

All right.

You couldn't stay in Portland for several reasons. We couldn't walk the ground, which is soaked, with our family. I remember when I came to Wislica, to my hometown after the war. The first time, when I was walking, there was a long road to the train. I came by train. At that time

I don't remember how it is. But I saw I can't walk on the sidewalk. I saw the sidewalk was plastered with Jewish stones from the cemetery.

When the German took out the Jews, they destroyed the cemetery, and they plastered the sidewalks with Jewish stones, with the matzevahs. So I went there, and I didn't want to walk on those matzevahs.

Gravestones.

Those gravestones. Yes. And I went there and I walked in the middle of the road, because I didn't want to walk on those gravestones. And if we knew we could make in Poland \$1 million a day, we couldn't stay there.

Why did you stay there as long as you did?

Because we couldn't leave so early. We had to be prepared.

Right.

We had to somehow to know where you're going.

So you made plans when you were in Poland that you were going to leave Poland?

Oh, yes. Definitely. And also in Poland we couldn't leave legal. The Polish border was closed. They didn't want the Jews to left.

You were in the Russian zone?

What do you mean the Russian zone?

In Poland, it was all Russian.

OK.

And we had to go on the black border. We risked our lives to go. And it cost a lot of money too.

Why?

Because legally, we couldn't leave Poland?

How come?

Poland didn't want the Jews to go at that time.

Why not?

Why they didn't want? You want to ask the Polish government questions, why they didn't want? They think-- maybe you would ask them. They said, they will say, we love our Jewish people. Why should they leave us? You understand? Nobody didn't ask them any questions.

We left on the black border.

But didn't you have a choice then to emigrate if you wanted to?

Not from Poland at that time, no. No, we couldn't leave, not legally. We couldn't go on the train and get out from Poland, no way. And we came to Germany. And this was a long story how we came to the American zone. It was very difficult. It's not important now anymore. But it was very difficult.

But we finally came to American zone because this is the only zone we wanted. We didn't want to be in the Russian zone. We didn't want to be in the English zone. We want to be in the American zone because we were hoping-- at that time, of course, there wasn't any Israel. There was still a Palestine.

We were hoping maybe we will be able to go to Palestine. If not, we will go to the United States. Because, of course, there was no way. We didn't plan to remain in Germany. So we came to Germany. It was about in the summer of 1946. And we were there.

First, we were there on this DP camp, on this-- it was special, a few separate, a few homes.

Where was this at? In Stuttgart?

It was in Germany. But it wasn't Stuttgart. I forgot the name of this place. We were there for a few months. And then my brother went to Stuttgart. And he found-- he got a permission from the city hall in Stuttgart for apartment, to share apartment with a German family because the DP camp was filled up. There was no more room. And the law, the German law, was that any German family, who belonged, who were members of the Gestapo, any part of the Hitler regime, had to share, had to take in a Jewish family, a DP family. It was called DP families.

And there were four rooms and a bath and a kitchen. And we had two rooms and they had two rooms. And we shared the kitchen and the bathroom. And we were living there for about three years.

And during that time, what did do there?

During that time, we were handling a black market.

With leather?

With leather. Yes.

Did Uncle Pinchas meet his wife there?

Uncle Pinchas met not his wife who he's married now. He married in Stuttgart. Her name was Eva. Yes, he met her there, and they got married a few months after I got married. And she lost her first husband somewhere I think in a concentration camp.

And her first husband's brother was there in Australia, in Melbourne, from before the war. And she found out about it, and she wrote him a letter. And he agreed to take her down with her husband, with my brother. And they went there.

I couldn't go there because my brother couldn't ask him. To have her, my husband's brother to send for help for his sister and her husband and two children.

Right.

Because he wouldn't do it. So my brother told me to remain in Germany, in Stuttgart. Until he will come to Australia. And there he will try to find somebody who will send me a permission to go to Australia.

But I said, no. I don't want to be there anymore in Germany. I want to go. And we were preparing to go to Israel, because the United States, you could go only if you were liberated from United States Army, if you were in a camp which United States liberated.

Right.

Your father was liberated in a camp, was liberated from the American--

What camp was that, a labor camp? It was a labor camp. I don't know, labor camp, concentration camps. I don't remember the name of the camp.

Do you remember the name of any of the camps that dad was in?

One camp was [NON-ENGLISH], I think it was [NON-ENGLISH]. I think it was in Poland. And this camp where he was liberated for was-- oh my gosh, I don't remember the name. I don't remember.

Well, all right.

I can't. I can't remember the name.

But dad was never in a concentration camp, right? He was only in labor camps?

This camp was liberated with the concentration camp.

Was it one of the major camps?

No, it wasn't a very famous like Bergen-Belsen or Auschwitz--

Majdanek?

No it wasn't Majdanek. No.

Chelmo, Sobibor?

No, no. No, it was a small concentration camp.

All right.

I don't remember the name.

Well, we can discuss the another time.

