

This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Yvette Nahmias, on September 26, 2019 in Peabody, Massachusetts. Thank you very, very much, Mrs. Nahmias for agreeing to meet with us today to share your story, to participate in this interview. I'm going to start with basic, basic questions, and then we'll go from there. OK?

OK.

Can you tell me, what was your name at birth?

Yvette Carmona.

Yvette Carmona. And what was the date of your birth?

May 1, 1922.

May 1, 1922. And where were you born?

In Salonika, Greece.

OK. Can you tell me a little bit about your parents and their families? And I'll start with your mother. What was her name, including her maiden name?

Marguerite [? Faraji. ?]

[? Faraji? ?]

[? Faraji. ?]

[? Faraji. ?] And do you know the year your mother was born?

Not really.

OK. I can't remember.

Was she also from Salonika, or did she come from somewhere else?

She was born in Serres, Greece.

Is that far from Salonika?

It's a couple of hours.

OK. So and did she have brothers and sisters?

She had one brother and one sister.

And do their names?

The brother was David and the sister was Sol.

Sola?

Sol, S-O-L.

S-O-L? Sol. Did you know your grandparents on your mother's side?

Yes.

And do you know their names?

Joseph and Leah.

Joseph and Leah--

[? Faraji. ?]

[? Faraji. ?] And they lived in Serres?

In Salonika.

Oh, they also lived in Salonika? So they moved from where your mother was born to Salonika.

Salonika.

OK. And David and Sol were her brother and sister. Were they older or younger than she was?

Older.

So she was the youngest in the family?

Right.

And do you know how your grandfather supported his family?

He was working in the tobacco fields, collecting tobacco leaves. And then little by little, he went up the scale, and he became the president of the company, of the tobacco company, which was an Austrian tobacco company.

Do you remember its name?

I can't remember.

OK, OK. And his name again was Joseph?

Joseph.

[? Faraji. ?]

[? Faraji. ?]

Did any of the children, that is your aunt, uncle, or mother; did they go for higher education? Did they have higher education schooling?

Just high school.

Just high school. OK. And what language did they speak at home?

Ladino.

Ladino. Is that the language you spoke at home?

We spoke French at home. And I spoke German, because I had a German fraulein.

Oh, you had a nanny?

Nanny.

I see.

I spoke fluently German, better than any other language.

Isn't that interesting? In Salonika, Greece?

In Salonika, Greece.

OK. Do you know Ladino?

Yes. I still speak it.

OK. All right, let's turn now to your father's side of the family. Did he have brothers and sisters?

He had one sister.

And what was her name?

And one brother. I never met the brother. He was killed in World War I.

Ah, OK. What was your father's name?

Albert.

Albert?

Carmona.

Carmona. And his sister's name? I can't remember.

It's OK. It's OK. And you know the name of the brother who was killed in World War I.

No, I never met him.

Did you meet the sister?

Yes. I met this the sister, and I met my paternal grandmother.

OK. Your paternal grandfather was no longer living?

No.

Do you know his name?

No.

OK. And your grandmother's name?

Esther.

Hester? Carmona.

Carmona. Would that be an Esther or Hester?

No. E-S.

So Esther. Esther Carmona. And was his family from Salonika?

No, they were from Paris, France.

No, really? They were from Paris? And how did they end up in Salonika? They never-- my paternal grandparents never came to Salonika.

They stayed in Paris.

So then how did your father come to Salonika?

Well, he was born in Turkey. And then he emigrated to Salonika.

OK, how did it-- how did it end up that he was born in Turkey and grew up in Paris?

Right. After he was born in Turkey, his parents went to France. And that's where they stayed until they both passed away.

Was the family originally from Turkey? His family?

His family, yes.

And how far-- how many generations back do you think that went?

I really don't know.

You don't know.

No.

Did they-- were there still relatives in Turkey when they left?

No, no. No relatives.

OK. Do you know anything of your father's family in Turkey, any family history?

No. Nothing.

OK. Do you know why they left Turkey to go to Paris?

Well, when the immigration started from Turkey to the Balkan countries, they just went back to what was the closest place, I suppose.

I'm talking when your father was born.

Yeah.

There was an immigration from Turkey--

To Greece.

To Greece, but his parents go to France?

Right.

Why? Why there? Why not somewhere else? Do you know?

No, I don't.

OK, all right.

It's very confusing.

That's OK. I mean I'm asking you a lot of questions about things before you were born. But the purpose is to try to establish what was that world. Who were the people in it. As much of your family history that you know. And not every-- some people know back five, six, 10 generations, because they've done genealogy. And sometimes there are no papers, no documents for that. But at any rate--

Let me tell you that my father had a Spanish citizenship.

How did that happen? How did that happen?

Because the influx of people coming from Spain to the Balkan countries.

Are you including Turkey into the Balkan countries?

Yes.

OK, I generally exclude it. But that may not-- that may not be correct. So when you're talking about Spanish citizenship and the influx of, I would take it, Jews from Spain to the Balkans, when did this influx occur?

I really don't know. This is part of history which I don't know.

Would it be part of the Inquisition?

It could be. Yeah.

So could it be that your father had Spanish citizenship due to a 500-year-old tie to Spain?

It could be. And that's what saved us in the concentration camp, his Spanish citizenship.

Was it automatic? Did you always know him having Spanish citizenship?

Spanish citizenship, right.

And how did he-- because he wasn't born in Spain. He never lived in Spain.

No.

Did he speak Spanish?

Oh, yeah.

Spanish Ladino.

Yeah. Well, that's something. That's part of history that I don't know. You know, the only thing influx I can think of is that one. Maybe there was another. Maybe there was another immigration.

Yeah.

OK.

You know, we took it for granted.

We all do. We all do. In our families, when it's just sort of that's the way it is. That's the norm.

And that's what saved us that he kept his Spanish citizenship.

We'll come to that. We'll come to that. And so do you know how your parents met?

At that time the weddings were-- the matchmaker.

They were arranged.

Yeah, arranged.

OK.

And my father was much older than my mother.

Do you know when he was born? No, but I have the birth certificate.

That's OK. About-- was he 10 years, 20 years older?

He was 12 years older.

He was 12 years older than your mom. OK. And did they ever talk about how this marriage was arranged?

At that time it was arranged, arranged wedding.

OK. OK. And you were born in 1922.

Mm-hmm, in Salonika.

And you have brothers and sisters?

No.

You were an only child?

Only child.

OK. And tell me, what are some of your earliest memories?

What is?

What are some of your earliest memories?

Well, I had a wonderful childhood. I was brought up very strict.

Were they orthodox?

No, brought up very strict, religiously no. No religious background. My father would go to just on the holidays to that synagogue. And his religion was be good, spread the good around, and help people. And that was his--

OK. So it wasn't-- he wasn't really tied to the religious tradition?

No.

OK.

He would go to synagogue on the holidays.

OK. And you and your mother, did you go too?

