

When I came back to that house that night, and nothing really happened. The Germans only scared the farmers, and they didn't burn anything down. And in a moment like this, I felt the war is over. Every time something good happened, I always said, it's over.

I had an incident once in the summer, that I was working in the fields. And the Germans were grabbing young Polish kids to work to Germany. And I figured that's all I have to be, is caught and brought to my hometown, and they'll point me out who I am. And I wasn't much afraid to go to work. It's just that I'm a Jew, and I won't survive.

So I didn't know what to do. How should I hide? What should I do with myself? And we had-- and on the farm--

This was in '40.

That was when I was living on that farm, but that was in the summer, the summer before.

The first farm?

On the second farm. No, the first farm, I didn't have too many experiences. And that day, I had a basket. I was picking potatoes. There's two kinds of potatoes, early ones and late ones. So the late one-- the early ones were cut off already. The hay of it was cut off, and was whole scoops of it made all over the field. And the new ones were growing.

And I said to myself, where should I hide? And I could hear the police, Lithuanian police, running all over the fields, grabbing, and screaming, and yelling. And I get myself into one of those pile of hays. And I said, no, I'm not going to lie here. What if they stick a bayonet through me. It's wonderful how you think when you want to survive.

I got out of there. And I said the only way I'm going to do it, I'm going to dig myself a hole in between the new potatoes that are growing. And I'll lie there. They grow in rows. And in between, there's like a canal. I dug it with my hands. And I took my basket, and I threw it way away-- I mean, very far away from me.

And I said, I'm going to lie here. And I said, what happens, happens. I hope they don't see me. And every time I tell the story-- I mean, it's unbelievable when I think of it. And I lie down in those potatoes. And I'm lying there. And I only pick-- and I made up my mind that I'm going to lie there till I hear a voice that I know, that I can get up.

And as I'm lying there, I open up my eyes, and a big soldier is standing with his back to my head. I mean, just with his back. If he would turn around, he couldn't help, but see me. And he's eating a cucumber that he grabbed from our garden, running through our fields. And with a big gun on his back, and he's just standing there, and eating, and looking all over the fields.

And there was nobody in our fields, but people were working on the other fields. And he kept walking. And he kept walking away from me. And then as the time went on, I only heard echoes. And I said, I'm not getting up. I'm going to lie here. Somebody has to come. Because they knew about-- it was like a raid. They made a raid.

And this was the Lithuanian police?

A Lithuanian policeman. Because the Lithuanians-- the Lithuanian borders opened up when the Germans came in. And they were-- now the Poles were already, gold. They became the real bandits.

Anti-Semites.

They're really killers. In towns like my town, there were not too many Germans that killed anybody. It was just the Polish and the Lithuanians.

And I'm lying there. And all of a sudden, I hear a voice of the woman. And she says, Bronka, are you there? And I'm still not getting up. And then I hear her closer and closer. And I got up, and I ran to her. And I walked into the house.

And I thought the war is over. The war was over pretty soon, another five months, I think. But I felt so free.

She says, you still have to get out of the house I said, I'm not going out, everything is fine. I said, they didn't get me. I had that wonderful free feeling, and that this is it. They didn't get me--

That was in '44.

That was already the beginning of '44. Because it was-- I don't remember what month. I just know the old potatoes were cut off, and the new ones were growing, and it was spring or almost summer. I don't remember months or years.

That's fine. You can just tell me the time-- the season is fine.

Yeah, the season. And I came to the house. And they felt good about it too, that they didn't get me. And then one day--

Was this-- had your mother died yet? Had your mother been killed?

No.

Your mother was still alive.

That's when it happened, when he came-- one of the sons, who had a girlfriend in the city, and he used to go by bicycle. And one day, he left early, and he came back too fast. And he comes back, and he says to me he has to talk to me. I said, why do you have to talk to me?

He says, I hate to tell you, he says, but they took everybody away from my uncle's farm. Because the first farmer that I told you that took me, his brother took in my mother, and my sister, and four other women with children. But he took in for money.

They gave him everything they owned. If we only had one, those things wouldn't happen. But they were too hungry for things, and they wanted money and stuff.

And I said, what do you mean? And he says, and I hate to tell you, he says, you have to get out of the house. You cannot stay here.

Well, at that point, you knew that your mother was dead?

