

## SAM KRYCER z”I

Sam Krycer z”I was born in Częstochowa on 17th January 1919. He arrived in Australia on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1938, settling in Melbourne. During World War II, he served in the Australian Air Force. On 25<sup>th</sup> April 2019, at 100 years of age, he represented the Royal Australia Air Force and led the annual ANZAC Day parade (Australia’s memorial day).

Sadly, Sam passed away on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019.

Between his participation in the parade and his passing, Sam agreed to talk about his life with our World Society webmaster, Andrew Rajcher.

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**Andrew: I saw the article about you in the *Australian Jewish News*, marching on ANZAC Day at 100 years of age. When I read that you’re a *Częstochower*, I just had to talk with you.**

Sam: Lately, over the last few weeks, they’re saying that I’m a hero. I am who I am - I haven’t changed and I’ve got no intention of changing.

**Andrew: Did you know that we now have a Jewish museum in Częstochowa?**

Sam: Whereabouts, which part?

**Andrew: On Katedralna – it was a very Jewish area**

Sam: It was.

**Andrew: We created an exhibition and the city council gave us the use of a building. They restored it and now they’ve incorporated the Jewish Museum into the City Museum, so the city is looking after it now. Our next project is to restore the cemetery. The Częstochowa Jewish cemetery is the third largest in Poland.**

Sam: I have a photo of our grandmother. She’s buried in Zawiercie, which is where my parents come from originally.

**Andrew: Tell me a little about the history of your family, about your parents and where they come from.**

Sam: My mother was born not far from Częstochowa, I haven’t been there, but I know.

**Andrew: Do you know the name of the place?**

Sam: Górki, it was called Górki, whatever that means. At home, you never asked “How are you? What did you do?”, you only spoke when you were spoken to.

**Andrew: You had siblings- brothers and sisters?**

Sam: Yes, originally seven siblings, one died young. One, a brother, he survived. He lives here [in Melbourne]. I can’t forget Poland, I can’t forget the antisemitism. Even at my age, I still remember it.

**Andrew: Your father, was he born in Częstochowa?**

Sam: He was born Zawiercie

**Andrew: Your parents married and then settled in Częstochowa?**

Sam: Yes

**Andrew: Whereabouts in Częstochowa, do you remember the street you lived in?**

Sam: How can I forget? It was ulica Warszawska

**Andrew: Warszawska – that’s on the other side of the “Stary Rynek” {Old Market Square}.**

Sam: You know the three crosses? That’s Warszawska. You went past ulica Cmentarna [pre-War street name] that goes to the Polish cemetery - just past there and, I’m sure it’s still there. We lived about a half a kilometre past that, maybe more.

**Andrew: Was your family religious? What was spoken at home, Yiddish or Polish?**

Sam: Yiddish. Jewish education was number one. Hebrew, I was very good at Hebrew.

**Andrew: Was that at a *cheder*?**

Sam: Yes a *cheder*. I remember lots of things. But the thing that I can’t forget the most was coming from *cheder* of a Sunday. While we were religious, the Poles were antisemitic – 100%. We lived in a non-Jewish tenement.

**Andrew: A *kamienica*?**

Sam: Yes, a *kamienica*. I used to play football and go for walks with the boys, the non-Jewish boys. But one day, I can’t remember the exact date or time. It could have been when I was about eight or nine, maybe ten years old. I was walking home from *cheder*. It was snowing and I was cold, wrapped up. This boy, a friend of mine, ran past me. I thought he tapped me on the shoulder, but he didn’t - he had cut my head with a knife.

Being so cold, I didn’t feel a thing. So I came home. We lived above a store, a grocery store. My mum had a neighbour, a Yiddishe woman - there were a few across the road. She cried out, “What happened, son, what happened?” I didn’t realise what had happened.

**Andrew: You were covered in blood?**

Sam: I realised I was warm, covered in blood. And the strangest thing is, you’d never hear it in a million years, [the wound] still plays up even now, every day. I still can’t touch it.

