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Of the original 252 audio-recordings in this collection, 212 of these tapes were transcribed around the time of the original recordings (between 1966 and 1978). In 2012, Cabbage Tree Solutions was contracted to create transcriptions for the remaining tapes. Corrections to and clarifications for all transcriptions are welcome, especially for names and places. Please contact Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, for questions. [askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu](mailto:askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu)

Interview with Mr. Joseph Falkowski, 1309 Cedar Street, Wilmington, Delaware, July 7, 1970, by Francis Turochy. Mr. Falkowski is a Polish immigrant.

Q This is July the 7th, 1970. I'm going to interview Mr. Joseph Falkowski. Will you give me your full name, Mr. Falkowski?

A Joseph Falkowski.

Q What is your address?

A 1309 Cedar Street, Wilmington.

Q How old are you now?

A 77.

Q What's the date of your birth?

A November 5, 1892.

Q And where were you born?

A In Poland, village called [sounds like Parkate], state [sounds like Womza].

Q Under what occupation was Poland at that time?

A Under Russian occupation.

Q Um hmm. Did you have any schooling in Poland?

A Yes, my father teach me in the home, because it was too far to go to the other schools. I couldn't get no transportation.

Q So was there more pupils than yourself?

A Well, there was a few of my boyfriends . . . what my father teach me, I teach them.

Q When did you decide to leave Poland?

A That was 1913, early in May.

Q Um hmm. How old were you then?

A I think I was about 20 years old.

Q Uh huh. Well, then you evidently worked in Poland. Who did you work for?

A I helped my father on the farm, and in spare time I worked with my uncle, build houses as a carpenter.

Q Um hmm. And what made you decide to come to the United States?

- A A lot of my relations went there and they come back and tell how's the United States. Then I decided to go. And my brother was there for three years at that time.
- Q And did you come alone to the United States, or was someone with you, your family?
- A Well, one of my friends, I just met him on the way to America, but we were travel all together to the United States.
- Q So you had a brother in the United States. Did he send you the steamship ticket?
- A Yes, he send me steamship ticket. And I pay my fare from my village to the port of Antwerp.
- Q Antwerp, uh huh. How did you get to Antwerp from your home?
- A Well, I took the train from Lahpe [sp], went to Astralenka [sp] by train, and from Astralenka we took . . . there was wagons pulled by horses, and we go to the border, we pass the border, and then we arrive in German town, I just forget the name . . . we board a train, and we go to the Berlin and to the Antwerp where I get the boat.
- Q Um hmm. So you left some of your family there. How many were left in Poland?
- A Well, at that time was my parents and sister and brother.
- Q How did you travel across the ocean, on a first-class liner? Was it a passenger liner or . . .
- A First-class liner. Name of the boat was Amsterdam.
- Q Um hmm. How was the passage over the ocean? Did you have clear passage, or was it rough?
- A [Inaudible] . . . it was pretty good traveling in the ocean. The boat it was . . . eight days it was on the water.
- Q Um hmm. And you arrived where?
- A In New York.
- Q Uh huh. Did you have to go through customs in New York?
- A Yes, sir. We went through the customs and I have to show that I was allowed to . . . every passenger gotta show \$50.00 that he have for a start in landing in the United States. I had my money.
- Q Now, did your brother meet you at the warf there, by the ship?
- A No, I pass customhouse and then I took the train from New York to Wilmington, and from Wilmington got taxicab pulled by horses, he bring me right to where

my brother lived, on Sycamore Street.

Q Did your brother have his own house then, or was he . . .

A Well, my brother was single and he was boarding with a family then, Stanley [sounds like "Gardowski"], and I was living there, too.

Q Um hmm. Did you wait long to go to work, or did your brother have it all arranged for you?

A Well, I didn't wait very long. My brother worked in morocco factory, Blomingtaugh [sp], on . . . what they . . . bring the raw skins from all the countries, and then sort them out and [inaudible] them 'til they [inaudible] . . . .

Q How much were you paid then on that job? How much did they pay you?

A \$9.00 a week.

Q How many hours a day did you have to work?