Well, I didn't think of my mother at all. At that moment, I just thought I better get out of here. Because I heard stories that in the ghettos, people used to be so jealous of each other, that if they knew that somebody's child is alive someplace, they used to tell the police. I mean, that was what-- people were like--

Other Jews?

Other Jews, yes. And mothers-- they say that mothers used to give out-- I don't know. I just know one thing--

But you heard.

That that at that moment, I didn't think even of my mother at all. I just-- they gave me a basket of food. And they said every morning they'll meet me. I should come up at night in the barn and sleep there. And I cannot stay in the house. Because nobody knows who is going to come to look or search.

So that was-- and that was only six months before the war was over. And they were taken away. And then I didn't hear any more about them, because they just knew that they took the husband away, and they took them all away. They told me-- that in our town was a police, and they kept them there overnight, and then they took them to Vilna, to be killed.

And then, all of a sudden, you hear tanks, and you hear-- a few months later, you hear--

Let me ask you then-- when you were-- so at that point, you were hiding in the fields.

Yeah.

But during that-- that was like, let's see '42, '43-- about three years that you were there.

Yeah, most of the time, I lived in the house.

You lived in the house. And again--

In the house, till the end of the war.

In terms of food and clothing?

I ate what they ate. I mean, maybe if they had meat or like for a holiday, maybe they ate more. But I was never hungry for food. I was cold a lot in the winter, because I had no clothes. Because they don't wear clothes. I had such a bladder, that I was 14 years old, and I wet my bed every night. Because I never wore underpants. I didn't have any.

And when I was 14, I got my first period. And I only had it once. And I didn't know what to do. So I sat in the river all day.

Did you?

All day-- all day in the river. And I was afraid to tell the lady. And when I did--

Did you know what was happening?

No.

You thought maybe you cut your self?

I was bleeding. No, I didn't know. I was bleeding. I cut myself. But I didn't. But I want you to know, I never had another period till I got married, again.

So you had your first period when you were 14, and then you didn't get another period till you were married. How old were you when you got married?

16. And I happened to get my period two weeks before I was married. You know how it is in the Jewish religion?

Yes, you have to wait.

But I didn't. I lied to the rabbi.

OK, but that's-- wait, so you spent the whole day in the river. This is when you were 14.

And when I came back-- yeah. And when I came back, and that cold water didn't stop. So I finally had to tell the lady. So she gave me a lot of clothes, schmattas and stuff.

But did she explain to you what was happening?

No.

She didn't tell you why you were bleeding?

I don't think so.

Did you understand it was because of-- that you were menstruating?

I don't think so. Because if I will tell you a story-- before I had my first baby, I didn't know where it was going to come from. I didn't know. And everybody laughs, but I thought-- I'll tell you a cute story. I thought the baby has to come through the stomach.

Because when I was a little girl-- we had no baths in the house, but every Friday-- not Friday-- every like once a week, the women used to go to the mikvah and to the bath. You bathe, and then you went to the mikvah and got your clothes. And I went along with my mother.

And I used to look at the women. And on their stomachs, from the navel down, they had a line. And I believed that that's where it opens up, and the baby comes out. Until I had my own baby-- and I knew where it came out from, because I had a natural birth. I'll never forget it.

And I just didn't know. So who knew about periods or anything? I was just-- after I got married, it was terrible--

Weren't you scared then, when you had that-- when you were bleeding?

Oh, at that time?

Yeah.

I don't even remember what I was. I'll tell you the truth, between the lice and the blood-- I had so much lice in my clothes that I used to go in the river and dunk my dress so they'll come out. But cold water is the worst thing. They multiply even more. You have to boil them in hot water.

At that time-- and then I developed some kind of a disease on my skin. I remember there was a wedding on that farm, and my whole skin was like a leprosy. I was terrible. It was pussy, and it was all bruises all over my face. And it went away. I'm telling you, like you see the miracle maker-- no doctors, no medicine, it went away.

Maybe it was some sort of a--

And let me tell you something, my eyes is just a plain-- I mean, I just went to a special surgeon. I knew one because I've been going to a doctor that you have to wait three months for an appointment. So I said, there must be somebody that takes you sooner.

I happened to go to a big doctor. And he's a boy that went with my son in the army together. And he examined me for the first time. And he says, Mrs. Wluka, he says, with your astigmatism, with your scar tissue, I don't know how you see it all.

