

10 seconds.

Some Brussels was very nice. The people, they treat us very well. I know I repeat it again. But it was lovely. We stay over there.

And then from Brussels, they put us in cargo planes, not with the seats, cargo, where everybody on the floor sitting. So we went to the first time I flew in 1945, and it was in June-- no, no. No June, I'm sorry. No. It was not in June. I arrived in Athens in September, just about the end of August and September, I don't remember really well, really.

And I stay over there for a week over my cousin's. First, they put us in the synagogue in a hall to sleep. Over there, mix men and women. I said I left the concentration camp. I came to a country. I thought they're going to treat us like a human being. So far they treat us after the liberation, we sleep in beds and everything. Now they put us in the synagogue over there in the floor. They give us a blanket, and sleep over here.

So I went to my cousin, and we stayed with my cousins, my sister and I. And then a week after, we took the bus and we went to Salonika. We went to Salonika. The Jewish community. They put us up in a synagogue, and they divided with the straw mattresses, things like that, gave us a new blanket, and a few dollars.

That time, you notice what is the freedom, what I don't die. What is the freedom for, to suffer like this? And we sleep one night over there. The next day I said to my sister and I, we knew a man that's from my hometown. He was at the concentration camp. And he inherited the house from his brother. So we say, if we can rent one room of his house. So he says, you are from my hometown, I'll give it to you the room free. So he gave us one room to live over there in Salonika.

So we stayed over there at least September or October in 1945. But it was Rosh Hashanah. My husband, he was in concentration camp too. So my cousin told me, Albert Tevet is alive too. Oh, I say. He's from my hometown. I know him very well. So I said I hope we see him.

So when I went to Salonika, he came to the Jewish community and he saw me and my sister. Oh, he say, you are alive. I saw the list. Where is Matilda? Because he used to like my sister very much. So I say Matilda don't survive. Why don't you come to Drama, he said. He already survived. He went back to to Drama, from my hometown. He got his business back and everything. He had lots of supplies.

So he got his business back. He already established himself. He said, why don't you come to Drama? I said, what for? I don't got nobody in Drama. I don't got nobody here. I don't know what are we going to do. He says, listen, why don't you have Rosh Hashanah with me? I'll take you to the synagogue. We'll have dinner, he says I'll treat you like a brother. I'll treat you like a sister, he says, two sisters.

So well, very good. So all of a sudden, we were sitting over there. They came two of my girlfriends. They was from Serres, And he was born in Serres, my husband. And I say, here is Suzanna and Stella. I want you to meet them. And he said from Serres, Yeah. They start talking, and talking. He forgot that I was over there, and he told me, we're going to go to have Rosh Hashanah together and everything, so he was talking with them.

And then I said, Albert, I will see you tomorrow. Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. So fine. So I told him where we live and then everything fine. So we went, and we went, and like he don't care. He went. He took Stella and Suzanna because, and he went to the synagogue, and he thought he was going to meet us over there. Fine.

So the next day he said, I'm sorry. I thought we were going to meet over here. He make excuses. I said, OK. So he said, why don't you come to Drama? Come to Drama. You're going to see. You got a house of your cousins maybe you inherited. So I went back to Drama.

As soon as I came, our live, it was like crazy, my sister and I, we were losing our minds. Because we was well known in the city, very well known, especially my other two sisters, very, very well known. And the one, she lives in Israel. Because we were the only Jewish people. We had a big house that we was working at home to have the beauty shop, the

dressmaker, and the milliner, the only Jewish family.

And we was very well known. All the Greek people, they knew us. All the Jewish people knew us. So where is Matilda? Where is Matilda? Where is-- everybody. [NON-ENGLISH] As soon as I start talking, I was crying. I was so sick. I was very sick.

Anyway, so Albert, he says, listen. I'll stay in a hotel. I'll pay for the hotel. So he pay for the hotel for us. He took us out to dinner for two nights. I said, I have to leave here. I can't stay one second. We're losing our minds. He said, don't lose your mind because you're going to come and stay here. He said, I'm going to marry you.

Well, I said, my sister, she's older than me. I came from an old school. I said my sister is the oldest one. First, she's going to marry, her. And then I'll marry her, I say. And so we went back to Salonika and my sister was engaged. She marry a man. He was survivor too.

