

LET ME TELL YOU A STORY

Grandparents

INTERVIEWS WITH PEOPLE FROM
PREVIOUS GENERATIONS

Danuta Jakubiec



How was it to live without phones?

It was very hard. If you needed to talk to someone, you had to reserve the call, go to the post office, send post advice to the person to come to the post office. When you reserved the time, you could call. You entered the cabin, waited for the connection and just talked. It was not like now when everyone has a telephone and everyone is using that.

Were there any other ways of communication with others?

There were telegrams, which were sent, or a post advice to someone. Letters were also written. This was the communication in my time, so as you can see it was hard to communicate with each other.

What can you say about communication between people? How did they live, talk with each other?

Communication between people was better than nowadays. Because, for example, everyone got together for Christmas at my grandmother's house. The whole family was there and we all talked to each other, had fun and today, everybody is sitting on their phones. Nobody talks anymore.

What about the Internet?

There was not even a word for the internet. Really often, people did not even have televisions. There was nothing.

How did you imagine the future? For example, how did you imagine what would happen in a few years?

I don't know. I couldn't imagine such a thing. It was even unimaginable to think about something like the internet. Nobody had thought about it. You know, I didn't even have a TV at home, and later when I bought the first one, it was "Zefir". Really tiny, black and white, and that's what I watched. And nowadays everything is much more advanced. I couldn't imagine it would be like that. Today, children live better, grandchildren also. For us, everyday life was really hard. It even happened that we didn't have enough money for bread.

Can you say anything about watching TV? How did it look like?

I lived on Kościelna street. We were the only ones who had a TV. They came to us from all over the street and we all watched it together. That's how it was then.

What did you like most about those days?

Communication between people. Between young people. We went to school. There were teachers and professors and youngsters. All of us were together in a group and everyone liked each other, everyone respected each other. Nobody insulted anyone or anything, really. It was very cool. I am very happy with these times.

Do you have any recipe for a happy marriage and how to live in it? What most important values did you learn in your life?

I don't know, what to say.

Tell us about your marriage if you can.

My marriage was ordeal for me. I am sorry to say that, but it was. My husband was not very good. He was following me, he wanted me to marry him so because of that he was nice. He called me

bad names. In my life I had never cheated on him, I think I should have had, but it never happened. That's just how I was brought up. That's how my parents raised me. He wasn't very good to me. He challenged me. This is an important lesson that I will tell you girls "remember that it is not worth sacrificing yourself for anyone, because it is not worth wasting your life. If you get married, that's good. But You have to think about who you are marrying. But if it won't work out, it is because it's masked by boys. Unfortunately. As I recall, I want to cry.

What was the most important lesson you learned from your grandparents, parents?

It was a life lesson. Grandma always told me to be good to everyone, and respect everyone. My mother and I have been like that all my life. I've always been very good. I worked in the hospital in the delivery room and all patients liked me, doctors, everything.

You were raised more by your grandmother or your parents? And why?

Probably my parents, but grandma also helped. I lived close to the church and we always went there together.

Was religion, church and prayer important in your life? Did you study it at school? Could you go to church, or was it forbidden?

No, it was no forbidden. We could. Religion was and is very important to me. It has always been and will always be, because they teach nothing wrong in the church. There are different priests, but I don't pay attention to this. I don't go for the priests but to pray to God. I am always asking for health, for everything good and God always helps me. God helped me with my marriage too. As I recall, I want to cry.

Did you work as a child? Did you help at home?

I went to the fields with my grandmother and my mother. I tied bundles and stroked tobacco. I did everything that they ordered me to do. I have been doing work since childhood.

Did you have any favorite toy or play as a child?

We were playing in paper chase. We jumped on skipping rope, rode on stove lid around the city. You played football.

Did the children have toys?

I had dolls. Grandma made dolls for me. There were no toys because there was no money for it. The fun with the stove lid was the coolest.

Were these dolls stuffed with straw?

No, they were rather leftovers.

What is your favorite childhood memory?

Everything. I liked everything.

And such a favorite? For example, did you get a present that you liked very much?