And I see pretty good. I manicure. I mean, maybe-- I don't cut anybody up. Maybe I don't cut enough cuticle. But I see very-- I can read. I can't read too long, because I get dizzy. But it's just a miracle. He says he cannot believe how I can see it all.

I mean, I have very heavy glasses. But I cannot get anything stronger. Because at my age now, he said that's the strongest they can give me. So that was a miracle-- no doctor, no medicine.

And my biggest problem was, after the war that I didn't listen to the doctor. When I had a doctor who told me that I have to wear glasses immediately, and I was getting sick. Every week, I had an inflammation in the eyes, and I wouldn't wear glasses.

Why?

Because a young girl in Europe, glasses? It was--

Vanity.

And I had nothing to worry about. I was married already. I didn't see my husband. That's why I married him. That's what I always tell him. I didn't see him when I married him.

All right, so right around '44, when your mother and sister was killed, or were caught--

Yeah.

--and they told you to go into the field. And so you weren't staying at their house any longer.

No. They just used to bring me food. They used to give me work to do in the fields. Like we used to feed the pigs with poison ivy. That's what you fed the pigs with. They used to give me big gloves and a thing that you cut. It's a round thing. What do you call that? That you cut grass?

Yeah, a scythe.

A scythe, yeah. And I used to cut for the pigs, get the food for the pigs. And I had to come in the barn at night. Three times a day, you milked cows. I milked the cows. I earned my keep. But they were wonderful to me. Because they let me stay, even on the barn.

At night, I used to sleep-- the barn was open, just a roof, and the two ends are open, an a lot of hay. But the animals were underneath, the cows, horses. And the partisans in those woods were shooting all night. You could see bullets flying-- fire flying. I was afraid the barn would catch fire someday.

The partisans, meaning Jews that were out and hiding in the forest?

I don't know whether they were Polish partisans, they were Jews maybe. There were a lot of--

And they were fighting. So it was like--

They were fighting each other. Like a resistance-- they were fighting the Germans together, and then fighting each other. I'm sure fighting each other if they were Polish against Jews. But a lot of Jewish men were in the Russian partisans, that ran away to Russia. And as they were coming-- approaching closer and closer.

See the end was that the Russians were chasing the Germans back. And they were coming again to our farm. That's when-- the Russians came into our farm-- I'll never forget. The war was over. And my people were so excited for me, the farmers.

Do you remember what season this was?

I'll tell you what season it was, because I used to hitchhike.

In '44 or '45.

I used to hitchhike-- that was the end of '44, maybe like October. Because I used to hitchhike in the streets, with the soldiers, to go into town. And it was warm. So it was either spring or beginning of the fall. I can't think of months. I just remember that I came to Poland-- I came to my town, back.

Well, this is after the war.

I'm talking after the war. The war was over, and I still stayed on the farm for three months. And then I finally decided, when I moved in with that woman, and I got the job. And then I moved in with a Jewish woman.

OK, well, let's take this one at a time.

Yeah.

OK, so the Russians-- you were going to tell me exactly when the Russians liberated your--

Yeah, when they came on the farm. Actually, some of them came on the farm for milk, for eggs. And they used-- they didn't know who I was. I was sitting there, just listening. And they kept saying that they're sorry that Hitler didn't kill all the Jews.

Russians were saying this?

These were Russian soldiers. And I had to listen to that, sitting with those Polish anti-Semites that hated Jews. And I had to listen. Here are the Russians, supposed to-- they are so happy for me, that the Russians are coming to liberate me. Because they hated the Russians, those Pollacks where I lived with. Because they were rich people.

And I heard that after I left the farm, that the Russians invaded their farm. They put poor people in there. And they sent them away to Siberia. Her sons ran away. I'm sure-- look, she was then in her 60s. And we're going back 40 years. So I'm sure she's dead.

She was the only one that was wonderful. But I cannot say nothing about them because they never harmed me. They called me names, and they called me dirty names and everything, but they never hurt me or harmed me.

They made me work. Her and I did most of the work. We did more work than her four sons put together.

So when the Russians liberated you, you then continued to stay on the farm for about three months.

I stayed for three months. And then one day--

Until 1945?

Yeah. I came-- I remember-- see, I only can go back, because I remember I got married in October.

October what?

October '45.

OK, so you were 15 around when the war finished.