And then I went back home to Drama, and I married my husband.

When was that?

In 1945, I marry in 1945, in November.

Very quick.

Yes. I marry in November. I want to marry because I want to be protected. I want to be-- I want to just look at-- god throw me out. I don't have nothing, nothing. And my husband, he was very good, very well to do, thank god. He treated me like a queen. And I had a very happy life, very, very happy life. I had a son, Isaac. He's 45. He's an architect. He's married, and he got two children, Avi and Shanna. He has a happy life, he very good to me. He's like his father. He was born in Greece.

My daughter, Sarah, married to a wonderful man. They have two boys, Jacob and Jeremy, and they're sweethearts. And then I have my other daughter, Matilda, married to Marty Rosenberg. He's a reporter. He lives in Kansas city. They have three beautiful children, gorgeous. They all go to Jewish schools. That's my dream.

What year did you come to the United States?

I came in 1951. And I can change nothing no more. I'm so lucky to be here. I came in 1951. I don't know one word of English.

How is it that you all decided to come to the United States?

I tell you why. My son was born in Greece, and my daughter was born in Greece. I had two children in Greece. Sarah was three years old, Isaac was five. No future for my children. Six family, Jewish families in Drama, too much antisemitism, too much hatred. I can see my husband, because he progressed right away. He came back from camp.

Albert, how come Hitler left you alive? Do you think it was a joke to say that? The minute from inside, they used to tell me, how come you alive? How come? They took Matilda. How come they didn't took you? I said I was lucky. I was smart. What can I say?

But when they was giving visa for to come to the United States, my husband said to me, you know, Alegre, they're giving visa to go to the United States. I said burn everything. Let's get out from here.

I was comfortable, very comfortable, very comfortable. And I mean it that richness doesn't make you happy. If you have love, communication of your family, and understanding, that is the most important thing to me. I was rich. I was happy. But I no have that future for my children.

I lost everybody, and I want to bring my children back, to bring my family back. I came to the United States in 1951, October 1st. I stayed in new York for a month because I was pregnant with my daughter Matilda.

After that, they decided to send me. But I was-- my visa was for to go to Cleveland, Ohio. There's a lot of Sephardim, they are here in Portland, he says, and Seattle. So they took us to Portland.

Right away I met a lot of friends, very good friends. They became like a family to me. I start to learn the language. I thank god. I educated all my children very well.

The only regret in my life is, my husband. He never saw nothing, never. His dream was to see Isaac get his diploma of architect. His dream is to see Mary, to put the tallis. He never saw that. His dream was to have grandchildren. He never saw that. That's the only regret in my life, nothing else. Everything is smooth, thank god. But the regret of my life is Albert never saw nothing, nothing.

21 years it's going to be in May I lost my husband. But all my children are very well educated. I have a son. He's an architect. He's doing well. My daughter, Sarah, she got her masters of teaching. My other daughter is a social worker. They all graduate colleges very well, marry nice mans. I can't ask for better than that. I never dreamed I was going to have grandchildren and children, never. I'm so thankful, god, I'm here in the United States of America, believe me.

It give me the opportunity to do the kids, they understand me. They have the pain what I went through. They went through a lot with me, all the nightmares, all the screaming, all the crying. They went through a lot, those kids. They gave me courage. Mama, be optimistic. Never worry. We are here for you. We love you.

All you ask, no better than that, believe me, to have a nice family. Thank god. But I don't have no desire to go back to Greece, no, not anymore. I took my two daughters. I went in 1972 after I hear my husband die. And I saw them in the place where she was born, Sarah.

But they have hatred there, the Greeks, the antisemitism inside.

You said your life was happy before the war. And you didn't mention antisemitism before the war.

There was not so much we heard, because I went to a Jewish school. I was not associated with the Christians. I always have Jewish friends. All our companies was Jewish people. So I never heard.

After the war, the war started, and they came. And now, with what Hitler done, because what is the hatred more? Because they came, the Greeks from the villages, and they took all the good things of the Jewish people. See? They took a profit from the Jewish people. They had that hatred now. They saw the Jewish people, they're rich. The Jewish people, they're smart.

