

So you went to Kraków.

We went to Kraków. And there was a big house for the camp people, concentration camp people. What were there organized from the joint or something.

Joint distribution.

Yeah. And I got there-- I came there with the people who lived before the war on Kraków two sisters. They went home. They had their home. And I went to that place where they organized for the concentration people. And I got a bunch of straw, that was my bed, and some bread. And then the following day, I had to go upstairs where they registered people who were left, who survived. And there were list who survived, they were in other camps, that they are looking for family for survivors.

I went down to look for survivors of my family. I didn't find no one. Nobody survived. So I was-- I didn't know what to do with myself. Who belongs to me in the and where do I belong? I wanted to commit suicide. Because it's no use-- no money, no place, no family, no-- what's the use to continue living? But I went to register. Maybe, maybe somebody will look for me.

So by coincidence, across from me where I was registering, a man was there. I was from Ryki, and he was from Zelechów that's 12 kilometer from Ryki. And he heard that I am from Ryki, it was like family. So he came to me, and he asked me all kinds of questions. And my aunt, my mother's sister, married during the war to Zelechów to a man. But I told them that, he said I went to cheder with him. [? Shlomo ?] pass. And so we continued seeing each other, and it was like I found somebody. And know that you know we went out and we met every time we went to-- they gave us to eat, and he had friends on the same floor that I was sleeping.

So he came to me, and talked to me, then asked me, would you marry me? I said what? I don't love you, I don't know you. So I said I'm going to ask if I had among the eight women what I was together after the liberation, was an elderly woman from Warsaw, but she knew English too. I told you about it.

And, I said I'm going to ask that elderly woman what I should do. I know the man only two weeks, and he asked me to marry him. She said what? You remain here in Kraków, you take a Gentile boy, you will have a ready made home and you have a future. I was crying, I started to cry.

My mother wouldn't give me that answer, that advice. So he saw me crying, he came to me. Why are crying? And I told him. He said I told you you should ask me, and that I should ask him if I should marry. And finally, a week later we got married. And we made papers to go to Germany. Germany was the-- it meant like a waiting room for emigration either to Palestine or to Israel or to America.

We made papers, and we went to Prague. We were in Prague, we were-- it wasn't that easy to travel then, because it was the papers weren't real, it was paid for them, and they were they weren't the real truth what we write. So we stopped in Prague and we were there. There was also a house where all the-- from concentration camp a war there. And they gave food, and they gave where to sleep.

And Meanwhile my husband got sick, he was in the hospital. And he was there for a week, then he left his ration card when it was rationing then. And we had to live on one card. From my card we both had to live. But for cabbage and potatoes, you could buy then. You went into a restaurant and you said, Bradbury, that was potatoes and cabbage that get-- that for money we got some money from when you came. They will give you some money to buy something to eat. and that was like a week. It was like this, then we went to Germany.

We traveled to Germany, from Prague to Germany. And the traveling was also like the cattle wagons. It was-- but anyway we came to Landsberg am Lech that was in Germany. And we-- the Joint took us in there, gave us a room. And we were there, then they organized-- we made friends and they organized a partisan kibbutz.

We were there for five years. No we were working each day and another woman was cooking, and was a kibbutz. We were all together. It was a house given to us, and my husband wanted to go to Israel. And I was reluctant to go, because I said I'm so hungry. And that time was not so good in Israel, It was hungry too. It was a bad time. It was the war and this.

But we can't go to America because we don't have no family. That time, if you had family, they brought you over to America. And meanwhile, I became pregnant. And I had a little girl there. And after six months, the girl took sick, she had leukemia. And she was in the hospital for eight months and died. It wasn't full my cup, with sorrows weren't full.

So after that came out that the Joint brings out people to America. We have to register. So they registered and we-- it took us a long time to go through all the doctors and this that made very much difficult to pass the doctors. That laid off for six months and eight months. Finally, in 1950, in March, we went to Bremerhaven, and we with the boat for two weeks. We traveled, we came to New York.

In New York, was an overflow of refugees that time, in 1950. Being that we didn't have no children, they send us to South, to New Orleans. So traveling with the boat, we came to New York and I saw everybody was-- had family, what we did for them, and parents, sisters, brothers.

For me nobody waited. I was crying. I couldn't help myself. Here come to a strange country-- nobody, who am I and who was mine. I was crying so did the woman from the Joint She was eating an apple and came to me and said, child, mine why are you crying? I said, I don't have nobody. Everybody has to look for what people waiting for, parents, sisters, brothers. Nobody waits for me. She says child, mine whole America is waiting for you. I started to the crying more.