At Santa Claus we always got presents under the Christmas tree. My mother always bought something there, e.g. fruit. I remember when we lived in Kościelna street and once in the house where we lived there was buying grain and when we moved in, huge rats walked around the house. They bit their brother. My mother got a nervous disease because the rats even lay in bed. It could not be eradicated. I also squealed. I was scared terribly. I was even scared to sleep. It was like that. Dad set prisons, but it didn't work. It was only one man who advised him to kill all the holes and lurk in one of them, take a sack and burn the rat's eyes. And so they did. They burned their eyes, let that rat in and killed the hole once. There was a terrible noise under the floor, but they have risen and since then they were gone, because the rats are smart and run away.

If you see rats now, are you afraid?

I'm very afraid. I'm even scared of mice.

What did you usually do in your free time?

In my free time ... I went to school. At school I had various extra classes: a dance club, I sang, we played mandolins, I belonged to a sports group, to an acrobatic group; and we met and went there. I liked these extra classes very much. And I also belonged to the geographical club and to the biological club.

How was school? What were the penalties? Did teachers punish you? Did the students obey? How was the class and how did it look like?

In our school, we had headmaster Galan. He was very strict but also really consistent. For example, if he singled out someone, he even said, singled out someone.

And there were also penalties on appeals?

There were also penalties. You were not allowed to wear colorful tights. If someone wore those, the director called them to the center and showed everyone, that you must not wear something like that. There also were aprons, and there was such a rigor at school. This was a compulsion and it was the way it was.

There were also physical punishments?

Yes. There were different teachers. If someone deserved, they got a punishment. If you didn't listen to the Russian teacher, she would beat your hand with a ruler. It even happened when someone could not or did not want to answer.

And were there any accidents at school?

I don't remember very well. I don't remember in which class I was then, maybe in the third or second grade in vocational school, because I had just finished in tailoring school. You know, I was a seamstress and I sewed dresses for all the girls. One day an accident happened in our school. A girl was walking with a boy behind her. The boy wanted to close the door, when she put her hand there, so he accidentally broke the girl's fingers with it, because he did not realize she put them there.

What kind of punishment did he get for that?

He had to go to the headmaster's and the headmaster ordered him some punishment.

Wasn't it such a school that only had girls or boys?

No, we had our class, and the rest were boys, each had their own classes, their teachers. Our class had one female and the rest were male. There were whole classes of men. We had good relations with each other, the boys and the girls.

When you were at school, were you separated?

No. We also had school dances and games. The headmaster let us have those.

And when you danced, did you have to keep some distance between you?

No, we were allowed to hug.

What were the dates like in your time? How did you meet each others?

Well, For me it was mostly at school. The boys courted the girls, not the opposite way. Also, maybe I wasn't really pretty, but I was successful. They liked me, the teachers and the boys. When it was a party or something, and the headmaster did not want to let us have it, I was the one who always went to talk to him. At the parties we danced with the boys and then they walked us home.

So there wasn't such a thing that they were guarding you and you couldn't talk to each other?

No. There was no such thing. It was fun. Really. I am happy with those times. I would like to go back to those times and be so young again because it was really cool. The boys were cool.

How did relations between boys and girls look like? What were the dates like when you were at school and what were the age differences between the couples?

We were at the same age. We were dating boys. Once with one, other times with other one. They were really nice school dates. it was fun. We also met and danced at harvest festivals.

Was there a gender breakdown in other schools? Do you know how it was in other cities, e.g.?

No, we went to other schools, to "Rolniczak" for fun. They came to us, we exchanged between schools. It was all agreed with the headmasters, whether we can go there or whether they can come to us. I had nice boys at school, it was fun too.

What can you say about teachers? What kind of people were they, nice, unpleasant, were they helpful? How did it look like?

Teachers were different, just like now. Sometimes they were also very angry, but I was fine because everyone liked me. But if a student was rude, the teacher was angry with him. When someone had bad grades or did not study, they stood in a corner.

Do you think that the education system was better? Were you more prepared for life after school than kids are now? Do you think it's better now?

Teachers used to teach normally, there were not so many tests as you now have in school. The teacher lectured all the lessons, called the student to the blackboard, and if someone could not understand something, the teacher explained to him once again to make everything clear. I don't know how teachers teach nowadays. It's really hard now. It wasn't really like that before. The teachers had to do everything they could, because if someone complained to the headmaster that the teacher was lecturing badly, the teacher was reprimanded.

What is the difference between being raised then and now?

