

This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Rina Frankel on October 23, 2017 in Shaker Heights, Ohio. Thank you very, very much, Mrs. Frankel, for agreeing to speak with us today. As I have said off camera, we're going to start your story from the very beginning and talk a lot about your pre-war life and that of your family. And from there, we'll build on to your experiences.

So my very first question is, can you tell me the date of your birth?

Yes. I was born June 26, 1934.

Where were you born? I was born in a little town, a shtetl, called Zarszyn.

Zarszyn.

Zarszyn. And it is in Galicia, the eastern part of Poland.

Can you spell Zarszyn for us?

Yes. Z-A-R-S-Z-Y-N.

OK. What was your name at birth?

My name at birth was Ryzia--

Ryzia?

R-Y-Z-I-A. But when I came to Israel many years later, I was rechristened. The Israelis could not pronounce Ryzia.

OK.

And even when we were Russia, I became Rosya and Roshi and all kinds of names. They could not quite grasp it. So when I came to Israel, I felt I wanted a change of name. And a cousin of ours, a distant cousin, who's a poet and came over one night and he started telling me different names, and I liked the name Rina. And from then on, I became Rina--

Rina. Is Ryzia a diminutive of something?

No. I guess I was named after an aunt, a great aunt. Polish--

Is it a Polish name?

Yes.

And it's also a Yiddish name?

Yes.

OK, OK. And your last name at birth?

My last name, my maiden name--

Yes.

Is Barth-- B-A-R-T-H-- which isn't really a typical Polish name.

No.

I understand ancestors came through France. And that's how the name continued.

OK. Yes, it could easily be a German name, a German surname. All right, so Zarszyn was your shtetl that you were born in. Can you tell me about how many people Zarszyn had?

Yes, of course, I learned this--

Later--

Later from my family. Zarszyn had 1,100 inhabitants--

Small.

And 400 of those were Jews. We had one synagogue that my father was instrumental in helping build. And one of my grandfathers, my mother's father, was the rabbi in that little town. He was also the shochet, and he was the mohel. He was everything because it was a small town.

Tell us for those people who don't know, what is a shochet? And what is the mohel?

A shochet is the person who has the authority to kill kosher, because there is a special way when animals are killed-- chickens or any other animals-- not to make them suffer. It's a very sharp knife is used. And they slit the throat quickly so the animal doesn't suffer. And there is special training for that. And my grandfather was trained. A mohel is the one who circumcises Jewish boys at the age of eight days.

OK. Let's talk a little bit about your family. Did you have brothers and sisters?

I had two sisters. Our families were related. The Barth family and the Leibowicz family, which was my mother's family, were cousins. So my mother married a second cousin. And it was a love story, which wasn't usual for that time among Jewish people. Usually they were paired up through their parents, and so forth--

Arranged--

But since they used to know each other and see each other, they fell in love very, very young. And my mother was actually three years older than my father. And my grandfather also used to teach young boys. We did not have a yeshiva, a higher Jewish learning place. So he used to teach students in his home.

And, of course, once my mother became of age, they started suggesting different young men for her to marry. But she refused everybody. And nobody knew why. And then when they finally discovered that the two of them were in love, my other grandparents wanted to send away my father, because they felt he was too young to marry. But in any case, they married. My mother was 23, and he was 20 years old.

Well, that's a lovely story.

Yeah.

It's very nice to know that this could happen and that eventually tradition allowed it.

Right.

Tell me what was your mother's full name then.

My mother's name was Miriam. And as far as I know she only had the one name. And her last name was Leibowicz.

And then became Barth.

And then became Barth.

And your father's name?

My father's name was Hersh.

Hersh. Mm-hmm.

And he had a middle name, a Hebrew name, Hersh Dov.

Dov. Barth.

Yes.

Do you know what years both of them were born?

Yes. My mother was born at the turn of the century. And my father was born in 1903.

OK. And both of them from Zarszyn?

Yes.

And were the families all from Zarszyn for several generations?

Well, my mother's grandfather lived in another small town. It was called Nowotaniec.

Nowotaniec?

Yes.

OK.

But I think that already my grandfather's father moved to Zarszyn.

OK, so for all intents and purposes, within living memory, if we talk about that being a few generations, you know, one, two, three generations, it was Zarszyn based.

It was Zarszyn, yes.

OK. What were the names of your sisters.

It was Hannah

Hannah.

And Bluma.

And were they older or younger?

Older. I was the baby of the family.

And Hannah and Bluma, when were they born?

Hannah was born in 1925, January 21. And Bluma was actually born on my birthday, June 26, eight years older than myself.

So that--

Hannah was nine 9 and 1/2 years older when I was eight years older.

So that would have been-- she would have been 1926 or '27?

Seven.

She would have been '27, born in 1927, June--

26th.

26th. Got It. OK. So you really were the baby of the family.

I was.

OK. And was your family very religious?

Yes, they were quite observant. My father was, today you would probably term him, a modern Orthodox, because he was well traveled for that time. He used to travel to Germany, to Czechoslovakia. We had a little store, and he would go on shopping trips to order different materials. He spoke German. He spoke very well Polish, which wasn't the case for all the Jews. He was actually the only Jew in our town that was a representative on the town council.

Oh, really?

Yes. And his dress was modern, except for holidays when he would dress like his father. But he had a little beard. It was trimmed. It was not-- because the very Orthodox Jews will not trim down beards. His beard was trimmed. And he was in business. We had a little store.

OK, tell me about it. Tell me about the store.

The store carried mostly food items. Of course, no refrigeration. They used to keep everything in the cellar. And this I actually remember. We had an opening in the store where a door would come up, or part of the floor would come up. And there were stairs. And they would go down, like butter was kept downstairs because it was cooler. And--

Did you have ice down there to keep it cool?

They had ice. They had ice. But obviously no refrigeration. And the store became like a gathering place. People would come and discuss politics, read the papers because we would get newspapers into the store. And this I even recall, being people, there were always people around my father discussing things.

And what was the name of the store?

Oh, it had no name.

Oh, it had no name.

I don't think so.

So it wasn't like Barth's Supermarket?

I don't think so. I never heard of a name.

Do you remember the street it was on?

No, because in this little town there were no-- I don't think there were names. There was a main street. And that's where--

And it was on the main street?

Yeah.

OK. Was it in the center of town?

Yes. We lived in the same building. And actually, the building was a two-family house. And the second half was occupied by a Gentile family, by a Christian family.

Tell me a little bit-- I have questions on all of that. Let's start with the easy ones that are factual and if you can remember them, such as the construction. Was it wooden? Was it a stone?

Wooden. I actually have a picture--

Oh, you do--

Of my grandfather's house, which was very similar.

OK. So it was a wooden house. Was built in the 19th century or do you think was it a modern house?

I'm quite sure it was built in the 19th century, though I don't know that for a fact.

OK, now as far as conveniences, did it have indoor plumbing?

Yes.

Did it have indoor, let's say, toilet and bath facilities?

I don't recall bath facilities per se, like a bathtub. I remember the kitchen better.

Tell me about it.

The kitchen has a very large oven, a freestanding, really big oven, I remember, with a big--

Pipe--

Pipe going up the ceiling. And I remember a dining room and a bedroom. But I do not recall a bathtub. As a matter of fact, I think I remember a portable tub.

But your mother didn't have to go out to a well to get water? She could turn on a spigot.

We had water, yes.

What about electricity?

There was electricity.

OK.

There was electricity.

How did you heat the house?

I think by coal.

Do you remember these coal ovens that many people would have that had decorative tiles sometimes in the corner?

I don't think we had that. I do not recall. You have to remember that I was five years old when I left that home. So--

I know, these questions are impossible. But the purpose of them is to try and paint a picture with words of what this life was like, what the world was like beforehand.

I know my mother used to tell me when I was a baby and she was busy, she used to put me out in front of the store in the buggy. And relatives or friends would come by, and they would take me for a walk or whatever. You know, these were times when people were not afraid that somebody will steal their baby. And I guess I was a pretty cute baby in its time. So people used to like to stop and play with me and so forth. And it gave her extra time, because she worked in the store. My mother was always the business woman, though the business was a very small business. But she was more than the working mother.

Well, that's a lot to have, both the household and working in the store.

Yes.

Did your sisters help out or were they too young to do so?

My older sister helped out. But I remember mostly afterwards what she did.

OK, we'll come to that. Tell me a little bit about-- OK, first question, your parents' education, you said that your father spoke several languages.

Yes.

He spoke Polish. He spoke Yiddish, yes?

Yes, and he spoke German.

Did he speak any Russian?

I don't think so.

Was Zarszyn part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire?

Probably. Yes.

OK, so it would be the part of Poland that Austro-Hungary had taken. All right, what about your mother? What kind of education had she received?

My mother had a very short education, because her mother, my grandmother, was not a well person. I learned years later that she was diabetic. And in those years, you know, there wasn't much to treat her. She was very often ill. And, of

course, she had children, many children. And my mother was taken out of the school after sixth grade--

Oh, dear--

To help out. But my mother was self-taught. And years later, she was proficient in Hebrew, English, also German. She was a voracious reader. She read enormous amount of books and could repeat them. She had a phenomenal memory. If you ask her about something, she would tell you the entire book by heart, she remembered. And she was really self-taught--

That's very impressive--

But as a teenager, she, from what I understand, was needed at home.

Did she have brothers and sisters?

She had brothers and sisters. She lost one brother in the Holocaust. One brother made his way through Romania to Palestine by 1940. And one brother ended up also in Russia, in Kazakhstan.

So do you know these names of these uncles?

Yes.

Just tell me the names.

The one who made it to Palestine was Yakov.

Yakov Leibowicz?

Yakov Leibowicz. The older brother that went to Russia, his name was Zvi Leibowicz.

Zvi Leibowicz.

And she had three sisters that survived. I understand that she had small sisters that died in childhood. They had measles or something. There was a set of twins that passed away early in life. The other two sisters also ended up in Russia and my mother.

So let's first go to the uncle who perished in the Holocaust. What was his name?

His name was Israel Moshe.

Israel Moshe. And the two sisters who survived?

One was Hannah as well, and one was Zilla.

Zilla. OK. So it was a large family of siblings.

Yes.

And was your mother the oldest or close to the oldest?

She was the second oldest after the brother that perished.

So no wonder she was taken out of school to care for everybody.

Yes.

Did you know your maternal grandparents?

Very briefly, very briefly. When we get to the point where we are further along I'll tell you the story about it.

OK. Did they live close by to you?

Yes.

Next door? Around the corner?

On another street. My grandparents Barth lived just a few houses removed from us. And that grandfather had the only little jewelry store in town.

Oh, wow.

And he was also a watch repairman. He was also a very devout person. And they owned some land. They owned their home. We did not. I understand that the other family were the owners--

The Gentile family?

Right. And we used to pay rent. But my grandfather Barth owned his property. He also had land behind the house that he used to lease out. And farmers would work it, and he would get their share--

Of what they got.

Yes.

What they harvested.

They also had a horse and buggy. And they were better off than most, because he had this kind of business.

Yeah, well, jewelry store would do it. But in a small shtetl, I wouldn't imagine that many people would have jewelry.

No, but there were watches that he repaired, that he sold. He would sell wedding rings. I don't know all the things that he had in the store, but--

Do you remember the store?

Not really. Not really, but I have a picture of the house. And you can see a big window. So I guess it was like a display window.

And how many siblings did your father have? My father was one of nine.

Wow.

And he was the oldest. There were five brothers and four sisters.

Wow.

And unfortunately, not one of the sons survived the Holocaust.

And what about the sisters?

The sisters all survived. And the reason is that two emigrated to Palestine in 1935.

Ah.

And two were young teenagers. And they escaped with us.

Do you remember the names of your uncles?

Yes.

Could you tell me?

So my father was Hersh Barth. Then there was-- I am not quite sure--

Of the sequence--

Sequence. But there was Avram, Efraim, Yakov-- oh, Yakov was after my father, that I know-- and Israel Moshe also.

And what about the sister's name.

The sisters, the oldest was Esther. And then there was Sylvia. Those were the two that went to Palestine. And the youngest two were Riva and Lonya.

OK. Did you know these aunts and uncles as you were a little girl?

I did, but I don't remember very well. I remember a couple of them, because my uncle Efraim and Avram, there were Zionists, very strong Zionists. And I remember like a dream them taking me in their garden and showing me how they laid out a Magen David out of bottles. And--

Tell us, what is a Magen David?

It's the Star of David. And that impressed me, I guess. I remembered that.

And you hinted at one of my questions is, was your own family political in any way?

I don't know that they had any particular leaning, but I know they always discussed politics.

OK. That's interesting--

And were aware of the world situation. And that was the reason that my father from the minute he heard that there was going to be a war that he started making plans to escape.

OK. We'll come to that. We'll come to that. That's very interesting. At home, what language did you speak?

Yiddish.

Where did you learn Polish?

I learned Polish just from the surroundings. This wasn't before my school years. And later on when we were in Bukhara, I went to a Polish refugee school.

Do you remember the last name of your Gentile neighbors?

[? Kulan. ?]

[? Kulan. ?]

Mm-hmm.

And what kind of relationship did you have with them?

We had a good relationship with them. And I actually am in this present life went back to Poland and I met his daughter.

Oh, really.

And she was extremely happy to see somebody from the family. And she really received us beautifully. And what she did, she told us that the house was bombed during the war. And she built the home afterwards, a modern house on the entire lot.

Did you see that house?

Yes, we were in her home.

And what was the fate of her own family?

Her parents died naturally. And she was married. We met her husband. I don't know much else about their history.

Was she born when you were already born?

She was my oldest sister-- my Aunt Lonya, who was four months older than my sister, they were in the same grade.

So she remembered you?

Yes. Yes. She was very friendly with my sister and my aunt.

OK. Now, in this house, did you also have a garden? Did you also have-- or was this in the center of town where there was no such thing?

I do not recall. I do not recall a garden.

You mentioned that your grandfather Barth had a horse and buggy.

Yes.

Did anyone in town have an automobile?

I don't know. I don't recall.

What about a telephone?

No.

Radio?

A doctor had a phone. And one of my uncles worked-- my Uncle Efraim was a director of a brewery that they had in town. And I know they had a telephone there.

OK. What about a radio? Anybody have a radio?

They had radios.

Did your family?

I think they had a radio.

But it sounds that newspapers were the way that people found out about the world at large.

Yes.

And the customers in your parents' store, were they both Gentile and Jewish?

Yes.

OK. But more Jewish than Gentile, or not?

I don't know how to judge that.

You were four, I know. I know. Yeah. It's hard to say. But I'm trying to get a sense of how integrated the community was--

They was very integrated because it was a small town.

And so people knew each other?

Yes.

Did you know where the local Catholic church was?

I know there was one. I don't recall it. But I know that relationships were pretty good. And actually, this uncle that was the director of the brewery was hidden out at a certain time with a Christian family. But somebody else told on them, and he was taken out and shot in the town square.

This is your mother's brother?

No.

Your father's brother.

My father's brother. Yeah.

And do you have any memories of-- you said that people liked to talk about politics-- do you have any memories of the discussions your parents might have had? I think the discussion was very much about the impending war. And my father was very suspicious of Hitler, of Germany, because he used to travel there and he knew what was happening there. And once, you know, they took over Czechoslovakia and so forth, he knew that Poland would be next. And he was aware of it.

Tell me a little bit about your father's personality. We talked a bit about your mother. Tell me about him.

My father was a very gentle person. He was very loving. It wasn't always customary in Orthodox families for fathers to hug and so forth. But I was very lucky. Both my father and my grandfather, whom I remember better, and my grandfather Barth, was just a very loving person and a very gentle person.

And my father, he was very simple in his thinking of himself. He never was a show-off or saying something that would make him look, you know, important.

He never puffed up himself up.

No. Never. Never. He was he was almost to a fault.

But yet, you know, for someone who is so modest, he was a central person in the village.

Yes.

If he has a store where people congregate, where they meet, where they talk politics, and you say he was involved in the synagogue.

Yes.

That must be he knew how to draw people to him.

He did. He was also the gabbai. And that means-- oh, gosh, how do you say it in English? The person who would call other people up to the Torah. It's next to the rabbi. And if you have a cantor-- we did not, to my knowledge, have a cantor-- the gabbai is the next important person in the synagogue.

Do you remember going to synagogue?

No. It was not very customary for children or even women, except for the high holidays and so forth, to be attending synagogue. This is more customary in modern times.

What about observing the various rituals? Were your parents very observant?

Yes, they were.

Did they keep a kosher home?

Yes.

Did your mother have any help at all in her home?

I am not aware that she hired help besides I think with laundry. She did not have a maid. I don't think we could afford it. I just remember my mother working very hard.

Was there a train station in Zarszyn?

Yes.

And, I'm thinking, were there buses at those days?

I don't recall buses. I think that a mean of transport was by horse and buggy.

So when your father would travel to Germany to probably buy goods, how would he do it? [PHONE RINGING] We'll cut. We'll stop.

