

OK. You mentioned just now, you wanted to go back about Auschwitz.

Yeah, Auschwitz.

Sure.

Yeah. Auschwitz, in a way, some had a little bit better. They could get a little bit better those what they were working there, Bekleidungskammer with the clothes, those where they work by food. I mean, they had a little bit better. They organized a little better. They helped other little-- other girls what they didn't work there. They help them out. One used to help the other.

And the conditions for work was really bad. We used to go out outside working in the rain and the snow, wet to the bone, come home with the wet clothes, in the morning to put on again the wet clothes, and go back to work. And day by day, same thing with the wet, with the snow, with the-- and then the conditions came back to the concentration camp, the toilets were really bad. It was like one room, a long one. And then was a long--

A corridor sort of like?

Yeah.

A long hall?

A long hall. And then was the toilets was like this-- a big--

Hole?

--hole here and a big hole here, big hole here, the long-- like a big long table, like for 50 people to sit. That's a big.

So it was a communal one.

Yeah. Yeah. And those big holes in each of the sides. Most of the people had diarrheas. They couldn't even make it to the hole. They used to spit at each other. It was just fighting. And the water was rusty, couldn't drink the water. The water was so rusty, like you're drinking rust.

That's why a lot of people-- I think even myself, I got sick. I had kidney stones. I had gall stones, kidney stones. I think this came a lot in the water. And even the soups we used to eat is with stones, with the things what we used to-- the way it used to take it out, it was plenty plenty of garbage in it. And everything was cooked. And you eating like this. So a lot of people like myself, I went through a lot of operations.

Since you've been to the States?

Yeah, since I've been to the States.

Yeah. When you were in Bergen-Belsen, then, you got there in August of 1944.

'44.

And it wasn't really a camp? I mean, it was just--

No. We had to start this whole camp. It was like barracks and soldiers, where they come from the fronts and they take them back. So they emptied this thing out. That's what I think. They used to bring soldiers, like in Poland and the other countries. This was Germany. Bergen-Belsen's Germany. So they used to bring in to--

Prisoners of war, maybe.

--yeah, prisoners to recover there. And then they took them back. So we--

Sorry.

We got-- Bergen-Belsen, overnight, became a bigger, and bigger, and bigger camp. Everybody in Auschwitz and other working camps, concentration camps, everybody was concentrating here in Bergen-Belsen. They brought in everybody to Bergen-Belsen.

And Bergen-Belsen didn't have enough food and enough place to hold all those people. People were dying on top of each other, on floors, and outside, inside, every place. That's all you saw Bergen-Belsen. I never saw so much death in all my life what I saw in Bergen-Belsen, piled up, like you see piles of lumber. That's the way it was piled up.

Why-- people were dying because of?

Dying from hunger, from hunger, no clothing. We didn't have no clothing. I was going around in the winter. The winter came already. August is August, the winter comes closer. And it was cold-- September, October, November. It was cold. I was going around without shoes. I didn't have any shoes and no clothing.

Was there any place for you to sleep? Did they have camp beds for you?

Yeah, they had the beds. But a lot of people slept on the floor. I was lucky I grabbed the bed because I came earlier. Then the later transports start coming. They didn't have a place where to sleep. They slept just plain on the floor. And the lice, no clothing, no nothing, no-- it was full of lice. The lice were going around, even on the floors, you could see them so much.

It was really bad, really bad, with no conditions for living. Sisters together, what they lived through the whole war, it was two sisters, three sisters, cousins, aunts together. They lived all the war till Bergen-Belsen. And in Bergen-Belsen, they had to die because they couldn't live through. We didn't work. They didn't take us out to work no place. I wish they would take us out, a garden, someplace to work.

You didn't help to build up the camp or anything?

Nothing, nothing what to build. It was nothing to build.

So did you have roll calls?

Yeah, roll calls, twice a day roll calls. That's all.

Did you have-- I meant to ask you too, when you were in Auschwitz, did they continue to have selections?

Yeah. Yeah. I forgot for this. Yeah, always.

And how often did they happen?

Very often. Very often. They used to come in. And somebody had a little pimple someplace, a rash, right away. You have to be really clean. And so they took you. They took her one of my-- of a friend of mine, what she lived near us in the old country, what I told you there, the mill, very rich people. They took her for selection. She had the diarrhea. And she really lost a lot of weight. She was a very young girl.

So I went over to her. I brought over some new clothes, a new jacket, new dress. I organized this. And I brought over. And I said, listen, you're going to get all dressed up. And you're going to go over to the Lagerführer. And you're going to beg. You're going to beg him as much as you can beg to let you live. You're young. You were sick. Now, you're

feeling good. You want to go back to work. She said, not in my life I'm going to do this. Imagine.

She had had enough.

