

Interviewee: Olga

Z- To begin, where were you born, when were you born, talk about your mother, your father, we'll leave it open.

O- With pleasure. Born in Poland. My parents were from Tarnow and they were very young at the time when they were told by a relative, an uncle, that they should go to another town in Poland, Borisov.

Z- Is that south, east, north?

O- Tarnow is an hour from Krakow. And Borisov is out west, not far from [0:02:03] about, I would say, 100 miles. It was a very small town, but what happened in Borisov they discovered oil. Oil was the richness and people started to come and change the whole . . . the . . . looks, but certainly the town changed from a small I unknown little province town to quite important. Especially who came were the graduates from the universities in [0:02:36], the Jews who didn't have the freedom to chose their jobs, but they went were they were hired. There were a lot of young people, very gifted, very energetic who came to Borisov. There were all kinds of professions, engineers, notaries, lawyers, doctors. And the town, what's the word. . . boosted? Or became from the richness . . . it was booming. Yeah. And there was a big big company called [0:03:06] that lasted very long. I'm still connected to that what I'm saying, and to that company and what happened to Borisov because it saved our lives. The oil was always important, especially during the war. Not that we were so sure that we will survive because there was oil, but certainly we survived for a long time, until 1944. I was still at the camp and the camp was existing in 1944 of The Russians were coming closer and closer.

Z- So when were you born?

O- Okay, so then, what happens. . . that's my parent first place that they settled. My mother is pregnant and goes back to Tarnow to give birth at her parents house. I never asked her she went, probably by train. But how long did it take? And then she regretted because she says the women were already going to the hospital to give birth but she still wanted parents house and midwife, and I'm born in Tarnow. But I'm probably very few days, maybe few weeks old and . . .

Z- What year was that?

O- 1923, I turned 89 a month ago. So, back to Borisov and my parents lived there for four years. I'm born there, I'm born in Tarnow growing up in Borisov next to the Jewish cemetery. And funny because I still remember the crying, which I was told there were hired crying women whenever . . . how do you call it . . . a funeral came. What happened two years ago, my granddaughter went to university and finished . . . what would be the course . . . writing . . . I lost the word, it will come back. Report, not report, but she is . . . well lost the word, it will come, sorry. So my

granddaughter decides to write, okay, my son, her father, is a journalist and he writes books and he's on the radio very often. So obviously she is drawn to that and she wants to do the same and goes to Concordia. How would you call this?

Z and J – Journalism? Maybe Communications?

O- She goes there and she graduate and she wants to go to Poland with my son, and asks me to go and write about everything what I went through in Poland. The whole story to be repeated. I said "no I'm not going, I can't go". I just feel . . Poland to me is empty, I don't have my friends anymore. Once I came here this is it. So she goes with my son. There is a book that I read and recommended to my son, he writes a few books too. And I said, in this book the author was in Borisov where we subsequently go. And he found many people that he spoke to and he cites them in the book and he also give the name of a translator who helped him. My son contacts the same translator, because they don't speak Polish. The translator is hired, speaks polish. And my granddaughter writes the whole story about this visit and video. And that's what she does. She's a journalist, but at the same time a writer and produced it.

Z- She is a documentary maker.

O- Yes she documentary. But I want to go back what happened to us. I'm a baby . . .

Z- What does your father do?

O- My father, okay, I'm getting into it because my father works in Borisov. He runs an office, he's told by uncle who is at the same time a CEO in Borisov, and my uncle tells him, you find the office there because there is oil, there is a good time to build . . . to go there and sell everything that they need to dig and looking for the oil. And that's what my father does in Borisov.

Z- So he's a supplier.

O- But it's only a wholesale not to retail. 4 years after my father gets another directive, you're moving to Warsaw. Warsaw is the capital of Poland. Your going to have bigger office and again you continue the same kind of work, but in much larger volume, everything. My mother is quite unhappy, she is used to the small town, whatever.

Z- Did she work?

O- No, the women did not work at that time.

Z- So, you were fairly well off?

O- Very well off because it was a unique rather place. My father was smart. My father was also in Polish army. What would be . . .not lieutenant. . .but one of the ranks already, because I think he had a year of law school, but he lost his father. I think if his father would be alive he would maybe continue, 'cause I see a picture, photograph, you know like a collar and a tie, everything is very much like a student. He didn't want to talk about it, anyway. We move to Warsaw, which is quite shocking for my mother, from a small town to a capital.

J- And when was that?

O- 19 . . . I'm 4 years old, 1927, okay. And my mother is quite brave and she's adjusting and there's a maid.

Z- Any siblings?

O- My sister now, who is few weeks old only when we come to Warsaw, and she grows up in Warsaw. But being a little bit . . . she's not a sickly child, but I'm the one who can do everything, and she has to be kind of looked after. It lasted long time. And we growing up in Warsaw, it's a beautiful city. I go to a kindergarten and subsequently to a school and a high school, and for my parents, very important that I learn another language and it's French. And I really got good basis of French and then when we came here it was very practical. And the school is fun. I am good student. I like learning and I'm introduced to some nice things that the capital offers. My father takes me to the library. I still remember the little room and the books. There are always books in the house. There is a newspaper my father reads. We have a maid. And on one side there is a lawyer, on the other side there is a doctor. I am telling you this because there is such a difference between the two of them. The doctor, my mother says he's a socialist, not that I knew what she was talking about. But I remember she said socialist. Why is he socialist, because he is very kind to us. And whenever I have an accident, something falls on the head, something falls on something else, he comes and he's always helpful. The lawyer, we lived there 12 years, he doesn't say hello. He has two sons who are dressed up like in uniforms and we don't exist for him because we are Jews and he is Hertz or something, hyphenated name. Never said a work to us or nothing. So this is a picture of Poland, which is not drastic yet, but doesn't get better. And, what is important in our lives is the library. My parents are going to the theatre. I am still too young for that. And we go . . . I am 13, my father takes me to the mountains to the [0:11:24] mountains, "you have to ski". Finally I learned to ski and I loved the sport. I even brought the skis to Canada, I was skiing. And socialization always important. Parents have found some circle of friends. In the meantime my sister is more sickly, I am healthy child, and my mother has noticed that her leg is swollen, takes her to the doctor. It's no penicillin of course at that time. She has, what do you call it . . .like something infectious, part of her leg. She needs a surgery. Now, at that time there is still a clinic, best doctor Goldstein, I remember, he runs the clinic. Let's hope, and everything is fine. She has a big cut in her leg. A year later the blood runs in your body and it's on attack. Again she needs a small surgery, after that, thank

God, everything is fine. But that affected her life and my mother's life because she was spending all the time in the clinic, longing for being at home with me. Had to call her sister to come and meet somebody there in the house. So that was quite sad. I don't remember the sadness, but I remember certain demands that I did it and it wasn't too bad. So . . .

Z- Were you religious?

O- No, not enough. I only discovered it later on. Very assimilated, which had good points and not so good. The good points because I was friendly with everybody. There was no such thing "don't be", because these are Christians and so on. First of all I'm not sent to Jewish schools, although, they was thinking about it, but the school was on Sundays, which would conflict with my father's day off. He didn't want that. So I went to a . . .it wasn't called Catholic school, yet a school. Ecole Franco Polonaise. Subjects were in French, very few, but I picked up the basics.

Z- What language did you speak?

O- Polish?

Z- Did your parents speak Yiddish?

O- No, never, never.

Z- Di they know it?

O- I think they know it. They knew the words for sure, but I don't think my mother . . . I have my grandmother's picture with the book open, which was unusual. Very beautiful woman, tall, slim. 6 children in the family. Non of them was religious that I would know, but observant. Certainly my mother would buy matzos that we would eat at Passover. And I was sent when I was already a teenager, 13 years old, to an aunt in Krakow because they run a more religious household. It was important for my parents to do something. We never denied that we were Jews. And there was a neighbor in the building, she sends us for . . . at Christmas some goodies for Christmas and my mother sends her matzahs. I mention this neighbor, because in 1946 or 7 I was back in Warsaw, we survived out west in Borisov, but we . . . the Russians said now it's the time if you want to go back to your country. The Russia takes quite a bit of Poland in what would be in the west and we going to the east, and we move back. Warsaw is impossible to live. It's totally destroyed, although I spent time because I'm in uncover, not uncovering, what do you call it. The monument in the Warsaw ghetto when they . . .first time they showed it.

