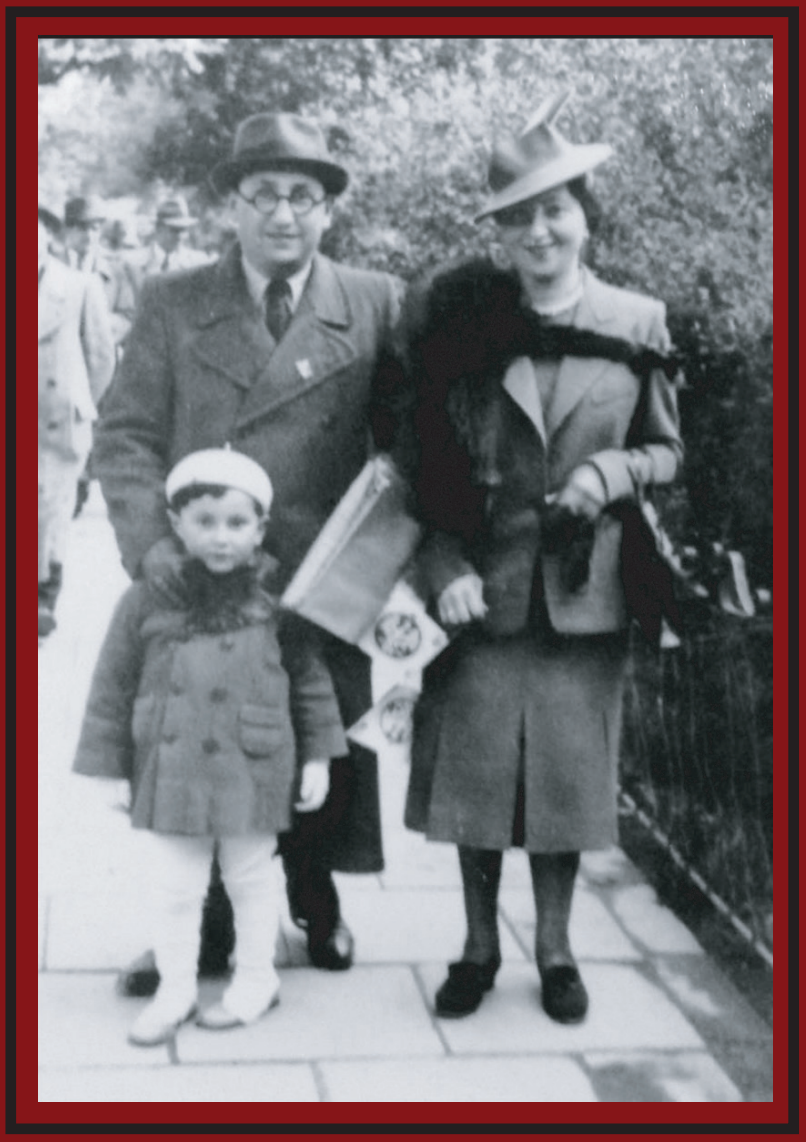
Memoirs of Holocaust Survivors Residing in South Florida

Hiding in Plain Sight

Holocaust Survivor Allan Hall's Memoir



As told to Bobbi Kaufman

Memoirs of Holocaust Survivors Residing in South Florida

Hiding in Plain Sight

Holocaust Survivor Allan Hall's Memoir

As told to Bobbi Kaufman

Republished by
The Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies
and The George Feldenkreis Program in Judaic Studies

The George Feldenkreis Program in Judaic Studies
College of Arts & Sciences
University of Miami

University of Miami
The Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

The information in this book is presented in good faith. The words in this book are the words of Allan Hall as he recalled his personal experience in the Holocaust. This is his story and his truth.

On the cover: Allan Hall with his parents in Cracow, Poland. Circa 1938

Cover design by Addyson Fonte
Design and art direction by Addyson Fonte and Erica Stern, M.D.
Proofreading by Betsy McCormack and Linda Wank
Printed in the United States of America

FOREWARD

"For the survivor who chooses to testify, it is clear: his duty is to bear witness for the dead and for the living. He has no right to deprive future generations of a past that belongs to our collective memory. To forget would be not only dangerous but offensive; to forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time.…

"... I have tried to keep memory alive…I have tried to fight those who would forget. Because if we forget we are guilty, we are accomplices."

- Elie Wiesel

As time goes on, the number of Holocaust survivors alive today is rapidly dwindling. With their passing, the incomprehensible cataclysm known as The Holocaust, or Shoah, is fast morphing from a 'lived memory' into a 'historical memory'; from a personal experience of 'those who were there' into impersonal commemorative monuments and museums.

All too soon, there will be no one left to offer first hand testimony of what it was like to actually be there when all hell broke loose; all too soon, even those who knew and heard directly from the victims of the Nazis and their collaborators, will be gone.

It is, therefore, a matter of great urgency that we gather and preserve for future generations as much primary documentation and testimony as possible about the lives and experiences of those heroes who survived the Holocaust, managed to build new lives, and were willing to tell their stories.

Memoirs serve as a very important means of preserving these testimonies. Several years ago, Holocaust survivors began approaching Bobbi Kaufman, asking for help writing their memoirs, describing their lives before, during, and since the Holocaust. She began working with the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach (HMMB), writing the memoirs of Holocaust survivors who were docents and contributors to the memorial. This collaboration was instrumental in her developing a series of in-depth, book-length memoirs. Six books were completed and uploaded onto the HMMB website and the HMMB created lesson plans for each book to be used in teaching about the Holocaust.

Now, in collaboration with the HMMB, the Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies, and the George Feldenkreis Program in Judaic Studies of the University of Miami, the series has been named Memoirs of Holocaust Survivors Residing in Florida. The existing books were graphically redesigned and several new books have been added to the collection, with the objective of continuing to expand the series. The complete series will be freely available to the public in digital form on the HMMB and Miller Center and Feldenkreis Program websites.

Our hope is that this series will make a significant contribution to the growing literature of Holocaust survivors' memoirs and serve as a tribute to their ability to make new lives for themselves while never forgetting.

Dr. Haim Shaked
Director, The Miller Center and Feldenkreis Program
University of Miami

DEDICATION

To my parents,

Edmund Horowitz Hall and Maria Horowitz Hall,
without whose bravery, cleverness, and love
survival would have been absolutely impossible.

— Allan J. Hall

PROLOGUE

I spent my childhood in Poland hiding from Nazis and their collaborators during the Holocaust. When I came to the United States as a twelve-year-old, no one wanted to hear about the horrors I experienced. Holocaust survivors who had been in the concentration camps, who should have been the most empathetic, claimed that I was not a 'real' survivor because I did not endure their horrors. Others said that as a child I could not have had a valid Holocaust experience. Well-intentioned adults advised me to stop dwelling on the war and instead concentrate on the future. I listened to them and did not speak about the Holocaust for nearly fifty years. In 1997 I was invited to an exhibit about Anne Frank in Roswell, Georgia. The curator, an expert on child survivors, assured me that in his opinion, child survivors are the most impacted of all survivors by their war experience. I was shocked to hear that an expert understood the way I felt. That was the validation I needed to begin telling my story.

I had an ideal childhood from the time I was born until 1939.

LIFE BEFORE THE WAR

I was born in Cracow, Poland, in April 1935 the first child of an upper middle class, secular Jewish family. My name at birth was Adam Janush Horowitz, but later I would have many names in my childhood.

From the start I was showered with love and attention by my parents and grandparents. I was the special child, doted on by everyone. My parents were what we would now call yuppies. My father was always beautifully dressed in a suit and tie and always carried a briefcase. He would leave work, come home for lunch, play tennis at his club, and then go back to the office for a couple of hours. My mother spent her time playing the violin, socializing and visiting with her parents and sister. She could cook if she had to, but she preferred not to. We would go to restaurants. Our summers were spent at the Baltic seashore or in the Carpathian Mountains. We led a charmed life.

My mother, Maria Hahn Horowitz, was a calm, regal person. She was tall, slender and graceful. She had dark hair, a straight mouth, and a long nose with a bump in the middle. She was a conservatory-educated violinist who gave up her career when she married.

My father's parents, Abraham and Fanja Horowitz, were originally from Zloczov where they owned a lot of real estate, but moved to Lvov to raise their six children. My father was the youngest child. Before the war, my father's sister, Mela, moved to Argentina, and two of his brothers, Henry and Natan, moved to New York. When my grandparents visited their sons in New York they briefly considered staying there, but returned to Poland saying life in Poland was better. I do not know what became of my father's sister, Lucia, and his brother Rudolph, but they did not survive the war.

Because Polish universities admitted few Jews, my father and two of his siblings were sent to school in Austria. My father, Edmund Horowitz, was well educated at a Viennese university. He spoke Polish, Russian, French, and German. At home we spoke all four languages — we just picked the best words to express our thoughts no matter in what language.

My father was an executive in the insurance industry. Because the insurance industry in Poland was closed to Jews, he worked for an Italian company, Riuniti. He was the chief casualty adjuster for fraud claims, especially those of suspected arson. He was 5 feet 7 inches tall with broad shoulders and a powerful body. He had dark hair, brown eyes, and a large hooked nose. He wore dark rimmed glasses. He was an action person, an athlete who loved people. My father could get along with anyone, including Nazi's. I think, to a great extent, this is the reason we

survived. During the war he pretended to work for the Nazis in his bogus defense businesses, which allowed him to be out on the streets providing the means for our survival. He could pass as an Austrian, a German, or a Pole — he was a chameleon. He passed as a quasi-Nazi — so much so that after the war he never received reparations from Germany because they questioned whether he was a Nazi or not — which was the most ridiculous thing! Imagine a Jew who was a Nazi — that was preposterous.

Cracow, the ancient capital of Poland, is a beautiful, culturally diverse city. In 1935 one quarter of the population was Christian of German descent, one quarter was Jewish, and the rest was Polish Christian. There was ostracism and quotas for Jews in jobs, professions, and education, but we did not experience any limitations in housing. We did not live in a Jewish neighborhood. We lived in a large two bedroom apartment. Our apartment was just four steps up from street level; it was a very desirable because there was no elevator. My parents' bedroom had large windows overlooking the street; my bedroom overlooked a central courtyard. The bathroom had white tile, a sink, toilet, and a modern tub. I would like to stand at the edge of the tub and shimmy up the wall to look through a window into my parents' bedroom.

We lived just two buildings away from my mother's parents and sister. My grandparents, Albert and Cecilia Hahn, always made me feel that the highlight of their day was

when they saw me. My beautiful aunt, Jadviga, was in her late twenties and brimming with life. I loved her.

My family was secular; it was rare for us to go to a synagogue. Friday night was just another night — a good night to go to the movies. I remember candles and sometimes a Friday night dinner, but there were never prayers or songs. I also remember stuffed gefilte fish. My mother and grandmother would buy a large carp and keep it in the water-filled bathtub. It was fun! I would play with it. They would take a second fish, grind it up and stuff it in the cavity of the big fish. I didn't relish the thought of it getting killed, but I liked gefilte fish.

