

You were telling us about the wagon ride, and you got stopped and asked for eggs.

What did they say?

You were telling us how you were riding in the farmer's wagon.

Yeah.

And you got stopped.

Oh. Yeah, and then they have seen the way the soldiers have come, the German soldiers was going with the trucks with everything in the direction to Kaunas. And I said to myself, here is the end. And fortunately, we were lucky. They didn't stop us. And we went through.

And we came to the farmer's house. The farmer didn't took us right away to his place. But he took us to his brother-in-law. He wasn't too far from there.

And Jay, by laying all the time, and all of a sudden it was quiet. And we didn't say anything. Jay spoke up, daddy, daddy. And we couldn't say anything. We were afraid.

So the man said, I hear a voice. I hear somebody talking. Oh, he said, go on. You are crazy. I am talking to you. Maybe I was whispering, and you didn't hear me.

And everything went smooth. Then we went to the farmer, to his house. We didn't have no place where to sleep. We was sleeping there.

The farmer's house, they used to have a oven. And on the oven, they used to have children sleeping there. You know, I don't know, it's hard to describe the farmer's life.

So then the next day, he went-- that man knew where my uncle was hiding. And he went to him. And he came to see us. And he told us to be very careful. And we were on the attic there by the farmer, winter, cold, no clothes. It was terrible.

Then I took sick because the rain. And by being over there, seven days somebody start telling the lawyer from Kovne came here, and he is hiding here, the Jew. [? Martynas ?] got scared. And he told him, we have to run. We have to go. I'm afraid that the Gestapo or somebody could come and see you and kill you.

I said, maybe we can go in there where the chickens are, where they keep the chickens. He said, no, we have to go. So he took us again to his sister-in-law. We were over there for five days or six, no more. And then they threw us out, plain kicked us out. It was winter.

And where to go? I didn't know. But I knew one thing that I could go, and I couldn't reach my uncle. And that [? Martynas ?] was a very smart farmer. My husband used to help them with the papers. You know when they had some papers to do, different things, and they didn't have the money, so my husband used to help them. It is again a long story to tell about that.

And it was winter, snow, cold. And he said, let's go. Let's run.

And we came in a place. And he said, please, sit down. Lay down. He said, like that. And it go look like a stone, a big stone. And he could hear the way police was running, you know. And after the storm went over, then he said, get up, and let's go.

I came to that farmer in [PLACE NAME] That farmer knew very well my mother. And Mrs. [? Barshefsky, ?] she was sick. And she was in Kovne in a hospital. And my mother used to cook for her and take her some food and see her every

day. So I had a place where to go in.

I left that farmer with Izzy, my husband, and Jay. And I went by myself. The dogs start barking. I thought that they go tearing apart the whole farm over there. I knocked in in the door. And the men have seen me and closed the door again. He got scared.

I said to him, don't get scared. Let me go into your place. He said, who are you? And I told him who I am. I said, how did you come here? How? Where?

I used to tell him bubbe maizes you know, story that I knew that place. And really I knew that place. They had a big fishing place there. And I used to come there when I was little. And by being by grandmother, she used to go get some fish over there. So I told him who I am.

So he made a cross. And he said, come in. And I told him, I said, listen, I got my husband and my son here. I said, please, help me. You are the only one who could save our life.

He said, but I don't have no place where. I said put us in where the potatoes are, in that-- there used to dig a big hole, they say. And they used to keep the potatoes over winter. And he said, no, I cannot. He said, let's go in the next door where they kept the horses and the coach, and go in there on the hay. And they put us up very high on the hay.

The next day, all around, the neighbors what did happen to your place? That the dogs were barking and barking and barking. He said, oh, nothing. Maybe police passed by. I don't know. We don't know.

I could be there only five days. He said, I cannot keep you anymore, I'm sorry. I said, can you get in contact with my uncle, with Itzhak. He said, yes, I'll go and I'll tell him.