**Andrew: It’s sensitive?**

Sam: Yes and I don’t want it seen to. At my age, I don’t want it touched - I’ve only got another sixty or seventy years to go. This is partly a joke, partly imagination. Why I said that was that I had a pacemaker put in a few months back and I was told it would last ten years, ten and a half years. I told them to order six more pacemakers! But this won’t let me forget. Every morning, when I have a shower, I start washing the hair, but I can’t touch that. When I go to the hairdresser I always tell them to go easy.

**Andrew: You were telling me that your family was religious. Did they go to the Old Synagogue?**

Sam: I’ll tell you how religious. Just one point, there were four boys and three girls. One boy, he was two years my junior. When I left Poland I was nineteen, he was seventeen. Now, he would have been ninety-eight years of age. He was handsome, blond hair, very capable. What I’m saying is that, when the Germans invaded Częstochowa, my brother had three mates, three friends, Yiddishe boys - they decided to go to Russia.

He wouldn’t move unless he asked mum. If any of us were sick, she would first go to a rabbi and

THEN get medical treatment. If we put on *tefillin* too quickly, we wouldn't get anything to eat until we did it again slowly

**Andrew: Wow, they were religious. Were they *Chassidic* Jews or just religious?**

Sam: Just religious.

**Andrew: They would go to the Old Synagogue, on ulica Nadrzeczna?**

Sam: No, Częstochowa had two – there was also the *Neue Shil* [the “New Synagogue”].

**Andrew: My mother grew up on ulica Garibaldiego 17 just up the road from that synagogue. So your dad would go to the New Synagogue?**

Sam: No, no, dad couldn't afford to belong to a synagogue, to be called up.

**Andrew: So he attended a *shtiebel*?**

Sam: I don't know exactly how many, but there were many were *shtieblech*. The table was taken out and you could stand up. They had a *Sefer Torah*.

**Andrew: In an apartment?**

Sam: Yes, but mummy would pray at home every day - she was so versatile.

**Andrew: What did your father do for a living?**

Sam: That's another question - he tried everything but he was unsuccessful

**Andrew: But to support seven children ...**

Sam: That's where mum came in. I have to tell you the truth. I don't know if you saw, (in the) picture theatres, “Dorian Grey”.

**Andrew: By Oscar Wilde?**

Sam: That was him - dressed up during the day like a lord

**Andrew: Your father?**

Sam: Yes.

**Andrew: You said you went to school - that you went to a cheder. Was your normal schooling in a public school?**

Sam: Yes, but I started work very early in my life.

**Andrew: That was very common where there was a large family and the parents weren't bringing in a lot of money, the kids went to work early - and that was your case, I understand.**

Sam: I went to the *Szkoła Rzemiosła* [Trade School], past the church at the end of ulica Warszawska, at the beginning of the Second Aleja.

**Andrew: Near the St Zygmunt church?**

Sam: Yes. I forget the name, but that could be it and I passed my matriculation in Polish. To get a certificate, you had to pay a zloty. I didn't have a zloty, I only had ten groszy, so I didn't get it. But, for four years, I went twice a week to the *Szkoła Rzemiosła* - between my Jewish education and work.

**Andrew: You working at the same time?**

Sam: It wasn't easy.

**Andrew: So, you came to Australia before the War?**

Sam: Yes, but not much before the War - in December 1938.

**Andrew: Was it the whole family or just you?**

Sam: Just me.

**Andrew: Why just you and why Australia?**

Sam: Well, there was a little bit of a history to that. My father had a sister, who had six sons and they were very, very wealthy. There was some dissension in the family because, for some reason, his sister blamed my mother for our situation and it was just the opposite - she didn't blame my father! So, he also had two sisters, one in Australia and one in England.

**Andrew: So, well before the War, you had an aunt in Australia?**

Sam: Yes - three sisters, one in Cześćochowa, one in England and one here. By coincidence, the one in Cześćochowa had six sons and the one in Australia also had six sons.

**Andrew: Your family produces sons, you've got sons as well.**

Sam: I've got two - two is enough for me. My dad didn't realise they were struggling here. The reason that they were struggling was common. People went to America, France, Australia, New Zealand and they shed their native language and became part of [the local community]. They were ashamed of their parents not being able to speak [the language].