We were always cultural Jews; we rarely observed religion at all. We actually turned Catholic for a brief while after the war.

I had an ideal childhood from the time I was born until August 1939 when I first experienced anti-Semitism. I was with my nanny in the park in our neighborhood. I was four years old and I wanted a flower for my mother. As I leaned over the sea of rosebushes and snapped off one rose, a policeman grabbed me by the back of my jacket. I had seen other children pick the flowers, but none of them were treated the way I was. I didn't have blond hair and blue eyes like the other children. He literally dragged me home by my collar, and sometimes by my ear. He never let go of me. He was loud and obnoxious. My mother was

very calm and collected. She very quickly realized the situation; she thanked him for his trouble and gave him some money. Then he disappeared.

I often played with the daughter of our building's janitor. Just at that time, as we were playing in her apartment, her mother started screaming at me and called me a dirty Jew and told me never to return to her apartment or play with her daughter. I was shocked; I didn't know what I did to upset her so.

THE WAR BEGINS

In late August or early September 1939 my parents began arguing all the time. The newspapers and German radio were carrying heinous anti-Semitic rhetoric. My father said we could not risk staying in Cracow, that we would be safer in eastern Poland in the area where he grew up. He wanted to leave immediately for Lvov where most of his family lived. My mother wanted to stay in Cracow near her parents and sister. The argument went on day after day. Finally, when German troops were on the edge of town, my father said he was leaving with or without her. He grabbed me by the arm and started for the door. Screaming and crying, my mother followed us out the door carrying her Persian lamb fur coat, the sterling silver dinnerware, our family photo album, and my stroller. We had no time to say goodbye to my mother's parents or sister. We never saw them again.

By then there was no longer public transportation available for civilians, so we began walking the two hundred twelve miles to Lvov. The German air force was bombing the main roads which were choked with Polish troops and refugees fleeing the city. To avoid the main roads we walked through the woods and on small country roads which made our trek longer and more difficult, but safer.

One day, walking along a berm about twenty feet above the railroad track, I spotted a speck in the sky. I was only four years old but I already knew the danger - I had seen strafing and bombing. We had nowhere to hide, so we went under the only tree in the area. The plane flew right above us. Either the pilot didn't see us or didn't consider us a worthy target. We thought this was the worst thing we would face. We did not know what lay ahead.

Sometimes people would let us stay in their houses or sleep in their barns, but most turned us away. The non-Jews would often be hostile and the Jews who didn't help us said we should trust in God to provide for us. Food was a problem. Sometimes villagers would give us some food. When we got desperate we stole a few ears of corn or some potatoes from a farmer's field. Occasionally, if a farmer saw us he would just turn and walk away — an act of kindness and generosity. At dusk we would build a fire and roast the little food we had. Our fires were so small they did not arouse anyone's attention. At night we made a bed out of grass and leaves and my mother's coat. My mother and I would sleep and my father would stand guard.

It took us about three weeks, but somehow we got to Lvov before the German-Soviet border was closed. Later we learned of the agreement between the Nazis and the Soviets to divide and occupy Poland. Luckily for us, Lvov, now called Lviv and in Ukraine, was in the Soviet occupied zone.

My parents on their wedding day.
Cracow, Poland.

My parents in Cracow before the war.

I led a charmed life as a child in Cracow.

On vacation in the Carpathian Mountains.

As a child in Cracow.

As a child in Cracow.

With my father in Poland

My mother at the Baltic seashore.

My maternal grandmother, Cecilia, my father, and my mother.

My mother and my maternal grandfather, Albert.

My mother, father, and Aunt Jadviga.

My beautiful Aunt Jadviga.

LVOV

We arrived in Lvov in October 1939 and stayed there until November 1941. At first we went to live with my father's mother, Fanya Horowitz, thinking we would be safe there. (My grandfather, Abraham Jacob, died shortly before I was born. I was named for him.) Soon, my father got a good job as the project manager for the construction of a theater. We moved to a spacious apartment with large windows. Life became pleasant again.

I was six years old in June 1941 when the Germans attacked the Soviets and occupied eastern Poland. Soon, we were forced to wear a yellow star on our clothing publicly declaring we were Jews. We were under siege by local anti-Semitism and subjected to harsh German laws.

One night my father came home from work very late, bloodied and shaken. He told us that while walking home he was stopped by a German soldier and ordered to clean the street. While he was on his hands and knees doing as he was ordered, he was attacked by club-wielding soldiers as well as civilian bystanders. He would have been killed if he had not used his briefcase to protect his head. When they turned on another Jewish victim, he escaped.

We had not heard anything from my mother's parents and sister; none of my mother's letters to them were answered.

After the war, people told us they saw my grandparents and aunt going into Plaszow Concentration Camp. When my mother heard this, she went into her bedroom and stayed there all day and all night. She never spoke about them.

THE LVOV GHETTO

Because we did not live in a Jewish neighborhood we had no idea what was happening to the Jews in the Jewish parts of the city. On August 1, 1941, we were ordered to leave our apartment and move into a small bedroom in an apartment already occupied by another family in what was the Lvov Ghetto. (The word ghetto was not used; we would not have known what it meant then, anyhow.) All we were allowed to take with us were the suitcases we could carry.

The people living in that apartment were not happy to see us. I remember my mother and the other woman clashing — we didn't have pots and pans and we had to use theirs. My mother insisted that I stay in our room, be quiet and stay out of the way. For the three or four months we were in the ghetto only rarely did I go into the rest of the apartment. I do not remember ever going outside. Really and truly, that was the beginning of my hiding. For the next seven years I often hid in plain sight.

My father worked during the day and my mother and I tried to occupy ourselves. She tried to teach me to read, but it was difficult for me. My father brought home an abacus to teach me arithmetic. I found arithmetic and number concepts easy to learn. I never mastered the abacus, however. Public schools were forbidden for Jewish children. Any hidden Jewish schools were too dangerous to attend. Just going outside exposed us to too many dangers. Beatings and even killings occurred frequently in the streets.

My parents would come up with various ways to earn money. One was to make toiletries and cosmetics. They started filling bottles and selling them. I remember inserting the little cork washers into the black plastic caps. This venture did not last.

Two or three weeks after we moved in, another family moved into the living room of the apartment. Things got really bad when another family moved into our already cramped bedroom.

One day, my father heard from his cousin, Zigo, who heard from a German commander, that there was going to be an action — a round up of Jewish children. That night I heard my parents talking and weighing the few options available for keeping me safe. The more they tried to keep their conversation from me, the more I listened. The next day, after frantic phone calls and whispered conversations, my parents made a plan to get me out of the Jewish district. They told me I needed to be away from them for a few

days. It was something I didn't want to do, but I had to — I understood that clearly.

A few days later, a short Christian man dressed in a uniform — maybe a train conductor's uniform — showed up. He ignored me and spoke to my father about how much money he was going to be paid. They arranged for him to take me somewhere in the country, to a safe house away from the ghetto until the pogrom blew over, if there was going to be a pogrom at all.

The man and I set out just past dusk when in the dim light we were least likely to be spotted. We walked down the stairs. I can still visualize the staircase with its once beautiful newel. At one time it was a very grand staircase, but now it was dirty, dusty, not well lit. We walked out the pedestrian door, which was set into the large wooden carriage gate, into the dimly lit street. It was cold. I was dressed in short pants, knitted hose, ankle high boots, a sweater, and a jacket. My cap and my knitted scarf helped hide my face. Among the blue-eyed, blond Poles I looked like what I was — a Jewish boy.

We turned to the left planning to walk down the street to the railroad station. We had walked just a few steps when we saw a truck stop at the end of the block and eight or ten soldiers jumped out of the back of the truck. We couldn't run anywhere, so we went across the street and made believe we were looking in the store windows which was ridiculous — there was no merchandise in

these abandoned stores. They were dirty, dusty. We turned and began walking in the other direction, away from the soldiers, when a second truck full of soldiers blocked the other end of the street in front of us. We were trapped. My guide slipped away; he vanished into thin air. I don't remember who got me, if it was someone from the first truck or the second truck, but I do remember someone grabbing my clothing. He didn't ask me what I was doing or anything.

I was thrown onto the open bed of a paneled truck. I was the first child taken in this roundup because I was out on the street — I was the low-hanging fruit. As I watched, the soldiers fanned out and went into the apartment buildings. I could hear the screaming and the crying. I do not remember hearing any shots. One by one, children were loaded onto the truck with me. When the truck was nearly full, the back gate was closed and we were driven to what I thought at the time was a police station. I later learned it may have been part of a concentration camp.

We were put in an area cordoned off by a wood paneled barricade about three feet high with a twelve to eighteen inch high glass partition on top. I was tall enough to see through the glass. I was one of the first children offloaded so I could have stood anywhere, but I made sure I stayed near the partition so I could see what was going on. I made sure I knew where the door was — I wanted to be close to it, but not close enough to call attention to myself. I realized that if I caused trouble I would be beaten up or worse. The whole time I hardly ever moved.

After about two or three hours my father showed up. From where I stood I could see into the police station and my father could see me. We made eye contact. I saw him talking to a couple of policemen and the commander in charge, and then he turned around and walked away. I thought he abandoned me and I was going to die. A while later he came back, gave the commander something and motioned to me with his hand to come to him. I came out, found my father and we walked out.

It is hard for me to talk about this because I always think about the children. I am convinced that I am the only one that got out. There were maybe three to five hundred children — little ones, maybe one or two years old up to eleven or twelve. Of all those children, I may be the only one who survived.

My father explained to me and my mother that at the police station he asked how much it would cost to buy one of the children. The commander threatened to shoot him. My father said he could pay with gold and diamonds, but not if he were shot. The price was two ounces of gold and two carats of diamonds. My father left the police station and went to friends and family to get the needed jewelry. When he returned to the station, the officer again threatened to shoot him. My father said, "If you shoot me, this is all the jewelry you will ever get. Let us go, and you can catch us again and get more gold and diamonds." The German took the jewelry and let us go.

I am not sure how we had money then. I know we had sold everything we had including most of our clothes. My father had his job at the theater, plus my father's mother was relatively well-to-do, so perhaps money came from there.

HIDING IN THE THEATER

Knowing each day in the Lvov Ghetto was filled with life and death events, my parents decided to go into hiding on the Christian side.

August 30, 1941, at dusk, when the dim light and the crowds of people trying to get home before curfew offered some degree of anonymity and safety, we scurried to the theater where my father worked. We almost never presented ourselves as a family of three. It would be very common for my father to walk 100 yards behind or ahead of us. People paid very little attention to a woman and a child or a single man; people paid more attention to people walking in a group. We did not want to attract any attention.

We climbed up to the space between the ceiling of the auditorium and the roof above. The space was about five feet high, suspended above the theater below. There was a rough wood plank platform in one area measuring about ten feet by eight feet wide that became our home for the next several weeks.