So my uncle came in. And he took us away from over there. And it was snow. And we were walking in the snow.

And the people, the farmers, thought that it was the partisan. And they thought, I don't know. They said, the little boy with little shoes there. They said, I think the partisan. And he took us away in another place, [? Pashkovsky. ?] And we were there until we get liberated. So it was no food.

Where were you until you were liberated?

Huh?

Where exactly were you until you were liberated? At another farm?

Another farm. We used to go from one farm to the other, from one to the other. But that farmer was a Christian with a good heart-- she, his wife, and he himself. And he-- my uncle already prepared a day ahead a time that we'll come there. And if you will be able to keep us.

So we were over there since the liberation. And it was no food. I weighed 95 pounds. And it was life-- no life. I couldn't forget my people. Want to kill myself. I said, I don't have any more what to live.

He said, don't you have a son? Don't you have me? Not everybody is fortunately lucky that we are three together. I said, I cannot-- I cannot sleep. I cannot-- it's terrible. It is a moment that you cannot-- it's something you cannot forget, and by being over there, hiding ourselves.

The only man who saved me really, it was my uncle. He used to come once a week and to bring us a little goat milk, bread, or something else, a little bit that we should have to eat. And when he used to come a whole week, I could live the way he used to talk to me. I believed in him.

It is a feeling that is hard to describe how painful it was. Day and night, you couldn't sleep. And here, your heart was

tearing in pieces. I couldn't-- I couldn't talk too much to Izzy, because he left his mother too in ghetto.

But, you know, it is so painful that from a big family, his family, and my family, nothing was left over except ourselves. And I don't know from where I had the power, I really don't, to go on my life.

It's hard. When you lose one person at a time, maybe it's a little different. It still hurts. But when you lose everybody in one time, and everybody with love to, and you are with love to the family, you would cut your fingers for them. And yet I lost them in 10 minutes, exactly 10 minutes. [SOBBING]

I cannot forgive myself. I want to run with them. They didn't let me. They didn't let me go, the police. I could see right now my mother the way she turned around and looked at me, and I looked at her. [SOBBING]

Does Jay remember your mother?

Huh?

What does Jay remember? Does he remember your mother?

He does. He does remember.

On all the days with the farmers, what would you do with Jay? How would you spend each day?

Huh?

How would you spend each day with Izzy and with Jay? How would the day pass? What would you do?

When? During the war?

No, when you were with the farmers.

At the farmers?

Yes, when you were hiding.

Well, we were with the pigs. I was with the pigs and sheep there all day and at night, all of us because we were afraid. We were afraid to be-- and then we used to be in a barn where they used to keep the corn and hay and straw, you know. That was our life. And the mice was our partners.

Would you tell stories?

And the mice was running over you.

Would you tell stories to keep Jay--

Jay, we were all together. And all three of us, we didn't move, all three of us in one. And Jay behaved himself very good. He was very quiet. He was very good.

Did you talk to each other, or did you have to be quiet?

Huh?

Could you talk to each other?

Oh, yes, we used to talk to each other, sure, because nobody was there. And nobody was there. We can talk. But what

can you talk? What? The lost of the family?

Crying all the time. I don't know from where I got the tears. But the tears used to run no matter where I was going, because the pain was deep in my heart.

Did you have any dreams for after the war?

Oh, honey, dreams, hollering and-- even right now, even right now, come back to you. And you know when you are asleep, you think that you have to fight with them. You have to run. You run from one place to the other. Here are the German. Here is the Lithuanian.

And then you start screaming. And you scream when you are asleep. I used to wake up Izzy. And he used to wake me up. He said, what? Get up.

I used to get up. I didn't know where I was. I didn't. I didn't know that how pitiful it was. Yeah.

And Izzy, when we were there at the last place where we were, it was already hot, the places where my uncle was. And we have to go in there to [? Pashkovsky, ?] where we have been. And my husband digged. They used to call a malina, a hiding place.