So my auntie, my dad's sister in Australia, had two cousins (who) migrated. She had a brother in Cześćochowa too and one of the brother's daughters was sponsored here. She then brought her brother, my cousin of mine.

**Andrew: This is why you came here? Your aunt sponsored you here?**

Sam: Yes, but there's a reason for it. The one, who was reasonably well off, the auntie in Australia, wrote to her sister in Cześćochowa that "you have six sons. You are pretty well off, but the way we see things, you are not very bright. Why don't you get one son to come here to see if he likes it? If he doesn't like it, he can go back. If he likes it, why don't the rest of you come and join him?"

**Andrew: By 'not very bright', she meant not seeing the Nazis on the horizon? How did it turn out?**

Sam: I'm coming to that. The end result was that the visa came for this cousin of mine, about my age (I didn't realise that he was two years older than me). When the visa arrived, they let out a big scream, "Wait, you don't have to go there. You have everything you want, stay put, no!"

My father found out. I'm talking about cousin Sam Tremback. He said, "Look sister, he doesn't have to go. He doesn't want to go, don't let him go. I've got a son, who's approximately his age. So I was sponsored and in doing so, I'm jumping forward now, I sponsored my sister. She passed away eight or nine years ago.

**Andrew: When did she arrive?**

Sam: The War broke out a few weeks earlier. Her ship was in the Indian Ocean when the War broke out.

**Andrew: So, you were here and your sister was on the way, which meant that you had your parents and five siblings still there. Of your parents and five siblings how many survived the War?**

Sam: One - my brother.

**Andrew: Your brother and the rest, were they in Treblinka?**

Sam: How would I know? Nobody knows.

**Andrew: So, you arrive here, you're nineteen, which means that you landed here '37 or '38?**

Sam: In December '38.

**Andrew: What happened when you arrived here? You're nineteen years old and you know the language when you came here.**

Sam: It wasn't easy.

**Andrew: Did you have a trade from the trade school?**

Sam: Yes – I was a tailor, a *shneyder* - but not an accomplished one. How could I have been accomplished when I was at the apprentice stage? But I was good enough - I was good at everything that I started.

**Andrew: So what happened when you arrived here?**

Sam: That was the shock of my life. You know, there's an old saying- *United you stand, divided you fall*. The family here was so divided it wasn't even funny.

**Andrew: Where were they living, they were in Melbourne?**

Sam: Yes, in Brunswick [a Melbourne suburb]. They had a fox-fur business, processing them for Myers [Melbourne's major department store at the time] - women's collars and muffs. But, as soon as the War started, that stopped gradually because there was the cry – "We don't need that. There's a war, we don't need to worry about that". So as it went down, I was in the middle of "What is he doing here?"

**Andrew: So the family was divided and you ended up in the middle of it. That was something you weren't expecting!**

Sam: It was a real eye-opener and then my sister arrived nine or ten months later.

**Andrew: How old was she when she arrived?**

S: Two years my senior, she was 21. But then, I wish I didn't have to tell you all that, it's not very nice. Then I had to start paying back for the fares because it cost fifty pounds for the passage and a pound was a lot of money then. Compared to today, it would about thirty times more today. Then, you could get a three-course meal for nine pence, ten pence. I found a place and I wasn't very well liked, as if to say, I was just in the middle – "What the hell are you doing here?"

**Andrew: How long did it take you to find a job?**

Sam: My uncle took me to a tailor in Sydney Road, not far from where we lived – a bespoke tailor, a *beshtelte*. He handed me a coat to put a pocket in. Now, a pocket can be put in three or four or five ways - straight, with jets, without jets, with a flap, without, and I did what I thought he wanted. I was good at it - I told you before, whatever I tried I was good at, but it wasn't what he wanted and I couldn't understand him and he didn't understand me

**Andrew: So it didn't work out?**

Sam: It didn't work out. So, I didn't have a job for another two or three days. I got to know some people outside the *Kadimah* [Jewish library and theatre] in Lygon Street.

**Andrew: I'm guessing that any communication would have been in Yiddish as your English wasn't good enough. Have you still got your Yiddish?**

Sam: Yes, it's a bit rusty, but I can still read it.

