

Everybody to hospitals, and that was the place where I was six months, six and a half months in a hospital.

Where was that?

I was in St. Ottilien.

Is that still in Poland?

No, no, no, in Germany. I was in St. Ottilien.

And this was 1945?

Yes, that was the time when she came in, was just right there after the bread. We lost so many people eating this bread. Poor little girls. They were so hungry.

I was so lucky that day, too. Very lucky. They took the people to the hospitals, they took care of all those Germans.

But we had a very hard struggle, those lives, watching everybody killing like this. And hanging them, and punishing them, and hitting them for no reason. I just hope and pray to the Almighty that we will never forget what happened.

And I hope and pray that everybody will know what happened to us, so it won't happen again. Because that's a terrible thing. A lot of people here, they just taking a lot of things for granted-- they just don't understand how precious the United States is, and what a wonderful country it is, really.

A lot of them don't appreciate this. But we do. We know everything about human beings-- we know everything about the people. We know everything about how life is important. Life is so precious.

When you're losing this, you lost everything. You don't have nothing what to live for.

But I'd like to say something-- beside this tragedy, when I was 10 years old in the concentration camps, I don't know, but I had another tragedy.

You're talking about more recent in your life?

Yes.

Can we just get to what happened between the hospital up until the tragedy? Can you tell us where you went from the hospital, and how you got to the United States?

From the hospital-- from the hospital, my sister survived, Gean-- I have two sisters that survived-- Gean Pfeffer-Moss, she lives in Jerusalem, she used to live here in Dallas, and she was a teacher here in Shearith Israel. And she lived here-- no, my sister-- my sister took me to the-- my sister found out that I was in St. Ottilien hospital. And she lived in Stuttgart, in Germany.

And she found a place there, and I stayed with her for a little while. But I was in the hospital six and a half months. With a Dr. Greenberg, he told me that I need to go to Karlovy Vary, which is Karlsbad, for my ulcer and for my treatments and different things. So I was there two and a half months, I think, or pretty close to three months. Also hitchhiking on a train, going there, because I didn't have any money, or anything, you know.

And when I came back from there back to Stuttgart, my sister was already in the United States. She wrote to me, but I couldn't get her correspondence at all to Russia, because in Karlovy Vary, the Russian people were there. And she couldn't get my letters, and I couldn't get her letters.

So by the time I got back to Stuttgart, she wrote me-- she left me a big letters and pictures how sad she was, but she had to do it. Because her husband found a brother in Florida, and this was the date when they had to leave. And they couldn't wait any longer. And they were waiting for me to come.

So I was on the same affidavit to go with them, but they couldn't contact me, they couldn't get in touch with me. So they were here, and I was there by myself in Stuttgart.

And then? What happened after?

That I met my husband.

In Stuttgart?

Mm-hmm.

Tell us about that.

Well, when I was a young child, maybe I was maybe about six and half, or maybe seven by that time, I went with two ladies and eight girls-- we were supposed to go to have fun and go swimming. My mother fixed me the lunch bag, and we went there.

So those ladies said to us, now, listen, what I'm going to do right now is to hire a big kayak. Do you know what a kayak is? OK, I'm going to take a kayak, and I'm going to take two girls across, and you wait here. So she did.

When she went there with all the girls, you know, two of them were behind, but it was another girl and me. And we were waiting, and waiting, and waiting, and waiting. And meantime, I need to go to the bathroom. And I was hungry, and I wanted to eat, too. I didn't have the patience anymore.

So Rubin had a white and a blue kayak-- my husband-- and he was such a good-looking man, and young boy, and everything. And while he was close to us, I asked him he just can take us just across. And he said, he'd like that. And he asked this lady he was with, is it OK? And he said, OK.

So she took this little girl, and I was there by myself. And he said, all right, I'm going to take her, come back, and take you. So by the time he came, picked me up, well, I walked in, in the kayak, and I was very happy just to be across there so I can start eating. And I wanted to go to the bathroom, too.

Well, he put me in the kayak there, and he start shaking the kayak. And I can't swim. Now, all my sisters could swim. I couldn't swim.