There was two-- where you keep the potatoes-- two big holes where you keep the potatoes. And it was already in springtime. So there wasn't enough potatoes to keep.

So my husband started digging the place. And he made from one place to the other to go in, so like a little tunnel. And he was digging. And all of a sudden, the sand was-- the sand-- started the sand coming. And it covered him up up to here. And he couldn't move. And he had just a little light, like from a flashlight, not a flashlight, like a candle.

That farmer has a son. And on Sunday-- Saturdays, they used to go out to play fiddle. And they used to play fiddle.

And you cannot scream. You cannot holler. You don't know nothing. But there was a dog. And the dog was running to him and kissing him and running and kissing.

All of a sudden, the dog have seen that the son is coming, John. And he ran to him. And he ran back to that place. He run to him and got back to this place. And he came in and have see my husband that he was covered up with the sand and digged him out. He digged him out from the sand. It is just miracles-- miracles and luck.

Where were you when this happened to your husband?

I was with Jay inside. And he was doing the digging outside. When can you do it? At night when everybody is asleep, when the farmers couldn't see you. So he used to work by little-- like a candle, you know. That's what kind of light he had.

And he built-- and later on he really built it up, you know, a little tunnel. And there was my uncle with his wife and two children. And some other people came from the ghetto. And everybody was there.

And we were laying on the floor like dead people. You know, you even couldn't light up a match.

When you said you were inside when your husband was digging, where were you inside?

Inside by the farmer.

With the farmer?

Yeah.

And then after your husband dug this hole, and it was the three of you, how did it come to be more people?

Oh, that was his friends came, my husband's cousin who helped us to come, who helped us to come to that place. So he came with his cousins and so on. And that happened we were there for three months. And this was no food, no nothing.

And the dog, when he used to bark, we used to know that people are there. And then we could go out. It is at night, 12 o'clock, 1 o'clock in the morning, to catch your breath a little bit and then back again.

Honey, what kind of life was it? That was impossible, impossible. People wouldn't believe that dead people were alive. It's like a grave, exactly like a grave, that you couldn't stand up. Only was like for children. How we used to go in? We used to slide in the way I told you, on your stomach.

And when you were inside, could you see light?

No, nothing. I told you that we couldn't-- it was so thick the air that we couldn't light up a match. A match couldn't be lighted up. He made a tiny little chimney like probably like that was that nobody could see. That's all. But it used to come in.

It's sometimes I think myself, how in the world did I went through? From where did I got the power? The power to life or power because-- maybe for my son because my son was my eye and my ear, and both of were.

And Jay was sick, no medicine, no nothing. His gums were swelled up. And you know how they healed? With onions rub, or garlic. She used to take and rub him, you know, the-- that is everything that I am telling. You just nothing, nothing.

But a person can go through your life. But that may be because I was young. I was at that time 28.

How did you know when the war was over?

Huh?

How did you know when the war was over?

Oh, yeah, my husband used to go with my uncle at night and get some corn. And we used to take the corn there at the farmers. And you know, they used to put in two stones. And you used to turn around like that and make the flour for the bread.

They used to go there to a place where they had a radio. And through the radio we find out that the army is already near here. And that was in 1944, July. In July, we got liberated.

And what was-- how did you-- tell me about your liberation.

Huh?

Tell me how were you liberated.

How we got liberated? Well, we have seen the Russian army came. And the Russian army went through to that place where we used to be.

There was not a highway, but the second highway was there. And that the way the military went through to that. And they went to Kovne, you know. And that's what we find out that we are already liberated. The Germans, they are not there, the Germans. And the Lithuanian people-- and the Russians came in. And then was the time when we got liberated.

And from there my husband went-- [PAUSES] my husband went first back to Kovne, you know, to Kaunas, where the ghetto was. And he thought maybe perhaps somebody will survive from his family. Nobody.