When I got married, I was 16. I got married at 16, because my 17th birthday was in January. And I came to Germany in June, from Poland. My hometown, I left like in May or June. Because it took us quite a while to get into to Austria. They wouldn't let us through the borders, because they didn't know who we were, and we couldn't go as Jews. So we went as Greeks. We spoke Hebrew. I mean, we had to go through the borders and through different towns.

Well, first, you spent three months in--

On the farm.

On the farm.

After the war.

And afterwards, that Russian soldier helped you to get a job.

Yeah.

And you stole bread in order to pay the woman.

Yeah.

And how long did you do that?

Oh, a few months. Because the incident with the Jewish woman that happened, that the husband was arrested. And then I lived with her. And with her, I signed up to go to Israel, and we came to Poland-- I mean, deep part of Poland, like Łódź. We came to Łódź, and we stayed there for three weeks, like in a school, as immigrants.

Right.

And from there I separated from her. Because she just went on. And I stayed in Austria. And I met my husband. I stayed in a school.

Well, you went from Poland into Austria?

To Austria, to Salzburg. They brought us there. They're going to bring us to Israel.

Who's they?

Some organization, some Jewish organization that was in Łódź, that was going to transport us to Israel someday. And they signed us up. And they brought us as far as Salzburg, Austria-- first Vienna. In Vienna, we were just a few weeks. And then they brought us to Salzburg. They put us all in a school, a public school. It was in the summer. I know it was June. There was no school. They gave us mattresses, and we were under the American zone. So they gave us every morning a ration of food and our bread.

Did you have to-- in order to get into the American zone--

Yeah.

--you had to do something.

No, we didn't have to do-- in order to get into Austria, we had to go through so many borders, and to get out of Poland to go into Austria, we went through hell. We had to walk. We had to throw away everything we had.

Did this Jewish organization help you do all this, to get you to Austria?

When we got to Łódź-- in Łódź already, there was a Jewish organization working. And they signed us up, like they'll take us to Israel. But they took us as far as Salzburg, Austria. And they left us there, like for a while. But most of us-- everybody went the wrong way. And I mean, I signed up that time to go to Israel. I had a choice in one night to make up my mind to get married or to go to Israel. And I decided to get married.

It looks like it was a good decision.

I think so. Now it was, because the guy that wanted to take me to Israel, my first cousin of mine, he never made anything of himself.

When the war was over, you told me all the different things that you did. Could you tell me a little bit about-- even when you were selling-- when you had that job with the bread, where you were on the farm, were you aware at that point of what had happened to the Jews?

Oh, yeah.

Were you aware that--

There were so much told to us already then. And we knew everything, what happened. And even then still, you had to struggle to survive. And especially myself, in my hometown-- I told you, I never wanted to go to an orphanage, and I never wanted charity. And we owned our own house. And in my house lived a couple of prostitutes. And they were very nice girls, but they only paid me if they had money, if they worked.

When was this now?

That was in my hometown, in Podberezhe. That was right after the war, while I was working in the bakery and living with the Polish lady. But I always wanted to be on my own. And when I moved in with the Jewish lady, that her husband was arrested, I said, I don't want nothing from her either.

So I used to go to the train stations and sell hamburgers to the Russian soldiers. I used to make them a pound of potatoes-- two pounds of potatoes to a pound of meat. We made hamburgers. They were very big when they were hot, and they shrunk when they were small.

But I never went back with hamburgers. If I couldn't sell them for 10 rubles, I sold them for 3. But I never brought them back. And I made a lot of money working on the train station.

When I came to L³dz, with a Jewish family, when I signed up from my hometown to go to L³dz, I came with Polish money. And there was nothing you could do with it. There was very little. There was no stores yet. And the only thing it goes-- to a beauty shop. That's where I went to be-- they call it de-liced.

Because I was still-- we still had it. Because the war was over, but we didn't have any facilities, any hot water, any nothing. So that was my first money that I really spent. It was worthwhile, because I never had nothing since. That was in 1945.

And you were 16 years old. And as far as you knew, everyone in your family had died or been killed.

I knew-- I mean, I knew of my father, when my mother was still alive, that he was killed. And I knew my mother was taken away. And we knew that nobody came out of the Ponary alive. And, in fact, one Polish lady kept saying that she wanted to take my little sister. And she begged the police, but maybe-- she did, maybe she didn't.