But anyway we were-- they put us on the train to go to New Orleans. We were traveling on the train and people saw refugees on the train. They wanted to give me an apple, they wanted to treat me but I was sitting by the window and looked out that I was-- I didn't know what they talking to me. I didn't know the language, I didn't talk-- I said that I don't want anything.

So later on a woman came to me and she said if somebody offers to you something, you don't say no. You take it and say thank you. So then the men, probably he was complaining to that woman, look at those refugees, they don't want it, they had no help. I had wanted to give him something. So later on he came to me and gave me an apple and a piece of cake. So I took it and said, thank you. Because now I see it wasn't polite, but I couldn't help myself.

So we came-- we are passing by from New York to New Orleans. There are such that time were on the way a little shacks, and colored people around with--

The shanties here.

I said why are they're sending us to a jungle? I was afraid. I never saw a colored person on my life. So they can became a midnight in New Orleans in the-- then from the joint there, they waited for us, and they put us in a hotel, and they gave us some money for breakfast in the morning.

It's obvious, first of all, we took a bath and we went to sleep. We got up. How do we say we want breakfast? How do we go to look for breakfast?

And no English at that time.

No English whatsoever. We came out, it was another man with us. And we were looking for a restaurant there no people. Can you find a restaurant in the morning for breakfast with no people. We were looking-- he has too many people, Here, I don't know. We look maybe for an hour till we find.

Finally, we went into a restaurant and my husband showed with the finger-- somebody took a breakfast. So we showed that we want like this. so he gave us breakfast. We went to pay, then my husband said, he should write down so we

know. We paid them. Then we wanted to take out for lunch, we should eat in the hotel that we shouldn't go through the same thing for breakfast.

Somebody came in from a factory and took out-- for lunch, orders, and we showed him that we want like this. And we took breakfast, we went home. I mean, we took the lunch, and we ate there. we were in the hotel like one month, no, two weeks, then we found an apartment. And they took my husband for a-- first for IQ test. So he took him to the-- where did they take him? To the Y. And they took IQ test, and he said you look good. In Yiddish, you say-- it says [SPEAKING YIDDISH]

You look good. That was [INAUDIBLE] That IQ, we didn't know what the IQ is that we-- Anyway, he found him my job in a song machine place. He was-- later on he was the one mechanic over the whole state of Louisiana. Pfaff machine, the German machine.

The German sewing machines.

Yes, sewing machines. And he was good, and after a year, I had my Stewart. Stewart was born after a year. Of course, I said, I don't want-- I want a piece of bread and water, but I want to have a child. Because after the child had died, I was very heartbroken. It was my mother's name.

And so Stewart was born. So he got the raise, \$4.50. So he made altogether like \$30 a week. And the apartment cost \$35 a month and so it wasn't bad. We managed. And we lived by a German woman. And when Stewart was small, he was crawling, playing. So one day he was sick and she didn't hear him. So she rang the bell. I lived upstairs. She said, what happened with Stewart? I said, he's sick. I don't hear his footsteps. This is music to my ears. I thought she would be miserable. So she was very good to us, very good.

And later on, we met friends there, also refugees.

By this time you spoke English pretty well?

Not yet.

Oh, you were still--

It's a year--

It's always in Yiddish.

And we met the people what they came -- We came Pesach time and they came Sukkos before, a half year. So we became friends and we work, we came together, we were very friendly with the [? chatter ?] because she was yearning for friends and neighbors because, being that no families, you have to make good with friends.

Sure.

And-- but that friend, she had a father in Germany, Munich living. So she went to Munich for a visit. And so meanwhile, he was working. He wanted to move. He wanted to move to this part of the country to Newark because he had family here. My friend. So they moved here, and we continue a friendship writing. Then they said, come over here because here if anybody can make a living, you will be better off here.

So my husband was fired at the same time by the German Pfaff machine. Because German came and they took over the store, they fired all the Jews. So it was a good occasion to move. So we move to Newark, we came to Newark, but I'm rushing. We lived there for six years. After Stewart was born, I went also to work. I was working in a factory where they blocked their lenses for the war. [? Their ?] [? lookers. ?] So I was working. So my husband was working in daytime and I was working at night. Til midnight. From 4:00 to 12:00.

So I never saw so my husband the whole week because I was working and he was still at work. I took a babysitter for two hours till my husband came. And he came in to neighbors and asking, do you know how my wife is? Anyway, we were there for six years. And meanwhile, my Stewart developed asthma. And there is a very wet climate. You could watch the respiration coming out of them. So I thought maybe I'll move. He'll get better.