Anyway, he wrote a letter there to send him identification that he was liberated there, because it's the only way he could go to the United States. But a few months passed, and he didn't get any answer. Well, there was no way we could go to the United States. So we decided to go to Israel.

I also remember after waiting several months not getting an answer from that camp your father was liberated, he decided to go to the JÃ¼dische Kultusgemeinde in Stuttgart. This was the office from the Jewish community in Stuttgart. And he asked them to write a letter to that camp, hoping that they would pay more attention to an organization. A few months--

Hoping that Israel would pay more attention?

No, this camp. The people who were there in the camp, who took care, there were somewhere places you can write for a paper where they said you were liberated at that camp.

I see.

And he asked those people there in this JÃ¼dische Kultusgemeinde [GERMAN] to write a letter to ask them to send him a paper that he was liberated there, so we can go to the United States. Well, several months passed again and nothing came. And we gave up hope. And we decided to go to Israel. And there were many, many people going to Israel then, of course. And nobody took any money. If somebody had money, he bought furniture, and goods, merchandise because nobody didn't want to take any money.

And we bought also, we had furniture. And I have even the dishes where I have every Passover, they come from Germany, which I took with me. And we bought a lot of leather. In order to take this, we had to have made wooden boxes to pack this, and to come to get us to go to Israel.

And since a lot of people were going, the carpenters were very busy. And everybody had to wait for the line in order to get those boxes made for him. And the carpenter was supposed to make our boxes told us that right it was Pesach of 1948. It was the first, right after this holiday, the first boxes would be ours.

Then, for some reason, it was Chol HaMoed Pesach. And for some reason, your father had to go to the JÃ¼dische Kultusgemeinde [GERMAN]

The organization?

Organization. When he came there, he said, wait a minute. We have a postcard from you. It has been laying here for several weeks. Why we just didn't had a chance to tell you about that. And they gave him the postcard. And this was where they wrote that he was liberated there by the United States Army. And this gave us permission to go to United States.

But since everything was ready, I said, no. Maybe it's [NON-ENGLISH]. We have everything ready.

Maybe it was destined that you go to Israel?

Maybe it destined, yeah.

If the carpenter would have made our boxes earlier, we had already been left. We only here because we had to wait for the boxes. So in this case, we better go there. We already have everything. No, we're not going to change. We're going to go there. And then Pinchas find out about it. I didn't even want to tell him, because I was afraid he will do something about that.

Wait? Pinchas wanted you to go to the United States?

Yes. And there we were living by German family. Pinchas was living in DP camp. And we had all our leather, everything stored in his apartment because everything was, of course, on the black market. Leather and everything was black market.

And the German police, ordered to go in search anything in the DP camp had to get a permission from the United States office there in Stuttgart, while the place where I was living, in a German family, they could come any time, any minute. They didn't need any permission.

And for that reason, we had everything stored in Pinchas' apartment. And when he found out that this card come, which we can go to United States, he came down. He said to me, Devorah you're going to the United States. I said, no. I'm prepared. Everything is ready. I'm going to go to Israel.

It apparently has to be like that. And he said, no, you are not. And he left. A couple of days later, he came to me, and he put on the table all the money what I spent for the leather, for the furniture. He sold it. And he gave me the money.

And I said, why did you do that? He said, look. Life in Israel is very hard. People living in those tents, and those almost like paper tents.

You went through enough hell in your life. You have two children now. Why do you have to suffer again?

Was Ruth born? She was on the way.

Yeah, she was a few months old only then. And Sheila was about eight years.

Wait, this was in 1949?

1949, yes.

Oh, OK. And I think the Pesach was the Pesach of 1949, not 1948. I made a mistake when I said that.

And he said, you go to the United States. I am going to Australia. If you don't like the United States, a few years I can send you. You can come to Australia. We'll be together.

Maybe we both will not like. I will not like Australia. You will not like the United States. And we both will go to Israel.

Right now, I would prefer if you remain in Germany and wait until I get an [INAUDIBLE]. Since you don't want to remain here, you absolutely refuse to do that, I just can't let you go to Israel now, in the condition Israel is now. And when he had sold everything, I didn't have any choice. I had to go to the United States.

I didn't know what to be, if we be sad or will be happy. Just something what happened, and I had to accept it.

Were you angry at your brother?

I was very angry. Yes, why he did it. But it was done. And there's nothing I could do about it. And we went right away to--

There was an American-- I remember her name was Levin, Miss Levin. She took care on all those people who went to the United States from Stuttgart, or from whole Germany. I don't know. She had there an office in Stuttgart. And we went there and we prepared the papers. It took a long time. And we finally came to the United States.

OK. You married Sam Gutterman in '48.

I think it was '48, yes.

And you had a child about a year and a half later or so, or a year later.

Yeah, yeah. Ruth, your daughter. Yeah.

And she was your second child. But she was the first child that you had after the war, right?

Yes, yes.

OK. What kinds of feelings did you have in terms of the fact that after all this death and everything, Ruth was the first? What kinds of feelings did you have about your first child, and about having your first child? Did you have any fears or anything?

