

We'll continue now with our interview of Mrs. Edith Farben. And I think we'd like to know a little bit more about what happened after your reunion with your mother back then.

Well, after I met my mother and my brother, of course, we were very happy because we already were a little family. At least we had someone. I considered myself, and I was considered by everybody, very lucky to have a mother. And we stayed in Bratislava for about a week or so together. Then we started out for home.

And again, the train would run a few kilometers, stop, and took us a long time. We stopped in Budapest for a couple of days. And we headed home. Of course, when we got home, our house was occupied by one of our neighbors. There was no place to stay.

Didn't find anybody. We knew already that my father had died, and my sister had died. My mother's sister was with us. And incidentally, she was married before the war. And she found her husband when she came home. He was home.

How were you able to eat and to just get by from day to day at this time?

Oh, they had kitchens in every big city. Schools were set up to sleep. And they had, what do you call, community, whatever. You went to these certain places to eat. I think it was run by UJA or something like that. But every big city had that.

Relief agencies?

Yeah.

Was UNRRA involved in your--

Yes. Yeah. And then there was nothing for us to do in Polana, so we went to Mukachevo. And over there, we met what turned out to be later my husband. We knew him before, and he had a wife, and he had children. And he had a couple of houses. And one of his homes was empty, and he offered it to us.

So my aunt went with her husband. And my brother, my mother, and I went, stayed at my husband's home. And then in October, I married him. Sometime that winter, we got a message from my brother, the one that was here in the United States, that he is in Czechoslovakia, and he's looking for us. He couldn't come to Mukach because it was occupied by the Russians, and he was an American soldier.

So my brother and I decided to go to see him. My husband wanted to stay where he was. So did my mother. But my brother and I didn't, so we made up, we are going to see him, and then we are not going to come back, and they'll have to come and join us. So we did. We had to go across borders during the night.

And we went, and we found my brother. And we sent my husband and my mother a message that they should pack up and come join us. First, they didn't want to. Then my brother went back and brought them back to-- we were in Teplice-Sanov. That was in Czechoslovakia. We stayed there through the winter.

And in the spring, we went to Germany to Wasserburg. That was a displaced persons camp before the war. It was a hospital for mentally retarded people. And then my brother came back to the United States to send papers for my mother. In January of '47, my mother came to this country. And we followed in July.

When she came, did she stay with your other brother?

No. My brother was single. Well, now, at the time, he was married already. No, she stayed with one of her sisters. My mother had three sisters and two brothers here. So she stayed with one of her sisters.

So we came here, and we rented an apartment. We got something from here, something from there, a bed, a table, and

stuff like that. And we both started working. And my mother came to live with us. So did my brother. And little by little, we made enough to live on.

We worked very hard. But we didn't complain because we felt that we're free. We never went to any of the agencies for any help, never. My husband was a very proud man, and he said, as long as I'm alive, and I can, I don't want anybody to give me anything.

What kind of work did you do, and what kind of work did he do?

Well, I worked in a dress factory.

Dress factory?

And my husband, when we first came here, he was hired by someone in a lumber factory to cut lumber. Happened to be very nice people, very nice. He had a very nice boss. Health-wise, we weren't doing well because to live the way we lived, and then suddenly-- when my husband started to work, his hands and his feet were swelling. He couldn't stand on his feet. That's how they were swollen.

But his boss was a very, very nice man. He sent him to his doctor. He took somebody off the production line, gave him the keys to his car, sent him to his doctor. The doctor gave him medicine and whatnot and told him to be off his feet for a few days. He paid him. He gave him suits. He was very, very nice to my husband.

And then after a while, he got a job in Ronson cigarette lighter factory. My uncle knew someone that worked there, and through him, my husband got a job there. And I worked in a dress factory. And in 1948, my daughter was born. And I went back to work. My mother was with my daughter.

So we were a family. And then in 1952, my husband bought a business, a candy store. So I quit my job, and we worked very hard. We worked hard and got on our feet financially. And in 1953, I had a little boy. I had him for 3 and 1/2 years, and then he died.