Would you tell me a little bit about what the Ponary were?

The Ponary were the most beautiful woods before the war. And that's where they decided that's big enough to bury everybody. Because Vilna had 70,000 Jews-- Vilna, itself. And then I don't know how many thousands of Jews that were brought into the ghetto. Vilna had a big ghetto. And all those Jews from all the surrounding towns, whoever got there, was killed there, and was buried there.

And that's what the Ponary were.

Yeah.

OK. So let's see, when you were in Austria, and this was like in June of 1945.

Yeah. Yeah, we came to Salzburg in June.

OK.

It was summer. Because you know why I remember it was summer? Because whoever had a husband or a boyfriend, they used to go at night, and steal in the gardens-- tomatoes and cucumbers. Because the food they gave us in the morning, we ate it up in the morning.

And all day, we were starving. We were so hungry for food. I used to cry all day. I think I was mostly the youngest there. I didn't have anybody. And that's why I got married so fast too.

Because I met a woman that survived from my home town. And she already lived in Salzburg, in a house. And my husband was in Auschwitz with her husband. And I used to go there. She used to make food for me. And that's how I met my husband.

And how old was your husband at the time? You were 16.

He was 23. I thought he was a very old man.

Seven years older at the time.

Oh, yeah.

And so you met him there.

Yeah.

And did you have some sort of courtship or you just spent time together?

Very short. I think I was alone with him maybe twice before we were married. Because the first time we met in their house, they made dinner for the two of us. And they told me all about him. And then they said to me that they think it's a good idea if I talk alone to him. Because I was never alone with him, talking what his ideas are.

Was this sort of like a Shidduch?

Well, they told him about me, and they told me about him. And my first impression was he's too old for me. And I didn't date anybody. I never went out with anybody. If I went out, it was with a bunch of boys and girls, after the war, in Austria. Because we all lived in a displaced persons camp, in Hellbrunn kaserne there, in Riedenburg. A lot of people are here that were in that camp.

And they said to me that he's alone, and he's really a good provider, and he really needs a wife. Because he had a girlfriend, and it didn't work out. And believe you me, I didn't know what marriage means or anything. I just said to myself, why should I be alone? Nobody's alone.

Because wherever you saw-- wherever there was a girl, she had a boyfriend or a husband. Nobody wanted to be alone, Not after the war.

If they didn't have one, then they got one right away.

Whether they were 20 years older. The men were really lucky. Every one of them got a 20-year-old younger girl. 16-year-old girls married 40-year-old guys too, at the time.

And in fact, if I wouldn't have married my husband-- he disappeared for a couple of weeks after he met me-- they had another one ready for me. I mean, there was a lot of men. And they wanted to get married. They got married too.

Nobody fell in love right away. They just didn't want to be alone.

It was just this need right away to get--

To be with somebody, and to have somebody to take care of you. Because that's all you cared is food. And somehow, the men could organize better than the women.

Food and shelter and to be taken care of.

Food and shelter, and to be not alone, to be with somebody.

You said you were crying every day.

After I was married-- not every day, but 100 times a day.

After you were married?

Yes. Because I was just-- I didn't really know what I did when I got married. I wasn't in love with anybody. And I didn't think this is the way to be. I mean I thought somebody put me in a jail. That's how I felt about the whole thing. And my husband had a lot of patience. He was wonderful.

That's all I wanted to go in those days, is dancing. I didn't care for food anymore. I just wanted to go out and have a good time, be with kids. Be with kids-- and I mean kids. And my husband understood it.

And don't forget, at 23, he was still very young. And he lived through Auschwitz for six years. But his mind already was like 100-year-old man's.

So when I met a 16-year-old boy, being married to my husband-- my husband made sure that I used to go dancing. And he used to invite a lot of boys. He did. And he used to pay for them. The kids had no money. I mean, they were kids. There were a few Hungarian boys. We used to go to the most gorgeous nightclubs.

Your husband really loved you.

He says he did the first sight. He remembers my dress I wore when he met me. We met, actually, the first time at a wedding. You know, weddings used to be made in the houses. Everybody baked and cooked. And I was at that wedding. And I always used to entertain, and sing, and dance, and tell stories, and jokes.