I didn't have any fears. I don't know what kind of fears?

For example, a lot of women went through a lot of hardships during the war. And they were afraid that their babies would be affected by it, that maybe their ill health or something.

I didn't think about it then. I felt healthy. And I didn't think this will affect my child.

Were you looking forward to having your child?

Yes, I wanted to have a child because I had only Sheila, and I wanted to have more children. Of course. And I was looking forward to it. I didn't think what I went through in the war will affect my children. I didn't think about that. I didn't know.

Well, I just meant even in terms of physical health right now. I mean like you didn't have any worries about that?

No, no. I didn't because after a year or so after the war I was perfectly healthy.

You had gained back all your weight and everything?

Yeah. I was in very good health. You can see now. Now I'm-- at that age, I'm still in good health.

You're--

I'm 66 now.

Right. OK. How religious were you after the war in comparison to before the war? Before the war I was enormous religious.

You were very religious?

Very religious. I was raised in a very strict religious home. And it just was the way of life. Nobody didn't question it. Nobody said anything. After the war, when I found out I didn't have anybody because I was alone from January until Uncle Pinchas came back, I think in June.

Well, you had Sheila.

I had Sheila. But Sheila, I had to give up again. I couldn't-- I just, there was no way I can keep her.

Yeah, I understand.

And what is a four-year-old, five-year-old child know? When I was going on the train with the merchandise, the trains were always full. There's no way I could go on inside. I always had with me those heavy string, and I tied up to the bench in the front. And I was holding my hand at the door, standing on that bench. And I was always traveling at night because during the day I was going around in stores and selling the leather.

And you never know. I figure when I was doing this, my gosh, I said if for some reason I should fall asleep for a second, and I fall down and get killed, nobody would know. Nobody would know if I'm alive, if I'm dead.

What does Sheila know? She was a little girl. She was a child. And she doesn't know.

She knows me now. She probably misses me. But after a year or two or three, she will forget. She will never know she had a mother.

And many other things what happened, this what I saw, I lost faith complete. I just didn't believe in anything. And this

was all those time when I was alone, when I was going, dealing that. I was on the road. I left Sunday night, and I came back Saturday night. And Sunday I was lying on the bed and crying. This is how I lived for about five or six months.

And then I told the story of how Uncle Pinchas came back. And we went. I went right away and took Sheila out from the children's home. And we went to Sosnowiec. And we find a room.

And at that time, I again became a human being. I had a home. I had to go buy food. I had to cook. I had to wash clothes. I had my brother. I had my daughter. And I had a home. I had a responsibility.

I had somebody to live for. I had somebody to look forward to. You understand? When I didn't feel good. I had somebody to tell, I don't feel good. When I was happy, I could share my happiness or my sorrow with my very close people what I love and care very much. And I realized that I couldn't explain what happened, of course.

But I realized that living like I did didn't have any meaning, didn't have any-- it didn't had anything. It was empty. And then when I began to gain back, I believed in God. I began to go to the synagogue. And I just became, again, a human Jewish being.

What were your feelings? What kind of feelings did you have about being Jewish after the war?

I was always very proud of Judaism, of being Jewish. And even then, I was proud of being Jewish because I know how-- I don't know if I should say this, because I know a little bit from the Jewish religion. I know how empty the other religions are, how artificial other religions are. And I figure, well, if the Jewish religion is nothing, the other one is absolutely nothing because they're all formed from the Jewish religion. You understand?

So, I always was very proud of being Jewish. And I always was very happy being Jewish. Even the time when I lost faith, I was very happy being Jewish.

What do you think kept you going during the war?

During the war, to began with I know I was hopeful that I will have my family. If not this, I don't think I will survive, because I wouldn't fight that much.

I know I have my mother, my father. I know I have my husband. I know I have Sheila. I know my two brothers died. But I have something to look forward to it.

And this gave me a lot of courage, a lot of strength to do what I did. If I would have known I won't have my family, I wouldn't have the strength and the courage to do things what I did. And I don't think I would have survived.

And secondly, everybody where I was in the hidden place, and then after I met other Jewish people who survived, they all didn't know about each other. But they all had the same prayer. They said, all begged God, please if I live only one day after the war, I want to see Hitler dead.

This was the biggest hope and the biggest prayer in me. If I will only see Hitler dead, then I can die. I don't mind to die then. But I want to see the end of Hitler, and the end of the German nation at the same time.

I saw the end of Hitler. I don't think I will ever see the end of the German nation.

What's interesting is that you should say at the end of the German nation. Because you told me earlier that if you had a choice between--

Yeah, yeah that's true. But if you're speaking about Hitler.

Why don't we go on?

Oh, I see.

You understand? I think Hitler wasn't a problem--

You told me earlier, I don't remember if it was on tape or not. But if you had a choice to see one nation destroyed you prefer Poland.

Poland, because the Germans, at least of course there's no excuse why anybody should kill innocent people. But at least they had an order. They were asked to do it.

