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Dr. Jack Yazer, Citizen Jack Yazer has very few memories of his childhood. When you ask about himself, he tells you about his current ideas, his plans. His mind is on a new hospital • some scheme for worker-ownership of an industry • or an idea that will give young people incentive to drive safely and to live drug-free. His ideas are rooted in today's problems. And, implemented or | not, they have always made us argue and think. None of his ideas bring any return to Jack. He is proud of his ideas and works fiercely to see them through • but they are not his living, only his daily life. So when you ask him about Jack Yazer, it is hard to get him to focus on Jack. Still, we wanted to know, where did he come from? Is it possible to get a hint of what made him an extraordinary combination of a proud and self-less man? In the following conversation, Jack Yazer struggles to recap? ture his childhood in Europe • a terrible time that has left only fragments of memory. Then, with no difficulty, he tells us of his years as a peddler in rural Cape Breton • clearly happy memories. But we haven't got a full portrait of Jack Yazer. We may not have even come close. If what follows doesn't satisfy you, you can try for yourself. Jack will talk to you. But you may have to chase him down the street on his way to meet with high school kids to tell them about his latest plan to encourage less driving accidents, less drugs.... Jack, where were you born?.... Jack Yazer. Sydney: I was born in Poland. Suprasl, near Bialystok. It's a small shtetl. (By shtetl, what do we mean?) A small little village--small country place. Mostly Polish. But then during the (war) it was changing hands a lot--the Polish, then the Germans, and the Russians. You know, it was a spot where it was changing hands. But when I was there it was just Polish, in my time. (Did you think of yourself as a Pole?) No, I always (was) Jewish. Because the Poles didn't let you forget that you were Jewish. It was very, very hard to be a Jew in Poland. It was mostly Poles. And there were I don't know how many Jews. I don't remember too much. But mostly it wasn't Jewish, you know. I can't tell you how many. But now, you see, I don't remember too much of my life when I was young. See, my mother died when I was 5--I saw her dying. And I remember, like, I was telling my wife, Zelda, I was telling her the other day--I saw somebody walking on stilts. I said, "Gee, I remember now, when we were kids, we used to walk on (stilts), and then we used to go in the firemen's place to get an apple from the tree." You know, I remember that, how we used to walk. But I don't know much more about it. I just happened to see that--yeah, that just hit me. I used to play soccer, when I was a kid. But all I remember (is) one particular game. Because it was Rosh Hashanah, and I was supposed to be home. My father was alone, and I was supposed to be helping home, whatever it was. But the game was on, you know. And then it was time for me home. And I remember the kids saying, "There comes your father," And I remember running home. And we had, like, in the porch there was a stairway. And I hid myself in the stairway. And I--kicked me, you know, took me. I remember that part--I remember the game. But I don't remember any other games. Like school, I don't remember very much. I



remember we had a high-peaked cap--navy blue with white stripe, and the grade school (name written) on it. And I can just see that. But I don't remember a thing about my class. I remember there was a high fence, maybe 12 feet or 14 feet, right around the school. And you had to go to this gate you were going through, and they gave us an opening. And as soon as you get out there, they throw the stones at you, you know. "You damn Jew, you!" you know. So I remember things like that. Those are things just--you know. But I don't remem-