

# *My Grandmother's Story*

Sofia Bardach-Oher Memoirs

Written by her granddaughter: Sharon Rosin-Meraro

Edited by her daughter: Irit Oher-Rosin

## MY GRANDMOTHER'S STORY

### **FORWARD**

My grandmother told me that she and her family survived World War II by assuming Aryan (non-Jewish) identities. It wasn't until I was putting together a speech about my grandmother (for a speech class) and asked for more details that I realized that my grandmother's story was far more complex than I had imagined.

My grandmother is a very positive, upbeat person with a happy twinkle in her eye. You would never guess what she had been through. She is a good example of a person who didn't let the past ruin her future. I am so proud to have such an amazing grandmother.

I decided to document my grandmother's story so that future generations of my family would have a record of what happened to our family during World War II. My grandmother, her parents, and her sisters were among the few Jewish people to survive the holocaust in Poland. My grandmother says it was a miracle. I believe that this is only partially true. My grandmother and her family survived not only because they were lucky, but also because they were very smart. I am amazed by the identities they created, the stories they came up with and the schemes they concocted . . . .

### **PART I - CHILDHOOD/LIFE BEFORE THE WAR**

My grandmother was born Rosalia Bardach in Stryj, on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1924 in Poland. This part of Poland (Galicia) is now in the Ukraine. Her parents were Wolf and Cyla (Czarna Morgenstern) Bardach.

My grandmother had one brother and five sisters. Her siblings are listed below from oldest to youngest:

Matias was born in 1907

Róża (Olga Ziuta) was born in 1909

Klara (Krystyna Krzysia) was born in 1912

Józefina (Józia) was born in 1913

Basia (Barbara) was born in 1917

Karolina (Jadwiga Jadzia) was born in 1921

When my grandmother was growing up, anti-Semitism in Poland was rampant. Jews in Poland had a pretty bleak future. They were not able to get jobs and were not accepted into universities to study professions such as medicine, law or engineering. One of my grandmother's cousins studied engineering in Prague and his father (my grandmother's uncle) paid a lot of money so that another one of her cousins could attend medical school in Poland. Neither of these cousins was able to get work in Poland after they earned their degrees. The Jews that did relatively well in Poland were those who started their own businesses.

Because of the lack of opportunities available to the majority of Jews, many lived in poverty. Jews accepted anti-Semitism as part of life. They did not attempt to bring about social change – they did not see this as an option.

My grandmother's family was better off than most Jewish families. My grandmother's father, Wolf, was a farmer. He didn't formally study farming, but learned it from his father. He made a living by leasing a farm in the village of Piaseczna and running it. (The family who owned the farm did not care that my great-grandfather was Jewish – they simply cared about getting their rent). Her mother, Cyla-Czarna (Morgenstern) did not work outside the house, but helped her husband at the farm. The farm earned pretty good money. One reason for this was that the farm manufactured alcohol used to make vodka. Very few individuals were allowed to manufacture alcohol in Poland, but my great-grandfather's farm was one of the few granted a permit by the Polish government.

When my grandmother was born, my great-grandfather was able to purchase a beautiful house in Stryj, about 20 kilometers from the farm. The house was located in a neighborhood that was predominantly Polish. It had four big bedrooms, a huge kitchen, and a large balcony. There was a well in the yard, but no running water inside the house. The lighting was both electric and gas. During the week, the parents were at the farm and returned to town (Stryj) most evenings. The house in Stryj was run by a non-Jewish housekeeper Kasia Ohera who cooked, cleaned and took care of the children. During the summer and holidays, the entire family was at the farm.

My grandmother attended a girls-only school in Stryj. The school had both Polish and Jewish students. Some teachers and students were openly anti-Semitic. My grandmother had both Jewish and Polish friends at school. On the week-ends, my grandmother mainly hung out with her Jewish friends.

When my grandmother was growing up, many Jewish/Zionist movements formed in Stryj and in Galicia. These movements discussed Palestine and Herzl. My grandmother did not participate because she was too young and lived too far from the location of the meetings, but some of her sisters did attend the meetings.

All of my grandmother's sisters attended and finished high school. Attending high school was a big deal in Poland at the time. It was very expensive and not everyone completed high school like they do today. Some of my grandmother's sisters also attended Hebrew school to learn the Hebrew language (according to my grandmother they never really learned Hebrew), but she did not. Róża, my grandmother's oldest sister also attended the University to study philosophy, but she didn't finish her studies because of the breakout of World War II. (The Polish government didn't mind if Jewish people went to study something like philosophy. However, this education did not increase Róża's job prospects). Basia worked in a store owned by a Jewish family. Józefina had a talent for knitting and people ordered shirts/sweaters from her. Klara learned sewing with the intent of going to Palestine. Karolina worked in a book-binding/printing/copying business owned by a Jewish family.

My grandmother's brother, Matias, attended high school, but was not a very good student and did not graduate. He studied formally agriculture so that he could work with his father at the farm. He was the only Jewish person in his class. (The Polish didn't prevent Jews from studying agriculture). He constructed beehives so that farm could produce honey and pools for raising fish. My grandmother loved her older brother - he always spoiled her because she was the youngest. He bought her a watch with his first paycheck.

Overall, my grandmother says life was pretty good for her and her family before the war.



My grandmother's brother



My grandmother and her brother (photo before World War II). Originally, Józefina was also in the picture, but my grandmother cut her out of the picture because she was afraid to be identified as Jewish. (Józefina looked Jewish.)

## **PART II – WORLD WAR II**

### *Life Under Soviet Rule*

After Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, the country was divided according to the German/Soviet Non-aggression Treaty known as the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. Stryj, the town where my grandmother's family lived, became a part of the Soviet Union. My grandmother was about 15 year old and attending high school at this time. Her sisters had all completed high school by then.

The Soviets, being communist considered my great-grandfather a capitalist, because he leased/operated a farm. My great-grandfather heard from friends that the authorities

planned to arrest him for being a capitalist and decided not to return to his farm. And so the family lost their farm and income.

Under communism, all people were considered equal and anti-Semitism was banned in Poland. People were not even allowed to say the word “Jew”. Soviet passports did not state an individual’s religion. This policy made my grandmother’s time in high school more pleasant. In the past, people did not hesitate to call someone a “dirty Jew.” Under the Soviet rule, however, nobody dared to say such things.