The Poles were not asked to do it. They did it. And not only this, when the Germans found out, a German Gestapo find out that a Pole killed a Jew, he killed the Pole. You don't have the right to kill Poles. We have the right, not you. You can't do that.

You mean if a German found out that a Pole killed a Jew, the German would kill the Pole?

Yes, because he didn't want Poles to kill Jews. This was his--

There was a lot of hatred between Poles and Germans, right?

Oh, yeah. Poles never liked Germans. And I don't think they liked them now.

Do you think that perhaps Poles might have saved Jews because of that? That Jews might have been saved as a result of that, even though Poles hated Jews, they still hated Germans equally or just as much?

They hated, like I told you before, Fran, the same way like now the Arab Nations don't like each other. They are enemies between each other. But when it came to kill Jews, they are together. They help each other. And the same way was at the war.

The Poles hate Germans, and they hate Russians. The Poles are not communists. But when it came during the war, when it came to kill Jews, they helped them all they could.

I read somewhere that, in general, Poles seemed to be better able to detect Jews than Germans were.

Yeah, definitely. Yes. They did. And that Poles helped, and that was why Poles were such a great help, that they were able to--

They were able to recognize a Jew. Because a German and the dialogue and the accent wouldn't recognize. When a Pole spoke with a Jewish person-- I told you one time [NON-ENGLISH]

Just dialect?

It was the accent. Because the Polish language is spoken very sharp. The German language is spoken like Yiddish, with a singing tone. Like English, the same way you stretch the word, in Yiddish, and English, and German. The German would never recognize that the accent that is Jewish. And also in the face, the Germans didn't know a Pole could recognize you were the Jew. Between a a thousand Poles you would take out a Jew, he would recognize them.

In general.

In general. There were exceptions, who were not like I was-- I didn't look like a Jewish woman. And there were also others who didn't look. But the majority did look. They could recognize them. And the Germans also, of course, the Germans were very, very strong. And big, big men against innocent people, against Jews who didn't hurt anything, against people who didn't have any guns and anything in their hands.



But when they came in, they know the Jews were hiding in the forest. They know they have knives, and guns, and everything. And when the Gestapo wanted to look for Jews in the forest, they didn't go in by themselves. They sent in Poles.

Right.

Or when they made a-- when they took out Jews from this town, when they emptied a ghetto, they didn't went in the homes in the apartments themselves. They sent in Poles. They were afraid. A Gestapo never took any risk for being killed. He always used the Poles.

May I ask you, after the war, did you talk about your experiences with anyone? There was here one time they had this the Jewish, the Jewish center made a-- I forgot the name of it.

How long ago?

This was about a year ago, I think.

I'm not talking about now. I'm talking about after the war when you were still living in Europe, in Germany.

No, I didn't talk to nobody.

And you were with other survivors too. Were you in a neighborhood with other survivors or not?

Pardon?

Were you in a neighborhood with other survivors?

What mean the neighborhood? The camp where we were, were only survivors.

But you said you weren't in a camp, that you lived outside the camp. Well I was in a camp before we came to Stuttgart. And then we went to Stuttgart, we lived by the German family. And then when Uncle Pinchas got married, he married his wife had a room in the DP camp and he moved in with her.

OK. So did you talk about your experiences then immediately after the war?

Between, no. Between the survivors, no. No, everybody went through--

Or with non-survivors, with Germans or with--

Maybe on some occasions, not much. No. I didn't. If somebody asked me something what they went through, I told him like I told you many times. Look, if I am telling you what I went through, day by day, I would have to stay here several days to tell you.

What are your feelings about what you had gone through? I mean you had gone through something that nobody in history had ever gone through. What were your feelings? What was your feelings? What were your values? How did you feel about the world?

I felt about the world that the world is a bunch of bandits, that they let it happen.

You were angry.

Very angry.

How could the world outside let it happen? How could a world let take innocent children and kill them, innocent men

and women, strong, sick, small, big. One year old, 100 years old, anybody, just killed them. How could the world see this?

How about Europe itself? How about Poland and Germany? I mean--

Poland and Germany, Germany was controlled by a madman, Hitler, you understand?

Well, you said how could the world let this happen. I mean you knew that--

The world on the outside world, United States.

But were you surprised that the inside world could let that happen? That Poland, no matter what?

Yeah. Yeah. Well, I don't know if I was surprised. I know that Poland, Poles who have a chance, they will do it.

Do what?

Kill.

But do you think that even Poland would allow a deliberate attempt? Were you aware after the war that, in fact, it was a deliberate attempt to wipe out the Jewish race, I mean to kill all Jews?

I found out when I was in a hidden place. And I found out about Treblinka. They took all those trains and put them in the gas chamber. Then when I realized that he was determined to wipe out the Jewish nation.

Did that ever cross your mind before?

Before now, no. No, not at all. But also, I want to tell you. In fact, like I told you, we had very often we came in to search.

Yeah, go on.

