interruption]

Anyhow, I thought German would be easier for me to learn and it proved true so I decided these 4 years I was studying German. I should have studied English but I couldn't see so far ahead.

Zelda: **So you came, you landed**

Lola: I landed in Quebec city because it is where they had the first stop. They had to take everybody to a clinic or a hospital and to see whether we don't have lung disease because they were very much afraid of lung disease

Male voice: **What's your son's name?**

Zelda: **What's your son's name?**

Lola: My son's name

Zelda: **The one who you came with**

Lola: Who I came with; I named him after my father Isaac. I wouldn't give him a Yiddish name because of what we went through. So the closest what could be was [52:16]. So the name today is Ulrich and it is George actually. [52:22] in English is George. And I came here, I said he will be George, my sister said no. All French Canadian driver are called George [laughs]. And so he couldn't be George, but he has the middle name George.

Zelda: **So he's called Ulrich?**

Lola: No, he's called Irvin.

Zelda: **Irvin**

Lola: Back to the roots

Zelda: **Back to the roots. Okay, so you got to Quebec city, they took you to the hospital, checked you out for tuberculosis**

Lola: I beg your pardon. Of course they checked. They checked everybody. But in the meantime we are going in the taxi. In the taxi, nobody spoke anything but Polish so he couldn't correspond. He asked whether anybody knows a little bit of French. So I said I know a little bit. So we talked. So he said, madame, you speak a beautiful Paris French. So I thought, my goodness, Paris French looks like that. I had to think to build my sentence. So this was that. They gave us sandwiches because by the time we arrived there, it was lunchtime. White bread with some, I don't know, this white white you know the [53:53] taste. That is the name for it, but okay. And nobody could it because – so when we came back on the boat, there was a big thing to put the garbage in so everybody, not to look at the others, put the bread in. Okay, then we arrived the next morning. And I was very sick on the boat. It was October, and the Atlantic in October so you can imagine. We were so sick that my son was saying mama please don't lift your head because you'll be sick again. We didn't drink anything, only water. Okay, anyhow, so we arrived in Montreal and they waited for us and took us home.

Zelda: So you lived with one of your sisters?

Lola: My youngest sister. My oldest sister was very sick. She came out very sick from the camp and she was very sick. And then when she had a baby in 1950 so she had a break down and she was in and out of the hospital

Zelda: So where did your sister live?

Lola: Oh she lived, what was the street, I forgot, I have to remember, just wait a minute. Okay, it'll come to me

Zelda: So there you were, you lived with your sister

Lola: I lived with my sister and what I tried – two days after that, I had a friend from work, a colleague actually from work who immigrated, engineer because I was working of course in Poland. So he came to Montreal two months earlier than I. He gave me the phone number of his sister to get in touch with him. So I got in touch with him and he told me where I can go start learning English in the Y on Park Avenue

Zelda: The Jewish International?

Lola: Yeah, the Jewish International Y. So I went there and registered

Zelda: Was that on Mount-Royal on Park Avenue?

Lola: It was higher than Mount-Royal. Close to Bernard; a big building. I think it is still a Y or am I mistaken, I don't know

Female voice: It's still a Y

Lola: It's still a Y

[interruption]

Zelda: **So you went to learn English?**

Lola: So I started that. It was a very good teacher. Apparently, he was a owner of a private school in Lebanon and in Israel and so on and a very nervous man. Mark something. But an excellent teacher. But there, while I was registering, a lady a little bit younger than I came to me [57:17] which means do you speak Polish. She was the wife of the first Polish representative in Canada because the government in Poland didn't send anything or Canada didn't want, I don't know whether it is fact. Only in '58 that there was the first one who came. She was his wife. And I was supposed not to tell anybody about it, that she is learning English at the Y or whatever. When she found out – I was letting everybody who I met at the time that I have to have some work. I need some work. So anyhow, I told her also that so she told me that the secretary didn't come from Poland yet so for this time – it was before Christmas, yeah 2 months before Christmas or so – so I worked as a secretary. Though I couldn't type because in Poland in the gymnasium you didn't learn how to type. This was for somebody else to learn, but not the gymnasists. So I didn't know but okay, I managed a few weeks. Well, so you want the story to go on?