They said to me, everybody, even I got a neighbor. He said, the Jewish people they are very, very rich. I said to her, listen, sweetheart, the Jewish people, they are rich. They're rich of mind, I say. They have a rich mind, I say. You see philosophers, big doctors. The Jewish, they're educated.

You don't see a Jewish person as they sweep the streets. Only the Jewish school and books, I say. That's the richness, not rich of money. Because everybody got a hatred, the Jewish people, they're rich, rich, rich. I said, not the Jewish people they are. They are intelligent, they're smart, they're educated. It's true?

How many Jews lived in your hometown?

My hometown? Oh, we have two synagogues, big synagogues. There was about 200 people, 400, something like this. Yeah, 400 people there was.

And how large was the Jewish community in Salonika?

In Salonika was a big Jewish community, very big, a lot of synagogues. A lot of synagogues, but there was poor people, very poor. And there was rich people, very, very wealthy. But in Drama, there was middle class and rich people, not poor. There was no poor people.

See Salonika is a cosmopolitan, big commercial city. They got the port. There was the cargoes back and forth. See? It was a big city, Salonika, very big city, and popular and very famous, famous city. There was a lot of Jewish people, very, very wealthy, very intelligent, and very, very poor. Lots of poor people there.

That's why there was a lot of poor people they used to live in ghettos, in different sections. They call them ghettos, see? And those ghettos then after they took all those, they cleaned them up, and they bring the transport in those ghettos.

And from there, they take them to the trains. There was a lot of poor people in Salonika because it was a very big city, very big. The largest Jewish community was in Salonika.

Bigger than in Athens?

Bigger than in Athens, yeah. Yeah. No, more than Athens. More, in Salonika, was more Jewish people. In Athens, you can escape. There are so many places to escape, you know, the mountains, [NON-ENGLISH].

The only thing I'm so curious, they don't mentioned too much for the Greek people at the holocaust. I wonder why. I wonder they don't mention, especially to those people they took him from the north of Greece. They don't know what happened to those.

I was reading in a book that says 65,000, they took Jewish people, I think more than that, if you count the little children and everything. 65,000, no. It's more than that. Because they took from so many places. Only Salonika was about 40,000 people, yeah. There was a lot of people in Salonika, Jewish people.

In Drama, Serres, Xanthi, [PLACE NAME], Alexandroupoli, [PLACE NAME]-- all those places, there's a lot of Jewish people that used to live there. They never mention for that.

Did you ever find out what happened to your brothers?

To my--

To your brothers.

My brothers, they went to crematorium. Yeah, all my three, and my father, mother. See, I lost five-- seven of my family, and my little nephew, eight, just the immediate family. I lost a lot of aunties, and uncles, and cousins.

How did your sister go to Israel?

Well, she went in 1948. She decided that life is better in Israel in 1948, just when became Israel a state. So she went in 1948. In 1949, my husband went to visit Israel, alone.

So Sarah was born in-- he left me with Sarah and Isaac at home, and I have a lady. Take care of the kids, and he went alone for two weeks to see how is the life in Israel. If we can make a living over there, so we can emigrate to Israel to make aliyah with him.

Well, he went over there. It was, look, they thought he was a millionaire. And everybody poor, because the country was poor at that time. And everybody from Bulgaria, he had a sister she was married in Bulgaria, she survived. See Bulgaria, they don't touch the Jewish people. The King did not allow the Jewish people to be taken. So they killed the King. They hang the King. But the Jewish people from Bulgaria, they took them from the big cities, and they put them in little towns. You know what I mean?

And that's what the Jewish people, all the Jewish people from Bulgaria, they survived. Now they migrate all of them in Israel. So my sister-in-law, she was in Bulgaria. And she moved to Israel. So he went the first time to see his sister since he survived. So he went, and everybody is so poor. And he says to me, Alegre, put my hand in the pocket, and take money, take money. I can't find the deep.

He called me up. He said, Alegre, I'll come in two weeks. I said, OK. So when he came, he says to me, it's not life for us yet over there honey. Even if I sell everything, he says you're not going to be life for us yet over there. Let's wait. And in between, in 1951, there came the visa for to come to the United States. So we prefer to come to the United States.