Although they were not anti-Semitic, the Soviet policy was anti-capitalist. Both my great-grandfather and grandmother’s brother were issued passports with “special numbers” because of their involvement in managing the farm. Individuals with these “special numbers” in their passports could not get jobs. As a result, life was very difficult for the family. My great-grandfather had not saved much money because he had invested much of his earnings to purchase new and modern equipment for the farm. My grandmother’s sisters worked to support the family. Since they did not have direct involvement in the farm, their passports did not contain the “special numbers”. Róża became a phone operator, Klara was a gardener/housekeeper, Basia worked in a wool store. The interesting thing was that before the war, my grandmother’s sisters would not have been able to get these jobs because they were Jewish. Even though he was banned from working, my grandmother’s brother was able to find work as a day laborer.

In January 1941, my grandmother’s brother Matias was drafted to the Soviet army. If he didn’t go to the army, he would have been arrested. The Soviets drafted people of all religions/ ethnicities (Jews, Poles, and Ukrainians). He wrote a letter to the family and it sounded like the conditions in the army were difficult.

By this time, my grandmother’s sister, Józia (Józefina), was married. Unfortunately, her husband was also drafted to the Soviet Army.

### *Life Under German Rule*

The Molotov–Ribbentrop pact remained in force until the German government broke it by launching an attack on the Soviet positions in Eastern Poland including Galicia on June 22<sup>nd</sup> 1941. As the Nazis advanced, they took prisoners of war from the retreating Soviet army. They freed and sent home the Polish and Ukrainian men, but murdered the Jews. Sadly, Matias and Józia’s husband were among these individuals. My great-grandmother saw that the Ukrainians and Polish men that had been drafted with her son were returning home and she asked them about her son. They told her that all the Jewish men had been killed. The family didn’t believe them at first, but then they realized that they were telling the truth.

Life became very frightening for my grandmother’s family.

The Nazis gave the Ukrainians a 24-hour period of “free-hand” to hold a pogrom. Many Jews were killed, beaten and robbed. After the 24-hour period ended, the Ukrainians continued to abuse the Jews.

Various announcements and restrictions began. The first announcement stated that all Jews had to wear a white band with a blue Star of David on their left arm. Any Jew caught without this band would be killed on the spot. The family complied and wore the bands. Then Jews had to bring all their furs and jewelry to a specified location. The family surrendered only part of their furs and jewelry. They hid the rest in their home's cellar. All announcements always ended the same way: "Any Jew who does not comply will be killed with his family on the spot".

Soon after the invasion, the Germans established a Jewish Council ("Judenrat") in Stryj. The council served as a liaison between the Nazis and the Jews. The Nazis issued all kinds of demands. For instance, they demanded a certain amount of money from the Jews by a certain date. If the council could not produce the money, they were required to turn over a certain number of Jewish people, maybe 50 or so, to the Nazis. Of course the council could never collect enough money. They gathered the poorest Jewish people and turned them over to the Nazis. The people were told that they were being sent to work for the Nazis, but really the Nazis planned to kill them. Luckily, my grandmother's family was not selected.

In November 1941 Jewish people living on certain streets were told to vacate their houses. The family's house was on one of these streets. A few weeks after the Germans occupied Stryj, a German civilian, who had a gas pipe company, knocked on the door of the family's house one morning and told my great-grandfather "you have one day to vacate the house. Take whatever you want." My grandmother's family ended up not taking much because they did not really have a place to go. At this point, Jewish people were only allowed to live in one specific neighborhood (not a ghetto, just a regular neighborhood). Luckily, my great grandfather's older brother (Mendel Józef) lived in that neighborhood. He owned a building, which had stores on the bottom floor and rooms for rent on one of the upper floors. He gave my grandmother's family one of the rooms. There was no kitchen or running water in the room. Although Józia's husband was no longer with her, she was considered a separate family (because she was married) and moved into a room in another building close by.

There was no law or order in the Jewish neighborhood. If there was a vacant room, people simply moved-in. Nobody paid rent. As time went on, more and more rooms became vacant because many Jewish people died, were taken away or killed. My grandmother's family could have moved to a bigger apartment, but they decided to stay where they were.

My great-grandfather who spoke perfect German approached the German civilian man who took over his house and told him that he had daughters who could work for his gas piping company. Basia knew how to type on a typewriter so she became a secretary. Many houses in the area were destroyed by Russian bombs and my grandmother was employed to clean up the mess. My grandmother and her sister were not paid for their work. Jews who were employed by the Nazis got a special letter "A" on the stars of their

arm bands. Although not necessarily true, it was believed by Jews that if they were working and had an “A” on their yellow star, they would be safer.

Coincidentally, my grandmother also ended up working in her family’s old house (that had been taken by the Germans). A couple of days after she started working there, the Germans decided to call her Ursula, although they knew she was Jewish. Four men worked and lived in the house. One of them brought his wife and children and they too lived there. My grandmother worked there as a maid. Each morning, she brought a tray with bread, jam, and coffee to the men for breakfast. Most of the time, they did not finish the bread. My grandmother was very hungry, but she was afraid to eat any of the bread. Instead she returned the bread back to the kitchen shook it out and ate the crumbs. One of the Germans who lived in the house saw her doing this. He felt sorry for her and told her that she could eat the leftover bread each day. She was so happy about this because food was very scarce. My grandmother was a very hard worker and she took care of things in the house without being asked. She was also willing to deliver letters and packages to the Nazi offices in Stryj. This was a very risky because Jews caught in these offices would be killed on the spot. The signs on the front door of these offices stated “No dogs or Jews allowed”. My grandmother didn’t look Jewish so she took-off her arm band and went into these offices to make the deliveries.

During this time, the Nazis started holding Aktions all over Poland. Aktions were operations involving the mass assembly, deportation, and murder of Jews by the Nazis. The Aktions took place in many different cities in Poland on the same day. The family lived in constant fear that they would be selected / found during an Aktion. Through various sources, the family heard when an Aktion was to take place. My grandmother and her sisters would scatter in different directions and hide during these Aktions. My grandmother and her sister, Róża, hid in a sewer during one of the Aktions. After each Aktion they met again and thought what a miracle it was that they all had survived it.

My grandmother and her sisters were very concerned that their parents would not survive the Aktions. Upon hearing of a dreadful impending Aktion, my grandmother and her sisters decided the best thing to do would be to hide their parents in the family’s old house that was now inhabited by the Germans. The house had an attic where one could hide and the Germans did not know of its existence. In the middle of the night before the Aktion was to take place, my grandmother and her sisters snuck their parents to their old house and they hid in the attic until the Aktion was over. Only one of the Germans living in the house knew this was happening. My grandmother’s family gave him two expensive fur coats (one for him and the other for his wife) in exchange for his silence. The German man told the family that if somehow the Nazis were to find my great-grandparents, he would pretend he had no idea how they got there. Thankfully, my great-grandparents, grandmother and her sisters survived this Aktion. Unfortunately, my grandmother’s uncle (Mendel) and his family were not so lucky. They were hiding in the attic of their building, but a prior Ukrainian gate-keeper pointed the Nazis to where they were. My grandmother’s family did not see them again.