She said, I have enough. I don't want no more. That's it. And she told me, if you ever live through this, please, talk about it. Don't never forget it, what they did to us, to our families.

Did you get the sense that the outside world didn't know what was going on?

No. I get the sense they knew. No, they couldn't imagine, just like we did. We did the same thing. Why should I blame other people? We did the same thing. People came out from Treblinka. I mean, they really-- I don't know how they came out from there, from those gas chambers. And they told us in plain Jewish. And they explained the whole thing. And in our imagination, couldn't believe this. We couldn't.

You couldn't accept it.

No, we couldn't accept this, that people can do a thing like this. So I really don't blame the outside world for it. I don't. They-- a person in right mind is really hard to accept this thing. Even I'm talking now, I live this through, believe me, I have a very hard time with myself too. How could I live this through? Today, I wouldn't even-- I wouldn't survive one day there, not one day, never mind six years. I couldn't, not in those conditions.

How old were you at that time, at that point, when you were in Bergen-Belsen?

In Bergen-Belsen? When was it, '44?

Yes. So you were 21 at the time.

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, when I was liberated, I was 22 years old. So they wanted girls to work in the kitchen. They had to cook for us-- I mean, for us. So they wanted some girls to work. Everybody wants to work in the kitchen. Who doesn't want to work in this kitchen? Everybody. Now, luckily, I got in. I got in.

And I worked in the kitchen. I worked very hard in the kitchen-- peeled potatoes. I schlepped those big kettles full of water. I mean, it was maybe one, two potato running around there-- and then later, not even one potato. And I worked very hard in this kitchen.

And I used to come home and feel so guilty. I couldn't bring nothing home for the girls. The girls were hungry. I didn't even have much to eat there because there was nothing to eat. And I used to tell them, you think I'm eating there a lot, and I don't bring you nothing. It's not true.

I went there to work. It's going to be better, but it's not. It's not. It's the same thing. We don't have there food. They stay over us. Even what you peel the potato, you want to eat, you cannot eat. They don't let you.

Then I worked a few days more. And one of the SS was a very nice person, was a nice person. So he said, OK. Don't rush. I'm going to wash you. Don't rush. Don't run. Take it easy. You want to eat? I said, yeah. He said, here's a carrot. He gave me a carrot to eat. He was very good. No, I was tired and working hard.

And see, we had the bunk beds, three beds and then three across, like if you lay the wall, you have to go three across. So one night, I had to go down to the bathroom. And I didn't want to step on nobody. I slept. And I was so careful not to wake up. So instead of sitting in the bed, I sat right on the floor of the third bed. And I fell down to the third bed of the floor. And I hurt my back.

You fell down when you were going to go to the bathroom?

Yeah, yeah. And then the minute I fell down, everything hit to me. If I don't go up this minute, back up, I never going to

go up back to the bed. And that's the way it was. I rushed back, with all my pain, I laid down the bed. And I was laying for probably for two months, who knows, for six weeks. I didn't move. I couldn't move. The minute I moved, I felt like all my bones are burning like a fire. So the girls took care of me-- a little bit water, a little of this.

You didn't have to get up and go to work?

No, I couldn't go to work. And those what they come, the people, she knew already. I used to make with my hands. So she counted me. So I was laying in this position there, really bad after everything.

Because you had sprained your back?

Yeah, I did. I did, after everything. So suffering was enough to suffer healthy, now, I'm sick. And if anything, they're going to take me the first one, they're going to take me in crematorium, I mean, if I cannot work, that's for sure. Now, luckily, we didn't have a big crematorium. It was a lot of dead bodies to burn before them to kill me. It was so many bodies, they couldn't burn.

So I was laying there sick, helpless, till one day, we had to move from these barracks the other barracks. So finally, the girls moved me, they hold me under my arms, and they dragged me, and they moved me. And then I start walking little by little. I start walking.

And then they start talking, the Russians are coming. The Russians are coming there. And the Germans start running around like without hats already, and no food at all, not even the cooked water we got, for weeks and weeks.

And somebody said, they're baking fresh bread, they're going to bake. So we dreamed all night with this fresh bread we're going to get. We're going-- everybody going to get a loaf of bread soon. After everybody's-- after, they're going to have enough of bread, they're going to give everybody bread.

And then we were laying. And I mean, girls between us, talking, if the end comes, what's going to be if the end comes? We're going to be liberated? Are we going to be liberated? What we going to do? Where we going to go? How we going to walk without the person being behind our backs with the guns? How are we going to walk?

You don't know no more how to be free. How are we going to be free? Where are we going to go? This was our whole thing. Not enough, we didn't imagine we're going to be free. No, if 1% in 1,000%, what are we going to do? That were our main thing.

And meanwhile, from left to right, people dying, and dying, and dying. The block became empty-- empty. Everybody's dying out. So one night, we hear rockets coming, fire things, and this, and this. And we don't know what's going on.

