

EI-1333

VALENTIN JAKOLENKO

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LEVINE: Today is May the 18th, the year 2004. I'm here in Tamarack, Florida and I'm with Val, whose full name is Valentin, Jakolenko.

JAKOLENKO: Right.

LEVINE: Who was born in what was the USSR and is now the Ukraine.

JAKOLENKO: Right.

LEVINE: He came here at the age of sixteen years, leaving in December of 1951 and arriving in January.

JAKOLENKO: New York.

LEVINE: In New York.

JAKOLENKO: January 10th.

LEVINE: January 10th, to be exact, 1952.

JAKOLENKO: Right.

LEVINE: He came via Austria, where he had been in a labor camp there, leaving from Bemenhaven on the General Green, a troop ship.

JAKOLENKO: Right. Right. Correct.

LEVINE: Terrific. Okay. If you'd say for your—for the tape, your birth date and where in—in the USSR you were born.

JAKOLENKO: I was born in the city of Poltava in the state of Poltava.

LEVINE: Okay.

JAKOLENKO: The Ukraine.

LEVINE: In the Ukraine, and the date?

JAKOLENKO: 19—June 29, 1934.

LEVINE: Okay. Okay, and how long did you live in Poltava?

JAKOLENKO: Since—until 1943, so I was born in '34. Six, nine years.

LEVINE: Nine years. Okay, so you remember life there, right? I mean, how could you—

JAKOLENKO: I just remember going to school a little bit, not very much, you know.

LEVINE: What was Poltava like? I mean, was it big, small? What kind of a—

JAKOLENKO: It's like three hundred thousand people. It's a—

LEVINE: City.

JAKOLENKO: It's not a big building city, but like four, five stories high.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

JAKOLENKO: And a small city, you know. Nothing. You know, no skyscrapers.

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LEVINE: Was it—was it a certain kind of—what do I want to say? Industry?
A certain kind of area that you had—

JAKOLENKO: Wish you asked me. I wish you asked me. I would have brought
you a book on the whole city of Poltava.

LEVINE: Oh, yeah? Did—

JAKOLENKO: It produces a—it used to produce, during the severe time, heavy
duty trucks.

LEVINE: Oh.

JAKOLENKO: And trucks, and trains. They used to build in the city of Poltava,
and a lot of agriculture area.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What kind of agriculture? What kind of—

JAKOLENKO: Wheat. You know, all that stuff like potatoes grown. Ukraine is
known in those days was like a bread basket of Europe.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Yeah.

JAKOLENKO: So—

LEVINE: So, now, you're father's name?

JAKOLENKO: My father's name is Constantine.

LEVINE: Constantine.

JAKOLENKO: "Yakolenko." Jakolenko, in English.

LEVINE: Oh, "Yakolenko." You say "Yakolenko."

JAKOLENKO: Yeah, see, because that's—

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah, right.

JAKOLENKO: In German is J.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: In Ukrainian should be Y.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and so your father, what would—what did he do in Poltava?

JAKOLENKO: I think he said he was working in there on the railroad.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: But then not long because he was in Finnish—Russian Finnish War. So he was in wartime. He just come home and he got wounded first day. I think the war was over in 1939 and only been home like a year.

LEVINE: Oh.

JAKOLENKO: And first German planes that come down to bomb and he got wounded. That's how the Germans caught us. He was—he was in the hospital.

LEVINE: I see. Uh-huh, and how about your mother, what was her name?

JAKOLENKO: Luba, L-U-B-A.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

JAKOLENKO: Oh, Snishjenko [PH], I don't even know. Don't ask me.

LEVINE: Snintjensko?

JAKOLENKO: Snishjenko.

LEVINE: Snishjenko, okay.

JAKOLENKO: Snishjenko.

LEVINE: And was she a working mother or—

JAKOLENKO: Yeah, she worked on the railroad, too.

LEVINE: Oh, they both did. Uh-huh. Okay. And did you have brothers and sisters there?

JAKOLENKO: Yes, I have a sister, which was about one year or two years old when we left.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Okay, so when you think of Poltava, what are the things that you remember doing or—

JAKOLENKO: Well, it was just the school ways.

LEVINE: Like the—

JAKOLENKO: Remember going to the colony school. In those days I was [unclear]. That's like a boy scout of Communist party. I remember, you know, teaching about Lenin, how great the guy was and stuff like that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Yeah, is there anything else you would say about—about having been in a Communist school? What it was like? What you—

JAKOLENKO: We had a lot of good discipline, which this country lacks of it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: I think really as bad as government was, the discipline was real. You don't talk in school. You don't move unless you raise your right hand and you're quiet. Obedient school. Very well trained.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And did you—did you like school? Did you—was it something you enjoyed?

JAKOLENKO: Yes. Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So okay, so now what prompt—when you left, you were nine. What prompted your leaving?

JAKOLENKO: Well, they come down. Germans come up and with the notice because the Russian Army was coming in and they give us a notice. "Pack your things and move out because we're going to destroy everything you own in here." And if you don't go, then where you going to go? You know, first you go on your own. They give you choice, either you want to go to the labor camps or—or they'll force—force labor camps. Pick your choice. So we packed and we left. We thought it was, you know, it's going to be over with a year, but apparently didn't end up like that.

LEVINE: So you left with your whole family?

JAKOLENKO: Yes, my mother, my father and by the way, my mother was wounded, too, in World War II. They both were wounded.

LEVINE: Wow.

JAKOLENKO: Same time. She got hit in the head by the Russians.

LEVINE: This is from bomb—from a bomb?

JAKOLENKO: No, the snipers. You know, she was combing her hair and hit it right in the head, in the side of the head. Almost kill her. She's all right.

LEVINE: Wow. So your mother and father were both wounded when you took off for the camps? Wow.

JAKOLENKO: They just recovered. That's how they caught us, because the other way we would have been packed and gone somewhere. You know, they moved the people. Russian Army moved the people to Siberia when they come down, you know.

LEVINE: Right.