There were no walls around this platform. I knew that I could not walk outside of that area because other than this platform there was just acoustical ceiling that I could have fallen through. In the space above us were exposed concrete roof beams. Below us were wires, sound equipment, lights for illuminating the stage and auditorium, and walkways for workers to reach the lights. There was a lightbulb hanging off an electric cord which stayed on the entire time. My mother and I had to be quiet all the time especially when were people in the building. All I did all day was sit or sleep.

My father was still working in the theater. At first he was the project manager, but when the Germans took over he became assistant to the project manager. He still did the same work because all the Germans did was go out to eat. At the end of each day my father would be very careful to make sure everybody was gone before he would go up the stairs to join us. The greatest danger was bringing food up to our hiding place and disposing of waste. Dad carried our chamber pot with him to the toilet at night or in the morning. I didn't use a toilet for four years, only a potty chair.

One day, a maintenance man came up to the area where we were hiding. He hesitated while looking in our direction. Clearly, he saw us. We immediately started looking for another place to hide.

HIDING IN THE FACTORY BASEMENT

My parents knew two Jewish engineers, familiar with the leather industry, who had managed production factories before the war. Together they came up with the idea of convincing the Germans to allow them to build a factory to manufacture artificial leather for military use. (Artificial leather was a completely fictitious product.) Authority was granted and my father and the two engineers were given high priority papers. They quickly began assembling a factory, the primary purpose of which was to create a hiding place for their families in its basement. A multi-ton machine was rolled on pipes to conceal a trap door leading to the basement. It was the only way in or out of the hiding place. If anything happened to the engineers, we would be trapped. Because there was always the danger of Germans bringing dogs to sniff out people hiding, the engineers bought several barrels of dried animal blood and spread it around the factory to confuse the dogs.

Production of the 'artificial leather' never did begin because the engineers kept claiming they could not find the necessary raw materials. For several weeks all went well. Then one of the engineers was approached by a relative seeking a place of refuge. So, another family moved in with us. Then another family moved in, and another after that. It became more and more difficult to bring in enough food and to dispose of waste. Soon it became so crowded and

there was so much activity, it was no longer safe. It was obvious we would have to leave. We were in the factory basement for two months — from September until November 1941.

THE NOSE JOB

While we were in Lvov my father made contact with a group of forgers and was able to get us false identity papers showing that we were Christian. Later, my father would work with this group — a relationship that played an important role in our survival.

Thinking that if he looked more like a Christian he would be able to find the means for us to survive, my father decided to have rhinoplasty — a nose job — on his big hooked nose. My father asked a Christian physician he had befriended to do the surgery. At first the doctor was unwilling — at that time helping a Jewish person could be punishable by death. Dad would not accept a no for an answer. Finally, the doctor agreed but said he could not take my father to a hospital and would have to do the surgery in his home office with no anesthesia, no nurse, and limited equipment. Anesthetized with half a bottle of vodka, my father held a pan under his face to catch the blood as he handed the surgical tools to the doctor. Dad healed with no infection and after the swelling went down he had a perfect Aryan nose.

Next in his transformation from looking Jewish to looking Christian, my father had to change the color of his dark brown hair. With bleach from the store, my father became a blond. With his Aryan nose, blond hair and excellent Viennese-accented German, my father was accepted, even among the Germans, without suspicion. But, as his nose healed it flattened and his nostrils flared. His aquiline nose was gone and in its place was the nose of an aging boxer. Another problem was dying his hair. One night he came out of the bathroom with oddly colored yellow hair. The solution was to shave off all his hair. He looked even more German with a bald head.

LEAVING LVOV

After considering the risks, my parents decided to leave Lvov and go someplace where we thought the Nazis would not be looking for Jews. We chose Czestochowa, the epicenter of the Catholic Church of Poland.

We knew no one in Czestochowa and had nowhere to stay, so we rented rooms in people's houses. Although we had Christian papers, we couldn't stay in hotels because hotels checked and registered papers carefully. People renting rooms in their homes just looked at our papers. My mother and I looked Jewish — people might be suspicious.

We stayed a few days in one place then a few days in the next place. My mother and I would stay in our room and my father, who now did not look Jewish, would go out trying to get food for us. As soon as a landlord showed any sign of friendliness or suspicion, we moved on. In the third or fourth home our landlords were two sisters. When we thought they were whispering about us, we decided to leave and went out the back gate. As we were closing their wooden gate, I saw two Polish policemen going in the front door. By the time they looked in the backyard and into the alley, we were long gone.

As we went from hiding place to hiding place I walked rapidly and kept my head down. I rarely spoke, but if I did, it was in a hushed tone so only my mother or father could hear me, and then only if they stood very close to me. I would never draw attention to myself. Being recognized as Jews could mean instant death for all of us. I was hiding in plain sight.

After failing to find a safe place to stay, we decided to leave Czestochowa.

WARSAW

We traveled by train to Warsaw, Poland's capital, its largest and most populous city. We were hoping a large city would offer some anonymity. When we arrived in Warsaw we once again rented rooms in various peoples' homes and apartments.

Poles were instructed to notify the authorities of any suspected Jews. One of our landlords, suspecting us of being Jews, summoned the police. My father was out at the time trying to find us a safe place to stay. When the police arrived they politely asked to see our papers. My mother pretended to look for them, stalling for time, hoping my father would come home. She finally handed the policeman our forged Christian papers. The officer said, "Yes, this says you are Christian, but you have Jewish faces."

We were taken to police headquarters in a horse-drawn carriage — the policemen rode in the back seat facing us and we sat in front of them facing the back. One of the officers stayed with us while the other went inside requesting instructions. The instructions were to take us directly to the Umschlagplatz, the train station at the edge of the Warsaw Ghetto.

We were instructed to leave the carriage, go inside the train station, and wait. We knew we were caught and in danger, but this place seemed strangely empty and not at all threatening. We saw maybe five or six other people. My mother and I sat on a bench and waited. Time passed and people trickled in, some of them children. I edged away from my mother and went over to one little girl. Soon other children joined us and we began to play. We ran up and down the wide wooden stairs playing hide-and-seek and tag. It was fun to be with other children. I had been alone, away from other children for a long time. Here I

could speak; I didn't need to hide or be quiet. I enjoyed myself.

The day turned into night. My mother and I tried unsuccessfully to sleep on the bench. More and more people arrived at the station. People sat on the floor and on the stairs. Others had to stand. The next night, people slept on the floor. There was no longer room to play. People were standing shoulder to shoulder. No one was allowed outside. Then, on the third day, we heard a loud whistle and someone called for attention. A person in a uniform announced that there were too many people there and all the children had to leave. I did not want to be separated from my mother. She stroked my hair, kissed me and said I must go. I joined the other children and two by two we marched out of the Umschlagplatz and into the Warsaw Ghetto.

THE ORPHANAGE IN THE WARSAW GHETTO

About seventy-five of us were marched a long way through unfamiliar streets. Finally, we entered a gray block building. I was told it was an orphanage. I knew I did not belong there — I was not an orphan. There were maybe two or three hundred children in the orphanage.

It looked to me like an old school building, without desks. I remember large rooms with large windows that let in a lot of sunlight. Many rooms held army-like cots. Some rooms were places to eat.

They did not try to educate us. I didn't perceive the orphanage as a bad place — just the opposite — it was a wonderful place. The adults there were absolutely wonderful to us children. I had come there after a long time of high stress where I had no contact with other children and I had to sit still and be quiet, so for me the orphanage was a paradise. I was thrilled at being with other children. I remember it as an opportunity to run, play, and have fun.

Food was scarce, but we were fed. We ate whatever they gave us. Lack of food became an issue later on. I have a peculiar outlook about food. Even now, I cannot have an empty refrigerator. The availability of food is very important to me — food itself is not. Give me a hunk of bread and I am perfectly happy. When we were starving, bread was the only difference between life and death. Even today, bread tastes better than cake!

For many years I thought I had been in Janusz Korczak's orphanage. In later years with the help of some people, I started doing research and learned the orphanage was not Korczak's orphanage. Apparently, Korczak and his children were taken to Treblinka about three weeks before I arrived in the orphanage. My suspicion is that the people in our orphanage knew what was going to happen, so they were extra nice to us, very, very patient and very loving, knowing that our lives would soon be ending.

Days turned into weeks and I did not hear from my parents. Then, one day, a man in a trolley car conductor's uniform

came to the orphanage and said my father sent him to get me. He had no documentation — there was no note from my parents, nothing. He just said that he was there to take me to my parents. I did not trust him. I was reluctant to leave the orphanage where I felt safe and slept in the same bed every night. Knowing that we were in great danger, the people taking care of us children in the orphanage took a chance — whatever chance there was at my possibly surviving — and told me I must leave with him. They walked me to the door and when we stepped outside they slipped back in and closed the door behind me. Here I was, outside on the street and I couldn't get back inside the orphanage.

I had no choice but to go, but I did not trust or like this man. I asked him questions to check him out. I asked him my father's name and what he looked like. I was careful not to offend him because if he really were taking me to my parents he was risking his life to help me. A Christian found helping a Jew risked execution.

He put a cap on my head and pulled down the brim. He told me that no matter what happens, I should say nothing, never look up, and never let go of his hand. At sundown we left the orphanage and walked toward a wall with barbed wire on top that surrounded the neighborhood. There was a gate in the wall that had a guardhouse above it. A German soldier with a rifle ordered us to halt and asked us what we were doing. My guide said, "I brought my son

here to see those dirty Jewish pigs. I want him to learn what is happening here — how the Germans are cleaning our city of this vermin." The guard asked where we came from. My guide replied, "We came through the gate over there." The guard said, "Well, I hope you've seen your fill of the pigs and you better get home quickly before curfew." (The patrols shot people on the streets after curfew.)

We walked through the gate at a measured pace to not reveal our fear. At a safe distance from the gate, in the dark, we stopped by a very low wall surrounding a cemetery on our right. My guide told me to hide in the cemetery while he walked further up the street to see if there were patrols ahead. He said he would come back and get me if all was clear. I hid in the cemetery and watched as he walked down the street checking for patrols. After a little while he came back for me. I still did not trust him, I was afraid there was a trap for me, so I didn't go to him. He whispered my name but I did not respond. After he called my name and I still did not respond he gave up and proceeded without me. I followed him, moving silently through the cemetery. When he reached the corner and I saw there was no trap ahead, I rejoined him.

He brought me to my mother and father who were living in a rented room in a Christian area of Warsaw. Dad paid him his fee and he left. It was then that I learned how frightened the man was. He had risked his life and his

family's lives to bring me out of the Warsaw Ghetto and I had repaid him by being difficult and uncooperative. He risked his life and I was just mean to him. I didn't even say thank you to him. I always felt very bad about what I did and wish I could make amends, but I never met him again and I never even knew his name or how to reach him. It still bothers me after all these years.

THE UMSCHLAGPLATZ

The day my mother and I were apprehended by the police we were supposed to join my father at the new room he had rented for us. When we did not show up, for three agonizing days he assumed the worst. He was almost right — my mother and I narrowly escaped being murdered at Treblinka. The day we were taken to the Umschlagplatz was the day the trains to Treblinka were stopped. They did not run for the next five days — the only time they ever paused in their transports to this death factory. I later learned the reason the trains stopped running was because the slave laborers could not keep up with disposing of the massive number of bodies piling up and decomposing there. The Germans feared contamination and disease would spread from the thousands of rotting bodies and be a threat to their own health.