I want to mention that, like I said before, in our home we were quite often, the Gestapo came in and searched for merchandise, for goods. And on some occasions, they said the American Jews started the war. But since we cannot reach them, you're going to pay for it.

The Jews in Europe will pay for it.

Why did they feel that the American Jews had started?

Why? That's what they said. Well, of course, they didn't. But this is what they said. The American Jews started, and the Jews in Europe will pay for it.

But knowing what you had gone through, well first of all, what kind of reception when you came to the United States, which was when?

We came to the United States October 29, 1949.

And at that time you were? October 1949?

Yes.

And tell me a little bit about that. Where did you come into?

Well, we came into New York. We were in New York for about eight days. We could have maybe remained there. But we didn't even try it because New York was too loud for me, too many people. But we originally had the papers from the Jewish Family Service in Norfolk. So we decided to go to Norfolk.

Norfolk, Virginia. Was there any reason why you were given that paper, why you were given Norfolk? Did you have relatives here?

No, no, no. We didn't have. The peoples, the Jewish people who were liberated, I mean the survivors, the Jewish survivors who were liberated in a camp which was liberated from the American army, if somebody had relatives, he went. The relatives sent him papers. And he went to the town where the relatives are.

If somebody didn't have a relative, the Jewish organizations sent them paper. And they sent them to different cities. And our papers happened to be to Norfolk.

And the reason why you came to the United States was because your husband had been liberated in a camp by Americans?

Yes.

Otherwise, you wouldn't have been allowed to come?

We wouldn't be able, no, no. You had to prove. We had also a lot of difficulties, because Sheila couldn't go with us. Because Sheila's name wasn't Gutterman. Her name was Kurtstein. And as far as the American government is concerned, if it's not the same name, she couldn't go. So I went one time to Miss Levin, and she told me to leave Sheila here with somebody, until I will take her down, until I will send her papers.

I say, you are expecting to leave a eight-year-old little girl at home with a German family? And she said, well, there's nothing I can do about it. That's the law. What can I do?

I said, look, it's a very funny law who does not permit me to go to the United States because the Germans didn't kill my little girl. If they would kill her, I would go. But if they didn't kill her, I cannot go. Do you think that's fair? Do you think that's right?

If they didn't kill her father, I would have that name. They killed her father. And I remarried. But they didn't kill her. And for that reason, I cannot go where I want to go.

And I began to cry, because it was very horrible. She said, look, go home, and come back in a couple of days, and we're going to talk about it. So I went home and I came by there about two or three days. And she said, you're going to go on your name.

[NON-ENGLISH]

[NON-ENGLISH]. And you can take your husband-- I don't remember exactly what she made something that the papers were on my name. It was Dora Gutterman. Do you understand? And I can take even her name. Because she is my daughter, I can take her. But she wasn't your father's daughter. So your father, he couldn't take her. If I went on his paper, I couldn't take her because I was on his paper.

I see.

But when I went on my name, I had my paper, I could take my husband, I could take Ruth, and I could take my daughter, even if she didn't have my name.

Oh, I see. I see.

And this was-- she made a big-- because I wasn't liberated by Americans. You understand? But under those circumstances, she understand what happened. And she did something which was really not legal, but of course it was legal. [INAUDIBLE] situation. This way we came to the United States.

So then you got settled in Norfolk, Virginia by the Jewish Family Service?

Yes.

And they found a job?

We were in New York for eight days. And we came on a Sunday. We came to New York on a Saturday morning. And then the second Sunday, we came to Norfolk. And there were those two Jewish ladies waiting for us. I think we came by ship. I think so by boat, by boat from--

From New York?

We had to go from New York by train. From the train we had to change to a boat. But we didn't speak a word English. So how do we know where to go?

So the lady there in New York gave us a letter. She wrote that we do not speak English. She told in that, the letter, where we want to go. She said, wherever you see a policeman or any man who looks honest, give him this paper. And she said, please take those people to the boat because they don't speak English, and they will be lost if you will not help them.

And we met somebody and they took us to the boat. And this how came to Norfolk. And at Norfolk, two ladies from the Jewish families are waiting for us. And they found--

They could speak Yiddish, though.

They speak, oh yeah. Sure.

And you lived in an apartment?

At the beginning, we lived in on 35th Street, in an apartment. We were there for a month. And then we moved to Berkley.

Why did you move to Berkley?

Because this rent there was too expensive.

But I noticed that we grew up in a neighborhood with survivors. Is that why you moved to Berkley? I mean because--

There were not any more survivors. I don't think so. The only in Berkley was only Horowitz, me, us and Horowitz. There were no more survivors.

But how about the Orthodox synagogue? Well, the Millers, they're not--

The Millers they're not. They are not--

Wait one second. But in Orthodox in B'nai Israel was mostly survivors, a lot of survivors.

Well, we were in Berkley from about the end of 1949 until 1957, I think, about eight years. And then we were going to the synagogue [NON-ENGLISH], another synagogue. But then the Horowitzes moved about two or three earlier before us.