But she's happy there, my sister, very happy. And she was here three years ago with me, and now she's coming, god willing. My sister, she's coming in April to grandson's bar mitzvah. I'm bringing her here.

So I talked to her last night. And I told her that I want you to make the plans that to come in, in April. She can't believe it. I say, believe it. Because that's the only thing I can make you happy.

And she got four children, two marry. And she's very happy. She says, Baruch HaShem. The only problem is when there was the war last year, the missiles that was thrown into Tel Aviv, I used to call her every time I heard something was going. I call her. And they had that fear and strain. And she say, we left the camp to survive. We see another fire we got here.

I said, it's nothing. Don't worry. Everything is going to be all right. But now she's calmed down. She's happy. She's happy, and I'm happy here to the United States.

Is there anything that you feel you've left out in your story of what happened to you?

Lots of things can happen, precious sweetheart. Lots of things happen. For to start, it takes so long, so long, lots of things happen.

Is there anything--

I should tell you-- let me tell you one thing what happened to me. One night at the lager was making a selection, a selection is they check you if you got some pimples, things, if you got something, little pimples, they take you for the crematorium. If you show the bone a little bit extra, they take you. So three girls, we run away. We run away, and went to the bathroom.

And the Blockalteste, she was a Polish Jew. She pulled me out from there, and she grabbed me from the doorway enter into here. The enter of the door of the first door. Excuse me. She grabbed me from my hair, and she pulled me down, and she like a dog, like you grab the dog like this, a Jewish lady. She did it to me, a Polish. she was the Blockalteste.

But that was her duty to do it, maybe. You can't help it. I thought, I'll escape danger. I don't want them-- if I have something, I don't know if I have something. But I was scared, because they was making selection, to take some of them for the gas chamber.

And a lot of people, they run away like I did. Like I told you the beginning, it was everything-- I have courage to run on top of the fire, I think I'll survive. You know what I mean? So that was one.

And one time too, I was working in the shoe Kommando, and I went to take shoes from the other barrack with another girl. And we went to the ditch over there to dig, to find something. And I found a few potatoes, wherever it was coming. And the [NON-ENGLISH], the German soldier, we call them [NON-ENGLISH]. Frau is mademoiselle. [NON-ENGLISH], I don't know what it is.

Anyway, so she put me and the other girl on my knees. We stay on our knees. And two bricks in our hands, and stay like this for one hour, two hours. So that's what she did punishment.

One time we was coming from work. I don't know, every time we was coming from work. Sometime they was checking up, like you work in a show Kommando. Maybe you bring another pair of shoes to sell it to make organization, something to do, for a piece of bread extra.

So they put us in our knees. The whole-- all the Kommandos, and to check each one if we have something extra. So we stay over there three, four hours on our knees, and checking everyone if we have something. A lot of things, where shall I begin? A lot of things.

All of a sudden, they call us up. Take all our clothes out. Take our clothes out. Stay everybody out. One time, it was not, so many, many times. You can't count how many times it was that.

Do you remember any occasions when you all tried to celebrate any of the Jewish holidays?

Yes.

How did you do that?

Yom Kippur, I remember it well. We never eat, nobody eat of the Kommando. Nobody-- we send all the barrels back. Because we used to work, and we was going to the Kommando. The men was going the other side. And some Yiddish says, it's [NON-ENGLISH], or there is Yom Kippur. They used to tell us, and talk in Yiddish. And so they say erev Yom Kippur.

So when we went to the lager, we eat good. The next day we went to work, Yom Kippur, but we don't eat nothing. And this other girl says, where is god now? Why he doesn't forgive us?

I said god is up. One day he'll forgive us. Many times I remember. I remember real well. All the holidays we knew when they was coming. Because when we was going to work, the men was going on the other side. And they used to tell us when is Yom Kippur, when is Pesach, when is Sukkot, when is [NON-ENGLISH], or the Tu BiShvat, all the holidays. I don't know how they knew it, but they used to tell us for all the holidays.

Did you know any of the other ethnic groups? Did you see any of the gypsies in the camp?

Any of the--

And did you see any gypsies?

Oh, no. Ukrainians, Russians, and yeah, there was a lot of Ukrainians. I don't think any gypsies I saw in my lager, but Ukrainians, they was very mean. They were very-- non-Jewish, not Jewish, and the Russians. There was very barbarian. They stealing the bread from our beds.