JAKOLENKO: I remember, you know, the battle like. Took them like thirty days for German to get city of Poltava. There was a—dead people laying as hard as—as high as this building in the valleys. I'm talking about millions of sold—I mean, thousands of soldiers, I remember that. I was a kid used to go play with the—pick grenades and stuff like that.

LEVINE: Wow.

JAKOLENKO: You know, soldiers were dead, anyway.

LEVINE: So in other words, when they gave you the choice of leaving or they'll take you, you had already seen all that in the town?

JAKOLENKO: Yes. Right.

LEVINE: Wow.

JAKOLENKO: Well, they give you ultimatum because you know when Germans backed up, they blew everything up and they burned homes, villages, everything. They [unclear] nothing.

LEVINE: Well, when you—when you left there, would—you believed in Communism? I mean, you thought it was a good thing.

JAKOLENKO: No.

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LEVINE: No? Oh, no?

JAKOLENKO: None of my family believed in Communists.

LEVINE: Even though you learned it in school, even though—

JAKOLENKO: My father's brothers and his family, half of them spent in Siberia. So how can you believe something like that?

LEVINE: But you were being taught it in the boy scouts and the school and the--

JAKOLENKO: Yeah, right.

LEVINE: But you knew otherwise.

JAKOLENKO: I never liked Communists in my life, but some of them—when I left Russia, those days the Ukraine, I never care for Communism. Somehow I had a hate for them.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: Day one.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JAKOLENKO: So that's—

LEVINE: Yeah. Were your religious? Was your family religious at all?

JAKOLENKO: I really don't know honestly.

LEVINE: Hmm.

JAKOLENKO: My mother went to church. I went to church. I don't know about my father because I hardly—hardly know the guy.

LEVINE: Hmm. Hmm. Now, would it have been like Russian Orthodox—

JAKOLENKO: Yes.

LEVINE: Would be the church.

JAKOLENKO: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Yeah, uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: See, I hardly saw my father. Between the World War, Finnish War and the Germans and as soon as we got to Austria, they separated us. So I—I only saw him once or twice.

LEVINE: Oh, hmm.

JAKOLENKO: Two and a half years in labor camp, so I never saw him.

LEVINE: I see.

JAKOLENKO: Because they—you know, they put women in one place and the men in another place.

LEVINE: Well, could you describe like when you took that ultimatum and you said, "Okay, you're going to go."

JAKOLENKO: I didn't took. My parents took.

LEVINE: My parents did and you were a child, so you—you whatever.

JAKOLENKO: They figure would be better idea because they don't like the Communism system, you know. So.

LEVINE: So—so what happened? Can you remember like leaving your home and traveling to the camp and—

JAKOLENKO: Yeah, first they—they got—we got somehow. I don't know where they got the horse and buggies, but we went by horse and buggies all the way to Poland.

LEVINE: Wow.

JAKOLENKO: And in Poland they put us in those, you know, cow trains. You know how the Jews they were going?

LEVINE: Right.

JAKOLENKO: Same thing we were going.

LEVINE: Oh.

JAKOLENKO: They closed her in and pack us all the way to Austria.

LEVINE: Now, did like a lot of people leave your town, Poltava when you did? Was there like a huge—

JAKOLENKO: Quite a few, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: Lot of people left, actually. Matter of fact, I met somebody in Nova Scotia same home town.

LEVINE: Ah. Uh-huh. So when you were traveling and when you were put on those trains and everything, there were a lot of people who had also come from the Ukraine or—

JAKOLENKO: There were. Yes, there were thousands and thousands of people were put in on it. You know, not just two or three families. They just—

LEVINE: Packed you in.

JAKOLENKO: Load—pack you in and go.

LEVINE: Yeah. And what was it—and what was it like on the train? Can you describe it?

JAKOLENKO: Well, it's like there's no toilets in it, you know. Wooden floors and, well, the trains that carries all the, you know, cows and horses and stuff like that. You had a little window that breathing. That's about it. The doors were closed. So they stopped maybe once every four—every four or five hours somewhere. Stop in the village and then—you know, empty space and then you go relieve yourself. Women run to the right; men to the left.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

JAKOLENKO: That was our lava—lava—toilet area, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JAKOLENKO: That's it.

LEVINE: And—and these were officers, military officers that were orchestrating this whole thing?

JAKOLENKO: Yeah, they were—they were in uniform. I don't—I really don't remember because I was too young to pay attention.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah. So you must have traveled—

JAKOLENKO: From Poland all the way to Austria.

LEVINE: To Austria.

JAKOLENKO: Yes, to Vienna.

LEVINE: And what—

JAKOLENKO: And they brought us in there and then they fumigated. I thought they going to put us in the gas chamber first. You know, all these buildings they put all the women and kids and they spray us with some kind of a chemicals. And then they put us in the—in the different department and took men. I don't know where my father—I never see him where the hell he lived. I don't even know where he live. I know he live in there, but I don't know where.

LEVINE: So they took him and separated him.

JAKOLENKO: Right.

LEVINE: And you never saw—did you see him again?

JAKOLENKO: I think once or twice he come down. You know, they let him off to come in and see us, but that's it.

LEVINE: Wow. So you stayed with your mother and your sister?

JAKOLENKO: Right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So where—where did you go? He stayed in Vienna.

JAKOLENKO: Right.

LEVINE: And where did—where was your labor camp?

JAKOLENKO: We stay in the building in Vienna. We don't stay in the—in the—there was some come of a building near the utility plant. You know, it was like a gas plant or something like that. So they packed us in there, you know. So much room for everybody on the floor and every. There's your bedroom and everything.

LEVINE: And that's where you stayed for those years?

JAKOLENKO: Yeah. Yeah.

LEVINE: Wow.

JAKOLENKO: For about a—we stayed until 1945 in that building, like two years, and then at the end of the war when the Russian Army was coming in close to Vienna, we—I run away with my family.

LEVINE: Wow.

JAKOLENKO: With my mother and sister and the father come up and we was planning to run away at night. From nowhere this German officer comes in and he saw him and right away he put a gun to him and told him, “You come with me.” And that’s the end of it. I never saw him again.