During this time, Polish people began selling their ID papers to Jews so they could assume non-Jewish identities. These transactions were discreet and the information about who was willing to sell his/her ID papers was passed by word of mouth. My grandmother's old friend from school, Wanda Hnatowicz, agreed to sell her papers. This transaction was to take place with the assistance of Pola Schnepps whose family had a photography studio in the Polish area. The Germans allowed them to keep the studio for the time being as they were taking pictures to send to their families in Germany. When Pola's father found-out about the ID paper transaction, he was very angry and forced her (Pola) to take the ID papers instead telling her she needed them more than Rosalia and hoping this will save her life. Pola felt very bad as all three (Pola, Wanda, and Roslaia were school friends). Luckily three of my grandmother's sisters bought papers from friends and one purchased papers from a woman in a wheelchair. The papers had photos of the individuals to which they belonged. Replacing these individuals' photos with those of my grandmothers' sisters was a complicated and expensive task, but a 13 year old Jewish boy did the job for my grandmother's family. Klara became Krystyna (Krzysia). Róża became Olga (Ziuta). Basia became Barbara. Karolina became Jadwiga (Jadzia). Józia, who had dark hair and looked Jewish, did not purchase papers. Polish people didn't mind selling their ID papers because neighbors around them could vouch that they were not Jewish. Stryj was a town in which people knew one another. Also, it was unlikely for certain people, who frequently stayed home in the Polish neighborhood, to be asked to present their papers.

My grandmother's family had money to buy these ID papers because they sold pretty much all of their belongings. During the war, all the stores in town were empty and it was difficult to buy anything. The building of my grandmother's uncle Mendel (where my grandmother's family was still staying) had two entrances. One entrance was in the Polish neighborhood and the other was in the Jewish neighborhood. Polish people heard that the family still had items to sell. They came in through the entrance in the Polish neighborhood to buy various items such as towels, clothes, etc. They didn't pay a lot for these items, but it was enough so that the family could buy the ID papers they needed.

My grandmother's family intended to buy the Aryan ID papers and relocate to another town as Poles. My grandmother had an aunt - Salka Morgenstern (the wife of my great grandmother's brother – Mendel) in Borysław a town located about 45 kilometers away from Stryj. Salka and Mendel did not have any children of their own and loved my grandmother and her sisters. Salka paid the town alcoholic, a guy named Roman Jablonski, to go to Stryj and see if the family was still alive. Although Roman had a good heart and wanted to help the family, he was probably more motivated to do so by his love of vodka. He knew that the family would pay him for his efforts and he could then buy vodka. My grandmother's family gave Roman many things – Józia's husband's and Matias' clothes, towels, etc. Everything Roman received from the family he sold for vodka. Sometimes he got so drunk that he would just fall asleep in the middle of the street.

Roman's love for vodka made him willing to take risks that most other people would not have taken. He rented an apartment in Borysław (paid for by my grandmother's family)

and told everyone that his two nieces, Krystyna (Krzysia) and Jadwiga (Jadzia) were coming to live near him, cook his meals and take care of him since he was getting older. He did end up eating meals with my grandmother's sisters. Roman told everyone that his nieces were from a different neighborhood in Borysław and had lived there all their lives. He had to be careful not to say that they were from out of town so that people would not become suspicious that he was trying to help Jews. Krzysia and Jadzia traveled by themselves on a train to Borysław in the middle of the night and Roman met them at the train station. Then all three walked the streets of Roman's neighborhood and he introduced them to everyone as his nieces.

My grandmother and her sisters thought that it would be a good idea for their mother (my great-grandmother) to be in Borysław as well. Krzysia and Jadzia told everyone that they didn't want to live by themselves and that their mother was coming to live with them too. Roman traveled with my great-grandmother to Borysław.

Roman also brought my great-grandfather and Józia to join Krzysia and Jadzia in Borysław. My great-grandfather and Józia did not have Polish papers and this made the trip to Borysław a risky one. Roman, Józia, and her father made the trip to Borysław by train in the middle of the night. They pretended to be asleep in hopes that they would not be questioned. Luckily, they made it to Borysław safely and went to Jadzia's and Krzysia's apartment in the middle of the night. The family was afraid that the arrival of more members would raise suspicions so nobody in Borysław knew of the presence of Józia and her father in the apartment and the two of them did not leave the room and were hiding behind a huge cabinet. My grandmother and her sisters spent many hours devising and memorizing stories so that their family would appear Polish. During this time, Jadzia worked in an office that laid oil pipes and Krzysia worked as a maid in a hotel.

My grandmother's family didn't think it would be a good idea for the whole family to live in the same town. They prayed that just one family member would survive the war and be able to recount what had happened. Basia (Barbara) traveled on her own to Drohobycz, a town about seven kilometers from Borysław. She got a job as a maid for a German couple named Papuszek who owned a slaughter house and she lived in their home. In addition to Barbara, they also employed a head maid. The couple was very impressed with Barbara's work and promoted her to the head maid position. They also had her assist with the slaughter house operations. Although the war was raging on, this couple somehow had enormous quantities of food and people from the countryside came to buy from them. Barbara sold the less desirable and cheapest parts of the animals (such as heads, feet etc.) to peasants from the surrounding villages who were trading eggs and butter for this meat. The couple trusted Barbara and did not suspect that she was Jewish. Whenever she could, Barbara took flour, eggs, sugar and any other food that she was able to find and brought it to the family in Borysław.

My grandmother and her oldest sister, Ziuta were still in Stryj. They lived in their uncle's house for about a year. My grandmother was still working for the Germans who had taken over her family's old house. The Germans decided that they needed to hire another employee for the business and recruited Mr. Weber who showed up at the house

one day with a suitcase. Mr. Weber was from the German countryside. He worked in the house, but was given his own apartment and my grandmother was responsible for cleaning that apartment as well. It is difficult to believe, but somehow Mr. Weber was not aware of the Nazis' atrocities against the Jews. When he arrived in town, he saw people being horded by police onto cattle train-cars and he asked my grandmother what was going on. At first my grandmother thought he was pretending not to know, but she eventually realized that he really didn't know. She told him about the Aktions and he was very shocked. He told my grandmother that during the next Aktion, she could hide in his apartment. She didn't believe he would keep his word.