Well, kids used to respect their parents. Grandparents were also respected. I loved my grandmother very much and I respected her too. I still remember it when at Christmas the whole family went

to see my grandma. Under the Christmas tree - there was no floor, but only the ground. My grandmother used to smear something red on it. I do not know if it was paint or something else - and she always threw a bundle of hay under the Christmas tree. Everyone wanted to sit there. These were really family holidays. We sang Christmas carols and everything. It was really great.

Can you tell some interesting story from your childhood. Something you remember?

There were different stories. There was one story, for example, when one winter, with my brother we went to our grandma in Rońsko. We realised that the river was frozen so we jumped on the bust until my brother fell into the water. I pulled him out and went to grandma to complain about what happened. But our grandma slapped us in the butt and said, "to the city, city rogues, you didn't come to upset me here" and spanked him. Grandma always gave food, but sometimes she gave a slap too. Regarding everything, she was a great grandmother, very wonderful. Grandma took care of everyone. So did my mother.

How was the hospital? Did you have good medical help? How about medicines and doctors?

It was better. Better than now, because when you went to the doctor, there were no queues and you didn't have to sign up for a deadline. When you went, the doctor did the right thing at that moment. Anyway, I didn't have a problem with it because I worked in healthcare. I have worked in the hospital for so many years.

And how about the drugs? There were a lot of medicine? And how was people's health? People were sick more often or less often?

They were sick less often. People were living for so many years, but today young people and children are sick as well. The elderly are not respected at all in the clinics. Elders may die nowadays, and before it was not that usual. In the past, when you went to the doctor, everything was taken care of. Drugs were available. They were not so expensive. If the doctor prescribed them, they were free. Thank God I don't have to take medicine and go to the doctor. I'm so good.

And how about giving birth? Did they only happen in the hospital, or also at home?

No, usually at the hospital. There were a lot of child births, not once there were ten in one night shift

How about work? What did you do? What were your jobs? What did you like the most and what you didn't?

I worked as a cleaner in the cinema. I worked there 8 years. Later I worked at the Polish Red Cross. I took care of older people. We went around the houses and looked after the elderly. It was A hard work but you had to something. After that I worked in the hospital until I retired. 12 years as a midwife.

You also said you were a dressmaker?

I sewed all the girls' dresses, skirts, blouses at school. If anyone else wanted they asked me, so I sewed.

Which job was your favorite?

Well, I liked them all, but I loved working in the obstetrics hospital the most. I loved little newborns and I enjoyed this job very much

Have you had any other jobs?

I had a very bad manager at the cinema, who I didn't like. I worked in the fermenting plant FOR a year.

What did you dislike in the communist regime?

Well, You know ... what I didn't like ... Maybe what is now, the envy. We were poor. There was no money for bread. Also, now people live well, and then it was really hard. Later martial law came in Poland. In 1980. At that time, I had a very sick son after the accident and I had to go to the government office for a pass so that I could go to Lublin. It was 60 km distance. I had to take a pass every time. He was very sick. It was hard for me at that time, very much. I didn't like it because people were so different.

Can you say something about the food?

About food? It was different. It was also difficult with it. Usually there was nothing in the stores at all and you had to wait in a queue the whole night, and in the end, you may didn't get anything. For example, once I was standing there at night because I had to buy something for the children. I had frostbite on my legs. You had to line up for sausages, for shoes and for suits, because there was nothing in the stores. Whoever had vouchers for "Pewex" could buy something else, but if someone was poorer, they couldn't.

How long did you have to queue up?

I stood at night. Somewhere, e.g. at 10 pm. We queued up but nothing had happened until the morning. And it wasn't until the morning that they opened the store. Whoever was first had got something, and whoever was last had nothing.

And you could take as much food as you wanted or was it issued in specific quantities?

No, they were limited, like a kilo of meat or a kilo of sausages, all by kilograms. It couldn't have been more, but one was enough to be honest, because if you bought some sausage, it could have lasted for a month and it didn't get bad or moldy like it does now. Then things got better as there were ration stamps. It was then when everyone had their items listed on the ration stamps. You bought everything with these. We also had vodka and wine, but not everyone had to buy them. If you were clever, you bought to sell them and then later buy something else for yourself.

Were these cards for everything? For clothes too?

Yes.

You think life is easier now or before, and for what reasons?

Well, I think everything is easier now. Now you can buy everything. You don't have to stand anywhere, so it's better in this case. In those days it was a very hard life.

What do you think about the war? Did you remember it? Do you have any memories from that period? Maybe your family was telling you something, some stories?