**Andrew: So you communicated with other Jews in Yiddish?**

Sam: Yes. So this friend of mine had an uncle - their family name was Kaminski He was a little fellow but a perfect tailor. He had a little factory in Bourke House, on the corner of Bourke and Russell Streets [in the downtown area]. It's still there today.

He was also a tailor and was four or five years older than me, so he was more accomplished. He had had an argument, the same thing happened in that family. His uncle's wife, his auntie, was jealous – "What's he doing here? We don't want him. He can't even speak properly."

**Andrew: There was a certain arrogance in the ones who came before.**

Sam: Oh yes, it's still prevalent, but some people sweep it under the carpet.

So I got a job. I forget now - I had so many jobs, I just tried this, I tried that. In Flinders Lane, I was five days a week, eight hours a day and earning, 37 shillings and 6 pence per week. I figured out that I needed get another 2 shilling and 6 pence. I managed to pay a pound for board and a pound for fares. I couldn't think (how I could be) saving enough to send some money home. I knew that they needed it, but I didn't have it. So, having thirty seven and six per week, I thought how can get two and six more?

The boss lived in North Carlton [an inner, very Jewish suburb of Melbourne]. So, one Sunday to the boss and I asked him if it was possible to get another two and six. His reply was, "If you don't like it, find somewhere else!". So I didn't get it.

In the meantime, my friend, whose auntie didn't like him for some reason, gave me a job. After my [main] job, I pressed coats for two pennies per coat. He made beautiful coats, long ladies coats, and I managed to press five coats after my job. So that's ten pence. I thought, if I can make one more I'd have a shilling because, for eleven pence, I can get a three-course meal. Well they couldn't provide something (more).

**Andrew: This is all happening just before the War. When the War broke out and throughout your time as a civilian and in the army during the War, what did you know about what was happening in Czestochowa, generally and specifically, to your family members?**

Sam: Nothing. When the War broke out, I had a cousin who came here two or three years before the War, his name was Krycer. When the War started, this cousin of mine bought a *Herald* [local newspaper] and it said "W A R". I said to him, "What does it say?", to which he replied, "I'll tell you later!". He'd been here for so many years and he still wasn't able to speak, read or write [English].

**Andrew: So, he didn't know what it said either?**

Sam: No, he just wanted to show off. He was a nice fellow. He turned very religious, which kept him going. I mean, being religious - that kept food on the table.

**Andrew: So, right through the War, as a civilian and in the army, you knew nothing about what was going on.**

Sam: No, how could I?

**Andrew: When did you get the first knowledge of what had happened in Czestochowa in**

**particular? Was it when the survivors arrived?**

Sam: Yes. Well, my brother came after, he came in 1948. Others had started arriving in 1946, 1947. In fact, my sister was already here by then and she saw in, for some reason in a Canadian paper, that one of my brothers had survived. The auntie in England made sure that he got from wherever he was to France. I don't know if he spent any days with her and then he got on a plane.

When my sister wrote to me that one of my brothers had survived, I couldn't do a thing because I wasn't here - I was overseas, in the Air Force, in the islands.

**Andrew: So you're telling me that you were here when all these things were happening in Europe under the Nazis**

Sam: After, not while they were happening. People didn't know about what was happening. The papers didn't and, even if they did write [about it], none of us could read it. There was no one to explain it to us, but we knew things weren't good. I was abused by one of my cousins' wives here, why don't I go and fight for my country, as my country had "started the war, being Jewish".

**Andrew: Hold on, this was a Jewish cousin.**

Sam: Yes.

**Andrew: That's crazy!**

Sam: My dear friend, that thing is still prevalent now. In America, they're called greenies [sic - probably means "greenhorns"]. Here, we are called foreigners

**Andrew: But, that's almost like an antisemitic Jew!**

Sam: Right, right! And I only went to their place, my sister and I, when they passed away. We were never invited to their house for tea or coffee

**Andrew: So, you just went for a minyan.**

Sam: Yes.

