

It's good afternoon by now.

Yes.

Thank you, Lillian, for coming down-- if you can look at me--

No problem.

--even better-- for coming down to do this. And we would like to start with your maiden name, your full name, and the place where you were born.

Well, I was born in Warsaw. My maiden name is Win. And mine-- I had a older sister and two younger brothers. My sister was--

Your full name now is?

Lillian Feigen. And I had a older sister, Sara, and two younger brothers. One was-- and I should call it here, but I'll tell you, in Yiddish was Favel. And the youngest one was Godl. And my father's name was Shloime. And my mother's was Lotte. And we had a very nice life too before the war. I have very good memories as a youngster from the past.

My dad was a very easygoing man. We just usually talked. At usually Europe, you would expect the men should be more the powerful men and punish the children. But it wasn't in our case. If anything, my mother was the one who was more disciplining us and teaching us differently. And we had a bakery. So we really did see very little of my dad because he worked at nights and slept most of the days.

But we looked forward for the holidays because even though my dad didn't wear any Orthodox clothing-- he didn't have the beard with the payos and things. But he still-- we still observed everything, just in every detail as Jews in the religion.

And we had a nice-- so we didn't drive on the holidays. We had a small congregation right not far from where we lived. And before the war, we lived in a more Gentile neighborhood. And I don't know if everybody knows, but the Poles were very antisemite-- and until this day, if you listen to the news and you know history.

Did you go to a public school?

Yes. And we went to public school. And my two brothers went to cheder. And I and my sister, we had a tutor at home to do learning-- Hebrew and Yiddish. Because really, at home, we didn't speak that much Yiddish. But we-- mainly, what we learned, really, we had a tutor for Hebrew, to read and write Hebrew a little bit-- I mean, the prayers, to pray, mainly.

And my mother, especially, always emphasized on education. She said, if you have the education, whatever you want to do later, you can do whatever you want. But just first, get your education. And this, I'll never forget. And I practiced the same thing with my own children.

And it was-- and when we used to go to parks to, before the war, take a walk or-- especially, I liked to go with my sister. She was older. She had-- with some friends. So my mother insisted she-- was very anxious to take me with her because she was older. She was already wanted to see some boys. But I had to go with sometimes.

And we went to the park. When we got in, we met some children, Polish children. Everyone practically had a rock in their hand or they had a stick to hit the Jews. And there was somebody, some-- for our neighbors' children or something, which they did know us, so they used to say, oh, this one, don't touch. This is our Jew, like me not or my sister.

She was protecting.

Because they knew us, we were protected sometimes-- not all the time, but at times, we were protected. So the times came to associate between the Poles and the Jews were such a good relations before the war. Was very bad-- they were boycotting the Jewish stores. They were saying, don't buy by a Jew. They put up-- they were writing with charcoal in Polish, do not buy in a Jew, by a Jewish store, or whatever you had-- the store or any business. They tried to avoid it.

But still-- and then, well, we just-- in 19-- I was born in 1925. My sister was born 1920. And I had a brother. The brother was-- one was born in '27 and the youngest one in '29. So in 1939, I just finished public school, graduated. And we-- in that time, it was-- and then worked through the summer.

And then already, we heard that the Germans already start invading different countries. And then in September, they invaded Poland. And within four weeks, they took over Poland, the German. And when they came in, at first, well, it's a war. We thought, well, whatever it was-- we didn't know the difference as children-- we saw the times were getting worse.

And at the moment, then they begin to start looking for the Jews again, the Germans are asking the Pole. The Poles, they should let them know, let's say, who the-- get them Jews to work, to do some things for them, or take them out-- or mainly men. They were looking for men on and off.

And the times began to get bad because between the Poles and the Germans, we had very bad times already. They came and they tried to-- it was like a war against the Jews constantly. And then the Germans already started talking about a ghetto. So we had to move out from our house to go to the ghetto because we were in a different area. So naturally, we had to double up with more families, like we lived with another family, where there was--

Was this still in your town in Warsaw?

In Warsaw. I'm speaking everything in Warsaw, what happened, yes. We moved-- we had to move out to the Jewish area, where there was the ghetto. I mean, they organized the ghetto. They just sized up so many streets. I don't know how they went about the more Jewish area, this would be the ghetto, the Jewish ghetto.

They blocked off certain area.

They blocked it off, yes, certain area. And we had to move there. And so we had to move in with another family, which was-- there was a widow with one son, married son, and a baby. And they had-- there were two daughters there, adult people. And we were six of us.

Really, my sister-- not my sister, my brother got married just before the ghetto. She insisted to get married, against my mother's permission. She gave them finally permission. She didn't wanted her to get married. But she had a boyfriend. And they realized that was going on. So they got married. So they weren't already with us-- not in the same place, but were in the same area.

So just the five of us were there. And when we got in, we lived there. And the conditions began to get worse with every day because firstly, they had the ghetto. And again, they start asking for men to go to work to take out people to forced labor. So they organized Jewish police from the ghetto and then the Polish people who helped them.