LEVINE: Wow. Wow. Wow. Hmmm.

JAKOLENKO: So I run away with my mother and sister to Italy and they was run away from Russian Red Army and I got picked up the Germans that were running. The Russians, they were running in Italy. There was the Russian Cossacks that running Italy. You know, they were occupying there because the Germans didn’t trust the Italians, so they put the Russians in charge of certain area.

LEVINE: Oh.

JAKOLENKO: And—

LEVINE: But the Russians were fighting the Germans, right?

JAKOLENKO: Well, there was a part—some of them surrender that belong to General Wasso [PH], which Stalin was—didn’t give him ammunition. He told them to keep on fighting. They run out of ammunition. They had nothing to fight to. So he couldn’t fight anymore. So instead of slaughtering all the soldiers, he asked Hitler if he could release them. He says, “I’ll go with you. Just save these people,” and because the General Wasso never liked Stalin, anyway. You know, Stalin was not a person that anybody could trust and apparently they went out and put the German uniforms and they went with Germany. So then we treated better than in labor camps.

LEVINE: Oh.

JAKOLENKO: They were treating terrible there. The Russian prisoners were treated worse than a dog. So that’s how the—how they turned out to be turncoats.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh. Well, now—

JAKOLENKO: So meantime, I running from one Russian and I got caught by the other Russians, which I didn't want them either. I wanted to be picked up by English.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: Because English was behind, but somehow they got us and brought us back to Austria.

LEVINE: Wow. Well, just to back up a minute, when—when you were in those two years in the—in Vienna, what did you do for labor?

JAKOLENKO: Well, my—my mother used to go, they put them to the factories to work. You know, assembly lines. They were making batteries, you know, packing stuff like that. You know, provided those factories were not destroyed because bombing was very heavy. In Austria, almost half of it was, you know, a city. Vienna was almost totally destroyed.

LEVINE: And—and your mother was making batteries in a factory and how about, were you—did you have to do anything as a child?

JAKOLENKO: No, can do nothing. Just kept us in the house.

LEVINE: Oh.

JAKOLENKO: Whatever we lived in, you know. Thousands of kids in that building or whatever had on it.

LEVINE: Yeah. What—what could—as a—as a man now, looking back on that, what—what would you say about that kind of situation? What—what does it bring out in human nature or could you say anything about—

JAKOLENKO: I don't know.

LEVINE: Such a—such a—such an extreme of people being squashed.

JAKOLENKO: They pack it, like. Yeah, well, that they squashed us like thousands of people in the building and you find a space, that's where you live. That is your spot.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JAKOLENKO: And, you know, they give you some cots and that's it.

LEVINE: Did you—

JAKOLENKO: They feed you whatever they feel like giving to you.

LEVINE: Was it—was it very meager what you had?

JAKOLENKO: To eat?

LEVINE: To eat.

JAKOLENKO: Yeah. Was like horse meat maybe once a month, if you're lucky or the turtles that I won't even feed the dog them. Stuff like that. Or soup. Most of the time was spinach and potatoes.

LEVINE: Oh.

JAKOLENKO: That—bread, forget it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: I don't know—I never remember having a piece of bread.

LEVINE: Wow. Yeah.

JAKOLENKO: That was it.

LEVINE: And you came from the bread basket, right? You were used to having—yeah, how—how did your mother and your sister and you, how did you fare those two years? I mean, did it—did it have a heavy toll on your health, either physical, mental, anything?

JAKOLENKO: Well, there's not much we can do. We were—you know, you had guards to go in and out, even out of the building and—

LEVINE: Oh, guards everywhere.

JAKOLENKO: Oh, yeah, you couldn't—you just couldn't get out and go on the street. No way. It was a—never forget. Remember Schultze, Stalig 13, the comedy? I swear that guy was—

LEVINE: Was there?

JAKOLENKO: The guard. I swear it looked just like him.

LEVINE: Oh.

JAKOLENKO: And he was a Communist, the German. He used to tell—he used to show up. He says, “Look, I’m a Communist.” He used to let me run in town, you know, turn around and see because you couldn’t go nowhere anyway.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: And where you going to go without anything?

LEVINE: Yeah.

JAKOLENKO: You know, so.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JAKOLENKO: They had you.

LEVINE: So were there people that you met? I mean, did it like bring out the worst in people or did some people rise above it and show kindness to other people in that situation?

JAKOLENKO: Well, we tried to, you know, live nice to each other. You know what I mean? Because we had no choice. But I don’t know of any of them left over after World War II. You know why? Because I remember when I was almost near the end. One time the building was hit with four bombs in each corner and I—I think most of those people were dead. Only me and my mother and my sister come out of it.

LEVINE: Wow.

JAKOLENKO: I think the building was to—totaled. There was hardly anything left, you know. They had bombs, you know, like hit the whole building, all four corners.

LEVINE: Wow. So—so, then what—what happened when the building was demolished?

JAKOLENKO: Well, we lived there and I think we start packing and try to get the hell out, you know. I think my father realized the end was near because in Vienna at the end of it, like in March or April, the—the Russians had so many canons and at Kartucha [PH], they would—they was worse than American bombing. They would, you know,

these canons would shoot day and night. Mill—thousands of them. I mean, they hitting almost everything.

LEVINE: Oh.

JAKOLENKO: So it was—after awhile you don't pay attention you dead or die because every—every day's fine. I lost—nothing was—honestly, I was not scared at all. I could care less. You know, after a while, you—they shoot so much that you just lose control. You don't care. If it kills you, it kills you. If you don't, you don't. That's it.

LEVINE: Wow. Yeah. I would call that a real depression. When you realize that—

JAKOLENKO: There's nothing you—

LEVINE: It doesn't matter.

JAKOLENKO: It doesn't matter if you're dead or alive. The life was miserable, anyway.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah. Wow. Okay, so—so that's when your father showed up and then—and then this guard came after him?