OK, so--

You asked me how he would get the material.

That's right. How would he travel?

Well, he would arrive by train and use a horse and buggy.

OK, so his mode of transportation was train mostly and then locally horse and buggy.

Yes.

Do you know the cities he would travel to in Germany?

No.

OK.

I know he would travel to the next big town next to us, which was Sanok.

Sanok.

And it was on the River San.

OK.

It actually became-- when both Russia and Germany occupied Poland, the San became a border. And it divided the city. And half of Sanok was Russian and half was German for a while.

And how far was Zarszyn from Sanok?

14 kilometers.

Oh, so it was close.

Very close.

So did you ever go to Sanok?

Yes. I have a wonderful memory-- you see, my memories of my father from home are like clips from a movie. I remember segments. So this is very clear in my mind that my father decided to take me along to Sanok. And we also had relatives there. I'll tell you about them later, because they became very important in our lives. And we visited there relatives.

And then he took me to a store and bought me what I thought the most beautiful little dress ever. It was on a blue background with little tiny colored polka dots, yellow, red, and I think white. And it was gathered here.

Oh, my yes--

And loose from here and with a puffed sleeve. And I wore this dress till literally it was shameful. It got so short on me. But I could not part with it. And not only did he buy me that dress, but he asked in that store for a piece of fabric. And those relatives of ours, who were cousins of my mother, had a little workshop where they used to make umbrellas. And he had a little umbrella made for me to match my dress. And that was such a wonderful day.

He also took me to a park. And what now became so popular where kids go with one leg on a board, like--

Oh, yes, a scooter--

A scooter. And he took me to this park. And he rented the scooter. And he held my hand. He said I should try riding the scooter. And this I remember very clearly. And I was probably less than five.

Oh, how lovely.

Yes.

Just lovely. You know, these simple things that are gifts to a child--

Yeah.

Absolute precious gifts. He sounds like a wonderful father.

Yeah, he was.

And do you have any other memories that really stick out from your childhood that are part of how you remember your life? That is things that may not have any relevance to politics or to history.

I remember I guess the last Passover, because we were so observant. I don't know if you're familiar with that custom. Very orthodox people will not wet the matzah with water, because then it causes it to leaven--

To rise.

And I, I guess, liked matzah with milk, which I still do, during Passover only. So I remember I had a special mug, a tall mug, that they kept only for me where I could, because I was so young, have my matzah with milk in it. And that I remember.

Did your sisters playing with you?

I don't remember a lot of playing, I have to admit. I really do not remember a lot of playing.

Were your sisters close to one another because they were so close in age.

Yes.

And were they attending school?

Yes.

OK. And tell me a little--

Until the war broke out.

Tell me a little bit about their personalities.

Well, they were very different. My older sister stepped in, and especially later in years where she had to work in Siberia-- and I'll tell you about that-- she was stronger. My middle sister was very gentle and took things way to hard. And she really had trouble surviving in Russia. She had many ailments. She was unhappy. And unfortunately, we lost her. She was quite young.

How old was she?

She was 55.

Was it natural causes?

Yeah.

Is there anything else-- I've tried to cover as many things as I could think of about pre-war life before things change. Is there anything else that is important for you, for your story, for people to know about, for your children to know about your life as a little girl before it all goes away?

I know that I had some toys, because I have pictures with a doll.

Do you remember the doll?

I do not remember specifically the doll, but I know I had. And probably, I would say, I played by myself a lot, because my mother was so busy always. I don't recall other small children besides a cousin. My Uncle Yakov got married, I guess, a year or two after my parents. And his wife's name was Tola.

Tola.

Yeah. I don't know her maiden name. And they had a little boy named Yossi. And he was one year younger than myself. And I do remember being with him. He was a cute little boy. And unfortunately, he perished in the Holocaust.

You had a large family, when you consider both sides of the family with your aunts and your uncles and your--

They were very close. Both grandfathers, both families, not only because they were related, but they were very close friends. And I know that on Saturday nights once a Shabbat was over, they would gather together in one of the other's house, and they would play chess. And this was their entertainment. They were great chess players. And I guess one would not forgive the other one. They battled it out to the end. And the kids would line up behind whomever they wanted to win--

Oh, gosh--

And kind of rooted for them. But this was their entertainment for a Saturday night when they didn't work you know after the Shabbat, and they would play chess. And the family would participate. The brothers played sometimes. But specifically, the two grandfathers used to play against each other.

And you remember this?

I remember that, yes.

What a lovely image, what a lovely image. And what a great way to learn chess. You know, the kids learn it too.

Yes. Because the kids would follow. Wherever the parents or grandparents would go. They would have a gathering together after the Shabbat.

You said earlier that it was an integrated town and that the relations between Gentiles and Jews were pretty good.

They were pretty good. There was always some hidden antisemitism. My sister used to tell me that the teacher in school would call on her and say, well, you should know that, you are smarter.

So the stereotype of a Jewish child having to be smarter?

Yes.

Or is always without question smarter.

But he would call it out.

Yeah.

And this would make her uncomfortable. And she told me about that.

OK. But is that the extent of how you felt it in your own life, in your own family? Or was there more of that you--

I, as a child, did not experience it. So I know it existed. I know there were defaults, that my mother told me that people would borrow. You see, most people would borrow, and they would write down in the book if they came for a bread or half a pound of butter. They would write down, let's say, at the end of the week, because people shopped almost every day. They were supposed to pay up. Well, there were many instances where they couldn't or wouldn't. And didn't pay up.

And were the fault lines ethnic?

In most cases. I won't say it was exclusive, but in most cases.

I see. Were there any competitive stores that Gentiles had?

I am not aware. I'm sure there was something else. I know that another Jewish family had what they would call a bar. It was also a gathering place of people. And they were also friends, very close friends, to our family. Their name was Schachner.

Schachner. How do you say bar in Polish?

Karczma, I don't know.

OK, because I thought-- was it karczma or something like that.

Karczma, yeah.

That was just a personal curiosity. Let's go now to where things change. Do you remember when the war started? Do you remember what you were doing? What the family was doing?

I remember that there was a feverish feeling in the house. And my mother tried to think of what if we escape, what do we need to take with us? And I remember feeling this anxiety in the house, that things were beginning to be put aside, like to prepare for packing. And eventually, my father and, I think, my grandfather went with them to the station master, whom he knew because he traveled so often, and paid him a handsome sum of money to secure an entire train car.

That's a lot.

A lot. For our family and some friends.

And so this would have been like a passenger train car with cabins and seats and--

I don't know if they had cabins, but definitely had seats.

OK.

So the war broke out on the 1st of September on a Friday.

1939.

1939. And the following Thursday, we left Zarszyn.

And that's seven days later.

Seven days later. Germany at that point was in Poland and moving further east.

They had not reached Zarszyn yet.

They had not reached Zarszyn at that point. But once we were on the train, we felt their presence very much.

Excuse me, describe leaving. Were their family members who said, I'm not going, I'm staying? Were there people who were debating to go, to stay?

Yes. So my grandfather Leibowicz, he and the two daughters, that a single, left with him and my grandmother. My grandfather Barth left with his two youngest daughters that were still at home and my parents and the three of us girls. And there were also some friends who joined. My father's brother that was next to him, Yakov, who was married with a child, he stayed and his wife stayed. He also had a store. He had building supply.

But my grandparents took Yossi, their child, with us, because he used to spend a lot of their time at my grandparents anyway, because both of them worked in their store. So Yossi was spending a lot of time with my grandparents. So they took him with us.

You see, the idea was that the war will be over soon. How long can it last? And how far will it go? So at the time they thought if we go to the Ukraine, which is further east, we'll be safe there. And my grandfather Leibowicz had a cousin in a small town also near Kolomyia.

And that is where? In the Ukraine?

In the Ukraine. And the name of the little town was Gwozdziec.

Gwozdziec. OK.

So we left on the train on Thursday. And shortly thereafter, the train was being bombarded.

By the Germans?

By the Germans.

This was still a Polish train--

Yes.

Under the Polish national rail system--

Yes.

Going East.

Going East. And the minute we heard the planes that the train would stop. And in the beginning, a few times they bombed the rails, not the actual train. And we would run to the field, to the forest, whatever was next to the train. And I remember running. And I remember the trip very clearly, because it gave me nightmares for years to come.

Well, you were four years old.

I was five.

You were five.

I was five. And eventually-- this trip was supposed to take a few hours. We ended up on the train for three days, because it took time to repair. Every time the Germans flew over and started bombing, eventually they did hit one car, but it was a car where they kept the luggage, not--

People--

People. So we were stuck on the train on Shabbat. And there was another bombing coming. And we all ran out. And there was a forest there. But my grandfather Barth decided that he wasn't going. He said on Shabbat, if you go down, you shouldn't come back on the train and travel further. Though my other grandfather did it, who was the rabbi. Interesting. He said, I'm going to stay on the train. And everybody begged him, please, please, you have to come down. You have to say-- no, I'm going to stay.

My other grandfather-- I'm sorry what I said because that was incorrect. My other grandfather Leibowicz decided he will go down and stay wherever the train stopped. And he wasn't coming back on the train. And my grandfather Barth stayed on the train, and we ran off.

Oh, so it was Leibowicz--

So this is how we were separated.

From your grandfather Leibowicz.

Yes.

Who was the rabbi.

Yes. We were separated. So I guess this bombing, this particular bombing, happened not far from the city of Przemyśl. So they must've taken a buggy or whomever they found transport and ended up in Przemyśl.

Were there other passengers on the train in other cars?

There must have been. I don't remember them.

OK.

I don't remember them.

OK.

So we traveled for three days--

To Przemyśl.

No, we traveled to Gwoździec, to near Kolomyia.

Did you get there?

We got there.

OK. And then you got the horse and buggy to go to Przemyśl?

No, we never went to Przemyśl. Only my grandfather Leibowicz with his family. He went off the train before the set of Shabbat, and he didn't come back. So we got separated. When we got to Gwoździec, there were already other Polish people who escaped. And apartments, because it was a small town, were very difficult to get.

Who is in control of the town?

It was Poland at that time.

So it was Ukraine, but Polish occupied Ukraine. Or Polish territory--

Polish territory until-- in 1939, actually a week before the war broke out in Poland, on August 23, and I learned this later, because I'm a history major, Molotov, who was the foreign minister of the USSR, Russia, and Ribbentrop, who was the German foreign minister--

Hitler's foreign minister--

Hitler's foreign minister-- made a non-aggression pact. And what this meant was that once they defeat Poland, they will divide Poland. And each one will take a part, which was actually in Poland's history from before. Poland was divided a number of times before. But this was their agreement that the Russians will take the eastern part and the Germans will take the north and the west.

So when you get to this town--

It's still Poland.

It's still Poland. And tell me the name of the town again.

Gwoździec.

Gwoździec.

It's a small town.

Gwoździec. So it's still Poland, but it is one that will become Russian.

Well, it shortly becomes Russia, because at some point really they were almost face to face the Germans and the Russian. Particularly, I am aware of the city of Lwów, which is now Lvov--

Lviv--

Lviv--

In Ukraine.

It was called Lwów in Polish. And the German were from one side trying to break through to the city, and the Russians were on the other side. Eventually, obviously, the Germans took over the town. But--

Did they take it over while they were still allied to the Soviet Union--

Yes--

Or after?

They were still allied. But they were each trying, I guess, to grab more. And I know that from reading afterwards. But as far as we're concerned--

You're in Gwozdziec.

We are in Gwozdziec. And again, there was no means of making a living. And my father was a smoker unfortunately. So he started looking for tobacco.

Where did you live when you in Gwozdziec?

Oh, OK, so we did get one room. And we all lived in this room. At night, we would bed out on the floor. We had one bed. And the rest of us would sleep on the floor. And daytime, everything was piled up on this one bed.

And I remember one day, I was not feeling well. And my father took me and put me on top of all those pillows and blankets. And he gave me a piece of paper and a pen. And I should amuse myself, because as I started saying, he started looking for tobacco-- I'm going between one story and the other--

That's OK.

And he found the source somehow-- I don't know how-- to buy the leaves, the tobacco leaves. And I remember these huge green leaves that he would buy and string them up to dry. And then he would chop it real fine. And he got like thin paper to roll cigarettes. And then he would sell them. And eventually the paper ran out. He couldn't get any more. And I remember he would roll the cigarettes in newspaper.

But anyway to go back to the day when I wasn't feeling well, so I had this little pen. And, you know, we didn't have the pens that we have today. There was a pen with a pen that came off the actual pen. Well, lo and behold, as I was scratching whatever I was writing, the pen disappeared, so I started choking. And I said, I swallowed the pen. I swallowed the pen. I know I swallowed the pen. And I started [CHOKING], you know, choking. And my father knew as long as I'm speaking I didn't swallow the pen. But I wouldn't quiet down. And I started crying, I swallowed that pen.

So my father bent down. He took out the pen I didn't see, pulled it off. He showed me, see, I found the pen. And I got all better.

[LAUGHTER]

Amazing medicine.

Yeah. I got all better. So he works with the cigarettes. And my mother, because from experience living in a little town and having the experience of the store, she made contact with farmers. And she started buying milk and butter and taking it to this bigger city, when you could still travel. And she made a few pennies on it. And my sister would also do that.

Together with your mother?

Together with my mother or alone. They went to different places. And this is how we lived in the Ukraine. But very shortly--

Before you go there, what had you taken with you from your home when you got into the rail car?

We took bedding. We took clothing. And we took some food, not enough for three days, because we didn't anticipate being on the train so long. But--

Did you think you're coming back to your home?

Oh, of course.

So nobody took real valuables or real--

You know, everything was left. There was no question. Everybody-- and this is what got us in trouble, so to say, though later turned out to be a life saver, particularly for myself as a small child, because under the Germans, I'm sure I would not survive.

So a few months after we were in the Ukraine, the Russians took over.

So again, I'm going to just make sure that I'm clear about it, you're in--

Gwozdziec.

Gwozdziec. You know, there are always some town names or some spelling or some things that I hear I think I'll remember, and then it goes.

Yeah.

So forgive me for that.

That's all right.

But you're in Gwozdziec. You're there for a number of months.

Yeah, a few months. I don't remember.

And today, it's in the Ukraine.

Yes.

But then it was Poland.

It was Poland. And the Russians came in, and we were suddenly under the Russians.

How did that change your life?

It changed it very much. Conditions got harder. There was a shortage of food. Travel was restricted. And the main thing was you had to be a registered. So everybody received, all the Polish emigres all received registration papers.

So people who had just recently arrived in town, like your family?

Mm-hmm. So I guess you had to fill out where you're living and where you came from, and so forth. And one little thing asked, when the war is over, do you want to stay in Russia? Well, nobody, as far as we knew, wanted to stay in Russia. We all wanted to go back home.

So whoever marked that they want to go home, shortly there after, at night, late at night on a Friday night, soldiers appeared at our door and many other doors, to most of the Polish refugees in that town and then many cities, and they came and they said, we are waiting, you need to pack what you can throw in a pillow cover for each person, and you are coming with us.

And my father tried to tell them, well, you know it's Friday night for us. We observe Friday night. There was no way out. There was no way out. So we had to pack--

And did you know-- I'm sorry that I'm interrupting-- did you know that this was because of having answered on the--

No, we didn't know anything, why we are being taken or where we are being taken. Not for an entire month did we know where we are taken.

Do you remember that night?

Yes.

What are the things that you remember from the night?

Well, I remember, you know, being very upset. With no notice whatsoever, soldiers appear with shoulder--

Guns--

Guns and tell you, you have to leave now while we are waiting. So whatever my mother, my sister thought we would need, they packed real quickly. And we were taken by truck.

I'm sorry I interrupt again. I want to make sure that I know who is taken then of your family. Who was with you in that room when they came?

Just my immediate family-- my father, my mother, and my sisters.

And what had happened to the rest of them?

We didn't know anything what happened to them. We found out later.

OK. So they weren't with you. You're the relatives who had gone with you to the town--

They lived separately. So we didn't know if anybody else was effected or it was just us. By the time we got to the train, we realized that all the Polish refugees were gathered by different soldiers, by different trucks. Actually, the truck would stop at other homes and gather more people.

So there were more people in a truck with you?

Yes.

And do you remember what kind of people they were?

Polish refugees. I don't recall exactly who.

OK.

But I know we were taken to the train. And those were different kinds of trains. Those were cattle cars. There were no seats. There was a birch-- you know, a divider on top from both sides. And there was a little tiny window at the top that had steel little beam--

Bars--

Bars, you know, so that nobody could escape from them. There was no bathroom. There was a hole in the floor, and there was a bucket. And they eventually managed to squeeze in 40 people into this one car, train car. And when

everybody was loaded, which took most of the night, we were locked in from the outside, and you couldn't open the doors.