And I fell in the water. And I hated him for it. When somebody rescued me, and took me out, and naturally my lunch was wet-- the whole thing was wet, my clothes was wet.

And this lady-- and he took me, I was across, and this lady was very angry at me because we didn't wait for her, you know. Then when I came home with them, I was punished from my parents by doing that, and not to be together with those ladies.

And the second time when I saw Rubin was in Stuttgart.

And you were how old?

When I saw him? 17.

How did you live in Stuttgart? How did you live in Stuttgart? I mean, how did you-- did you work?

Well, I wasn't really too long in Stuttgart, because I was in Karlovy Vary, I told you, you know, in this clinic there. After I left St. Ottilien hospital, and I gained weight and everything. I looked pretty good. I was very sick in the hospital-- they were feeding me intravenous all the time. I was very sick girl.

In Stuttgart, the UNRRA was taking care of us. And no, I didn't work. The UNRRA was taking care of us.

And we were just displaced people, you know. I didn't work. My sister was already here. And I remember one thing what I had was the army blanket-- you know from the army? Those green blankets.

I met a man over there in Stuttgart, and he was a tailor. Or he knew a little bit about tailoring, whatever. And I asked him, if he could make a coat for me from this blanket. And he did.

And I want you to know, I have a picture from it, it's a beautiful coat. But I hated it because it was itching me like I will have the measles all the time. But I really loved it, because it kept me warm.

But I didn't do anything in Stuttgart. But while I was there, I found out that my other sister, Tema] survived. They called me in Stuttgart, from the UNRRA, to their office. You know the UNRRA is, don't you? Or you heard about it? The American--

OK, and they said, listen, I have very good news to tell you. I heard that your sister is alive in Stockholm. She was in a hospital, but she's alive. She's doing fine.

And I said to this man, how do you know that this is my sister? So he said, well, her name is Tema and she was with her younger sister, Zosia, in Bergen-Belsen. And so she lost her life, which is my other sister. But Tema survived.

Tema was the one who sent me care packages, you know, all the fish and sardines from Scandinavia, from Sweden. She was in Stockholm. Then she was in Malmo.

So I remember-- but I didn't work. But one day, Rubin, my husband, he used to live-- he was in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. And he was a furrier, and he did extremely well at that time, in Germany.

Had he been in the camps?

Pardon me?

Had he been in the camps?

Yes, he was in the camp, too. But I'm talking about right after the war. He and Mark Tambourine, which they were two partners, and they went in the fur business. Now Mark is now-- maybe I shouldn't say it, but he's a much older man, you know, he was in the fur business before the war.

Now, Rubin. Wasn't he was just a young boy. So they were in the fur business, and they did very well.

And when Rubin came to Stuttgart, I remember, I took some of those packages from my sister, from Tema, and I sold them. Because I heard so much about Rigoletto the opera, and I wanted to go and see it. I'd never been to one. I was so anxious to go, but I didn't have any money.

So I sold this care package-- the package what she gave me. But the tickets were still expensive, then, you know. And Rubin arrived to Stuttgart then, and he had a flat tire. While he was there, everybody on the Reisburgstraße-- Reisburger street, in Stuttgart, were surrounded there, looking at him.

He was a very handsome man, driving a BMW, nine-passengers. And he had his own chauffeur. And he did extremely well.

And everybody-- they saw me, they wanted-- they kept telling me, Ala, you never seen anybody in your life so good-looking in a beautiful car, and a chauffeur. I want you to go meet him. We all met him here this morning.

And I said, oh, I have to go and get those tickets to go see Rigoletto. And I didn't go to see him. I wanted to stay in the line, pick up those tickets. I wasn't interested.

Then, the next day, I said, maybe I'm going to see him the next day when he's going to be there. Well, he was still there. And Regina, which she's dead now, that's my sister-in-law's sister, she was crazy about him. And she kept saying to me, Ala, you have to go and see him. You have to meet him.

I invited him to have dinner with us-- Regina. So then, I went to meet him. I already had my tickets. And looking at him, I could tell by his eyes that I know him, but I couldn't place him right at first.