When I was led away to the orphanage, my mother remained at the Umschlagplatz. The following day my

mother volunteered to join a work detail to clean the streets. Each worker was given a broom or a shovel and the group was led out to the street. My mother approached the German soldier guarding them and offered him a bribe to let her go. (I believe my mother sold her fur coat just before we were taken to the Umschlagplatz which would explain how she had money for the bribe.)

He took the bribe and told her he could not let her go, but he would not look back to check on the group following him. My mother joined the group at the rear. When the soldier and the work detail turned left at a corner, my mother continued straight, put down the broom, removed her yellow star, and continued on to the place where she knew to meet my father. When she told him about my being taken to the orphanage, he hired the man in the conductor's uniform to get me out.

Knowing we could not survive in the ghetto and we could not find a safe place in the Christian community, we had to change our strategy again.

TWO YEARS IN DRAPACZ

Passing as an Austrian industrialist, my father rented a suite of offices in the tallest skyscraper in Poland, the Drapacz. The building was the epicenter of the German presence in Poland. The top floors were occupied by the

Luftwaffe, the German air force headquarters. Other floors housed German munitions and military supply companies. My father created a fictitious company that was supposed to be furnishing supplies to the German army. To create the appearance of a normal company he hired a secretary and a bookkeeper to handle bills of lading, invoices, and other paperwork. (There was never any real business — my father and mother wrote the incoming correspondence themselves.) Of course, the real purpose for renting the office was for my mother and me to have a safe place to hide. We were hoping the Nazis would not look for Jews in their own headquarters building.

The office had two rooms. Between the public hallway and the front office was a door with a translucent glass panel. While no one could see through it clearly, shadows of people moving inside could be seen through the glass from the hallway. From the front office a door led to a small bathroom with a sink and a toilet. Another door, with no glass panel, led to my father's private office. In his private office was a closet that was supposed to be a supply closet. There was no lock on the closet door. In mid-December, just before curfew, my mother and I had to walk several kilometers from where we were staying to the Drapacz. We had a problem: boys my age wore ankle high laced boots and because I had an infected big toe, putting on my boot over my swollen foot and toe was agony.

We considered cutting off the front of the boot but didn't because that might have called attention to us. As we walked across town I set my jaw and I did not limp, not even once, because limping would have attracted attention. When we arrived at the Drapacz we climbed the thirteen flights of stairs to Dad's offices. (We avoided the elevator to have as little contact with other people as possible.) When my mother finally took off my boot my nail and some skin came off and a mixture of blood and pus poured out. Even then I did not cry; from mid-1941 until mid-1945 I do not remember crying, not even once.

THE CLOSET

For the next two years my mother and I stayed in that closet for ten hours every day. The closet was maybe thirty inches deep and five feet across. There was not enough room for my mother and I to sit side by side. She would sit on one side with her back against the wall and I would have my back against the opposite wall and our feet would be interlaced. We had two pillows — not for comfort but to muffle a sneeze or cough or any other noise. I vaguely recall once making some noise and my mother clamping her hand over my mouth. I remember hearing one of the secretaries saying, "Did you hear that? Did you hear that?" I never uttered another sound. We had a potty and a length of thin white string to play cat in the cradle games hour after hour. My mother could not read to me — we were in

the dark. The only light we had was coming through the crack underneath the door. She couldn't tell me stories — conversation was never possible. The best we could do was whisper into each other's ear.

Nights started early in Poland. We could not turn on the lights because we were not supposed to be there. My mother and I were in the dark, day and night, for two years. When I was sick from the bad food and my stomach hurt, my mother would comfort me by gently rubbing my pain away — clockwise circles worked the best. To keep me quiet and entertained, my father made up the kingdom of Hoka Boka Doka. In that kingdom there was a king and queen and, of course, a prince. Unsurprisingly, I was the prince. Night after night he whispered to me never-ending stories of the adventures of its royal inhabitants. The more repetitive the plots, the better I liked it. I would beg to hear the stories over and over again. These stories were the best part of the day. The stories of Hoka Boka Doka were what I looked forward to the whole day. The days when my father couldn't tell me stories were much longer days with much less happiness. I loved those stories. I still think fondly of them.

It amazes me now that as a seven, eight, and nine-year-old I remained silent for days upon days and I never cried or complained. On the days when we thought we could stand it no more, we would try to survive for just one more hour or perhaps just one or two more minutes. Hiding was

difficult, but it was better than constantly looking for a new place to hide.

After a while we would lock the door to my father's private office and open the closet door slightly for some light and fresh air. After a month or two, my father let his two employees go. It may have been because they were becoming suspicious or because he was running out of money. With them gone we spent more time out of the closet, but were always ready to run back in if somebody, perhaps a maintenance person, came into the front office. We never knew when somebody would just burst in — they had keys. We always feared that something would go wrong — the toilet would overflow, or a window would break, and someone would look in the closet. It was amazing — in two years nobody ever opened the closet door — people just walked in, saw the office was empty, and left. Except at the end.

At first, my parents and I slept together on the floor of his private office. In the morning my mother and I would go back into the closet. After my father fired his two employees, he moved a second desk into his office and we used the two desks as a bed with newspapers as bedding. Occasionally, we would sponge bathe to get clean and stay healthy.

The Germans had their headquarters on the top two floors of the Drapacz, so in the winter the heat was on all the time, day and night. To get rid of some of the excessive

heat we would open the window less than an inch. From the street, thirteen floors below, people couldn't see that small opening. We could never open a window more than that because of the risk of somebody seeing it and coming upstairs to close the window. Discovery meant our immediate death.

At first, we bought food with the proceeds from selling all our clothes and valuables. In addition to whatever little he could buy on the black market, my father would go downstairs at night and go through the trash cans looking for food the Nazis discarded. The Germans had enough food that they could afford to peel their potatoes and discard the peelings. Their discarded potato peelings became our potato pancakes and their coffee grounds became our coffee cake. In the winter and spring my father would sometimes find whole frozen potatoes along with the peelings. Frozen potatoes have a sickly sweet taste; I still remember eating those frozen potatoes — I will take that memory to my grave! But we ate whatever my father found, spoiled or not. We cooked on a single burner hot plate which we placed under the slightly opened window to let the fumes out. Potatoes emit little odor when they are cooked, so that was perfect. We would check the outer office from time to time to be sure there were no cooking odors there. We could not risk having food smells coming from our office.

After several months, we became desperate for money. Everything was in short supply, but my father noticed string made from twisted brown paper was readily available. The string was commonly used for wrapping packages. My mother thought we could crochet the string into shopping bags and my father could sell them on the street. The problem was we did not have a crochet hook. My father pried up a loose piece of wood from the parquet floor and after whittling for several days, produced our first crochet hook! It was rough, but it worked. My mother figured out how to crochet panels that we joined together using a needle my father carved. (My mother's parents owned a dress store - perhaps that's how my mother knew how to sew.) With the addition of two handles made from coarse, stronger string, we had a shopping bag. On weekends, when no workers were in the building, we could work from sunrise to sunset and make between three and five bags a day. When we had to be in the closet we could make one bag a day at most. Sometimes a crochet hook would break and my father would spend an entire day making a new one. At first the hooks were rough, but with use and the oil from our fingers, they became smooth and easier to work with. The difference between using a new, rough hook and a well-used one could be as many as two bags a day.

We learned how to apply Easter egg dye to make the bags pretty and more marketable. The bags were strong, large and colorful and they sold well. The only problem was if they got wet the coloring would run, the string would dissolve and the bags would break. When my father was

approached by angry prior customers, my mother told him to simply sell the bags at a different location every day so customers could not find him to complain. With this new source of income my father could buy some food on the black market to supplement the food from the Nazis' garbage cans.

Although we were malnourished and lacked exposure to sunlight, we remained relatively healthy. My mother and I had no contact with people in the outside world, but my father did. One day, my father developed a fever. When the fever did not break and he got sicker and sicker, he knew he had to see a doctor. Although he worried that he was too weak to climb down and then up the thirteen flights of stairs, he finally went to the doctor. He was diagnosed with tuberculosis in his neck and lymph glands. Large sores appeared on his neck. The drainage from the sores, which went on for three or four months, was highly contagious. My mother insisted that I keep a safe distance from my him and never touch his clothing or help her care for him. We gave him nearly all of our food. My father survived and my mother and I did not get infected.

BOMBS AND SNIPER FIRE

In April 1943 when we heard explosions and smelled smoke, we knew it was the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. We generally surmised what was happening to the people in the ghetto, but we never saw any of it. Our windows faced a different direction — I am grateful for that.

In August 1944 with Russian troops a few miles away from Warsaw, the Polish resistance decided to liberate the capital and the Warsaw Uprising began. When the Russians did not advance into Warsaw, the outcome was predetermined — the Polish resistance was no match for the German military might. We did not know it, but we were in the epicenter of the fight. The Drapacz was hit by over 1,100 German bombs and shells. Even with the building shaking, gray smoke poring through the windows and the sounds of screaming coming from people caught in the street, we never thought of leaving our hiding place.

On September 13 or 14, 1944, while my father was out gathering food for us, we heard the front office door open. The door between the front office and the private office was unlocked. My mother and I dove into the closet and closed the door behind us. It didn't take long before a very small old man dressed in a shabby sweater, baggy pants, and wearing an air wardens helmet, opened the closet door. He was the first person I had seen, other than my parents, in two years. In ordinary times he would not have appeared threatening, but those were not ordinary times. We were terrified. He saw our fear, and assuming we were afraid of the fighting, tried to reassure us. Actually, we were only terrified at being discovered and possibly deceived by him. He told us we were not safe where we were and insisted we go down to the basement to the bomb shelter. As an air raid warden his job was to make sure everyone in the building got to the bomb shelter. Either he did not

notice that we were Jewish or he did not care — his job was to make sure everyone in the building went to the bomb shelter.

We walked down the thirteen flights of stairs we had walked up two years earlier, then went down the additional three floors to the bomb shelter. (By then, the elevators no longer worked.) The shelter was a series of long narrow vaulted rooms with white stucco walls and benches along both sides. There were no doors between the rooms so it looked like a series of hallways. There were two bathrooms at the end of the continuous hallway.

We were surprised to see only civilians there. There were no soldiers, no policemen, and no children. The men and women looked like they had been sitting in the shelter for a long time. When they saw us, there was some whispering that maybe we were Jews. My mother and I sat down on one of the benches. That night my father joined us.

The bombing continued. On the next day, or the day after, the building shook — even the bomb shelter shook. A great cloud of dust enveloped us all. We were all coughing and choking. When the dust settled we could see that everyone was okay. Looking around, one of the men discovered an unexploded bomb with its nose buried below our floor and its tail not visible above our ceiling. The bomb was much longer than the height of shelter. Everyone's immediate

concern was that anything could cause this bomb to explode. We feared it might have been designed to explode after a delay. We needed to get out of there quickly.