And the Germans via the SS that you had to go so many people every day, they had to take out to work. Well, like my dad, we had to move away. So he couldn't go to the bakery already to work. So he didn't do much. And he was also a young man. So they used to take him too to work because he was early in the 40s.

But most of the time, first, they looked for the younger men, like in 20 or so. But in the 40s was still-- because he was a strong, handsome man. So they used to take him to work too. And my brother, well, somehow didn't like the idea of going to work because sometimes, he was going out on the Polish-- or got out from the ghetto to the Polish side. And he did some business with a partner, the Polish partner because he looked like a Gentile.

So again, but wherever he wanted to leave the ghetto, it cost you money because you had to get out, pay off the policeman or somebody should look the other side. Because the German really didn't know who was a Jew or who wasn't, only the Poles knew it or the Jew knew who was standing, helping them. So somehow, because people were still going in and out, some working people, somehow, that he got out.

So he had a friend in a small town that he went, that he decided after a while to go to the small town, to the friend. Because he wrote to him. And he said, in the small town, Janowiec nad Wisla it was there, that he stayed with his friend was there. And he's told him that there is not so bad. And they don't know anything.

They don't have any Germans, really, in that small town in the area. They were evacuating their other areas or surrounded them. But in that particular town, was still nice and peaceful. So if you want to come, he'll find him a place where to stay. He should come. So that's what my brother-in-law did. Meanwhile, so we stayed together. My sister came back to our house to live with us.

And the conditions were getting bad because you couldn't get food the way was running out of food. We were running out of soap and other things. And it was very hard to really to continue to have enough food. You saw on the street people begging. They couldn't beg-- they really didn't, whatever you gave them, even a few cents, they couldn't buy much for it because it was nothing anything to buy. And the food was very scared.

And a lot of people were sitting outside on the street. You would think they were beggars that they alive. So many times, I went out with my mom, so she said, well, give them a few cents. And when I touched them, the person tipped over because they was frozen. So people were very bad off already.

This was in '40 during-- in '42. Or even at the end of '40, the '41 and '42 winters began to be very bad. And they were running. And then people were getting sick, like the typhus was going around and so on because from the-- couldn't from undernourishment and the dirty conditions. You couldn't keep as much. You tried to keep clean, but it was very hard.

And it just happened that-- and I was always in the family the weak child. We were-- everybody was all stronger and healthy. I was the one who caught more colds than somebody else. I was the one had to watch not to get a sniffle, not to get a earache. So and I was just happened to be the one and the only one just before in ghetto that I got the typhus.

And there again, the Germans worried about the epidemic of the sickness, they shouldn't get it over somebody. So they were running out to send out people to look if somebody was sick to get them out. Because from ghetto, probably they burn them, whatever they wanted to do with them. And we-- my mom once realized that-- and I had so much high temperature, I didn't know what was going on anyway. But then that's what I was told.

So they put me-- I remember, in Warsaw, when we had two bedrooms or three bedrooms, so you went first to one bedroom. And then was another door from one room to the other, you walked into the three bedrooms. So the last bedroom had a door. And we had wardrobes, like a closet, but it wasn't a built-in, but it was the commode, whatever you called it that.

So we put in front of the door a commode. And we know-- realized that they start running because we lived in a big building. And we know-- my mom and the people who lived there too with us-- realized that the Germans were coming to look for sick people.

So they put me in the last room there and put the wardrobe in front of it. And luckily, they didn't move away because sometimes, if there-- somebody would have caught on or something, they moved away, they would realize there was another room. But they didn't. And that's the way I survived the ghetto.

Did you recover from it?

I recovered from it, yes, after that. And after this, already in '42, my brother kept on writing to my sister, she should come to join him there. We realized that the divorce--

Where was he?

He was in-- he left Warsaw-- the ghetto, like I told you, to his friends, to Janowiec nad Wisla, what they call it, in a small town. Was still peaceful there. And they didn't have-- that was pretty-- it wasn't as bad as we had in Warsaw. It was easier living there. So he said that she can come.

And she looked more of a Jew, a Jewish face than I, even though we resembled each other. But she was darkish, had darker eyes, and she had dark, black hair. And I was more like light brown hair, and had blue eyes, and looked more of a Gentile face than she did. And my mother, really, was-- didn't want her to go because she knows that once we're going to leave, we'll never see each other.

Even though at first-- I'm going to go back. Before the ghetto, when they start trying to talk about the ghetto, a lot of men used to leave the families and go to the Russian zone. They told them to run away or to go any place, just to get out because they were trying mainly to get the men out. And some families left too.

So my sister kept on telling to my dad, Dad, leave town. And go here and hide it. So my dad had four children and a wife. So he said, well, if we all going to-- will go, we'll all go. Or I'll stay with you, with everybody.

So my mom said always, she always remembered the Germans as a very good people, especially to the Jews in the First World War. Because she was a youngster at that time, she was born and she was-- 1920-- no, 1900, pardon me. She was not born that time. So she was a youngster, teenager at the time when the First World War was.

So everybody was really happy with the Germans. So they said, well, one crazy man cannot make people crazy for forever. Everybody will wise up. It will kind of straightened out. But she didn't realize that, evidently, how bad it was-- it could get.