Z- Unveiled.

O- Right. So I'm there in Warsaw and . . .

Z- So by 1939 Warsaw was not a friendly place . . .

O- No, I wouldn't say so, although, I know . . .okay . . . Warsaw was, for Jews, it was a [0:15:37]. There was a Marshall [0:15:39] who was very esteemed by Jewish population, ever anti-Semitic. He was a soldier, former soldier. So Poland always had this . . . people in uniforms and my father fit into it. He loved it. From time to time he had to go to some kind of exercise, maneuvers, whatever it was.

Z- Reserves.

O- Reserves, okay. And at the same time I am growing up. If war wouldn't be on I would be in the last year of high school. The high school is Catholic. I am at first I am at first the Jewish woman in the school. Then there is [0:16:24] from . . .the father is Hungarian, he is transferred to Poland and we are friends because we are two Jewish girls.

Z- How come you were the only Jewish girl in school?

O- That was the kind of a school . . . not that the school was anti-Semitic, but it wasn't one of the big schools, it was Franco-Polonaise, was a little bit different.

Z- So it was like an immersion?

O- It was maybe an immersion. But subsequently it lost some kind of possibility of growing up or something, or opening more classes. So my mother got a little bit worried and I was growing up, she didn't want me to be with too much of the Catholic boys and dating or something. Anyway, I am transferred to a school where we are 12 people in a classroom. Eight Jewish women, and four non-Jewish, so it's quite a change.

Z- So even though they were secular it was still important for you to marry someone who was Jewish?

O- Absolutely, and she would ask me "would you marry" . . . what did I know about marriage, being 12 or 13. But she wants to make sure that I am not marrying a non-Jew. Okay, how do I go from then now?

Z- So, you're about to finish high school, you would have gone to University. What were you interested in studying?

O- To give you a picture of University for Jewish kids, for Jewish students. One of the boys I know, he is already a student at University. I'm in his house and runs, and it's 1938 or 39, and he runs home and he shows his mother, "you see, it's bleeding, my head is bleeding, the students were hitting me, but nothing wrong now". Jewish students have a already place to sit on the left side during the lectures, the Catholics can sit wherever they want. But the Jews don't want to sit were they are assigned,

they don't want to be part of ghetto, student ghetto, they stand up during the lectures. The professors don't say a word, nothing. That's how it goes on. When there is a break in lectures the students, the Catholic students put certain . . I saw this, what do you call this . . . what I'm wearing.

Z- A ring?

O- No, no like this . . .

J- Knuckles, brass knuckles, no?

O- This what you put when you get married, you get what?

Z- A wedding band.

O- A wedding band, but these types of bands they all joined here and they very strong and sharp and they hit the Jewish students with these.

Z- So those are knuckles.

O- Knuckles, okay. And he comes home I remember and he shows his mother "you see, I was hurt in the head, I have a little bleeding, but I was okay today". So this is the situation of Jewish students. So my parents says, "okay you'll go to France, you speak French a little bit and . . ."

Z- To you?

O- To me. There was already [0:19:28] nice University, "you finish the last year of high school, you go to France". I'm very happy. And away from home, and you know, and another friend will go with me. She never survived. And this is the plan. In the meantime the war is coming. We are spending holiday summers all on the sea shore or there is another place my mother takes some baths, you know, it's very a la mode. Women go to other places, my mother goes to this one. It's a lovely place. I have a good time. I play tennis, I swim, everything.

Z- Spas.

O- What?

Z- Spas.

O- That's it. Yeah, exactly there was big . . . she was taking bath, what do you call it that they put . . . mud.

Z- Mud baths.

O- Mud baths, okay, I couldn't understand, but she was doing that. Okay, that's the last good vacation. She comes to the swimming pool, she says we are going home. The war is imminent.

Z- Okay, there is only the two of you, right?

O- Two of us. I take care of my sister. By then she is like 12 or 13, I'm a little bit older. It's no problem. We go to the swimming pool, very nice life, okay. And we go back to Warsaw, the Warsaw is in a panic, of course. And we take shovels and we go build the, you know . . . to save ourselves. Around Warsaw as if this will help, what do you call it?

Z- Trenches?

O- Yeah, trenches. And it's fun, I'm so young, so I run with the boys and we dig something there and we come home, and I'm sitting on the roof to watch the planes. I mean, naiveté that there's no sense. We get a phone call from Krakow, from my mother's sister, and her husband "take the money and run". My father says "no!", "France and England join the war and they're going to fight, and what's the Germans, what do they know, you know, about fighting". "Take the money and run" my uncle repeats. They pack and they go. If they would stay, let me tell you, they were so engaged with . . .there's another story, there's another German who was a spy and we didn't know, that they wouldn't be alive.

Z- Who your parents?

O- No, no my mother's sister. Reluctantly my father calls two other friends. 10 people get . . .they rent one . . .like [0:21:54], you know, horse and buggy. "Take one suitcase", my father tells. "I want to take the . . .". "No, only one suitcase because we will be back in three weeks". We were back in four years, okay. We go, we go east and we hit [0:22:10]. [Same as 0:22:10] is already . . .full of . . .people who run away from west and nobody knows what to do. In the meantime we wake up on day in [same as 0:22:10], no we don't stay in [same as 0:22:10], we go to another smaller place. My father feels this is safer. And one day my father goes out, comes back, he says, "guess what, the Russians are here". Well, you know the Poles can forgive the Jews, that they stood on the sidewalks with flowers, which is true. Because I remember the guy, I saw it, and he had flowers for the army, but that was, you know . . .The Poles, the Jews in Poland had absolutely right to do that because they thought this is, they are saviors. But you see what they did to the Jews, I mean it's known. The communism was another farce, okay. So, we stay in this town for about a few weeks. My father and another friend, who survives, because he's taken to Soviet Union, the deportations, they go to [0:23:16], [same as 0:23:16] is in north Poland. And maybe they'll cross the border and in few weeks my mother will cross the border. That was the dream that we had. They don't cross the border, they come back. My mother is very happy. The other day, I have to say a few words, because the other day in the newspaper there's an article about Polish army people, who

were arrested because of the . . . they saw it's arrested a lot of these men who were running away from Germans to Soviet Union, thinking that this is the solution. These people were shot dead . . . the famous, what's the story . . . of the town that they shot maybe . . . over, I don't know, a few hundred Polish officers. I read this article and I got furious because between those Polish officers there were quite a few Jewish officers. A lot of doctors, I happen to know a few because I knew their sons. And my son, Julian, is a . . . writes for Toronto star. I said "Julian, I'm going to write the article, you correct, and I will send to these people who wrote this article about Polish . . .". Because it's every second sentence it's "Polish officers, Polish officers", not one word about . . . I would not say there were millions, I would say there were hundred, but certainly even if there were 20 that's enough, of Jewish officers who were killed with the Polish officers, nobody talks about it. So, anyway, that was my contribution to that. So, my . . . we walk on that street, where we are there, the small town. And I see the Russian soldier walking on the main street and he is looking left and right and he see's my father and he see's my father is walking with a friend who is also a Polish officer in uniform. My father had this intuition that something is going on, starts running and jumps over the fence. Anyway, this Russian didn't have a chance to catch him. He wouldn't be alive if he would catch him. That was Russian policies and we lived with occupied place for a while. So, where am I now?

Z- You are occupied by the Soviets.

O- Okay, so we are there. What they do, they go to the stores and they take everything out what's possible. They were watches from here to here . . .

Z- So were you in [same as 0:22:10] at that time?