But what happened was as another train came parallel to our train, you know, people were yelling from that little window to find out, is this family here? Is this family? Have you seen this family? Well, we connected through that window with my grandfather Leibowitz, who were taken from another town. And also, my grandfather Barth and his family were in the same train car with us. They were not taken together with us from the house, but they ended up in the same train car with us. So this was June 28, 1940.

So you really were in this place for well over half a year--

10 months.

OK.

10 months. And the journey started. And as I said, we had no idea where we are being taken or why we are being taken. And we were locked in. And as long as we were still close to a war zone, they didn't unlock the doors.

And I remember one day, somebody became very ill. And people were pounding on the door, whoever could. And nobody responded. Nobody responded.

Eventually, they would stop. The trains actually stopped very often later on because if there was a military train that had to pass. They would move that train to a side track, so the military train could pass. So we were often shifted--

But were the doors opened when you were on the side track?

Once they stopped and we were out of like Ukraine, they would open the doors. And actually, my mother-- there were always farmers that would come to that train. They had potatoes. They had-- it was summer. They must have had some vegetables. So my mother would always go down and try to find something. And we had a little like a primus.

You know what a primus is? It's a little-- it works on kerosene. There is a little container of kerosene. And later there is a wick. And you can cook on it. It has a little room around it where you can put that little pot on it. So--

Well, that's pretty valuable when you're in such a situation.

Yes, yes. And the problem was that we kept kosher.

How can you keep kosher on such a train?

We kept kosher. We would eat the bread that they would bring. And if my mother could buy something from a farmer, it would last a couple of days till they stopped again. And that's how we survived.

What happened to that person who got very sick and nobody responded?

He eventually passed on.

Was this the only death in the train?

As far as I recall.

But you remember-- this was as an older person?

No, I think mid-40s or something. We don't know what-- I mean I don't know what happened. The grownups, you know, tried to shield children. I shouldn't look. I shouldn't go there. You know, we sat in our little corner. And there

wasn't much room to move around. I mean you couldn't just get up and parade. There were 40 people together.

Were there arguments that broke out because of the closeness?

Well, I remember one little argument that my grandfather caused. Orthodox Jews wash their hands first thing in the morning when you wake up. You're supposed to pour water three times on this hand and you say a prayer, thank God that I woke up. And it's a very lovely prayer. It's called Modeh Ani. I thank God.

And inevitably, he kept a little container there next to him. When the train would lurch real quickly, that water would spill on somebody on the bottom. And they were not to happy with it. So I remember this person sitting underneath my grandfather saying, please don't spill that water. This I remember. He was very observant, like I said. He tried to follow every regulation, even under these circumstances.

Were there conversations that you remember people having on the train?

You mean confrontations--

No. No, just, do you know where we're going? Do you think--

Oh, yeah, everybody spoke. I mean you're stuck together. You speak. You wonder. We passed so much land going all the way to Siberia.

Did people say, I think we're going to Siberia--

No. No. We never heard the word till we landed there.

Were there soldiers on the trains with you?

There were soldiers always outside, not inside the train car.

OK. Did you learn a little bit about some of the other people who were on the train and who they were? Not only that they were refugees, but where they had come from, what their professions were.

I'm sure the older people did. I don't recall specifics. I remember also there was a fight between two guys. But they settled it. They had no place to go. I don't know what it was about. I mean it was so tight.

Was it hot?

It was hot. It was the middle of summer. And there were others in the train. You know, there were many reasons to get upset, many reasons. You know, with the bucket there and the hole in the ground, people were just not themselves, which is very understandable.

And after an entire month-- I am not sure, my sister said July 28. And I heard from somebody July 29. But in any case, it was a full month before we arrived, what we were told was a Siberian settlement.

Who told you?

Well, people who were there. There were some people, Polish people, there that were exiled before for whatever reason. They were in Russia, if they said something or did something, you know, the Russians didn't need many reasons for you to be shipped to Siberia. So there were people living there. But once we arrived, they didn't have housing for us. We were put into barracks with many people until they constructed some homes in another development.

By homes, do you mean barracks or do you mean--

Eventually, we ended up in little homes, in little houses. But this was an open barrack. I remember that. And next to our family, a doctor with his wife and one son settled. And then there were many other people. I remember this doctor because he was sitting and being across from us.

Tell me, were there any officials who came within your sight line to say, here you are, this is why you're here, this is what you'll be doing?

No. The reason why I think we found out-- much, much later-- that they took everybody who said that they were going to go home after the war. But there were officials. They came and they told that's where we are and that everybody will have to go to work, six days a week. And the work was in the forest. And they were cutting down trees and cutting them into board-like pieces. And this had to be shipped in the summer through a river. And in the winter, they were piling it up till summer.

A question here-- which location in Siberia did you--

It was north of Sverdlovsk. And I don't remember the name of the first settlement where the barracks were. But where we eventually ended up was called Tavda.

Tavda. And did they say what was--

It was Upper Ural, Siberia.

Did they say you are now prisoners or you are now forced labor or you are enemies of the state or you were just people who need to help us?

No. We were not prisoners, because families were allowed to stay together. But they told us, you have to work. They didn't use the term slave labor. But that's what it was. They said everybody above the age of 14 has to go to work. So my older sister qualified.

Hannah.

Hannah. And--

Did they feed you? Did they give you food?

They gave us rations. And if you didn't work, if somebody in the family didn't work, you didn't get anything. So my father had to go to work in the beginning and my older sister. Somehow my mother did not. I don't know if she was excused because of me or my other sister. She did not. But my aunt had to go to work.

So we were in the settlement just a couple months. As you know, winter sets in August.

Wow.

It gets very cold. And I have to tell you a story about this grandfather, another story. We arrived in Siberia in July. And, of course, it's the polar sun, where it doesn't get dark, very, very like twilight in the middle of the night, and the day is long forever. So at the end of Shabbat, there is a prayer. It's called Havdalah, which means dividing the holy day of Sabbath from the every day. And we light the candle, and we sit. And the head of the family says that prayer. Well, you have to say it when you see three stars in the sky.

Poor man.

[LAUGHS]

So my grandfather waited till about 2:00 in the morning when they finally realized we didn't know about polar sun, that

there isn't going to be night. And eventually, the kids convinced him to say the prayers and to go to sleep-- at 2:00 in the morning.

Oh, the poor man.

[LAUGHS]

That's another incident of my grandfather. So anyway, my sister started--

OK, I'm sorry I'm interrupting.

You want to ask me something else.

Yes, I want to find out-- you said first you're in a barracks. And then they move you to a smaller sort of like single fa-- describe to me both places.

OK, well, this place was only barracks. That's all I remember. They would bring in water and some food. And the people who were of age went to work. That's all I remember.

And we lived on our packages, because there was no room where to unpack or to do. But it was summer, and it was pretty warm. It gets very warm there. So eventually, before winter actually set in, we were moved to a house that we actually shared with another, Christian, young couple. She was pregnant at that time. Why they were sent to Siberia or wherever they came from, I personally do not know. I know that my mother used to talk to them all the time.

So once we were in this place, we were settled, so to say. I remember we had a bedroom. We had the kitchen, probably a little sitting area. It wasn't very large.

Was it a wooden house?

I think so.

And it had a wooden roof or a tin roof or a thatched roof or--

I'm not sure. I really don't remember that. I remember the inside. I don't remember--

Did it have furniture?

It must have because we had beds. And kitchen utensils, my mother brought with us a couple pots and whatever. The problem was there was no water. And in the winter, this became a real problem, because the only water you could get was going to the river and chopping through the ice, which took enormous effort.

And because this was the route that people took, many waters spilled. You know, people would fill the bucket, and then some would spill and freeze. And when the people who carried the water, like my sister and other people, they would come close to the house and then slip and spill the water, which was tragic. They would have to go back and start pulling the water out of the river.

Why wouldn't one use snow that is there and just melt it over a fire?

I don't know why. We used snow, I think, for washing to melt, but not for drinking.

OK.

For drinking water, you had to get water from the river. So this became a problem. Especially in the heart of winter, you had to cover yourself everything. Just the eyes would show, because it would go down to 40, 50 below zero. And by the

time they would come back, the lashes from your breathing would be frozen. And people, many people, lost limbs. They lost fingers. They lost toes if they didn't have adequate, you know, gloves and shoes.

How were you able to dress when you had been taken in the middle of summer?

That was a big problem. That was a big problem. So my mother started bartering. She bartered her wedding ring away. She had nice nightgowns, which I don't remember from home. But there were Russian people in Siberia who had been there for a long time, and they haven't seen a nice dress in years. And they thought the nightgowns were dresses. So she bartered it for potatoes. She bartered it for a warm coat.

In the winter-- in the fall, actually, but there is no fall. It's summer and then winter starts in full force. Cabbage-- cabbage became a very important thing. And my mother would sour it in a barrel, because she knew we weren't getting vitamins.

Cabbage gives you--

Cabbage gives you vitamins. So we would live on this cabbage for most of the winter. And many times in the winter, she would venture out beyond our settlement, which was extremely dangerous, because there were wild animals all around. This was Siberia. And many times people would get lost and never find their way back. And many, many people died there. Many people died. They didn't come prepared for this climate.

They had no chance to be prepared.

They had no chance. And even if you're prepared, it was so harsh. Walking to the place of work, to the forest where they were cutting down the trees, was 8 kilometers--

In that cold--

From our little settlement and 8 kilometers back.

And in winter, they worked too?

They worked throughout. And actually, in the winter, she worked with another young girl--

Your mother?

My sister worked in the forest with another young girl, as did my aunts. They paired them up. And they carried the logs that were cut down. [PHONE RINGING] And--

We'll come to it. And they carried the--

The girls would carry the logs into a machine that would cut it into boards like--

Even in wintertime?

Yes. And the other girl, her name was, I think, Lisa or something like that. She was up front. And my sister was in the back carrying. Now, you can imagine 14-year-old, two girls carrying a huge Siberian log. It wasn't easy. She must've slipped or something. And the log did not go in properly to the machine. And it hit back on my sister.

This was Hannah?

Hannah. She immediately became extremely ill with terrible pain, terrible pain. They sent their home. And she was just convulsing in pain. Eventually, they found the doctor who tried to examine her, but he didn't know why. He didn't know why. When it subsided, she had to go back to work.

So at this point, my father became very frail, because he didn't eat much. He tried to give the children more. And he really neglected himself. He became very thin. So luckily, if you can call it that, the Russians did not keep records exactly the way the Germans did.

What do you mean by that?

Well, you know, the Germans would write down every name and everything. Even in Auschwitz they have all the lists and everything. Here, you could fudge a little. You could tell them-- I'll give you a for instance.

My Aunt Riva was called once, like, 2:00 at night. They loved doing all their action at night, the Russians. They came knocking at the door, the commandant, the head of the settlement, wants to see Riva. And we had the feeling why, because she developed sores on her foot and she didn't go to work.

So my mother, quick thinking, since my name was Ryzia-- Riva-- very close, she woke me up. She said get dressed quickly, the commandant wants to see us. She took me by the hand and we walked in the frozen night to the commandant's office. We appeared and he started yelling, why did you bring this child here? My mother said, you asked for her, you asked for her. He said, you're, ridiculous, take the child home. That was the end of it-- for a while. So we spared Riva from going and maybe being punished or whatever.

The same thing, there was another incident. I knew that the commandant-- you have to watch out for him. If he is coming, then there is trouble on the way. So there was a yard like-- I remember the yard-- and somehow there were a few steps to go up to our house. I saw the commandant from afar. I figured I better run and tell my parents the commandant is in the area.

So she must have caught sight of me. I started running. But I had, you know, short steps. He came running after me. I had braids at the time. He grabbed me by the braids and like threw me down from those few stairs. And he said, you're running home to tell your mother, your parents, that the commandant is coming. Threw me down the stairs.

But my mother heard the commotion. So my father went behind the door. The door opened this way. He stood behind the door. So he never saw my father at home that he's not working.

So again, this was something that was, why didn't he go to work? He's following up why somebody is staying home.

Exactly. Either he came for that, or they would just appear for no reason. Another incident that is very clear in my mind is Passover. My mother, as other Jews, saved some flour. And somehow they managed together, a group together, build some matzah. So we sat down with potatoes and some greens that we had to a Seder, you know, the ceremony that we celebrate on Passover.

In the middle of our reading the story of Passover, the Haggadah, there's a knock on the door. Commandant comes in. First, he didn't say anything. He put his hand-- I remember this like it was yesterday-- put his hand behind his back and started marching around our table, around our table, back and forth, back and forth.

Eventually, he took-- there was a jar on the table, and he snuffed out the candles. And then he said, you Jews believe that you went out of Egypt. Eto nepravda. This is not true. He knows the story better. And he started telling a story that this never happened and you believe in religion. Religion is stupid and so forth. And when he finished his speech, he left.

I was wondering that atheistic component of the ideology--

Yeah.

OK. So another trick they pulled was on the Rosh Hashanah, which is one of our holiest days. They appeared early in the morning at the house, knocked at the doors. And they pulled out from a few homes Jews with beards to go clean the

public latrine. And it was frozen. And they had to use shovels. And they get on Rosh Hashanah.

So they didn't outright kill us like the Germans. But they killed your spirit. They killed your dignity. And many people just couldn't cope with it.

Tell me, was this an equal opportunity kind of contempt? Did you see that happening at Christmas and Easter for the Gentiles? That is, did they keep almost like a list of what religious holidays there would be and target everybody on their religious holidays?

I really don't know that from my experience. I know from reading that they did. And other settlements where they had Russians that they shipped to Siberia and they did not allow them to have worship, because under the communist, you know, all the churches were closed. Everything was closed. They did not allow to practice any religion.

Was your settlement mainly Jewish?

No, it was very mixed, very mixed. And I want to tell you about this young couple next to us, because this is another memory that's etched in my mind very clearly. So the woman gave birth. We heard her-- there was only a wooden wall dividing us. And there was actually in a little hallway, there was a window that you could--

See in--

Look through from one to the other. We heard her give birth. And about a week later, we heard this ear piercing cries. That baby passed away. She cried inconsolably.

I remember my mother going over there, and other people came. But they found somebody that painted the child's liking. And I remember she showed us that picture through that window. And I can see that little baby's face.

Oh, dear.

It was so sad. It was so sad. That woman was really inconsolable. And we were next to each other.

Now, I had no friends. I don't remember playing with any children throughout that time at all. My father started teaching me a little, to write the alphabet, both the Polish and the Hebrew alphabet. We didn't get very far, between work and worries. But I remember he used to spend time with me trying to teach me to write.

Another thing that happened, because we were all undernourished and I was six at that time already and very skinny, tall, but skinny, school starts there at six, the age of six. And school is six days a week.

So again, my mother didn't want me to go on Shabbat to school. So she decided the easiest way to get out of it right now is to make me a year younger. So she did. And from that day on, all my papers say that I am a year younger.

And some years ago, we went back to Poland. I don't know if you want me to jump--

Yes, go ahead. If it has a tie to the story, tell me.

It has a tie, because for many years I wanted the birth certificate. And we were back in Poland. But there was no place to look. We never went back to our place of birth. So I think it was 2005--

2005--

Not that many years ago we went back with friends to Poland. And we were in Krakow. So we hired a car. And we went to Zarszyn. And I told you my aunt was in touch with this woman who was her contemporary. So I called her, and I told her I was going to come.

And as I mentioned already, they received us very nicely. And she asked me, what do you want to do here? What do you want to accomplish? I said, well, I have really three things that I want to do. I want to see where my grandparents' houses were. And I want to go to the little city hall and get a birth certificate, so my age is straightened out once and for all. Why it bothered me I don't know, because I always tell everybody my true age anyway, even though I am a year younger on my papers.

She said no problem. I'll take you. So we go up this little building. They have an office upstairs. We go up. My husband was with me. She introduces me to the lady in Polish, of course. And I speak Polish. So she says this lady was born here, and she would like to have a birth certificate. She said, no problem, what year were you born? I tell her 1934.

She goes to a cabinet. It was made out of tin, you know, a cabinet. And there are different ledgers. She pulled out a ledger from 1934. She sat down. And she says, what was your maiden name? And I tell them I know his name was Barth. She says, Barth, Barth, Barth. Repeated it maybe six times. She said, you're Jewish. I said, yes.

She lifted that book, slammed it on the table. I have nothing for Jews. All the papers were burned. When my husband heard that, he said, we're out of here. We're out of here this minute.

Fortunately, we stopped at my one grandparent's house, where it used to be, just an empty lot now where my grandparent Barth lived. And I asked her if she knew where the rabbi, my other grandfather lived. She said, I know approximately the street--

This is your aunt's friend?

Yes.

OK. Was she there with you at the municipal building?

Yes. And she immediately said, what do you mean you have nothing? What if she wants to claim property? Her grandfather had property. And I said, well, first of all, I don't want to claim anything. But the woman said, I have nothing for Jews. So my husband dragged me out there. He would not continue the conversation.

But before that we went to the street where she thought my other-- it was a little alley, not paved, still not paved, just a dirt road. And as we were walking, I said stop. I think this is the house.