Well, I remember. For example my mother told me how the war broke out, and how we escaped to Grójec. My mother took me in her arms, my dad took my brother and we fled to Grójec, but the war was even worse there. Sometimes my brother was hungry and he was crying. There were Germans everywhere, so my grandmother told us when she saw a cow in the meadow. Then my mother took my brother under the cow's breast and gave him milk. He stopped crying and we kept running.

Has anyone in your family fought in the war?

Family ... Yes, grandfather fought.

Do you remember where he fought?

No, but my father was in a concentration camp. Only where he was ... I think somewhere in Germany, but I don't know exactly where. My mother told me that when he arrived, he was very

emaciated. And my grandmother, in turn, hid Jewish women.

Have you witnessed any historical events or executions?

I don't know, I only remember how we lived here in the city - in a not very nice place - and a Jewish woman fled to us and later the Germans were looking for her and I remember how in front of my eyes this Jewish woman went out and killed her. They shot her in the yard. I cried so much because I was a child. I cried terribly because I didn't know what was going on. My mother couldn't calm me down.

What were your biggest fears during communism? What did you fear the most?

What was I afraid of ...? When I saw these Germans, I was very afraid of those Germans. I was afraid to go outside because I thought "maybe they will shoot me just like this Jewish woman". I don't remember very well because it was a long time ago.

Were there any life-threatening situations?

She had such situations a lot. I used to go to the mountains with my mother-in-law to the mountains (that's how they call such a place in our city, but these are not real mountains, houses on a hill). Jola was tiny in the wheelchair (her daughter). Czesiek (her husband) took Piotr (the eldest son) on a bicycle. A strong wind rose. Something began to fall from above, it was a sheet of metal from the roof. Someone shouted to me. If I didn't stop, it would cut my head off. And the second time, also when we went to the mountains, a cart, i.e. horses were frightened, and there were apples on this cart. The guy was carrying apples and this guy flew from this cart, and these horses rushed at us straight. We were on the bridge and there was nowhere to hide. I began to pray and somehow missed me, and the cart fell over, apples spilled out, and those horses went on. I was afraid that children would kill.

How do you perceive policy changes? How do you perceive this from a historical point of view? All these wars, systems, politicians?

I know ... Now life is better. Now the children have their homes, not like they used to be when we lived 8 people in the room and the kitchen. Now everyone has their room, their home and a good life, thank God. I lived with my husband, three children and parents.

And how was communism? Did you feel any change when communism collapsed? Something has changed in people's lives?

It used to be very bad because the communists ruled. Everyone wanted everything for themselves and did not share with others, and now it is good. Everyone has a retirement. Now it is only bad because everyone is out of work. You can't get to work, and if someone is already working, you

are not respected at work. Once, if someone had an education, it mattered.

Do you have any advice for modern youth?

That they would respect each other. That they would not be enemies only. In order not to treat ourselves badly, that it would be good, because later if one treats badly, it all comes back to man. And that they would choose their partners well one day.

What are you currently doing?

I'm don't work. I'm sitting at home. I like reading and doing crosswords. I go for a walk.

Grzegorz Szczepanik

Can you say something about yourself?

My name is Grzegorz, and I am 58 years old. I am a farmer, but now agriculture has become more industrial. As for the family, I have 3 children. I live in a village. I have another sister and an extended family who live in the same village, so I have good contact with them. It is characteristic for the village that it is like a closed circle, and it is not like in the city, where people do not know each other.



How did you grow up, what were your responsibilities when you were a child?

There used to be more responsibilities for children. Apart from the fact that they had to go to school, there were other duties they had to fulfill, such as grazing cows and doing small household tasks. We also had to separate the sprouts from the potatoes. And in the past it wasn't a holiday like now, that you are going somewhere, there was only harvesting, hay-making. Well, generally there were no exceptions. They all had similar duties, because they all had farms, my parents and my peers. The work itself was not hard, it was also fun. For example, when stacking, several children gathered and jumped on the straw. We also made bonfires during potato harvest. There used to be a different atmosphere that is hard to describe in words.

How did you spend your free time? Do you have a particular memory from your childhood?

We had different kinds of games: two fires, palant (baseball) and of course there was football.

I lived in a village that was much poorer compared to the city. Children needed to organize games by themselves. That's why these games were available only.

When I was a child, we started a fire near the barn. When the closest neighbors saw it they came to stop the fire. We were not aware that we had done something wrong.