O- No we are in Rovnik and then we go back to [same as 0:22:10] again and I go to school. That's a last year of high school, it's a little bit chaotic but the schools are open and full of daughters of the . . . from the families who ran away from Krakow, not Warsaw so much, but mostly, I don't know for what reason, maybe because they were occupied first or longer. They ran away from there and they don't know what to do. So, Russian in their [0:26:22] and thinking, they said "you want to go back, sure, register, write the address were you want to go and write the address were you live now". We didn't know yet the Russians thinking and the Russians policy. We register. We decide to go back. Because the letters at that time, the occupants didn't have time yet to do anything, they . . . the ghetto is only 1940, this is still 1939. The war is still, not the war, but the Russian are the way, we don't know yet, we are naïve. So we register and my father goes to Borisov. He says, "I'll try there. They know me. There is an office. I'll go." It's two hours from [same as 0:22:10]. He goes first, and me and my mother and my sister we stood staying in [same as 0:22:10]. Now, in their [0:27:13] their politics, the Russian write. . . ask us to register and they know our address with my aunt and my aunt, after a while, she prefers to have Russian tenants then us, so she is quite happy that we might go away. But we are still there. And then my father sent for us and we are already on the train. Two days

later they know about who registered, they know the addresses, they go to those places and said "you want to go to Germans, how can we trust you?", "We'll take you, keep in Russia and you'll stay there". And this is . . . they doing them a favor, but at that time we don't know what's going to be when the Germans comes and occupy us. And they, these people who ran away from Poland, thinking this is a . . . heaven, they . . . the Soviet Union, they going to take care of Jews and all this. They take them on the train, good-bye, Siberia. The first two years are very difficult because they are taken deep in Siberia, they work, the conditions . . . from comfort, you know, from the west to this poor country. They stay but after the Soviet Union joins the allies, so they let them go, not that it's better, because they still travel to Kazakhstan and other States that they don't speak Russian. It's hunger, it's poverty, but they survive, there is no danger the way we live.

Z- So you went back?

O- So we are now on the train to go to Borisov, but this is still Soviets so they . . . it's a little bit of a communism. We get a room. Everything is like treated as temporary. When we have a chance we will go back to Warsaw, without knowing what's doing Warsaw at that time, because the Germans are doing there own selves, and building the ghettos. But I go to school and the life is a little bit normalize. They speak the Ukrainian. I never heard about that language. You start learning. At the same time the school is still have professors from Poland, from Polish times and so on. So it's good. And I developed friendships and it's quasi-normal life. At least it's no bombing, it's no . . . we don't about . . . we have contact with Warsaw because mother's brother is there. He ask, you have no idea what he's asking for, he's asking if he can sell the sewing machine, you know, the little things that are not so little they could send them not us. Now where we go from here?

Z- So what changed?

O- What changed is . . .nothing changes until 1941, when . . .I think we have a dance or something in the high school, because it's June 22 and we come in there early in the morning, like 4 o'clock in the morning and I look at the sky and I said to her, I said "what is it, maneuvers?" "Look at those two plans fighting, why should they fight?". We go home, open the radio, nobody knows anything, nothing. The war begins. This is 22 of June.

Z- In '41.

O- '41, right. And my father in his wisdom, he says "difficult times are awaiting us". I said, "how does he know?". After all it's the Germans, you know, who is going to . . .Russia is strong and they going to fight and all this, this is it. The first three days are murder. They drag the Jews from homes, because we, the Jews always concentrate in some parts of the city and the city is trembling, well it's a . . . Ukrainian, I never heard the language, but I'm learning, Jewish, Yiddish and Polish. So, three hundred people were killed the first few days because they were Jews, of course, they were

accused that they were killing the Polish patrons, and the . . . the direction of this . . . this, not revolt, but certainly this murderous times are against the Jews. And there is such a . . . and at that time I finished high school, I must have finished high school at that time, and I'm working in a hospital and I know quite a few people who work in the hospital. I approach one doctor that somebody's mother wants to visit her daughter. He just push me away and I see the changes right away in the people, in the atmosphere and everything. In the hospital I am flirting with one of the young doctors. He comes to the . . . he knows where we live and he calls my name. My mother says don't go out and we sit in the toilet. The toilet is so located that another door is open and you don't know even that the toilet is there, because they . . . they . . . the poor . . . Ukrainian, what do you call it . . . peasants, go everywhere. They steal my watch, they still something else, they go into your house, they steal fast whatever they can and they disappear. This lasts for two or three days. Three hundred people dead and they buried in cemetery. When Julian, my son, and Myriam, granddaughter, went now to Poland, the cemetery it doesn't exist anymore, there is only a monument. I have a picture. That was once a Jewish cemetery.

Z- So you were there until when?

O- 19 . . . we were liberated in 1944.

Z- By the Russians?

O- By the Russians. They were going to the Berlin. That was their dream. They have to liberate Berlin. And I am so determined to study that, Russians are settled and it's fairly . . . it's quasi-quiet. They still fighting, and they still dancing, but they are not . . . they actually, they are the winners of the war and the Germans are running away.

Z- So how many Jews were there in the village?

O- Maybe 6,000.

Z- And everyone was safe?

O- No. Well, now the Russians . . . with the Russians we are fairly safe and they . . . not that safe, but anyway I pack my stuff, I said "I'm going to study". Finally 1944, who knows how long the war is still going on, I go to [same as 0:22:10], which is like 100 miles from Borisov. I'm in heaven. I'm in University and . . .

Z- What to you study?

O- What do I study? I want something like philosophy, psychology . . . I end up, because everybody says "no, you have to go to Palestine" and there is no Israel yet. I said, what am I going to with this physics and the math. I hate this, but I go because

I don't even know where to go for the other subjects. And I study and I finish the first year. It's not so bad.

Z- In sciences.

O- In?

Z- Sciences.

O- I literally give back the professor to let me go by, because the physics I hated and I wasn't interested one bit. But what can you do when you are such an ignorant at that point. Anyway, I change after. So it's ... and there ... the [0:34:57] they send the Russian students, that they Russian, because they want to start a ... a like a ... a part of their country. And they decimated, the Jews don't exist of course. I still don't say that I am Jewish, because they, you know, they didn't do, the Germans when they traveling through the Soviet Union and killing. They still today don't where this people are, where they were buried.

Z- What was your family name?

O- Koretz. No, T-Z, my father didn't like because he said it's too German. He changed to C. So now you read my name, Korec. And Korec in Polish, it's what you ... when you have a bottle, you put, from cork. I'm so ... I have no sentiment for that name at all. It's like not my name. Well, I'm married so I have Ben's name. But that's what happened we didn't know that would be, you know ...

Z- And you were born Olga?

O- Yeah, yeah, my mother didn't know how to name me, but her sister in Berlin said name her Olga, it's such a beautiful name. Now in Polish you can say [] you can have many differences in the name, but here it's Olga, so I'm Olga. Now there are plenty of Olgas, a lot of Russians come to Canada.

Z- yeah, cause it's more of a Russian than a Polish name.

O- Very Russian, yeah.

Z- Okay, so you are at University and ...

O- I'm at University and ...

Z- Planning to go to Palestine?

O- I don't even think about Palestine, I know my father wouldn't be happy because he don't like heat [laughs]. In the meantime all the sisters are gone. My mother's sisters, four women I think and one man. And left ...

Z- They weren't in Warsaw though?

O- No, Tarnow and one was in Berlin, she was deported. Hitler did this beautiful maneuver. Brought German . . .no, Polish Jews who lived in Germany for 30 years, he brings from [0:37:08] Poland and he says, "let Poland take you". And Poland says "let Germany take you". There is one, the famous one, who shot one of the workers in the German Embassy, Greenbaum . . . I think was his name. It's a famous story because, okay, between these people, four months, they staying at the borders. She write to us, [0:37:33] was her name, my mother's sister, "maybe we can come to Warsaw'. My mother says, "how can you come to Warsaw, it's crisis all over, it doesn't make sense". She finally goes to Tarnow to parents house. But Mr. Greenbaum who is thirty years he was prospering in one of the small town in . . .big town in Germany, says to his son, writes to his son who is already in France "Do something, you are in France, maybe the France will understand something, why are we standing here for months". So this kid goes, buys a gun, goes to the German Embassy and kills the first man he sees sitting at the desk. Well, a Jew killed a German. I don't know what happened to him. Nothing good. That's for sure. There's a picture in the museum that they carried him or something. And let's burn all the synagogues and this is Kristallnacht. So there's a lot of stories, you know, around this.