JAKOLENKO: Right. Right. Who the hell knows where he came from? It was at night. I don't know how he spot us, and that was the last train that left for Italy, too, and he told me in Russian. He says, "You go and I'll find you in Italy."

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you were like the man of the family, I guess, even though you were eleven or--

JAKOLENKO: Yeah, those days. Yeah.

LEVINE: Or some age like that, yeah. Uh-huh. So this is now 1945 you're talking about?

JAKOLENKO: Yes, at the end of '45.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: Like in March—[tape off/on]

LEVINE: A little difficulty here with the—with the tape recorder, but we're going to back up again and why don't you pick up. You went to—first you went to Italy briefly for a matter of months.

JAKOLENKO: Right.

LEVINE: And then?

JAKOLENKO: Then we got picked up by the Russian Army that was on German side and they sort of took us in and brought us back with them back to Austria. So English Army was occupying the part of the area that we were. It was occupied by English who were pushing up and they were backing up. So they went back to Austria. We got to Austria for a while. So far was—finally was over in [unclear] and we stayed in that city. Then about few days later, they come in and they asked all these people, the generals, whoever were running this party. Lieutenant, generals, all the officers, they want to—want to have a meeting. They want to get them all together. So when they meeting come in, they—they brought them all and deported them all back to Stalin's Russia. Forced them on the pack. Then later on, they, too, they come up and send the tanks and trucks and everything, surrounded the whole—whole, you know, barracks, whatever that place was in [unclear] and tried to force deporting all the people. And the people that were in it, they would start jumping in the river and killing themselves and too much stuff or apparently news reporters saw it and reported to United States. When Roosevelt realized they were doing this, and Roosevelt's wife begged him to stop deporting these people, and apparently after I think three or four days, they stopped. They just wanted—whoever voluntarily wants to go return back to Soviet Union, they were asked. You can go if you want to.

LEVINE: Did anybody do it?

JAKOLENKO: No.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: Nobody did.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: So—

LEVINE: Why don't you tell your—your attitude towards Stalin, which we lost on the tape?

JAKOLENKO: Well, I had half of my family spend in Siberia for doing nothing and as far as I'm concerned, as bad as Hitler was, I feel Stalin did more

harm to humanity than anybody else in the world. You cannot trust that man. He did more harm to people than anybody realized and everybody was playing like they don't see nothing. As bad as Hitler was, at least he—if you didn't bother him and you did what he told you to do, they'll—you know, they'll let you live. At least you know you'll live tomorrow. With Stalin you never know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. So in other words, your family was picked up in the Ukraine—

JAKOLENKO: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: And taken to Siberia.

JAKOLENKO: Yeah, for some minor things. They were, you know, they do something. If you say something wrong, you were gone. I had a—my father had a brother that was a pilot and he end up ten years in Siberia for nothing. I don't know what he did. I was too young to know, but half of the family were vacationing in Siberia.

LEVINE: And when they were in Siberia, they were in—

JAKOLENKO: Never come back. Never.

LEVINE: Forced labor—

JAKOLENKO: Yes. None of them ever returned.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Yeah. Okay, so—so you were in—oh, so you were saying the people—nobody chose to go back, to be deported back .

JAKOLENKO: No.

LEVINE: And then the English and the United States were involved in saying—

JAKOLENKO: Yes.

LEVINE: And you got to say where you wanted to go.

JAKOLENKO: Right.

LEVINE: And your mother—

JAKOLENKO: No, they brought us to the labor camp after they took us out of there, which we didn't belong with them. We didn't belong to these people at all, you know. They were soldiers and they did some bad things to people. I don't know what they did, but you know, I don't belong with them. I was in [unclear].

LEVINE: You mean the Russian soldiers, you're talking about?

JAKOLENKO: Yes. They were turncoats.

LEVINE: Oh, say—say that because we lost that, about these Russians soldiers and how they became turncoats. What was the—what was behind that.

JAKOLENKO: These Russians soldiers, they were under running by the General Wasso, which he was working for Stalin and they were fighting in Russian somewhere. I don't know where, but he run out of ammunition and Stalin promise him he's going to give him help and ammunition. So had nothing to fight with. So Germans finally got him. When they got them, they put them in labor camps and they were treating Russian prisoners terrible. They were treating worse than the animals. So General Wasso went to Hitler and ask him if he can give him guns and go fight with him against Stalin because the guy betrayed him and he was a liar. And that's what happened. Some of them, you know, whoever want to go and fight for, with Germans, they did and went so they could be little humane a little bit.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Was this a large number, do you think?

JAKOLENKO: Well, I don't—I really don't have no idea.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Yeah. Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: But I know the labor camp that I was with them when they brought them in, it was big place. I'm talking about a hundred thousand, you know.

LEVINE: Oh.

JAKOLENKO: Maybe less, I don't know, but was quite a big. It's a big labor camp. And—

LEVINE: So this was then still it was—it—the war was not yet over. This is 1945.

JAKOLENKO: No, the war was over.

LEVINE: The war was over.

JAKOLENKO: May 9th, 1945 when they brought—you know, they came from Italy. They settle in and apparently that's decision were made by Roosevelt and Stalin to deport all these people. And I got stuck with them, accidentally. So then I run away. I went in the mountains and hide for four days, you know, freezing cold. In April in Austria it's still snow in the—in the—so I went and begged the Germans, you know, Austrians for food and everything from farmers. Or eat, you know, frozen apples that's left over on the trees. Stuff like that. I survived.

LEVINE: Now, you ran away because—[clock chiming]

JAKOLENKO: I don't want to be deported to Russia.

LEVINE: Go back to Russia, uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: So when I come back, they finally stopped it about—and then I went spent about couple days looking for my mother and sister because I left them both and I run away on my own. I finally found them after two days, I think.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. And then is that when you found out your mother was getting married?

JAKOLENKO: No, that was about two years later.

LEVINE: Later.