My grandmother and Ziuta heard that a horrible Aktion was impending. They did not know what to do. Out of desperation, they went to my grandmother's family's old house. Ziuta waited outside while my grandmother went in. Mr. Weber and the others were having dinner at the time and my grandmother came in crying. By that time, all of the Germans in the house had grown to like my grandmother and asked her what was wrong. She told them that she had heard there would be a horrible Aktion that night. The Germans told her not to worry, no Aktion would take place and that she should go home. Somehow with his eyes, Mr. Weber motioned my grandmother to go into the kitchen. In the kitchen, she saw the keys to Mr. Weber's apartment. Because she had cleaned his apartment, my grandmother knew exactly where it was located. My grandmother and Ziuta went to the apartment to hide. When Mr. Weber got home, he told the two that they could sleep in his bed and that he would sleep on the couch. For 24 hours during the Aktion, my grandmother and Ziuta did not move from the bed. They were terrified. They did not even get up to eat or use the restroom. They were afraid that if they moved around at all, the tenants below could become suspicious that someone was hiding there because they knew that Mr. Weber worked all day and lived alone. Also, there was a police department directly across the street from the apartment and the sisters were afraid that someone would spot them through the window.

When the Aktion finally ended, my grandmother and Ziuta wanted to repay Mr. Weber for his help. They had hidden a suitcase underneath one of the beds in their uncle's building and thought that maybe the Nazis did not notice it. They told Mr. Weber that if the suitcase was still there, they wanted to give it to him as a thank you for his help. Mr. Weber refused to take the suitcase. He told my grandmother that he did not help her for money. He helped her because he was against the Nazi regime. He told my grandmother that she and her sister would need the suitcase for themselves.

When my grandmother and Ziuta returned to their room in their uncle's building, the place was in shambles. Everything was turned upside down. The Nazis, however, had not noticed the suitcase. My grandmother and her sister took the suitcase and decided they should go to Boryslaw right away. Ziuta had Arian papers, but my grandmother did not. To get to Boryslaw they had to switch trains in Drohobycz and when they arrived there, Ukrainian and German police were everywhere. (During this time, the Ukrainians had a police force that was separate from the German police force). A Ukrainian policeman ran after them and shouted "you are Jews." My grandmother and Ziuta acted like they didn't even know he was talking to them and they kept walking. The police

officer caught up with them and demanded that they go to the police station with him. Ziuta and my grandmother acted annoyed and told him that of course they were not Jews but they agreed to go with him to the police station. An old German police officer was manning the station. Ziuta was very pretty and the German police officer openly admired her. He scolded the Ukrainian officer and told him to let the two go. And so my grandmother and Ziuta were released from the police station. Neither of them could get over the miracle.

They changed their mind about going to Borysław and decided to stay in Drohobycz instead. They went to the house where Basia worked and hid in the cellar. The German couple (who owned the house and for whom Basia worked) didn't know they were there. Soon after they arrived in Drohobycz, both Ziuta and my grandmother began looking for jobs. Ziuta got a job as a maid and lived with the family she worked for. My grandmother heard about a young woman that was running an employment agency. She went to speak with this woman and told her that her parents went to Germany to work and she was all alone and needed a job. The woman told my grandmother about a German family who lived in Poland all of their lives and had an autistic child in need of a caregiver. My grandmother had no experience with children, but was willing to do anything. She would have worked with ten autistic children if she had to.

My grandmother went to the house of the autistic boy's family's on a Sunday morning. The family consisted of two spinster aunts, Ada and Rela Fuchs and the autistic boy, Jerzyk Bulfan. Jerzyk's father was arrested by the Soviets and they never saw him again. His mother had just passed away. Jerzyk was in church with one of his aunts when my grandmother arrived. The family's house seemed like paradise to my grandmother because it had two rooms, running water, heat and electricity. Both of the aunts worked at the post office. My grandmother's sole responsibility was to take care of Jerzyk who was a beautiful seven-year old child. But he was very difficult. He could not speak - he simply screamed. He screamed so much that the neighbors could not sleep. He was not potty trained. My grandmother was determined to make this job work. She was very patient with Jerzyk. First she trained him to sleep through the night. His aunts just yelled at him, but my grandmother told him very quietly "It is now night time. Everyone sleeps at night. Animals, flowers, everyone and so Jerzyk you must sleep too". My grandmother's efforts paid off. She was able to get Jerzyk to sleep through the night and she also potty-trained him. He learned how to say the words "food" and "water". My grandmother was very happy with her job. She even became friends with a Polish neighbor. She lived with Jerzyk's family without incident for three months. She told them a different story than the one she told the woman at the employment agency. Instead of being a girl whose family was working in Germany, she was now a girl whose parents lived in a town nearby. She needed money to travel to visit her parents on the weekends so the Fuchs sisters paid her 50 zloty a week. During the weekends my grandmother went to the house where Basia worked. Jerzyk's family did not have much food, but the Papuszek's had a lot of food. By this point, the Papuszek's knew that Basia had a sister. Mr. Papuszek noticed that my grandmother was very skinny and told Basia that she should give her some food.

A Jewish physician, Dr. Hildenratt was treating Jerzyk since he was born. During the war, this doctor was working in some sort of work camp. Since Jerzyk's family did not want to get a new doctor they had to obtain a special permit so he could keep treating the boy. The doctor could not believe the progress that my grandmother had made with the boy in the three months that she was working as his caregiver. After he returned from his visit with Jerzyk he played poker with some other Jewish people in the camp. During the game, the doctor's wife asked him about Jerzyk and how he was doing. He told her that he couldn't believe the progress that the caregiver had made with the boy. The doctor said that it was strange that a Polish girl would accept this type of a job and although the caregiver looked Polish, she might be Jewish. The doctor had no intention of hurting my grandmother, he was simply wondering aloud as all the poker players were also Jewish. Unfortunately, one of the Jewish men at the table, Micio Rozyn was working for the Nazis hoping to improve his chances of surviving the war. Micio went straight to the Gestapo and told them that he had heard that maybe there was a Jewish girl working for a family that had an autistic boy. (My grandmother met the Jewish doctor after the war and he told her this story).

On March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1943, an officer from the Gestapo arrived at Jerzyk's home. My grandmother denied that she was Jewish, but the officer insisted that she had to go with him. He took her to a Gestapo building where a number of Nazi officers were gathered. One particularly horrible officer by the name of Gunter who was known for shooting Jews for no reason was there with his big German shepherd dog. My grandmother went to the dog and began patting it and told the officer what a cute dog he had. This made the officer think that she was not Jewish. Jews were known for being afraid of dogs and here was my grandmother patting that big scary dog. My grandmother also pretended that she did not speak German. (Only Jews spoke German. Polish people did not). One of the officers told the others "she is not Jewish, let her go". But the Gestapo officer who brought her in was not convinced. And so my grandmother was taken to the cellar of the building. In the cellar were other Jewish girls that had been captured. They were being held there until the next Aktion.