What did the schools look like? What was the attitude towards teachers?

In elementary school, the teacher was an authority because compared to an ordinary student who went to elementary school he had big knowledge. Each teacher used to teach a specific subject, they had only one specialty. There were corporal punishments, you could get hit with a ruler, but it was not drastic.

The atmosphere at school was relaxed, not like now that there are bodyguards and everything is closed. The children behaved more spontaneously in schools, there was no rigor.

If someone did a prank, it was always the boy's fault.

The children were once more disciplined, so they wore these uniforms. We all had the same clothes that we had to wear for three years.

Children in the village had the best fun after 8pm. They could play hide and seek because it was getting dark.

How often did young people decide to go to university?

In my class, from 31 people, only two students went to university. In my school there were more girls than boys who made that decision.

In the past, when they finished high school, people could do many things that 18-year-olds have no idea about today.

I was going to go to the university, but I gave up at the last minute. I even had the documents ready, but it turned out that I didn't go. I thought I might not be able to pass the exams.

Have you ever thought about studying anything other than agriculture?

Probably not. I went to agricultural school, and when choosing a field of study you have to have basics from high school. There were not so many possibilities and for University you had to pick your classes based on your previous background.

How did people make a decision to become farmers?

In most cases parents passed the fields from generation to generation, some people were buying them too. There were no state-owned farms in my area, only individual farms. There were larger families then, usually four or five children, only few of them stayed on the farm and the rest had to look for a job in the city. Even if they lived in the countryside, they had to commute, because they couldn't make a living from farming. In my village there is poor soil and agriculture is profitable only for those who have larger, undivided plots.

When did you start working and what changes did you notice throughout the years?

When I was 7-8 years old, I used to go with my parents to the field. I was helping with the harvest, haymaking, I was collecting sheaves and raking hay. I was collecting potatoes too.

When I finished school, I started working. I also worked as an agricultural advisor in WODR (Voivodship Agricultural Advisory Center) for five years.

In the mid-eighties everything in Poland was changing so they tried to give advice to farmers who didn't have access to new information but wanted to improve their work.

At that time it seemed that these changes would not progress so quickly. Now agriculture is becoming industrial, and I think it should be more connected with nature.

Were there many possibilities for boys and girls to meet? When was your first relationship?

Groups of young people were meeting at village parties which were the main occasions to date someone because of the lack of transportation. They all danced together and if someone felt something more, they would pair up. People didn't have cars, so only those who studied in the city could go to a cafe or cinema.

In general, the first dates were in high school and when someone walked with each other holding hands people thought that they were already bound for life. Also being sat next to someone on a bus going back from school was considered a date.

My first girlfriend was from my class. She lived in a different village, so we were exchanging letters with each other. When I was in the army, we also corresponded, but the letters were censored so we stopped.

Did you drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes? When?

Mostly boys were smoking. Those who started to smoke at the age of 16, they're still doing it.

Integration parties were organized at our school and students drank alcohol in secret. We used to drink cheap wine, because there were no others or they were too expensive.

Teachers cared about students' behavior, not because of their role, but more as a human being.

How could you find a wife or husband?

People were getting married within the village because there were not many means of transport at that time. We can say that there were only three large families in our village. It was good because the family was close.

How did the weddings look like?

There was a division into a civil marriage (which was not considered a marriage for most of the people) and a church marriage. In the morning there was a civil wedding and in the afternoon a church wedding. Now you can get married without a civil wedding.

What were the wedding parties like?

In the seventies, weddings were held mainly at home. Guests from the side of the bride were at her home, and guests of the groom at his home. The bride and groom spent part of the wedding in one house and then moved to another. Guests came together in the morning, they were eating and drinking. Sometimes they were already drunk before the wedding. The bride and groom went to the wedding alone, with witnesses and maybe three more people. On the second day there was an after party held in the same way.

In the eighties weddings began to be held in rented tents, but most often they were organized in two homes. The bride and groom with young members of their families went to the wedding by a rented bus. Later, they went to one house for a party and then to another.

What are the differences in other ceremonies then and now?

The funerals were completely different. When someone died at home the family had the responsibility to take care of the corpse. People had to bring the coffin and the death certificate. The doctor did not come to the deceased. Family was gathering at home and praying. Later, the coffin was taken to the shrine and people sang dirges there. Then the coffin was taken to the church, where the funeral took place on the next day.