Z- Yeah.

O- yeah.

Z- So the war ends, 1945 comes and the war is over and you are still in University?

O- I finished. In '45 I'm still . . . where am I in '45? I'm still in Borisov, going to Krakow. My parents now are in Krakow because there is Russians says to all the refugees, "you want to go to your home, do it now, this is going to be Russia". And there's Bellarouse and all this is Soviet union and you go to Poland. Poland shifted, the . . .

Z- Border.

O- The borders, took a part of Germany, and Warsaw is impossible to live, so we live in Krakow, so I registered another year in University, I have to continue this work I hate. But I finish and I get used to it because I chose . . . they opening a factory where they are going to do some produce from . . . fruit and so on, and they never had this kind of industry, but that suits me a little bit better. And I finished, I graduate, I have engineering degree.

Z- That's why you have the iron ring?

O- Oh, no, you know what happened? It's a beautiful ring, but I swim here and there is . . . the chlorine . . .

Z- Oh, yeah, so it's silver.

O- Oh, terrible. I bought this it was 25th anniversary, I was married 30 years, anyway.

Z- I thought it was the engineering iron . . .

O- [laughs] oh, no. That was . . . I don't know if they had, I think they had this, you're right. . . And we come to Canada.

Z- When do you come?

O- 1949.

Z- So between '46 and '49, how do you decide to go to Canada?

O- My mother, the only sister that survives, is the one who that they ran away from Poland to Romania, they got into Palestine. I don't know even if they had money, but they headed. . . [laughs] my uncle says "half a year, the water grows on you, and the other half a year, the water goes from you" [laughs]. So . . .

J- So, complaining about the heat . . .

O- Yeah. And Palestine at that time, you know, it's a poor country. They don't want to stay there. My uncle was in Canada before the war, he located some money, and he has a very good friend, a German, who is so friendly with us that you would kiss him. When he comes to Warsaw, he is an engineer, and engaged in the same company that my father works. My father would come home and says "prepare something" because [0:41:17] was his last name, "he's coming", okay. Supper, salads, this and that. You know that he was a spy and we didn't know. He came with German army. My cousin had a fiancée, and she was cheated one day. She meets a friend and she is very unhappy, she's Jewish and she complains she doesn't know what to do, and this is German occupation, and the friend says to her "come this afternoon, I'll meet you and we'll talk about it". This one comes and there is two Gestapo men waiting there, because the woman she met was a spy for Gestapo. I think she was Jewish, but somebody tells me she wasn't, whatever. She's arrested and she meets this [same as 0:41:17], whom she know because he is invited by my aunt to her house, and she meets him there. The name of the woman that I am talking about is Paula. She begs him, she says, "you know me, I'm Artu's fiancée, save me, I'm here arrested because I . . . I . . . somebody, did such trick on me". Nothing happens, she's taken to [0:42:26] which is a big camp in Krakow and she is shot. I read in one of the books. So now the problem is he's invited by my aunt to her house . . .

Z- This is after the war?

O- After the war. Must be . . . no we are already in Canada. Must be '69, '70 something, like this, and he's there. Now, I don't want to shake his hand, and my father gives me a look that will kill me. So I . . .

Z- In '69?

O- Yeah.

Z- Okay, so let's hold on to that story. So, you decide to go to Canada. So it's you your parents and your sister?

O- We come here.

Z- How old are you? You're 20?

O- In '69 (should be '49?), I was born in '23, so how old . . .

Z- 27. And you were single still?

O- yeah.

Z- So you all come.

O- We all come.

J- And how do you come?

O- Train . . . to . . . only train. Train to, oh yeah, France. In France . . .

J- Trains.

O- No, in boat. In France we stay for a week. We visit Paris. It's very beautiful. It's very nice.

Z- So you had money?

O- My father has some dollars, yeah. In France, you know, they people who meet . . . I go . . . somebody tells me "go for Matzahs", because it's Passover time. They distribute to Jewish people the Matzahs. I go there and I meet a boy that I know from vacation in Poland. That kinds of meetings, you see people and that's the time where Picasso is in Peace Congress, you know, it goes on. And then the boat, take in Le Havre. I speak a little French, so kind of it's easier. And we come to Quebec city. I hear the French, I said to myself what language do they speak? . . .

J- And this boat, your dad pays for the boat. He arranges all the costs.

O- We paid for the boat, but ahead of time I get ticket, I think in Poland. And the man who is interviewing me, they are very funny at that time, they think that every Jew who survived is kosher or something and we come to . . .

J- Is what?

O and Z- kosher

J- Is kosher, okay.

O- And we come to the boat and we get a kosher meat. We never had kosher meat in our lives, but okay, it was good [laughs].

J- And paperwork and stuff, how is the arrangement to come to Canada?

O- Very easy.

J- Your dad's . . . your sister or your, or your dad's sister is in Canada already?

O- My mother's sister.

J- Your mother's sister, so does she sponsor you?

O- Through a lawyer. Everything . . .

J- Everything is done through a lawyer?

O- Yeah, we have to pay them back. My father has some money, but everything is done. No problem. And we come here and . . .

J- You come here to Quebec city.

O- We come to Quebec city, they speak French there and I don't understand one word, but everything is new. The people, the way they dress, and the English, forget about it, but French, and French is no popular here. The French Canadians are, what do you call it, janitors. The lowest category in the population.

J- This is in Quebec city?

O- Not only, Montr—

J- --I know. Well, when you were . . . we are just trying to slow down the story, because you just arrived, you're just arriving . . .we just want to arrive with you in Canada here, that's all.

O- In Quebec city, only French of course, but in Quebec city there is a little group of refugees like us, and everybody is counting on some relatives who are waiting in Montreal. We had no idea what Canada is all about.

Z- Did you have to go through any medical or anything?

O- In Poland.

Z- Before you left?

O- Before we left. Not in Canada, I don't remember anything like this, no.

Z- So you get off the boat onto a train?

O- Yeah, by train to Montreal, and then, right, and then we stayed, okay, in Montreal my aunt staying in this apartment for a week, waiting for us. She will be with us first week and then she says goodbye, you are on your own, I'm going to Prescott. Prescott is Ontario and my uncle already opened a factory.

Z- In Prescott?

O- In Prescott?

Z- Doing what?

O- Metals stuff, the same . . . yeah. Parts of . . . bathrooms. He knew it, he never worked there directly, but he's very clever man, self-taught I'm sure. And totally engrossed in his business, and it's already doing well. It's 1949, after the war, you know, everything is terrific, whatever you make, whatever you do.

Z- So where was this apartment in Montreal?

O- Queen Mary, yeah.

Z- So did you stay there?

O- We stayed there. My aunt says "go to the baker shop and buy bread". I said "how do I buy bread?". "You say, black bread please". I go to the baker shop I said "black break please". She give me the bread and she says something else. I said what else do you want from my life, I bought the bread, let me go home. She talks to me, she smiles. No idea what she says.

J- Well what does she say?

O- "Anything else?". Who prepared me for that.

J- It's difficult yeah.

O- But that was so American "Anything else?"

J- But you are hearing French and English.

O- Sure. So then you have to work . . . so . . .

Z- One second Olga, hold on, let's go back.

O- Sure.

Z- So there's your mother, your father, you, your sister. Your sister's just a couple years younger than you.

O- My sister can't work yet.

Z- Yeah, she's not well.