And he was sitting with a girl there, which was his girlfriend. I don't know-- I think they lived together or whatever. And she looked 10 times my size. And she was much older than I was, very mature, and very sexy, nice looking girl. And everybody told me that she's his girl.

So when the people that introduced me to him-- I said, what do you mean him? He's got a girl. No, that's just a cousin that he met after the war. And I believed everybody everything. But somehow, I wasn't stupid or anything, but I didn't know anything about sex, or life, or love, or anything.

Well you were 12 years old when the war broke out. You never really--

Yeah, and who in Europe told you? Even when you were 16, they wouldn't tell you. Are you kidding me? They told you nothing. The mother was afraid-- did you ever see Archie? I mean, she don't tell--

It's sort of like ignorance is bliss and knowledge is like--

Exactly, Nothing. Who knew? When I went into the hospital to have my first son in Austria, I was a very little girl. And that's all I had, is just a belly. I didn't carry it too big. I only gained like 16 pounds the whole pregnancy.

But when my husband walked away, I said, this is the end. I'll never come out of here alive. I just you'll die. You're not going to live. How can you live? This thing is going to open up. It's going to burst. I mean, the thoughts-- and when I think about it.

You didn't have anyone to talk, to help, to explain, or you didn't feel you could ask?

I had a wonderful doctor, but the doctor didn't come to deliver my baby. I had a midwife in the hospital. I was in a nun's hospital, like a Holy Cross. They were so wonderful to me. But the midwife-- I was for 11 hours in labor. She didn't get up. She slept through the whole thing.

I didn't scream, but I ran to the bathroom I could have dropped the baby in the toilet. I had so much pressure, and I thought I had to go to the bathroom. I ripped everything in bed. She wouldn't get up. At 5:00 in the morning, she says she thinks now it's time for her to get up. And by 6:00, my baby was born.

And the minute my baby was born-- it shows you when you're young, like nothing ever happened to me. I felt so good. In fact, I yelled through the window. My husband was all night outside. I didn't even know.

And of course, when his first son was born, he I think loved me from-- the way he tells me today-- from the first day he met me. But when that baby was born, I think if I told him to jump off the roof, he would. I mean, there was nothing. He used to keep in the house we lived-- we lived with a German family-- Austrian family. And they had a garden.

He used to keep 20 little baby chicks, and every day I had one for dinner. They used to bring it to the hospital. That woman that introduced us used to cook the soup, and fry the chicken, or whatever, and bring it to me to the hospital. In Europe, after the war, when you had a baby, they kept you in bed for 10 days.

When I walked out of bed, I thought I'll never skate, never ski, never dance. My life is over. And I was still only 17 years old. And I wanted my life just to begin. So I had a little girl that used to take care of the baby. I had-- like a nurse used to come and bathe him, and wash him, and do everything for him.

And after the war, for food, you had a woman that took care of you, and of the baby, and of everything. It was no problem. And then I got myself a little girl, when he got a little older, to take care of him in the daytime.

And I used to go to two movies a day. When I think of it, it was so much missing in us, that we wanted so much to do, that we missed, to catch up on all the things. And I have--

What is your son's name?

David.

David, OK. And he was your first son.

He was my first son.

So you-- so when you went to-- to Vienna.

Salzburg.

Salzburg, sorry.

We lived in Salzburg. We were--

You decided not to go to Israel.

Yeah. See, in Israel, I had a big family. And as stupid as I was then, I knew if I go with my cousin-- because I saw what was going on. Every girl that had a boy, they lived together. They slept together. And I had a feeling if I go with that cousin, he'll use me. And I just made up my mind that's not going to happen to me.

But I thought you were with another woman.

Well, there was a-- that woman, I met in Austria. She used to be my mother's neighbor, that survived Auschwitz with a man. I don't know, her first husband was killed in the war. And she met another guy. And they're in Brazil someplace today. And she introduced me to my husband.

But I met her-- see, I met her first in LÃ³dz. She was liberated. She was coming. And then we went our own way. She went someplace else, and I went someplace else. And then when we came to Salzburg, I met her again. And she lived in a house already, not in a camp. They took away-- because a lot of Jews after the war, took over villas, took away houses from the Germans. They had a little freedom just for a while.

Because immediately--

Houses that they originally had? You mean, originally theirs?

No, no, no. No, no, these were Polish Jews, that came to Germany, but they felt that everything--

Angry.