One morning, we hear yelling. We are liberated. The English came in, the British. I said, no way. No way. I don't know. Something there died in me. The minute I hear liberation, I said, I don't think I want to be liberated.

Where I'm going to go? What country going to take me? The Poles going to take me back? Where I'm going to go? I have nobody. Then I remind myself, all my cousins, all my uncles went to Russia. Maybe they're alive. But then came back to me, when was the Blitzkrieg, they were all always near Poland. So they all were killed out. I don't think so I have anybody alive.

How about your brother? You didn't know if your brother was alive.

No, I didn't know. So I was hoping, maybe my brother-- he's a young boy. He wasn't old enough to go to the-- to be a soldier. Maybe he'd be alive. So everybody started running out.

When was this that they?

Liberation?

Yes.

April '45. You see, you think, from '44 to '45 is just a few months. To us, was like 1,000 years. Every day was thousands of years. We couldn't just live through those days. So when we were liberated, a lot of girls went out. I didn't go out for all week. I was laying in bed and just crying, crying my eyes out. And I got so weak, I couldn't eat. Everybody brought in bread. We had bread piled up till the ceiling. Yeah, bread, like you pile up--

The English liberated you?

Yeah, the English. And they gave us such a fat soup. They gave us soup. People died after they ate the soup. It was too fat. And they died. I didn't eat. I didn't want to taste the bread. I didn't eat. For a week, I didn't eat nothing. I was just laying, and crying, and crying.

For what did I live through? Why did I live? For whom? Why? What, I'm better? What, I'm better than my brother? What, I'm better than my parents, my own family? I had such a pain in me. I didn't want to take my life. And I didn't want to live. I didn't know what to do. I was really sick about it, really sick.

Were you still having that back injury then?

No. My back got a lot better. Yeah. My back got better.

But you were extremely depressed?

Yeah. I was terrible depressed. I was crying day and night. Everybody was dancing in the street and telling me, what you doing to yourself? You wanted to-- you wanted to be liberated. You wanted to survive. You always talking about surviving and surviving. Now, you survive, you don't want it? I said, what we did survive? We still sitting here. We free to go out.

And we don't go no place. See, we were-- we weren't on the wires, nothing. They took us to new barracks, where the soldiers were living, the German officers were living, nice barracks, three-four girls in one barrack-- in one room. I mean, rooms was like buildings. And I said, we are free. But we're not going no place. Where are we going to go? We have to wait till somebody's going to take us from here to there. We're not free.

You're never-- you had gone so long without making decisions--

Yeah, yeah.

--that all of a sudden--

Yeah. It was no place where to go. So we went out once to the civilian side. We talked to the Germans. We don't know anything. The concentration camps were right there. They killed so many German Jews. And they tell us blank, right in the face, we didn't know a thing. We didn't know a thing. What happened? We didn't know.

Like they just woke up from a dream. They were drinking, and eating, and dancing, and having the best good time from all the world, came in from all over the world. They don't know what happened. See? They don't know what happened. Now, is another thing. This has never happened, they say.

You're talking about what's happening now in California?

Yeah.

There's that--

How can they say, it's never happened? They better say, they didn't know it's happened. That would be a better way for them.

Well, I suppose the same people that say that are the same people in Germany that said they didn't know it was happening.

Yeah. That's the same people. They just reversed because the other thing, it didn't make sense. Because when we were liberated, we took in a lot of German people from the city. You know what they were, in the government, and even in every walk of life. They took in Germans to the graves. They dug out big communal graves to throw in in fives people what they were shot.

You took Germans to show them the graves?

Yeah, the German in Bergen-Belsen, they were there. It should be pictures. Listen, I didn't have a camera. Or those people, where they gave speeches and they talk. Are you going to tell me nobody took pictures of those days? I don't understand.

This was something to see, what kind of graves. The graves were miles, like to Coolidge Corner. This was graves dug, big ones, in five rows. And there, they were staying and throwing in. They were throwing in the corpses. They're throwing in. So they were ashamed to say, they didn't know because they see what happened. So now, they found another word for it.

When-- after you were liberated, were you suffering from any physical illnesses at the time?

Yeah, I suffered a lot, suffered a lot of headaches. I had headaches and headaches from the beating or something. I had tremendous headaches. I had a goiter because of the things I didn't have enough in Germany, the earth and the things. I had a goiter be taken out, had gallstones, gallbladder. I had a kidney stone. I was a lot of sick.

Was this immediately after?

Yeah, right. It was-- I was sick after. And then when I came to this country, I took-- I came to this country in 1949, in May, May the 4th, just when my mother took-- was taken to the gas chambers, same date, came here to this country.

So you were liberated in May of '45-- in April of '45.

April '45.

And you stayed-- remained in Bergen-Belsen for a time-- after a while?