And we saw a lady working in the garden. So we called the over. And I said, would you by any chance remember a family Leibowitz. And she says, of course, what do you mean? I live in their house. She said, my husband used to come on Shabbat and light the fire for them. So I somehow, in my mind's eye, I had the vision to recognize that house.

So anyway we left very shortly thereafter, after this experience in the city hall, and returned to Krakow.

And you never got a birth certificate then?

No. I understand that now, already for a number of years, in Warsaw there is a depository, a big repository, of different documents of Jewish people. And possibly if I was registered, they may have something. But I really haven't pursued it any further.

I'm so sorry to hear that. I'm so sorry.

It's an unfortunate-- the lady that was with me felt terrible. She just didn't want to leave. She kept telling her, she was born here, she had family here. And the woman was just-- wouldn't handle it. So to go on--

So we're back in Siberia.

We're back in Siberia.

I have a few questions.

Yes.

The settlement, do you know about how many different little house there were in it?

You mean to count? To give you a figure, I wouldn't be accurate. I remember streets with houses.

Was there anybody who wasn't a deportee who was there?

I don't think so, except like maybe the military.

My idea is, like we did with Zarszyn, to just get an approximate sense of how large, how small it was.

I would say maybe 500 people.

OK.

I'm estimating.

I know. I know. And it was then controlled or administered by a military authority.

Yes. But you were not considered prisoners. We were considered refugees.

Who worked because they loved to work for--

Yeah. Yeah.

I have heard in other deportee's stories of people earning sort of like a nominal amount, a ruble or two.

They did pay a nominal amount. And this is what we had to buy bread and the absolute necessities. But if you didn't have any other assets to barter or to sell, you really couldn't exist. My mother never had sons. So she always had a weak spot for young boys, for single boys, who needed help.

There was this one boy in particular that she befriended in Siberia, who was-- we call this in Yiddish, a real Schlimazel, somebody who would always lose something and somebody who couldn't quite take care of himself.

Was he there without his parents?

No, he was alone. He was away from home in a yeshiva. And he was caught together with everybody else and shipped to Siberia. But in the beginning, there was still a time that you could send packages from Poland-- at the very beginning. And they would reach you, or they would send through the Red Cross different things.

So when you said, we lived on packages, is that what you were referring to rather than not being able to unpack?

No, no, no, when I said we lived on our packages, I just meant our things. But this boy received a couple packages from his parents-- in Siberia-- in Siberia. I don't know how. So he comes to my mother with the package. And he says, Mrs. Barth, I want you to give me every day a piece of what my mother sent me, either a piece of candy or a cookie, because if I keep it I'm going to eat it all at once.

Oh, my. Oh, my. So she knew that my mother wasn't going to touch it. As a matter of fact, I remember after she gave him his piece, every day he would come by. She would put it high up on a shelf. And none of us-- none of us-- would dare touch it.

But he would also come to my mother and say-- I remember, he was ashamed to say-- he would say, Mrs. Barth, I lost a glove today. And we didn't have spare. My mother would take a rag that she had from something or cut up something. And she sewed him some kind of a glove, because without it, he would lose his fingers.

What was his name?

His name was also Yakov. And he eventually ended up in Belgium, became a diamond dealer, and came to visit my mother in Israel--

Oh, no kidding--

[LAUGHTER]

Many years later.

I hope he didn't lose diamonds.

I know. But as a boy, he was like that. One day, he came, he lost a scarf. My mother somehow found a scarf for him. I mean, he was just totally unreliable as far as his things. But he was a sweet--

He needed a mother.

Needed a mother. And my mother mothered him. He would come and sit after work at our table. And we would share what we had with him. So Siberia was terribly hard.

Tell me a little bit about the relation between the military authority in the settlement. Do you have a name for the settlement, by the way that you were in?

Tavda.

Tavda. I'm sorry. You did tell me. Tavda. And do you remember the name of that commandant?

No. No, I do not. They all wore military garb. That's all I can tell you. If they were part of those who were sent to Siberia and then put in charge-- there were many cases that this was true. And there were many cases that they were just sent for the purpose to administer the different settlements.

Were they NKVD?

Were they?

NKVD. Were they secret police, for example.

No. I know what NKVD is. I'm not aware of it. No. We dealt with NKVD later on in Russia.

OK.

But not in Siberia. I don't recall anybody being called that. And was it just about-- if you have approximately 500 people, about how many administrators would be there?

All I know is the commandant, somebody was sitting and writing things for him, which must have been a secretary, and the soldiers who acted like policemen.

OK. Was there a fence around the settlement?

Was there a?

Fence or a gate?

No. But there was no place to run.

Well, see, for Western kind of understanding, why wouldn't there be a place to run? Why wouldn't you be able to just run away?

Because the settlements were far apart. Summer was very short. And winters were forever. And it was a very dangerous. And anybody who attempted, never came back and never made it. And even as I said before, going through the forest to another settlement was extremely dangerous.

Were there people in this settlement who had already been exiled there before you arrived?

Yes. Yes.

So they kind of told you of what it was about.

Yes. Well, those were the people that my mother would barter with and buy things from. And another thing, which was very interesting, the summers are basically two months, real summer, June and July. And during that month, my mother would seed different vegetables. And everything managed to grow in those two months, particularly potatoes and some onion. And that's what I remember most of all. I think maybe some beets.

All very important.

Yeah. During the summer.

Yeah.

And as I said, she would buy cabbage. I don't think she'd grew cabbage. I don't recall. And she would hide those potatoes in a cold spot. I think covered. And through the winter until it ran out, we lived on this.

That's amazing. She sounds like if it hadn't been for your mother, you all would have been lost.

Yes. No question about it. No question about it.

Did you arrive there with any kind of documents?

No.

I'm talking about old Polish passport--

No.

Nothing.

I don't think so, no, because particularly having lived in a small town, there was no need. I don't think my parents had any papers. I don't think so--

Your father may be if he traveled to Germany.

Maybe my father. I don't remember seeing any.

OK. Well, again, so it's when one starts creating a paper trail, where is that paper trail. I'm thinking back about your birth certificate. And sometimes some people who were in gulags, when they were released from those gulags got a certain kind of certificate that they had been and now they were allowed out.

Oh, yeah, I'll tell you about that. So we ended up being in Siberia 19 months.

All in Tavda?

All there.

OK.

Now when Russia joined the Allies.

And that would have been because? Why would she leave Germany to join the Allies?

Well, because Germany attacked Russia. And by that time, there weren't many places that you could travel in Russia, because the Germans had progressed so far along into the heart of Russia.

You're talking June 1941.

Right. [POLISH]

[POLISH]

[POLISH] The reason I remembered that, because we were singing a song, [POLISH]

Tell us what that means.

OK, on the 22nd of June, we were notified that war broke out. And that was 22nd of June, 1941, when Russia joined the Allies.

And did that come from the commandant?

No, that I learned later in Bukhara, because I didn't go to school in Siberia at all.

Were there loudspeakers in the settlement?

I don't recall loudspeakers. I think they used to just go individually to the different houses when they wanted somebody.

And were there ever any gatherings where everyone from the settlement had to come together to hear something, to witness something?

I don't recall.

Did you ever go with your sister when she worked or when your father when she worked?

No. I mean it was 8 kilometers away. It wasn't just next door. No, I never did. I never did. But we always tried to hide somebody, give them a day of respite. And if you couldn't get-- there wasn't really a doctor. There was what they called a felczer. And that was like a medical assistant, the best term I can think of, that would come and observe you. And he would say, yes, you're fit for work, no, you can have a day off.

And so that felczer could be a very powerful person.

Yeah. Well, I remember him because he came to look at my aunt's heels where she rubbed it so terribly. And he decreed three days she could stay home.

So the commandant shouldn't have been looking for her.

That was another time, you know.

OK.

That was another time. I mean we were there for 19 months. There were--

Many times--

Many incidences where the commandant would appear for no reason. Or they would come to check cleanliness. So they would lift up the bed, the sheets and this. And out of the blue, they would just come and check different things-- unannounced, of course.

Yeah. Were there bathing facilities?

Just in tubs, you know, in portable tubs.

OK. And I take it they were outhouses. There was no indoor toilet.

There was.

Oh, good.

There was in those new houses. Where we were taken in Tavda, there were toilet facilities.

OK.

I remember I had a tooth infected. And my father went through the whole settlement looking for a dentist. There wasn't any. And this felczer came. And he looked, and he said, well, I don't have any tools to pull teeth. He said, it will take care of itself.

In the meantime, I remember being in a lot of pain. And some months before my mother found a kitten. It was a red, kind of reddish fur tabby. And when I had pain, the cat would lay across my neck. And it kept me warm. And I loved that cat so much. And when it was time for us to leave, I remember my mother went from neighbor to neighbor asking them if they would have the cat. And at least she told me that she'd found somebody.

What was the cat's name?

I didn't name it. It was just cat. You know, we were not used to this like now, kids name everything, you know.

It was just cat.

It was just cat, but I loved it.

Of course. Of course.

And so eventually the day came--

We'll come-- excuse me that I'm interrupting. I want to stop right now. Can we--

So before the break, we were talking about the Siberian experience in Tavda, the commandant, the 19 months, the cold, the hunger. One last question before we move on-- did many people die in this settlement?

Many, many. Many, many people died in Siberia. Many of them froze to death, literally. If they didn't have the right clothing and walking 8 kilometers to work, they never made it back. They just froze.

People were malnourished. They died of all kinds of diseases-- hunger, just many reasons many people died. Many, many. And those of us who were there and were able to stay within the family framework was easier to survive, because parents always cared for their children and saw the children should have a better bite of whatever they could get. And I know this was true in our family. And this is how one supported the other. And within the family framework was easier to survive than people whose families were torn apart, who were taken from different places, ended up in different places.

So conditions were horrendous. For people who came out from a different climate, not used to such labor, the labor was tremendous for people who were conscripted, you can say, to work. There was no other way. Here and there, we got somebody out for a day or two. But everybody had to work, because if you didn't work, you didn't get your ration of bread, you didn't get your food. So you had to work. There was no other way out.

What about Bluma? We haven't talked about.

Bluma did not work. She was under age while we were in Siberia. And like I told you before, she was not a strong-- things upset her. She was afraid of many things. And later on when we get to Bukhara, I'll tell you more about her, of all the problems that she had, health problems, which turned into emotional problems. And she was very close to me because she was like in the middle. But she was of a different nature than my older sister.

Well, you know, not everybody has the stamina to withstand these kinds of assaults.

Exactly. Exactly.

One other point before we move on, you mentioned earlier that this experience robbed people of their dignity. Can you go into that a little bit, so that someone here who doesn't know how that happened would have a better idea?

Well, you know, just like under other circumstances with the Germans, though they didn't set out to kill us outright, but by disregarding all the principles that are important to you-- when you cannot worship freely, when you cannot observe your holy day of the week, when you can't live in dignity as a human being-- work, of course, but not to work like a slave, not take 14-year-old children and have them work in the forest with logging trees, that's robbing you of your dignity. That's robbing you of your principles, of your beliefs, of they believe in human beings.

So you hear at some point that it's the 22nd of June and that Germany has invaded the Soviet Union. How do your lives change after that?

Well, I think it changed to the fact that we saw hope of leaving Siberia, because it was known right away that now we're not the enemy. Even though we were Polish, we were no longer considered the enemy. They were fighting on the side of the Poles and on the side of the Allies. So we knew that the day will come and we'll be able to leave.

It took a while. We didn't leave there till the very end of November, because many circumstances. Number one in the Russia at that time, and I know during the communist was true throughout, that you could not go where you wanted to go. If you wanted to change your place of living, you had to apply. You had to get permission to travel to that place.

And the same thing happened here. Yes, they joined in June. But until the wheels turned and we got permission to leave was almost the end of November. And finally, we weren't allowed to leave. So there were--

How did you find out-- excuse me, how did you find out that you could go?

Well, again, going back to my age, I don't know that I found out. My parents were talking about it. People were speaking about it. So I learned of the fact that we will be leaving some day, because there were people in Siberia who were there 20 and 30 years. And a lot of them had no hope of ever leaving. Well, we knew we would get out at some point. So I guess you had to apply for permission where you wanted to go.

And I want to interject here, simply so that if somebody hears this in the future, there'd be a connection as to how it happens. My understanding was that the Poles came to an agreement. The government in exile in London came to agreement with Stalin to let the Polish citizens go.

That's true. That's true.

So that they could help form fighting forces against the Germans.

That's true.

So that if you were in a settlement and you were not a Polish citizen, but had been deported, you didn't get to go.

Yeah.

You had to be Polish.

Yes.

OK.

Yes, this applied only to the Polish refugees, not to the Russians who happened to be there exiled from Moscow or Leningrad or anywhere else.

[PHONE RINGING]

Let's--

So I mean the first deportations from the Baltic states was in June 1941, a week before the Germans attacked. So those people would have been sent, and they would never have been released, because they were not citizens.

Right, they were not Polish. Yeah, I knew that. I'm sorry I forgot to mention it. But I know from my family, my youngest uncle, my father's youngest brother, Moschel, he was caught in the war in Lwow.

Ah, he was there.

Because he was there at a yeshiva studying. He was the youngest. And he was studying there. So he was not with us. But we knew that he had maybe a chance of survival because he wasn't in our area. So toward the end of the war, my grandparents wrote a letter to the Red Cross. And they wanted to find out the whereabouts of this youngest son. And we actually received a letter from the Red Cross, and then shortly thereafter a letter from him, that he survived in a bunker. And he learned what happened to his brothers and to everybody else in Poland. And therefore, he's enlisting in the Polish army to go revenge his brothers.

Was this the Anders' Army that he was going to enlist in?

No, the Anders' Army was in Russia. I know about that. No, this was-- the Anders' Army was going in the Middle East, to the Middle East. This was the Polish army. And this was the last we heard from him. This was the one and only letter. And presumably, because we searched all over for him after the war, he must've gotten killed in some battle.

OK.

So this was the fifth son of my grandparents.

I can't imagine what they must have felt.

Well, after learning, my grandmother particularly, after learning that she lost the five sons, she just couldn't go on living. And she died within a year afterwards. She died in 1947. Yeah. She was only 61 years old.

Oh, my goodness. So you're here in Tavda. And you finally learn that you can leave. But then the question is, where to go to?

OK, so my father had the answer, because his aim was not to go back to Poland, but to go to Palestine. So he applied to the furthest point south, where his hope was that through Iran or through Afghanistan, which Iran borders the Black Sea, that he will be able somehow make his way to Palestine. So he applied to go to Bukhara.

Bukhara. And Bukhara is in what Soviet Republic?

Uzbekistan. Is in Uzbekistan.

So we got permission to go to Bukhara. And as I said, it wasn't till November. There were no trains. The service was very poor. The war was going down. Half of Russia was under German rule. So travel was very difficult. And some point in November, we made our way to Sverdlovsk, which was a main hub of trains.

And was this in Kazakhstan?

No.

Or is this in Russia?

Sverdlovsk is in Ural.

OK.

And there were hundreds and hundreds of people in the waiting hall of the train station. Some were there for weeks waiting for a train to connect to go wherever they asked permission to go.

And so Tavda was about how far from Sverdlovsk?

I don't remember exactly the distance, but it was not terribly far. I think we got there in one day.

And by horse and buggy? By sleigh?

No, no. By train. By another train.

OK.

How we got to the train, I don't exactly remember. But we came by train, but we had to go off in Sverdlovsk and wait till there was a train that would take us in that direction. Because different people were assigned from different settlements, some were assigned where to go, not just where they request requested. So I know that my grandparents Leibowitcz ended up in Kazakhstan near the city of Alma-Ata. They've since changed the name of Alma. I'm not quite sure what it's called today. And they ended up in a kolkhoz. A kolkhoz is a settlement where everything is a collective.

It's a collective farm.

A collective farm. So they ended up there. But the very interesting incident I want to tell you, when we were in Sverdlovsk, and like I said, there were so many people there. And there was barely room to find a corner and sit down. My father was walking around and talking, you know, and recognizing another Jew. Where are you from? Where are you going? Et cetera.

And he got to speaking to this one man. And during that conversation, the man said to him, I met a most amazing man here. He's knowledgeable. He's wise. And he's just a special human being. And I would very much like you to come and meet them. If you have to be here some time, I want you to go and meet him.

And he literally took him by the hand. And they walked through other crowds and whatever. And guess who that was? It was my grandfather Leibowitz. And this was the last time that we saw my grandparents, unfortunately, only for one day, because their train arrived and they had to leave. So that's where we got to see them the very last time. We saw my aunts. We saw my grandmother. And unfortunately, both my grandmother and my grandfather died in Kazakhstan.

Of what causes?

They became-- she was not a well person as I told you.

That's right. She was diabetic, right?

She was diabetic. She had other-- I remember her having tremors. I don't know what this translated to, what the illness she had. But she was not a well person for many years. And obviously, under harsh conditions, they both died there. And my aunts eventually came out and made their way to Israel. So I've got to know those aunts very well and loved them very much.