Give it back, you know.

Right.

Yeah. But it didn't last long. Because even with the German family, where I lived after I was married, they gave me my own room, and I had kitchen privileges. And whatever I had in my room-- I had a bed, and a little table, and a couch, and a crib for the baby--

So you and your husband lived there?

Yeah. And every time I went someplace for the day, a chair was missing. She used to take things away. And nobody could stop her. And I lived there till I came to this country. I lived there for four years with that family.

Were you ever in a DP camp?

Just for a while before, I got married, in Riedenburg, in Salzburg.

What were you doing-- that was on your way to Israel.

On the way. We were going to go to Israel.

And which one were you in? Do you remember?

Riedenburg, Salzburg, yeah.

OK. And what did you do there in the camp.

We did nothing. Oh, we used to take care of the-- we used to Polish the men's shoes. There was a few young ones, like myself, girls. We used to take care of the rooms, clean, cook, you know, boil potatoes. In the morning, make cocoa for everybody.

The men were working. The young girls didn't do anything. I mean, maybe professional ones had some jobs.

And that's and that's when you met your husband, shortly after that.

Yeah, I met him-- I'm telling you, I came in June to Salzburg. And I was in that school, just for a little while. And then I came to Riedenburg. And I moved-- in fact, one of my friends, she's the worst really. She lives in New Jersey. And we slept together in one bed.

There was just rooms for so many girls, for so many guys. And 90% of the girls were older. And they all were in Auschwitz. And they all had boyfriends. And there were a lot of Greek Jews.

And there was such a mixture in those camps. And I think that's why I got married so fast. I just said--

A lot of pressure to get married.

--how long can you live like this? I mean, alone, and being so nice, and the goody-goody. They used to call me Bronia with the couch. I was the only one on a couch by myself. Everybody had a partner in bed.

So I think that's what made me get married so fast too. And I always-- I used to say, oh, I'll get married someday, and I'll have my own room, and my own clothes, and my own this. And I had such visions, you know, what I'm going to have.

And I had them. My husband was wonderful. I mean, if we couldn't go dancing Saturday night-- I mean, maybe someday you can say it on the tape, you can erase it-- my husband used to rent a room to American GIs, with girls, so we can go dancing. Because to me, if I couldn't go dancing Saturday night, I--

So you got married in January of--

No, October '45.

October '45.

Yeah.

And what was your husband-- and then you lived in a room?

Yeah. The minute we got married, we got from the city-- anybody who was married was given rations and was given a room. So we were given a room with kitchen privileges, bathroom privileges, with a German family, who was a husband, and wife, and a daughter.

And this was arranged through--

Through like a city-- through the city of Salzburg, that the Jewish organization helped. There was like a Bricha there. There was a lot of organizations. And, of course, we could have been married and lived in a displaced persons camp. There were a lot of camps in Salzburg, itself.

But, of course, we didn't want it. So if we could get a room, we got a room. And we lived in the suburb. I mean, you had to go by bus to the city. And Salzburg was a beautiful city.

What did your husband do?

He did-- first, he went partners. Because there was a Polish man that survived the war too, was in camps. And they opened up a canteen, like soda water, and cookies, and cake. And people used to meet there, and play cards, you know. And they made enough money to survive.

Then Americans used to come and trade with cigarettes, and chocolate, and all that stuff, because the American GIs were there. And they were wonderful. I remember my 17th birthday party, we had all American soldiers at the party. They said, it's like an American wedding.

And when I came in '49, I saw my first wedding, I said my party wasn't like that [LAUGHS]. Because we have cousins in Brooklyn, the Chateau Gorard. They are cousins, the Gorodetsk's.

And in those days, they didn't have the Gold Room. They just had a little Crystal Room. And I saw the first American wedding. And I didn't think-- although, I had a beautiful birthday party-- I had a cake made by a Hungarian baker. And I was four months pregnant at my 17th birthday party.

Oh, really?

That's right.

So you got-- so you were married in October, and you had a baby--

In August, the following August, 10 months. 10 months-- everybody told me-- my husband told me. He's the first one that told me that we won't have any kids for five years. And I told you I had my first period before I was married, and my second period. And then I didn't get it the following month. So the women says, oh, you're just married, take a hot bath, and you'll get your period.