But weren't the other survivors that went to Berkley Synagogue?

Not in Berkley, no, no. We had a lot of friends, American friends. But they were not survivors. It was a very small Jewish community.

But I just remember growing up surrounded-- I mean there were always survivors. I mean there were the Weissbergs and the Lefkos and the--

Well, you know them, maybe sometimes we went to them, and they came to us. But they didn't live in Berkley. We were always in contact, yeah. We were always in contact. We always were close.

You found out each other, right?

Oh, yeah. We found out about each other, sure.

What kind of reception did you receive from non-survivors?

I want to mention also that the Jewish Family Service was trying to get us together. And let's say when it came-- I remember the first year when it came to Thanksgiving, they made a Thanksgiving dinner. And they invited all survivors. And they invited the mayor of Norfolk, and all those leaders from Norfolk to meet all the survivors. It was the first Thanksgiving.

And this way we met. And then we met each other, when I met a survivor, and it was a woman, I felt like to my sister. I mean it was we always felt very close.

Because you had a common background.

Because we all went through the same, not exactly the same. But we all went through the--

Did you feel closer to someone if they were close to your hometown, if they were from Poland?

No. They were not close to my town. But I know a lot of people. One I met one Mr. Lefko who lived in Sosnowiec. It happens often about a year before the war broke out. But we all felt very close.

What kind of reception did you get from non-survivors? I mean were able to share your--

It depends. Some people were very friendly and very nice. And some of them were not very friendly. They looked down. A lot of peoples looked at the survivors like a lower grade, lower-grade people.

Because it was a common knowledge that before the war, who went to the United States? Somebody who couldn't make a living in Poland, or who went bankrupt, or left a wife. I wouldn't say most of it left for reasons they couldn't stay there.

And people like our family, we didn't have any reason. We made a good living. We were very respected. And we felt very good there. Why should we go to United States?

And so somehow, I think the Jewish people in the United States think that those people came after the war, they're also this type of people. But this wasn't so. All the survivors who came here now, wherever they went, left Poland only because they didn't want to be there.

Because when I came to Wislica, every stone, every house remind me something. When I came in, when I--

Everyone who survived Hitler's concentration camps or her, whatever he was, did not want to remain in Poland for different many reasons.

Don't you think people in the United States knew that?

I don't know. I'm not sure. I don't think they realized this. I don't think they think about it. I think they still looked at the refugees as lower people.

Immigrants.

Immigrants, that's right. And I very much didn't like it. I very much-- how you say this? When somebody tells you something and you are against it. I was very much-- it was very upsetting to me.

That what? I very much rejected this that somebody can look down at me. I was in my home. I don't necessarily agree with it, because I think every human being should be great at what he is, not what his parents are.

But this way was in my home town. I'm only stating the facts. That this was [NON-ENGLISH]. And not everybody could say to me good morning. Not everybody.

Right.

So highly respected was my family and me, and the whole our family.

So, you're saying that you had a lot of status.

Very much status.

In Poland, also here you were looked down upon.

And here, and suddenly I came, and I was a refugee. I was nothing. And I rejected it very much. I never said anything. I was living with Mrs-- I don't know if you remember Mrs. Harfield.

Yeah, I remember her.

And she treated me like trash. And many times, I cried about that. It was hurting me so much that I realized she would be a nice person, she wouldn't do that. I understood that. But despite this, I just refused to accept it. I just couldn't accept it.

Did non-survivors ask you about your experiences or other survivors? Were you able to share your experiences with other survivors or non-survivors?

When we came between survivors, sometimes we talked about it. And sometimes I tell a few words to mine. Sometimes but not often, because we all know that everybody went through a lot, and everybody survived not because he was smart, not because he had a lot of money, not because he knew what he's doing. It just happened.

Because I was in many places I didn't know where to turn left or right.

Did you feel--

And if I would turn somehow, I turned maybe left, and if I would have turned right I would have been killed. I didn't know where to turn. I just turned this way.

Did you ever discuss-- did any non-survivors ever ask you about your experiences during the war?

Yes, sometimes. Yes.

And did you feel comfortable in telling them about it?

I never discussed, no. Especially if I talk about the experience only with the survivors. With Americans, I never discussed this.

But did they ever ask you?

Yeah, they did. But I had a feeling, I could be wrong. But I had a feeling they ask me for entertainment. They want to know what happened, not to feel with me, not to really to feel the pain what I went through, but just to listen to a story. And that's the reason I didn't want to talk with them.

When an American person asked me, what I went through, I told them. It's too much to say. It's not important now anymore. And I prefer not to talk about it.

Did you join any survivor organizations?

Oh, yeah. Sure.

There were survivor organizations here?

Before I came here, there were not.

I mean once you resettled?

In Norfolk?

Yeah.

Oh, yeah, sure. We have now meetings there.

Did you join any-- there is a survivor organization now in Norfolk?

Yeah. Let me tell you something until this movie, Holocaust--

Which showed on TV.