Yeah. We stayed for time period in the English zone. Then we went over to the American zone. We didn't like to be in the English zone.

The American zone of Bergen-Belsen?

No, Frankfurt-am-Main. That was already free, I mean, not camps, was not a camp.

And where did-- and this is in Frankfurt?

Zeilsheim, was Zeilsheim was another kind of displaced person.

Displaced-- a DP camp.

Yeah, DP camp.

Was Bergen-Belsen a DP camp afterwards too?

No. No.

But you went to a DP camp in Zeilsheim?

No, I went to Zeilsheim-- yeah, Zeilsheim.

OK. And when was this?

This was in '45. I went first to Poland. OK. You want to know about Poland?

Yes, I want-- yes.

Yeah. I was liberated. I was depressed, and depressed, and depressed. And I couldn't find myself a place. I said, I have to go back to Poland. I mean, I saw with my own eyes who was killed. And those what they weren't killed, what I didn't see, I like to find out about it.

So I went back to Poland, which it wasn't easy. It was very hard. I was going on trains with coals, the potatoes, freight trains. On locomotive, I went, just sitting with the driver on the locomotive. It wasn't easy. It took quite time to go.

And when I came to Poland, and I sit in Poland on the trains with a Polish woman, if I would have a weak heart, I would die then, I tell you. That's all what you hear from the Poles talking. They said, so many Jews survive. This was a lot of Jews for them. Just came back a handful, a handful of Jews from a country like this. They said, too many Jews. I was thinking Hitler killed them all out. But they're still here.

That's what you heard them say?

On the trains, that's what the Poles were talking on the train. It was a Russian soldier. And he knew I'm Jewish. So he took me to him. And he told me, a lot of Jewish people are killed by the Poles now coming back, a lot of people. And you better watch out for those Poles.

So I came to Warsaw. Warsaw was-- the ghetto was all to the ground, bombed. I went into the committee. And I went just myself there in the committee. I read it. I was going already with my husband. I got acquainted with my husband before I left. I registered him. His name is Morawitz. So I said Nathan Morawitz. He lived in Targowa 49. He left there his parents, and two brothers, and a sister.

Where did you meet your husband?

I met him right after the liberation. On my birthday, May the 16th, I met him walking.

In Bergen-Belsen?

Yeah, that was after the liberation in Bergen-Belsen. I met him there. He was walking with another Jewish boy. But he doesn't live. He got killed. He drowned in the water. And with a Polish boy, he was walking and talking in Polish. And we girls were walking too.

So-- and the others, from where are you? From where you coming? Where you been in the concentration camps? Here, there, we start talking. So then they came up to a room, to a house. And they sing songs. And they sit with us. And they talk. Did Esther tell you about it? She met the same.

She also met--

I was walking with Esther, with another girl. She lives in New York, Jenny Reiner.

Esther met her husband there too?

Yeah, she met her husband after the liberation. So and then my husband right away--

OK. So you registered yourself. Is this for in case someone was looking for you?

Yeah, somebody looking for me. And then I'm trying to go to Radzyn. I'm trying. In Radzyn is the train is 12 kilometers away from Radzyn. So I have to go there to the train to Radzyn. And then I have to walk, probably. How I'm going to get there? And who knows who is there? They don't going to kill me there if I come.

So we-- I and another girl-- she is now in Israel-- and the boy what he doesn't live, he went with me to Warsaw. No, from Radzyn, she went with me because she is from Radzyn too, the girl. Jenke Klaiman is her name, now is Schuster. So she went with me. We came there. We found a few Jewish people living in one room on the floor, sleeping on straw.

And they saw me, wow, what you doing here? Why did you come here? I said, why I came? I came looking for my people. Nobody is alive. Everybody is dead. We came looking for people too. We don't have nobody either. And if we're going to stay another few days, they're going to kill us. We're going to be between them. If you didn't die with your parents, now, you're going to die without your parents.

So I said, I want to find out what's going on. So I had a cousin. He said, don't find out anything because the Poles going to kill you. They're going to be afraid for you. And they're going to kill you because they killed your family. And now, they're going to kill you. I didn't listen. Listen, I lived through a concentration camp. And I came so far. Now, I'm not going to go to the place where my parents are laying?

So I went there. I came to my neighbor, to the Gentile woman, knocked on the door. She saw me. She start crossing and praying in this. From where did you come? How did you live? We sure you're not living no more. Then I start asking questions. No, nobody lives. Everybody is killed.

And she started telling me the whole story, how this whole thing went by day, the day, and the night, and the killing, and how they were killed. This will take another 10 hours. Finally, she showed me where they buried them, on our land, my parents' land, dugged a hole. And they throw them all in just like this.