O- No, she's okay. I don't remember . . . she . . . I don't think she went to school. No, she finished school in Poland. She also has to go to work, and she goes. She goes . . .

Z- And your father had enough money to last initially?

O- Initially yes, but my . . . I think my . . . uncle arranged something. And there was also a friend from Poland who already was a year ahead here. We left together on the same [0:48:51] Warsaw and he's very devoted to my father. Engineer by training, he already is Barclay street, and there were fields, it was like you were in the country. He's building Barclay and he engages my father as a bookkeeper. You're going to sit in this and this place and keep the list of the people working, you have to pay them. And he is the builder of Barclay. Barclay St. when it was finished looked like the worst New York, you know, I don't know what part of NY looked like that. They rebuild, they improved and it's quite nice street. Full of . . . I don't think you find one Canadian born on that street.

J- Barclay street? I don't know it.

Z- It's not far from here, it's sort of Cote-des-Neiges and Victoria.

J- So he's involved in the construction business, he's building things?

O- And he duplicates the same factory that he . . . the same products that he had in Poland, he's producing here.

Z- But one second, but first he was a bookkeeper first, right.

O- Oh you are talk about my father, he's always a bookkeeper. He's always doing something in the stores that . . . at a desk and pen. And he's good at it.

Z- What does your mother do?

O- My mother goes to the factories and picks up, let's say, you have to finish sweaters . . . j ust design, like something. She is very good at that and she manages. So she gets 5 dollars a week or something, but it helps.

J- Does she bring her work home to work on.

O- Sure

J- Is that it?

O- Sure.

J- Is that it, so she brings the work home?

O- Yeah, she brought the work home.

Z- And you needed her to work?

O- And she wants to work. And these are German most of the time, they are people that she can communicate with, they are not English speaking, they are refugees like us but they came before us, earlier. And so, they . . . they exploit her, but she doesn't mind. So she brings sweater, she does quite a nice work, she was always doing something.

Z- What was she doing with the sweaters?

O- Adding something, let's say the design wasn't finished, you know, they has knitted sweater but you had to add. They gave her one sample and she does it. Very easy work.

Z- So maybe like a flower or . . .

O- Exactly. Yeah.

Z- And how many hours does she work a week?

O- Not much, but she schleps . . . but it's not hard for her, she wants to continue it. And [0:51:23] are healthy and somehow we [0:51:27]. So, I get also a job. How did I get this? It was interesting because I worked with the machine that produces some kind of a cream. And this cream has to be put in the bottle. You know, and Neutrogena, I still see the adds of that cream. [laughs]

J- So that was the name of the cream? Was Neutrogena?

O- Something, yeah.

J- Something like that, okay.

O- And the women look at me like I'm, forget it, I don't know nothing. But this is good enough, and then in the end they tell me to sweep the floor. Unfortunately, I said it at home, because I shouldn't say. I didn't mind, so I sweep the floor. And my mother – oh, tragedy. Come to Canada and sweep the floors [laughs], my daughter, anyway.

J- So that was your first job and where was that job?

O- Oh, everything, all this industry goes . . . it's . . . I don't know what you call it, district in Canada, oh in Montreal. Near the water, not in central Montreal for sure. But, slowly, first of all there is a large crowd of refugees, and some are doing already very well, in the dress, in this . . . one puts the foot between the door and doesn't let the owner to close the door until he buys something, you know, the shtick. Well, one already rent the duplex, we still live in the apartment. What . . . My cousin is taking care of us, but she's not practical, because, to live in . . . at that time, they were hot hot summers, and terrible winters and we didn't have a balcony. The balcony was essential in this climate. But there is a little part, so they go to the park.

Z- This was here in Queen Mary?

O- Not far. You know where Hampstead is? So it's past Hampstead. Hampstead is British, I don't think there is one Jew. And now I don't think there is one English, it's all Jewish.

Z- No because, I was looking at data today that traced the number of Jews in Hampstead, like in the schools. Zero. Well until '61.

J- So the schools . . . okay.

Z- It was wealthy established . . . could we go back to those first times? So you got this job doing that. What about English, did you go to English classes, or French classes?

O- No, English, English. French didn't count. French was not necessary to survive here. English you have to speak.

Z- Why not? You knew some French?

O- Yeah, but the whole business is done in English. The big companies it's only English. You go to them and maybe there is a little bit of anti-Semitism too. My cousin was sure that I would get because I go with him at that time, that I would get a job in a lab, that I will know what to do. And then they call me or they send a letter, no. So he thought "ah, because you said you were Jewish.". Maybe, I don't know. I didn't speak English well anyway. But then somebody knows somebody and I get a phone call from a woman who works in a lab in one of the hospitals. It's a psychiatry department up there at the hospital, and they need a laboratory person who can work with the microscope. And she heard about me, maybe you should come. I come and I get a job. The man who hired me was so wonderful. He says "what language you speak?". I said, "I don't know try me". And he says . . .

Z- He says this in English?

O- I don't remember what language he spoke to me. He was wonderful. He was extremely bright. One of those poor boys whose mother worked in a factory and educated him. He was brilliant, PhD and so on. And we remained friends, I still see, he died and I still meet his wife. So I am in a lab now and the salary is \$175 a month, which is good by that standard.

Z- When was this?

O- Maybe, 1950, '51.

Z- So one or two years . . .

O- After I came. I feel . . . and I meet, you know there is another young Jewish man there, and I meet through them some other people. And all the refugees start meeting in one place. And what we talk about? How we survived the war. So there are a few women from Auschwitz, and there is somebody was in Russia.

J- This was all in the hospital.

O- No.

J- Not all but . . .

O- No, but we, somehow there is a connection, you know. When you are refugee and speak Polish and you, lost here, so we go to, in the evening or the weekend there is--

J- And were do you go?

O- We go to usually somebody's house and talk but then, on the weekends, there is a place like ideal, you have to take a boat in Lachine. Lachine it's . . .Lachine, it's like China, you know.

J- I know, I know, yeah.

O- I think one of the writer's he died. He moved to America, he was [0:56:53] and lived there. Quite famous. One of the Jewish writers. I have to refresh my memory, there are picture of him, I think, in the museum. So we go weekends, we take the little boat and we go across the river, doesn't exist anymore, and we go and spend Sundays there. It's very much European neat, you know, have to go to la plage or a little bit of water, of sun. My parents, it's lovely. So that's the part that we liked. And also, they organized a little . . . to know better the surroundings. So there is a "new world" they called, because it's new world for us. We came here from the old world. This is a new world.

Z- Who organized this?

O- One of the guys who was more energetic. And we meet, let's say on Sunday, at the same time. We take a boat. I don't know how we got the boat. Somebody has a car.

Z- Did you speak Polish to one another?

O- No. Then we start . . . they German, Polish, what other languages? Mostly German and Polish.

Z- No Yiddish?

O- No, nobody speaks Yiddish. No, these are very assimilated Jews. Maybe they spoke at home but certainly not between each other. And, there is a writer from Canada . . . what's his name? He died, you know . . .

J- Poet or writer? Fiction writer?

O- Fiction writer. Jewish. Begins with H. I'll find out for you. And he starts teaching refugees English.

Z- Might have been Layton.

O- Layton, I said H and it's Layton, okay.

Z- Someone else told me they had taken classes.

O- But he is so modest at that time, he's not the same as later on. And my husband, oh yeah, I meet Ben also and he knows Layton.

J- Okay, so some of this large group, or this group is getting larger, people keep meeting, keep meeting. They aren't all refugees. They're assimilated Jews and Germans.

Z- No, no, they're refugees who were assimilated in Germany. That's why they don't speak Yiddish. I mean German or Polish. In Europe they didn't speak Yiddish because they were assimilated into their countries, and they are survivors from the war.

O- Even if they spoke at home, they didn't speak Yiddish outside of the home. There was a large group like that, we were not unique in big cities, not in small.

Z- So you went to English classes with Irving Layton?