My grandmother stayed in the cellar of the Gestapo building for two weeks. One day during that time, the Gestapo man who brought her there told her: "Don't worry. I will make sure that you are not killed".

After two weeks, the Gestapo decided to move my grandmother to a jail to wait for the next Aktion. It was dirty and there was barely any food. The Jewish community sent food to the jail for the prisoners, but it was almost not edible. My grandmother was sure that she would be killed in this jail.

A very strange thing happened while she was there. One day she heard the guards calling her name (which was still Ursula at the time). She and her cellmates thought this was the end. Her cellmates told her to be brave. As it turns out, the Gestapo man who brought my grandmother to jail was there with his wife. The wife looked at my grandmother and said "you poor girl". She began telling my grandmother how she wanted children of her own, but could never have any. She told my grandmother that she had brought her a bag

of food which my grandmother ate and thanked the woman. My grandmother had no idea why this woman brought her food, but she later learned that the Gestapo officer was being promoted to a position in Kiev and he and his wife wanted to adopt her and take her to Kiev with them. (Of course, she didn't go).

My grandmother was in jail for two months. Every day during that time, she was taken by a Ukrainian officer to the Gestapo building for an interrogation. The Ukrainian officer had a gun and made my grandmother walk in the street while he walked on the sidewalk. The man who interrogated her was a horrible person – his prime job was to kill children. Every day he asked her all sorts of questions like “where are you from, where did you go to school, where is your family”. My grandmother invented all sorts of stories and memorized them so that she could repeat them each day to the Gestapo officer. My grandmother was determined not to let the Gestapo know that she had family. She told the Gestapo officer that she was all alone.

At the same time my grandmother's sisters, Basia, Ziuta, and Jadzia were doing everything that they could to get my grandmother released from prison. (My grandmother did not realize this). Her sisters were roaming around the Judenrat office trying to make contact with someone whom they can bribe and who could get my grandmother released. They had still some jewelry that they intended to use for payment. What they did not realize was that they made contact with Micio Rozyn out of all people and ended up negotiating with him to have my grandmother released. The slaughter house where Basia worked was one of the few places in town to have a phone. Micio told my grandmother's sisters to wait by the phone and that at 3pm he would call and tell them when and where their sister (my grandmother) would be released. Instead of calling my grandmother's sisters, Micio told the Gestapo that the three women would be waiting by the phone at 3pm. At 3pm four Gestapo officers broke into the slaughter house and took my grandmother's sisters to the officer who was interrogating my grandmother.

My grandmother was repeating to the Gestapo officer that she did not have any family when her sisters were brought in to the same office. My grandmother thought this was the end. Her and her sisters spent a few hours with the Gestapo officer. Desperate, my grandmother and her sisters told the Gestapo officer that they were half Jewish. Somehow he decided not to have them killed. My grandmother suspects that maybe it was because he thought Ziuta was very pretty, but she doesn't know for sure. My grandmother also thinks that the Gestapo officer figured they would get caught during the next Aktion and just didn't feel like making the effort to have them killed. He released my grandmother and her sisters to a work camp.

My grandmother worked in the green house located within the work camp. She shared a tiny room full of bunk beds with ten girls. There was not enough work for my grandmother's sisters at the green house so they were taken by police officers to clean up the streets. By this point, Mr. Papuszek, Basia's employer heard that she was in the custody of the Gestapo. He contacted the Gestapo and told them he really needed her to run his slaughter house and offered to give them meat. He told the Gestapo that when

there was an Aktion, he would hand Basia back to them. My grandmother says that he didn't really intend to do this, but was just trying to get Basia released.

Within a few days, my grandmother's other sisters managed to escape. The police officers couldn't keep an eye on everyone cleaning the streets and my grandmother's sisters escaped the minute that the officers were not watching them. Lucky for my grandmother's sisters, the officers were too lazy to chase after them. They figured they would be caught during the next Aktion anyway.

Jewish parents had to pay so that their children could work in this green house. They believed their children had a better chance to survive the war this way. But in the end, most of the people who worked there were killed (regardless of payments made by their parents). Basia made contact with my grandmother through a Jewish policeman who worked in the greenhouse. Her message was that it was a good time to escape. So one day, on the way back from the greenhouse to the work camp, my grandmother told the group she was walking with that she was going to pee in the bushes and would catch up with them. And then she escaped and walked by to the slaughter house where Basia worked. My grandmother once again hid in Basia's cellar. The work camp was not like the concentration camps. The officers were too lazy to chase after those that escaped.

After my grandmother's escape from the green house, it was decided that it would be best if she and Ziuta would leave Drohobycz and go to Borysław. Ziuta pretended to be older than she really was – she wore a long skirt and put her hair in a scarf. My grandmother pretended she was Ziuta's illegitimate daughter and younger than she really was. Ziuta and my grandmother rented a room in Borysław in a very poor neighborhood. It was not hard to find a room because many rooms which were previously inhabited by Jews were now vacant. The room did not have running water. Ziuta got a job as a maid and my grandmother just stayed in the room during the day. At this time, my grandmother adopted the name Zosia. Ziuta and my grandmother decided not to live with Jadzia and Krzysia. They thought that if the family had two separate apartments and if something happened with one of the apartments, the other could be used as a hiding place. This decision saved my grandmother and her sisters' lives later on.

Krzysia, Jadzia, and their mother (my great-grandmother) were already in Borysław (they were brought there by Roman). Józia and her father were still hiding in Krzysia's and Jadzia's apartment. They did not leave the apartment and when necessary hid behind a huge cabinet. Krzysia and Jadzia told all the neighbors that their mother was deaf. This was because when she spoke, the way she pronounced the letter "R" made her sound Jewish. They also told the neighbors that during the day she did laundry for rich people. This was not true – during the day, she went to my grandmother and Ziuta's place. My grandmother and her sisters thought it would be better for everyone to be out of the house during the day. That way they could lock their front door. If my great-grandmother was home, a neighbor could potentially come by during the day. My grandmother and her sisters did not want anyone coming by because they were afraid that they would see Józia and her father (who were not supposed to be there).

One day, boots were stolen from the hotel where Krzysia worked. My grandmother and her sisters were concerned that the hotel owners would search the houses of the hotel employees (including the house of Krzysia and Jadzia). For this reason, they decided that Józia and her father should move to Ziuta's and my grandmother's place, a trip they made in the middle of the night. They stayed there for a few months. During the day they hid in the pantry. My grandmother kept the door to the room open all day so that neighbors would not become suspicious. As it turned out, the hotel owners did not search Krzysia's and Jadzia's apartment, but the police did. Krzysia and Jadzia did not realize it, but around the same time that the boots were stolen from the hotel, one of their neighbors called the police and said that she saw a man walking around in a neighboring apartment. It is not clear why the neighbor did this, because she could not have seen my great-grandfather around. If the boots had not been stolen from the hotel (where Krzysia worked), Józia and her father would have been discovered by the police and the whole family may have been killed. Another miracle.