JAKOLENKO: Yeah, they put is in the—Brook Undermoore was the name of the city and that was the labor camps. I don't remember much about that one. They kept us there like thirty days maybe a couple of months, and then they took us to another labor camp at Kauffenburg [PH], the name of the city was. They put us in that city and after that, that's I think where she met him. You know, that or Traffya [PH]. I think after Kauffenburg we moved to Traffya. That's where she met him and she got married to this guy. He was a veterinarian doctor apparently.

LEVINE: Hmm. So, in other words, it was the Germans who kept gathering you up and moving you to other—

JAKOLENKO: No, that was after the war was over. The English were moving us.

LEVINE: Oh, the English were moving you.

JAKOLENKO: Yeah, I got picked up by the English after this was over.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: Then after the war was over, some of us went to work and some of them, you know—I went to some school in Austria, but I got like sixteen or fifteen. Couldn't afford going to school, was nothing to eat.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

JAKOLENKO: So I had to go work on the farm, you know. Work for—for two meals and a loaf of bread.

LEVINE: Right, right, and that seemed like plenty.

JAKOLENKO: That was my payday.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh. Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: That's it. I did that for a couple years, then I worked on the road, building the roads in Austria in the mountains.

LEVINE: And that's where you worked with other Austrians and you got to like them.

JAKOLENKO: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: They treat me nice. I had no problem with Austrians.

LEVINE: How were the English as—as the sort of the—the camp—running these camps?

JAKOLENKO: They were very—they didn't bother very much with any of us. You know, they would do whatever they had to do, give us our food supply, whatever. You know, food to eat for the people that couldn't afford to go because there was no jobs, nothing. You know, Austrians had nothing either, you know, because everything was bombed. There was no work. The only work you could find probably on farms or stores and that was not easy. You know, there was no food. Actually, the stores didn't open up until 1948.

There was hardly any food in there, even for the Austrians. You weren't able to buy anything. You couldn't buy nothing.

LEVINE: So the English—

[END OF SIDE A]
[BEGIN SIDE B]

LEVINE: So the English were feeding the people who couldn't work? Is that—

JAKOLENKO: Right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: You know, give you two or three meals a day. Whatever they give you, good or bad, but it was just something.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And—and you—and people didn't have to work at that point unless you had a job and you could go out and—

JAKOLENKO: Oh, yeah, they had to work, but the end they had to do some work. You know, if they—for instance, in Austria the last labor camp that really the snow used to be sometime three, four, five meters high. Like fifteen to twenty feet and in wintertime, they would put you on the train and go and clean the railroad tracks so the trains could move because trains could not even push from the hill down, got so much. Matter fact, I used to go two, three weeks and then do whatever they have to do. Clean the train stations. Something, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

JAKOLENKO: Just in wintertime until snow falls apart. But they asked him, you know, to go. They pay you, too, if you want. They give you a couple of bucks, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm, and did—how did the Austrians that you worked with—what was their attitude toward—toward the Germans?

JAKOLENKO: They really didn't like them. They hated them more than they hated me. They're like Russians. As much as they hate Russians, they like—they hate Germans more than—than that. that's what a lot of people think that a lot of Austrians like us, they really don't want to become. Hitler just come in and took her over, you know. That's it.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

JAKOLENKO: Like Bush took over Iraq.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JAKOLENKO: Now he doesn't know how to get away from it.

LEVINE: Right. Right. Okay, so then you said you came—you went to Bremenhaven.

JAKOLENKO: Yeah. No, we started there. We went from Traffya. They told us that we going to United States. They put us on the train and brought us to Salzburg. From—we stayed in Salzburg I think six weeks, I'm pretty sure, and they put another camp in there. There was American camp. This when Salzburg was occupied by Americans. So we went from English zone into Americans.

LEVINE: Was there a difference in treatment, or a difference in anything?

JAKOLENKO: No, same thing.

LEVINE: Same thing.

JAKOLENKO: It was not much difference. Just, you know—

LEVINE: Another camp.

JAKOLENKO: Another camp and different flag. That's all.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: And then they told us one to pack and "You're going to United States," and that was it. They put us on the trains, brought us all the way to Bremmenhaffen. In Bremmenhaffen they put on us General Green. The name of the boat was General Green and took us eighteen days to get to United States, which we hit the I think the worst storm in the—in a long time.

LEVINE: Winter crossing the Atlantic is—yeah.

JAKOLENKO: Yeah, it was eighteen days, which is not normal for the ship to go.

LEVINE: No, no.

JAKOLENKO: And it was a military ship.

LEVINE: So it was like steerage. It was like, as you said, one cot after another after another, right?

JAKOLENKO: Right.

LEVINE: Yeah, and then you acted as an MP on the ship, just to sort of—

JAKOLENKO: Well, they asked you for volunteers to help the people because you know, they don't have many soldiers that they could handle so—such a big amount of people. So they needed somebody, you know, that was not sick and healthy helping people up. So I used to go take all the women out of the toilets. They go to bathroom, they—they can't get up put their clothes on. You know, they were dizzy. Bring them back. Or in the kitchen, when they would feed us, they couldn't get out of there, you know, the [unclear]. Bring them back to beds.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: I run around day and night, you know, bringing these people. Carrying them around because I never see such a storm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: Matter fact, the sailors never saw a storm like that.

LEVINE: Wow. Now, were they mostly Russian people?

JAKOLENKO: No, they were all—I think it was—I don't know Russian. There was Russian Jews, if that's Russian or what.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. Eastern European.

JAKOLENKO: [unclear] were French were some.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: Were there Jews that had come out of the camps?

LEVINE: Yes.

JAKOLENKO: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: In Austria. I don't know, some of them—some of them were doing good in the camps. I don't know how, but they did it. I'm telling you, I used to—I used to go, couldn't find nothing, no piece of bread. You go to Jewish guy and ask him, "Is there any place to get a bread?" If you had the money, they get you bread. I don't know how, but they did it.

LEVINE: Hmm. Hmm.

JAKOLENKO: They had a know how.

LEVINE: They're the ones that survived, right?

JAKOLENKO: Yeah, but you know what it is? I think—I think—I'm not sure. I don't want to be a liar, but I think Hitler, the Austrian Jews, I don't think he abused them as much as anybody else.