And then, we start talking. And he kept saying to me, you know, I can't understand-- everybody came to see me yesterday, and today, and this morning. And you try to avoid me all the time. I told him, I didn't, I just didn't care. You know, I wanted to go and get those tickets, you know.

While he was doing all that talking, I said to myself, oh, my. I said, this is the man what I-- I think that's-- no, that couldn't be. But more I looked at him, he looked the same way, you know, with those beautiful eyes, you know, and all that. So I said to him, did you have a kayak, white and blue?

His face was so red. And he said, yes. I said, you the one did the dirty trick to me, did you? And he said, you didn't want to-- so that's the way we started.

And we married in 1947, from all the girls what he had.

In Germany?

In Germany. And I moved to Stuttgart-- I mean, to Garmisch-Partenkirchen, which we had the factory and fur salon in Garmisch.

What was life like there?

Life-- in Garmisch, I wasn't by myself. I was with my husband. I was with a lot of people, a lot of survivors. But I loved my husband.

And he was such a good man. He was so good to everybody. He helped everybody. Everybody liked him.

Then, he was the president from the federation there-- not federation, family service, whatever, you know. There was no federation, I don't think-- community center, or whatever, you know. Everybody just loved him.

Our home was an open house for everybody. And by the way, we lived in Eva Braun's villa, I want you to know. Which was Hitler's.

What was that like for you, to know that?

Well, when I moved in there, with Marian and Freja-- Freja already lived there, and Marian-- I hate everything about it. Everything I-- what can I tell you? I hated it.

I'm sorry, who are Marian and Freja?

Marian is the partner was with my husband, I mentioned that before. Yeah.

The villa was-- consists of 28 rooms. We had-- upstairs, we had a big kitchen, we had a big kitchen downstairs. I think--

not that I think, but all the paintings, and the chandeliers, and the crystals, and the silver, I think and I feel still that everything belonged to our people.

We lived in this place because it was convenient. We helped a lot of people that came from different places that were handicapped, they looked for jobs. And this was the place for them. So we put beds there, and accommodate them with everything, what everybody needed. Was the biggest place in Garmisch.

And my husband was very pleased with it, so he could help somebody.

So you took people in?

Oh, we had a lot of people all the time. All the time. We helped them with jobs, but they stayed with us. We were cooking-- was like an open house for everybody. You didn't have to have an invitation.

It wasn't because it was Eva Braun's house, it was a shelter for people that needed it. Where to sleep, where to stay, not to be in the gutter, not to be on the streets.

But at night, was very rough, because the chandeliers, and the crystals, and-- they woke me up. I had terrible dreams about them all the time.

What were your dreams like?

The sirens-- pardon me?

What were your dreams like during that period?

Only about my family, and about the people what I went through, all this time. All the killings, what I could see-- all the carrying the bodies, people. What I was so close with them, people what I tried to help. People what they were so dear to me.

They were just human beings. I just couldn't believe-- I thought it was a dream. I just couldn't believe that this was reality what we went through. With all that thing.

I just-- it was just hard to believe. After the war, it took me a while to-- I just couldn't believe myself what I went through. And how I survive, going through all that.

Was terrible. But then, I had a son in 1948. I brought my little son to the world. I didn't believe that I'm going to be able to have a baby, because while we were in the concentration camp, they also put food in the soups, so the women would not have any periods.

By that time, I didn't have mine in the beginning. So I didn't worry too much about it. But I had a big problem later on, when I was pregnant with my son.

What was the problem?

Well, I was pregnant, and I had a miscarriage. Then I had another miscarriage. Then finally, the doctor told me to go ahead and give it another try. And this was really the thing, because of that soup, what they put the medication or whatever they did, you know, so nobody had the period, the girls, they didn't-- the women, I know they didn't.

But then God was good to me later on, and he gave me a son.

What were your thoughts about being able to have a child after what you had been through?

I was just thrilled. You know, that was a moment where I really start to believe back in God a little bit. Not much, just a

little bit. Because I was praying to God, I was praying that he's going to keep an eye on me and give me a healthy baby this time.

I was really-- I almost believed that he's going to do that before I had my son. But for a while, I really lost faith. I really did.