Someone told us there were shelters in another district of Warsaw controlled by the Polish resistance fighters. So, with a small group of about ten people we set off to find them. We quickly learned that bombs were not the only threat to our safety — snipers controlled the roof tops and upper floors of buildings across Warsaw. There was sniper fire everywhere. Somehow, there were guides pointing out each sniper and telling us how to avoid being shot. The trip took maybe three hours, much of it on our hands and knees shielded by low barricades. My mother did not look well — she looked like she was in pain — but she insisted that we keep going. We crawled on our hands and knees, nearly on our bellies, across the last street to reach the courtyard of a building and descended the stairs into the basement shelter.

In 1993 when I visited Warsaw with my family, we found the buildings along our route still pockmarked with the bullet holes from the snipers we eluded that night.

This shelter was a series of four-way vaults, dirty and dim, with cobwebs in every corner. At least it was quiet! People moved about this shelter with little fear. There were a few children here, but I did not go over to them. A short time after we entered the shelter, people started talking excitedly. I listened for the threatening words Jew or Jewish, but did

not hear them. Soon, women began gathering around my mother and then they led her into an adjacent vault. I tried to join my mother but these women gently blocked me and would not let me in. I was very upset, but I would not make a scene. As always, I would do nothing to draw attention to myself. For over three years I was constantly within arm's length of my mother. Being separated from her caused me great anxiety which got much worse when they hung a sheet over the opening of the vault. I could still hear my mother and, although she occasionally reassured me that she was alright, I could sometime hear her groaning and whimpering and I knew all was not well. This went on for what seemed like hours. I might have fallen asleep. Late that night or early the next morning, I heard a baby cry.

NEW BORN BABY

On September 16, 1944, my brother, Andzej, was born in a coal bin in a bomb shelter in Warsaw. He was very small — he weighed less than one kilo, or two pounds. There was a doctor in the shelter who came to see what was a medical rarity in those days — a newborn child. My mother told the doctor she tried to feed the baby but she had no milk. The doctor told her she had not eaten enough food to produce milk. She desperately wanted to keep this baby alive. The doctor suggested mixing sugar with clean, possibly boiled, water and feeding it to the baby, one spoonful every half hour. Somehow, someone brought water and a bag of

of sugar. At first the baby refused to take any nourishment. Slowly, he accepted a teaspoonful. Day after day, 24 hours a day, every half hour, my mother, some of the women, and I took turns feeding my baby brother.

We stayed in the bomb shelter for a few days and then went to some apartment. We knew the Polish resistance could not defeat the Germans without the help of the Russians and the Russians did not help. Now, the Germans wanted to destroy every building and kill every Polish person remaining in Warsaw. (Generally, it was believed that all the Jews were already dead.) They wanted to destroy the city. Every man, woman and child was trying to get out of Warsaw. We needed to find a way to get out of Warsaw before the city was dynamited. We could not leave through any checkpoint because we had no current valid identification papers.

There was talk of escaping through the sewers. If we went in the sewers we would have to be very quiet; any noise would alert the Germans and they would either release poison gas or throw grenades down there. There was talk of leaving Andzej (now called Andrew) behind or smothering him before we left. I desperately wanted to live — enough that perhaps I could have accepted that plan. I am still troubled by those thoughts.

My mother would not abandon the baby. She said, "We will not go into the sewers. The four of us will stay together. We will all survive, or not, but there will be no killing or abandoning by us." That was her decision. This was my mother's defining moment. She rarely spoke, but when she did, her decision was final.

Posing as a German, my father learned the Germans were allowing the ill and wounded to leave the city with no check of their papers, on a hospital train. A doctor, who was sending patients on the train, agreed to send my mother, my baby brother, and me on the train because a newborn baby was such a rarity. We did not know where we are going, just that we are getting out of Warsaw.

We feared we were headed to Germany.

RETURN TO CRACOW

We boarded the hospital train in late September 1944. My father posed as a German businessman with a minor injury. My mother put blood-stained bandages on her face and neck. I was supposed to be sick so I mostly kept my head down and sat very still. We avoided interacting with people as much as possible. As usual, I was hiding in plain sight. I sat in one car with my mother and the baby and my father sat in a different car so no one would suspect we were together. We did not want to draw attention to ourselves as a family. Andy still needed to be spoon-fed sugared water every half hour. When my mother fell asleep

I would feed him until I got too tired and could not do it anymore. Sometimes a woman sitting near us would help.

Every once in a while the train was shunted to another track so a military train could pass us. Sometimes we sat for hours waiting for other trains to go by. After three days we arrived in Cracow, a journey that normally would have taken a few hours. We worried that someone in Cracow would recognize us, but reasoned that we looked very different from when we left five years before — we had lost a quarter of our body weight plus now we had a baby. Also, by then no one expected any Jews to be alive.

In Cracow we moved into an unused building that had a store on the street level and an apartment upstairs. We were a little more relaxed, but my mother, brother, and I never left the apartment — danger was always present.

Needing to find an additional source of income, my father began working with a Polish resistance group. Occasionally, people I assumed were connected to the resistance would come by. Realizing that many people needed new false identity papers, he contacted the engravers and printers who made our original false identity papers and offered to broker their services on the streets. Not having to be on the street meant less risk of them being caught. Of course it put my father at great risk, but he needed the money for our survival.

The Drapacz, the building where my mother and I hid in a closet for two years. The Nazi Air Force occupied the top two floors.
Warsaw, Poland.

Our office windows were under the ledge, one row down.

Andy, my daughter Lisa, and I visiting the bomb shelter where my parents and I sought safety during the Warsaw Uprising.

This is probably the coal bin in the bomb shelter where my brother was born.

THE WAR ENDS

Every day my mother and I waited for my father to come home with news of the war. We learned to 'read between the lines', searching for the non-statement. We disregarded the German claims of gallant fights. By listening for the location of a claimed victory we learned the front lines were moving further and further west meaning the Germans were losing the war. We knew the tide was turning but that they were still hunting Jews. Then, on January 19, 1945, my father came home and announced, "The Russians have liberated Cracow. The Nazis are gone!"

Now there was no government; the only authority was the Soviet military. We welcomed them — they were our heroes who saved us from the dreaded Nazis. We socialized with the Soviet soldiers. After a few weeks the Soviets announced a new Polish government was being formed. In February 1945 my father was made a deputy in the Ministry of the Treasury. He had been in the resistance and had built a theater — they liked him and he liked them. His work included bringing insurance companies from other countries into Poland. Because his work involved traveling to other countries, he was issued legal diplomatic papers. These papers would play a very important role in our survival.

I was almost eleven years old, but I could barely sound out syllables of words on a page. I wanted to go to school, but there were no public or Jewish schools. The only operating

schools were run by the Catholic church and were for only Catholic children. One night my mother said, "It is too dangerous and difficult to be Jewish — I think it is time for us to become Catholic." My father said okay and we became Catholic. There was no ceremony of initiation or training — we just said we were Catholic. After that I attended church every Sunday, made my first communion and began going to a Catholic school. I even had visions of becoming an altar boy.

One Sunday afternoon in 1945 there was a knock on our door. When my father opened the door his face turned ashen and his knees buckled. He thought he was seeing a ghost, the ghost of his mother, but it was no ghost. His mother had survived and found news of us from her daughter in Argentina.

She told us how she survived: "The maid I had when the Nazis occupied Lvov in June 1941 was a smart woman. She understood the danger and urged me to go to a safe place. I had nowhere to go, so she took me to her village in the mountains. Knowing I could never pass as an uneducated country woman, she came up with a story that I was a deaf-mute from another part of the country so I wouldn't have to speak or answer questions. Even when they made sharp noises to trick me, I never let anyone know I could hear or speak. It was very difficult but I did it for four years."

When she realized that we were no longer Jewish, she began to yell, "You dare to convert to Catholicism!? You dare to let Hitler win? You are helping Hitler win. I am ashamed of you." My father admitted, "We made a mistake. We are and will always be Jewish."

Now that I was Jewish again, things at school changed drastically. I was not allowed to take part in classes where religion was mentioned which was very often. I had to stand out in the hall which is how students were punished. I was being punished for being Jewish. Because most of my time was spent in the hallway, I learned very little. None of the teachers helped me; the students either ignored me or made fun of me. School was not fun. (I never did learn to read properly. When I was nineteen or twenty I went to a reading clinic, but by then it was too late to improve significantly. I cannot spell in English, Polish, Spanish, French, or Latin. I learned to work with these issues and was successful in the rest of my schooling which would include a doctorate of law).

My grandmother stayed with us for a couple of months then joined her daughter, Amalia (Mela), in Argentina. She begged my father to go also, but he refused saying, "We can't. This is our country. We are rebuilding Poland." My grandmother lived in Argentina until she died there at a very old age.

My paternal grandmother, Fanja Horowitz, survived the war posing as a deaf-mute.

A NEW DANGER

Around three o'clock in the morning on May 15, 1946, there was a loud banging on our door. My parents opened the door to find five men — some in civilian clothing, others in police uniforms. They said, "Edmund Horski, you are under arrest." (During the war my family changed our name as we went from place to place. At the end of the war the name we were using was Horski.) Our neighbors, woken by the commotion, watched and listened. One of the plainclothesmen went into the bedroom with my father and watched as he got dressed — a privilege afforded only to high ranking people. Others were dragged out in their night clothing. Another policeman asked my mother for our diplomatic passports. They were in my parents' bedroom, but my mother pretended she did not have them. She said, "They are not here. They must be in his office." My father came out of the bedroom, and was taken away. They were halfway down the staircase when my mother screamed, "Where are you taking him?" The answer was, "Central Police Station."

Day after day, my mother went to the police station trying to get news of my father. Finally, an officer acknowledged that he was in the central station. Several days later she was allowed to see him. He told her he was being interrogated about his job, his friends, and his associates. Most of the questions were about government workers who were exiled to london during the war.

One day I went with my mother to see my father in the prison. After all I had experienced, this was a new and painful blow. The reality was my father was being purged. The Soviets regularly purged people whom they suspected were less than completely loyal or no longer fit in their scheme of current governance. A person being purged would either be shot or, if he were lucky, sent to Siberia. The Soviets would keep a prisoner's family hostage and if the prisoner did not follow the rules or tried to escape, the family would be shot.

HUNTED BY THE RUSSIANS

My mother was desperate. She knew my father would try to escape and she knew we would be hunted. She told my father she would find a way to get me and Andy out of harm's way. The United States was not an option and Europe was not safe, so my mother decided we should go to Palestine.

She found a twenty-year-old distant cousin named Szlifka, also going to Palestine, who agreed to let Andy and me travel with her. We were to go from Displaced Persons' (DP) camp to DP camp making our way to Trieste, Italy, where the American general controlling the port ignored the British mandate and allowed ships headed to Palestine to leave no matter who was on board.