Made our lives a little bit hard, because until then nobody didn't talk about it, nobody didn't come together. And there was just nothing. Since that Holocaust--

Since the Holocaust movie.

The Holocaust movie--

Which was on TV.

Which really was nothing. What they show was absolutely ridiculous. But this made such a roar between the people that they begin to talk about it.

And they begin, like we heard about a year ago, I think Mrs. Rosenblum I think, Rosenbaum or Rosenblum is-- she was in charge of it. And she brought down speakers. And we had for about two weeks there were almost every night speakers at [NON-ENGLISH]. There were a big thing going on.

And also I was on TV. Several were on TV, at Channel 15. But this only happened after this TV show, Holocaust.

Which was on TV a couple of years ago.

Yes. But until then, nobody mentioned anything.

So until like two years ago, there was no survivor organization in Norfolk?

No, not at all. No.

There were survivor organizations in other cities.

Yeah, maybe, but not Norfolk, no.

Did you apply for reparations after the war?

I did when I was in Germany. I didn't want their money. I had a feeling that I would get their money, like you tear out a hair from a pig. Why leave it with them? And I will give it for you for charity.

I did apply and I had some-- I don't remember how much I got, a few, 500 mark, or 1,000 mark. I got a down payment on it. And then right after that, I left to the United States. And when I came to the United States, I applied again.

And I lost everything. And the reason why I lost is because when I applied in Germany, only those peoples who were in concentration camps were allowed to get money. Since I wasn't in concentration camp, I was on Polish papers, I was in a hidden place, for this they didn't pay anything. And I want to get out of them as much as I can. So I said I was in concentration camp.

Well, I never was a liar, and a liar has to have a good memory. And when I applied-- when I was in the United States, several years after I came, after that, I applied again.

And apparently everything didn't match. You understand? I didn't remember exactly what I said. Then I don't remember what I said then, and didn't match. And I lost.

But later on, even if you were in hiding, you could get reparations?

Yes, I can get now for everything. But I don't know where to go.

But then it was too late because once you had lied.

No, I think I can prove now. I think now is when you can only prove if you were in Poland and you were Jewish. If you were born in Poland, you had to suffer because a Jew, whatever you was, whatever you did, you were a Jew. And you were surrounded by enemies who want to kill you.

Did Uncle Pinchas apply for reparations?

Uncle Pinchas was in Auschwitz. He didn't have any problems. So he gets reparations.

Oh, yes.

What does he get? Do you know what he gets?

I don't know how much he got. But Uncle Pinchas has also applied for-- you could apply for furniture what you lost, for jewelry, and he had something he got sent, after our parents were took away. And received about, I think, \$1,000, because he sent me half of it. He sent me \$500. And I took right away, a check in the mail, and send it to the JF. I didn't want to keep that money.



When was this?

This was several years ago. I would say about four or five years ago, maybe more.

What languages were spoken primarily at your home when you were growing up?

Only Yiddish, between us, we spoke Polish in the business for customers. But between us, my parents, my brothers, only Yiddish.

And what language was spoken primarily when you were raising growing up in the United States with your children and stuff?

Well, I didn't spoke to them Yiddish, because I lived between English speaking peoples, and I had a maid. I worked in the store. And she spoke English. So I spoke to the children English.

And I'm sorry. I never had time to learn them Yiddish. And I'm very sorry for that. I just was too busy to do it. And this was really wrong.

What did you communicate to your children about the Holocaust?

I didn't told them much. I didn't want to talk much to my children about the Holocaust. When they were little, of course they were little. And then they grow up, I don't remember, maybe on some occasions, I said something.

But I don't remember discussing very much with my children what I went through during the war. I didn't think it was serve any purpose. I didn't think it will do him any good. Why talk about it? What can you do? But I think it's good that-

Did you talk about the past at all?

What do you mean?

About your parents.

Yeah. I talk about my parents, about my home. Yes, I told them what home I had and everything. But what I went through during when Hitler time, I didn't talk much about that. Do you remember me talking something?

Yeah. I personally have a memory of your talking a lot about, but not really-- you talked a lot about your family. But you talked a lot about hiding, about when you were hiding.

About hiding?

Not in hiding, sorry. When you were under false papers. You talked a lot a lot about your experiences. But usually they were-- having listened to you tell this whole story, I realized there was an awful, awful lot that you never told me. So you tended to tell me the same stories.

Pardon?

You tended to tell me the same stories.

I really don't remember what I said, what I didn't said. Maybe I told them then some episode of what I went through.

What kinds of feelings do you have about the United States now, or about living in the United States?

United States is a very wonderful country, a good country. They gave me a home. And they gave me a home, and they

gave me an opportunity to establish a home for myself and my children. But the United States is not my home. My home is Israel. My land is Israel.

I was born and raised in Poland. I think every day in the school, the Polish hymn, the Polish pledge. I always put my hand on my heart and made a Polish pledge. And when Hitler came, everything was going.