After the ceremony, the coffin was carried from the church to the cemetery on men's shoulders. If there were no men, it was carried on a cart. A lot of men had to gather so that there would be someone to carry the coffin. They were changing along the way.

Do you notice differences in people's attitude towards religion?

The church's authority has decreased. There used to be more religious people going to church. Now the youth goes there only for certificates, if they need them. The priest is no longer an authority in the field of faith.

Are there any traditions that have disappeared over time?

Christmas carolers were more authentic in the past. It was a group who could make people laugh and they were walking from one house to another singing carols. Now they are only do it for money.

Another custom that has disappeared is making pranks, so-called 'happiness'. The rules were to take gates of the neighbors and hide them somewhere and for this a large group of people was necessary. There were even people who raised a carriage and put it on the roof. Everyone treated it as a normal thing, even if they were a bit angry because of the prank. People who made those pranks came and helped to fix what they did. Nobody is doing these things now.

What is the biggest difference between the past and the present?

I am the most worried about the fact that people are less open to others now. In the past people had a will to gather and do something together because they had to help each other. Now if you have a problem, you call a specialist. It is sad to me that it changed so quickly. On the other hand, comparing to the conditions which people are living in now, I must say that it's much better. I did not expect it to proceed so quickly.

Teresa Woźniak

In the beginning we would like you to introduce yourself, say something about you and your family, your name, age and so on.

I'm Teresa Woźniak. I'm from Gorzkow. I have three children: two sons and one daughter.



What about your parents?

My parents are already dead. My mom's name is Wanda and my dad is Jan. I have siblings as well, or actually only sister because my brother is already dead.

Could you tell us something about your childhood?

I went to primary school and to kindergarten, as well. I finished seven grades/classes.

What kind of subjects did you have at school?

History, biology, Polish, mathematics, physics, physical education.

Could you tell us how did you spend your free time as a child? What kind of games did you play?

There was this common room at school where we could spend our free time after school. We played football with boys, as well.

Did you work when you were a child?

No, I didn't work.

What kind of games you played with your peers? Now we have computers and then?

We played volleyball, we were running. Apart from that, we didn't have much to do.

How was the life without television, phones and technology that we have nowadays?

We listened to the radio a lot. There was one TV in the common room at school - who wanted to watch, could go there.

When it comes to the phones... Because Mrs. Barbara told us yesterday that if you wanted to call someone, you had to sign up on some list and wait for one week. What is your experience?

We wrote more letters and postcards. When you wanted to call the ambulance, you had to go to a police station because there was a phone.

But you had a possibility to call to some friends etc.?

Children actually didn't call, rather older people, for ex. my parents.

And when you were a little bit older, what ways did you use to contact with other people?

The same, letters and postcards, empty ones or with some view.

How your parents or older people did call?

It's difficult for me to say, because when you wanted to call somewhere, e.g. after an ambulance or doctor, you had to go to the police office, and so it was rather not, because it was a small town, a settlement, so everyone knew each other.

And when someone died or was sick, how did you inform about it your family or friends?

You just send a telegram. You had to go to a post office and fill it.

What did your parents do for life?

My mom worked physically in a factory which produced eternit. My dad also worked physically in the area of public roads.

Did your parents tell you anything about the II World War?

My mother told me because as a young girl she belonged to the Home Army. That's all I know.

What about your dad?

He didn't say anything about the war. He was from a village, and my mother was from Jewish city, there were a lot of Jews there. Sometimes when I came to Końskowola near Puławy, she showed me where the Jewish shops were.

Because you were born after the war, right?

Yes, in 1946. My mother was born in 1925 and my father in 1926.

I know that there was a lot of hunger in Romania after the war, but I don't know if you remember the time after the war because you were a small child...

When it comes to my house, there was rather no hunger, we didn't lack food. Maybe other people lacked, but here we did not.

How did your family get food? Just buying?

My grandmother worked for Jews, washed, cleaned and cooked. Instead of money, she received food and brought it home. At least that's what my mother told me because I don't remember.

Could I ask you about your siblings?

My sister is already retired, she worked in a fur factory in Kurów. He has a son who is in Scotland and he has wife and son at the age of 29. My brother and sister-in-law are dead, they had two daughters. One lives in Zwoleń, has a husband and two children. The other one lives near Zwoleń, she has a husband and two boys.

Did your teachers talk at school about II World War in the 50's? Or it was too painful to talk about it?