And so anyway, we went back-- so she went-- wanted to go to her husband. And then I don't know what made my mom change her mind that she says, all right. If you're going to go, I should follow her like a shadow. Go too in case if something happens to her, I should be able to come back and let her know something what's going on. She was afraid that she won't make it on her own. So we both left. We had to get passports from the Pole-- from a Pole family, German.

There still was a possibility?

Because my brother-in-law was a businessman. He worked or had a partner and I-- a Pole. And he just happened to be one of the nicer people. And he wrote to him, he should make us a passport with the names and everything for me and for my sister. Naturally, it cost us money. But he did make it for us to get out.

And we-- somehow, then, we went out. And then we had transportation to-- we had to cross the river, was Warsaw-- was Wisla from Warsaw. So first, we had to take transportation to the boat. And then we went on that boat through Wisla because it was-- we had to cross.

And I don't know how far. If you ask me how far, I really don't know because I have no idea of the towns. Because I was born there, was a young 14 years old when the war broke out. And I really didn't know much. I didn't travel that much the world to know. Even in town himself, I knew parts of it. But we went to the boat on the other side.

And this was in the spring of '42. And it was pretty nice. And then I met quite a few people. But one couple, particularly, she had-- they had a daughter my age. And she had a brother, younger brother. And we became very good friends. She was from Kazimierz. And her name was Paula Cukier. And when they-- and this was going on, everything was-- yeah, in the '43-- no, I'm not going to rush it back. Let me go one thing at a time. I get confused.

No. When you went with your sister to meet your brother-in-law, so what were the conditions like when you arrived?

When we arrived there, it was a small town, like I said, more of a village type. I don't know. But it wasn't luxurious. But

my brother-in-law had a small apartment because his friend find it for him. For money, you could get. You lived with somebody because there were a lot of Polish and foreign people there.

And it wasn't a-- if you really wanted to make a living as a Jew, it was very hard because you were afraid to go out to leave town. You were afraid. You were just-- most of the time, you were looking over your shoulder if somebody doesn't come up and hit you over your head or take a gun because you didn't trust anybody, really. But as I was concerned with my sister, we lived pretty good. We were free.

And you were-- you had relative freedom.

Yeah. We had-- that's why I said. That's the only thing we went there. Nobody was-- they didn't-- my brother didn't have to worry to go to work there. They have to go to forced labor. And when he went there, most of time, he was hit, and kicked, and pushed around from the Germans. So he came home sick most of the time. A lot of people were sick after coming home because they had no respect for the Jew.

They had no-- they treated him-- for a animal, you had more pity than on a Jew. So whatever harm they could do, they did, even though they needed them to go to work. And especially winters in Europe, in Poland, were very cold. If you didn't have the clothing and everything or gloves, you really-- it was tough. And we were limited.

So in that small town, what I did there was a little-- we had a freedom. We looked over the shoulder. But we didn't worry as much from day to day, the German will come and take them to work or so. And still, you had to have money, anyway, to accumulate a little bit to be able to manage to live a little bit.

We-- somehow, everybody thought that this is a passing time we'll go through. Why, I don't know. But you really didn't have a choice. Whatever it happen will happen. Yeah. And this was in the spring of '42. And in the fall of the same year, somehow, we were out.

Well, I was to met with my friend out and so on. And then we look around. And we see Germans begin to surround the whole town. Just from-- they came up from nowhere. And they start surrounding us. And then they start looking around for Jude-- Jude out, they start calling everybody. All the Jews should come out.

And there was a marketplace for the small town. And we had to get in that place. So they say and whoever it was trying to hide were kicked. And some of them were killed, they were, for trying to run or so. Anyway, they got us with-- were got together.

That was kind of a gloomy day. This day, I'll never forget because it's-- and we were all scared because we didn't know what they were going to do with us. They took us out. And we knew how cruel they can be. So we were standing there. And one woman fainted. So she fell down. And naturally, the family wanted to pick her up.

So the Germans standing close by said, don't you touch her. And another man, a German, from a distance, he must have heard it or just saw the woman lying on the ground for one reason. I don't know what happened. He took the gun and he killed her.

So they-- so my sister saw it how cruel, really, they can be. He said, well, for dogs like that, he said, I'm not coming-- going. So she start pulling me away. She said, let's try to get away. She said, or I'm going to be alive or I'm going to be dead. She didn't want to go. I mean, she didn't want to stay on the place with us, see, because she realized that they will take us away someplace.

And I was-- just couldn't budge. I was always very much afraid and scared. So I didn't want to move. And I told her, well, if you can go, go. Because I would not move. So I stayed there with my friend, the Paula. And my sister, somehow, went away. I didn't even wanted to look back to see where she went because I was afraid nobody should know if I look back, what reason, they shouldn't catch her. So I didn't even look back. She just pulled on me. And she went away.

And we stayed there. And then they start sorting us, like young people to one side, women to the other side, children to the other side, men to another side, somehow. And we didn't know where we going, what we're doing. And we really didn't have anything, just would wear the clothes on us. And so the two of us and that friend of mine, the Paula, we stick together.