So when he was fired from the job, that was the occasion for him looking for a job here, and for him to get better. But Newark wasn't a better climate than New Orleans. When I came to Newark, I went to a St. Michael's Hospital in Newark. And I met there a doctor from New Orleans. And I told them the story about Stewart that he has asthma and he said, you couldn't find a better place than Newark? Because here is also not so good.

Anyway, we came to Newark and my husband was looking for a job. He was working in a [? doll ?] factory. So I was working in [? Suez ?] bakery. Did you hear? No. I was working in a bakery. While he was working at night, I was working

Day.

Day. Then he found the job by knitting, in a knitting factory. So he was working in daytime. So I said I can't work at night so I went to my boss and told him that I have to change to work in the evening or part time. So he said, I took a long time to teach you and this and that and now you're going to quit? All refugees should have been-- Hitler should have killed them all.

I said, why? Because I want to change the hours? I have a little boy and I don't have anywhere to-- my mother doesn't live-- I should give him to watch the baby. I have to change accordingly how my husband works. He works day time, I want to in the evening. Anyway, that's why I stopped working. And I was with my baby, and I wanted to send him to Hebrew school. At that time, was on Clinton Avenue was the Yeshiva, Daytime Yeshiva.

I went there and I wanted him to register for school. Because I told him that my father would want-- I should raise my child and give him a Jewish education. And I told them I'm going to look for a job and pay as much as I can. So he said, I'm not your babysitter. We are not your babysitters. I sent him to public school. As he went to Peshine Avenue school, then he went to Hawthorne Avenue school, and he was a very good student. At seven years, I sent him to Talmund Torah. And we moved to [PLACE NAME] You don't know Newark.

Not as well as that.

So he went to-- then I moved to [? Lyons ?] Avenue, and I sent him to Talmund Torah and Young Israel Shul. It was on Lyons Avenue, Rabbi Siegel was then their rabbi. Anyway, he was a very good student, and he was-- in the junior congregation, he was the hazan he was very good.

Then I had my second son, Carl. So him I sent right away to Yeshiva to HYA. So he's religious, and he is not. Stewart is not. So we left Lyons Avenue, he went to it was then Young Israel, the yeshiva, and later on, we sold the house and we moved. We moved to-- where did we move? To Peyton Place. It's also Newark, near Houghton Avenue. And in a few, -- later we moved to Hillside, and we moved to Broadway. And on Broadway, my husband died. In 1974, my husband died. Carl was then 14 years old.

So I was working.

What did he die of?

Heart attack. I soon go to work on a Monday. It was February 4th. And it was then so cold, and I was working in a factory where they make the trains the tracks, toy trains, and when I came home I found him dead. So after I ask when I was sitting shiva I asked the rabbi why. Cause we didn't live yet. All this time, the struggle to raise the children, to make ends meet, and then it comes to get up nachas There is no answer for that.

After two years, the administrator from the [INAUDIBLE] yeshiva, he told my Carl, ask your mother to call me. So I

thought that he wants to raise the tuition. So I called him up. He said I want to meet you. So I said I'm working. He went home like 4:30 and I'm working until 5:30. He said, I'll wait for you. So I went to pick up Carl. I went a little early and I went in to him and he introduced me to my husband, Naftali.

I didn't think-- it didn't dawn on me that I'll remarry, but I said I'm going to ask my children. I ask Carl what do you say, if I should remarry? He says, I thought that I'm going to take care of you. I'll build the house and you have your own, like a mother and son house. And I said, OK. You now say you want to support me too, but what about when you get married? A daughter-in-law don't like, a mother-in-law should be around.

OK. Then he says he was president of NCSY. You know the organization? So he says, when I'll go to a convention, at least you won't be left alone because he felt sorry that when he goes away I'm all alone. And I ask Stewart. He said, yeah. Why not? It's good for you and this. He was-- they agreed.

So I went to Israel, meanwhile, I spent six weeks there, and I met Naftali's sisters. When we came back, we got married. And we live happily ever after. I hope.

And you had two children with Naftali. This is Naftali's children with his previous wife.

Oh, his previous wife.

Yeah.

Oh, that's right.

With his previous wife. He had two children, and I have two children.

Yeah.

He has two children. So we had to make two homes into one. We moved in two weeks before Pesach to that house where we live now, and we got married in March 21st, 1976.

I see. So you're really newlyweds now.

Yeah, 14 years.

Yeah.

And we made two houses into one, and thank God. I hope no regrets from either part. The children can [INAUDIBLE] the youngest of Naftali's getting married September 2nd. And the first one is expecting a baby. And we're going to be very happy. I'm very happy for him, and for ourselves. We're very happy.

