

MATUS STOLOV



Born: June 7, 1928 (Minsk, Belorussia)

Interview Date: March 2016

Matus Stolov was born in 1928, in Minsk, Belorussia. He had one older brother, Boris. Under Soviet Communism, expressions of Jewish life were banned in 1934 and so Matus did not receive a Jewish religious education. In 1936, Matus's father died of natural causes. In 1941, Germany invaded Minsk and a ghetto was built around the Jewish section of the city. The family tried to flee but only Boris was able to escape. Matus and his mother remained and lived in the ghetto with family friends. Matus witnessed frequent executions and mass shootings perpetrated by the Nazis and their collaborators. Matus and his mother survived the ghetto with the help of a Christian friend named "Big Yelena." In 1942, Big Yelena arranged for Matus and his mother to be smuggled out of the ghetto by partisan fighters. They later crossed the front lines and settled in Kazan but returned to Minsk after it was liberated. Matus and his mother received a notice that Boris had been killed in combat when he was serving in the Soviet Army. After the war, Matus studied mechanical engineering in university. In 1952, he married Victoria, a woman from Minsk whom he had known since grade school. In the early 1980s, Matus received permission to immigrate to the United States after years of trying to leave the Soviet Union. He, Victoria, and their daughter settled in Chicago, Illinois. This interview took place in March 2016 in Los Angeles, CA.