And I don't know if it's normal, or not, but I did. I just couldn't believe. If we had a God, and you see all those things what is going on to the people, and he cannot stop or show miracles the way we were taught he can do, I lost faith in him.

But when my son, Joseph, was born, I was a different person. It meant so much to me. The whole world was different.

My husband was so happy, I was so happy. I was just praying, I wish my parents would be here and see the first grandchild, which they had one before, and they lost it-- my sister's baby. I didn't want to bring it up, because it's very painful.

But what we came here--

Can you tell us now? Or is that too hard to talk about?

I can't talk about it. Well, my sister, Jean, OK? My sister Jean was married to a criminal lawyer. She's the one who is in Jerusalem. She was a very educated lady, and she still is. She's teaching in Uppsala-- she speaks a few languages. She's the one was the teacher here in Sherith Israel in Dallas.

Her husband was a criminal lawyer. They were very well off. They had a six-month baby, baby girl. They sent her to the concentration camp. They sent her husband, also, they sent him to the crematorium. And they took the baby.

I can't say it. They killed her baby. They threw the baby out through the window. I can't say it.

She was six months old. Such an innocent, little baby.

I have the little one's picture here, too.

I'm going to tell you one thing, it's going to take us another 10 years to tell everything, or more.

Do I have more time?

You want to tell us, after your son was born, and bring us up to date in your life?

Thank you.

We came to the United States here in 1949, July 4th, Independence Day, with my husband, with my little baby boy, Joseph Bernard. So happy and so proud.

The first thing what happened to us when we arrived to New York, my husband-- I asked my husband to bring me a little bottle of water for the baby. I was nursing the baby because I didn't know how long we were going to be on the boat.

Then, we had to take the train to go to the house. So I had the most beautiful silver fox long cape. I put it on the bench in New York, on the station. And my husband had a most beautiful fur coat, lined-- the furs, you know, fur lining. And he put it on the same bench. And he went to get the water.

I was changing the baby's diaper. It took a split of a second, all those two pieces were gone. His coat, oh, yeah, his coat, and the hat, and my cape. This was our first experience in the United States.

But we came to Dallas. My husband had already a job at Neiman Marcus, which they knew that Rubin is coming. So he was a furrier and a designer for them. Couldn't speak English. But he was a wonderful craftsman, and a very good taste.

So he was with Neiman's 11 years. Then he was associated with Szor-- Sam Szor. I don't remember, it was maybe two or three years. Then he finally went back on his own, in his own business, which the name was Fine Furs by Rubin.

Did you have more children?

I have two more children. I have another-- I have a daughter, RoseAnn. And then I have a son, David J. And I'm so proud of them. That's the only thing what I have right now, is my beautiful children. And I have two grandchildren.

We had this place, Fine Furs by Rubin. And we were so happy, we were such a happy family. We used to go on walk, and hold hands, my husband and I, and just like two little kids. Just happy. And I used to help my husband in the fur business.

But in 1980, I had a terrible tragedy. We went to Europe. And we came back from Europe, we had such a wonderful time. We went to Israel, we went to Paris, we went to Italy, we've been going for two and a half months.

I have to have a little water.

[DRINKS]

We came back from Europe on a Sunday night. Monday, my husband opened the business. Tuesday morning, around noon, two Black girls walked in, in our shop. I was there, too, calling people from storage and the showroom.

They walked in like two customers. They robbed us. They took everything from our store, and they killed my husband in cold blood. They shot at me.

And I lost my husband then. That was really the end of everything.

But one thing he gave me was a wonderful name, and beautiful children to be proud of. And beautiful memories.

And I don't want to talk anymore. I really don't. I'd like to, but I can't.

Is there anything else you want to say? Anything out of all of this that matters, that you think is important to say?

I just hope and pray to the Almighty that whoever listens to me believes what I'm saying, because it is nothing but the truth. I wish I can keep going, but I just can't. I'm only human. It would take me really years to talk what I went through.

And I'm choking. I'm trying not to show it. But I hope for everybody not to forget, and not ever, ever forgive to anybody what they did to us.

And to remember one thing-- said, I don't want to live for the Holocaust. I want to give my life to the livings-- not for the Holocaust. Thank you.

Thank you.