I went with him.

OK. I had to go.

So tell me, what did strict mean when you were growing up? How was that implemented, a strict upbringing?

The German fraulein.

The German fraulein. Did she have more of a say in your growing up?

Oh, definitely.

Oh, yeah?

Oh, yeah.

What was her name?

Irmgard Moser.

Irmgard Moser. All right.

And I spoke German without an accent. And now I can't speak it anymore. It's funny. I understand it. But I don't speak it.

And how soon after you were born did she come into your life?

Oh, I think I started having her here since I was two or three years old.

Oh, wow. And so did she live with your family?

Yes, she did.

OK. And you say your father rose to become president of the company?

The company, yeah.

OK. Tell me a little bit about your home. What did it look like?

Oh, it was a beautiful home overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. And--

It couldn't have been the Atlantic. Was it the Mediterranean?

The Mediterranean, yeah.

OK. Yeah.

Yeah, it was in Salonika. And--

Was it a villa.

No, no. It was an apartment building.

OK. And about how many stories did it have?

About six, I think, if I remember.

Do you remember--

And we were on the fourth.

You were on the fourth floor? So you had a view?

Yes, we had a view. Did you-- was it a modern building?

A modern building, yes.

So it had modern conveniences?

Yeah. It had everything.

Electricity, plumbing?

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

How was it heated? Each apartment had their own heating system.

Coal or wood, or generate-- like central--

I think if I remember correctly, it was electric, because we had-- we could lower it, and--

OK. So from the little you say, it sounds like your family was well-to-do?

Yes.



OK. Did your father have an automobile?

No.

OK. Do you know?

The company where he worked for, they had a car.

OK.

And was that close to where you lived, his workplace?

Not too close, no. Because they had to pick him up, and it was downtown.

OK. Did you ever visit him there?

Oh, yeah.

Yeah?

Yeah, I would go and I always wanted to use the typewriter, and the adding machine.

Did they let you?

Well, sometimes they did, and sometimes they didn't let me do it.

And I mean Irmgard Moser was responsible for raising you, I guess?

Right.

And teaching you German.

Who told her how to do it? Was it your mother or was it your father who influenced the way you would be brought up?

I think she influenced them.

Oh, really?

[LAUGHTER]

Well, that's interesting. Tell me about her personality.

The only thing my father used to say when he would hire somebody, never strike my daughter on the face. You can strike her on the hand. You can strike her on the behind, but never on the face. So before Irmgard, I had somebody else. And she struck me. So I put my hand on my face, waiting for my father to come back from work, to show him.

What happened.

Out she was.

So you held that hand there for a while, didn't you? Yeah. And so Irmgard, did she ever strike you anywhere else?

No. On the behind sometimes.

OK.

What kind--

She was very strict but very sweet, very, very nice. When I grew up, she even tried sometimes to hide if I wanted to go out with a boyfriend.

She would hide that from your parents?

[LAUGHS]

That's kind of fun.

Yeah.

Yeah, and do you know anything of her history, where she came from?

No, I can't remember right now.

OK. Was it Austria or Germany?

No, Germany.

She came from Germany?

From Germany.

OK. Did she talk much about her own family or life back in Germany?

No, no.

OK.

Not at all.

Not at all?

Not at all.

And-- on how she ended up in Salonika, did she ever explain how that happened?

There was an agency where you would put your name down, and to request a nanny. And that's how we got her.

OK, through that agency.

Yeah.

All right. Did your mother have any other help at home? We had a maid.

You had a maid.

And was the maid as much of your life as--

Oh, yeah.

Yeah? What was her name?

Stella.

And was she-- where was she from?

From a village in Greece, Komotini.

Komotini. And what language did she speak with you?

Greek.

Greek.

So I spoke Greek, French, German, and Ladino.

That's quite a lot.

Yeah.

That's quite a lot for little girl.

And then I took English in school, and of course French. It was a French school. Yeah. Well we had to be multilingual in Europe.

Yeah, I wish we had it more here in the United States. Because you are introduced to another world when you speak another language.

Right, right.

What was your mother like? Tell me a little bit about her personality and her interests.

She was a very simple woman, dedicated to her husband and to me. And she didn't have any real education. She went to elementary school. And I don't even know if she finished it. But she was very loving, compassionate, helping people. There were lots of poor people in Greece, in Salonika. And she would cook for them, and help them.

And how did she-- how was she involved in your upbringing and your life as you were a little girl? Did you go places with her? Did you--

Oh, yeah.

Yeah?

Yeah, we traveled a lot. We went to Paris once or twice a year to visit my grandmother, paternal grandmother. And those were just to Paris.

OK.

Yeah.

And how involved was her side of the family with you and you with them?

Very much so. We would see my grandparents two or three times a week.

That's a lot.

Oh, yeah. Yeah, they were-- we lived very close. And her sister didn't live in Salonika. She lived in Athens. So we didn't have a chance to see them too often. Only if we would go to Athens.

Was that far, Athens from Salonika?

Well, it's an hour flight.

By flight.

By flight.

So much, much longer if you go by train?

By train, yeah. Not that much. I can't even remember.

OK.

Yeah, we used to go by train.

Yeah.

It's so long ago.

Do you remember the address that your home was on? What street it was? Nikiforou Foka number 1.

Nikiforou Foka number 1. And you were on the fourth floor?

Fourth floor.

Did you have a balcony out to the sea?

No, no balcony. Just the windows.

OK. And--

Oh, yeah. We had a balcony in the front overlooking the white tower.

There was a white tower?

Yeah, in front of the ocean, there was a big white towers, which was used as a prison.

Really?

Yeah. And it's still standing.

Today? Yeah. Oh, wow. And how would you describe the neighborhood that you lived in, as you were growing up? Was it a residential neighborhood? Was it in the city center? Was it further out from the city center?

Close to the city center.

Was it?

Yeah, yeah.

OK. Could you walk?

Oh yes, yeah.

OK. And was it one of the better neighborhoods in Salonika?

Yes, yes.

OK.

Yes. The whole K in front of the ocean, had all high-rise apartments.

OK. Do if it was a new high-rise apartment that is built?

Yes, it was new.

It was?

Yes.

OK. OK.

It was one of the newest and it was built, and we had a park in front of it, a nice park.

It sounds beautiful.

Yeah, it was.

OK. Did you have friends in the neighborhood?

Oh, yes. Yeah.

OK. Were they the same as school friends or different?

No, school friends.

They were school friends.

School friends.

And would these also be children of other rather well-to-do families?

Yes.

OK. Were they Jewish as well or not?

Jewish, yes.

OK. We attended the French school. So most of the families were Jewish families.

Really?

Yeah.

For the French school?

French school. Yeah.

Can we cut for a second?

Did you live in a Jewish community or not?

No. No it was a mixed community.

Did you have any friends who were not Jewish?

Oh, definitely, lots of friends.

OK. Do you remember any of them, and what their names were?