In June of 1944, the Nazis began to retreat from this part of Poland as the Soviets were advancing. And so miraculously my grandmother, her parents and sisters survived the holocaust in Poland. Sadly, their brother, all of their aunts, uncles, and cousins did not survive.



My grandmother on the day that World War II ended.



### **PART III – LIFE IN POLAND AFTER THE WAR**

Although the Germans retreated from the region of Poland in which the family lived in 1944, the war was still raging-on in other parts of Poland. World War II officially ended in May of 1945. The Soviets once again ruled this region.

My grandmother's family moved to Drohobycz. Because the war was not officially over, they continued to pretend that they were not Jewish.

During the war, school was not in session. My grandmother just started high school when the war broke out and wanted to complete her education. The Soviets were offering an abbreviated intensive high school program in Stryj for people in my grandmother's situation. My grandmother and her father returned to Stryj to check into having my grandmother attend this course. To get accepted into the course, my grandmother had to tell the school that she was older than she really was. The course basically covered the most important subjects in high school and provided a high school diploma.

My grandmother and her father went to their old house in Stryj and found that Dr. Rott, a Jewish dentist and her son lived there. After the war, there was no order – people saw an empty room or house and moved in. They just assumed that the people who used to live there had been killed in the war. My great-grandfather didn't mind that Dr. Rott was living in his house and they agreed that my grandmother would live there as well until she completed her education. My grandmother says unusual arrangements like this were the norm after the war. Even though my grandmother's family had the house in Stryj, they were afraid to move back to town in case the Germans came back. My grandmother visited her family in Drohobycz on the weekends.

It took my grandmother 9 months to complete the high school program in Stryj. Before the war, my grandmother had not been such a good student, but she worked really hard to complete the course. She didn't do much else except study. There wasn't really anything else to do.

My grandmother was 20 when she completed the program in Stryj. She decided to enroll in a two-year paramedic program. Because many people had died during the war, there were a lot of professional opportunities. My grandmother again studied very hard when she was in the paramedic program.

While she was in the paramedic program, Józia introduced my grandmother to my grandfather. My grandfather had lost his entire family in the war except for his cousin. He and his cousin survived the war by hiding in the forest. My grandmother and grandfather got along well from the beginning. My grandmother says he was a good man from the first day she met him until the day he passed away. Within two or three months of meeting her, my grandfather wanted to marry my grandmother. She told him that they

didn't have to rush, but he was eager to marry as soon as possible. After the war, so many people were left without family that it was not uncommon for them to marry quickly. Everyone was eager to put the past behind them and start new families. My grandmother and grandfather got married in a civil ceremony on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1945 with her family present. My grandparents had very little money and my grandmother didn't even have a dress to wear to her own wedding.

When the war officially ended in May 1945, people were not celebrating in the streets. People were happy, but many had lost everyone and everything and were barely alive.

My grandmother had completed the first year of the paramedic program in which she was enrolled when the Soviets announced the Repatriation Program. Under this program, Polish and Jewish people were allowed to leave the Soviet Union and return to Poland. (The region in which my grandmother lived used to be Poland before the war, but became a part of the Soviet Union after the war). The family decided they wanted to live in Poland instead of Russia. (Most people with a Polish nationality preferred to live in Poland). They decided to travel to Poland as quickly as possible before the Soviets would close their borders. For this reason, my grandmother did not complete the paramedic program.

To go to Poland under the Repatriation Program, one had to apply. My grandmother's family members were granted permission to go to Poland at different times so they couldn't travel together. My grandmother's family had talked about going to a certain region in Poland and figured they would find each other when they got there. There was no mail or telephone. Although it sounds strange to me, my grandmother says that people just found each other in these towns.

My grandparents didn't go on a honeymoon – instead they decided to travel to Poland. They went to the train station and were told to get on a cargo train car that would take them to Poland. They didn't ask any questions and got on the train. They didn't know exactly where they were going. They each had a suitcase and not much else. There were at least 20 people in the cargo train car with them. Many of these people had attempted to bring with them all of the contents of their homes. It was not the most comfortable train ride. My grandmother and grandfather rode this train for 3 weeks. The train stopped in various places for a few days. No one asked any questions and no information was provided. No one paid to ride the train. Poland was in a state of disorder.

My grandparents heard that there were Jewish people in a town called Gliwice (in Upper Silesia, southern Poland) and they decided to get off the train there. The plan was that my grandfather would continue his studies. My grandfather attended medical school in Italy and completed two years of his studies by the time war broke out. Unfortunately, there were no opportunities in Gliwice and my grandfather was not able to complete his studies. My grandparents moved into a room that used to belong to some German people who had returned to Germany. They didn't pay rent. No one asked for rent.

My grandfather then went by himself to the town of Legnica (in the central part of Lower Silesia, about 250km away) to see if the situation there was better. My grandmother stayed behind in Gliwice for a few weeks. Although the war had ended, she was still afraid to say that she was Jewish and changed her last name to Bardacka so that it sounded more Polish.

My grandmother eventually got word that she should join my grandfather in Legnica. She boarded a train which was packed with people. No one paid for train tickets. The train was so packed that people rode on the roof of the train and on the outside steps. My grandmother rode standing up on the outside steps of the train for a whole day and night. She says it was a terrifying ride. But it was nothing compared to what she had been through during the war.

My grandfather had found a nice apartment in Legnica for which they had to pay rent. He got a job as an accounting clerk. He had no background in accounting, but he purchased accounting books and taught himself the subject. My grandfather was eventually promoted to a manager position. My grandmother got a job in a lab. Because she wasn't licensed, she accepted a lower salary and worked extra hard to do a good job.

My grandparents stayed in Legnica for twelve years (1945 – 1957). My mother was born in Poland in 1949 and her brother (my uncle) was born in 1953.

The economy in Poland was not good. My grandparents both worked, but were not able to save much money. Food was difficult to come by. The government handed out "food stamps." Each adult was allowed 300 grams of meat per week. (They had to pay for the meat, but couldn't buy as much as they wanted). Food lines were long.

My grandparents wanted to leave Poland. Many Jews were leaving Poland illegally and going to Palestine, but my grandparents didn't feel comfortable doing that. In 1951, they applied in Warsaw to go to Israel. Their application was denied – they didn't know why, but didn't dare to ask any questions. Krzysia and Józia and their families were approved and were able immigrate to Israel in 1951. My grandfather had an uncle in Melbourne Australia, who was willing to take them in, so my grandparents also applied to go there, but that application was denied as well. Poland had basically closed its borders and was not letting citizens leave.