A Oh, from seven 'til six.

Q How did you travel back and forth to work?

A Walk. It was only about 15, 20-minutes walk one way.

Q So that was a morocco shop, you said?

A That was a warehouse for Blomingtaugh, the morocco shop, the raw skins come from all of the other countries, then they sort them out and [inaudible] them.

Q Um hmm. So actually they were in the tanning business, not manufacturing.

A Yes.

Q Tell us, did you work long on that job?

A Well, that was . . . one year I worked there. When they got slack, they laid me off.

Q Um hmm. And then what did you do?

A I got the job with DuPont Company, Alfred I. DuPont in his residence. I work in the garden, clean trees . . . dry branches. And later on I got the janitor job in his residence, tend the boilers and [inaudible] . . . make ice cream.

Q Um hmm. Yeah. Did you do much corresponding between your relatives in Poland?

A Oh, yes, I do a lot of . . . I write a lot of letters to my family, and they write it to me. Oh, every . . . maybe every couple of weeks.

- Q Um hmm. Were they anxious to come, any of them, over here, too?
- A No. At that time there was . . . hardly anybody can come. But my parents, they . . . being on a farm, they can't come. And my brother and sister help them . . . they have to . . . later on they got married, and they live together over there.
- Q Was it a large farm your dad had?
- A No, not very large, about middle-size.
- Q So the rest of the family were not interested in coming to the United States.
- A No . . . no.
- Q By then did you feel lonesome for the family you left in Poland? Did you feel like going back, or did you prefer staying here?
- A I felt like going back in the beginning, but after I got married and settled then I liked it over here. [Tape stops, starts again in mid-sentence] . . . from different companies and we sort 'em out and [inaudible, sounds like camphorize] it so they won't get [inaudible].
- Q In other words, you went right to work when you came here to this country?
- A Yeah, about a couple of weeks, I got . . .
- Q How much did you make there? How much did they pay you?
- A \$9.00 a week at that time.
- Q How many hours a day did you have to work?
- A We worked from seven to six, I think.  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour for lunch.
- Q Did you live close to where you worked? Did you walk or did you ride?
- A Yeah, I walked . . . I walked. It was about 15-minutes walk.
- Q So you worked for the Blomington Leather Factory . . .
- A Yeah, I worked there about a year. Then it was gone slack and they laid me off and then I got the job for DuPont, Alfred I. DuPont and worked at his residence, as a . . . help in the garden . . . cleaning the trees of dead branches. And later on I got as a janitor in his residence. I tend the boilers and I make ice cream for him, and clean all the machinery . . . [inaudible] . . . .
- Q Did you make much on that job?
- A I make I think it was \$35.00 a month.
- Q Were you able to save some money?

- A Oh, yeah, I saved some. I saved some, yeah.
- Q Did you join any church of any kind when you came to Wilmington? Did you join any church or organization of any kind?
- A Join? Yeah, I joined church. First thing I come here, I joined St. Hedwig Parrish.
- Q Any clubs or any organizations, too?
- A Not right away. Later on I got married and got acquainted more with the people, I joined [sounds like First Polish Council].
- Q How were conditions here compared to those in Poland? Was it better here?
- A Well, at that time, yeah, that was better here, yeah. Yeah, I liked it.
- Q What food differences were there? Were there more meat plentiful here, and-- you tell me about it yourself.
- A Oh, more meat, yeah. In Poland we didn't have that much meat what we have over here, because . . . I don't know . . . on the farm there they killed a pig, we had that for maybe five, six months before they killed another one.
- Q Where did you live here? Were you boarding with some family?
- A Yeah, I boarded with same family my brother was boarding with, that was Stanley Gardowski.
- Q Um hmm. How were the living conditions here then?
- A Well, they was pretty good . . . pretty good, yeah.
- Q How many were sleeping in one room?
- A Two. Me and my brother.
- Q Did you share the same bed, in other words, with your brother?
- A Yes.
- Q How long did it take you to repay the money that your brother had advanced for the ticket?
- A Oh, that was only \$50.00 he paid for that ticket. I pay him . . . well, in about a year's time I pay him off . . . yeah.
- Q Did you correspond with your parents back in Poland? Did you send them money?
- A Oh yes . . . everytime I correspond.
- Q Uh huh. Did you send them any money at any time?
- A Yeah. If I had some, I sent it to my parents to help them out on farm.