The only one I remember is Ritsa who hid me for two days until we went back to Athens. She was hiding me--

So you're talking during the war.

--during the war.

Yeah. Well that means something.

Yeah, that apartment we lived in was beautiful until the day we heard the German step.

Boots?

Walking around along the K.

OK. We'll come to that. I want to get a sense still of pre-war, your pre-war life. You were growing up in the 1920s and were a teenager in the 1930s. And so I'd like to get through the teenager's eyes a picture of what your life was, your daily life was like. You went to a French school. And I take it that was elementary school.

Elementary.

What about high school?

High school also.

Also?

Also.

Also the same. Did Salonika have any other foreigners there that would send their children to the French school, that is foreign international people or diplomats, or things like that?

No, no. no.

OK.

They were almost people who were born in Greece.

OK. Did you travel, besides visiting your paternal grandmother in Paris, did you travel anywhere else with your parents?

No. no.

No?

Just inside Greece, to the islands, or from Salonika to Athens, but no foreign countries, just Paris, I mean France.

Yeah, but within Greece, would you go on holidays with your parents, to, as you mentioned to the islands?

No.

No?

Nothing.

OK. OK, and what were some of your parents interests? Did they have a large social circle?

No. No, it was just family-oriented mostly. But we had lots of Greek friends.

OK.

They would come to visit us. We would go and visit them.

OK.

But not really a big social life.

Was this part of the connections your father had, or your mother-- these friends?

Mostly my mother's.

OK. OK. And what were some of her other interests? You mentioned a lot of charity work--

Yes.

--that she did. Did she have leisure time?

Yeah.

Well, some ladies would go to cafes. They liked to visit their friends.

Oh, no. No, no. No, she didn't have.

OK.

But during the war, she had a group of women come to the house. And they would knit for the soldiers. They would knit the socks, or vests.

OK.

So that was her social life, I would say.

So, she sounds like she was a serious person.

Yes, serious, but no education at that time.

And which of your parents was the more outgoing, the more--

My mother.

Your mother?

Yes.

Yeah, so your father was more reserved?

Yeah.

As an arranged marriage, did it work?

Yes, very well.

That's nice to hear.

I'm glad.

Yeah. So as you're growing up, it sounds like you have a very comfortable life.

Yes, we did.

And which parent would you say you were closer to?

My father.

Yeah?

What was the particular tie to him?

I don't know if he was not as tough as my mother was. He was a little bit-- I can't describe him really. He was such a sweet man. My mother was more-- she would sometimes hit me. But my father was very sweet with me.

And were your mother and Irmgard a team?

Yes. Oh, yeah.

So it was two against one?

Not really.

Not really. What did you learn, aside from language, but what were some of Irmgard's I guess values? If she was really the one responsible for bringing you up, what is some of the influence that she had on you?

Number one, not to be jealous.

OK.



Sometimes I would be jealous of my cousins.

Why?

And she would teach me, they can have more than you do. And so she really taught me.

OK.

One thing, another thing too, to respect older people.

OK.

Sometimes not to answer back, hold onto to your--

OK. Hold your tongue.

So she was a wonderful influence. I really owed to her what I am today.

Really? That's quite a big compliment.

Yeah.

Yeah. As you were growing up, were your parents at all interested in the political world?

No, not that I know.

OK.

No.

Did you have a radio at home?

Yes.

Do do you remember the broadcasts that were on the radio? Did you listen to it much?

No, I don't remember about that at all. I know we had a record player, and we would play the records.

OK. Was there ever any conversation in your home about the politics of Greece?

No.

What about when Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany?

Oh, my God.

Was there talk about that?

And how, lots of talk about that.

What do you remember being said?

That he was a tyrant.

OK.

That he didn't respect anybody. At that time there, was no question about Jews yet.

OK. So this was 1933. You're 11. He comes to power. And so your parents talk about his dictatorial--

Not in front of me.

OK. OK.

That was one subject that was avoided.

Really?

Yeah, well I was a young child.

As you grow up though, and you become a teenager, do you hear more about what's going on in Germany?

We didn't have much time, because the only thing I remember is when the German army invaded Salonika, came to Salonika.

And when was--

That's the only thing I remember.

OK.

Do you remember when that was?

Let's see. Let's see, when did we go to camp? Do you remember what year we went to camp? I can't remember it really.

OK. Well, do you remember hearing about the beginning of-- well, first of all, the Anschluss of Austria, the annexation of Czechoslovakia?

Yeah, yeah. Vaguely.

Vaguely? It was still far away. It's not Greece.

Right.

Was there an Italian presence in Greece?

Oh, yeah.

Tell me about that.

They were good people.

Were they?

Oh, what a difference.

But they came before the Germans, yes?

Oh, yes.

OK. So can you tell me about what was that like in your life? Like did you see Italian soldiers? Did you interact with anybody?

Unfortunately no. We didn't see them, because they were busy on the Albanian front. So they were not-- we didn't see them too much in Salonika.

Was there a change in daily life in Salonika?

Not during the Italian occupation.

So things went on like they had?

Right.

And life wasn't impacted or changed, or no new rules, anything?

No. Not as far as my family.

OK.

I wouldn't know. Politically I wasn't involved. At that time, I was too young.

OK.

So when you're attending gymnasium, sort of high school, is that a French Lycee?

French Lycee.

OK. [FRENCH].

Is that what it was called?

Yes. [FRENCH]

[FRENCH] And when did you finish?

I didn't finish.

You didn't finish?

I didn't finish, because the war started.

You said the war started--

I got my first baccalaureate, and then that was it.

[KNOCKS]

Can we cut?

What was that?

OK. So the war starts in Europe on September 1, 1939. That's when Germany invades Poland. But on September 1, 1939, was there anything new at that point going on in Salonika?

No.

Do you know when the Italians arrived?

'43?

The Italians in 1943? Or was that already the Germans who arrived in 1943?

The Italians were a year before.

OK.

Yeah.

OK.

Yeah. '42 then. At that time I wasn't interested in politics. The only thing, as I said, is when the German occupation came. That was when really it hit me.

Was-- so you were taken by surprise. Yes?

Surprise?

By the German occupation, or not?

Not really. We were prepared. Because the Italians had asked the help of Germany.

Oh, is that what happened?

I think so.

OK. Let me see. So when the war starts in '39, you're not affected?

No. And you're not affected then for a couple of years?

Right.

And so Greece, did Greece fight at any point?

Yes, they fought?

Who do they fight?

They fought the Italians.

And it was at this point that your mother was helping with other ladies to knit socks--

Right.

--and things like that.

Right.

OK. At this point, did your parents start talking more about the war and what's going on in other countries?

Not in front of me. They tried not to.

Even then?

Even then.

Because by that point, you're already 19. 18-19, not in '39. But if you're born in '22--

Yeah.

In 1940, you're an 18-year-old girl.

Yeah, they didn't talk too much.

Uh-huh. And so what happens with the Greek fight against the Italians?