And just happened, they took us on the same train. And from there, we went to Skarzysko. They took us to a concentration camp. And this was like forced labor. We worked on the ammunition. That factory was an ammunition factory. And when we came in there, so we took out. They gave us-- what do you call it-- bunk beds. But it was one big layers of people on straw put out.

And we-- by the bunches, we were living there, to sleep there every day. And then they showed us where we're going to go to eat-- they brought the food, really, in a line. We didn't go where to go while stay in the line. So they the food they gave us, like whatever they gave us, the soup was like mud, really. And the piece of bread was like glue. If you had a bad stomach, you were in big trouble because nobody could digest it. Even with a good stomach, you couldn't digest that food, if you call it food. There's-- once a day, that's what we got.

And it was-- we didn't have any extra clothing, nothing, whatever we had. I still had some decent shoes and my coat on me. And every day, we went to work. They lined us up. And we went to work to the factory. And we had to examine the bullets, see-- well, see the machine was going very fast, punching them out real fast, the bad one, bad bullets or good bullets.

And somehow, we had to check them real fast. If you didn't do the right thing or so, then the person was very-- you were in trouble because you got beaten up. Or I don't know what did. They took him away. And then already, you can barely walk back to the barrack. And you had to stay. You could hardly move.

And just so I tried to avoid, not to pay attention. We had the-- what do they call-- the foreman for the-- who watched us. He was from Ukraine, Ukraine man. And they were just vicious people. And everybody was afraid of him. And we just tried he shouldn't have a chance to have an eye on you. Once he took a look at you, you know it's going-- something will happen to you so everyone avoided this.

And as we worked in the same-- this was the end of-- it was about this fall of '42. I think it was September or so, we got into concentration camp. And in '43 in the spring, we heard was the uprising of the ghetto, in Warsaw ghetto, we heard. And so I realized that because the-- that it's going to be the end of my family.

Because where the quarters were Mila 18. And we lived on Mila 15. So we're just like cross the street, just you could see from. And I know, my brothers were very young boys. And my dad was young. And my dad wouldn't sit still and just let things happen.

Because even before the war, going back, like I said, the Polish people weren't very nice to the Jews too. They tried to-- throw rocks to the shuls when we're praying. My dad got hit once with a rock too in the head from the Polish-- from the Poles. And so he was quite a fighter. He, too, if he had to fight, he knew how to fight. But the Warsaw ghetto, they knew they're not going to win it. But at least they were fighting it. They didn't sit still.

And the conditions in concentration camp, the energy was running out in everybody. And the clothing, it got shabby. So my shoes got worn out. So they gave me some wooden shoes. And from the wooden shoes, I had sores on my feet, where they went and got into the cold, the miserable weathers.

And no, you couldn't clean yourself up and everything, barely to wash yourself up. So it was very infected. And I had already like holes in my legs, was very close around the ankle in the back where the shoe was hitting it.

But nobody paid attention. We had to go to work. If anybody would stay in the barracks, in the morning, they came in to check if somebody stayed, didn't go to work, you didn't see your light anymore, then that's it. They took you to where they killed you or whatever they did. You didn't stay alive. They knew. They took you out. And this was the end of it.

And every night, practically, especially when was a rainy night or a very cold night, they took us out, all out in the middle of the night when we could stay already and rest a little bit in the barracks. They took us out. For hours, they kept us outside.

Since there was Appell?

In the Appell, the first thing, they were counting us. And then they had fun to live-- they realized that everybody was there. So they had fun to look everybody over. And to see-- and if they didn't like somebody, they moved them to one side.

And then we all-- somehow, we took off a awful long time. Maybe it appeared longer than it was because you were freezing there. We were practically with no clothes in the cold weather. So when we got back in and we went back to the barracks, we heard, then, later on, shooting. So we realized, they took them to the woods. And they were killing them.

So this-- and like I said, the conditions in the barrack was very-- in the morning, many times, we used to get up. And some people, we thought, would try to get them out because they started calling everybody to work. And some women were dead already. Because we were going-- even with the temperature, or you were sick, you had a sore throat, you had ears, you had to get out. Otherwise, you didn't have a choice. Everybody tried to go to work.

But you couldn't continue like that. So when you went to the barracks, you were lucky that you died just natural causes. Otherwise, they would take care of you. And we're talking-- it was really, very bad. We finally in 19-- so in-- we were there from '42, September, till '44, till about-- I think was in February or March.

Look, see, I don't know. We didn't know what the reason at the moment it was because people were talking. We didn't hear much news from the outside. But some said, they're winning the war. Some said, they're losing the war. We really didn't know what was going on. But at that time, they started transferring the camp from Skarzysko to take out people from the camps, from Skarzysko.

So most of the time, when they took out people, so we thought, we heard shooting, they were killing them. And we were the first transport to take us out. And they took us to the freight trains. So somebody asked them where were they taking us? So somebody-- then the German said, we're going to a different camp.

