Arthur was born in 1930 in Warsaw, Poland. He lived with his parents, beloved older sister, Eugenia, and extended family. His middle-class family owned a dry cleaning business and they lived in a mainly Jewish neighbourhood. Soon after the German occupation of Poland, hundreds of thousands of Jews including Arthur’s family were forced to live in the Warsaw ghetto under terribly crowded conditions. The ghetto was set up in the area of the city where Arthur’s family lived, so they didn’t have to move, but life changed drastically. In order to help feed his family, Arthur snuck in and out of the ghetto to trade items for food. On the first day of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1943, Arthur was outside of the ghetto, so he did not know what happened to his family. For the rest of the war he lived under a false identity, posing as a Catholic, moving from place to place, and eventually finding shelter at an orphanage. He participated in the Polish uprising against the Germans in Warsaw and witnessed the Soviet army’s liberation of the city. After the war Arthur learned that his immediate family had been killed, but that his aunt and uncle had survived. With other orphans he travelled to France and considered where to settle, before deciding on Canada in 1948.

“I felt like a traitor to my own people, especially to my family. Yet, life had to go on and I eventually came to a conclusion that saved my sanity: I had a right to live and if conversion enabled me to survive, so be it.”
—ARTHUR NEY