In October 1956 Władysław Gomułka came into power and implemented some reforms among them allowing Jews to leave Poland and immigrate to Israel. Prior to this point, there was still anti-Semitism in Poland, but it was not openly discussed. When the Jews were allowed to leave, anti-Semitism broke-out again. My mother had a Polish friend, Christina, who she pretty much knew all her life. They played together and went to the same school. When my mom was seven years old, Christina told her that she no longer wanted to play with her because my mom's dad was a murderer and he killed Jesus. Even though my grandmother explained to my mother that this was not true, my mother took this very hard. After this incident, my grandparents became more determined to leave Poland.

As part of Gomulka's reforms, "private initiative" was allowed. My grandfather became acquainted with two Jews who somehow had enough money to open a clothing store. They offered him to become the manager. He travelled to Warsaw to purchase whatever merchandise he could find to stock the store's shelves. My grandmother also helped out at this store. Working at the store, my grandparents were able to save enough money to go to Israel. In 1957, they were granted permission to leave Poland and go to Israel. Jadzia and her family, Ziuta and her husband and my great grandparents all were granted permissions to immigrate to Israel in 1957. Basia and her family immigrated to the US in 1960.



Another picture of my grandmother, around 1956

#### **PART IV – GOING TO ISRAEL**

My grandparents, my mom and her brother traveled to Warsaw by train to meet the immigration representatives from Israel. The representatives put them on a train to Vienna and then to Genoa, Italy. From Italy they traveled to Israel by boat. Conditions on the boat were not very comfortable. The family of four was given a tiny cabin in the bottom of the boat. It was difficult to breathe in the cabin, so they ended up sleeping on the deck of the boat. It took the boat four days to reach Haifa. The immigration representatives gave the family 8 Lira (very small amount of money) and 2 cans of olives when they reached Haifa on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 1957.

Approximately 400 new immigrants were arriving in Israel every day in 1957. The young state of Israel was not prepared for such a large wave of immigration. As part of the immigration process, the Jewish agency provided temporary housing to each new immigrant family and also granted them loans to pay for the temporary housing. The temporary housing was a 250 square foot (24 square meters) hut and did not have electricity. There was not enough housing for all the immigrants who were arriving.

While en route to Israel on the boat immigrants got the destination assignments. My grandparents were to live in Tiberias (Tveria – טְבֵרְיָה by the Sea of Galilee). However, upon arriving in Israel on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 1957, they were advised by some people at the port (new immigrants who were in the country for two months already...) not to go there. My grandparents had the address of some friends from Poland who had immigrated to Israel the month before. Immigration representatives gave them a ride to these friends' house and there the family spent their first night in Israel.

One scary thing for my grandparents about immigrating to Israel was that they did not speak Hebrew. When they immigrated, my grandmother was in her early 30s and my grandfather was in his early 40s. On the second day in Israel, my grandfather enrolled at the Ulpan. (An ulpan is an institute or school for the intensive study of Hebrew). At the Ulpan, my grandfather ran into Jazia's (my grandmother's sister) husband. Jazia and her family had immigrated two months earlier and already had a hut to live in. They invited the family live with them until they could get their own hut.

My Mom's family lived with Jazia and her family for 3 weeks. Every day, my grandmother went to the immigration agency to check on the status of a hut for her family. This was difficult because my grandmother didn't speak Hebrew. Finally, my grandparents got their own hut in Kiryat Nahum (near Kfar Ata). They were ecstatic to finally have their own place. My grandfather threw out all of the family's suitcases. He told my grandmother "we are finally home and don't need these suitcases anymore."

My grandfather studied Hebrew day and night. He knew that he needed to speak the language to find a job. Finding a job in Israel was not easy at the time. My grandparents both did temporary work for a while. My grandfather then found a permanent job in the accounting department of the Reali private school in Haifa. He was eventually promoted and became the treasurer, a position he held until his retirement. My grandmother found a job at a taxi company. She started out as a clerk, but was promoted several levels and worked for this company until her retirement.

My grandparents lived in the hut for three years. After that, they were able to buy an apartment in Ramot Remez (in Haifa).

## **EPILOGUE**

After five years of living in Israel, my grandparents began the process of seeking reparations from the German government. The process took ten years. They had to

provide documentation and witnesses, but finally they began receiving payments from the German government. My grandmother still receives a small payment each month.

My grandmother says that when she arrived in Israel, she felt like she was finally home. My grandparents were happy in Israel. My grandfather passed away in 1995. My grandmother lives now in a retirement home in Rehovot.

## **MY GRANDFATHER'S STORY (told to me by my grandmother)**

My grandfather didn't talk much about his past, but my grandmother told me what she knew.

My grandfather, Jozef (Yuzek) Oher, was born in Borysław, Poland on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1914. His parents were Moshe and Natalya (Allerhand) Oher. He had two older sisters, Mania (Maria) and Anda (Ana). My great-grandfather had a business that sold pipes and other parts for the oil industry which was big in Borysław.

My grandfather had a happy childhood until he was 12 years old. At that time his mother became very ill. My grandmother suspects that it was stomach cancer, but at the time doctors did not know what the illness was or how to treat it. They advised my great-grandmother to go to Carlsbad (Karlovy Vary) in what was then Czechoslovakia and drink the water there, which was supposed to have healing properties. My great-grandfather took my great-grandmother to Czechoslovakia several times, but the water did not help and she passed away when my grandfather was 16 years old. My great-grandmother's death hit my grandfather and the family very hard. My great-grandmother's illness was also financially draining for the family and the emotional drain also caused my great-grandfather's business to suffer.

Eventually, my great-grandfather remarried in 1935. The woman he married did not have children of her own and did not like being around children. My grandfather did not get along with her. By this time his two older sisters were married with children of their own and he lived with one of his older sisters and her family.

My grandfather always knew that he wanted to be a doctor. Attending school was very expensive in Poland and my grandfather worked very hard to pay for his schooling. He tutored German (he was very good at German) and worked at his brother-in-law's photography studio. He was able to pay for his high school and even save some money for medical school.

After high school, my grandfather attended medical school in Bologna, Italy. He had an uncle in Nuremberg, Germany who agreed to help him out financially. My grandfather was only able to finish two years of medical school. In 1938, the University informed all the Jewish students that they could not return to school the following year. Hitler had already influenced Mussolini . . .

My grandfather returned to Poland and lived with his sister for a while in Borysław. Eventually he moved to Krik in Western Poland in the area of Jasło-Krosno to work for someone in his family who owned an oil drilling business. He earned a good salary for someone his age. He was determined to complete medical school. His plan was to work at this company for a few years, save money, and go to France to complete his studies. At this company, my grandfather met a nice engineer named Mr. Hauser. Mr. Hauser and his wife did not have any children and they became my grandfather's surrogate family.