And we really didn't believe them. We thought that's some kind of a trick, that they'll have a different way of killing us, or to do something to us. But they kept us for about two nights and three days in those freight trains, for what reason, it was a much shorter trip originally. It shouldn't take that long. Why they dragged us, I will never know. And we had only had one portion of bread and soup for the three days.

We didn't get any-- we were locked in like cattle. They didn't let us in, let us out for the few days we were traveling. But finally, when they let us out, we realized that we came into a camp. That was really-- we didn't know what to look forward to.

And they told us when-- in Czestochowa, they took us to a camp. It was fairly new. They only had a few men working on the outside, digging ditches or so for heavy work. But they also had ammunition factories there. And with the people who worked in Skarzysko, they needed people there because for some reason, they needed a factory to be used.

So we came there. We started working there. And then they brought some people-- really, this was after the uprising from where-- there was already from after the Warsaw ghetto was eliminated. So I believe some people went from, again, from Warsaw ghetto, they took some people to different camps, some people, too, some young people. And some people came to Czestochowa too.

From Warsaw?

Yeah. So they had-- so we had some people there. And I met there one man. He was-- they were our neighbors lived

around down the corner where we lived. And the boy, he was my sister's age. And he was that time in camp too. So we felt like having a brother, really, something because you feel so close because nobody knows you, just is everybody. We're all Jews, but you don't know from home anybody. So you feel like this way, it kind of makes you feel good to get to know somebody.

And too, the conditions were more or less like in Skarzysko, just they had a little bit better food. The food, they gave you the same amount. But in the soup, you could already see a piece of potato swim around on the water, as you know. So it was some improvement, which not much to talk about. But it wasn't--

What about your sleeping conditions? Were they any better?

The sleeping were, but-- were about the same thing. But they just already gave us some water to clean ourself out a little bit. And we had some soap. It wasn't enough, but at least you could wash a little better too. And when we were in need-- it wasn't still-- it wasn't possible to keep clean. We were infected with lice, and with all the bugs, whatever infections, whatever you want. That's why people were sick, getting the typhus and getting other sicknesses because the conditions were impossible.

But we didn't have a choice. And a lot of people-- I'm going back again to Skarzysko-- couldn't take it. So they knew they were going to be killed, they tried to run away. And the Germans killed them, put them on there in the back. And that's what they wanted. They knew they're not going to survive. They didn't want to live there. And some of them, they caught, and they punished them for different reasons. They probably realized that, what they're trying to do.

But at that point, when we were at Czestochowa from March till about January in '45. We came at the beginning of '44 till January '45, yes. And we heard already shooting, like they were fighting already, that the war was going on close by.

And in a way, we're talking, it's been-- do you know, like a woman, my friend, the-- with Paula, we were together. And we said-- they said, well, the only dream we have-- to get killed together with the Germans. At least they'll go too with every satisfaction. And one day, we-- and then one day, they realized that they didn't take us to work. They told us not to leave the barracks. They were standing there watching that none of us should leave, just stay inside.

So nobody walked out. We were ordered, didn't know what's going on exactly. And they-- and were two or three days we didn't go to work. And somehow, it quiet down a little bit. And we didn't see anybody coming in or going in. It was kind of quiet.

Finally, some of the boys got more guts. And they went out. And they realized that the wachter was gone. The Germans were gone. And they just left us in the middle. If they had the chance only, two transports to take out from our camp, they took them out to Germany. And we were the last ones to leave Germany.

So they were caught?

They caught some people-- they took out-- some went to Buchenwald. Some went, I think, mostly to Auschwitz. They still took them out to camps. They still wanted to get rid of the Jews. No matter how bad they're-- off they were, they realized they're losing the war, they still wanted to get rid of the Jews. So they took still two transports, they took out.

When we stopped working, they took out some people. And we were supposed to be the last ones to leave. I believe we would have been the last ones. There weren't too many people left already. And it looks like the Russian-- then we found out that the Russian Army cut off the transportation for them. So like used to call it, meant to be that we just left there.

Luck.

And we just didn't get-- didn't go to Germany, where the others went, because there was another hell they went through when they went to Germany. So we were left behind. But again, where do you go? What do you do when you're left alone, you don't know anybody? So in the other barracks, when the mens begin to come out, so there were two elderly

men-- they were as old as my dad or maybe older. And then they had two nephews with them.

They were there in concentration camp. And there were other, I think, two or three brothers from the same area where they came from. They all came from small towns. And at that time, I didn't realize that he will become my husband, that my husband was between them too. And they came out. And they said, well, they're going to walk to that small town because they had some property there.

But they were familiar.

They're familiar-- well, they were all the people. They were business people before the war. They were peddling, what you call it here, going from one town to another. So mainly, I think, what was the two uncles that would end up-- because I don't think the nephews even knew exactly how to get home. But the uncles did know. So they said would they lead us, then, to that small town where they came and said, they had some property and things from there.

And hopefully, they'll get some of it back. So at least we get a start. Because nobody knew where to go and what to do. Because nobody was there. Even the Russians didn't got back yet. And we didn't wanted the Russians because there, everybody would be afraid for the Russians too. So we didn't see anybody at the moment when we were talking about leaving.