They had a place to hide. And they thought that will be the place where they could survive. And they burned up the house. And they burned up the other place where they was hiding. They shot them and burned them.

And that was the end from his family-- his mother, both sisters. That little boy what she has went with his father. And it was the big Aktion for the children. I didn't see them anymore. I saw them when I left. So nobody survived from them.

Did you go to the ghetto with your husband?

Huh?

After the war, when he went back to the ghetto to try to find them, were you with him?

Well, I was with him. I was with him. We have seen-- I cannot talk anymore. It's so many things, so many things.

And maybe because of Jay, because it's no more life to live, but because of my little boy, he needs us. But not one time, I want to take my life. But then I said, who will raise Jay?

Is there anything else to be afraid of after what you've been through?

No. I-- one second. Wouldn't you mind to ask me again?

Is there anything left to be afraid of after what you've been through?

Well, I know only one thing. After the liberation, I couldn't get used to go on the sidewalk because they used to go on the highway. And for a Jew wasn't allowed to go on the sidewalk.

And I told my husband, I said, how can I get used to get on the sidewalk? That how much did used to go. A dog, a cat, they used to go freely wherever they wanted. But that you never, never.

And another thing I want to tell you, people said, luck. And I said, Mazel. You know what it means? I said, if you really did have Mazel by going through so much. And the good Lord saved us.

That's what I am telling you right now. It's just nothing. As long as you didn't go through. You know what I mean? But you have to go through and see everything with your own eyes. The

Way here you're talking to the people and the people disappeared. Here, you talk to the people, and the people are disappeared. Everywhere it was a selection.

Here, they special took a man. And they hanged in the ghetto exactly the way you go in by the guard where it is, because they found a loaf of bread. So the next day, they hanged him. And everybody has to go out and to see that. Would you believe it?

Now, today, you, Edna, what are you afraid of?

Well, I was afraid when I came here. And I used to see the brown uniforms what the police used to wear. And each time I used to see a brown uniform, I said, the Gestapo, the Gestapo, because they used to wear brown uniforms.

And when we came here, we have to make life from the beginning. Like I said, we couldn't go to the profession what Izzy had, lawyer. So he said, Edna, he said, I'm not going to college. I said, why? He said, you have to be born and raised here in America.

You have to have the language. You have to have the dialect. You have to have everything what a lawyer needs.

He said, I cannot. I cannot do it. He said, we have to start it up from something else. I said, what is in your mind?

He said, you know, I like to open up a service station. I looked at him. And he said, yes, I'm going to learn in a service station.

He went and he learned. And he worked in the service station for a couple of months. No language, no nothing. Listen, honey, that was no picnic. But he learned.

When he used to come at home I used to see him, the way he used to come home with the coverall, it really hurts. It really hurts me because my husband never knew how to take a cup of coffee or a glass of tea.

Then he said-- then he was working in Pepsi-Cola for my uncle, you know, my aunt who brought me. And uncle said to him, I want to send you something that you should qualify at that. He said, Uncle, Dear, I thank you very much. I came to this country not to work for somebody else. I want to work for myself.

He said, Izzy, what you go do? What you want? He said, I want a service station. And why he want the service station? Because he had a motorcycle when he was single. And the motorcycle, he likes to go and to fix.

And the way it happened before the war, and he couldn't practice anymore law, so he took the agent for motorcycles. And the motorcycles came from Belgium. And some of them came from England. FN, FN was from Belgium. And [? Iron ?] motorcycle was from England. And he started up in 1938.

He used to work-- he used to go out and sell it, you know? And I used to sell at home. I used to work with him together. And that the way he wants to do it. And he said, we go start it up from the service station. And watching a couple of years later, you get used, know a little the language and so on, he said, I want to go in the wholesale business, in the part business.

And when you said, in 1938 he was in the motorcycle business--

Yeah.

In 1938, what did you know about Kristallnacht?

The Kristallnacht, we find out-- oh, yeah, that's a long story too.