This was October. And in spring, they plowed this field where my parents, where my loved ones lived, they plowed it. They throwed out all the bones, throw it around, and they plow it. That's what I had to hear. That's what I came back to Poland, to hear this. And I went back. I went back.

Did you know then whether or not your brother had survived?

Yeah. Now, I came back to this place, where everybody were concentrating in Radzyn, all the Jewish, what they came back to Russia. So I met my cousin there. And he told me how my brother was killed. He said, he was a very young boy, enlisted himself. He gave the wrong age, told them he was older.

He wanted to go find the Germans, want to liberate it. He want to liberate his parents, his sister, and brother. And he went there. He was a young boy. I told him, Moishele, don't go. And he just went. That's all. He saw him, the way he was killed. His head was all chopped off in the shrapnel.

From what?

From the German, from the-- what they shoot. So he was killed instantly, he said. And all my mother's sisters and the little children, little cousins, all were killed when there was the Blitzkrieg in '41, the Blitzkrieg. When they invaded Russia and they went in in Russia, they killed all the Jewish people were out. Nobody was left. They killed them to the ground.



So you went back to Warsaw then?

Yeah, I went back to Warsaw. And from Warsaw, I went to Łódź. And from Łódź, I went back to Bergen-Belsen. I came back to Bergen-Belsen. And we stayed there in Bergen-Belsen. Nobody wants us, no place where to go, nothing. Just they kept us. They give us food, give us clothes from the UNRRA, from the Joint, some clothes.

And we just still like in a concentration camp. Not under pressure-- we free. Well, we still not free to go no place and to do anything with ourselves. We have to wait till we get the food. We have to wait till we get a clothing. And it was really hard. It was really fighting.

And was depressing because after a concentration camp like this we lived through, nobody pulled out the arms, and to take us in in arms, and to-- thanks god you are alive. How could you survive a thing like this? Thanks god. And to be happy with us.

And nobody. Nobody. Nobody want us. And the Polish people-- we were born Polish. I mean, that was our country. My father fight for this country. My cousins all fight for the country. My uncle went to war. And they didn't want us at all. When they talk about so many people dying, they say Poles died, so much Poles. It's not true.

They shouldn't call us Poles now. We're not Poles, we Jews. We're not Poles. We became without a country. We became Jews without a country. I don't know. People what they didn't experience this, I don't think so they can really knew what kind of hurt this is.

When you're small and you grow in a country, you know it's your country. You love it. You love it just like you love your parents. You think the world of your country. You would fight for it, for the freedom for the country. And then all of a sudden, your country becomes it's no country, when you really despair, when you real somebody to speak up for you, to stand up for you, you don't have it. That's what I think. I feel a lot for the Vietnam War.

For the Vietnamese.

For the Vietnamese, what they came back to America. I feel the same thing like that. I came back with no war, nobody cares if I live, if I die, how much I suffer, how much I still suffer. See, like those what they came back from Iran, you saw what kind of welcome? It says a lot to do. I mean, those people were-- don't--

The hostages, you're talking about.

Yeah, the hostages. Those people don't going to suffer like the Vietnamese soldiers suffering. They still suffer. They see the deaths. And they see all those horrible things. And those, this going to stay all life with them. I tried. I tried to conduct a decent life. I wouldn't kill nobody.

I think in these and as much I live through, and so much garbage, so much hate, and so much scum, I didn't learn nothing from it. I didn't. I didn't learn to be bad. I didn't learn to be killed and kill. I raised my children.

Let's talk a little bit about that. When you came after the war, what made-- how did you end up coming to the United States?

I came with a quota. It's a quota or what they call it.

A quota.

Quota, yeah.

Were you-- you were the--

I didn't have no relatives here. I had nobody. So I came-- the Joint brought me in, the Jewish organization.

And why-- how could you get papers to come to the United States?

Somebody sponsored for paper. My husband going to come. He's going to work for him. I mean, we're not going to take nothing for the government.

Was your husband liberated by Americans?

No, same thing, in Bergen-Belsen like me

Oh, that's right. So you were liberated by English?

Yeah, the English.

But you were in the American zone?

Yeah, I went to the American zone.

Because you wanted to come to the United States?

I wanted to come to the United States. And I didn't like the way the English treated us. They treated us a little bit like the Germans. The English don't like us very much. I sensed it when we yelled at the German prisoners, our commanders, what they were over us. Before, they were so high and mighty.

Then you should see how the Germans looked in three days after they were captured. You wouldn't recognize them. Jewish people deserve a medal for surviving and for doing those things. I hate when somebody tells me, didn't you fight back? Why you don't fight back? Why the Germans didn't fight back? They went like sheeps. They begged. They looked like-- in rags. And they looked dirty and filthy.

They always pictured us like we filth, and we lousy, and this. Under those conditions, even Queen Elizabeth would break down under those conditions. She's a big queen. Everybody is big when the time is big. Or when the time gets small, every person gets very small.