So when I said with my friend, the Paula, I said, well, you want to go, we'll go. So we went. And then the other girl, a Rose went. She lives in Canada now. And two other sisters were there with us and I think one other girl. So we're nine or 10 men and was seven women, girls, or something. And we start walking and hitchhiking, I don't know, for the farmers. And so finally, we got to that small town.

And there, again, I had very bad-- a lot of problems with my legs because I had the sores. So still, I didn't get to a doctor yet all the time. But at least they were cleaner conditions so I could clean myself up, and wash up, and try to put something to-- for the pus, for the infection, not to spread as deep because I had already such a hole in my left leg that when I finally came-- well, could lay down when I went to a doctor, he told me I was lucky that it didn't hit-- it was almost hitting the bone. Otherwise, I had to-- part of my leg would have to be amputated.

So then we stayed there for a while. And until the Poles gave the family there in their home an attic to place where-- and I don't know. I don't even remember. I think she didn't-- when we wanted to cook, we had to go down downstairs, I think, to the woman cook. And the one, the girl, that Rose, she was also from a small town. And she was the oldest in the family.

So she knew a little bit more about cooking and taking care of her household. So she was like-- we were the helpers with her. So we started the mess and went to the farmers to do some work, whatever they could. And so one brought some potatoes, and one brought some flours. So we began already, somehow, a community living there.

And then there were more people coming to the town. And they were requesting for the property back. And the Poles didn't want to give them back. They liked it that way. They didn't want the Jews. And they didn't want to give it back. So they got very tough. And we saw how it's going around, what's going to happen. Because there are a lot of them. They killed them before. And we felt, they'll kill again.

So we decided to leave the town. As a matter of fact, one man with his son came back to ask for his-- he had a bakery and some other thing, a property. He asked for it, they killed the father because he didn't run away fast enough. And the son ran away. But the father got killed. And there were many other things, incidents like that in different-- what we heard later on. But after the war, there were a lot of Jews killed from-- one side from the Germans and the other from the Polish people too.

And then we left there. We went to Chorzów. It's another town, where-- I don't for what reason we went there, really, because we followed a man. The men were the lead. We didn't know what we were doing, really. We went. So we all went there. And in Chorzów there, we had again the-- they were from Jewish people to the Germans took up a lot of property. So there was a big villa there or someplace. So we lived in that. But it was a nice house, so they didn't have

individual house.

It was abandoned now?

It was abandoned already from the Germans. And so we went in there. And well, we decided what to do. And somehow, we got already paired up, already, like some-- like my friend, my girlfriend, she didn't find a boy she liked. So she just wanted to do something else.

And I, with my present husband that time, we liked each other. So we decided to get married. The other girl, Rose, got married to one of the brothers too, which she lives in Canada. And another couple lives now in New York. So we survived. And we left the concentration camp together. And somehow, we paired. We just traveled there like this.

Do you keep in touch?

Yes, we do. Because we have a lot in common and we feel very close.

Actually, excuse me, this period of time, you're still not liberated? Or were you liberated at one point?

No, wait a minute. We were, this period-- no, I'm rushing too fast for you. That's right. I get confused. We were, in January 15, the Germans left already Czestochowa. They didn't come back already. This was already liberated. But the whole country, the war was still going on, but not in the areas. We were liberated already. Were the areas where we went, the Germans were gone already.

Did you see any liberating armies?

No, we didn't see. We didn't see any army. The Germans were gone already.

They just left?

But the war stopped, I think what was it, in the spring, I believe.

'45.

In '45 in the spring, was it May or April? There was still fighting there, but not the areas where-- we were liberated, really, in Czestochowa-- was in the middle of January. The Germans left, we never see. Wherever we went, wherever we went, the Germans were gone already. The Russian-- we were on the Russian zone, where the Russian pushed them away. We saw Russian soldiers, yes. We did see them. I should-- and that. Yeah, but we didn't see-- the Germans were gone already.

I see.

And we-- at that time, but so Czestochowa-- we were in Chorz³w at that time already. And this was-- yeah, this was after the liberation already. This was already-- I'm rushing-- in '46 already. Yeah, already, that's right.

When you got married?

When we got married was in March '46 in Chorz³w. We stayed there for a while. And after we got married, we didn't want to stay on the Russian zone. We didn't want to be there, especially my husband. We didn't want. So I said, let's go to the American zone to the Americans. So we went to Munich, to Germany.

And again, we did-- from Munich, when we came in, we registered as a couple. And we registered from where we are from. And we were looking for people because some people found each other-- cousins or family-- mothers, brothers, whatever. And my husband, he comes from seven children in his family. And he didn't find anybody. And I didn't find anybody. But we registered there.

I didn't know if people go to Poland or wherever. They have-- because somebody was there, they still find my card with my maiden name, and where I was liberated, and where I'm from. If somebody looks for me, they can find me. But that time, from Chorzów, then we got married in March in '46, we already-- then we're thinking of going there to Germany, to Munich, to the American zone.

And we went there, like I said, there. And there's a married couple. They gave us already a room in a villa there. And they gave us already the food, American supplies. But we registered. And we already was-- we're beginning to live like human beings a little bit. And from there, we registered.