O- Evening. Jewish Public Library. In the meantime when you left Poland, people who knew that you going here, coming here "please take a letter to this one, please take a letter this one, I have relatives and so on". And I have a letter to the library, the Jewish Public Library, and this man is absolute delight.

J- You bring the letter to the . . . and you've been holding this letter for a number of months.

O- Right, because the lessons now in English by Layton and in the Jewish Public Library, I think in the basement.

J- And this is during the weeknights.

O- Yeah and it's a handful of us. A couple, a single boys, me, I go and I go to this library and this man "sit down and talk to me", he says. And I do.

J- And excuse me where is the library at his point.

O- Jewish Public Library, you were in.

J- But is that the same place.

Z- No, no, no

O- It was on Esplanade. That was the Jewish . . . yeah, yeah, yeah.

J- Okay, good. Just picturing where you are.

O- You know, the [1:01:05] I love of the Jewish community changed drastically.

J- Oh, I'm sure.

O- The whole . . . what did you mention before that was . . . I mentioned too? Only Jews they didn't live there.

J- Hampstead.

O- Yeah, Hampstead. Now no English will go there because there are only Jewish.

Z- So you took Jewish classes?

J- English.

O- English. And we all talk about ourselves of course. And Irving he is terrific, he's kind and he's like modest and he became impossible. He grew and grew, you know, more and more. And the whole Cote St. Luc was fields and grass growing. I think he had a home there, and my husband knew him, and he said we'll visit him. I remember a little house, far away. You drove to through the fields, you were in the country. And that was Cote St. Luc, and the Hampstead started to build up. Non-Jews left.

Z- How did you meet your husband?

O- Very romantic.

Z- Is he also from Europe?

O- No, he was born here. You can imagine . . .

Z- And his name is Bare?

O- Sher. S-H-E-R It's Sherinski, but we legalized Sher.

Z- Okay.

O- I was invited by another boy to go to movies in French University. A movie about a black boy, it just connected that a movie like that wasn't playing for public, because they wouldn't go, but it was in the French University, here somewhere, not the building that's standing up, it was a one building, French went to University to be notaries, or there was another job they could go, notaries or priests, that was the limit. We started to rent a house somewhere in the country, so when I came in shorts I had to go back home and put on a longer skirt, because the priests didn't let you.

Z- What year was this?

O- 50s

J- 1951 or 1952 or '55

O- Later. Maybe later. Yeah maybe . . . no, '51 we didn't go yet. Kids must have been already like 5, 6 years old.

Z- Okay, so that's that.

O- Okay, so let's go back.

Z- Before I asked you about your husband, but I want to hold on before that. So your friends were all refugees?

O- All refugees.

Z- And did you hang out with other . . .

O- No, didn't hang out, but of course being at work I had to meet them. So there were English girls, very polite, but I couldn't relate to them.

Z- How come?

O- It was language. My . . . everything was too fresh in my memory, the whole war. I was looking still for books, but books weren't written yet. At that time nobody wanted to talk about the war. Oh but the three girls whom I knew were from Auschwitz and they would talk and sometimes somebody would say "enough, we don't want to hear anymore".

Z- Who said enough?

O- Another survivor who didn't want to hear.

Z- And what about the Canadian Jews? Did they want to hear about it?

O- Canadian Jews, no. They said when you come hear there will be no end to your talking. There was no beginning. They absolutely didn't want to hear.

Z- Why not?

O- Because it was too much, too sad. They put some kind of a barrier and they really were not interested. It was so far away from their psyche, that you could only communicate with someone . . . I met two, three people and I remember them. "Sit down and tell me what happened". One was a social worker. Nothing to do with Poland. Nothing to do with Europe. He wanted to know. The other one I don't eve

remember, but I know he also wanted to hear. I would never open my mouth to anybody who didn't say, "come and talk to us". The people were also coming and talking to us in Yiddish, some people. Former fighters from Poland, now immigrating to the States, invited to come here. There was a movement. We can't forget . . . but that didn't start yet, it wasn't forced enough, it wasn't . . . you needed leaders and there was nobody who started doing something like this. What happened one day, what caught my attention, Hungarian Jews were very disturbed by what was happening to them because they were caught in the last years of the war and 400,000 was sent to Auschwitz and they always, like they were ready to be free and here they go through such torture. And they formed a circle and they needed 320. And that I saw on the t.v. and caught my attention already, I said that's how far they go, and where is the rest. How come the rest aren't with it.

Z- They organized themselves?

O- I think they organized themselves, or you found one person who is interested and starts running some kind of . . . maybe that was already a treatment? I don't know, but I was interested in it. And there is a program on the T.V., which was terrible, didn't resemble the war at all. But everyone was talking about it. I was already going to the Y because I'm always in sports and I see the women born here talking about it, and I get sick because . . .

Z- Why? What program?

O- Because it didn't resemble anything what we went through.

Z- What program was that?

O- I think Meryl Streep is somewhere . . . It resembled what . . . the real stuff, like this lamp, it resembled something else. Nothing, nothing . . .

Z- This was in the 50s?

O- Must have 50s. Maybe early 60s, I doubt it. 50s, late 50s on CBC. They wanted to, you know, it becomes more and more ripe and people can't keep their mouths shut. And it's so many refugees coming that they need some kind of sharing, there is no museum yet, nothing.

Z- What about support for the people? You didn't need financial support, but a lot of . . .

O- First of all that's Germany, so they so okay, every Jew . . .

Z- No I understand about the Germans. But the Jewish community supporting the immigrants in Canada?

O- I think there was some bitterness about it. There was not that much of a support. There was lack of understanding. We were loaded with, you know, the horrors, that . . . who could understand it. They didn't believe. They said "enough already I don't want to hear". But I don't know how this . . . this . . . was somehow overcome and broken down. What was like in the States.

Z- I think it was the same.

O- The same. So when did it start?

Z- Well that's what I want to look at.

O- You know, the books started to appear. Maybe that's what it was.

Z- What books?

O- Survivors started to write.

Z- But that wasn't more until the 70s.

O- That late?

Z- Yeah, I think so. But let's go back, so people who needed, did you know people who were in need of help, financial, who were struggling.

O- Financial help wasn't that . . . it was possible to get. First of all, well, it was also up to Germany because the Germany had money now, and they said we'll pay you if you testify.

Z- Yeah, but that wasn't until the 60s.

O- That's what it was?

Z- Yeah.

O- I don't remember, because my parents they . . . population of their age, they was getting the money faster, because they knew how much longer they going to live, so it won't cost us so much.

Z- But people who came to Canada to get started, do you know what support was available?

O- The general feeling, I think, was that we don't get any help. You help yourself. This is the Canadian pride. You have to help yourself. Nobody helped us, you help yourself. You go to work, you work hard, you're going to be paid. And people started that. Everybody was working, and . . . somehow we had, we had social life.

We had support, we were supporting each other in that way. Not obviously support, but even by communication. I was friends with people that I wouldn't really chose them to be my friends. But I suppose out of necessity. They were a little bit older, they were not at my level and we started to be friends. And they had a basement already, and they organize the party. So . . .

Z- So it was out of emotional . . .

O- We needed some joy in our lives.

J- And were you socializing after work, were you socializing with your mom and dad and their friends?

O- No.

J- You started to make your own friends?

O- Right.

J- And your sister is in a different generation . . .

O- The generation of my parents repeated what they left in Europe. They going for coffee, to the restaurant, or to the coffee house, and they'll sit there. I don't think the people . . . the waiters there were too happy because they would sit for hours. But they did it. You know, Canada wasn't crowded, they . . . it wasn't open for refugees, they were very selection, selection . . . They were selecting who they were going to let in. Did I ever see a black person on this street here? Never. They had to sit were they were born, in suburb that now it's very beautiful this suburb and so on, but the black guy would come here and be hired or you hired him to fix something, never. This was horrible, this prejudice.

Z- So it was a real racist . . .

O- Oh, and how British here, they were English, you know, they were [1:11:55] and even the Jews. The synagogues and the whole movement started because of the influx of the people. People were coming. They were coming for a long time.