Zelda: **I do. So after you worked there a few weeks, and then?**

Lola: Ater the few weeks, my sister, the youngest sister where I lived at had a husband and the relationship was not very good because he was a man who suffered extremely. You know, everybody suffered in the camps, but he really suffered much more than anybody else. So I was always saying, either he's a monster or he's sick. Most probably, he was sick. But people who are mentally not stable, they will never agree to the fact that they are not as they should be. And he did not ever want to accept any treatment or whatever. And, it was a very difficult life. And since we were 2 new people to take care of, their relationship most probably became even more strained than it was. My sister kept crying. I didn't know why she cries, and she wouldn't tell me why. After the 4 weeks, it came, it always these things come to take risk somewhere that you have to to make a decision and I moved out and moved into the house of my older sister. My sister being in the hospital at the time. My

brother in law was very very nice and there was a little girl there of my Uric's age so they got along very very well. And these few months that I lived there were really a respite. So in the meantime, I was writing – not I was writing letters because I couldn't, but a friend of mine as writing letters wherever I think or was told that it might be useful to try to find a job possibly closest to whatever I could do. So all the letters were come back mister Margalis so and so. This was my name at the time. So I was able to make only one appointment with the [1:01:25]. I don't know which one, the national

Zelda: **STPR or CAR?**

Lola: Yeah, so it was the national, and there was an engineer there who talked to me because he was from Poland. He said I came at a bad time; it is not a good time. So anyhow, I could see that there was no way that I could get a job closer to what I could do in my profession.

Zelda: **Was there any help from anybody in terms of trying to help you to work?**

Lola: No. I went with my sister and

Zelda: **Where did you go?**

Lola: I went to the JIAS first of all. They told me oh you are engineer, you'll be very well off. Didn't offer any help; nobody offered anything absolutely. I must say I didn't go any much more because if they didn't help, where was I supposed to go to look for help? So there was no help/ But, a younger friend, an acquaintance actually of ours through a friend what I met. It doesn't matter the connection

Zelda: **Was she also an immigrant? A survivor?**

Lola: Yeah, absolutely. She was from Poland. She said when she came she went to a school because at the time it was starting to build a prototype of a computer and it was a huge machine on which you could do bookkeeping. It was called a bookkeeping machine. After not long ago I remembered very well the name but now it slipped and I don't remember

Zelda: **It's okay, it doesn't matter.**

Lola: I know. So she took a course there and after that she was employed and got a job right away. So, I decided to go to that course but it cost \$90 and I had a friend who I met and she was here already a year and she got a job right away. She was lucky. And right away she said I'll give you the \$90. I said, how do

you, we knew each other maybe 2 weeks, maybe I'll never be able to give you back

Zelda: **And there was no**

Lola: No, no help.

Zelda: **There was no way to apply for money or get money, or there was no loan?**

Lola: No no.

Zelda: **Nothing**

Lola: No. Anyhow, with the \$90, I went there and since the examination what she gave me she asked me French or English because they had 2 groups so I took French. Maybe it was the wrong decision, I don't know, but at least I'll understand something. Okay, at that time it was December. I had to take my courses, the English courses

