

AARON ELSTER



Born: February 4, 1933 (Sokołów Podlaski, Poland)

Died: April 11, 2018

Interview Date: November 2015

Aaron Elster was born on February 4, 1933, in Sokołów Podlaski, Poland. He grew up with his two sisters and his father, Chaim, and mother, Cywia (née Scherb). After the Nazi invasion of Poland, his family was forced to live in a Jewish ghetto in their hometown. Two years later, Aaron escaped the ghetto as it was being liquidated. His mother had already arranged for a Christian family, the Gurskis, to take in Aaron's older sister as their own and convinced them to conceal Aaron in their attic. He lived in the attic for over two years until they were liberated by the Soviet Army in 1945. After the war, Aaron's uncle, Sam (who had fought for the Russian Partisans during the war), arrived in Sokołów Podlaski in search of family and took care of Aaron and his sister. The three of them lived in a series of displaced persons camps in Germany. In 1947, Aaron and his sister immigrated to the United States, arriving in New York and eventually settling in Chicago, Illinois. In 1954, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and fought in the Korean War. That same year, he married Jackie and they had two sons. He was an active member of the Skokie survivor community, serving as the Chairman of the Speakers' Bureau and Vice President at the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center. Aaron passed away at the age of 85 in April 2018. This interview took place in November 2015 in Los Angeles, CA.