But at that point, this was paths crossing--

Just random, just random. And the thought that this other man that my grandfather was an exceptional human being and he wanted my father to meet him was a miracle, because we would have never found him. We would have never looked for him. We would have never found them. So we got a chance to see him, to see them, all of them, one more time.

How long did you stay in Sverdlovsk?

We were more fortunate. Somehow it was only a few days.

OK.

But there were people that were there for weeks. And it was a few days. And again, I remember my sister, my mother went to buy food. My father-- everything was very scarce, very scarce.

We're talking late November, early December 1941?

Correct. Not early December. End of November.

End of November.

Or maybe we started early Novem-- we ended up leaving on the train like mid-November.

Got it.

So we finally made it to a train. That journey took also weeks. Weeks.

To Bukhara?

To Bukhara. We actually had to get off in Uzbekistan, but in Tashkent. We went off, and for a while they thought-- the parents thought-- that we would stay there. From this station, we were together with the Barth family.

From this station, I remember also there was no buggy or anything. Everybody carried something. And my aunt told me, years later, that a man came over, a Jewish man. And he said, I'll help you carry your packages. And he took like a pillow and quilt, and he disappeared. And we never saw him again. So those things happened because people were in need. People were in need.

So we were in Tashkent a few weeks. And I remember the first night, they had no doors. They had low window-- Bukhara was the same thing. They had very low windows. And people would walk through the windows. And I knew from stories that only thief went through windows, who walk through windows. So I was very scared when I saw somebody walking through a window.

Also, the room that we got, the wall adjoined a bakery--

That's not a bad place to be.

No, not a bad place. But it shook. He was running machines. And the wall would shake. I remember that. And it was hard to go to sleep, because he would work primarily at night to have the baked goods during the day. So I remember Tashkent even though we were very short time there.

How did it look otherwise? When I think of Tashkent, I think of a very exotic place.

Exotic place. Well, I don't think that I was taken along a nice tour of the city, you know, so I don't remem--

No sightseeing--

So I don't remember very much of the city. I do remember Bukhara, of course. I don't remember Tashkent very much, except that building where we had the one room and that the walls were shaking all the time, mostly at night. So then we, again, after a few weeks, were able to get a train, room on the train, which was very difficult. And we made our way to Bukhara.

When we got to Bukhara was a other story, because there were many refugees who came to Bukhara. We were not the only ones. And you couldn't find any lodging. You couldn't find in their rooms.

And eventually, we found, I remember, a very large room. And I'll tell you about the buildings there that we shared together with my grandparents, my aunts, and our family. And there was a little kitchen. And the buildings primarily there are constructed within a courtyard. And they're built on two sides, one side for winter, literally, where the sun hits, because the winters are very harsh. It's like subtropical climate. The summers are very hot, and the winters are very cold.

And they had obviously no heating. So I remember for the Bukhara people, they used to have a dog out in the floor. The floors were either dirt or some kind of stone. There was a dugout where they would put coals and heat the coals and have like a little table over it with a quilt. And you would stick your feet under--

The quilt--

Under the quilt, close to the coals, and that's how you would warm yourself.

Oh, my gosh.

Yeah.

Oh, my gosh. So what happened to your back? Your feet are warm, but your back is cold.

You cover yourself the best you can. But this was not the biggest problem in Bukhara. What happened in Bukhara was really great hunger and terrible diseases, because Bukhara did not have clear water at that time, clean water. And people would drink polluted water and get typhoid. All of us had typhoid. I had typhoid.

We didn't have beds. They laid out planks on the floor. And like all five of us laid on the same, you know, one next to the other. And on the other side were my grandparents. And my sister and I were the first, I think, to get typhoid. But this was later. This was after we lost my father.

What happened?

Well, we were in Bukhara only five weeks when my father became very ill. He got very strong abdominal pains on a Saturday afternoon. And by evening, he was in excruciating pain. And all three of us and my aunts, we all ran in the neighborhood. And when I told you it's built in a courtyard style, they all have doors that they lock at night. So we started knocking at those doors of neighbors in the area and asking for a doctor.

And, you know, the Bukhara people, including Jews-- there were many Jews from Bukhara, natives-- that were very suspicious of us, the Ashkenazi Jews. They weren't familiar with us. We didn't speak the same language. They spoke Bukharan, which is Uzbek's language, which is a separate language. A lot of them didn't even know a Russian. They spoke their own language. We, of course, came from Eastern Europe. We spoke different languages. By that time, we knew some Russian. They were very suspicious, and they were afraid to open the doors.

And it wasn't till late, late at night that we found somebody who said he was a doctor. He came and examined my father. And he really didn't know what was wrong with me. He had no X-ray. But he did arrange Sunday morning to take my father to a hospital.

So I remember that morning very well. This is one place where I always have trouble talking about it. Before they came to take my father, he wanted to pray. So he put the tallit on, the prayer shawl, and his tefillin, which orthodox Jews put on their heads and on their arms.

And I was standing like on this side and watching, just looking at him. And he called me over. And he took me in his prayer shawl, wrapped me with it and hugged me. And he kissed me on the forehead. And he said, don't worry, I'll be OK. And this is the last time I saw my father was that morning.

They took him to the hospital. And they decided that he had an obstruction in his bowels. You see, even in Bukhara he denied himself. He fasted days. And it totally ran down his system. And when he ate, I guess, he didn't digest it, or whatever. I'm not a doctor. I can't explain what caused it. But that was the result. And they decided to operate.

So the doctor was going to operate. He told my mother that she needs to pay him x amount of rubles. So my mother took her purse, and she spilled it out all on his desk. And she said, this is what I have, this is what I can give you. She said, but I have three children. And tomorrow I won't be able to feed them. So he took enough money. He gave her back enough to buy one bread. And this is what we were left with.

Monday, they operated on my father. And a half hour, they came out to tell us that he didn't survive. And we don't know if they actually did the operation or didn't do the operation or what caused his death. He was 38 years old.

And when I saw my mother coming back from the hospital with my sister, I knew, I knew that we had lost him. And-- my mother had to take care of us.

Your father, was he able to be buried?

To?

Was your father buried?

Oh, yes. My father was buried. Bukhara had a Jewish cemetery. And after some months, you know, after a year, we put a stone up. And I have pictures of that. Unfortunately, I never went back to visit there. During the communists, we were afraid to go back, because we were there. And I was actually in the young-- Communist Youth. They made everybody in school--

You were a Pioneer?

To be in the Komsomol, which is the Communist Youth. They made us wear the red kerchiefs with the insignia and everything. And people always advised, me don't go back, don't go back, you may be in trouble because you lived there for so many years. So I didn't. And once communism broke, my sister wasn't well enough to go. And it's one of those things I just never made it back.

Do you know the date of your father's death?

Oh, sure-- what was it? He died-- I know the Jewish date. I think it was the 21st of December. And Tet Tevet is what I observe every year, the anniversary of his death-- the ninth day of the month of Tevet, because we observe the Jewish date. So--

I can't imagine what it was like for your family then.

Yeah. So we were left with nothing, literally. We started looking in my father's jacket pockets to see if he had something. And my mother found a treasure. I told you he was a smoker. And he used to use a lighter that used little stones, you know little--

A flint.

A flint. And he had a few hundred of them in his pockets, between different pockets. So, you know, nothing was available at that time. So we started selling that. And that was the first money that we had after we lost my father.

Of course, we had a minyan, a group of men, Jewish men. And we held services twice a day in our apartment. And I remember very clearly there were people who would come in the morning and would be dead at night. They were so weak or so ill that they would come in the morning, and then we heard he dropped, literally dropped, in the street. And there were many cases like that.

But slowly my mother started to think of things she could do to exist, to survive. So kosher slaughtering was forbidden, particularly of cows. But people try and do it anyway. So they would slaughter a cow. There was a shochet, as I explained before, somebody who was qualified would do it late at night, someplace hidden. And my mother would go and buy the cheapest parts available. I remember she would buy--

The snout?

The face of the cow. And we would sit for hours and try to clean the hair out of it. She would pour boiling water on it. And you literally had to pinch it--

Pinch the hair of it--

With tweezers to take the hair out. And then she would chop it up. And she would make a stew or cook a soup. Or she would buy bones. And slowly some single people who wanted to keep kosher found out, and they would come at night. And my mother would have some food. And they would leave whatever kopeks, whatever pennies they had for that meal. And then what was left, we ate.

And bread was still a problem. They used to sell bread. And the lines were enormous. Sometimes you stood 24 hours in

line or longer. So I remember one incident. They were actually selling little white rolls. And my sister was in line, and my aunt was in line. And when it came close to the window, they ran home and they grabbed me as well. I should stand in line, because whoever stood in line got a portion.

So it came my turn. And the window was up there. I was down here. I was standing up and trying to look. And the guy looked down at me, and he said, what are you doing here? I'm not selling to children. So I started crying. And he said, well, don't cry. I'll tell you what, if you know how to count, I'll sell it to you.

And right there with the line of, I don't know, 50, 100 people behind me, he gave me a math test. Do you know how much is 5 and 5, or 4 and 4? I don't remember the exact numbers, but I answered them all, whatever he asked me. And he sold it to me. So you incidents like that you remember.

Yes.

And another way that we got bread to really live on was as the people died-- we had ration cards-- their cards were available. Their families would sell the cards. And you had extra ration papers. So with that, my mother would buy different-- of course, everything was illegal. If they would catch you, you would go to jail, no question about it.

Pretty soon she met a man that used to carry flour to an institution, to a Russian institution. Well, he couldn't make a living either from what he was getting. So he would steal. He would take a sack of flour, throw it down someplace. He would tell my mother where to wait. And she'd pay them and drag that--

Flour--

That flour home. And then she would bake or resell the flour or do different things, where one time she was caught. She was caught and she was taken by a policeman to the police station. And she was sitting there for many hours, because there were other people ahead of her. And she said at one point there were so many people in front of that sergeant that was interrogating everybody that she got up and she started slowly to inch her way toward the door, and she ran off. She ran off, but she was afraid to come home.

So she went actually to a Russian woman that she had met. And she stayed there for two weeks. She was afraid to come home, that they'll come looking for her.

Did they?

But-- no, because they obviously didn't take her name, or if the Sergeant, he didn't really-- whatever, they never came looking for her. Eventually, she came home.

But one time, they caught her. She couldn't run off. So they held her overnight. And my grandfather still had a watch of some kind. So my sister went-- she had the guts to do it, my oldest sister Hannah. She and my aunt together went to-- I don't know what his rank was, a captain or something, but somebody above the policeman-- she came to him, and she started pleading for her mother. And he just had no sympathy. So she took out the watch, kind of quietly. And he got so mad, he chased her out. But she wouldn't leave. And eventually, he took the watch. And my mother came home after a couple days.

But she did things that I don't know if every woman could have done that. My mother really did not think of herself so much that she can end up in jail, that she can be, who knows what, sent back to Siberia. But she did whatever she could to have a piece of bread in our house.

And I remember I developed this, during those years, that I would never finish whatever I was given. I would save a piece. I would save something, a piece of bread. And my mother used to tease me, and she would say, better hurry up and finish that because the Messiah is going to come and then you won't have one to eat it. She said, better finish it now. And--

Did it work as an argument?

I remember-- of course, again, we had no cooling of any kind. So there was a well in that courtyard. So they used to lower food into the well, because the well was cold. And I remembered that one time, she was able to buy on the bazaar, you know, where people, farmers, would come and sell stuff, some cheese.

And I guess it got bad a odor, and my sisters wouldn't need it. They gave it to me. They wanted to see if I would eat it, because you couldn't just throw it out. Well, for some reason, I loved it. And I still like blue cheese. [LAUGHTER] So I remember them staring at me as I was eating it. And there were many times that we were not starving, but hungry, many times during those years.

How many years did you stay in Bukhara?

We stayed in Bukhara till April '46.

That's a long time.

A year after the war almost, because, again, the Polish government started repatriating the Polish refugees. But they didn't get to everybody right away.

Well, one thing that I wanted to ask you about the early years, was there a Polish presence, let's say a Polish government presence, or organizations in Bukhara?

There were some organizations. And they started a Polish school, as I mentioned, for children of refugees. So I was registered in the first grade. And I remember going to school. I had no coat. It was a winter, the first winter we got there. I had a coat from home that reached me halfway through my arm and very short. And it was winter. It was very cold. And besides, it looks kind of silly on me.

And I remember one day toward the end of the year, they wanted class pictures. Well, I refused to go to the picture, take a picture, in that coat. So the teacher grabbed an older girl, took off her coat-- she couldn't take anybody from my class because they need their own coats. While the older girl was waiting for her class turn, she took off her coat and put it on me.

And I have that picture. It's not in very good shape, but I have it. And I look at the saddest little girl you ever want to see, because I didn't feel comfortable in that other girl's coat. And it didn't fit me. This one was way too big for me. And I was like wrapped in it, and I sat on the floor. And if I could have made myself disappear, I would have.

So I managed to go through fourth grade--

So four years.

And Russian was taught as a language in our school.

But you learned your subjects in Polish?

In Polish, yes, that's how I really acquired more Polish.

Were there Gentile Poles there too?

Yes.

And what was the relationship like? What was--

In school?

Between one another.

We had good relationships. I don't remember any incidents, bad incidents among the children. I really don't recall any.

Do you-- OK, did you want to say something right no, because I have another--

I just wanted to say that we were still forced in a way, not physically, but forced, that everybody in class had to be in the Young Komsomol. And Stalin's picture was on the walls. And here we say the Pledge of Allegiance, and then there, we had to sing to Stalin.

Yeah. So there were concessions that needed to be made.

Yes.

Even though it was a Polish school--

Yes--

Of don't forget where you are.

Yes. Exactly. Exactly.

Was there also at any point in Bukhara a Polish military presence? That is did General Anders' Army-- part of the reason for the release of Polish citizens from the camps was to get military men to help to fight.

Yes. So Anders' Army passed through Bukhara. And for some reason, Anders' Army did not want Jews. I don't know if you know that. But they took Jewish children with them. And actually, at one point, my mother acquired another widow with children to help her in this cooking venture that she did at that time. And she had three children, and she sent-- they were slightly older than we were-- and she sent those children-- I don't know how or who in the army took care of them or how, but they followed with Anders' Army. And when they reached the Middle East, somehow those kids ended up in Palestine in Youth Aliyah, which meant the Young Immigrants.

This woman wanted very much my mother to send us, if not myself-- I was too young maybe-- the others, but my mother didn't want to do it. She did not want to part.

Were those, the children, the other children, were they boys or girls?

I think one boy and one girl.

So the boy could look after the girl, if necessary?

Yeah.

It's kind of hard to send just young girls.

Yeah.

I would have--

My mother refused. And I know there were other people who send-- and how, what the circumstances were I really couldn't tell you. But I know they said they send them with Anders' Army.

Well, you see, it's still a very murky kind of-- there's no definitive word that I have heard yet about this, Anders' Army

and the relationship with Jews, because some Jews that I've interviewed said I was accepted. And some said, they didn't want me.

Yeah.

And some were there--

I don't know if it was dependent on the local, let's say, if somebody came to recruit and this particular person didn't want to accept Jews and another one did, I don't know.

And then I even read-- I did interviews, but I read in a scholarly article that there also was a Soviet person there with the Anders' Army, and sometimes it was the Soviet who would not allow.

Possibly. I don't know.

We don't know.

I don't know that.

We don't know. But nevertheless, this is what you know of that. That's what you experienced of it. And that is something that--

Yes--

Is part of the story.

Yeah. Yeah.

OK. So they passed through, and they didn't stay except for the fact that there still were some Polish institutions--

Yeah--

That were in Bukhara.

Right.

OK.

And there were the usual help, not may be as well organized, but usual help groups among the Jews as well.

The aid groups--

Like when my father passed away, the Chevra Kadish, which is an organization that helps with burial. They helped us with burying my father.

Did you go to the funeral?

Yes. We all did, though the women were kind of pushed back. We were not exactly immediately by the grave. We walked quite a ways to the cemetery. And again, my father's body was carried. And, of course, in Jewish tradition, they're only-- not in a casket, but on a plank of wood. And they're just buried, the body, without a casket.

As I said, there were many times that a piece of bread was something to treasure. And many people would come to the door and beg. And my mother would always manage to slice a piece and give the man. And when we lived together, one of my aunts, the youngest one, used to get literally into hysterics, because of you, we are going to die.

To your mother?

Yes. Because you're giving away our bread. And you can't give away anything. But my mother could never refuse. Either it was a piece of bread or if she had something cooked leftover or whatever, she would share. And it's so interesting to me because, this aunt survived. And in later years-- she was not a rich person. She just lived-- she worked actually in a hospital. She helped translate from Russian to English. And she was like half volunteer and half salary. She would give away her shirt if you asked her. She always sent exaggerated gifts. If she knew a child had a bar mitzvah or something, for her means it was always exaggerated.