Well, you're saying that you were victimized and you were being blamed for being what you were?

Yeah. Yeah, can you imagine? Why you didn't resist? You went to the concentration camp. Why don't you-- why didn't you resist? How can you resist a army full of soldiers are staying with all kind of machine?

So what you're saying is not only was it bad enough that you had to go through it. But they made you feel guilty, like you did something wrong?

Yeah, they made me feel guilty like I did something wrong. I didn't fight back. I should have fight back. The way, what? Look, today, a hijacker takes a plane, even he does nothing in his hands, everybody is afraid, and they do what he does.

So you decided-- you made a decision to come to the United States.

Yeah. I decide, tell my husband, I'm not staying in Bergen-Belsen because to me, the English are just like the German.

When did you marry? Did you marry there?

Yeah. I married in Frankfurt-am-Main, Zeilsheim, I married. That's Frankfurt-am-Main. It's under Zeilsheim-- Zeilsheim is a little city under Frankfurt-am-Main.

When did you marry?

I married in '46, March 18, 1946, I married.

And you could-- and so were you in Bergen-Belsen until you came to the United States?

No, I was in Zeilsheim.

I see. You went--

No, I went to the American zone. I told you.

Oh, I'm sorry.

It wasn't Bergen-Belsen. No. I went to American zone. I lived in this-- this is a little camp where they empty two streets from civilian Germans. They put them together with their relatives. And they gave us-- Eisenhower did it. And Eisenhower took us back out in there. So in '46, we married. In '47, I had my son.

What's your son's name?

Steven. Steven Murra, Steven Edward Murra, Srul Hersh after my father was named. He was 22 months old when I came to this country. And we came. The HIAS took us over. My husband started working as a baker. In 1951, I was pregnant again. And I had twins, two daughters, twins-- Rita and Janet, twins. One was named after my mother, and one was named after my husband's mother. So we had the parents already. And our grandchildren are named after my brothers.

When you came, you were resettled in Boston?

Yeah. Yeah. We came.

And you knew Esther-- also was resettled in Boston?

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I came to Esther. I was writing to her all the time when I was in Germany. And when I came, I lived with her for a few weeks. And then I got apartment.

When you came to the United States, when you first got here, did you talk very much about your experiences, about what happened?

Yeah. I tried to talk. I tried to talk to people. They shut us off right away. Some people didn't-- we didn't know how to talk English. We talked Jewish. So when we talk to them in Jewish, they say, [YIDDISH]. They didn't want to understand Jewish.

I don't know. They were funny people when we came in here in this country. They were not so educated people, mostly were from the First World War people. They came in. They educate their children. And they made some living. Who knows? I don't know. But they were very ignorant to us, very ignorant.

You're talking about Jews and non-Jews?

Jews. I didn't come with non-Jews. I don't know. I came very little with non-Jews because I couldn't talk English. And the non-Jews cannot talk in Jewish. So mostly, I associate with Jewish people. It's one thing-- see, that's what this is in-- it stays in us. We don't associate with American. We don't. We keep to ourself.

Were you able to share your experiences with other survivors?

Yeah. Yeah, we talked a lot with other survivors. We always talked till it came to a point we start playing cards when

we used to come together. Like four or five couples, they used to talk from the concentration camps before or after ghettos, hiding places, all those things. We used to talk, and cry a lot, and talk a lot. So it came to a point when we started having the children and we were too much depressed. I was a lot of sick. I was sick. In the times when I had my children, when they were very small, I was very sick.

With physical illnesses like gallstones and kidney stones?

I lived with attacks for three years till I got the operation.

With what?

Attacks, gallstone attacks, kidney attacks. I was very sick. I was very depressed, always very sick. So we didn't want our children to know what happened to us. We didn't want them to suffer like we do.

If your children were growing up, then, did you ever talk to them about your experiences?

When they were small, they used to ask some questions. Where's our relatives?

They used to ask you where--

Question where my relatives, where's the parents, where's my grandmother, uncles and aunts, cousins. Where are the people? Why we are just by ourself? So I used to tell them, it's a long story. It's very painful. Hitler killed them all.

Did they ask you about your number on your arm?

Yeah. Yeah, I told them I was in concentration camp. That seems-- it seems so brutal. It seems so terrible, like this is something I did. They don't want to think.

As though you were being punished for something?

Yeah, that's right.

Were you afraid that your children were going to interpret it that way?

That's right.

Did they interpret it that way?

No. I feel guilty a lot of times sitting [? like I do. ?] Really, I felt guilty by having children.

You felt guilty about having children?

I said to myself a lot of times, we shouldn't have any children. We really shouldn't. Because children like to grow up with their heritage. That's what we cannot give them. We can't give them their heritage. We can't give them a belonging, just me and my husband.