Tell me what you knew and how you knew.

My husband was at that time in Germany. I didn't. But he did. It was in 1938, or in 1939, when he was going to Belgium and to make the order, the motorcycles. Then he had an aunt in Berlin, Tante Johanna. And he was over there. He stopped over there to visit his aunt.

And then when it started up-- and he was fortunately lucky to come back home. Because on his suitcase used to be Israel, his full name Israel Ipp. And Israel is that the way used to call the Jewish people, Israeli, Israel. And he was fortunately lucky to go through that they didn't took him off from the train.

And there was a lady. He said, you know, Mr. Ipp, that you are fortunately lucky. They could arrest you and put you in a concentration camp.

So let me-- there's one more piece that I would like you to tell me a little bit more about. You told us about the wonderful days in Lithuania when life was good and you didn't have the problem of antisemitism. By 1938, you already knew that there was trouble. What happened in between? How did it change from good to not good?

It changed a whole lot. Because from Germany, we were on the border, Germany and Lithuanian. And soon they started up over there. You had a feeling already that it is difference.

And then another thing, when the Russians came in 1940s, they came in in Lithuanian. Then it started up the rest. Then was, you know, a hell, to say the way it is.

You couldn't go out. You couldn't say anything. It was terrible. It was awful. Wherever you used to go, everybody used to point, Zydas, Zydas, Zydas. You know what Zydas means? Jew, Jew, Jew.

And how did they know?

Well, you have plenty of people you know. Christian people who knew you. And on your face, you could see that Jewish people. The Jewish people were entirely different from the Christian people. It's unbelievable.

So even before--

But the worst thing that it was was when it came when the Russians came. And after the Russians, that when the Germans came in, that was the worst thing in the world. But between '35 and '38 was not so bad. You still could go on and live, like for instance, here, democracy. You still could go on.

They didn't kill you. They didn't shoot you. So they used to write, Zydas, Zydas, different things, articles in the paper. But they didn't kill you.

And when it started up the slaughtering when they got in the ghetto-- and even before the ghetto, they started up already when the Russians started going away. So then when they start doing the slaughtering. It is in a place it took 45 or 52 people, men.

And it was there a gasoline station. And they took the people. And they got gas, put it up all over them, and they burned them up. Would you believe it?

They took out 512 people, all intelligent people, lawyers and doctors and bookkeeper. I could see in front of me that was across from our house that we used to live on the ghetto was already. And they took the people and friends-- many friends was over there what we knew, we raised together, lawyers and doctors.

And they took them. And they want to take them to check some books, to check over in the archive. And all of them, they killed overnight. Not one survived.

So when you told the Lithuanians at the selection that you were a dressmaker--

Yeah, he let me go.

They let you go.

Yeah.

And were you a dressmaker--

And why? I'll tell you why, because what it happen that the Arbeitsamt let out, give you certificates, who is a tailor, who is a shoemaker, who is-- all working people, you know, about 300. And I had a feeling that can save your life.

And they want to give to my husband too. My husband said, no, I don't need it. Whatever will be with everybody that will be with me. And that's what it saved me by going there and tell him what I am.



They have to have for the soldiers to show the Werkstatten that they used to have the places. So there was lined up with people. You still have to have [NON-ENGLISH], to go in there, to show, to fix up the clothes and different things, whatever you can do, like caps and here for your ears and gloves to make. That's what they have to have the people who knew to be worker. But intelligent people they didn't need.

And did you work as a dressmaker?

No. I learned here. When I came to this country at [INAUDIBLE], my first job was there. And I learned there how to sew. And I hate it. It was too monotonous for me. I was crying and doing the work. And I couldn't take.

But I learned. I didn't know how to make a hem. I didn't know how to put in a zipper. So they used to pay me a little. And I used to do the work. And I was very handy for that.

Then after that, I used to take a little work at home. And then my husband found a place, the service station. And then the doctor said take her out from the house because I felt terrible. I thought I could lose my mind.