No, they didn't. There was no topic like that. In the sixth and seventh grade, when we had history, we only talked about ancient history. There was nothing about the war.

Has communism somehow negatively impacted your life?

It's difficult for me to say. I went to work before I was 18 years old. I didn't miss anything because I was earning money and grandparents helped me, as well..

But if you compare with nowadays, do you think that communism was better or worse?

It's difficult for me to say because I'm retired now. But in general, I think now is better. I don't miss anything. Although I don't receive a big pension, because I get PLN 1080 for 32 years of work, because in the 90s I worked as a caretaker at school.

Maybe you didn't experience it personally, but there probably were people around you who didn't have enough food?

Maybe somewhere in the villages yes, because what they produced in the field had to be sold in order to be able to buy other things. And if someone worked in a state-owned company, they had monthly salaries, not large, admittedly, but they were. For example my three children were studying, so we had to pay one part for the boarding school and another part was covered by subsidies [scholarships].

How could you get a job in a state-owned company?

It used to be easier to get to a state-owned factory. Now maybe it's more difficult, or maybe everyone are just more demanding, but then, anyone who could have a job, had a job.

But you had to pass some exam?

No, only OHS.

Did you have to study at any special school or have any connections to get there?

After elementary school, I didn't work or study anywhere, I went to work before I was 18.

So you just went and said you wanted to work?

Yes, exactly. I mean, I worked as an adolescent then, so I couldn't work 8 hours, only 6 per day.

How did you spend your free time? For ex. with parents? Did you go on any trips, trips or holidays?

There were no such trips. There were some at school, but later not, I did not go anywhere. After work, we sometimes went to the neighbors to earn a few pennies working in the field. Picking fruits or weeding.

And when you got married, did you go on holiday?

No. I had three children, there was no way to go.

Did you choose your husband, or then parents chose a husband for their daughter?

No, no, I chose it myself.

If this is not a very private question - how did you meet your husband?

I think somewhere at the party.

Could you go out with your boyfriend in the countryside before the wedding, hold your hand etc.?

Yeah, you could do it.

How much time passed between meeting your husband and the wedding?

About a year and a half. We lived separately and met sometimes.

After the wedding, did you live in your own house or with your parents?

We lived with my mother-in-law. Because my mother-in-law raised her son (my husband) alone.

Can you say something more about parties? Maybe first we should ask about the dowry, was there a tradition of "buying" a wife with dowry? For ex. giving land, money, house?

No, in my case no, my parents didn't have to give anything. My dad had no land, he gave it to his sister.

In your day, when people had children, did they want them to get an education or did they expect them to work on the land?

We didn't have any farm. Earlier I worked in a fur factory with my mother-in-law and we worked 8-hours shifts. I worked from 6AM to 2PM and she worked from 2PM to 10PM, so the children stayed alone for an hour for the time when we were changing shifts.

Have you ever wanted to move to the city?

I mean I never lived in the countryside, I lived in a settlement, whether in Końskowola or Kurów, when I got married.

What do you mean by settlement? Does the settlement look more like a city?

The settlement has up to 3-4 thousand residents.

So, have you ever want to move to a larger city like Lublin?

I don't think so, because I couldn't afford a flat or homestay.

What was the medical care like back then? Was there a hospital in your town or did you have to go to another city? Was it worse than today?

There was no such trouble. If you had to go to a medical centre, you would go to a medical centre, and if you had to go to a hospital, you would call an ambulance and it would take you to the hospital. Just like now, actually, now it's even harder to get to the hospital.

Because you lived in Końskowola and Kurów and there was no hospital, right? Was there a medical centre?

Yes, there were medical centres. There were hospitals in the bigger cities like Puławy or Lublin.

I assume that ambulance service was free, right?

Yes, yes.

Was it common to give bribes?

I can't say if there were any bribes. I have never given it.

But people didn't give chocolates or coffee, for example?

I don't know, I've never given. I've lived in Gorzków for 30 years and I've never given one.

**Interviews made by the participants of the
international youth exchange
'Let me tell you a story – Grandparents'.**



Project organized by Association HEureka Generator from Zamość, Poland in frames of European Erasmus+ Programme, Key Action 1, Sector 'Youth'

Project partners: Association Evolution (Romania), For YOUTH (Slovakia), Youthphoria (Greece), Co-Efficient (Hungary)

This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.