And my husband used to work day and nights. The kids didn't see him. I was sick a lot of times. I used to hide. I didn't want them to see me sick. I didn't want them to grow up and think they have a sick mother. I always tried to be running and doing things, be always on top. But I lay down in bed, used to cried by night to sleep.

My parents used to teach the children from right to wrong, always say the truth, always be nice, be polite, don't talk loud, all those good manners. Yeah, I told you, I felt guilty, I'm going to raise a child. The other children what they play with, they have American parents. They're born here. They have a whole future for them. What I have to offer my child?

So we tried to be-- to bring ourself up, try to have a nice home. We tried to give the kids everything they wanted-- nice clothes. We did everything possible. We worked hard. We saved to give the kids what we never had.

Did you join any survivor organizations?

Yeah, I belong to the New Americans Greater Boston.

When did you join that?

I'm always joined there.

Right away you joined it?

Yeah, right away when we came.

Why?

Why? Well, this was the only place where we could understand each other. We could laugh together. We could cry together.

So you sort of became each other's families?

Yeah, we could be upset together. We upset a lot of times. Even a wedding-- look, my children, I have three children. They married beautiful, all of them very happy married. I have three grandchildren. One grandchild is coming on the way when I be in Israel or I come from Israel. I just hope everything comes through good.

So we have a lot of things to share. We cry when we happy. And we cry when we sad. And we always cry. Even the weddings-- I go to a wedding or my children's wedding, I should be happy. I raised nice children. They're very respectable. They're teachers. My son is a lawyer-- nice, good kids. I should be happy. And I'm not happy. I'm not happy. I'm always sad, not happy. It's something inside. It's like a cancer sitting. And it's eating, and it's eating away.

After the war, did you apply for reparations?

Yeah, Wiedergutmachung. Yeah, we got Wiedergutmachung.

You get reparations now?

Yeah. So what they give us? They took everything away-- everything. They stripped us naked. We worked six years hard labor in their camps. We worked. We built highways. We built where the airplanes coming down--

Airport.

--airports. We built houses. We built. We worked all our life. And what we get? We don't get nothing. The Nazis' women, where the husbands were Nazis, and they were persecuted or killed, they get triple what we get, more.

Who?

The Nazis' wives, the Nazis' children.

How come?

The SS, yeah, they get money. Yeah, they get.

Under what reason?

Under the martial law, under their laws. I don't know under what law they get. We don't get nothing. We cannot survive on this pension what we getting there. We don't have Social Security from Poland. My parents lived all their lives and their work, and they took away all the things they had from generations, the gold, the silver.

What we get? Nothing. We don't get nothing from them. That's nothing. I don't call this any kind of giving. No. They have to be ashamed. You know how many is dying out now? What, we going to live to old age here? A lot are dying out. What they're doing with this money? We should really get after them. A lot of widows are left.

Right. And when I asked you about--

And they don't have any money to live on. When I asked you about reparation, I didn't mean compensation. You can never be compensated for what happened.

No, that's for sure. No.

No, I understand that.

No. I can never be. Even they're going to give me billions, I wouldn't be. I wouldn't change it for no billions in the world what I had.

When you were raising your children here up in the United States, what languages did you speak in the house?

Yeah, in the beginning was Jewish, yeah.

Spoke Yiddish?

Jewish, yeah, Yiddish. And then when they start going to school, they knew a little bit English. My son got it very fast when I came in this country. He talked German when he came here. And right away, he talk English. Kids get-- the kids learn very fast. Yeah, my children, when they went to school, they know English.

Do they understand Yiddish now?

They understand, yeah. They talk when they have to talk. Yeah. They can talk when they have to.

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

What kind of feelings? It's still the best country in the world. I just hope and pray you're never going to go sour like other countries are going. I just hope and pray the government going to be always strong and good.

Do you think another Holocaust is possible?

Yeah, it's very possible. No, not with this government, what we have now in Washington, the government, and the Senate, and the House. I mean, it's not just the president what he says. That's what I like about this government. It's not one person, what he wants to do, and what he says. I like this kind of setup.

You're saying that person can't have so much power.

That's right, no way. He shouldn't, never. If he goes crazy in his head, he can destroy the whole country. I watched the Watergate very closely. I watched the Watergate just like Germany. I watched it.

What kind of symbolism did it have? What kind of analogy was it?

It is almost identical to the German kind of wolves, the Watergate, yeah.

Ehrlichman and--

Ehrlichman and Engelman, they all was a German descent. And this was the wolves. And I'm telling you--

Loyalty was a big issue.

The loyalty, yeah, when you say kill, you have to kill. It's loyalty. And you say lie. And you say you didn't do it--royalty.

Loyalty.

Yeah, royalty.

Wait, no, loyal, I was talking about being loyal--

Oh, loyal, yeah, loyal.