So I got into the service station. I don't know how to pump gas. I knew what to do, but I couldn't.

Came in a car, a new car, a Studebaker. And he said, fill it up. Filled it up? That was a miracle. I filled up the gas and start to stop. I took the nozzle and I pressed. And the gas popped up to the ceiling. And he, said, oh, Edna, we lost a customer. I said, honey, I told you I'm not a service station operator. Oh, he said, oh, it's all right.

Another episode what I want to tell you. But it happened in the service station.

Well, let's take one quick break. How much time do we have left on the tape?

About 17 minutes on the tape.

OK. What lesson do you want us to learn from your experience?

From my experience, I just don't know-- see your life clear, no matter what you are doing, no matter what kind of work you are doing. Don't get disappointed. Do whatever you can to charity. Take your life with-- how to say-- no matter how bad it is, always look ahead of you. Don't never look behind.

But look ahead. Look ahead. Tomorrow will be a better day. And day after tomorrow will be still better.

And don't get disappointed in your life, even if you have to scrub the floors, even when you have to work for somebody else just to make a living. Do it and keep your pride. Keep your chin high. You are a person like everybody. That the way I changed my mind. That the way I said, it was, it was over.

But thanks to my husband's education and my help, that's what we got right now in a free country where you can live no matter what you are doing. But you can live in freedom. You can live at-- you live in freedom.

You are not afraid anymore a Nazi or a Lithuanian will come and kill you or beat you or everything. Here is free. Here is the free country.

I want to tell you one more little thing. When I was working in the service station, across from us was the Yellow Cab Company. There was two men. One was the insurance man. And the other one was a friend of his.

They used to observe me the way I used to work in the service station. And one said to the other, you know what I'll tell you? That woman doesn't have any problems in her life.

I said, what do you mean? Everybody got problems. He said, I observe her from day to day. That woman she walks out, she smiles all the time.

He said, the other one said, I bet you that everybody got problems, and she got too. If she would have problems, she wouldn't smile. He said, let's go in and ask her.

I'm telling you the truth. They walked in the service station, inside. And one said, lady, we like to ask you something. I said, if I can answer you in English, I'll be glad to. But my language is very poor.

He said, let me tell you something-- let me ask you something. Do you have any problems in your life? I said, why are you asking me? He said, any time you observe, any time you walk out, you talk to the people. You smile. You never mean. A smiling lady.

I said, darling, if I would tell you my problems and my trouble, the biggest tractor and trailer wouldn't take away from one corner to the other. So the other man said, what did I told you? She got problems too.

I used to cry inside. Customer used to come in, I used to smile. Some of them came in, Mrs. Ipson, did somebody hurt you? Why you cry? Oh, I said, I'm sorry. I don't cry, but I got a little cold, and the tears are running. I couldn't stop. Wiped off the tears. Smile again.

Is it easier for you now that you can tell people why you cry?

No. I didn't tell them. But I had a few customers what they used to come in. And they were in big problems. And I told them, I said, that is no problem. You got your family. You got everything. I said, you can solve your problem. You have money for the car. Go and say to the people and tell them that you lost your job. You don't have? So you go get the work. Go pay him a little at a time, as much as you can.

And the people, I said, they will help you too. You come in, and they will help you. I said, don't give up. I never give up. I always look ahead. I had worse than you did. And I made it. You can make it too.

Please, believe me, you can make too. Go to everybody whom you owe the money. Tell everybody what kind of shape you are. You don't want nothing. You want to pay, but you are just right now out of a job.

I said, the time will come, you'll have the job. Give a dollar here. Give a dollar there. Give a dollar there. And everybody will be happy. And you'll be happy with your family.

And a couple of months later, he came back and he thanked me so much. He said, Mrs. Ipson, I did it the way you said it.

I think we're going to cut now and get ready for the pictures.

Real steady. OK, good. Thank you, Edna. That's good.

OK.