What we thought?

No, no, no. The Greeks fought against the Italians.

Yes.

Who won?

Who won? Unfortunately the Italians.

OK. Well then the Germans came, and helped the Italians because the Italians were losing. Greeks were winning.

OK.

And then Germany came and helped the Italians, and that was the end of--

Greek independence.

Greek independence.

OK. So am I correct in saying that the first time you really it impacts you, is when you hear those German boots?

Boots.

OK.

And on the radio.

What did you hear on the radio?

That they were coming to Salonika.

And who were the radio broadcasts by, do you know?

Greek.

Greeks.

Greek radio.

So it wasn't that the Germans had taken over the radio?

No, no. No, not yet.

All right. And what happened-- do you know what happened with the independent Greek government?

No.

OK. They just--

I don't know much about politics.

OK. OK, that's fair enough. The reason I ask all these other questions is again to place what happens to you in the context of the larger situation. And sometimes people know it. And sometimes they don't know it. It's not a test. It's just trying to paint a picture with words.

Right.

So what did you see when you heard those boots?

Well, first we knew that they had invaded Athens.

OK.

Because that's where they were first. Then from Athens, they came to Salonika. And of course, the radio was telling us that the Germans were coming towards Salonika.

OK.

And so what did you--

And the first time we saw them is when they started marching in front of the ocean of the K, and with their boats making noise. And that's when we started getting scared. At that time, we really didn't know that they were so much against the Jews.

Even then, huh?

Yeah.

OK.

We didn't know until the rabbi called everybody, or we had a meeting, I don't remember, and told us about the anti-Semitic views of the Germans. Because until then, we didn't know anything about that.

OK. And as a result of that meeting, was there any change in how your family was operating?

Everybody went in hiding.

So what happened with you, with you and your parents?

We were Spanish citizens.

So?

So the Spanish consulate told us as a foreign entity, we should not-- we should hide, but not be afraid. So we--

So you had Spanish citizenship as well as your mother?

Yeah.

You all got it from your father?

From my father.

Uh-huh. OK. And there was a consulate in Salonika?

No, there was a consulate, an embassy in Athens. No consulate in Salonika.

So your father must have gone there to ask what to do. We weren't told anything. And my father didn't go there either. We just stayed in our apartment until the Germans came to our apartment. And they didn't get us yet. They just came. We were on the sixth floor. I can still see them. They knocked on the door. We opened the door. Heil Hitler. We had a piano on the entrance where I used to take piano lessons. [GERMAN] Raus. Right away, take the piano out. That was the first thing they did. That was my first experience with the Germans.

And did they--

And then they left. They took the piano. They left. And of course we were scared. And then some of the Greek friends told us, you should come and hide with us, because they are really attacking the Jewish people. So we went. We left our apartment.

You said sixth floor. Did you mean fourth floor? You said you lived-- the first time you see them is they come to the sixth floor. They came to all the floors. But when they arrived to my floor, our floor was the sixth floor.

I thought it was the fourth floor.

No sixth.

Sixth, sorry. OK. And so is that when you went to your friend Ritsi?

Rita.

Rita.

Oh that's--

Rita.

Rita?

Rita.

Rita, OK. And where did she live, close by?

She lived not too far from us, in the city.

OK, and did she have an apartment too?

Yes. She lived with her parents. And so they hid us. We went there.

All three of you?

All three of us.

OK.

And then we got ready to go to Athens. Where Athens was occupied only by the Italians, and not the Germans yet. I thought you said the Germans occupied it and came to Salonika.

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I think that's how it was. But then I know that my father-- some Greek friends told us that we had to leave Salonika and go to Athens.

OK.

The Spanish embassy got in touch with us.

I see.

And said, make sure you have your Spanish citizenship papers with you.

OK.

So we went on a train. My father was dressed as a coal worker, working with coal, to put coal on the trains. And we went on the train maybe a day and a half to Athens. When we got to Athens, and my father came out of the train, kissed the floor. Thank God, not knowing what to expect now in Athens.

So in Athens we went to stay with some Jewish friends. And then when the Germans started going after the Jewish community, we had to hide with a Greek family.

Did you know the Greek family you were hiding with?

Yes, yes.

OK.

And then we got the Spanish embassy got in touch with all Spanish people, telling them that the Spanish citizens were not-- that we can go freely to concentration camp.

You can freely go.

Go, yeah. So we all went. My father didn't want to hide. He said, I'll do whatever the Spanish embassy tells us. So we went. And we were waited in a gathering place. And the Germans came, put us in a truck, took us to the railroad station, put us in the same train as everybody else.

Well, it sounds like a very strange message to say, you can freely go to a concentration camp.



Yeah.

Does that mean they knew where you were going?

They didn't-- I don't know. But they said, you can go freely. Don't be afraid. So my father didn't want to hide.

OK.

And we said to him, let's hide.

He said, no, no. I cannot. Every time I hear a noise, I'll be afraid that the Germans are coming. So they told us that we would have special treatment, Spanish.

OK.

So we went. I put us on the train. We went to Bergen-Belsen.

You went all the way up to Bergen-Belsen in Germany?

All the way on that train, suffocating with one on top of the other, no water, no latrines, no nothing. And then we got off the train. Of course, in many stations, we got off. And then when we got to Bergen-Belsen, we come in front of the door. Arbeit Macht Frei. And then they put us in barracks. And they didn't divide us. My father, my mother, and I were always together.

What had happened to Irmgard by this point?

Oh, she had left already, long ago.

When did she leave your life?

She left a few years before the war started.

And she returned to Germany?

She returned to Germany.

Did she ever talk about the Nazis?

Never.

Did you ever see her again?

No.

Isn't that interesting? OK. So you're in the barracks, the three of you. And do you have your documentation with you? Do you have the papers that say that you're Spanish citizens?

Oh, yes. Yeah.

You have that still?

Yeah.

OK. So this must have--

But now we are American.

OK. Take me from there. So you enter these barracks. You see what they look like. I can't imagine what kind of a shock it was.

It was a shock, but we were happy that they didn't separate us, that we were still together. We didn't know for how long. So they put us in the barracks, and they gave us our beds, three beds, one on top of the other. And that's all I remember.

Then I remember how they would call us every morning at 6 o'clock. We were half asleep. [GERMAN] Raus, raus, raus. And my father was already an older man. And we would go and stand. But they never hit us. They were not aggressive to us.

So was this the special treatment, the protection as being--

A special treatment if you can call it special treatment. I mean they didn't kill us. They didn't hit us. They didn't abuse us.

What did you get to eat?

Same as everybody else. Every morning a cup of coffee, if you could call it coffee, a little piece of bread, and the little bit of butter. I remember that the butter, I would save it for lunch, when they would give us a potato. And they would put the butter on the potato.

OK.