My grandfather was not able to stay at this company very long. In September 1939, World War II began and the Nazis took over Western Poland. Mr. Hauser was one of the few people in Poland to have a car, which was lucky because the Hausers and my grandfather were able to escape from Western Poland. They returned to Borysław, which was in Eastern Poland. From 1939 to 1941, Eastern Poland was under Soviet rule and a safe place for Jewish people.

In 1941, the Nazis took over Eastern Poland. During an especially horrible Aktion, my grandfather's whole family (father, step mother, sisters, brothers in law, nieces, nephews) were taken. Only my grandfather and his cousin, Arnold (Nunio) Distler, managed to hide from the Nazis. My grandfather was home with his family when the Nazis showed up and ordered the whole family to come with them. The family started to file out of the house following the Nazis. My grandfather hid behind the open door – the Nazis did not notice that he did not come out of the house. Arnold, upon hearing the Nazis knock on the door to his family's house in the adjoining courtyard, quickly jumped into the cellar of the house and was not discovered. My grandfather and his cousin never saw their families again. When the Nazis came, they told my grandfather's brother-in-law not to worry, that because he was a photographer he would be OK. The Nazis supposedly needed photographers. My grandfather was hoping to find this brother-in-law alive after the war, but unfortunately he was not able to.

Arnold and my grandfather stayed in Borysław for a year. They sold everything they could from their families' homes. They worked in a work camp (Beskidian Urden) for 2 or 3 months. (Work camps were not like concentration camps). They did not get paid for their work. But they got the letter "A" on their Stars of David. (All Jewish people had to wear Stars of David by that time). Although not true, Jewish people thought having the letter "A" on their Stars of David would prevent them from being killed.

Some Jewish people told my grandfather and his cousin that they should go with them and hide in the forest because if not they would certainly be taken during an Aktion. There was a large forest in the area. My grandfather, his cousin and these Jewish people built a "bunker" (basically an underground room) in the forest (10km deep into the forest). They planned to build a bunker large enough to hold 7 people. My grandmother doesn't know exactly how long it took them to build the bunker, but she knows it was a long process. First, they dug out an area large enough so that they could build a room. Once they dug out this area, they built walls and a ceiling underground. Then they covered the ceiling with 2 meters of soil. Grass grew in the soil and camouflaged the bunker. The bunker ceiling was strong – if someone walked on it, they would not detect that it was there. Only a small opening was left to enter and exit the bunker.

One challenge of hiding in the forest was how to obtain food. My grandfather, Arnold and the others slowly accumulated food and supplies for the bunker, including a gun. They even brought a stove (for cooking) into the bunker. They also made contact with a Ukrainian man who agreed to buy them food (barley and beans) while they were in hiding. This man was decent, but he wanted money for his services – he accepted only gold coins as payment. The man had to be very careful not to buy too much food or



people would become suspicious. He bought small quantities of food from many different places. My grandfather and Arnold were careful not to let the man know where their bunker was located. They had to periodically go pick up food from this man's house. Picking up the food was particularly risky in the winter because there was snow on the ground and my grandfather and Arnold were afraid that someone would see their footsteps in the snow. So during the winter, they went to this man's house only when it was snowing. They figured that the falling snow would cover their tracks. My grandfather became very ill during one of these trips and almost didn't survive.

Seven people (including a seven year old girl) stayed in the bunker for 14 months. They really believed that they were the last Jewish people left in Poland. During the days, they looked for food in the forest – nuts, berries, and mushrooms, basically anything that they could find. They got water from a stream nearby. During the nights, one person stayed awake to guard the area outside of the bunker.

The Ukrainian man who was buying food for them warned them that there was a man assigned to patrol the forest. This man used to find Jews who were hiding in the forest and tell them that he would not give away their location if they gave him money. He would take everything that they had and then he would go straight to the Gestapo and tell them where these people were. Unfortunately, one night when Arnold was guarding the bunker, this man showed up with a gun. Arnold told the man that they would give him what he wanted. Arnold asked him if he wanted vodka (my grandfather and Arnold had purchased vodka in anticipation of having to bribe someone). The man said yes and Arnold went and got the vodka. Then asked him if he wanted money, to which the man said yes and Arnold went and got the money. Meanwhile, Arnold and the others in the bunker were trying to figure out what they should do. Finally Arnold asked the man if he wanted the suit that my grandfather was wearing – it was a very nice suit from Italy. The man said yes. Arnold told him “that's fine, you can have it, but the man wearing the suit (my grandfather) has only this one suit so you need to give him what you are wearing in exchange.” The man, who was wearing overalls, said OK. Arnold went down to the bunker and told all the men that when the Ukrainian put down his gun to change his clothes, they should all attack him. And that is exactly what they did. When the man had his overalls around his ankles, all the men from the bunker attacked him and tied up his hands. The man begged for his life and promised not to disclose their location. But my grandfather, Arnold, and the others knew that they couldn't trust him and they had to kill him.

Although they knew that Jews were hiding in the forest, the Nazis usually avoided going into the forest because they knew that many of the Jews hiding there had weapons. However, my grandfather and the others from the bunker knew that once the Ukrainian man's family realized he was missing, there would probably be a search party sent to the forest to look for him. They buried the man in the nearby stream because they knew that the Nazis' guard dogs would not be able to smell his blood if he was buried under water. Once they buried this man, they knew that they could not return to the bunker. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian man who was buying their food told them that the Germans were starting to retreat and that they should hang-on for just a little bit longer. Until the

Nazis retreated from Eastern Poland, my grandfather and Arnold wandered around the forest and didn't return to their bunker. (My grandmother does not know exactly how long it was, but she thinks it was a few months).

Finally the Nazis retreated from Borysław. My grandfather and Arnold had nothing by this time. They met a Jewish oil engineer who survived the war with his wife and daughter. Arnold and my grandfather lived with that family for a while. The parents really wanted my grandfather to marry their daughter. My grandfather probably would have married her, but after living with them, he saw that both she and her mother were not very good people so he did not marry her.

Arnold and my grandfather got jobs, but they barely made enough money to buy bread. After his photographer brother-in-law was taken during the Aktion, my grandfather gave all his equipment to a poor Polish photographer. He told this man that he can have all this equipment, but if he (my grandfather) survived the war he wants it returned. The man agreed and returned the equipment to my grandfather after the war. And so my grandfather took pictures and was able to make some money doing this.

Around this time, he met and married my grandmother. They lived in Poland until 1957 and then immigrated to Israel. (See my grandmother's story for the details.)