This wasn't a DP camp [CROSS TALK]?

This was what you call a DP camp, yes.

Oh, it was.

It was a DP camp, yes. Because we had no place where to go. And the American people took care of that. So we-- and from there, we registered on. And we went came on a quota. My husband registered as a tailor, come to the United States. So he was one of the first ones to come to the-- we would have been here in '46 in November. But was a coal strike. So we waited in Bremerhaven for three months, till January till we came to the United States. And while we were--

So you just signed up and you got on the Polish quota?

Yeah, well, it took us a while. We waited for quite a few months. But we were one of the first. I think, we had-- I think one or two ships was ahead of us. And we were the second or third one to come to the United States. But while-- I still say something. I keep on forgetting.

While you were in the DP camp, was your husband working there?

At the DP camp, not much. He did something. You couldn't do really much there. He worked a little bit. But it wasn't much. We mainly-- what we were trying to get is to get in to have a normal life because there was no more-- we didn't want to settle in Germany. We didn't want to settle in Poland. Because Poland wasn't the best country for the Jews.

And as luck, we had the occasion to leave, we wanted to leave. So we registered and waited for our quota to get in. And when we were already coming-- I think we were ready in Bremerhaven or before went to Bremerhaven, my husband met somebody. And he told us that we have-- he has a cousin or two brothers live in Chicago, he said.

They're from before the-- they went, I think, right after the First World War. One came right after the First World War. One came, I think, in '37 or '38. They're from Czeszowa. And he said to look them up there. Yeah, he met-- that's right. Then he met-- this was a nephew of those two cousins who lived in Chicago. And he told them, told my husband that because we delayed it.

So I took the address, the phone number, how to get in touch with him. But we were already-- we were coming on our own. I don't think they would have requested us, even. Because I don't know what we would-- because we was a distant relative. But we came to New York when we arrived.

And the HIAS put us up in a place where to stay. And they took my husband up. I had no [? say. ?] But my husband, they took him up to the factory to the men's-- latest-- suits, garments, and so. And they told him, more or less, it's piecework, and how much he can make. So he wrote to the cousins, in Chicago about it too. He says that well, you can make a living in Chicago too. But he wasn't definite to tell you to come or not to come.

So my husband said, well, he wanted to try that time, see how Chicago is. And he could say, could always come back. But the HIAS, again, wouldn't take-- wouldn't pay for the transportation. Before begged at us, put you in one place, and

that's it. If you want to go, you go on your own. And we didn't have any money. The only money we had is \$7, each of us, when we got on the ship before we left. And we came off the boat the ship in New York-- which wasn't much to do with that. In that time, we needed \$50 by train money for both of us to go one way.

To go to Chicago?

To go to Chicago, yeah, by train was \$25 per person. I would never remember that. But I know that much, my husband asked-- went up. His oldest brother's friend left years before the war to New York. And he kept in touch with him. So he knew-- remembered his name. And he remembers, more or less, what he was doing, had the manufacturer of ladies' underwear.

So we came up to him. And he asked me just if he could lend us \$50. We'll pay him back. So it really was very nice and gracious. He gave us \$50. And he sent a gift, two slips, which was very nice of him I didn't expect that. But when we came to Chicago, we came to one of the brothers' house.

And he had a friend, a German Jew, who had lived that time in Hollywood Park. He had a factory of hat boxes. It was manufacturing all the hat boxes. At that time, men and women were allowed a lot of hats. So he was quite busy. And he had a big house.

So he said, well, if we want to stay with him for a while, said, they're welcome. See, they had three children, three or four boys. So we went in. We had nothing, just there hardly any clothes with us. So he gave us a bedroom. This was a Saturday night.

And Monday, they made for my husband an appointment to go to the union downtown to register. To be able to work in the garment business, you have to belong to the union. So he started working Tuesday. Monday, went to register, and Tuesday, he started working. And the German Jew, when we stayed at night, he took us to his house with his wife.

He said, well, if I want a job, he said, he can always use me in his factory. I can go with him and come home back with him. He'll pay me \$0.65 an hour. So that's what I was doing, helping him out with the boxes, folding them up or whatever was necessary. This was my big job at that time.

And then they moved to California. So we had to get another place. We lived to-- went to Logan Square, again, to a elderly woman who lived in the other bedroom. From there already, we had accumulated a few dollars already. We got together. And at that time, we couldn't get an apartment. It was the rent control. So we had to pay to get an apartment.

And finally, we got an [INAUDIBLE]. Logan Square at that time was a pretty nice area. And we got the three and a half-room apartment, we paid for-- furnished it out. And then when my daughter was born, my oldest, in 1949-- yes, and I worked, at that time-- for a short time before I got pregnant, I worked with that man. And then when I stopped working with him, when they moved, the people moved away, I went also to work in the garment section. But that was where they got-- cut off the threads from the dresses, whatever, would call it a finishing.

Finishing.