And I used to beg her, please, we don't need it, don't send so much. There was no way of talking her out. She like totally her nature, I don't know if it changed, or the war made her so frightened that she was going to die that too was an unkind person during the war, but completely changed afterwards.

Do you think maybe she felt guilty? I'm just supposing. I wouldn't know.

She just was very much afraid that she was going to die.

Well, but what you highlight on I think is something we very often, us, who have never experienced war, is how people change, how their natures change, how their personalities change, what effect this constant stress and constant fighting for survival is.

My mother would buy the bread and come home and slice it. And she would argue with my mother that if she sliced it the other way, there would be more. [LAUGHTER] Foolish things like that, I remember that. And my mother used to tell her, please, it's the same bread, don't worry about it. But she would insist every time. If my mother just sliced it the other way, there will be more.

And she really suffered. She suffered. And in the later years, she was the total opposite.

And you said Bluma-- was it Bluma now who also had some sort of experiences in Bukhara?

So Bluma became very ill with a tape worm. And it kept repeating on her. And in order to get rid of it, she had to during horrible medication that they gave her. And then-- it's not pleasant to talk about it, but the sensation of getting rid of that was frightening. It was horrible. And somehow she got this disease, and they kept repeating on her. And she suffered terribly from it. And she couldn't eat and just wasn't strong, just wasn't strong.

And the very first year, as I said, when we still lived together after my father was gone, those were the most difficult years. Later we moved on our, our little family, to another apartment. We separated. Apartments became a little more available. We got to know more Russian people. So we got also a little apartment in another street.

And my mother, I told you, she used to collect young men that needed help. So in the courtyard adjoining ours, there was a young man that suffered from malaria. Somehow she found out about him. And at that point, we had more food already. And she started bringing him food.

When he got better, he came to our house. He met my sister. And he fell in love with my sister Hannah. And they were married in September 9, 1943.

Oh, wow.

And he came into our family. And he was also a very, very loving, caring person. I loved my brother-in-law.

What's his name?

His name was Moshe, Moshe Kaufmann. And he knew how badly I needed and wanted a decent coat. So like within the

month of marrying my sister-- of course, there was no honeymoons are anything, you know. Somehow, and to this day I never knew where, but he found out a family that had a coat that would fit me. And he came home one day, and I remember that so clearly, it was wrapped in brown paper. And he said, I have a gift for you.

And I unwrapped it, and it was a beautiful little coat. It was navy. And it had two rows of gold buttons. It was double breasted. I loved that little coat. And I felt like a princess in it, because the rest of my clothing was shabby. And this little coat was almost brand new. It looked new to me, but I know it wasn't. But it was something I felt wonderful. And I never forgot the fact that he brought me that very important gift to me. And I just loved wearing it, till I outgrew it again. But I had it for a while.

So it's one of those bright spots in a very bleak picture.

Yeah, yeah. So my sister got pregnant. And in December '44, she had a little girl. Her name was Yona. And my sister almost died at childbirth because of what turned out to be a wandering kidney. That accident in Siberia knocked out her kidney from the socket. And the kidney was literally wandering--

Around--

Out of her socket. And she again had a terrible attack of pain. And she was in grave condition because of that kidney. And it wasn't till 1949 in Israel that she was operated in Jerusalem, in the Hadassah Hospital, and the kidney was removed. But she managed to live till this year. I lost her in July. She was 92 and 1/2.

What a loss.

And she lived with one kidney.

My condolences. This is after a lifetime together.

Yeah. Well, not quite together, because I've been in the States now for almost 63 years, even though I still speak with an accent. But, yeah, her loss is a very big loss to me. And unfortunately, we lost Yona as well about six years ago. She had breast cancer that metastasized. And she eventually succumbed after a few years.

She left her husband and two adopted children. And one is a boy, and one is a girl. They were not brother and sister. It's a very interesting story in itself. She got those children from two different sources, but they were only three weeks apart. So she raised them as twins. And it's a boy and a girl. The boy became an attorney now. And he's going to be married May 22 in Israel.

And I would very much like to make that wedding. I hope I can, because I was very close to this niece, because she was born in Bukhara. I knew her from the day she was born, and I used to play with her as a child. And we were together when we came back to Poland.

Did your sister have any other children?

Yes, she has two other girls. She also had three daughters. No sons. But she now-- well, now she has sons-in-law and grandchildren and many great grandchildren.

So when you split, it was yourself, your mother, and your two sisters--

Right--

Who moved into your own apartment. And your paternal grandparents and their daughter-- or two daughters?

Two daughters.

Two daughters moved into another--

Another apartment.

Was it close by to yours?

Yes, it was not far, not far. And I actually have a very sweet memory of my grandmother. I remember I used to-- I have two memories, one not so sweet, but funny. I used to go walk over there like Saturday afternoon. In the winter, it was cold, as I mentioned. There was no heating. And she would stay in bed Saturday afternoon, like for the rest and to take a nap.

And later in the afternoon I used to go over there and crawl in bed with her. And at the end of the Sabbath, there's also a prayer that women say, specifically for women. And she would recite that prayer with me, while I was cuddling with her. And that's a very sweet memory I have of her.

Now, the other incident that is funny today, but wasn't funny at the time, after some time, my mother switched to making butter and cheese because she was familiar with that. But, again, this was all illegal. You have to remember that private enterprise totally illegal in Russia. So she would procure some milk, and we would wait till late at night. Of course, the milk had to sour for about two or three days. Then, at night, we had two churns that we would sit and churn butter. And I used to help a little, but mostly my sisters would do that.

And then I remember she would take like a cheese cloth and pour what-- the butter was scooped out. And then she would pour the sour milk in this cheese cloth. And somehow cheese would form. And she would sell the butter and cheese to other Russians, who didn't get it. And this was fresh butter.

So one day, I guess she couldn't leave the house for whatever reason. I was already eight at that point. She wrapped a little package of butter. And she said, I want you to take it to this and this address to this woman-- I don't remember the name anymore-- and give her this butter. But if you meet anybody on the road that asks you where you are going, you are not to tell. You are not to tell. Just say you are out, because she was afraid that the authorities would find out.

Well, lo and behold, I'm walking. Whom do I come across? My grandmother. Where are you going?

You're not to tell.

My mother told me I cannot tell anybody where I'm going. Well, she got so offended. She thought my mother told me don't tell grandmother. Of course, she didn't do that. But my grandmother interpreted that that her daughter-in-law told her child don't tell your mother-in-law where I'm going.

So this was a whole to do afterwards. And my mother tried to explain. I just told her don't tell anybody. I didn't mention whom she can tell. So this was this was an incident.

It took a while.

It took a while, yes, between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law to straighten it out.

Do you remember when the war ended?

Yes.

Tell me what was that like. How did you hear?

Well, there were celebrations in the street. And at first there were celebrations, because we did not have much information of what happened at home, and that everybody is gone from the family, you know, the brothers and my mother's brother and extended family. We had no information. So at first there was jubilation, till slowly information

started coming through and finding out what happened in Poland.

So in Bukhara, at some point you do learn.

We do learn, but we still don't know. We still don't know.

Isn't that interesting that when one hears, one knows, but you don't know?

You don't know, because we didn't know particulars. I don't think we really knew about the extermination places in Bukhara. We knew a lot of people died. But we didn't know particulars. And it wasn't till later, and mostly by the time we got back to Poland, that we found out that nobody was left, you know, from the brothers. We always had a hope, at least the one that survived the initial war before the war ended that he may be alive.

The one in the bunker?

Right. We did not know that the one was shot in our town. We did not know that the others were taken to concentration camps and killed there. The best to our knowledge, the older brother was taken to Belzec, which was an extermination camp. And I didn't complete the story with Yossi, my young--

That's right, the little boy.

My little boy, my cousin. So he was with us for a while in the Ukraine. And there was a time in the beginning, you still could kind of sneak through the border and come to the Ukraine. So his father came. And he said, we just miss him terribly. We'll take him home for a while. And he took him home. And, of course, the borders, everything was locked up once Germany got really a hold of Poland, and we never saw him again. And he was lost together with his parents in Belzec.

You decide-- you say you stay until 1946.

Yes.

And the war ended in early May 1945.

Yes, May 9, 1945.

And you go back to Poland--

May 8. Yes. So the Polish government arranged passage. But they were not interested in sending us to our place of birth, to Galicia. They were very much interested in settling the areas that they took from Germany. You know a part of Silesia was taken from Germany and annexed to Poland.

And a part of Eastern Poland then--

Went into Russia, yes. Actually, where I was born is very close now to the Ukrainian border. And Lwow now became Ukraine. And we were actually-- it was called Zarszyn Wojewodztwowskie, which was-- I don't know if county is the right word. But did belonged to that--

Region--

Region, right. So this is now Ukraine. And it was USSR. It was Russia during all the years till the collapse of the Communist regime.

So we were taken to a town that used to be German. It was actually a beautiful little town. It was a resort.

Oh, what was the name?

Reichenbach.

Reichenbach.

Reichenbach in German. And in Polish, they named it Rychbach.

Rychbach.

Rychbach.

Rychbach.

Rychbach-- R-Y-C-H-B-A-C-H-- Rychbach. They had mineral waters there. And it was a small little town, but beautiful town. So my married sister Hannah was with us and their daughter and her husband. And very shortly after we got there, they wanted to leave. And my mother didn't want to go with them, because she felt we would be a hindrance to them.

What happened was my brother-in-law made contact somehow through other relatives with his parents. He was initially from the city of Lodz-- Lodz. And his parents had a textile factory. They were quite well off.

So somehow after the war broke out, they managed to get to Romania. And from Romania, they were able to buy tickets, because Romania was neutral at the time, to Palestine. So they came to Palestine at the beginning of '40.

And how did he end up in Bukhara.

The son was taken separately. He was caught someplace and taken separately. The details exactly I don't know.

But anyway, so the father wrote to him that if he can get with my sister and child to Germany, they will be able to send them official papers and take them out to Palestine. So my sister, brother-in-law, and their daughter Yona smuggled out through Poland. They went through Szczecin.

Szczecin.

Went boat through the border there in a truck that covered them up, camouflaged them with different things. And they were smuggled into Germany. In Germany, they ended up in DP camp.

Where?

I'm not quite sure if I remember now. And--

Do you know whether it was the British zone or the American--

British.

British zone.

British zone, they were very much interested in British zone, because the father was going to send them British visas. Palestine was under the British. And he was able to get visas for them.

So they were in Germany, I think, a year or so. And in 1947, late in the year-- I think by September, October-- they came to Palestine. I know for a fact that they were there during the UN partition of Palestine, because my sister told me about that evening. They were there already. So this was the reason my mother didn't want to go along with them, because she was afraid we would be a hindrance to them. We weren't sure where they were going to end up. And we

knew that the father could only bring his son and wife out. So we stayed in Poland.

We stayed for a number of months in Rychbach. And slowly, a Jewish little community was formed. And I remember we were there Rosh Hashanah. And they organized a service in somebody's house. There were no synagogues.

And walking home from the service-- I was with my mother, my sisters, and also my mother's brother, the one who was also in Kazakhstan somehow joined us there. How I don't know. But he was in the same town. And he had four children. My cousins, they're still all alive in Israel today.

So anyway, on Rosh Hashanah night, when we walked home from the service, we heard shots. And it was dark. The streets were not lit up very well. We didn't know where the shots came from or who fired them. The next morning we found out that three Jews were just shot at random in the street walking back from the service.

So shortly thereafter, my mother again, she needed a livelihood. And she found out that there was a children's home in Bytom, which was also part of Silesia, not far from the city of Wrocław. This children's home was for children primarily that were hidden out with Christian families during the war. And if a relative survived or a friend or a neighbor, if anybody knew that a child was given to a family, they tried to get those children back.

But those children had a difficulty. I just think to Jews, again, most of them had to play the role as a Christian. They took them to church. They were baptized. They were communion-- you know, everything that goes with the Christian religion. They were not used to Judaism. And many of them were young and couldn't remember anything being Jewish. Some were, but a lot of them were young.

I was the only child with a parent, because my mother was like the house mother. She also cooked in this children's home. So this children's home was, again, under the observation and support of an orthodox Jewish organization. And we did not go to school. We were home-schooled.

And our schooling was very poor looking back at it. They taught us a lot of Jewish prayers, stories from the Bible, a little math, maybe a smattering of Polish. But it was very poor education.

Well, they're very extenuating circumstances. It's post-war.

Yes.

The purpose is to find living relatives. And what do you do in the interim?

Yeah.

Yeah.

Yeah. So when my mother took the job, they promised her then when they will send children to Palestine, she will go along with them. I don't know if you are familiar with the aliyah bet.

Well, explain to people. What is aliyah bet?

Aliyah bet, aliyah means going up to Israel. That is the number two. It was called SO because this was the second wave of Jews going to Palestine. And that too was a legal from the British standpoint because they had the white paper which forbid bed Jews just en masse coming to Palestine and only with visas, like my sister and so forth, anybody who had a special permit to go.

Other than that they used to smuggle Jews in. They used to hire boats, ships, sometimes, mostly from France or from Italy, and make it through the Mediterranean and figure out in such a way that you arrived at night. And they would let off the people illegally. And if they were caught, they were sent to detention places. There was one in the city of Atlit. My Uncle Yakov actually ended up in Atlit, because his group was caught when they landed in Jaffa. They also used to

send people to Cyprus. And many were stuck there for a year or better.

So they had promised my mother that they will send her with a group of children on this Aliyah Bet. When the time came, they sent a group of children, and they did not keep their promise. And my mother was very disappointed. And then she found out-- I'm not sure how, through the organization, or so-- that there was another children's home forming in the Lodz.

[PHONE RINGING]

OK.

So my mother found out about the children's home in Lodz. It was also sponsored by a Jewish Orthodox organization. And she got the same job there-- house mother, cook, whatever.

And at that place, I remember a number of people very well. They brought to us children, as I said, that were hidden out during the war or lived openly as Christians. So comes to mind particularly one boy who was raised by a very good Christian family. They loved him. They dressed him well. They send him to a good school. He actually lived I think in Warsaw, but for some reason came to Lodz.

And he was 12 for this time, which probably means he was five, like myself, when the war broke out. So he had totally blocked out his former identity. But as he was walking in the street, he heard Yiddish spoken and something clicked. And I don't know how he separated from his Christian parents, but he ended up walking into a synagogue. And he asked to see a rabbi. And he started telling the rabbi that he remembers something about being Jewish. And they started looking into his background.

And sure enough, the parents, the Christian parents, admitted that he was given to them to hide him, to raise him. But they didn't want to give him up, which is very easy to understand. It's hard when you raise a child for seven years or better just to give him up. But eventually, they did and he ended up in our children's home.

My friend to this day-- she lives in Canton, Ohio-- was brought to us with a sister. And they had a very interesting history too. They were from Vilna. And when the Germans were coming in, the mother to come to Ukraine-- Vilna Christian family. And these people kept them for a number of months. Then one night my friend heard the woman of the house say, we're running out of food, I think I'm going to turn them over to the Germans, the two girls. So she heard that.

So at night, she woke up her sister, and they ran away. She didn't know where she was running. She was walking on the street-- I mean on the road. And they got tired, and they fell asleep. And a priest found them, and he immediately realized who they are. And they took them to a convent. And they survived in the convent. And, of course, they were totally Christianized-- if that's a proper term.

And the mother survived. And she searched for those girls and found them. The problem was the girls didn't want to stay with her. They didn't know her anymore. They didn't want to stay with her. And I think they also got a little, you know, prejudiced history against Jews. And they called that poor mother any name in the book. They Didn't want to be with her. They kept running away from her. So she brought them to us.

And became a habit that the every new child that would come was put in the room with me, because I was the one child that was raised Jewish. So they put-- her name was Basha-- they put Basha in my room. And at night once we turned off the lights, I remember watching her. She would crawl down from bed, kneel, cross herself, and say a prayer. And I didn't say anything to anybody. I felt she needed it.

But then, they assigned me to walk with her to school. We were registered in a Yiddische shule, a Jewish school, that taught all subjects in Yiddish. And Polish was again a taught language--

Like Russian had been before.

Exactly. So I walked with her. And every day, she would tell me, please, let's just go into this church for a minute, for two minutes, please. And I was told to say, no, not to go into a church. So I always said no to her. In my later life, I regretted it, because she possibly needed that. But we became good friends.

And then when we eventually immigrated to Israel, I lost contact with her. And through a third girl in our children's home, when I was in America already, she connected me with her. And she told me that she lives in Canton. So I picked up the phone. I found her phone number. Information, those days, you dialed information. And I got her number. And we both started screaming in the phone. And we are friends to this day. And she speaks very often about her experiences.

And tell me, was she able to become Jewish again?

Very much so. They went to Israel. She lived in Israel like I did. Her sister still lives in Israel. And her sister was the one that was the most rebellious against Judaism, because she was younger and that's all she remembers.