Zelda: **'58 or ?**

Lola: '58. Of course it was a silly exam in Mathematics and you know that so this was fine and then I finished that course and she told me that the best thing will be that you'll go because banks need, they just installed these machines and banks need people. So I thought to myself, a little bit French I know and after that course came back, a little bit, not much but a little bit. So I'll go to the National Bank which was the closest to where the school was. So I spoke to a young man, and I was 36 years of age at the time, jus had finished on the boat. So he said, first of all he said I am too old; hey accept people only up to 25. And second of all, he said you don't speak English so we cannot hire you. So I said, I'll speak French, but I'll learn English. No, no no. So then next to it, the banks were all on Saint-Jacques, now Saint-Jacques, it wasn't Saint-Jacques. The next bank was Toronto Dominion so I went to the Toronto Dominion with my story. Only I didn't tell anybody that I had finished university. I didn't tell anybody. They told me, this is what the [1:05:59] they told me, some French for my [1:06:03] to not to say that because it's true; then I'll be over qualified. So is aid I worked in the same office where I did work, but what I did, something else. So this man interviewed me and so, a middle aged man. And I could see that he would rather to take me. Then I said like, he was sitting from me [showing using hand movements] but his desk wasn't so wide. So I could see that he had this application I filled out, and he wrote like this, the knowledge of English X. It wasn't for me, it was for whoever after. So, anyhow it made me feel very good. He said we'll call you tomorrow. He did call me tomorrow. In the meantime, I moved out of my sister because I

was working already. And I started, even before I was working there at that consulate. I was earning, I don't remember how much, but maybe \$30 a week or something. And in the bank, the offered me 35 so it was much better. So I moved out and I rented a room, and then a small room for my son in a triplex of a family who somebody told me about that they are renting out. And this is how life started.

Male voice: **Did your son go to school?**

Lola: Yeah, of course. We enrolled him in school that is the day that we came. He had a very hard time. For 3 months, he wouldn't say to me a word of English. Everybody was telling me, so how is the [1:08:03], but by Christmas he was speaking English. So one thing was achieved.

Zelda: **So where did you move to finally, where was that triplex?**

Lola: It is in [1:08:21]. Is there a street like that

Zelda: **I lived on [1:08:26]**

Lola: No, which number did you live?

Zelda: **133**

Lola: And I lived 170.

Zelda: **And I think my parents moved, cause we lived on Durocher from '53 – I was in grade 2 so I would've been 7 – so that would've been '58, 1958**

Female voice: You were neighbours

Male voice: **Is that where you showed me yesterday [to Zelda]**

Lola: No it wasn't 170. 177!

Zelda: **So it was just down towards Fairmont**

Lola: Yeah, absolutely.

Zelda: **We were neighbours**

Lola: And I have a landlady from hell, you wouldn't believe

Zelda: **We had rats, that's all I remember. It was awful**

Lola: I don't know which is worse. But anyhow it was really from hell.

Zelda: **Who was she? The landlady**

Lola: She was from a very small city in Poland. She went through Russia. Her husband was a, how is it called, who makes shoe, a shoemaker. And in Russia they lived very well and here they came. They bought a triplex

Zelda: **Was she Jewish?**

Lola: Doesn't matter, but it's okay, I survived. My son who [trails off] – television. He didn't have a television in Poland and he watched television at my sister and the other. Here, he sat under the table in the room where there was a terrorist literally, I am not exaggerating.

Zelda: **So who was your – there were your sisters and then you had people you knew from Europe, right. I mean one thing talking to Theresa, was there any integration with the Jewish community who was established here?**

Lola: Not at all

Zelda: **Why is that?**

Lola: Not at all. I don't know. I didn't see. It didn't have any personal connection. She [pointing to Theresa]

Theresa: Just a moment, we never discussed this. I just want to tell you. We never said a word. We never discussed this [inaudible 1:11:00-1:11:10]. We talked of course. Do you have friends of the non Jewish community. I am crazy? Why would I ask her?

Lola: Okay, I just told another secret. This lady, you know she asks so well questions so I said I asked so many times Theresa to tell me exactly details what her roles were in Russia, she never did, she never did. So I stopped asking any more because for whatever reason.

Theresa: My what?

Lola: No, how it was, how you went from place to place, which places

Theresa: That was, you mean Russia. If I tell you, it would be like in a dream

Lola: Would be what?