Yes, just the threads are marked down for somebody. I wasn't the finisher. But the finisher was sewing on the buttons. So with this, I just cut off the threads and put the markers where the button's supposed to be, or a pin, or something, whatever necessary. So it wasn't much of a job. But it was something to get an extra few dollars. And the first year when we came, right away in '47, we started going to night school. We went to Lakeview High School. As a matter of fact, we graduated there from high school, from the Lakeview High School, the night school.

And then I got pregnant, as I said before, with my daughter in '48. And she was born in May. As a matter of fact, today is her birthday. She's 41 years old. I just wished her this morning, I talked to her. And then we lived in that building the three and a half rooms. In 1952, my other son was born-- so Jerry. And 1957, another of my boys was born.

Again, by that time, I lived in West Rogers Park. We had a two flat already there. And from '47-- '55 to '60 we lived in

West Rogers Park. In 1960, we moved to Skokie. We built a home. And we moved out there. And my husband-- didn't say, I'm going to go back, but my husband-- I just kind of lost track of him. I don't want to lose him.

Did he work in this garment thing that he had taken up?

Yes, he did work-- he worked in the garment just till about 1951 or '52. And then he went on his own. So he bought first a launderette. At that time, was-- people were-- everybody didn't have a washing machine at that time yet. So for two years, he had that. So he didn't like that after two years. In 1950, for the two years, anyway, he bought a-- they cut up poultry and barbecued chickens.

And so we had two stores and four possessions, which was-- kept him very busy. And I couldn't do much because I had two children already at that time. And so it was hard for him. And then he realized that-- we did ice. And so he began to get a little arthritis because you had to get up early morning and work with the ice a lot.

So after this, he sold this. And in 1959, we bought in Skokie. He was really cleaning and tailoring from a woman. But then we had men's clothing tailoring until he moved to Phoenix in 1976.

And but we were still-- and my daughter, like I said, she's 41. She's married. She has three children. She's the first one to have twins. She has twin granddaughters. And the little one-- we call her little one, she's not little anymore now. But Becky, she-- I'm very proud of them. And I'm very proud of my daughter. She got her-- she has a bachelor's degree in teaching and a master's in psychology.

She works?

And she's not working, no, she's raising her children. She has, a matter of fact, a master's in psychology she got when the babies were already here, were six months old, the twins. Took a lot of hassle and a lot of work for her to do it. But she was very ambitious and a great girl. And I'm very proud of her.

And my middle one went to Northwestern University. He got a master's in computer science and programming. And he's a very-- has a very responsible big job in a big company. He's doing very well, too. As a matter of fact, he's still in Italy today. He called me for Mother's Day that he's still in Rome. So he'll be back sometime toward the weekend.

And my youngest one lives now in Mesa. He has a bachelor's degree in computing science and programming also. So he's doing all right. So everything so far works out all right with them. So we'll say it's a happy ending.

Yes, to have grandchildren and children, that's the--

We miss a lot of the family because-- like my daughter, when she was little, she was-- she had toys. I used to buy a kitchen set or dolls. So she set up things for-- to play with. So I used to ask her who else is coming for coffee or for dinner? And she says, oh, my grandma is coming. So I could never understand who's the grandma. But in her imagination, she had a grandma.

That's beautiful.

Well, we didn't realize it that the children were really missing a lot too out of it. We missed a lot of our lives' life. And they missed a lot too.

And the reason we go through the pain of telling all this story is to show the world that we're still here.

We're still here. That's true. And I hope they'll know, nobody will be here to deny it because we are here. And we can give a lot of proof because a lot of people got killed. And a lot of people have their lives-- lifestyle completely different if not for the war. It would be totally different for everybody. I can speak for everybody, wouldn't the same thing.

And I hope will never will happen again. And it's impossible to say everything what we went through because I know, I

said. And then I go back. And I think back, there are so many things to say. It's very-- you can speak about it for days. You can't cover everything.

Do you think your health was affected because of the work?

Yes, it was. Like I said, I have troubled with my legs. I had a very bad-- my spine is very bad affected with arthritis from the conditions. My knees, I have trouble with my knees too. And I have a heart murmur. And I'm very-- well, I think most of-- like I spoke to, most of us, including myself, I'm very nervous and sick because you think back. And it affects everybody mentally.

However, I'm sorry that we have to put you through this. But we're doing it so that the world should never forget.

Well, that's why I agreed to come. I push things away. I don't even want to talk about it because you push it away. You talk about something else. You think everything's all right. But you begin to think about it, it's terrible that the people should do things to people like that. You could never believe that some-- like my mother said, one crazy man cannot make everybody crazy. But it looks like it did. And it's still going on. It's still going on.

Unfortunately.

And I thought, after a war like this, that people would learn a lesson. A person is only a person and should be no different. Treating them should be no different what religious you are.

Right. That's why we hope, by telling these stories, to avoid another tragedy.

Yeah, well, like I said, that's one thing I'm happy that I have wonderful children. And they-- I'm very proud of every one of them. My daughter married a very lovely young man. And they-- very proud of the whole of everybody. So hopefully, they'll have a better life.

Well--

What we had.

--that's the enjoyment of the rest of our life.

That's right. That's what we hope for.

And thank you very much, Lillian, for coming in and telling us your story.