Then my brother got sick, and he died. My mother has suffered a lot. She lost her husband, a daughter, a son, a grandson, and she really has suffered a lot.

And then in 1970, she remarried, but for a very short time. Up until then, she lived with me. And after that, when she got married, she moved out. And she's living on her own now, but just a block away from me. She lives right on Mickey Avenue, at the Mickey Village. And if you know where the ACME is, I live right in back of the ACME. So when I go to my mother, I just walk through the ACME lot.

And that's how our lives shaped up. And we tried to do the best. My husband died in 1980. I have three grandchildren.

I want to tell you a little bit about my mother's experience in camp. After we were separated, as I said before, I went to camp, and I worked. When my mother was shipped from Auschwitz, it was already when they were liquidating there because the Russians were very close.

They shipped them to Mauthausen; first to Bergen-Belsen, Venusberg, Mauthausen. They were filthy. They were hungry. They were diseased. My aunt had an infection in her hand here. That's Irene's mother. It was so bad that a red stripe was going on her right hand. A red stripe was going up her arm. It was--

Following the veins.

--blood--

Blood poisoning.

--poisoning. And you can't even show it to anybody because right away, it's death. My mother found a potato in the field, as they were on a train for 16 days. They let them out, I don't know, twice, I think, in the 16 days. They gave them water twice or three times and a piece of bread once. Every morning, they would open up the cars and take out the bodies.

They were in the field when they let them out, and my mother found a potato. So her first instinct was to eat it. Then she decided, no, she can't eat that potato because her sister needs it to get the--

Poison?

--infection out of her hand. So she was cutting tiny little, very thin slices, and kept it on her hand, and tore a piece of her dress. And she urinated on it and put the compress on. And believe it or not, she healed it with that.

How did she know to do that?

I guess it was the old--

Folk medicine? --folk medicine. And she healed it. If we would do it today, we would think we'd die. And then they were walking. And the people had diarrhea. They were sick. As soon as they stopped, they were shot.

And as they're working, and my mother sees a German soldier, one of the SS, one of their guards, standing there eating bread, cutting it with a knife and eating it, and my mother said to her sister, I'm going to ask him for a piece of bread.

And they also kind of figured that the war is ending because they were transferred from one camp to the other. They were walking. They were riding all different ways. They figured the war has ended, is going to be ended soon. So my aunt said to my mother, sure, you survived until now. Just in case, if we can survive this, make sure that you get killed. Don't do it.

And my mother went to him, and she said to him, would you please-- in German-- give me a piece of bread? He looks at her, and he says, you dumb cow. Why didn't you ask me before? I only have this little piece. And he gave it to her. So my mother, of course, shared it with her sister. Every time the subject comes up, my mother said she felt that bread in the tips of her fingers and the tips of her toes, one bite, because one bite went to her sister.

My aunt almost died because she was sick. But thank God they're here.

Can you see any meaning or pattern in all the things that have happened to you that brought you here? Does it make any sense?

No. Like a lot of people say, how? What? I think it was just faith. It was just faith. One survived. The other didn't. There were stronger people than I, and they didn't survive it.

Physically stronger?

Physically stronger, like before camp. I knew women in our little town that were big and strong, and they didn't survive it. And I did. And then again, who knows? I guess I'm a faithfulist. I believe in faith. It happened. Whether it's right or wrong, that's my belief.

And you're here to tell about it.

Yeah.

Thank you.

And the reason I wanted to talk about it, because I would hope to God that it never happens again. And it should never

be forgotten. It's painful to talk about it, but I'm glad I can do it because I wouldn't want-- and not just Jewish people. I wouldn't want any kind of people to have to go through that kind of-- when we came to this country, those days, there was quite a bit of discrimination against the colored.

At the time, they still had to be in the back of the bus in the South and all that. We couldn't see it. We really couldn't see it because we just felt-- we know what it's like to be discriminated against. And it shouldn't be. No matter what, it shouldn't be. People should not be discriminated against, killed for what they are, or anything like that.

We've had a great lesson in that.

Thank you, Mrs. Farben. We appreciate all you've done, and good afternoon.

Thank you.

Thank you very much.

[MUSIC PLAYING]