LEVINE: Oh.

JAKOLENKO: I think—I think he treated them better than German Jews or Russian or Polish.

LEVINE: Polish.

JAKOLENKO: Or like that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Hmm. Okay, so then you came into the New York Harbor. You saw the Statue of Liberty.

JAKOLENKO: Yes, and I finally—finally see how the boat moves without waves, you know, got used to. So they unloaded us in the—what's that?

LEVINE: The ferry boat? Like a—

JAKOLENKO: No, the boat was parked in that some place in Brooklyn. I don't know, and then they brought us to this Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Ellis Island, and what was that like, as much as you can remember of that?

JAKOLENKO: I just saw thousands of people coming out of the boat and going, line up and the railings and they check it out what you have. Check this up and they tell me I'm going to Boston. We went through the customs, pack us and I come back and they put us on the train and I got to Boston.

LEVINE: Well, in other words, you didn't choose to go to Boston? You were told that's where you're going.

JAKOLENKO: Yeah, they put you whatever they felt like.

LEVINE: Oh, and was your mother and sister with you? Were your mother and sister—

JAKOLENKO: Yes, all—all four of us.

LEVINE: And your stepfather, right.

JAKOLENKO: Yes.

LEVINE: And so when you got off the train in Boston—

JAKOLENKO: There was a guy who was a priest that took us. I don't know. He was Orthodox priest.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JAKOLENKO: He no had a chapel, but he picked us up and you know, get us a place to live for couple a days. Somebody paid for our rent. Then we—when he got us a job work in a restaurant, we pay him back, you know for the—for the people.

LEVINE: Oh.

JAKOLENKO: Matter fact, I finally met the woman after fifty-five years, months ago. That I didn't see her since 1952.

LEVINE: Wow.

JAKOLENKO: The people that paid for the—

LEVINE: She—this was the woman—

JAKOLENKO: For the rent. Her husband paid for the rent.

LEVINE: In other words, they found people to sponsor people. Was that what that was?

JAKOLENKO: No, the—the church was sponsoring some [unclear].

LEVINE: Oh, I see.

JAKOLENKO: But this people paid for our rent, because we didn't have—when I got there I had no job, no nothing.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: So they give us an apartment and we slept on the floor for a couple weeks. Then I got a job in there working in Albiani [PH] Restaurant as a busboy for nine months until I learn English. Then I went in a garage and worked my way up.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. How was learning English for you?

JAKOLENKO: Was easy because of German, a lot of German words and English are the same. You know, like Yiddish and German.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: If you speak Yiddish to me, I understand almost everything.

LEVINE: Really? Uh-huh. Now, you had learned German from being in Austria.

JAKOLENKO: Right.

LEVINE: This—but you didn't know it before that.

JAKOLENKO: No, I didn't. I didn't even know a word about it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So now you know—

JAKOLENKO: But kids, you know, learn fast.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. So—so tell about how you were received. How did you—were you in an Irish neighborhood in Boston? Is that how you encountered the Irish?

JAKOLENKO: Yeah. Yeah, we live in a poor neighborhood in Boston.

LEVINE: South Boston, is that where you were?

JAKOLENKO: No. Yes, that's the end of it, but we was in the West End, they called it, all the—just like Harlem in—

LEVINE: Like Roxbury and around in there?

JAKOLENKO: Right, right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: That area used to be. Now it's—they put up skyscrapers. They push us out of there, but first time I was there, I went out and couple Irish saw, gave me a good beating because I—you know, I didn't speak English and just got here. They don't care. They just wanted to go out, had a fun on me.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JAKOLENKO: But I had fun at the end of it on all of them. There were four brothers. When they did it, I told them, "I'm going to get you someday, "and I did get them all.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So in other words, you beat them up at some point.

JAKOLENKO: One-by-one I got them.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: And we've become friends after that. In those days, you know, you don't go killing.

LEVINE: Nobody had knives and guns. They were just using their fists.

JAKOLENKO: No, but you don't go to kill. Just having fun, you know. That was it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. So—so what was that? Was that—I mean were people like working on the waterfront a lot?

JAKOLENKO: Where?

LEVINE: In—in—in Boston?

JAKOLENKO: No. I don't know. [coughs] I worked in the restaurants and then I got a job. Second job I was working in the Pontiac dealer and then I become not a Chevrolet dealer. I start learn repairing the cars and move on. Then I work in a machine shop with a—finally I got married and went to California. I didn't like California. Turn around, come back and I worked for this company that I work before I went back. They said they have no job for me. I went across the street and got a dollar and a half more.

LEVINE: As a machinist?

JAKOLENKO: Yes.

LEVINE: So did you learn how to be—

JAKOLENKO: Only thing that I did—

LEVINE: A machinist, after?

JAKOLENKO: Since I had a friend that I work every night, when I come from—you know, from my garage job.

LEVINE: Other job, uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: And I go to a machine shop, work with him until ten every night.

LEVINE: I see. So—

JAKOLENKO: And he teach me, you know, how to run all the lathes, operate everything.

LEVINE: I see, and was he a—a Russian man or was—

JAKOLENKO: No, was Ukrainian.

LEVINE: Ukrainian man.

JAKOLENKO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: He had a small business.

LEVINE: And had he been here before, before World War II?

JAKOLENKO: I think he was born in—in here.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: Because he speak just English and his kids and everybody spoke English only.

LEVINE: So were you working on cars in the garage? I mean, in other words, as a mechanic?

JAKOLENKO: Yeah, repair it. Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: Learn, you know, how to do—I learn how to grease cars and change the oil and then how to repair the transmission. You know, all kinds of work. Little by little I picked up and I—I was good at it.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm.

JAKOLENKO: That's how I met my wife, repairing her Chevy.

LEVINE: Oh.

JAKOLENKO: She brought a brand new car and she says, "The car is only a week old." I says, "That transmission is no good." She says to me, "You're crazy!" Says, "Okay." I says, "Well, bring it to another mechanic and see." He look and he told her, he says exactly. So I took the transmission and I fixed it for her.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So then she liked you, right? [Laughs]

JAKOLENKO: Yes.