And then they brought another group in. I don't know where they were from. But it was a couple with a little girl. My father saw that little girl. And every time we would get our meals, he would save some, and give it to the parents to feed the little girl. Because the little girl was already-- After almost a year, they took this couple and they were going to Palestine.

We don't know. They must have been some kind of refugees that were entitled to go to Palestine. They left, and the father-- I can't get it off my finger.

It's OK.

Wanted to thank my father for everything he did to save his little girl, and gave him this ring.

Oh, my goodness.

My father didn't want it. He said, you're going to Palestine. You need it.

Oh, my goodness. If you could hold it up like that, so we could focus on it. Put it on that finger and Gus will focus on it to-- excuse me, can we cut. What is it?

Yeah. So this was the ring?

Yes, this was the ring.

And you have worn it on your fingers ever since?

Yes, my father didn't want to accept it, and gave it back to them. When my father woke up in the morning he found it in a little piece of toilet paper under his--

Oh, OK. All right. Let's cut. Do you remember the name of these people?

No.

No. But their little girl survived that year? Is that so?

Yes.

OK. They were supposed to go to Palestine at that time.

And you never knew what happened?

Didn't happen.

Were you in a special kind of barracks in Bergen-Belsen, or were you together with other prisoners?

No. We had a special section for the Spanish citizens. But we had to share the same toilets, and the toilets were outside holes, and men and women, everybody together. And so we had to go from the barracks into those toilets, whatever they called them.

Did you have prisoners' clothes? Were you able to wear your own clothes?

Our own clothes.

Your own clothes. And what about the others in Bergen-Belsen? Were they wearing different kinds?

We didn't see any other people. The only thing I saw, we saw, is every morning or every other morning, in front of our little window a big truck with dead people going by.

OK. So you would see that?

We would see that. But we didn't know. We thought they were sick. We didn't know what was going on.

I see. And do you remember when you arrived, when it was that you arrived in Bergen-Belsen?

Oh, it was early in the morning, because it was clear. We could see that Arbeit Macht Frei.

I meant more by the time of year, was it springtime, winter, fall?

October.

It was about October?

Yeah.

OK. October 1943?

'43, yeah.

All right. And so you're there.

Yeah, because we were liberated in 1944. In '44?

'45. '45, so so it was '44, not '43. We were liberated April 13, Friday. April 13, 1945.

Well, who said that Friday the 13th is unlucky? So how long were you in the camp?

A year.

So that would make it a year and a half if it was October '43.

Maybe.

Or half a year if it was October '44.

No, not half a year.

Then it was October '43 that you were taken there. Because a year and a half later, it would be April '45.

'45, yeah.

Yeah. All right. So a year and a half you're in this camp.

Right.

And what was daily life like?

Boring. We'd sit around. We were lucky. We had a woman who was a very well-educated lady. And she would talk to us about history, and a little bit about politics that she knew from then. But otherwise, there was nothing to do.

OK. So no one was put to work?

No.

No. You just--

None of the Spanish citizens were put to work. We were privileged.

In that way.

In that way, no beating, nobody got hurt.

OK. About how many Spanish citizens were there?

Oh, quite a few. I really don't know.

Well, an estimate sort of? Would it have been more than 100?

No.

Was it 50?

Maybe 80 or so, families.

Families.

Families, not people.

OK.

Because they all had husbands, and no-- there were no children. No children.

OK. But were there other young people about your age?

Yes.

OK.

And my parents' age.

And you all lived in this one large barracks?

Yes. One large barrack, one.

One. So all the Spanish citizens there.

Yes.

Were they from different parts of Greece, or were they from different parts of Europe?

Oh, no, no. Only Greece.

Only Greece.

Only Greece.

OK.

And--

As far as I know.

OK, no, no, no. What language did you hear in the barracks most often?

Mostly Ladino.

Mostly Ladino. OK. And was there anybody there that you knew from Salonika?

No. Yes. There was a professor, and his daughter, and his wife; and another couple, and that's it. I didn't know anybody else.

OK.

And the others were from other parts of the country?

Of the country, that's right.

OK.

Most of the people were smart, and they were hiding. But my father was afraid of hiding. So that's why there were not too many people that we knew.

Oh. Was that something that-- I don't want to put it this way. But I don't know how else to put it. Did you ever hold that against him, that you didn't stay in hiding?

Sure. I blamed my father many times whilst we were in camp. Because unfortunately my father died the day of the liberation. He contracted typhus fever on the train, and he died.

So it took a year. It took a year and a half for this to get him, the typhus.

The typhus, he got on the train, the train that left Bergen-Belsen.

You're talking the liberation train.

The liberation train.

We'll come to that. We'll come to that. But while you're in the camp, did you did you say to your father, I told you so. We shouldn't have left.

Oh, many times, especially my mother.

[LAUGHS]

And how did he react to that?

He said, I think I made the right decision. Even then he said, I couldn't live in hiding. He was quite older than my mother, so at that time it was arranged weddings, marriages.

And well you know, people made decisions really not knowing the implications of those decisions.

True.

You know? And so many destinies were determined because of such a decision.

Right.

You said daily life was boring.

Yeah.

Was there a little bit more food that you got than, let's say, other prisoners might get?

Oh, we didn't know.

You didn't know.

We couldn't know.

OK. And aside from the lady who was knowledgeable and would talk about history, what other kinds of activities would take place in these barracks?

Nothing. We would have our little books, read, and talk to each other. But dull life, thank god.

So it was whatever you took with you, you were allowed to keep?

Yes.

It wasn't that when you came there the suitcases are given away?

No.

OK. OK. Did you take anything special with you? Do you remember what you had? No, nothing special, just the everyday--

The same and the same. Did anybody in the barracks seem to have news of what's going on in the outside world?

Unfortunately not.

So they didn't know is Germany winning, losing?

Nothing.

OK. How much did you think you knew of what was going on in the part of Bergen-Belsen that was not protected?

The only thing, as I said, I think I said before. Is in the morning, they would come by with the trains or--

Trucks?

Trucks. Trucks full of dead bodies in front of my little window that we had. And that's all we knew. So we thought, well, they got sick. They died. And we didn't know what was going on. Nobody knew.

I see. Isn't that amazing? Right there, and no knowledge.

No, nobody knew.

Was the barracks outside the regular camp, or was it separated in some way from the rest of Bergen-Belsen?

We don't know. Because our barracks were there. And that's it. We never got around it to see what's going on.

Were you allowed outside the barracks?

No, oh no. No.

So you couldn't take a walk?

Oh yeah, around the barracks we could walk, around the barracks. And then we had to walk to the latrines.

OK. So and they fed you then, would you stand in line and get some food that way?

Right. Right, they would give us a little bowl. And then they would come back and pick up the bowls that were empty.

And you ate in the barracks?

In the barracks, oh yeah.

Was there a table for this or was it everyone went to their bunk bed?

On the bed.

OK. OK. Did you make any friends there?

Well, we knew some people. So we stayed friends with those people.

OK. But not really something that was a close friendship or anything like that?