There were other incidents. That they brought to us as a six-year-old little girl. And she must have been a baby, literally, when her parents gave her away to a farm. But those people were not as kind to her. And they made her work in the fields at the age of five. And she used to tell us stories that were unbelievable for a five-year-old. And she eventually made it to Canada and became a doctor.

So these children--

You saw a world there.

Yes. Yes. I have many, many stories from this children's home, many stories, mostly children sad, sad children. They had no families. They were brought to a new place, to most of them a new religion, no rules. Particularly, we were under the supervision of strictly Orthodox people, which the men that thinks that it was not psychologically good for those children.

We weren't allowed to go to movies. So children would sneak out sometime. The older girls in particular would go to a movie. Well, if that rabbi who used to come to us found out, he would slam the table and yell at all of us. And we had to be dressed modestly and different things that I developed animosity to this person and really didn't like him, because, like I say, I had a different vision, because I had my mother, first of all. And--

And you had a different spirit. All through your story, you have been telling me of the rituals and the prayers, but also the kindness that was associated with all the people who introduced those to you.

Yes. But not this man that was in charge of this children's home. I never forgave him for that. I never forgave him, because after his visits-- and when we used to slam the table, children would get stomachaches. They would get so upset, they would cry. And that upset me terribly. I was already 12 years old, 13 years old. And I could understand how bad this was. So that upset me greatly.

But to move on, we were stuck under the communists and we couldn't go anywhere. But it was thanks to a Jewish Orthodox rescue organization, the Vaad Hatzalah, which literally means the Committee of Rescue, Organization of rescue. They somehow send us legal passports to leave Poland. So in November of '48, we left Poland, and we came to France because France was one of those gateways--

That's right--

To Israel.

So you didn't have to smuggle like your sister had?

No. We all know that on May 14, 1948, Israel declared independence. So there was a state already. So we came to Paris toward the end of November. We ended up being there for three months, with my mother going almost every day to the Jewish organization, see when will be our turn to leave and so forth. But it took three months.

In the meantime, in Poland, before we left, my sister Bluma married. And she went with her husband. We separated in France. They had their chance to go sooner. And we followed later.

So it was you and your mother who were left.

Yes. Yes. And my mother and I lived in those children's home, the second children's home. So we were in France a town not far from Paris called by Baye. It was a half hour train ride, 40 minutes train ride. That's where my Grandfather Barth was. But unfortunately, I did not see my grandmother anymore. She had passed away, and she was buried in France, in Paris.

So one set in Kazakhstan and the other--

In Paris. Her body was actually-- after my grandfather died in Jerusalem, her body was exhumed and brought to Jerusalem. And she's buried side by side with my grandfather. So we eventually made our way through Marseilles in southern France to Israel.

And this would have been the winter of '49?

No, it was by that time spring--

Of '49?

Yes. Well, in Israel it was spring. It was actually February. We arrived in Israel in February of 1949. And we landed in Haifa. And I remember looking out and seeing the sunrise on that beautiful city on the mountain. And I thought to myself, this is it, I am never, ever leaving here. Well, here I am in Cleveland, Ohio.

[LAUGHTER]

But it had been it had been almost 10 years since-- when I count-- since your father said we have to get out of here, the Germans have attacked. You know, that's 9 and 1/2 years later.

Yes, many wanderings.

And an Odyssey.

Yes. So we were in Israel. And, of course, in 1949, '50, '51, they used to take everybody to an absorption center. So we ended up in that absorption center. They took us by train from Haifa. But it was an ancient train. And people used to walk along the train. That's how slow--

It was--

It moved. And we ended up mid-afternoon in Pardes Hanna in the absorption center. And people were placed in tents. You know, so many immigrants came at once, that they had no buildings. So everybody ended up in a tent.

And after spending the first night there, my mother went to the office and she requested bus tickets for the two of us. And we left the absorption center after one night. And we made our way to Tel Aviv, where my sister was living. And my younger sister-- my middle sister was also there already in a different apartment, but she had like a one room. And my older sister had a bedroom and like another half a room, a little kitchen, a little bigger. So we went to her, and we moved in. But, you know, being what they call in America greenhorns, we had trouble getting to her as well, because we arrived by bus to Tel Aviv and we had suitcases. From Paris, from Poland, we had the warm coats, which we never

put on again in Israel, and things like that.

So from the bus station, we took a cab. And we gave the cabbie my sister's address. And the guy said, oh, I know, I know exactly where it is. I'll take you there.

So she lived on the little street, almost like this street, a little street called Lakhish, which was on the corner of a big street that cuts through all of Tel Aviv, called Frishman. When the guy saw Frishman number 4, he said I know exactly where it is. But this wasn't Frishman 4. It was Lakhish 4. He took us to the ocean, the second building from the ocean. My sister lived across town, almost at the other end.

He left. We started looking in the building. We didn't find her name. We had no more money for a cab. So we dragged across town our luggage and eventually arrived at my sister's place.

So I was at that point 14 and a half. My mother wanted to send me to school. So, obviously, I was too tall and too big to go to fifth grade or sixth grade.

Well, your schooling was completely, completely--

Totally interrupted, totally disorganized. I had school in different languages. I did not speak Hebrew. I knew a smattering of words. She put me into the eighth grade. She might have as well put me on the moon. I had no idea what they were talking about. A, I didn't understand. B, I didn't know the material.

And after a couple of weeks, I was just so unhappy. And God helped, and I became sick. I had tonsillitis. And I had to have my tonsils out. And this was the end of my going to a regular school.

So I needed a job, because, again, we have nothing. So my brother-in-law found me like a mother's helper. So I knew already enough words. They had the little girl. And the woman was very much pregnant. And I used to go every day and try and help her out with the household chores and so forth.

Then the little girl had-- she was about five-- had a playmate. And the Playmate asked her who's that, pointing at me. And she said, this is our maid, [? ezer ?], which means helper, but it translates into maid. When I heard that, I told the woman that I can't work for her anymore. I just decided-- I don't know, just--

I'm not a maid.

[? Tachme, ?] I'm not going to be a maid. So we had the relative, the one who christened me Rina, he and his brother owned a factory of beds, iron beds. And he knew how bad off we were. So he said, you know what, come to my factory. I need somebody, he said, to answer the phone. Come at least three days for a few hours and answer the phone. So I did.

And whatever I earned, I hired a private tutor to teach me the language. And once I felt proficient enough to get another job, I got a job in a knit store-- oh, no, in a candy store. Excuse me, first in a candy store. The candy store was probably as big as from the wall to here-- tiny, tiny. And everything they had was on shelves. And you had to reach everything on the ladder.

And the owners were German Jews, an older couple that came to Israel some years ago. And they no longer felt comfortable going on the ladder. When I say older, who knows, they could have been in their 50s or 60s. To a 14-year-old--

That's all old--

They were old. So I worked there for a few months till I learned some more Hebrew. I still had a tutor. And then I got a job in a knitting store. I knew enough, they taught me how to give instructions. So I learned how to knit and how to give instructions. And I worked there for a number of months.

And I'm jumping ahead because then shortly after our arrival in Israel, this first cousin of my husband-- of my mother, sorry-- first cousin of my mother's came to Israel. He was from Sanok. He was their relative that we had visited. And he lost his wife and two daughters under the Germans. He and a daughter and two sons ended up further in Siberia than we.

We actually, once things got a little better in Bukhara, we used to send them packages of fruit, primarily of dried fruit, because we knew that they don't get any vitamins, any fruit in Siberia. And they stayed there longer than we. Somehow-- he was also a rabbi, a scholar, a very learned man. And actually, after the war, he worked like in the Jewish court that established in Berlin. And he dealt with divorces and with other things.

There were unfortunately many couples that after the war chose not to live together anymore, like this relative of my husband who lost a three-year-old boy in front of their eyes. He was bayoneted by a German. And they just couldn't live together afterwards. And they were, somebody like that, that divorced right after the war. When they found each other, they got divorced.

So this cousin of my mother's, they decided-- my mother had been a widow at this point for 8 years. And so they got married. In Jewish law, it's permissible. And obviously, they were beyond childbearing years. So they didn't have children. But his youngest son, who's only eight months older than I am-- his name is Schmuel. He and I eventually moved in with our parents in one room. It was a building that used to be in the Arabic area between Tel Aviv and Yafo, because housing was terrible shortage in Israel at that time with all these immigrants coming in. So this was our first apartment with an outhouse and a little dark, mutual kitchen.

But after some months, my mother got a job. And my stepfather got the job.

What was his name? His name was Rabbi Itzhak Granik-- G-R-A-N-I-K. And so we were able to move to a two-bedroom apartment. There were no living rooms. The bedrooms became living area during the day. And my stepbrother and I shared the room. And the parents had a room. And there was a little kitchen.

And we lived there for some time. I remember this was upstairs. And downstairs was a Yemenite Jew. And it snowed in Tel Aviv that year. And that man had never seen snow. And he came running to our apartment and knocked at the door, and he said, something white is coming down from the sky. He didn't have the name for snow. He said something is coming-- in Hebrew, of course-- is coming down from the sky. What's happening? He was unaware of it.

But anyway, we moved again. I don't know why, but we moved again to another apartment in Tel Aviv, which now became a very hip area. It's like Soho in New York. It came back to life. They rebuilt. I went back a few years to see if I can still find it, house. And it's gone. There's a beautiful building standing there.

So I slowly progressed--

What was it like for you living now with a new half-family? You know, you were in a reconstituted family.

It was hard. When they first married, I didn't join them. I didn't join my parents. I stayed with my sister for a couple months. And then the older brother, whose name was Aryeh. He used to come from time to time take me out to a movie or something and visit my sister. He and my sister were close in age. And they knew each other from before the war.

So he would come over and visit. Then one day he said, let's go for a walk, to me. And he said, is there something special that upset you or so? Why don't you go and live with our parents? They are very upset that you aren't coming home.

And I didn't think of it that way. I just knew they live in one apartment, my stepbrother, you know, it was all new. I didn't know him. And so I stayed with my sister. But he said that my parents are really upset that I'm not coming home. So the next day I packed my few things and I'm moved in.

I see.

So, yeah, we lived together. And even the second-- third place already, we have two bedrooms. And my mother had a little separate kitchen, but it was like a hole in the wall, you know, not much. It was a very old building. And I had a bedroom by myself. But I had to work.

So from the knit shop, I found a job in that bank, but not as a teller. I found a job-- they had a division of insurance. So I was accepted there with very minimal knowledge of what one needs to do in an office. I immediately signed up for typing lessons. And actually, my brother-in-law paid for it.

Aryeh?

No, my brother-in-law Moshe Kaufmann paid for it because I didn't have the money and my parents didn't have the money. So I asked him, and he paid for it. And I learned enough to be able to get along in that office, to be able to write letters. And we dealt a lot with the different kibbutzim. And there were many forms I had to fill out and many things. And I learned enough of the language to do that.

I also simultaneously signed up for a year business school. So I learnt different things that you need in business-- math and typing, putting a letter together and so forth. So I did that. I was 16 at the time.

You're still young. You're still a young girl.

Yeah, but I have to work. And I actually remained on this job till after I was married. When I finished with the business school, I signed up for high school. By that point, I was working full-time, and they had evening, night school. So I would work from 8:30 in the morning till 5:30, with a break for lunch. And school would start at 6:00. So I would go to school till 10 o'clock at night.

Oh, my goodness, that's a grueling day--

Four days a week-- five days a week-- no, four days. Not Friday, not Saturday, five days a week. And I made friends there. And I used to go out with boys afterwards. And I went out with one boy for an extended time.

And during that time, I met another distant relative, not a blood relation, but an adopted boy who was in the army. And I thought he was just the most gorgeous creature I had ever seen. He was tall and broad shouldered and handsome. And I really fell in love with him. And he became my boyfriend for a while.

And eventually, obviously, I didn't marry him. I broke up with him. My mother was very much against it because he was in the army and he had signed up for extended stay. And my mother said, I don't want you marrying an army man. Who knows where he's going to end up and where you're going to live and where what. And there was a rumor that he will get-- they used to give soldiers priority of where to build an apartment or get an apartment. And he told me once he may get an apartment in Bnei Brak, which is a city outside of Tel Aviv. It takes all of 20, 25 minutes to get there. And my mother said, what are you going to do all the way out in Bnei Brak? And here I am oceans apart. But that was at the time, you know-- and somehow one thing led to another, and I broke up with him.

But to go back to my interest, I worked and I went to night school. And it wasn't easy. It wasn't it easy at all. And I used to study for many hours into the night.

And then one day, I received a phone call from a friend that I knew from a group that was actually outside the children's home in Lodz, but a group that used to get together, girls, Saturday afternoon. And we used to study a little. I didn't know how to read yet, Hebrew, at that time. But I used to study, and I have a good memory. And one day they called on me, and I remember the passage by heart. And I came home, and I told my mother, today, you teach me how to read-- this was still in Lodz-- because I was embarrassed inside that they may call on me, and I didn't know how to read.

So she sat down with me that afternoon. I was reading, I was beginning to read. So--

Was that Hebrew that you were beginning to read?

Yes, because Yiddish I knew, and Polish I knew. And I knew how to write Russian. So to go back to Tel Aviv-- I'm jumping back and forth-- I got a call from a girl that I knew from that group. And she said, I'm having some people over, and actually there's going to be an American. Why don't you come?

So I said, well, I will, but this will be after 10 o'clock, because I have classes. She said, that's all right, we'll be here. So I went. And who was the American but my future husband.

So we started speaking. And he asked to take me home. Then he asked me for the following day for a date. And I did not want to seem too easy, so I said I was busy. And then he said, well, I think I'm going to be easy be busy the following day. I said, that's OK. And he said, well, maybe I'll cancel the other plans. And we got together the following day and from then on every day.

I met him in December of 1953. We were married in February 1954, two months later.

Wow. You didn't wait long--

With a formal engagement of three weeks. After the first week, he asked me for my ring size. It went very fast. And there were a lot of reasons why we found mutual language. You were asking me something before and this came to mind. When we came to Israel, Holocaust survivors were not honored in any way. The native Israelis, particularly the youth, which was already trained to fight, to be strong, they could not understand. How could you allow yourself to be shipped, to be taken to the slaughter? They could not identify with that. They could not comprehend it. And I belonged in Tel Aviv to a youth group. And all of us, without exception, were children that survived the Holocaust. We did not have one native Israeli in our group.

As a matter of fact, I had another distant cousin, born in Israel, very, very handsome boy. He was actually written up as one of the most handsome young men in Israel. I met him, and he asked me to go out with him I was 17. I went out with them once or twice, which was fine. Then one day he invited me to come to his house, which I had been before. They were relatives. But he invited a group of other friends.

And we were speaking, which was OK. Then they decided to play charades. And they were somewhat of an intellectual group. And I was nowhere near them. And the charades were do mind and different books and different stories that were totally unfamiliar to me. And I remember one of the books was "The Naked and the Dead." Yes. And I felt so inadequate at that point that I never wanted to see him again. I just felt not equal, not equal.

And I always had a thirst for learning. It was very important to me. But I could only go so far in the years, like in Israel where I had a little bit of an opportunity, I still didn't go to a regular school. I had to go to night school. I didn't get art. And I didn't get labs or any of those kind of things.

But after we were married, I continued. I was in my senior year. And I managed to-- in Israel you have to matriculate through the government. You don't have tests just in school. You have to take an official government test. So I managed to test out from-- there were certain subjects, certain times. So I tested out from a number of subjects, but not everything. But I got the certificate that I tested out from these subjects.

Then I received-- after we were married, so another story-- after three weeks, my husband left. He had to go back to the States to start working. He had been in Israel this time for six months. But I didn't know him the six months. He stayed with relatives who were there prior to the war. And they decided that he should not leave till he finds a wife in Israel. He was 30 years old, and they wanted to see him married.

And he himself wanted to marry, because he also tried to date here American girls and couldn't find mutual language with them. So he dated many girls. Sometimes he would go for lunch and for dinner two different girls and so on until he met me. And then as I said, we weren't going out till we were married. And three weeks after we were married, he left me. I went back to work. I don't know how long you want to stretch this.

No, just tell me-- I'll come in with my questions. Don't worry. You went back to work. And I used to pass the same place. Tel Aviv, I don't know how you're familiar-- has magnificent hotels now, many, many of them. There wasn't a single big hotel when you were married in February 1954. They were just putting in the footers of the first big Dan Hotel.

So we stayed in a little-- it's not even bed and breakfast, because they didn't serve you anything. But they had rooms--

Like a pensione--

A pensione, right. They had the gall to call it The Astoria. [LAUGHTER] So we got a room there with a bathroom down the hall. This was our wedding night. And downstairs were stores. And there were always two guys-- you know, there was no air conditioning. There's not much business. They would stand outside and kibbutz, talk to each other. And they would see us going up to the pensione and back out and so forth.

My husband left, I was still walking that way to work. I got the dirtiest looks from them. Not only did I not have my husband with me, I also didn't have my ring. What happened was when he came to Israel, he had a man's ring with a little diamond. And in those years, they were very strict. And if you brought in anything of what they consider value, they put it in your passport.