Have you spoken much with your children about your experiences in the war, in the Holocaust?

Not-- in little short ways like just coincidence too I brought out something that what I went through, but not like I told here the story. The whole story they don't know because they were always-- When you're younger, you don't have that much time to spend-- I was working and I don't didn't have any help whatsoever. So I was very busy, but I think I was a very good mother to them because the love is-- it got stronger since their father died. The love for us and for the brothers together, it's very strong.

Now my Stewart is a health economist. He's working for the government in Washington. He's married and his wife is also environmental economist. And Carl is finishing a third year residency in ophthalmology in Chicago, and starting a fellowship in Michigan of pediatric ophthalmology.

Do you have grandchildren?

Not yet. They want to keep me young.

That's right.

They don't have time. They're so busy, and they're very workaholics. My daughter-in-law and son, they're very good workers. You can hardly find workers like this. When they undertake a job, they have to finish it the way they think is right. And people are happy with it. He gets rewards for that.

And so your life is now more settled and--

Yes. I only--

--you have family.

Yes, we are-- I think we are happy. I can't speak for Naftali.

He looks OK.

Yes, they are very happy. We are very happy. The children are practically-- you know when I took over the family, the younger one was 12, and the older one was 14. So--

Not an easy age.

No. It wasn't easy, but we made it.

Thank you very much for coming in and sharing your story.

You're welcome. It was a short story according to others, but it's a story nevertheless.

Yeah. It isn't the length of the story that's important. Thank you.

You're welcome.

Because when you sit down after such a march, you can get up. But we walked and walked. We walked through fields, and it was in the spring so the people-- in the fields were already potatoes planted. So people were hungry. They bent down to dig out a piece of potato so they shot them and they were remaining like this with a hand in the dirt. They were shot.

And we passed by houses and people had pity on us. They wanted to give us water. The SS didn't let them give us water. We had [INAUDIBLE] we had to march. And whoever didn't march in the speed were shot. But then we came to a point that they said, we're going to rest here overnight. We're going to rest here overnight, and everybody went into the barn. It was fresh hay crop so we laid down, and everybody fell asleep because we were tired.

By 12 o'clock, they came and we have to go. We have to go again. So everybody said, we're not going. Do with us what you want, because we can't. The feet gave up, hungry we are, we don't have anywhere to go, do whatever you want. 10 girls went with them. And they fired around the barn where we were remaining, and they left. Then we heard shots. They shot those 10 girls who went with them. They shot them.

And we went in the morning-- it was like 5 o'clock in the morning, we hear voices that how to say it? They said in Russian, [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH] The Russians are here, and that they shouldn't be afraid. And so we went out, and two motorcycles came [? with ?] the Russians. And they said that more are coming, you are free. You don't have to be afraid anymore.

And so we went to the other side of Elbe and they organized that each farmer takes eight girls. Each farmer took girls and they gave us [? their ?] [? attic. ?] Took straw and made beds for us, and brought up a loaf of bread like from 20 kilo. A big, big bread that they bake themselves. And with soup, and jam, and milk.

While they [? picked ?] stops that we should eat, one [? outfit ?] came with American soldiers. So we had the, among us, was one girl from Warsaw, she knew English. And she went out to them and spoke to them. And we all were run down, and now a couple girls were there remaining on the attic. When we came up, the bread was gone, everything was gone. Those two ate everything. And so they had to bring more for us, but those two girls got sick, very sick, and they died.

So the Americans said, if you need anything, come, we have an office there and there, on the neighboring town, but we never saw them again. Russians came. And the Russians came, and they said that the girls should take up their bedrooms, the Germans bedrooms, and let them go on the attic. So they gave us two bedrooms, and with two beds and they each share a room so two of us in a bed.

And they gave us, the Russians gave an order that they should give us what our heart desires. Because of them, we look like this. I was 70 pounds. Can you imagine? 70 pounds. So they gave us-- they cooked three meals a day, they gave us whatever we wanted. After five weeks, we had to go back to wherever we came from. Like to Poland, mostly were from Poland.

To be repatriated.

Yes, because they said that while we are there, they cannot transport from Germany anything. They cannot take like cows because they have to support these people from camp. So we went to the train. In the trains, inside were soldiers. How do girls go [INAUDIBLE] just. So we went up to the roof of the train, and we were traveling. Each time when they stopped, we went down first before they went out from the inside the train, and we hid in a ruin from the bombard the houses. And we ate something, and then we went up again on the roof. When it came a tunnel, we had to stretch out, and we came to Kraków.

I'm going to stop you at this point because we want to change the tape.

OK.

So we'll continue from here.