**Andrew: Let me turn to your military service. As I understand it, there were what were called "Resident Aliens", who were in the army, but they were not put in combatant roles because they weren't Australian citizens. What were they called?**

Sam: The Labour Corps.

**Andrew: Because they weren't Australian citizens, they had permanent residency, so they were put into non-combatant roles. Now, if you were sent overseas in the Air Force, that was a combatant role I assume. Did you become an Australian citizen that quickly?**

Sam: No.

**Andrew: So how, as a non-Australian citizen, did you enlist in a combatant role in the Australian Air Force?**

Sam: First of all you had to pass a very strict test. In order to go into the army, you didn't have to pass any test. As long as you were able to stand up, you were taken. The navy was more or less the same. But the Air Force was very, very strict. You had to be physically perfect. They found something wrong, so I had to go to a doctor, get it fixed and bring a certificate. They found wax in my ears. Well, there was a Dr Stanfield in Carlton [an inner Melbourne suburb], he did it.

**Andrew: Oh, my goodness!**

Sam: So, getting back to being a foreigner in Labour Corps - those people who were not naturalised [citizens], including me, they were taken into a Labour Corps. In those days, the train line between Sydney and Melbourne was different gauges. So those people were employed to get the goods from one train onto the other and that was a big job. Anyone who was not naturalised, not a citizen, was of a certain age, between eighteen up to forty, fifty, was called up - unless you were married, then you were excused. It was in Ripponlea [a suburb of Melbourne]. There was an army depot and I was called up there too.

But prior to that, I had applied to the Air Force. I came on a ship with a certain Dr Goldman. He was a linguist. He spoke twenty-one languages and understood twenty others. He was on the ship with me and we became friends, because I was still nineteen at the time. There was a special night, a gala night, and he brought two pieces of material, different colours and he got me to make him a pair of trousers. I made it and he won a small prize. It so happened, I lived with my sister. Then I left her, because I knew I was going to join up. So I finished up living in the same boarding house as Dr Goldman. It came in handy for me, because they called me up for the Labour Corps. But I had already applied for the Air Force and I knew I had passed. They were very strict – [in a test], I was given two minutes to figure out percentage,  $70.5$  multiplied by  $6.3$  divided by ... etc. Professor Goldman wrote a letter to the Air Board (sic) that I had stood for the Labour Corps and passed, but that I wasn't interested in going there. Within a few days, I got a call-up to the Air Force.

**Andrew: What was your role in the Air Force?**

Sam: First of all, it was study, study, study. First, I went for three weeks familiarisation.

Andrew: Where was that?

Sam: Shepparton [Victorian country town near the New South Wales border]. There were three of us, three Jewish boys, and that was the only time we had three.

**Andrew: There was still a small Jewish community in Shepparton then - the Feiglins). They ran the orchards and there was a small timber shule.**

Sam: Yes, I didn't see it because I didn't have time. We had to keep fit by going on long marches. Fortunately, there were no exams. Then the hard yakka started. ["Yakka" – Australian slang for "hard work"] Sam Wynn, as in Wynnvale Wines, had two sons. I went with him to Shepparton; Sam was some big shot in the Jewish community. I joined up the same as his son David and that was the last time I had a Jewish boy in the same group. Then the hard work started - we went to Adelaide. There was a big hall full of fitters and turners with lathes, machines. There were about forty or fifty - so big.

Oh, prior to that, I must go back just for a moment. When the War started, I was desperate to try and learn a bit of English to know where I am. So, three or four of us decided to go to Melbourne RMIT [Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology]. We got there, put our names down and the lessons lasted, I forget now, two hours, three, whatever. At the end of the lesson, I didn't understand - none of us did. I didn't understand one word. I thought "next week, hopefully, I've got to learn something". The next week, the man turned up in a uniform – "lessons are over".

**Andrew: So where did you learn to speak English?**

Sam: I told them that I went to the RMIT, but that the first time I didn't understand a word and the second time was "lessons finished, the War is on" which means that, along the way, I picked up enough to get by, I must have.



But when we got to Adelaide, I didn't realise what I was applying for. A lot of people applied for things like being on guard duty or as a kitchen hand or mopping floors, whatever. I applied for something and I didn't realise for what.