Theresa: Like in a dream [1:11:56-1:12:07 inaudible because of multiple speakers] until I established myself. I'm telling you, it's not that I hide, I don't hide anything

Lola: There was a very close connection because I right away went and asked where is the library. So I went to the Jewish Library, which was the old Jewish Library

Theresa: The Jewish Library was very active

Lola: Yes, it was active, and I was active. Whenever they have something, I was very busy. I started working so I was very busy. And then, I met my future husband

Zelda: **And he was also an immigrant?**

Lola: Absolutely. In '59 he was for the summer in the Y, in the same Y because I wanted him to, in the time when I worked, to be occupied with something. He didn't go to school. And the next year I wanted him to go to a camp and I found out that my sister used to the [1:13:17] camp with her children when they were small whether with the 2 of them or with 1 of them I don't. I went to register him to the camp. There was a young [laughs], just to laugh a little bit okay, so there was a youngish woman who was inscribing him and how much I have to pay. So I mentioned that I have to get married or something. So she said, you just came – because she asked when I came – and you got married, you found husband. I am born here, educated here and everything and I cannot find a husband [laughs]. So this is what she said. So I said, what can I do [laughs]. So anyhow, he went to that camp. The next year he also went to that camp

Zelda: **He was Polish?**

Lola: What?

Zelda: **Your husband?**

Lola: My husband is Jewish-Polish

Zelda: **Jewish-Polish**

Lola: He was. He's not alive anymore. He was Jewish-Polish.

Male Voice: **And when did he come to Canada?**

Lola: He came to Canada in 1951 or '52, but he came from Israel. Because he was able in 1948 to emigrate from Poland

Zelda: **What was his name?**

Lola: His name was Ebert. David Ebert. And he had a sister and brother in law in Israel. And then they came to Canada. When he established himself here, they came to Canada

Zelda: **And what did he do?**

Lola: He was a businessman. He run a restaurant next to Loyola College

Zelda: **So why do you think there was no, I mean I talked with Theresa a lot about this, but why do you think there was no integration with the Jewish community that was established here?**

Lola: Because all my friends and everybody who I knew, it was all – we were talking about it among ourselves that we somehow moved only in the little circle of people like to call the shtetl, which I hate the name because they misunderstood the name shtetl all together in books and in everything. A shtetl means always meant in Yiddish a small city and never a village. There was a distinct difference

Zelda: **Really?**

Lola: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Theresa: not a village, no. Shtetl is a small town

Zelda: **A small what**

Theresa: A small town

Zelda: **That's what I thought**

Lola: A small city

Theresa: A shtetl you have shoemakers and people come to the market, but a shtetl, it was urban in some ways

Lola: Absolutely, it was. Because the shtetl what I come from has a court, had a high school, had a prison and had also, how do I translate it, a county

Zelda: **My mother said she came from a shtetl**

Lola: Where was it, in which part of Poland?

Zelda: **[1:17:12] near [1:17:13]**

Lola: near [1:17:15], Central Poland.

Theresa: it's a very famous city in Poland because the holy mother

Lola: Oh, she must know, she knows it

Theresa: People see the holy mother. She came [inaudible because multiple speakers]

Zelda: **So you were talking among yourselves**

Lola: That we don't, actually we don't [trails off]. And in later years, when there was a connection, it wasn't of a nice kind. Because the connection was with very rich women from [interaction with Theresa] with very noses up and very unpleasant personal relationship

Zelda: **Why was that, do you know why or why do you think?**

Lola: I think because their social position was very different from mine, very simple. And what I present is not interesting to them. This is a very simple thing. Okay? [looks at Theresa]

Theresa: Yeah

Lola: So we agree

Theresa: We just came with our problems and with our were baggages

Lola: Absolutely

Theresa: And they could not understand us what we had with us, and we cannot understand a normal passive life. There was nothing to talk about. We could not talk with them because when I talk with Lola about anybody else we always ended up on what happened to us during the war. That was our baggage and that was predominated in everything and it is still there

Lola: Every end of the conversation starts from that subject

Theresa: So of course socially that's how it is. You are not social with them but you could talk about something. Social contact is voluntary

Zelda: **So you don't feel they wanted to know anything about the war or the Holocaust?**

Lola: No, I cannot say that not with what we have now. We have a deluge of everything; of literature, in every media, in every medium, in everywhere so we cannot talk about it. It is very different. They now