Do you ever--

No country in the world is mine except Israel. Israel is the only country where I will never hear you stinking Jew. And I wish so much I didn't have to tell you the feelings of mine that my parents died, my brothers died. But my feelings would be completely different if they would die in Israel fighting for Israel, instead of the German gas chambers, or to the Poles' knives, or to the Poles' guns.

It's an honor and it's an opportunity to die for Israel for any Jew at least in this country. Any Jew in the United States who think this can never happen in the United States, I hope they will never experience it. And I hope it will never happen.

Well, you grow up in Poland.

They don't know how wrong they are.

You grew up in Poland. I mean you were part of the everyday life of Poland. You spent 30 years in the United States now.

Yeah.

And so you've experienced United States. Do you think another Holocaust is possible here?

Any place in the world is possible. And in Poland, I could expect it. But in Germany, you don't know how the Jews and the Germans lived. When I was after the war, when I went, during the [NON-ENGLISH] to the synagogue, there was there in this Jewish office. There were there how many? About five, six survivors. There were several hundred people, all German Jews.

And I couldn't save my life, not one of them I couldn't see any Jewish. They were all like German. They were living together. They were intermarrying. They went to each other's parties there, are complete assimilated. Complete, all together.

In Poland, when you saw a Jew on the street it's a Jew. In Germany, you could never see this. If this could happen in Germany, and Germany is a very intelligent people, highly educated people. No matter how I feel about them, I have to say what I saw in Germany.

So if there wasn't as much antisemitism in Germany as there was, let's say, in Poland?

Maybe there was antisemitism in Germany. I don't know. I didn't live in Germany. But all I know is that the German Jews and the German people, they're one nation.

They were very assimilated.

Very assimilated. And if this could happen in Germany, it can happen any place in the world-- United States, Australia, any place. All you need is just a leader to become an antisemitic leader.

The right circumstances.

Yeah, the right circumstances, there will be a severe, like in Germany, when you want to buy a loaf of bread, you had to

take a wagon with money to pay for a loaf of bread.

You mean inflation.

Inflation, you will get severe inflation. There will be a severe hunger, whatever. And there come antisemitic president. The people spoke to me yesterday, when they will pass you, they will seem like they don't see you. They will turn around. I experienced that.

In what ways do you feel that the Holocaust has changed the course of your life?

Well, that's hard to say, honey, how changed my life. My life changed completely, of course.

Right.

Do you think it's-- what you were just telling me before about, about how that one day a person will say hi to you. The next day that they'll call you a dirty Jew.

Yeah. Yeah.

What you're saying to me is that you don't really have very much trust towards people that are not Jewish.

Oh, no. No, not at all. I have very many American friends, very nice people, very good people. And I like them all. And they deal with me and I deal with them.

But I know-- I don't doubt that. I know like I see now the sunshine outside. I know if God forbid, if something will change, if the wind will blow in a different direction, they will be right away here again and everything will blow in different direction.

So you don't feel any sense of security here?

In the United States, no, not at all.

So would you say that that is as a result of the Holocaust that you have those sort of feelings?

Yes. Because I wouldn't have the experience of another Holocaust, sure. I wouldn't see what happened.

In other words, if the Holocaust had never happened, you think you'd be more trusting of people.

Yes. Yes. I would. Because I wouldn't have experienced what I had.

Right, right.

I wouldn't have the opportunity to see how people change.

Right. Well that's what I mean when I ask you in what ways do you think the Holocaust has affected your life.

Sure. It gave me a lot of experience. And I'm still sorry why, despite everything what I haven't been against United States, and I made a good living, and not materialistic or nothing, and I can afford. But despite that fact, I'm still sorry I didn't went to Israel.

Whenever I meet when I was on the bridge there in Washington with Mrs. Techel, whenever I see her, I said, Pila, I made a lot of mistakes in my life. But the biggest mistake I made is not going to Israel.

You mean Mrs. Techel's daughter?

Yeah, yeah. I met there--

Why do you feel that way?

Because in Israel, I would be home. Here I'm not home. Everything what I have, I somehow I could be wrong. Somehow, I have a feeling it's not really mine, because if God forbid something happen in one day they come and they put on a lock on the apartment, whatever I have, it's not yours. Just like in Poland.

Maybe in the United States, it couldn't happen as quick and as easy. But it can happen, the same way exactly.

What kinds of values do you feel you have tried to give to your children?

I'm trying to give them to be proud of being Jewish, to work for the Jewish nation, to work for Israel, to work for the Jewish people. It is possible to go to Israel and settle in Israel. I was trying to give them an education which I never could get. I was trying to develop them a sense of ambition, to get as high as possible in education, and human development. That's what I was trying.

Is there anything that you can think about that you'd like to add now that hasn't been covered in these tapes?

I might think about something later on. Right now, I really don't think. Maybe later on, if I remember we can add something.

OK. How have you felt about answering these questions?

I want to answer those questions because nobody doesn't live forever. And I will be going. I want people to know what happened in Jewish nation. I hope they will draw some conclusion, and I hope they will work and it never happen again.