**Andrew: So, you didn't understand what you were applying. What did you apply for?**

Sam: Motors - aeroplane motors.

**Andrew: As a mechanic?**

Sam: Yes. So the process to go through was so intriguing. On the lathe, they gave you a big piece of steel and said "[make] that shape" – giving me a diagram and a micrometer. It had to be accurate to one thousandth of an inch – it had to be. If that wasn't enough, there were lectures - condensed lectures on about six or seven, eight subjects.

**Andrew: Most of which you wouldn't have understood?**

Sam: I didn't have a hope in the world. But, I wasn't backward in coming forward. I teamed up with two or three boys and I was alive. When I say I was alive, I was a livewire. They enjoyed my company and I enjoyed theirs and so I learned things very quickly - I had to. Would you believe that quite a few, who were born here, failed. I passed. That was it - that was also the beginning of more studies and passing them. I came back to Ascot Vale [inner suburb of Melbourne] and managed to disassemble a six cylinder [engine].

**Andrew: With almost no English, you passed as an aircraft motor mechanic?**

Sam: Not yet – that was the beginning. The beginning meant Ascot Vale. Then there was a posting to Essendon and then to Laverton [both Melbourne airfields at the time]. My first trip as a crew member was from Laverton to Mascot [Sydney airport]. I was already part of the crew and then back to Ascot Vale for a conversion course - two months, three months, I forget now.

**Andrew: I assume that your English was improving all along the way?**

Sam: All the time. I didn't sleep, but then I graduated to take care of regular motors. Then I went to Benalla [Victorian country town]. Benalla had a training school where the boys learned how to fly. Now something interesting happened – I became homesick. I thought, "What am I doing (in this) little place?!" The thing is, I've never forgotten home - all this time, day and night.

**Andrew: About what was happened in Czestochowa?**

Sam: Yes. In fact, I still say *Kaddish* nearly every day - twice a day sometimes. I've done it for the last few years now, because my brother, if he wouldn't have been so religious, would have been ninety-eight years of age.

**Andrew: So, you went all through this training. Let's jump ahead a little bit - you said you served overseas. Tell me about that.**

Sam: Well, after you graduated, they had a pool. The pool was in New South Wales, a big place, huge block of land. It was called Bradfield Park, which was a train station or two past Chatswood [northern suburb of Sydney]. That pool consisted of all trades, observers, pilots, engineers and whatever. There were hundreds of us. That pool supplied all the stations with what was needed.

**Andrew: There was a massive barracks there and that's where you stayed?**

Sam: Yes, but we were just bludging [Australian slang for "not working, being lazy"], because there was nothing to do - just waiting to be called. And then the call came. We boarded a ship in Sydney,

picked up some more troops in Brisbane and we finished up in a place called Morotai -that's Indonesia, the Dutch East Indies in those days. I didn't realise until after the War, that Indonesia consists of over seventeen thousand islands, to be exact, seventeen thousand two hundred.

Then I managed to get tinea - and I got it so badly because the showers. There were hundreds of us on the ship, and the ship was only twelve thousand tons. In the shower, there were little boards to stand on and you had to make it quick. I got tinea so badly - everywhere and I couldn't walk. When the ship docked at the island, I had to carry a rifle, my kit gear and I couldn't walk. It's always hot there and humid - that didn't help.

And all the time, I never heard a thing, no [radio] broadcast - nothing of what was happening in Europe. Nobody was interested. Then I got a letter from my sister. She wrote to me that she saw, in a Canadian paper, that one of our brothers had survived.

**Andrew: Do you remember how far into the War that was? Do you remember roughly what year that would have been?**

Sam: That would have been about 1944. I was in what was called a "Communication Unit". It was the second communication unit - the first one was [in] Essendon. "Communication Unit" meant that if the soldiers occupied an island, we would fly in the big shots and evaluate the situation and get the hell out. So that was the No. 11 Communication Unit

**Andrew: It sounds like a transport system for VIPs, military personnel.**

Sam: Right, you got it!