My mother gave me a simple verbal instruction, "You are going to Palestine." Her last words to me were, "Make sure they don't find you." This was a coded message — I knew who they were and I knew what to do.

CARRYING MY BABY BROTHER TO PALESTINE

On May 26, 1946, carrying twenty-two-month-old Andy and a very small suitcase, I climbed onto the back of a truck and rode to the first of many displaced person's camps. It was a former military base with sleeping barracks, a kitchen and mess hall. It was not so easy to travel to the next camps — from then on we mostly had to walk. As we walked from camp to camp, Szlifka began spending more and more time with people her own age. Eventually she disappeared altogether. It did not make much difference to me — she was not much help anyway.

At each camp, as we were processed in, I made up different names for me and Andy. I knew not to use our real names. I trusted nobody. The Poles were anti-Semitic, the Austrians were not friendly, and the Russians were hunting us. There were almost no babies born in Europe in 1944, and here we were — a child and a baby walking across Europe — we were recognizable.

As we arrived at each camp we would be thoroughly disinfected with white DDT powder. Then we would go to the dining room and be given food. Next, Andy and I would be assigned

cots in a room often holding 50 - 100 cots. At night there was a lot of singing and dancing in the DP camps. This was the first time I had ever heard Jewish and Hebrew songs or seen people dance a Hora. Life in the camps was safe and comfortable. We would stay in a camp for a few days or sometimes a week or two, but I was never tempted to stay in a camp — my mother told me to go to Palestine.

Each day, I would try to find a group going in the direction I wanted to go. There would be between 15 and 50 people in a group. Sometimes Andy would walk a few steps but most of the time I carried him on my back or shoulders. Occasionally, some women helped carry my suitcase, but their ability was limited by their own bags and bundles.

I had trouble keeping up with the group. The group would walk for maybe two hours, stop for fifteen minutes or half an hour to rest and then go on. Often, it took me so long to catch up that by the time I got to them they were ready to begin walking again. Although I needed the rest, I needed to stay with the group. I didn't want to get lost; I always wanted to at least keep visual contact with the group. One time I needed to stop because my back hurt, my feet were on fire, and I could no longer feel my shoulders. I was afraid to lie down in case I would fall asleep. When I was ready to keep going I called Andy and he jumped right up onto my back. Perhaps he understood the danger we were in. That night we arrived at the camp, in the dark, half an hour after the others. Somehow, we always made it to the next DP camp. Nobody seemed to

care when we were left behind, but they would seem pleased when we showed up. I never spoke much to these people; I was too worried about remembering the false names I used to avoid detection, plus I was not used to being friendly.

It was summer and it was hot. Getting water was a problem. I had to make sure Andy had enough to drink. At one of the rest stops there was watermelon being distributed. Because we arrived late, most of the watermelon was gone. I was really parched. They gave me one slice — it was like gold! I gave it to Andy first, of course. He ate all the pink part and I ended up chewing on the rind which was better than nothing.

All was going reasonably well until the end of June or early July when we reached a camp at the bottom of the ski slopes in Baden, Austria 40 miles south of Vienna. While being processed in, somebody noticed that Andy had a fever. Andy was taken to the hospital with measles. His illness was serious because he was so small and so malnourished. They kept him in the hospital for six weeks, feeding him to give him strength to continue on to Palestine. It was the first time in his life he was getting enough food. As the weeks passed I was bored and lonely and worried about my parents. Each day I hoped would be the day I could take Andy out of the hospital and resume walking to Trieste. The only break in the monotony was when I was allowed to see my brother. We mostly just sat together but then I began telling him our father's stories about the kingdom of Hoka Boka Doka. He liked the stories, but no one could tell them as well as my dad did.

On August 12, 1946, my mother and father arrived at Baden in a military vehicle with a Star of David on its side. They hugged and kissed me as if they would never let me go. We immediately went to the hospital to see Andy. After three months, Andy did not recognize our parents. The first thing he said to our father was, "Mister, do you have any bread?" For a long time I had to keep reassuring him that he could trust our parents. I had some reservations about our reunion — for three months I had acted as an adult, as a parent; it was a hard adjustment to be an obedient child again.

We went directly from the DP camp to the railroad station where, using our diplomatic passports, we boarded a train for Paris.

ESCAPE FROM EUROPE

When we reached Paris my father told me what happened to him in prison: After weeks of questioning in the police station, the warden told him he was being shipped to Siberia. When my father objected that he had no trial or even a hearing, the warden's only reply was his orders were to send him to Siberia. The length of his sentence was indeterminate and he would be released if ever the order for his release was issued. There was no appeal. A week later he was taken by railroad to a prison further east. This happened again and again; he was being sent to Siberia in stages.

One day, a fellow prisoner handed my father a note. It said on that night a certain guard would let him escape by going over the prison wall. My father was frightened — was it a trap? Who sent the note, and why? Should he take advantage of this opportunity or not? The knowledge that Andy and I were out of the country was an important consideration. Also, knowing my mother never turned over their diplomatic passports meant that if his escape was successful they could get out of the country. He made his decision. That night, July 2, 1946, his cell door and the cellblock door were not locked. My father does not remember how he, at 5' 7" inches tall, scaled the prison wall, but he did. As he was pulling himself to the top of the wall, a guard saw him, but instead of shooting him, turned and walked away. Dad jumped down from the top of the wall into blackness and rolled down a grassy hill. In front of him was a black sedan with the back door open. Dad jumped in and found mom waiting for him.

My mother received a note from an undisclosed source telling her that my father was going to escape from prison and that a car would pick her up and take her to pick him up. Although mom worried this was a trap, she wanted to be there if he did escape. A car was waiting for her at the designated time. When the car got near the prison wall, she was told to open the back door, say nothing, just sit there and wait. When she opened the door she saw a figure jump from the wall and run to the car. She did not know it was my father until he got in the car. Their surprise and relief at seeing each other was overwhelming.

Following instructions, my mother and father did not talk to the driver or look at his face. Then she handed him a change of clothes and their diplomatic passports she had kept hidden from the authorities. They were driven directly to the railroad station where they bought tickets to Paris. Their diplomatic passports were accepted without question (this was before computers) and they reached Paris without incident. My parents never learned who orchestrated their escape, but they speculated it was the forgery group my father worked with selling their counterfeit identification papers on the streets. The group was actually a well-organized, multifaceted underground resistance group.

Once my parents reached Paris they began searching for Andy and me. They contacted the United Nations Refugee Agency, UNRA, which had no record of us. No agency had any record of us. There was no record of us because I never used our real names when I registered at each camp. They did learn, however, that Szlifka entered Palestine — alone.

Next, my mother and father made a list of everything they knew we would do. They knew our approximate route to Trieste. They knew I would never leave Andy under any circumstances. They knew they were looking for two children: one a boy around two years old, the other a boy or a girl around eleven years old. My parents knew I was capable of posing as a girl because during the war we often talked about my dressing as a girl to avoid being identified as a Jew because in Poland only Jewish boys were circumcised. Posing as a girl might be safer during the war.

From Jewish Agency records, my parents identified eleven possible pairs of children traveling along this path. Using a car loaned to them by a cousin serving in the Jewish Brigade, they tracked down pair after pair of children until they found us at Baden and took us to Paris.

A one-room apartment in Paris became our home for the next five months. My mother spent most of her time caring for Andy while my father and I explored Paris. We could have gotten French citizenship, but my mother said, "No. We will be much safer out of Europe. Our boys will grow up in America."

From the left: an unknown man, my mother, and I. On the right are two Russian soldiers and a government official. We looked at the Russians as our saviors and friends.

My brother Andy, my mother, and I shortly before the time my mother told me to take Andy and make my way to Palestine.

THE UNITED STATES

My father's brother, Henry, got us four first-class tickets to the United States on the SS Ile de France sailing in December. We took the ferry to England and visited the sights in London while we waited to sail. When we got word the ship had been commandeered for the French military, my father contacted his brother and somehow my Uncle Henry got us seats on an American Airlines plane leaving London for New York.

Because we would be traveling on diplomatic passports issued by the Soviet-backed government in Poland, my father knew he needed to appear to be traveling on diplomatic business. Our small amount of luggage would not arouse suspicion if we were just making a brief trip. As a diplomat, my father would be expected to be carrying a stuffed briefcase. The problem was he didn't have any papers to put in it. My father reasoned that with his diplomatic immunity they could not open the case, so it just had to look official and important. My mother said, "I have just the thing." She handed him Andy's potty. Without a word, my father dropped it into his briefcase and we set off for America with $42 and a potty.

Sunday, January 12, 1947, we boarded the plane for New York. I knew this was a special moment and I wanted to capture it, celebrate it, but I didn't know how. I was still terrified of calling attention to my family so I didn't speak to anyone and I hardly moved on the long, long flight. But I looked and

looked — determined to remember everything. I especially remember the logo over the plane's water fountain — it had an eagle with raised wings and a bold capital double A. Years later, in an antique book about airlines, I discovered it was the logo for American Airlines — how fitting that I came to America on American Airlines! As we approached New York I looked out the window and saw the lights of New York City. Nothing prepared me for such a sight. Tall buildings were awash with light; I saw street lights for the first time. All I knew was the blackness of night in wartime Europe. This looked like Paradise.

We deplaned with the other passengers and went through the usual immigration process for international passengers. All the other passengers from our plane were cleared, but we were detained. The officials kept asking us questions we did not understand and could not answer. The only words we knew in English were yes and no. Then they took our passports, examined them repeatedly, and made many repeated phone calls.

We were afraid. The night my father was taken prisoner in Cracow, my mother did not hand over our diplomatic passports claiming they were in my father's office. The government immediately invalidated our passports, but my mother still had them. We knew we had travelled to America with void passports. We suspected the immigration agents were calling the Polish embassy and consulate and that we were in great danger.

There was a glass panel between where we were being held and the waiting area. Waiting on the other side were my father's brothers, Henry and Nat. After about an hour and a half, my father's brother Henry, a former Polish cavalry officer, marched through the doors marked No Admittance, and started yelling, "What are you doing? These people are here on diplomatic passports! How dare you hold them? I am here to pick them up!" After a brief conversation, we were released. We followed Uncle Henry out and met his wife, Aunt Lee, my Uncle Nat and his wife Aunt Helen, and all their children. On the way to Uncle Henry's home we learned that the immigration officers perhaps had never questioned our passports and were only concerned about our well being. Had it not been late at night on a weekend they would have reached the embassy and we would have been sent back to Poland to our certain deaths. When my Uncle Henry went into the restricted area and told the officials he was sent to pick us up, we escaped death, again.

For a few days we lived at Uncle Henry and Aunt Lee's house. At the time, food was still rationed but my aunt and uncle generously shared everything they had, or could be gotten, with us. One morning my aunt was cooking using butter. I had never seen a stick of butter before — in Europe it came in tubs. During the war a little butter on a piece of bread was an unheard of luxury. I asked my aunt if I could taste the butter. I took it out of the wrapper and took a taste — it was delicious. I loved it. I ate the whole stick and asked for a second stick. They would have given me all they had, but halfway through the second stick I got sick.