No, no.

What was most of the talk that was going on in those barracks?

Not-- really, I can't remember.

You can't remember? OK. That's OK. I mean it's not a happy memory.

No, not so-- then my mother got sick.

What did she get sick from?

Oh, she had diarrhea and throwing up, and then of course, she couldn't eat. And that's where my German language helped me a little.

OK. So what happened?

When they brought in the food I said unfortunately, my mother-- in German of course-- cannot eat, that she's very sick. And is there anything you can do for her? So he didn't say-- he said, oh. I don't know. But the following day, they came with a special little soup for my mother. That's where my German helped me.

Yeah.

So for 2-3 days until she got better, she had that special treatment.

That also sounds unusual, very unusual.

Yeah, yeah.

And were there many guards-- were there many guards around your barracks?

Especially during the night.

OK.

Because apparently somebody tried to escape. So they had at night. During the day we saw a few walking around to make sure that nobody-- but you didn't see too many.

But at nighttime there were more? And did you have any interaction with those guards?

No.

OK. So when you spoke German to this person who's distributing the food, was that a rare occasion when you were speaking German?

Yes.

OK. Did you have any other interaction?



Yes, my father got quite sick, and he couldn't get up in the morning to go--

To appell.

To go and say, I'm here, yeah. So I asked. I said my father is sick.

[GERMAN] Raus, raus. They took him out with his pajama, whatever he had on. He had to wait, and it was a snowy day. It was cold. So they were quite rough.

OK.

So that's another occasion when you were talking with them. So that means that there wasn't much communication between the keepers and the prisoners.

No.

OK.

Who dared? Just look at them, you were scared.

OK. So take me through April 1945. Did you sense something in April 1945 that life is going to change?

OK. We got order in the morning to vacate the camp.

OK.

So they put us in line. We started walking, walking, walking. My poor mother was very weak. She could hardly walk. And my father and I were in front, and every time we would look, make sure that my mother is coming. And of course, the Germans would say, [GERMAN] schnell, schnell, schnell. You know?

Yeah.

So finally, we got to a spot. They put us on a train. Both my father, my mother, and myself. And we didn't know where we were going. That trip lasted, I think, maybe two days or so on the train. No water. Sometimes they would bring us a little water. And then all of a sudden one morning the train stopped. The Germans got off the train. No German to be seen.

So we got off the train. And we sat. The picture I have, we went and sat there. And then no water. We got thirsty. So a couple of young kids, kids and myself, started going toward the village. We're walking towards the village, and we see all of a sudden a big tank coming in front of us. Every time I think of it.

And we start, we are Jews. We are Jews. And here is a black fellow, his head coming out. Go back. Go back. We are Americans. We are Americans. And that was it.

And that's liberation.

Liberation Day.

So it was Americans who liberated you.

They liberated us.

I always forget his name. I have written it down. You know, I'm getting older. I'll tell you the name of the general who liberated us.

OK.

Was it General Patton?

No, no.

And it wasn't Eisenhower?

I can't remember.

OK.

So anyway, they put us in German homes. They took the people out. And unfortunately in our apartment was a beautiful piano. And two of the men were so mad, they took the piano and threw the piano out the window.

That is two of the Germans threw the piano out the window? Or--

No, no.

The Americans? Oh, the prisoners.

The prisoners took the piano. They were so happy to be liberated, and happy to do something bad to the Germans. So they took the piano and threw it out. I can't forget that. It wasn't right. It wasn't right to do. but young people with young blood.

Yeah.

And then unfortunately the following day, my father got sick, high temperature. They took him to the hospital.

The American field hospital?

Yeah American Hospital. And the name of the doctor was Dr. Carmen. And he said to me, we'll try and take care of your father. Unfortunately, he passed away. He was buried and is buried in Germany.

Do you know where?

Yeah, I have the picture of where he's buried. Hillersleben.

Hillersleben?

Hillersleben.

OK. In the barracks that you lived in, in that year and a half, were there any people who passed away while they were There

No.

OK. So in your barracks everyone stays alive.

Maybe on the other side, I don't know.

OK.

But that's unusual.

Yeah.

That's very unusual.

And so it's particularly bitter, now that the war is ended, your father catches typhus. How many days did it last then until he passed away?

In the train?

No, no, no. He catches typhus and then he passes away. How many days?

Or day or two.

Two?

Yeah, we were just liberated. And we went to this house. And then they took my father to the hospital. And the day after the hospital, after they took him, they came and told us that he had passed away. So he went through all that and didn't-- he didn't even know that we were liberated, because he was so sick.

Oh. Oh. Was he was he delirious or something, when he was that sick?

No, no. He was sitting on the train, like everybody else. Just he was an older man already. And they took him from the train, and they took him right away to the hospital.

So not even to the house with the piano?

No.

That was just where you and your mother lived.

My mother.

How long did you stay there?

Well, from there they took us to a big movie theater. We stayed there for two days. And then they gave us order to assemble in front of that building. They took us in big trucks to a train station, put us back on a train. And what was it? The liberation train. We were completely-- we were going to-- it was called the liberation train, although we were already liberated.

We went to-- what's the country?

Are you thinking of a place name?

No. Two countries in the North. Well, there's Sweden and Denmark, or the Netherlands, Belgium?

Belgium.

You were going to Belgium.

They took us to Belgium.

OK.

And they put us in some homes, different homes, waiting for our ships to be shipped back to Greece.

And of course, you could speak with everyone, because you spoke French.

Any language. Anywhere we went, I could speak French. I could speak German. English, not that fluently yet.

Your mother, was she as multilingual as you were? Your mother?

No, no.

So you did translating for her?

Yeah.

OK.

My father knew more languages.

So do you remember the place, the homes you stayed in, in Belgium, where you stayed?

No. It was where they have the people that go through--

Transit camps.

Transit camps. But not a camp. It was really a nice place.

More like a hotel or a guesthouse or something.

Yeah, something like that.

OK.

And you stayed there only a little bit?

A little bit, until the ship was ready for us to be shipped back to Greece.

OK. And you got on that ship?

We got on that ship.

And how long did it take to get back to Greece.

It took us about 12-14 days.

OK. Where did you land?

In Piraeus, Greece. We got out there, and I'm with a little bag with nothing in it. We go through customs. So the girl says, anything in there? I took my bag, I threw it at her. I say, we're coming from a concentration camp, and you ask what's in that bag, instead of welcoming us? I starting crying, you know. I threw the bag. I said, take the bag, and look for yourself what's in there.

My uncle was waiting for us at the station. And he said, good for you.

[LAUGHS]

And so in Piraeus, he was waiting for you.

Yeah, right.

And then what happened? Then-- where did they take you to? They took us to their place. And then we rented a small--

Where did they live?

They live in Athens, and they were hiding during the occupation. Yeah, my uncle, my two uncles, two aunts, my grandparents; everybody was hiding.

That's on your mother's side?

On my mother's side.