**Andrew: So, that was your wartime experience. When were you demobbed?**

Sam: I think it was the end of 1945, because I was working in a clothing factory and they were so short-staffed that he [his employer probably] wrote to the Air Board saying that "he's had enough, we need him". So I was discharged December 1945.

**Andrew: That's well after the War finished.**

Sam: After Germany had surrendered, all the generals who represented the nations in the Pacific, met in Melbourne, at Victoria Barracks, to talk about how to knock out the Japanese. I had nowhere to stay. I slept in Gordon House. I wouldn't go to my cousins and my sister. I didn't go to her because she lived in a [single] room - she wasn't married. She made me sleep in her bed and she slept on the floor, so I didn't go to my sister's anymore.

(Sam then shows his orders to "proceed to Melbourne" from Morotai.)

**Andrew: That would have been about a month after Japan had surrendered.**

Sam: No, we were already here when Japan surrendered.

**Andrew: You talked before about the Polish antisemitism as you were growing up and that, throughout the entire War, you didn't know what was happening to your family.**

Sam: No, nobody did.

**Andrew: After everything died down and you got yourself established, did you ever want to go back to Poland to see what had happened?**

Sam: No - too many bad memories. I couldn't take it. I know what you are asking and it is a very good question. But no, it would bring back too many memories, sad memories - no, no way.

**Andrew: Did you get any more information about your family from the Częstochowa Landsmannschaft that was active here in Melbourne?**

Sam: No, only from Czarny. He knew my mother briefly. My brother survived HASAG.

**Andrew: In the munitions factory- HASAG-Pelcery?**

Sam: Yes. If you wanted to survive, you learned things quickly, because you wanted to live, you wanted to be useful.

**Andrew: So, the War finishes, you're demobbed and you're working. When do you meet the love of your life - your wife?**

Sam: I went out with a friend of mine to *Maison de Luxe* [suburban dance-hall] and I saw this girl. Then I heard that she was one of twenty or so Yiddishe-Polish girls from an orphanage.

**Andrew: So when did she come to Australia?**

Sam: She went to New Zealand in 1937. A New Zealand Yiddishe couple ran an orphanage for twenty-one or twenty-two. Their name was Deckston. So she was one of these kids.

**Andrew: You wanted to be supportive?**

Sam: Yes. She didn't have an easy life but she didn't have a bad life either.

**Andrew: So, after the War, when you met her you were working as a tailor?**

Sam: I had a dress shop in Victoria Street Richmond. Originally, there were three of us who started a firm in a factory, a little workroom, in Footscray - then we divided. I finished up with a stall in Dandenong, one in Victoria Market and a shop in Richmond.

**Andrew: So you were selling dresses?**

Sam: Yes, but it was getting too much for me. I couldn't manage. I was tearing myself to pieces. I had nobody to help me, so I just had to let (it) go. I sold it to a Yiddishe fellow. As for my wife, I didn't rely on her to put food on the table. Then I got into taxis.

**Andrew: So you had taxis until you retired? So, I guessing that you've got to know a bit about motors if you had taxis.**

Sam: I had three taxis. I finished up with *Yellow Cabs*.

**Andrew: So you married, you started a business and two sons come along. How long have you lived in this house?**

Sam: Nearly forty years.

**Andrew: Your life after you retired, how do you keep yourself busy?**

Sam: It's not easy and I do get bored. Thanks to my son Colin, I can work the computer a little bit.

**Andrew: How old were you when you stopped working?**

Sam: Ninety-two

Colin (Sam's son): The only reason that he stopped working was because Mum needed more care and he had to be home - she has dementia. That is the only reason that he stopped getting up in the morning and going to work.

**Andrew: So my last question was going to be what is the secret to a long and healthy life? But I**

**think I've already got the answer to that.**

Sam: I wish I could tell you, but I can't. But, if I could, I would pass it on to my sons and to my grandchildren.

**Andrew: You still smoke and you like a whisky.**

Sam: I used to drink a whisky instead of taking sleeping tablets. I thought whisky and water relaxes me and helps me go to sleep.

I love my two sons. But I wonder, have I done enough for this planet? I didn't make a mark, I didn't.

**Andrew. You survived. You brought two sons into the world.**