LEVINE: So—so was your wife coming from some place else?

JAKOLENKO: No, she's American.

LEVINE: She's American.

JAKOLENKO: Yeah, she was born in America.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Okay, so then you went to California, came back to Boston?

JAKOLENKO: Yes.

LEVINE: And—and that's when you worked as a machinist then?

JAKOLENKO: Yes, machinist and a garage, too.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: Machinist my—was my second job, but when I come from California, then I forgot about the job and went work in a machine shop and I work on the missiles and [unclear] and everything like that, you know. So.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: I was good at it. I was inspector a long time. When I come down here to Florida, I tried to get a job. The pay was three dollars an hour. I told them I'd go sweep the floors before I'd go work for you for for--that amount of money.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: Three dollars fifty cents for inspector? I said, "I spent four years going to school, to New Hampshire every day at night to become inspector. To be a quality control inspector." You know, you have to know real good.

LEVINE: This is for—for—for machinist? For—

JAKOLENKO: For mechanical inspector.

LEVINE: What did you inspect?

JAKOLENKO: Inspect all the missiles.

LEVINE: Oh.

JAKOLENKO: All the stuff. You have to know—have to read the blueprint and everything and you have to know how to use the tools. There's so many tools in this world, you know, that you don't know. So I better myself within that job. The people were there five, six years. I was—in two years I was in charge of all of them because I was going to school.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm. Wow. So, you must have picked things up quickly and you also worked hard. So you—

JAKOLENKO: I had doors open for me easy because I always went to schools. I spend a lot of nights in school when I got married.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: I went to schools in here when I got here. I took the job in here on the street department. I never work in—in the streets. I have no idea what the hell the streets do, public works does, but I learn everything, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh, and that's what you did down here?

JAKOLENKO: In city of Tamarack.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JAKOLENKO: Who do you think built all these roads in here?

LEVINE: Oh, so you built roads in Austria, too, right?

JAKOLENKO: Yes. Yeah, but this is different type Austria. Over there you work by the hand and you know, by the eye and here you got to—you don't just blow the mountains, dynamite them in here. In here you got a machine that comes in, does all the machines. In there you have no machine, equipment. The only thing we had is one dozer. That was it.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah. So at some point you I guess decided you didn't care about going back to Austria. You—you—

JAKOLENKO: Well, after a while, you know, you life with the walls, you become a wall. So after I live so many years, I decide, well, I might as well stay here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: You know, I got married. Life was good.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JAKOLENKO: I had a good life, so I have no complaints whatsoever.

LEVINE: Why don't you say your wife's name and her maiden name?

JAKOLENKO: Her maiden name, Inas [PH] Frieda.

LEVINE: F-R-I-E-D-A?

JAKOLENKO: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and—and did you have children?

JAKOLENKO: No.

LEVINE: No, uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: She couldn't have no kids, so those days nobody bothered like today, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah. So when you think about what you've done in your life, what makes you proud? What do you feel very satisfied having done?

JAKOLENKO: I feel proud that I built six parks in city of Tamarack.

LEVINE: Ah.

JAKOLENKO: All that were built by me.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: Designed by me. Most of the drainage and engineering work that I—I'm not engineer and I run the Engineering Department and I think I feel better that I know more than engineers that—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: Due to my schooling some place else that I spent nights and nights going to different schools.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah.

JAKOLENKO: And I think I better myself better than anybody else.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: And the doors always were open for me because I—I picked up fast.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, how do you think about your Ukrainian side and American side or how do you think about yourself in—in those—in those kind of terms?

JAKOLENKO: Well, I live so long ago, Ukraine. I went to Ukraine in 1989 and first time. I felt like I was in a strange country. I didn't felt that I was home any more. You know, after so many years you go back, you have no feeling for it. I mean, I saw my cousins. That's about it. But this—

LEVINE: Did you know them from when you were little?

JAKOLENKO: No, I don't.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: I don't even remember them, but you know.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh. And how about Austria, did you go back there, too?

JAKOLENKO: I went back there to the labor camp. I took my wife. We rented a Jetta and I opened up like hundred forty miles an hour, as fast as they can go. From Vienna to the last labor camp, which is Traffya, about a hundred fifty miles and I was there in an hour.

LEVINE: Ah, and how did you feel about that? How—how did—how did—

JAKOLENKO: I wondered. I want her to see how the labor camps were. They were still there in the city. The city didn't change, but the labor camps, where they were, were knocked down and the buildings are staying there. There's everything like nothing existed.

LEVINE: Oh.

JAKOLENKO: You know what I mean, because the area of the labor camps was big. They—that city, that last place I was in Traffya, during the war, World War II, that produced thirty tanks. See, the city was in the mountains and they had a factory like two miles long. That's where the canons and tanks—that's where they had a labor work living in there, laborers, and Hitler used to, you know, shuttle them. It was like five six miles to their factory. So apparently they worked twenty-four hours a day. They produced thirty tanks I think a day or a month. I'm not sure.

LEVINE: Wow. Wow, and what, they—they razed the whole thing like it didn't—

JAKOLENKO: The factory's still there.

LEVINE: Oh, the factory's there.

JAKOLENKO: But the barracks are gone. There's nothing there. I want to—I want to see the school that I went. I want—you know, when I was there, I went couple years to school. German school. I was the only Ukrainian in German school and was not that bad. No.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Did you feel like that was a place that you could have—

JAKOLENKO: Lived?

LEVINE: Lived and stayed?

JAKOLENKO: That was like living in Wyoming.

LEVINE: Oh.

JAKOLENKO: You know, city's—small city. People know—everybody knows everybody. Crime rate probably zero. The biggest thing if you have in that city, probably something might et into a fight.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: But Austrian people not that aggressive, you know, if it comes to something like this.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: Very seldom you hear anything.

LEVINE: Yeah, how—how would you characterize Americans as a people?