--in the context of loyalty.

Yeah, loyalty, right. And the hush money and all this, that was always going on in Germany, always. The top, the top, the brass, they ruled the world, the brass. And all the other, they were afraid. Like killing Jews-- it came in, let's say, a New Year's night. Two soldiers came in to kill Jews. Hitler didn't tell them to do it. Believe me, a lot of Jews would be saved if Hitler would have to kill them.

But they did kill them. They did kill them. Those innocent soldiers and those innocent people, what they tell you, they didn't know, it never happened, and it never could happen a thing like this, those are the people they killed the Jewish people. Those are-- for those, you have to watch. Those are the killing.

So you feel like, in a sense, Nixon felt he was above the law.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I felt this. I felt it very sickly then, this time. I was really sick. I didn't eat. And I didn't sleep. I used to sit near the television. If I would have this recorder, I would record the whole thing. I was sitting near the television. My aunt was then from Israel, she came for a visit here to the United States. And she was sitting with me together. And I used to sit and cry, lived all the German horror back. Nixon brought it back to me. Yeah.

That's interesting.

It's very interesting. And I just hope-- I'm taping this. It cost me a lot, a lot of strength.

Emotional.

A lot of emotion, a lot. And I'm taping it because I wanted-- I'm talking now. I'm just talking only to the young people. I don't care what they are-- Jewish, not Jewish, to all the young people in the world, I'm saying to them, be very careful. Be always alert. Don't think somebody going to promise you the world.

Don't ever let nobody promise you anything. Because those were the promise. They just want to get in. And they are very evil people. If somebody in the government tells you, it's not so good, we have to struggle, we have to continue, we have-- he shows you the right way, the good way, better way. Oh, we going to have cars, and we're going to have beautiful houses, just vote for me. Don't you ever vote for this person. Never.

Because this is the person, he's going to get after the poor people. The poor people going to vote him in. But the rich people going to live, not the poor. And that's my message. We should be very careful. The government is the most important thing. If the Polish government would be a good government, even the Poles were bad people, it would never

come to this, never.

In talking now, what you just said, about the poor people will vote him in, but the rich people are going to live, do you ever have any thoughts about Ronald Reagan being president now?

I hope he's going to be a good president. I just hope. I want him to be a good president. I want him to care about the poor people because the poor people voted him in. And we don't have so much rich people in this country. We have a lot, but not so much.

Poor people voted him in. And I just hope he's going to go for the poor people, is going to go for the human rights, even for woman rights. Women have to have rights too. It's their body. And what they want to do, they should do it. They should be free. They shouldn't be obligated, somebody's going to dictate them what to do.

With their bodies, right.

With their bodies. If they can work in places now-- I mean, they came a lot ahead-- why go backwards? Why go backwards?

Yeah, good point. OK. Well, I think that's really about it. Is there anything that you would like to add or say anything?

I would like to say about Israel. I'm going now to the gathering to Israel.

To the world gathering?

To the world gathering. I'm going because I know my mother, my father, my brothers, all my uncles, aunts, and all the little city what I lived there is going to be there by spirit. We all going to be there because there was their dream, to be someday in Jerusalem. They always-- the prayers, when they closed the book, we were always next year in Jerusalem. So I'm going for my parents, for all my relatives, and for all the six million Jews what they couldn't see what I'm going to see in Israel, a country, a beautiful country.

It's true, they're surrounded by enemies. Now, maybe someday-- God made such a miracles. Maybe, he's going to perform another miracle and those enemies going to become someday friends. And they're going to live together in peace.

Because in peace, you can establish more things. You can grow. Your children grow. Your country grows. Everything is much better than a war. A war doesn't do nothing, only killing. It doesn't help. It just makes a lot of broken hearts.

Have you ever been to Israel before?

Yeah, I've been 10 years ago in Israel. And I was so happy to see this beautiful country. I walked there just like my mother's walked behind me and beside me, my parents, and all my family. That's the way I walked in Israel. I was always thinking-- middle of the night, I used to go out on the balcony and look in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. I looked at my mother's, my father's eyes, and looked at this country.

And I'm very proud to see and to tell them, we have a beautiful country. And the dream for my parents came true. And just too bad they had to die with such a death they did. They always were hoping, someday going to be a Israel. And the Nazis don't going to survive. That was their dream. And that's what they dreamed. The Nazis don't going to survive. And thanks god this dream came true.

Well, I hope you have a very safe and happy trip to Israel.

Yeah. And I hope my daughter going to hold down with the baby till I come back. I come back the 21st of June.

When is she due?



She's been due in this time. I almost didn't want to go. I didn't want to go. And she begged me, go. So because of her, I'm going. If she would tell me, don't go, I wouldn't go. And she said, go. I know it's going to do some good. So go.

Well, thank you very much.

Thank you. You're very kind.