Z- And your parents only hung out with survivors?

O- Only.

Z- Now, is it because they were pushed to them or they wanted to?

O- No, they wanted to. They were . . . the local people, the immigrants from before, they were not interested in refugees. They were afraid to hear even what happened. That was not their biggest joy. We understood. So they . . . they had all . . . this

couple was from this place, mostly from Polish Jews. My mother never learned good English, my father did. He works at the place, I think . . . and that's . . . that's was their lives. And then they start living the European life. So they need two weeks vacation, so they go to lake Placid. That's already big progress, that was nice. Like in Europe you go out to this place, that place, seashore for summer. And the heat here was horrible, so everybody ran away. And then . . . so, I meet this boy who works in the same place as I do, he takes me out and we go to see a movie at University of Montreal. So it's an unusual movie about black boy who can't find a place for himself, but I can see that he's a little bit different this guy, and if he comes to take out the refugee, that already means something. Because the Canadian boy wasn't interested in refugees, in . . . take the girl out who is coming from Poland. First of all Poland was like, you know, the worst of the worst because they were anti-Semites, because his [1:13:52 – Babbee? Spelling?] came from Poland and she told him stories, so that's, yeah . . .

J- Okay, I'm just absorbing. Okay. I should not date a Polish girl, I'm learning that right now, okay [laughter].

Z- So how did you meet Ben?

O- Okay, so I am going with guy to the movie and somebody is sitting in the front of me, that's Ben. And he turns his head around, and I said, what is he looking at? Me! I really didn't pay attention to him.

J- This is 1950 . . . what?

O- Right, 1951. When I got married, but we knew each other 5 month, so that probably . . .

J- Long time, okay, go ahead, so you at the movie.

O- The movie is good and I go home. In the meantime Ben tries a hug. So Ben is with another girl and he says to her "do you know this girl?". She says, "no, but I know the guy she is with, so you call the guy and you tell him" . . . what . . . she had to lie and she didn't want to lie . . . "You tell him that you know, that you went to school with the girl he was with". That was so funny because to school . . . I just came from Poland, but anyway. The boy that I was with, he tells me "somebody called me and she says that she knows you from school", I said to him, I said "that a good lie". "That she knows you from school and she wants your phone number". Can you imagine?

Z- But you are speaking English well at this point?

O- Me? No. I said what is this, but I figured out it must be this guy who was turning his head looking at me. Okay. So, he calls, "I saw you in the University. My friend knows the boy you were with".

J- You're speaking what? Polish?

O- No, English.

Z- He's Canadian.

J- I know he's Canadian, but he could have grown up in a German household. I don't know. Okay, go ahead.

Z- If anything it would have been Yiddish, right.

O- Right. He spoke Yiddish with his mother.

Z- 'Cause they were that first wave of . . .

O- My father in-law spoke English, but my mother in-law, very poor, but she spoke . . .

.
Anyway so he calls me once. I can't go. He calls me two, I get busy, I'm taking some courses, I had to, you know, do something with my life. And for a week, I think, he is calling everyday, he wants to go out, I can't. And then Friday, I said " yeah, I can go out". He can't go out, I said, "okay, so we'll wait". Finally we meet. It was very romantic because I was invited somewhere else, I said I'm on this and this street, it's Sunday afternoon, you can come pick me up. But he didn't pick me up and he was waiting there.

J- Where?

O- Park Avenue. I work with this woman. In the meantime I'm at the lab. I'm very happy because I am doing some work with microscope. I am getting . . . what do you call it? Samples of blood, and I have to find the red cells, this cells . . . and it's like interesting.

J- Yeah, you're lucky, it's interesting work, right

O- Absolutely. And I'm meeting people who are, you know, a little bit different category. A lot of English nurse, and one, when I know that I am getting married, she's making . . . what is the celebration before the . . .

Z- Shower?

O- Shower. I have no idea what they want from me [laughter]. I don't know what I'm going to do there. And these things are very kind of crinkly [?1:17:28] , because my English is poor. They take me to their beautiful homes . . .

Z- So what did you speak with Ben?

O- English.

Z- Did you understand Yiddish, or no?

J- So it's Park Avenue and where, where did you meet that Sunday afternoon?

O- Oh, no, no not . . . Park Avenue and one of the main streets, I wouldn't even remember now. She was very . . . Her name was [1:17:53] and [same as 1:17:53] family was old Jews from Russia who came here. And she was like, you know, rich woman who still worked. What did she do in the place where I was? She was washing the laboratory----

J- The glasses, the vials, cleaning . . .

O- Yeah. She was working part time. I didn't understand the who, complex, you know, of the work. And she was coming for a few hours, she came from this lovely family. And she had nieces and nephews, anyway. It was quite pleasant to be in her house.

J- Oh Yeah, you are meeting people.

O-That's it. And the customs. She served celery, I thought I must be in the wrong house. And you dip into something, and you watch these people like you are in the zoo. It's so different from my friends.

J- Lot's of fun, lot's of fun.

Z- So Ben picked you up . . .

O- So Ben picks me up and we walk all the way . . . all through the . . . what the street down . . . to St. Catherine from . . . Park Avenue. The mountain on the right side, I don't know too much about the mountain. On the left side is the field, they play football.

Z- Fletcher's Field.

O- Fletcher's Field. And on this field, you know, 1942 or '43, I don't know how many couples got married. Because the boys were going to . . . overseas or they were going to the army, and it was like mass wedding.

Z- Jews or non-Jews?

O- I think yeah, that I never asked.

J- General Canadians, just that was the rumor, that was the sort of legend of that area, eh. Of . . .

O- That's what?

J- That there were loads of weddings.

O- Oh yeah, this was one day, one afternoon, because it was 1942, I think, the war was, they just joined it. What happened in 1942?

Z- Canada joined the war.

O- That's it. So the boys who were going overseas, they all got married. That was a famous scene. I liked it so much. It was so nice. Okay, so that was famous, and then they play football there. There was a little bit of Europe there. And the Y moved from . . .no, there was the Y and they moved from there to Snowden, which was much developing, now much more Jewish. So we walk with Ben, and he takes me to a nice restaurant, and we talk, and we have so much to talk. And the relationship developed.

Z- And even though you didn't speak English well.

O- No, no, he had a dictionary, but somehow . . . well, he invited me to a circle of his friends and we sitting and I said "yes, I knew him, he was a, just a minute, he was a Jewish monkey". I they look at me "he was a Jewish monkey?" "Yeah, yeah, Jewish Monkey". "You sure?" "Yeah" "Maybe Jewish monk?" "Oh yeah, Jewish monk". I thought I said good word, but it wasn't Jewish monkey it was Jewish monk. Can you imagine?

Z- So you got married?

O- We got married. It was chief Rabbi of Montreal and the whole wedding ceremony was also a little bit strange, you know. My parents walked with me and it was covered . . . what do you call it? The Chuppah.

J- The Chuppa, yeah

O- And few friends, Ben's friends, my mother's sister, my cousins were there. I have pictures. Was lovely. My in-laws, my . . . one son was already married, Ben's younger brother. Ben was the oldest of three brothers, and two brothers were married. One brother, the youngest brother married a woman who was 16 years old, but she was like 36. I was 16 more than her. And she was, they all Canadian born. One is American born and he was the last one, he was not married yet.

Z- So what did Ben do?

O- At that time not much. He was working for a guy in the store and he was taking some stuff, coming and spraying in the store. Nothing much. Subsequently he joined a larger company, they had [1:22:19], they had many many stores here, everywhere, all Canada. So he was in merchandising, and in the office. Actually, he was in the stores a lot. He liked it. Subsequently he was doing . . .

Z- So when you got married, where did you move to?