JAKOLENKO: Well, I think Americans people are very, very good. You know, more a lot of good people. General, you know, helping and in my opinion I think United States does lot for everybody. I really do and most of the people, you know, we're always helping everybody when the disaster comes.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm. Well, what impact do you think all that you went through in the labor camps and—what impact do you think it had on you? On your—on your person? On your—your—your personality.

JAKOLENKO: I'm more tougher than—than somebody else is. I can stand the pain and I can be very tough, if I have to be tough.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: Like I run this public works. I was second in command in there. I could have been [unclear] nice, but you cross me in there, and my tone will change very fast.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: And I would do anything for persuade you to think my way.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: You know, not—not nothing bad, but you know, explain who's in charge in here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: And I were—I never abused my powers. Matter fact, I left seven years ago and people still come to my house, "I wish you were back." The people that I used to yell at. So they must like me because I was fair and honest.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: If you come in drunk, you work for me, and you say, "Val, I got a hangover. Can you give me"—I tell you, "Go do something light for today." Tomorrow you probably have to do twice as harder, but you know, just go get lost somewhere.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: That's why the guys always liked me. Because I was fair and—

LEVINE: UH-huh.

JAKOLENKO: They expected it and on top of it, I just assign them so many jobs. Boom, that's it. They finish, that's the end of the story.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: But I am—I'm proud how many parks I built. I thought one of them, the last one that I build is Carpenalla [PH] Park, I thought they were going to name after me.

LEVINE: Ah.

JAKOLENKO: I built that whole park for the city, less than ten thousand dollars cost them in the money.

LEVINE: Wow.

JAKOLENKO: And if you see the park today, you will said, that park you see, [unclear] park, that was built by me from beginning, including the rocks that there. I laid it with the Black guy, the supervisor down in there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: He was my helper and I was operating the backhoe, build all those big boulders. We built that whole thing. All the drainage, everything was done by me. I did most of the designing, too. Somehow I was ahead of everybody else.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Well, I guess—I guess are you glad you're that way? Are you glad that you—

JAKOLENKO: I'm glad I am.

LEVINE: Tough and—

JAKOLENKO: I am tough. Yes, I know that.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

JAKOLENKO: But I—I am also mellow. If you're nice to me, I can always be nice to you, but I'll do anything for anybody if I have to help. I—I still do now. You know, I do a lot of general work. I go for church work, do three days a week for free, and if I have to buy some material, I never charge nothing.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

JAKOLENKO: I do. That's one thing I'm proud about United States people. They always generous to people that poor. A lot of people don't realize that. A lot of places they won't do what you got in here, you know. You need a donation for something, you poor, you need a bread, people will do that for you.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm. How about the Trade Tower—the Trade Tower bombing? What was your reaction when you knew that had happened?

JAKOLENKO: You want to tape this, what I got to say?

LEVINE: If you—if you don't mind, I'm happy to.

JAKOLENKO: All right. They had a—they had about ten, fifteen years ago, what you think—send it to everybody United States was taking. What do you think about this whole situation? What do you think this country should change? In my opinion, I wrote to them what I thought. I don't think the government's going to like what I got to tell them, but I told them the truth exactly what happened. As you long as you let the Moslems in in this country, this will happen

sooner or later, and I predicted all this things ten, fifteen years ago. And I told "you have no idea what kind of a people you're dealing with." But took them so long to figure out and I think half of those idiots today still don't realize that these people never going be your friend. And I remember Clinton and everybody were yelling at Israel that they mistreat them. Well, in my opinion, Israelis are doing good job on them and that's not even enough. You got to be worse with them, because these people don't back off from there. They will be constantly what they doing. They object is to destroy everybody and make Moslems.

LEVINE: How did you arrive at that? What made you think that way?

JAKOLENKO: Because I—somehow I never liked Moslems from day one. I don't know why that's come up like this. I really don't know what it come from, but I always had a feeling for these people, that they were really rotten to the core.

LEVINE: Did you encounter very many Moslems?

JAKOLENKO: No, but in labor camp I encountered some of them, but try not to have nothing to do with them, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: Example like this, using this Koran, they telling you how loving [unclear]. Killing you, it's nothing to them. Blowing themselves is nothing to do them. So, I mean how can you—how can you deal with people like this?

LEVINE: Yeah.

JAKOLENKO: And I think United States making a big mistake by letting them in here. If I was the President, I'd deport them all back where they came from and that's other Europeans. They Europe, when I was left in Austria when I lived there, there was hardly any Moslem in it. Today you go in there, and they already causing the problem. That's just the beginning. Wait until be more of them, they going to find out it's not easy people to live with.

LEVINE: Mmm. Mmm.

JAKOLENKO: Like Yugoslavia. We were bombing Serbs, [unclear] help the Moslems. Well, what do they do? They been already killing couple of soldiers. They stick you with a knife, [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Okay. Okay, well, we're nearly at the end of the tape. Is there anything—[phone rings] [tape off/on] Your experience, coming to this country, your life since, anything?

JAKOLENKO: Well, I'm happy that I end up in here and I enjoy being living here and I think I more red, white and blue than some of these Americans.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: You know? Surprise—

LEVINE: Because why?

JAKOLENKO: Because I grew up in different worlds and I realize, if you don't love country, where else are going to love you, you know. And person without country is like man without head, if you don't have anybody back you up.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: And I think this country's been great for me and everybody else that. If you want for opportunity, you can be a millionaire. I could have been millionaire hundred times, if I really wanted to.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JAKOLENKO: You know, but I'm happy what I got and got enough, as far as I'm concerned.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay.

JAKOLENKO: How's that?

LEVINE: Well, I want to thank you. I've been speaking with Val Jakolenko.

JAKOLENKO: Correct! Wait, watch this—

LEVINE: No, I ain't going—glass of water.

JAKOLENKO: And he—yeah, I'll give you one in a minute. And he came here at the age of sixteen, originating in the USSR, the Ukraine now, and via Austria and in 19—January 1952 he came into the New York Harbor and went through Ellis Island. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm signing off.

EI-1333/JAKOLENKO

[END OF INTERVIEW]