

## **George Elbaum**

### Video Transcripts

#### **Video 1: George Elbaum Warsaw Ghetto**

Put a wall around about two percent of the area of Warsaw. And that became the Warsaw Ghetto. Yet the Jewish population of Warsaw was 30 percent. So, when you consider that the Nazis packed everyone in the Warsaw region, into the ghetto, and yet there were—you know—the people—there was only room for those people who were already living there. Where do the newcomers go? Where do they live? Well, if they were lucky, they knew someone who lived in the ghetto like we did or had friends or family that would move in with them. And I was remembering—I remember when I was about three and a half years old, suddenly, about a dozen strangers moved into our apartment. And I remember asking my mom, cause they were sleeping on the couches, on the floor, in the living room, in the hallway, kitchen, everywhere. And I remember asking my mom, “Who are these people? What are they doing here?” And my mom said, “Well, they’re friends, they’ll be with us for a little while.” And indeed, once the Nazis were satisfied that they’ve collected all the Jews from the entire Warsaw region and shoved them into the ghetto, they started shipping out the occupants of the ghetto and sending them to concentration camps and to the gas chambers.

#### **Video 2: George Elbaum Mother’s Papers**

My grandmother and I, one time were herded into our courtyard with our neighbors, ready for shipment, except at the last moment, I remember seeing my mom running in through a gate like this [holds up a finger pointing], holding a piece of paper in her hand. That piece of paper was a document that she got from the factory director in—that worked where she worked in the ghetto. And the document allowed her to keep her family in place. With this document, which was, in effect, a temporary permit to continue living, my mom managed to convince the Nazi officer leading that day sweep to let us go. If she arrived a few minutes later, it would have been too late.

#### **Video 3: George Elbaum Experience with a Soldier**

Families, with whom I lived—Polish families—I remember I was sitting at a table, eating soup. It was getting dark and someone was lighting a kerosene lamp on the table, and suddenly there was loud banging on the front door, and loud shouts in German. And everybody rushed to the front door, but I didn’t. I just kept sitting there, eating. Why? Probably cause I was hungry. I was hungry through most of the war years. But that was not unusual. And I kept sitting there eating until all of a sudden I sensed

somebody was staring at me. I remember looking over to the side, and there was a Nazi soldier standing right next to me, staring down at me. I remember he had on a heavy, dark green winter coat, and a machine gun on his shoulder. I remember staring at the machine gun because it fascinated me. Then I looked at him and I smiled. I don't know why. And I went back to eating my soup. He stood there another moment or two, and soon he left and everyone—all the other soldiers left the apartment—all was quiet again. I learned after the war that had I showed any fear whatsoever, he would have made me drop my pants to see whether I was circumcised, because only Jews were circumcised in Poland at that time. And if that happened, I would have never reached my fifth birthday. Luck.