When he decided that we were going to be married, he took that ring to a jeweler. And he said, please change it to a woman's ring. And because it was a thick gold ring, he didn't have to pay anything for it. He just did it.

He leaves at the airport. They check, where's the ring? He said, well, I got married in the meantime. I gave it to my wife. And they said, oh, no, you'll have to pay \$400. Well, at that time it was a fortune, and they didn't have it. We lived those three weeks on the gifts that we got for our wedding. He was out of his money already. Or you take the ring back.

Well, wouldn't you know, they send them out. And he had to take literally off my finger and take the ring back to the United States. So I had no ring and no husband.

And a lot of looks.

And a lot of looks. And I went back to work. So I was in Israel for eight months by myself because I was in a Polish quota. And at that time, the law that a spouse or a parent can come along with you did not exist. It came into effect, I think, in 1956 or '57. So I had to wait on the Polish quota. And it was very difficult, very difficult.

Then I decided when the day came and I was approved-- I had to go for a medical checkup and all of that through the American consulate. I had to get everything ready to leave-- I decided that since I'm leaving Israel that I would like to stop in Paris. When I was in Paris, I was 14 years old. And I really spent my time, at that time, going from one museum to the other. I always had an interest in art. And I wanted to go back and see it with a more grown-up eye.

So I arranged to be a week in Paris. And I was supposed to stay with a couple, cousins of my brother-in-law Moshe Kaufmann. And the week before I left, I already had my passports, everything, and voyage on the original Queen Mary to come to the United States. So I couldn't change anything.

And unfortunately, this couple was in a terrible car accident. He was killed, and she was still in the hospital.

Oh, my goodness.

So I couldn't stay with them. So I ended up in Paris the end of November. I arrived in the States on the 3rd of December by myself. Short days. At night, I didn't want to go out by myself. I didn't have that much money. So I stayed in a very, very rundown old hotel, a cheap hotel. But I remembered where the Jewish area was. And I used to go back there. And I remember this one restaurant owner, because they used to live in Lodz. so. I knew them. And I made a connection with them. So I spent a couple evening with them. In any case, this was an extremely unhappy time for me, being there alone in Paris under those circumstances.

What passport did you have? Was it an Israeli passport?

No, I got an American visa. I really never had an Israeli passport per se.

Did you have a Polish--

I had a work permit. You know, they're called a [NON-ENGLISH], not a passport. When you work, you needed to have a picture and your age and all of that. So I had that. And on the basis of that, I got the American visa and passport.

So you say you were under the Polish quota. Did you have Polish citizenship papers?

No, but I was registered as born in Poland.

And so that's enough?

That's enough. So it took eight months. We were married in February. And I didn't get here till December.

That's right.

So--

At this point--

I'm sorry?

At this point--

Yeah--

I'd like to kind of ask some general questions.

OK.

And the crux of them all is the Soviet and the Nazi experience. Do people who are Jewish who were deported by the Soviets have differing interpretations of what happened to them? Much more so than, let's say, Gentiles. I'm making this assumption. But for Gentiles who are deported, it was an unremitting tragedy all around, no holds about it. Is that the same thing that's true for you?

Well, at the time when we were deported, we thought the tragedy happened to us, because we went to a wilderness, to a cold, frozen wilderness. It wasn't till later, much later, when we started finding out what was happening in Poland that we knew we were the lucky ones, you know, that we survived, because personally I know at the age of five I would not have survived. They probably would have, if they would take us to Auschwitz or Bergen-Belsen or Treblinka, or any one of those camps, the children were gassed right away with their mothers if they had small children. So it was thanks to my father's foresight that we made it to Russia. And at least most of us survive. He didn't, but most of us survived.

Do you feel because of that, because it was not the same thing like certain death, that the experiences that you did have, the hardships that you did go through weren't always fully appreciated?

That's true. And even by those who survived the camps. And I know that personally, when I first met my husband, after what he went through, he went through Auschwitz, he went through labor camp, he went through of horrible things, he didn't in the beginning quite comprehend that we also suffered. And most people were like that. They heard you were in Russia, they said, oh, you now, you're in Russia, like this was something wonderful. It turned out that more of us survived. That's true. But it wasn't so wonderful.

Well, this seems to be in some ways human nature. And the reason I'm asking these questions is I'm always looking, not only for how did you personally experience it, because it's part of your story, but also for guidance for the rest of us. And the human nature that I have heard at various points of-- amongst deportees, for example, those who were deported to the Arctic said we had it much worse than you who were deported to Kazakhstan.

Right.

Those who were deported by the Soviets and those who were under the Nazis, depending on who you were--

To every single individual, their experiences are their experiences, what they lived through, what they suffered. To this person, our own experiences are the important ones. Yes, we can empathize with others. Yes, I have now, as an adult and for many years now, a greater appreciation of those who went through the concentration camps. It took such fortitude. It took such desire to live. And thank God, because of this desired to live and to be strong, I still have my husband at age 94 after going through hell.

And going through different illnesses and going through-- I didn't even mention that, because we can be here till tomorrow. The first time we went back to Poland, we were in a terrible accident, and we were almost killed a second time.

Oh, my goodness.

We arrived in Krakow. We went to Israel first. And from Israel, we flew to Vienna. In Vienna, we spend there a couple of days, and we rented a van. All our five children were with us.

This was what year?

This was in '78. And it was shortly after my mother passed away. And we went to my mother's grave. And my husband said, I need to go back to Auschwitz. That's where my parents grave is. No grave, but that's where they were. I said OK.

So as I said, we rented this van. We drove through Czechoslovakia. And the trips were horrible. They stopped us at every border and questioned us for hours. And eventually, we made our way to Krakow at night.

In the hotel, we had to register-- it was under communism-- who is going to sleep with whom in which room. They didn't allow more than two people in a room. So we had to divide the children who sleep with whom. And they kept our passports.

The next morning we got up and my husband wanted to go straight to Auschwitz. So we started driving. And I remembered we didn't have the passports. So he turned back. I ran in. And I've ran those steps 100 times since over in my mind, because many times I felt had I not gone back, had we not been at this particular point at this particular time, maybe it wouldn't have happened.

So I got the passports, and we started out again. And then there was a sign in the road, 2 and 1/2 kilometers to Auschwitz. and. I think that my husband was already transported there, that he already saw himself back there. And he wasn't paying as good attention he could have on the road. I don't know there was a stop sign or not, but the truck made a left turn right in front of us and hit right at the driver side where my husband was sitting and I was sitting.

And I saw the accident about to happen, like within a split second. And being a driver already, I-- you know, it's automatic, you brake. And because I braked, my leg was totally shattered. And he was critically injured. And we ended up in various hospitals recuperating for months. And I went through three surgeries to put me back together. And eventually, I had to have a knee replacement, which I had in 2001. And my husband healed, thank God, but he had an infection. He had to be taken out of Poland. It's a whole other story. I don't know if you want to go into it. And we didn't see anything of Poland obviously, because it happened the first morning.

And your children, were they affected?

Our children were slightly injured. They had contusions. They had-- what do you call it?

Concussion.

Concussions. And-- when I tell about Polish stories, I have the Polish words in my mouth. We were very, very lucky with everything that we came upon. The director of the hospital, he was a surgeon. And this man saved my husband's life.

In Poland?

In Poland. Because he had lost so much blood that he would have died. So he sent people out and called policemen, called firemen, called anybody he could find, and without testing the blood, he would just pump the blood into my husband. And he survived, but he developed a terrible infection.

And he would have died there, but we were lucky from another area as well that the American ambassador to Vienna was a friend of ours, somebody from our synagogue that we knew. And the way of going there, we had to communicate that him. So through him, they sent a medical plane. And they took my husband now to Vienna, and our oldest daughter went with him after she took me. I was in that hospital for four days, and the doctor said, I am not qualified to operate on you. Your leg is in pieces, and I'm not an orthopedic doctor, I cannot do it.

So he said the best thing would be to transfer you to an orthopedic hospital. And there was one some 50 kilometers away because it was near a coal mine and they had many accidents there. So they brought me there. And the conditions there were just awful. And I was separated from my husband. I didn't know if he is dead or alive. My daughter came with me initially. Then she went back to him. Then she came back to visit me again. And I used to write them notes in Polish where to take her. I was petrified sending her with strangers 50 kilometers away.

But eventually, she took me, she traveled with me to Warsaw, went back and went with her father to Vienna, where they did skin graft and surgery on him. And eventually, we ended all out here in Cleveland. Children were shipped home first, the four younger ones. And my daughter came with my husband. And he and I ended up here in the hospital for a number of weeks in separate rooms. And we used to wheel our wheelchairs to go meet each other.

It was a very hard recuperation, very hard. It took a long time. We lost almost everything we had, because the airlines were not very kind to us. We had to take multiple, multiple seats in order for them to accept us. And my leg, they put me into a cast from here all the way down. And they said they will not accept me except with a nurse accompanying me.

And the American consulate were wonderful. My older son managed somehow when the accident happens to make his way to a cottage. He doesn't speak a word of Polish. But he made himself understood that there was an accident. And he called the American consulate. They connected him with the American consulate. And they showed up the next morning. And then following my husband's surgery, his wife came. She actually brought him chicken soup and stuff, because the food in the hospital was terrible.

But this doctor was very caring. And once my children recuperated from their initial shock and bruises, he said, he couldn't keep them in the hospital. But they had no place to go. So he said he will set up his office. He'll bed out for them. They can stay in his office so that we're not separate.

And as a thank you we brought them-- they weren't both doctors, he and his wife. She was a pediatrician. Once we recuperated, we brought them to Cleveland for a month. And I had arranged different visits to different hospitals for them to see and observe here.

Well, in those days, that was something very special.

Very special. He used to make notes. And he told us that he couldn't even share those with anybody, because they'll say

that he's an American spy.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

And we took him to Washington. And we took him to New York. And friends of ours took him to the Niagara Falls. And they had a wonderful time here.

I think, Mrs. Frankel, we've come close to the end.

Yeah.

In one interview, one can never cover everything. There is a lot in your story that I would like to follow up on where there's this thread or that thread. And I know that we can't. We don't have the time. But at this point, I'd like to give you the opportunity, if there's anything that I haven't asked about that you haven't mentioned that you think is important for us to know about.

Yeah. I spoke about my schooling. I just want to say that thanks really to my husband's nature, he knew how much I longed. So when I came, first, I took English lessons. And I enrolled at Case, and I took English 101. I took a number of other classes.

I was very fortunate. I have mentors along the way that literally pushed me along. I had a teacher, an American lady, who invited me to her home and said, you must go on, you have the ability, go on. So I continued.

Then, as I was having children, it became harder-- [PHONE RINGING]

Are we on?

It became harder to go to Case Western Reserve. So I enrolled at Ursuline College, which is not far from here.

Ursuline?

Ursuline--

That's the nuns--

Catholic college. And the nuns were extremely kind. And I got my bachelor's degree from there. I graduated. And actually, the Bishop of Cleveland handed me my diploma, which was a big honor.

Then I continued at the College of Jewish Studies. I got the second bachelor's degree in Jewish arts and history. And I continued and got my master's degree. And at some point, both my husband and I received an honorary doctorate degrees for our contribution to the college.

And the reason I'm saying all that and doing this interview is for my grandchildren, for my great grandchildren. We have, thank God, 10 grandchildren. We had 11. And unfortunately, we lost one to a terrible accident. She was beautiful. She was brilliant. She was 16 years old. It was in the mountains in Utah. She got injured and passed away.

But we have 10 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren. And when I'm gone and not able to tell them the stories anymore, I want them to have this record and know what fortitude their grandparents had and a little bit of what they accomplished in life. My husband built a business. He employed, at some point, almost 200 people in Cleveland. He was in the electrical business. I did a great deal of volunteering in various organizations. I was president of a number of organizations. And I think we can leave a proud record for generations to come. And this is primarily why I am doing that. And also, I want people, generations from now, who will no longer meet a survivor, have a record of what some of us lived through.

I couldn't think of a better way to finish our interview. Thank you so much. Thank you for doing this today, for opening up, for sharing. We know that it costs. And we appreciate that you do it despite the cost.

Thank you.

I'll say with that this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Rina Frankel on October 23, 2017 in Shaker Heights, Ohio. Did you want to say something else?

I wanted-- we forgot about the pictures, or we didn't do anything--

We'll do that after that. I mean, after we formally finished the interview, we sometimes hold up a picture and then say, who is this? So we'll do that.

OK.

OK, we'll cut now.

This is a picture of myself when I was nine months old. I don't know exactly the date when this was taken, but I was told that I was nine months old.

OK, thank you.

In this picture I'm three years old. And in the background, the one with the braids is my Aunt Lonya. And to the left of her is Avram, my Uncle Avram, my brother's brother.

And do you know where you are-- where--

I think at the sight of my grandparents' house.

OK, all right.

This is a picture of my mother, Miriam, as a young woman, though I don't know how exactly it represents her, because it was taken from a little photograph, little passport photograph. So it's been enlarged many times.

Do you know about how old she would have been in this photo?

I would say in her 20s.

This is again a picture taken from a little passport picture. I think he was about 30-- in 1939, he was maybe 35. And what I like to see is always how immaculately actually dressed he was, always with a tie. I have some other pictures always dressed and trimmed properly.

And this is your father Hersh.

Yes, my father Hersh Barth.

OK, thank you.

There's a damage in the picture. This is my Uncle Yakov's wedding to Tola. And on one side to the right are my grandparents. Where the white damage is is my Grandfather Barth, my Grandmother-- Breindle was her name-- and to the left is my father and mother. And the girls on the bottom from the left as Hannah, Lema, and Lonya, my Aunt Lonya.

OK. So I just want to clarify, the far left, the lady on the far left looking towards the bride is your mother?

Yes.

Sitting. And then next to her, the man who is sitting, is your father Hersh.

Yes.

And the rest of the people in there are various family members?

Family members. Actually, two of my aunts Leibowicz I see there. And some Barths I see here. And some that I cannot identify.

And do you know about what year they were married, this wedding was?

They were married shortly before the war. I would say '38.

OK. But are you in this photo?

No, I was not. I must have been too young to taken to the wedding.

OK. Thank you. OK, who's here?

To the left sitting down is my Uncle Yakov Barth.

The one in the light suit, the light jacket.

No, to the right. Did I say left?

Yes.

To the right is Uncle Yakov Barth, the same one that got married the picture that we just saw. Next to him to the right is his brother Avram.

Who's standing.

Who is standing. And he is wearing the Polish Army uniform.

OK.

I don't know exactly when this was taken. And the man to the extreme left is my Uncle Yakov Leibowicz, my mother's brother.

OK. And the man standing--

I do not know who he is.

OK. OK. And you don't know about when this was taken?

No. It's all pre-war, but I am not sure what year.

OK. OK. Thank you. And what is this?

This is my grandparents' Barth home. As you see the writing on the side, my Aunt Riva left this picture. And her daughter actually made a copy and sent it to me. And my aunt had written, this is our home, which is to the left written

down in Yiddish. And the writing on the top states that this is their neighbor's house. Their name was Tuchfeld.

Tuchfeld. And this, if we recall, is where your Grandfather Barth had his jewelry business.

Right. I presume that this window had something to do with his little store, because his store was right in front at the entrance.

Can you zoom in now, Catherine, to see whether or not we can see more clearly the front of the house?

I don't know if there is something in there or not.

Maybe, maybe not. We'll see.

No, I see a curtain. Oh, you see by the door there is a little window with some stuff there. You see that?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes, on one side. OK, so that would have been the entrance to his shop?

Yeah, and to the house.

And to the house.

Yeah.

OK.

I know there was a back entrance as well.

Thank you. That's really pretty.

This is a picture from our wedding night my husband and myself, I guess toasting each other.

And this was the date of your wedding?

The date is February 25, 1954.

So it's Rina Barth and Sam Frankel.

Schmuel Sam Frankel. His Hebrew name is Schmuel.

And this was in Tel Aviv?

This was in Tel Aviv, yes.

OK. Thank you.

These are our five children. The tall one at the left is Steve. Next to him is our oldest daughter Ann.

She's in blue?

In blue. The one then white is our youngest, Sharon. Next to her is Marilyn. And Dan brings up the right corner.

OK, so you have two boys and three girls.

Yes.

And about when was this photograph taken?

This was just taken when we were all together in Florida when we had the naming of our first two great grandchildren.

So this would have been what year?

Two years ago.

So it would be 2015.

Yeah.

That looks great.

OK, this is the clan that my husband and I built. You can see the two mothers with the two babies. They are two weeks apart. The taller one is my granddaughter. The other one is married to my grandson, the one in white. And this is almost all of the family. We were missing a couple of people.

And this was taken also--

This was taken in Florida, because they live in Florida. So that's where this was photographed.

OK. And this was in 2015 as well?

Yes, it was at the same time as the other photograph.

All right. Thank you. Thank you very much.