O- Where was our first apartment? Oh yeah, Cote-des-Neiges, and there is . . . Vietnamese restaurant I think, [1:22:45] apartment. A man who owned it lived in Outremont. Outremont was very English, very beautiful old homes. And we had to go to him. I'm sitting there and it was like a palace. It wasn't a palace by the homes, some of them a little bit higher up, old, French Canada, mostly, a little but, French Canada. [1:23:10] furniture. Everything was so rich and nice. Not one Jew would have lived there, that's Outremont. You know where Outremont is?

Z- Yeah it's were we drove . . . Right . . .

J- Oh Yeah, we walked through various parts of Outremont.

O- It's a part of the Montreal that never changes. They live there for generations, I think. Although, everything changes now. They selling homes and they moving to condos, it's the newest trends.

Z- So you continued to work?

O- I continued to work until Julian was born. First I had a baby that didn't make it, so Julian was the first healthy kid, was terrific, was nice. I wait and everything and I stop working.

J- And that was when?

O- Julian was born 1953, I think. My daughter was born 1955, and then Emile, 1959. Good, very clever kids, thank God. Then, it was hard for me to stay home, but I didn't want to work.

Z- Did you have to?

O- I could use the money, but 10 years, I said no. I'm not going to leave the kids. My boss, former boss called me, he said come back to work, hire someone. I said no I couldn't.

Z- What was . . . I mean you had a lot of friends who were from Europe, survivors, and many of them struggled with money and they had to work. What did they do with childcare?

O- Mostly, if the parents were alive, it was parents, it was Babbee [spelling?], it was mother. And somehow the job fit the schedules. Not many women worked.

Z- You know, everyone I interviewed worked.

O- Really. Because . . .

Z- They had to, they had no choice.

O- I think until maybe the German came with the . . . helping . . .

Z- Yeah, the first years they all. . . you know, some of them were like your mother, a lot of them like our mother, they took work into their home, or they worked with their husbands, you know, bookkeeping or taking care . . .

O- Yeah, and there was some support given through relatives. It was help given, absolutely.

Z- Family help.

O- Absolutely. Yeah. And they, some did very well, I mean if you come to the museum, there is one wall, only donations and they are not small donations, they don't mention how much, but there's families here. And you wonder how these guys were so smart, that they made so much money, because they had no education, there was no time for education. To the Jew born in Poland in 30s, not 30s, like 20s let's say, when did he have time to go to school? Who went to school. And, how did it develop, the whole thing? I think the perseverance, the ambition of some guys, the cleverness . . . they were shrewd, they made money. You look at them and they couldn't put the two letters on the paper but they made millions of dollars, but they were also generous.

Z- Street smart.

O- What?

Z- Street smart.

O- Absolutely.

Z- Okay, any other questions or thoughts? . . . Did your sister work?

O- Not once she was married.

Z- But before?

O- He was quite well to do. He came from a religious family of 12 children already, when he married her. 3 boys and a lot of girls. And the girls did okay marrying nice guys, Outremont homes, like a different category. When they had sweaters that they didn't want to wear I took them, because they were too nice not to wear, and I didn't understand why they didn't wear it, because they bought a new one, and so on. And they would invite us and they show of, this tasteless everything you know, but they had this ambition and they accomplished.

Z- What Ben from a religious family?

O- Much more than me. My mother in-law was worried very much that I am more of a [] than a Jew, but she changed her mind. She knew. So when she was coming Ben was coming if I don't serve milk and meat, you know the basic I knew and I never do that to them. And they were very nice. My father in-law liked me I think. He said, "you're good for Ben". So they . . . they had their own . . . my father in-law was very active in the organization, which was United Jewish People's Order . . . and they had a choir and I loved singing.

Z- That's funny because U.J.P.O was very secular, left-wing.

O- But it was and it wasn't, it depends which part of UJPO I think. There was a part like my father, he was a worker essentially. He went to . . . I think to a fort . . . when you couldn't get work in Canada, he had to support three kids and a wife. He went to work and sending my mother in-law money from there. It was tough times in 20s I suppose. So how did we start on that. Oh, yeah, so they ran the . . . what do you call it? When the kids go to camp, camp in the summer. And my kids went when that was already over, they went to camp, the Y camp. Still today they going to the camp. My granddaughter is now the counselor and the other one in the training counselor, they love it. And my son, all the children went to camps. They love it. And last year the camp wasn't as full as it used to be. They took a group of kids to Israel. She went to Israel, she loved Israel. I said you going Israel, you have to go to [1:29:45] of course they did without me telling them. And you have to find the name of the man, because I put the name of the man who was sending us money, who support us all. For four months we were sitting in the attic, but we had to pay for sitting there. The landlady said I want to improve my life and you have to pay me. We didn't have a penny. We wrote to . . .

Z- Sitting where?

O- In an attic in a private home, for four months hiding. When we escaped the camp and we found the woman who wanted to hide us, but "you have to pay me". My father says what are you going to pay.

Z- Oh, so you were hiding in Poland?

O- In the last four months. When the Gestapo came to the camp and they said "the Russians can be here, the Russian are 350 miles away". We thought that would be three days. In the meantime they were in four months, so we had to go somewhere. We didn't want to stay in the camp. People who didn't have a place stayed in the camp.

Z- What camp was this?

O- That was the camp that they built that was . . . army . . . camp, old camp. And they put all the Jews in Borisov, they put them in there.

Z- So you stayed in hiding.

O- So we went into the hiding, but it wasn't easy to find the hiding. Somebody knows somebody, okay, this is the place to go, you know. What do you know about the people who take you? Nothing. But they look good. My father says they look honest so we will go there, we have no choice. So there is a building . . . it's a nice cottage and they live on the top. Like it seems to me that people that lived in that building ran away from Poland and where we stayed was for the servants most likely. And the couple who was renting this place slept in the same room as we did, and we all have a little place to sleep, and we sleep there. But comes one day and she says electrician is coming, because she has some ideas, she wants to change this, that, nonsense, but we can't advice her, because who are we such a clever people that have to hide. So we shut up and she is doing her work. She says you have to hide in the attic, in one corner, you sit there and electrician is coming to fix some lights. Electrician is coming and as we sit, he's coming, coming, coming, and we sit, we face each other like this. Now, this is the end of us, if someone sees, he knows what we doing there, who is sitting in the attic at this time. He is looking at us, we are looking at him. Not a word gets exchanged and he goes away. What are we going to do, tell her that? So she can say get out from here, I don't need you. Not tell her? Is it honest? Well, we decided not to tell. Luckily, this guy that I don't forgive myself, that I should have looked for him after the war and tell him, you have to be on the list of the righteous gentiles, I have someone on the list. We put the man who was paying, because at one time we had to pay this lady who is keeping us. My father wrote to this man, because this man took over our apartment in Warsaw, because he lost his apartment, so that was always some kind of exchange. And he was sending the money. My friend had to go to Warsaw for the money, bring the money back, pay the lady. And one day my father is in the bathroom and our landlord have guests, their brother in-law and he has to go to the bathroom and they know that my father is there. He tries to open the door, locked. He comes back, he says 'who is in the bathroom?' So what they going to tell him. They don't say anything. He says, "you hiding the Jews, I'm going to the police to denounce you". So at this point they say "wait one second, We're going to speak to my guests". They called us guests. They came and say, "Mr. Korec, I don't know what to do, he wants to go to the police and denounce us, we'll all be killed". So my father says "wait, I'll speak to him". He brushes his hair, he puts something nicer . . . he is sitting in. He

goes he says to the guy "you can do what you want, but I have connection" which was true "with people who are in army. "Not officially they are members, but they know. And if you do what you telling me now that you are going to denounce us, you are going to be killed the first day when the Russians are here, and besides that how much you want?". So he says " 500 and something". "Okay, you get it". We write to the man who is paying for our hiding, that we need extra money, and he sending us. So he's on the righteous gentile list. He came to visit us in Warsaw, my parents when Krakow and my mother went on her knees and kiss his hand. So when they say Polish people are terrible, they are, but there are exceptions too.

Z- Okay, I think that's it.

O- You want to come back? Or you heard enough?

J- We never hear enough.

Z- We could always come back and we never hear enough.