Because those, there was a civil prisoners, war prisoners. We were not war prisoners. They took us like slaves over there. And there used to come packages to them, German too, non-Jewish German, there was prisoners. Because they was against Hitler, put him into concentration camp. Yeah, I met a lot of them, very barbarian, the Ukrainians. Strong women, very strong.

Did you ever see the camp orchestra?

The orchestra of the camp? Many times. Many times.

Can you describe what you saw?

Well first of all, when we used to go to the Kommando, right away, they say sing. They want us to sing. [NON-ENGLISH], sing, sing, sing, Greek. So we used to sing wherever we sing Greek songs, French songs, Spanish songs. We used to sing. And then going to work, and coming back, and yeah, [NON-ENGLISH] was a lot of them. It was a

lager over there in Auschwitz. It was a big building. We can't go in that one. It was only for the women.

They took them over there to make a-- they used to sterilize the women. And there was make an experiment, the doctors. And a lot of women, they survived, a few. They survived that. In that Kommando, they never let us go in there.

One thing I want to tell you everything was clean, very clean, very clean.

Even though you had no soap? Even though you had no soap?

No soap, we washed. The soap they give us once a week, a bar of soap, you know? But the soap, it was so small. It was not a big bar, you know? So to wash our hands, our face, our necks, but they give us. So we used to sell bread and take soap. So that's why we can have extra soap to wash.

Or you give you coffee. You don't drink your coffee, you sell the coffee. You take a bar of soap. That's where you make the organization. You sell your bread, you sell your piece of salami. They give you whatever you want, make exchange.

In other Kommandos, my sister used to work in the [NON-ENGLISH] Kommando. She had extra clothes to change, and underwear. And she gave it to me. But she was very clean, my sister. Even at the camp, when we sat down in the-- you remember those beds you saw in books, don't you? They're shelves, beds, with the straw.

Why don't you describe them?

Those windows, with the underwear they give us, she cut it my sister, the half. And she made me a handkerchief. She made me handkerchief. And she cleaned the windows. She was so clean, my sister, very clean.

The beds, did you have blankets?

No, blanket one.

One blanket?

One blanket. And there was in each section of the barrack, it was a stove, a wooden stove.

Did you have pillows?

Pillows, no. No. No pillows.

Did you have mattresses?

The mattress was a straw mattress.

A straw mattress. How many layers of barracks?

The bottom one, two, three. I was in the middle.

How many women, three people.

Three people.

Or four, it depends on how wide they are. Some was a little bit wider. And then you yourself organize. If you want to sell a piece of bread, you sell a piece of bread to the Ukrainian, to the Russian, they give you a sheet, or they give you a pillow so that you make yourself. Did people steal these?

No. Those they was even more advantaged, because they was prisoners. They treat them better then they treat us. My

sister, the one she's in Israel, she survived with me, she was sick in Birkenau. She was very sick, throwing up and diarrhea.

They put him in the bottom-- bottom of the shelf. When you put them in the bottom, it's like you are dead, and they put you in crematorium. My sister and I, the other one, the one she-- they took her to crematorium. We took every day our soup, and bring it to her, to eat the soup, the bread. And we only with the coffee and the salami. Sometime we use salami and bread. And I divide the bread, mine with my sister, and we give one portion of bread to my other, the one she was sick. So she can really get stronger. And she became stronger. The other one died. And she survived, thank god.

You do whatever you can, you do just to survive. But the night before we was free, we were sitting, five, six girls, seven girls. We were singing. And a little girl, her name was Alegre, she was from Kastoria, from Greece. She was so weak. Early in the morning, die. She never saw the freedom.

Like her, many others.

Why do you think you survived?

What did I survive?

Why?

Why? Well, I'll tell you why. I guess I have to tell the world that it happened. It happened that. It's true what Hitler did to all the Jewish people. It's not only me, what I survive. Thank god there survived a handful of people, not too many, not too many, just a handful compared to what he took, Hitler. And the people that survived, it's just a handful. And the ones that survived, they're proud to say that this happened, and I hope god that it don't happen again.