Soon it was time to find our own place to live. Luckily, Uncle Nat and Aunt Helen let us move to their summer home in Newburgh, New York. The house was wonderful but very isolated — we were more than five miles away from any town. Now we were alone in a new country where we did not know the culture or speak the language. We struggled with terrible memories of the last few years as we tried to understand how this world of peace and plenty existed at the same time ours did. Could we trust that we were really safe? We were not sure.

BEGINNING SCHOOL

In March 1947 my parents enrolled me in school as a fifth-grader at Union Grove Elementary, a four room schoolhouse set in a pine forest two miles from where we lived. Even though I did not speak English, I was very excited to start school. My uncle explained my background to the principal so the teachers and the students were very good to me. The principal was my guardian in school. My teacher tried to teach me five or six years of schooling in four months.

One day my aunt said to me, "If you are going to school in America, you will need new clothes." I was wearing a white shirt, a sweater over gray shorts, brown knitted stockings clipped to my underwear to keep them up, and ankle-high lace up boots. My jacket did not reach the bottom of my shorts. On my head was a black beret. I would have been well-dressed in Europe, but not in America.

Mrs. Bloom, the wife of Newburgh's reform temple's rabbi, came to our house several days a week to teach me English. (Later I went to her house.) I very much wanted to fit in in America and to do that I had to lose my Polish accent. I listened so intently to Mrs. Bloom's accent that I eventually could mimic her voice. I still have a trace of her South Carolina accent. My parents learned English by insisting that we speak only English in the house.

My mother had left her violin behind when we left Cracow for Lvov. When we got to the United States she picked up a violin, put it under her chin, played maybe half a dozen notes, put it down and never touched it again. She just left it. She sounded like a first year violin student. She was heartbroken.

Some Jewish agency found out about us and came to meet us saying they wanted to help us. My parents were puzzled until they figured out that this was a charity. They were insulted that somebody would think we would accept help or charity. My parents told them to leave the house and never come back — which they never did. Meanwhile, we had no source of income — zero. I remember my parents sitting and deliberating over what they should do, how they could earn money.

Finally, my mother said, "I am a woman, I can sew." As far as I knew she had never held a needle in her hands. She walked half a mile to the bus, rode into town and went from store to store looking for a job as a seamstress. She didn't speak English and had never used a sewing machine, but by the end of the day she had a job as the third seamstress in a custom slipcover and drapery shop. The other two seamstresses were

very kind to her and taught her to use the trundle sewing machines. A few months later when the shop bought electric machines, my mother was on par with the others. That was the beginning of my parents' American careers.

I have no idea how he communicated, but my father got a job as a laborer in Beacon, New York, directly across the river from Newburgh. His job was to carry lumber to the lathes that turned the lumber into furniture legs. Physically, he was not very strong, so he lasted only two or three months at that job. When my father learned that the shop where my mother worked needed another slipcover cutter, he somehow managed to get that job and that got him into the slipcover and drapery business. Soon afterward, Mom and Dad borrowed money and opened a competing store. When Dad noticed people also wanted to decorate their homes, he started bringing in bric-a-brac and decor items which he bought at auction in New York.

We lived in Uncle Nat's summer home for about a year and a half until we saved enough money to move to an apartment — the first place of our own in America. The neighborhood may have been nice at one time, but when we moved there it was seedy and nearly abandoned. Our business went well — in 1950 we got our first car, a woody station wagon, then we bought a house. When I was in school, Andy spent his days in the back of the store. When I got home, I was his babysitter. What a job that was! He was always slipping away and wandering around the town. One time, when I was in

school, a policeman found him sitting on the railroad tracks waiting for a train. By the end of ninth grade I was doing well in school, making dean's list and being inducted into the National Honor Society.

The rabbi at my Bar Mitzvah was Morris Bloom, my English tutor's husband. I didn't do a very good job at leaning for my Bar Mitzvah; I never did learn to read Hebrew fluently; my participation was half memorized. I remember being hurt, disappointed, that there were so few people at my Bar Mitzvah. I was still an outsider even among the Jewish children.

MOVING TO MIAMI BEACH

In the winter of 1951 my uncle invited my parents to join him on vacation to Miami Beach. They fell in love with it and decided we would move there and open a store selling bric-a-brac and antique jewelry. They wanted to drop the drapery and slipcover business because carrying the heavy bolts of fabric to peoples' homes was too physically demanding for Dad. In June 1952 my father and I drove to Miami Beach looking for a store and an apartment to rent. On that trip we discovered that my father was color blind when he sped through red lights having no idea they were red and scaring me half to death! (In a town in North Carolina the red lights were on the bottom and the green lights were on the top.)

We rented a store on Collins Avenue across from the Roney Plaza hotel. We quickly learned that only white Gentiles were welcome in that hotel. We were allowed to sell to their guests and deliver items to the hotel, but we were not allowed to visit with our customers. Next, we rented a one bedroom apartment just across the canal from the store. Then we went back to New York to windup our business there and sell our house. Our plan was to move to Miami Beach in August and prepare our store for the winter tourist season. One night my parents said to me, "We cannot leave the business right now. We need you to take the train to Miami, on your own, and set up the store while we finish up here." I was sixteen years old — it sounded like an adventure.

I took the Silver Meteor to Miami and moved into our apartment. Soon, shelving and merchandise for the store began arriving. I assembled the shelving and set up the displays. Customers walked in through the open doors of the un-air conditioned store and began buying. At last I had some money to go to restaurants and movies — to do things a teenager would do. I bought a fan that I carried with me between the store and the un-air conditioned apartment. It was August and it was hot!

Several times my parents called and told me they needed to stay in New York a while longer. When they asked me how school was, I told them it was fine. I didn't tell them that I didn't attend! By the time they arrived in Miami Beach in mid-November the store was doing well. They soon realized it was because I had been working full-time and had never set foot in school.

My parents were furious and told me I needed to figure out a way to get readmitted to school immediately — they were not going to help me. From my war experience I was familiar with forgery, I took the transfer documents from my school in Newburgh and changed the date to show that I left there in October, not June, so it would appear that I was just then arriving to start at Miami Beach Senior High in November. The principal's secretary was suspicious and asked if I had changed the date on the transfer document. I never admitted my wrongdoing. She let me know that she knew, but still sent me to class.

By the time I entered Beach High my accent was gone and I was just an ordinary guy. I never spoke about my prior life. I went out for the football team and was so bad at it that the coach didn't want to give me a letter. But, because I played the whole season, the parents of the other players insisted and the school gave me the letter. I made friends, began dating, and was elected president of my fraternity. I considered myself awkward and un-athletic, but later when I looked at pictures of myself I was shocked — I was a good-looking kid and I never knew it!

In 1954 I graduated from high school as Allan Horski. Horski was the name my father chose at random as our last name during the war. He could not use the Jewish name Horowitz as long as we were in Poland and we did not want to use it now either. Anti-Semitism was common in the United States after World War II. We despised the name Horski and wanted to change it. We were looking for an H name when I found the

name Hall in the Miami Beach phone book. It was the most common name starting with the letter H.

AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP

That summer we became American citizens. Our first two years in America were spent virtually in hiding. We were so petrified, so frightened of being sent back, that we went back to our old mode of hiding in plain sight and never applied at immigration. In 1949, after a number of visits with lawyers and assurances from my uncles, my parents were finally persuaded to visit the authorities. Naturalization was a five year process. We became eligible for citizenship in 1954, seven years after our arrival — the first two years didn't count because we were not legal.

We feared the citizenship examination — what would happen if we didn't pass. We studied hard; Andy and I knew everything — you name it and we knew it. We feared that my parents couldn't pass the exam, so we decided that if somebody asked my mother a question, Andy would answer and if they asked my father a question I would answer. Judge Pat Cannon asked Mom a question and of course Andy answered before she had a chance to answer. Then he asked Dad a question and I answered quickly. This happened several times until finally, the judge said, "Okay, guys, I know what you're doing. I'm going to pass you. I'm not going to throw out anybody. Now will you let your parents talk?"

Because I was leaving for college and would not be able to return for the swearing in ceremony, Judge Cannon examined us and swore us in as naturalized citizens of the United States all on the same day, which was unheard of. I graduated high school, had my name changed, became a citizen, and began college all in the same summer. I had been admitted to the University of Florida as Allan Horski. I had a difficult time convincing the University of Florida that Allan Horski and Allan Hall were one and the same person.

At college I had a great deal of difficulty adjusting to living without a tight family structure. Leaving Andy was a little more complicated — I was his third parent. My parents were always at work so I would prepare our meals and do everything that needed to get done at home. My mother and father would come home late at night, long after Andy was asleep. I knew he would have difficulty without me, but I had to attend to my own needs.

I entered the School of Architecture at the University of Florida and graduated with a degree in building construction with concentration on structural design. My interest was the skeleton of the building. (Today this is mostly done by computer.)

While I was in college, my parents, at first gently, then more forcefully, urged me to fill out papers to apply for reparations from Germany. I bristled. I wanted absolutely nothing to do with the German government. I didn't want their money. I have no idea how my parents persuaded me, but eventually I agreed.

Because the application papers required a report from a doctor saying I was suffering adverse effects from the war, I went to see a psychiatrist. When I met him, my worst fear was realized — he was a German with a German accent. I proceeded to tell him that I wanted no German money, I was fine, and I had no residual issues. He listened, but was more knowledgeable than I was. He said, "If that's what you want, okay, but why don't we sit down and chat for a little bit." He was very skilled. Two hours later he said in a very gentle way, "I understand how you feel. But I'm going to give my analysis to the government and you can do whatever you want to do, but I am professionally bound to do that." He reported that my war experiences significantly impacted me. I went back home and bristled some more. I did get reparations from the German government for a 25% disability, and afterward I got extensive psychological help. It was vital to my wellbeing.

While at the University of Florida I met, fell in love with and married Jeri Horowitz. We had two daughters — Lisa and Julie. Jeri and I divorced after 21 years, but maintain a cooperative relationship on all family matters.

MY CAREERS

My first job was in construction management. I went on to build part of the Saxony Hotel, many private homes, apartment buildings, and shopping centers. In around 1962 I started my own construction company in Orlando. I was very, very successful — too much so. It was too much too fast. Soon I was building in three cities and had four or five companies.

I was burning out. One day, I said to my partner, "It's simple, either I buy you out, you buy me out, or we just sell everything and each of us will start again on our own." He said okay and gave me a number I couldn't refuse. I had taken one law course in college and liked it, so I thought maybe I'll try law school. I sold my business, took the LSAT, did well, applied to the University of Florida law school, and was accepted all within three months. This was in May or June and school didn't start until September, so with my free time I bought and fixed up a house in Gainesville, got a job as a chief estimator for a construction company, and later secured a teaching job at the University of Florida School of Architecture.