So these were all her relatives?

All her relatives.

It was Uncle David, was it?

Yes.

OK. And so did they survive the war?

Yes. They all did. My grandfather, my grandmother, they all survived the war.

Oh, that's good news. That's very happy news.

But then they died.

When was this? When did they die? Soon afterwards?

Old age.

Oh, OK. You're talking about your grandparents?

Grandparents.

All right. My uncle died of cancer. He was a big shot in his company, and he was in Austria. Because the company, their headquarters were in Austria.

Like your father's company?

Yeah. OK.

And no, father's was in Switzerland.

Ah, OK. And did you ever go back to Salonika?

Oh, yeah.

Did you go back to your apartment?

No, just on the outside.

Really?

Yeah.

You never-- so any of the items that you had there, did you lose them all?

Some of them we lost, and some we gave to our neighbors.

OK. And so they returned those?

We didn't ask for them.

OK. So you never got back any of your household goods?

No, not really.

Did you continue to live in Salonika, or was this just a visit when you went back?

No, just a visit.

Just a visit. So you never lived in Salonika again? No. My mother did. But I didn't.

OK. So when you returned-- OK, tell me tell me how things progressed when you returned.

OK, when I returned, we stayed with my uncle and my aunt for a while. And then they got me a little job, where I would tell my story, you know. And then we went to Friday night services.

OK.

And a cousin of my mother met me. And said, and asked my mother. We have a young man here who would like to get married. You know, at that time it was an arranged marriages. So would you like to meet with him?

My mother said, right now I don't have time to think about that.

Was this for you or for herself?

For me.

For you, OK.

So the temple organized an excursion somewhere, so we'd have to take a bus to go. On the way back from that excursion, I started singing on the bus. At that time I had a very beautiful voice. So my husband got in love first, I think, with my voice and then with me.

Well, that's nice.

Was this the person that they had wanted to meet you with?

Right, right.

OK. So your life then moved to Athens. Yes, I didn't go back to Salonika.

Your family was well-to-do before the war.

Yes.

Did any of that remain?

Yes.

OK, so your mother had some kind of assets to live on?

Yeah.

All right, all right.

Yeah, at that time, people would send their money to Switzerland. And that's where it was secure.

I see. OK.

It wasn't allowed to do it.

But it happened. It happened. And it was secure?

Yes.

Because in many places it was lost. So you didn't live with your uncle and aunt for long? Did you find your own place then with your mother?

Our own place? It was occupied. We didn't go to--

No, no, no. In Athens, did you find a separate apartment for your mother and yourself?

No, no, no. No, we stayed with my relatives.

OK.

Until we immigrated.

Now you say you got a little job telling your story. It's very unusual at that time that people were telling their stories.

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah, it was a little Jewish community. And so they knew that I had come back from camp. And they wanted to know what our life was there.

I see. And did you speak with many groups?

No.

Did you speak just one time?

No, I didn't want to, just at this gathering at the temple. And I didn't want-- I'm not a person of interviews. I became one here.

OK.

[LAUGHS]

Well I'm very, I'm very--

And every time I tell, I said, that's the last one. So you-- you know, that that will be the last one.

And you're referring to Anna Smulowitz who arranged this interview with us. And I'm very grateful that you agreed to do it.

Thank you for coming.

We're almost finished, but not quite.

OK.

Not quite. I would like to ask then, you stay then. You're 23 years old when the war ends. If May 1 is your birthday, then may 1 1945 you turned 23, and you had just been liberated, the April before. So you returned to Greece, no longer a child, no longer a teenager, but a young woman. How long did you stay in Athens before you met your husband? How long did you get married? When did you leave, and how could you leave? And that is, what were the circumstances that allowed you to leave? Tell me a little bit about that.

My cousin works for the American Joint Distribution Committee. And she told us that we could come to the United States, emigrate, if we wanted to. So my husband said at the beginning, he said no. I was just-- I had-- I got married. I had a little boy, and he was three years old, 2 and a 1/2, almost three.

His name? What was his name, your child? His name is Albert.

Albert, OK. And your husband's name?

Jack. And his last name?

Nahmias.

So it was Jack Nahmias. OK.

I was Carmona. My maiden name Carmona, which is a Spanish name.

Did your Spanish citizenship make a difference in your--

In Greece?

In Greece to emigrate, OK.

My father had to renew every year his work permit.

Oh, really?

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Now to emigrate to the United States, did it make a difference that you had Spanish citizenship?

No.



No.

OK. And your husband I take it also was Jewish?

Yes. What was, in brief, did he hide in Greece?

Yes.

OK.

My husband was hiding in a hospital. He was a dentist. And when the war started, he spoke Greek fluently. So he was working as a nurse, or somebody in the hospital, and that saved him.

OK.

His sister and his family was deported.

To where?

To Dachau or one of the--

Did they perish? Did they survive?

No.

They did not.

OK.

His parents, his sister was hiding. And then she passed away. But his parents were deported.

OK. So did he at some point change his mind about immigrating to the United States? Oh no, he was ready immediately.

Oh, I thought you said he didn't want to. Oh no, no. No, he was willing immediately. He sold his practice, and he was ready.

OK. So under what conditions did you come here? Was there a quota or something, or did you have to have sponsors? How did you--

The American Joint Distribution Committee was the sponsor.

OK. And where did you come to what, part of the United States?

Boston. So we had two weeks on the ship with a two-year-old little boy running around. It wasn't fun. But we arrived. We saw the Statue of Liberty.

So you arrived in New York.

New York. OK through Canada. We stopped in Canada first. And there were people getting off in Canada. And then we came to the States.

What year, what year did you come to the US? 19-- I can't remember.

OK. What kind of a ship was it?

Oh it's like a cruise ship.

OK. Not a military ship?

No, no. No.

OK. OK, so it was a regular passenger?

Yeah.

OK. And from New York, did you stay in New York, or did you come up to Boston?

We came to Boston.

And what was the reason for that? Why come to Boston?

Because my husband had a cousin who had already had immigrated before us, and he was living in Brooklyn. So he got us a little apartment in Brooklyn. We lived with another gentleman who had given permission, to live with him. We stayed there. My husband was a dentist. So then we got our place, our own place. And then he said he wanted of course to renew his license. He applied to different colleges. And he was accepted somewhere in Canada. He was on his way to Canada, he had landed. I got a call from the University of Minnesota that he was accepted there.

So he had to come back. We had to pack up the little things we had with my Little Albert. So he left first from Canada. He went direct to enroll in a dental school, to get back his diploma. So it took two years. I worked. I put my little boy into a nursery school. And in Boston, until he started working, for a while. We put him in a nursery school in Boston. And then every night he would be screaming, crying. So I went to the school and I asked, is anything wrong with my son? He said, no. Why? I said, he screams every night. He says, yes. He doesn't drink his milk. We put him in that closet.