Q What did you do in your leisure time after work?

A Well, we went to theater, go to . . . summertime, we go to park, like that, and . . .

Q How soon did you marry, and with whom?

A I married in 1919 . . . uh . . .

B [Unidentified female] November.

A November . . . I'm sorry, November 9, 1919.

Q Uh huh. Who did you marry? What's your wife's name?

A Well, she was Cheslova Sobozenski [sp]. Her parents come from old country too . . . the same state I come from.

Q Uh huh. Was she born here or was she born over there?

A She was born over here. But she visit old country when she was six years old with her parents, and stayed there for a short while and come back with her parents.

Q And how did you meet your wife?

A Well, I was . . . my brother was married already, and he had a house same block was her parents bought the house. And . . .

Q And you got acquainted with her because you lived close.

A Yeah. We was neighbors.

Q Where did you live after you were married? Did you buy a house right away?

A I lived with my wife's parents for maybe about a year or so . . . little more than a year. And then my brother decided to go to old country with his family, and he had a house, and I bought the house from him at that time . . . on Elm Street . . . 1109 Elm Street.

Q Did your wife work too, or she didn't do any work at all after you were married?

A No, she just . . .

Q Stayed home and took care of the house.

A Take care of the house, yeah.

Q How many children did you have?

A I had three boys and one girl.

Q Uh huh. Are they all living now?

- A One died. The second from oldest died.
- Q Um hmm. Did they get any education here in this country?
- A Me?
- Q No, the children.
- A Oh, children, yeah. They all are educated. Oh yeah, I just want to mention, 'cause when I come over here, I go to night school, learn English and learn the law to become citizen. I've been . . . every wintertime they have a night school there. I went all the time to it.
- Q When did you become citizen of this country?
- A That was in March, 1925.
- Q Did you wife . . . oh, your wife was a citizen, that's right, because she was born here.
- A Yes.
- Q I see. Now we come to the period of World War II. Compare the conditions in this country to what they were before during the . . . before they went to war . . . before the war in other words. Did you serve in the United States Army?
- B Tell him you had the three boys in it.
- Q Um hmm. Was work plentiful here, then?
- A Well, I was working in the shipbuilding. I was . . . I don't know whether I was . . . riveter . . . build the ships at [sounds like Highland Plant] and [something and Jones] . . . and send ship Chester . . .
- Q How were your earnings?
- A At that time I was working in Philadelphia Naval Yard, work on battleships-- New Jersey, Wisconsin, and many other destroyers, I was working . . . that's why I was exempt from the service, as a worker on the ship . . .
- Q Um hmm. Because you were working more or less for the war effort. Um hmm. What was life like after you were here for about 10 years? Did you enjoy it, was it much improved over what it would have been in Poland?
- A Well, I enjoyed life here. It was very good. I always liked it.
- Q You made much more money, did you, at these jobs in the shipyards?
- A Oh, yeah, we make pretty good money, then.
- Q Did you correspond with your relatives in Poland during the war? Or you couldn't?
- A Not . . . for a while we didn't get correspondence from Poland.



Q Um hmm. What was life like here during the war?

A Well, it's . . .

Q Much improved?

A Well, during the war was short of everything. Everything was . . . you don't get . . . lot of time you don't get what you want to get, because there was a war, they sold the stuff out there.

Q Did your children receive any education?

A Oh, yeah, they all pass high school. And daughter pass Beacom College for two years, I think.

Q Um hmm. Did you ever visit Poland after that?

A No, I never.

Q Did you correspond with your people in Poland much afterwards?

A Well, I correspond all the time, yeah.

Q Well, Mr. Falkowski, I'm going to conclude this interview with you, and I want to thank you very much for your kindness in allowing me to interview you, and I wish you many, many more years of happy life here in this country.

A Thank you, Mr. Turochy.

[END OF INTERVIEW]