I was going to law school, taking care of the family, and teaching but I didn't find it all that difficult because I was used to working ten to twelve hours a day, six or seven days a week. My children were six and three years old — it was a wonderful time. When my brother joined me in law school one semester later, life got even better. When I graduated I accepted a job in Atlanta. I practiced transactional law in Atlanta for 20 years — from 1966 to 1988. My last 17 years were utterly delightful. I was teaching at Southern Polytechnic State University (Now merged into Kennesaw State University just outside of Atlanta.)

Andy also joined a law firm in Atlanta after graduation, but soon moved to Miami. I greatly admire my brother. He has sued several countries that sponsor terrorism and has won large judgements on behalf of American citizens who were victims of state-sponsored terrorism. He is an eminent trial attorney and a respected civic leader.

My mother's passport picture after she arrived in the United States.

My father after the war.

With Andy in Newburgh, New York.

One of our plane tickets from London to New York.

My Bar Mitzvah in Newburgh, New York.
I am in the middle of the front row.

Before leaving Poland.

When I graduated from high school my name was Allan Horski.

As a young businessman.

As a young lawyer.

MY FAMILY

In 1983 I married Lori Gold, a psychologist and lawyer who worked for the Georgia Secretary of State. She is very smart and great fun to be with. I retired in July 1996 and Lori retired December 16, 1996. We moved to Miami Beach on December 17th. In Miami Beach, as part of my legal practice, I provided free legal services to Holocaust survivors.

Between us we have three daughters: Lisa, Julie and Ashley. My oldest daughter, Lisa Hall, is married to David Michel, the son of Holocaust survivors. His parents left Europe early, but he still has a clear understanding of what it is to be the child of a Holocaust survivor. Lisa and David are both lawyers. They live in Cleveland. Their children, Eric and Randi, both graduated from Harvard. Eric works for Google in San Francisco and Randi works for the U.S. State Department in Nairobi, Kenya. Julie, my younger daughter, started her career as a nursing home administrator. She married David Cole who was also a nursing home administrator. They both also managed senior housing companies. David is now retired and Julie is a residential real estate broker. They live in Alexandria, Virginia. Ashley Gold is Lori's daughter from a previous marriage, but after 35 years she is also mine. Ashley and her husband, Jordan Kanfer, have two young sons, Noah and Graham. After closing her women's clothing stores, Ashley now works as a consultant in that field. Jordan is an attorney. They live in Brooklyn, New York.

My past was not kept a secret from my children or grandchildren, but I would never start a conversation about it. If they wanted to know they could ask and I would answer. That was the pattern. The Holocaust was not something that was kept a secret within the family. My brother Andy and his first wife, Patricia have two sons, Michael and Adam. Adam and his wife, Abby, have two daughters, Mia and Ema. Adam practices law in Andy's law firm. Michael is married to Sabrina. After serving for twelve years in the Navy, Michael now works for the U.S. Naval Supply Service. Andy's wife, Gail, has two daughters, Hillary and Katherine. Hillary has two children, Zachary and Molly. Katherine, a lawyer, is married to Josh Etra, also a lawyer. They have two daughters, Lilly and Annabell.

FAMILY TRIP TO POLAND

I wanted to go to Poland, but as long as my father was alive, visiting Poland was not possible; he was adamant that he would not go back. After he died I slowly started speaking to my mother and Andy about going. I wanted us to make a family trip as long as my mother was still alive. She was not at all adverse to it, so in 1993, Lori and I, our three daughters, our sons-in-law, my mother, Andy and his wife and son, and my first wife all headed to Poland. My first wife was a major part of my life and my daughters' lives, so she was invited to join us.

Julie, David, Ashley, Lori and I went ahead separately and were waiting to meet the others at the airport in Poland. My mother was in bad enough shape that I asked Lisa to arrange

a wheelchair for her. We waited and waited and when all the passengers from their plane came off and they didn't, I panicked. I was terrified that my mother either got very sick or died on the plane and I had caused it because I persuaded her to go on this trip. Actually, when they finally appeared my mother was happy and full of energy — they just took their time.

When we went to see the apartment where we lived before the war a strange thing happened: my mother actually bounded up the stairs, two stairs at a time. The family living there welcomed us very graciously. My recollections of the apartment were very accurate which surprised me because I left there when I was four years old. When I walked into the bathroom I exclaimed, "Where is the window above the bathtub?" In the plastering above the tub was a half-moon crack. The people living there never knew there was once a window there and always wondered about the crack.

The trip was very emotional. We went to the Drapacz, the high-rise building where we hid in the closet for two years. We could not get into the actual two rooms, but we were in the hallway leading to the rooms. That's where I lost it. I just broke down and could not stop crying for a long time. Even now just thinking about it my eyes fill with tears.

After the 2001 attack of the World Trade Center I became acutely depressed and claustrophobic and was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD.) The diagnosis seems

obvious in light of my wartime experiences. I still have nightmares of being pursued and struggling for survival — but now in my dreams I fight back. I try very hard to protect against risks and am rarely taken by surprise. Even today when I walk into a room I am instantly aware of all possible hiding places and routes of escape. I know how many people are there and who seems trustworthy. I am aware of anyone wearing a uniform, but I no longer immediately feel threatened. I am able to lead a 'normal' life — I think!

In 2004 at my Beach High 50th class reunion we went around the room and everybody spoke about what they have been doing and about their life since graduation. I said, "I have something to share with you." I told them I was a Holocaust survivor. I thanked my classmates telling them that it was in my last two years of high school that I first felt accepted and that I was living a normal life. It really brought the event to a halt. I had always kept that part of my life private. I strongly suspect that Andy and I are the only Holocaust survivors who went to Beach High and perhaps to the University of Florida.

My family on our trip to Poland in 1993.
From the left: Me, David Michel, Lori, Lisa, Ashley,
David Cole, Julie, Adam Hall, Jeri Hall, Gail Meyers, Andy.

With Andy in front of the apartment building where I lived as a child in Cracow. Photo, 1993.

Andy and I in front of the building where my family lived before the war. Our apartment's windows are to the right of the door. Cracow, 1993.

My mother visiting with the woman who, with her family, was living in the apartment we lived in before the war. Cracow, 1993.

My father loved my mother until the day he died.
You can see it in his face.

My favorite picture of my mother.

Celebrating my 80th birthday.
From the left: Ashley, Jordan Kanfer, Lisa, David Michel, Eric, Lori, Randy, Julie, David Cole.

MY LIFE TODAY

I no longer keep my experience in the Holocaust private. As survivors aged and fewer and fewer of them were able to speak publicly and the demand for speakers increased, I began to speak. I speak at schools and colleges, at churches and synagogues, wherever I am invited. I am a docent and regular speaker at the Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach. When people ask how, as such a young child, I knew and understood so many details of our hiding, I reply, "We were in quarters where my parents had no privacy. I knew what was going on —even when they shifted from language to language,
I understood. Also, when you are that frightened, you remember everything." My mother never spoke about the Holocaust, my father never stopped talking about it. Most of what I know is a combination of listening to him and my personal experience.

Life for my parents in America was far better than they could have dreamed. They saw their children and grandchildren grow to become happy, successful people. My parents had an incredible partnership. My father loved my mother intensely until the day he died in 1988. My mother died in 1995. Because of my Holocaust experience I retired early — at age 61. I never expected to live out my statistical life expectancy and wanted to enjoy my "last years." I am pleased to report that as of today I am 82 years old, in good health, and very active. Lori and I do a tremendous amount of traveling. We like to go to new places and meet new people. I love to learn about people.

Some of my most memorable experiences are just encountering people in the street and learning to see things from the perspective of a different culture. There is still so much to learn! We are always taking courses in art and literature and history and whatever else interests us. We go to the theater and have season tickets to the symphony. Our home is littered with books and more arrive each week. We have breakfast and lunch with friends and go out for dinner with friends several times a week. I have lunch with my brother once a week. Every Friday morning I am a docent at the Holocaust Memorial. My life is full of fun and happiness.

After a traumatic beginning, life has been good to me. Life in the United States, though it was not always perfect, has been wonderful and well beyond anything I might have expected.

I am deeply indebted to Bobbi Kaufman whose skill and support enabled me to tell my story which I tried to write for many years.

It is my hope that this book will continue to tell my story of survival and resilience after I no longer can.

ABOUT THE WRITER

I began writing for Holocaust survivors in the 1990's when survivors I met on The March of the Living asked me for help writing about their feelings on returning to Poland for the first time. Later, survivors I interviewed for Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation asked me for help writing down all the things they did not speak about in their interview. Soon, other survivors began approaching me seeking help writing a book about their experiences in the Holocaust. I met with the survivors, recorded our numerous conversations, organized and wrote the stories in the survivors' own words, printed the books, and then handed the books to the survivors as my gift to them. The books were written solely for the survivors and their families; they were never intended for publication. They are being published now because my friends, Carol and Jaime Suchlicki, recognizing their historical value as first-person testimony, introduced me to Dr. Haim Shaked to discuss finding a wider audience for the books.

Thank you to Dr. Haim Shaked director of the Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies at the University of Miami for agreeing to publish the books and for your guidance and patience as we worked together on this project.

I am grateful to the March of the Living for introducing me to the world of Holocaust education and finding a role for me in it.

Thank you to the Shoah Foundation for choosing me to be an interviewer and for mentoring me through more than thirty interviews of Holocaust survivors. Your training led me to do the work I do today.

Thank you to the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach for encouraging the docents at the memorial to work with me to write their memoirs. I appreciate your confidence in me and your respect for my work.

Thank you to the my dear Holocaust survivors for sharing your most painful as well as your most joyful memories with me. Thank you for answering questions that no one should ever have to ask or answer. Thank you for trusting me to write your memoirs accurately and respectfully. It has been my honor and pleasure to work with you.

—Bobbi Kaufman

"My mother and I were in the dark, day and night for over two years. The closet where we hid was maybe thirty inches deep and five feet across. We had two pillows -- not for comfort, but to muffle a sneeze or cough. Being discovered would cause our death."

- Allan J. Hall

After being the first child picked up in the children's pogrom in the Lvov Ghetto, and narrowly escaping deportation to Treblinka, Allan was hidden in an orphanage in the Warsaw Ghetto. When his father, passing as Aryan, rented an office in Warsaw that housed the Nazi headquarters, Allan and his mother hid in the office closet for over two years. During the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising they fled to a bomb shelter where Allan's mother gave birth. In 1947 the family emigrated to the United States where Allan went on to graduate from the University of Florida School of Law. He is married and has three daughters.

There is a concept in Judaism of a positive commandment, something that is time dependent, something that must be done *now*. One must, accordingly, applaud this important effort by the Miller Center and Feldenkreis Program of the University of Miami to collect and publish Holocaust survivors' memoirs as there will soon—too soon—come a time when the last survivors will be no longer. Sadly, tragically, this testimony is not only urgent but timely because the world in which we live echoes their world and the quality of their witness. The very nature of their survival has much to teach today's generations. One must express gratitude for this project and in the sagacious words of Hillel say: "If not now, when?"

Dr. Michael Berenbaum
Professor of Jewish Studies
American Jewish University
Former President and CEO
Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation
(Now USC Shoah Foundation Institute)