What do you have to say to people who say it never happened?

Someday, they'll go through it themselves, and they can believe what happened, what is true. It happened. Believe me, it happened. Nobody says lies. It shows it's not only the number they show, there's so many, many, many things they're showing, the people. There are so many proofs that happened. All the families, they took them. Where are they now? Where are they?

They took so many people, not only from Greece, from all over. From Poland, from Russia, from Germany, Hungarian, Romania, Yugoslavia-- where are those people? They don't die in two years like this or three years. Whoever says it don't happen is crazy. He really is crazy. That makes me very, very mad, very upset, makes me sick inside.

Because I went through the hell, and he's going to tell me it don't happen. I hope god it happens to him.

Oh, will you show your number, please?

I can tell you my number, 39028.

Tell us how they did that.

Oh honey, that's tattoo. And then they took it, and they put it on with a needle, and they put it. The delta here is because you're Jewish. To the non-Jewish they put only number. They don't put the delta. But delta is Greek. I should say, the triangle. OK? The triangle, they put it because you are Jewish. The half star of the Jewish star.

But to the non-Jewish, the put plain number.

Did it hurt when they did that?

In that minute, when you have fear and you worry what happened to the family, what's going to be, you don't feel they



punch and pinch you. You don't feel it.

My son, I tell you that, one second. My son, when he was three years old, I told you. He says to me, mama, why have you got that number? I say, sweetheart, I forget daddy's telephone number. I put it here and I can't forget it. OK.

He was four years old. He says to me, mama, why don't we got grandma? Everybody got grandma. Why I don't?

I say, sweetheart, grandma, they took them away. I said, let me tell you. Sit down close to me, padre. Padre means father. Sit down here. Sit down to me. I said to him, sweetheart, it was a very mean man. His name is Hitler. He took my father, my mother, my sisters, my brothers. They kill them. And they put on a number. And I was over there, I say, three years.

Where mama?

I say, someplace. I show you one day. He says, I'm going to take a plane one day when I grow up. I'll go and kill all the Germans. Fine. I used to go on the bus. I used to go here in the United States in the bus. He says, look what she put that. Why are you putting that here? I says, it's my social security number.

I'm not giving an example. They are so ignorant, they don't know, they don't read? And I say it's my social security number. You know? Now, my little boy, Jeremy, he say to me. Now he knows what's happened to me. He knows now the whole story. But always you got dirty your arm, grandma. Clean it. I said, I don't got enough soap. I'll clean it tomorrow, honey.

No I'll take. It I'll take it. I'll clean it. I say, you can't clean it. And then I told him what happened. Now he knows the story. There are a lot of funny things, a lot of curious people. Why they put the number there? I said, where do you want me to put the number, here? Even if they put it here, I say, I was going to say I'm proud I'm Jewish.

When they ask me, you got an accent. I say I'm Greek, but I'm Jewish Greek. I'm proud that I'm Jewish because I went through the hell, and I hide anymore I'm Jewish. Believe me. I said if Hitler put it in here, the number, I was still going to leave it over there, I say.

How do you feel about the Germans?

I want to be honest with you. I don't want to hear the name of Germany. Anybody who says it's German, I think all the Germans, maybe they are good and they are bad in every country. But they done so harm to my family, to everybody. And I don't want to-- I don't care for them.

You say I hate them? I hate them, yes. I hate them, I really do, so much antisemitism, so much hatred. I met a lot of German people. I talk to them nice and I'm polite. But I can be friendly. I can't. It's impossible. I can be. I can be fine on there. I hate them. Maybe I'm wrong, but I don't think so. I don't think so.

I want to tell you something. When the boat was coming to the United States, why didn't you let the boat come in? Another antisemitism tragedy. All the people were killed, too many things. Too many. Everybody knew what was going on.

Whoever says to me, we don't know nothing in the United States. They're lying. They knew what was going on in Europe. They knew it. That was not a secret. My gosh, from one country to another, he was going, and he was taking all the Jewish people. They don't know what's happened. They knew it.

Thank god you live in a free country. You can talk and say, and if the President of the United States talks to me, and said to me, I'll tell him too. I'm an American citizen. I vote. I have the right to talk.

Thank you.

It's true, honest to god.