So I took my Albert out. I went to my office. I told my-- Rosenthal, his name was Rosenthal. I said, I'm sorry. I can't work. Because my son I have to take care of my son. Bring your son with you. I brought my son. I had my little room by myself with my son. Of course, it didn't last too long, because he wanted-- the phone would ring, he wanted to answer the phone.

What was your job? What were you doing?

He was a certified public accountant, so I would answer the phone.

OK.

And then we got notice that the University of Minnesota accepted him. I had told my boss. So my husband flew directly--

To Minnesota.

To Minnesota, and enrolled in college. Then I came. Got a little apartment. I worked, put him in a nursery. Thank God that nursery was nice. And that was it.

And then you came back to Boston after your husband finished?

OK. And so did he practice as a dentist?

Yes.

Again, in Waltham.

In Waltham. And that's where you lived--

Yes.

Until you retired-- until he retired.

And then I got a job. I worked for a bank for the Harvard trust company. I got trained as a teller. And then I had my own office. And then little by little, I went up. And then we retired. We went to Florida.

Did you ever go back to Greece?

Oh, yeah, a couple of times.

And did your mother stay in Greece? Your mother?

No. No my mother came with us.

Oh, she did.

Yeah.

So she was with you when you were working when he was going to school, and so on?

Yes.

OK. OK. So she moved to the United States as well?

Yeah.

All right.

And she moved in with us, of course, to Florida and one night she didn't feel great. She was in bed. She started having the hiccups. So I came and caressed her and I said, mommy, mommy. Don't worry. I'm here. She was gone.

Oh my.

99 years old.

99. Wow, what year was this, do you remember?

I can't remember the years.

It's OK. That's OK.

And then my husband got sick, and then he died also in Florida. So I had a full life.

We've come now to the end of our interview. And I'd like to close it with some final thoughts from you. When somebody would listen to your interview, what would you want them to take away from it? What would you want them to understand about the experiences that you had?

Not to despair, that's number one.

OK.

Always hope. No matter how much you are suffering, hope and pray. That's what I want people to-- not to despair. There's always a God.

Did that sustain you?

Yeah, I think so.

OK. And did you become more religious afterwards?

No.

No. OK. All right.

No, I didn't become religious. I enjoy my services. I go to it. But I wasn't brought up religious.

OK. Well, thank you. Thank you very, very much.

Thank you.

And I will say that this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Yvette Carmona Nahmias on September 26, 2019 in Peabody, Massachusetts. Thanks again.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

You're welcome.

Can I tell you a quick story about that picture?

OK, Mrs. Nahmias, please tell me what is this photograph of that we see?

This was the day of liberation on a Friday April 13, 1944.

'45 you mean.

'45, yeah.

April 13, 1945.

And that's the train we were on. And that's the train also where my father contracted the typhus fever.

So this is the train that the Germans put you on after you had to walk and walk and walk.

Right.

And then they suddenly disappear. And then everybody leaves that train. Who took this picture, do you know?

Villagers, people from the village.

People from the village. And then they gave this to you?

And then I went to that little-- there was a little store there. I went to buy some milk or something. I don't remember, not buy, because we didn't have money. And so this picture was there. And the German said, this is the one. This is the one sitting up there. That's the one. And they gave me the picture.

Oh, so they had taken it. They had developed it. And they recognized you.

Right.

And they gave you this. And do you remember the name of the village?

Hillersleben.

Hillersleben. H-I-L-L-E-R-S-L-E-B-E-N. And that must have been not so far from Bergen-Belsen. Was it?

Far?

Do you know how far it might have been from Bergen-Belsen?

We were on the train. We didn't know.

You didn't know. OK. Well that's-- it's unusual to be able to have a photograph of one's liberation, isn't it?

OK. Thank you for showing that to us.

Yes. Tell me about this photograph here, Mrs. Nahmias. Tell me what is this photograph of? Can you hear it? Can you hear it? Can you hear me?

Yeah.

Can you tell me what is this photograph of?

This photograph is the house where they put us in after liberation.

In Hillersleben?

In Hillersleben.

And about how long did you stay there? Just a couple of days, because from there they took us to another shelter, an old, old movie theater. We stayed there for one night. And then the following day they put us on the train that took us--

To Belgium.

That took us to liberate home in Belgium.

OK, OK. And how who took this photograph? Was it the same people who gave you the other photograph?

I really don't remember how I got it.

OK.

I can't remember.

OK. All right, thank you.

Mrs. Nahmias, you are holding open a book. And please tell us what is this book that you are holding. What does it have in it? This book, what is this book that you are holding?

This book?

Yes.

It's the list of all the people who were in Bergen-Belsen.

So it's a list of all prisoners of Bergen-Belsen. And this is volume one?

Yeah, it's all the people in Bergen-Belsen.

OK. And I saw that there were two volumes of this book. And this is volume one.

That's right.

And on the top, across the top, it has the name, [NON-ENGLISH], which means first name, when a person was born, [NON-ENGLISH]. The [NON-ENGLISH], when a person was liberated. And [NON-ENGLISH] if somebody has passed away. And when we look down, in the middle of the page, we see three Carmonas.

So three Carmonas, that's my father, my mother, and myself.

That's right.

And it lists the dates of your birth.

Yes.

The dates of your liberation, and the date that your father passes away.

No, the day of my father's birthday and mother's birthday, and also the day he passes away.

Passed away. Yeah.

Yeah. And if you could close the book now, so that we could get the front cover. That's what that is. It is called Gedenkbuch Book of Remembrance, Bergen-Belsen.

How they mail those to me?

Hang on a minute. Hang on a minute. OK, you say you remember you when you got those books at the post office.

Yes, yeah. Such big heavy books, how they mail them to me, I mean they could have said, we can't mail you the books. But they were willing to mail them.

They did. And who did this Bergen-Belsen? The people who put this together? This particular volume?

No, no. I called Germany. Not Bergen-Belsen.

Ah, OK.

And then they mailed them. And I were surprised. I never expected that they would make such big books.

And when did they arrive, what year did you get these?

Oh, long ago. I can't remember years.

OK. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Thank you.

OK.

OK, tell me Mrs. Nahmias, tell me what is this picture that we see here of this lovely little girl?

This is me at age two or three. I don't remember. And I'm wearing an outfit that my paternal grandmother sent me from Paris. I was always dressed up in Parisian couture.

It's so cute.

Yeah, it is.

It's really so cute. And what our friend Anna said to us off camera, is that this poster was made when the film that she had your excerpt of an interview in was shown. So this was one of the posters that was created for that.

Correct.

OK.

In Brooksby Village.

Yes. All right, and then we see this beautiful, beautiful blue bedspread. Tell us about that.

My mother loved to crochet. So when she had time, she crocheted this one. It's made out of wool. And when she came to America to stay with me, she made the same one in thread.

In a thread, OK. So this one is wool, it's blue. And the other?

And the other one cream color. Yeah, I have it right here, if you want to look at it.

This is fine. Thank you so much.