I took a hot bath, and I got my period. That was the first time. The second time, I didn't get it again. So they told me again to take a hot bath and to drink some liquor on an empty stomach. And I didn't get it. This time it stayed with me, nothing helped.

When did you find out were pregnant?

Three months after I was pregnant. I was in a play in the camps. I used to entertain. We had plays, shows, put on shows.

In the DP camp.

In DP camps.

And we used to travel.

Who's we?

The group. But my husband went with me. A group of new Americans-- Americans-- groups of survivors in the camps, in Salzburg. And we formed a group of actors.

But you weren't in the camp at the time.

No, but they knew me. We were always in the camp, every day, being with the young people. I hated where I lived, in that suburb there, in that room. I couldn't wait to get out of there. So we used to go to camp. And I was in that group. And we used to entertain.

And then we had to travel, to Linz, and to Vienna. And I loved it. And my husband went with me. And I kept throwing up every place I went. So everybody says, I eat too much food. They used to make kneidlach with milk. I don't know, foods that are very tasty. But I thought it's making me sick.

I didn't know I was pregnant. I was dancing and doing everything. And we had love scenes and all kinds of beautiful things. So I was in my fourth month already. So somebody told me I better go to the doctor. Because I didn't get my period either anymore.

Were you gaining weight?

No, I wore-- till my seventh month, I was going dancing, and I wore regular clothes. And really, I gained the whole pregnancy, I think, 16 pounds, maybe. And I was very small. I wasn't big then either, before.

So when I went to the doctor, and my husband was in the hallway. And he examines me, and he says-- he thought I was one of those American-- German girls running around with a GI, I mean, I'm so young, and I'm pregnant. He was going to tell me the bad news. So he says, you-- [NON-ENGLISH] he says. You're going to be a mother.

I said, yeah? I said tell my husband. Oh, he was so happy to hear that I have a husband out here in the hallway. And I loved it.

Your husband was delighted, obviously.

I was too, when I found out. I mean, the women-- you should see with it. I was like a star was born. The women didn't know what to do with me because I was pregnant. And I had so many mothers then--

Was there anything special-- was there ever any talk-- I mean, feeling like after so many people had been killed, was there ever any feeling that--

I think everybody who was married immediately had a baby. Because I can just see by my friends now, we all have-- a lot of women had babies, and the babies died in the pregnancy. So I have a girlfriend here-- I mean, she has two sons now, but her first child died.

Were women afraid that they couldn't--

They won't be able to become, which is quite a few didn't.

Because of their--

A close girlfriend of mine-- the one that I told you in Jersey that is divorced now and is remarried, she was married six years. And she was in Auschwitz, though. She was very young to be in Auschwitz. But she survived because she was one of those-- she was-- they called it a [NON-ENGLISH].

And she was a little girl that was taking care of those fancy German ladies. She was like their-- maybe they lived with her. I don't know, maybe they used her for everything. I don't know what they did. But she was fixed so she couldn't become pregnant. Like men were castrated-- my husband has a friend in Italy, that he never came to America, that he survived with him together, and he was castrated.

In the camp.

In the camp, yeah.

And why? Experimentation? Or just so they couldn't give birth?

See, my husband, someday when you have his interview, he was from the first ones in Auschwitz, when they had no death ovens yet. They were building the crematoriums. And, of course, they didn't-- in those days, at the beginning, maybe they didn't have too many separations. So right away, they wanted to castrate the man.

And he was in one of the groups-- just by pure luck-- before they used to castrate them, they used to put them in a machine to freeze. Because they had to go through the surgery. They had to put the testicles on a freezing machine. And he went in, he says, in that booth, and he put his hand on that machine.

He says, he'd rather be dead. If he gets out, and if they'll operate, but maybe they won't operate. Or maybe-- it's such a horrible thing. And he walks out of that booth. I mean, the German was watching you through a little window. And they gave you so much time. And the German said to him, go down, [NON-ENGLISH]. I mean, it's a very dirty word-- get off.

And he walks out of this little booth. And in the street, they grabbed him to give blood in the hospital for the German soldiers. He was three weeks for-- they called it blood [NON-ENGLISH]. Three weeks they took blood from him in the hospital. And then they threw him out.

They used to feed him with some water and some bread. And they threw him out. When it's meant for him to survive and to be normal, the way he is, they threw him out. And they grabbed him. That's when they started building crematoriums. They had to have bricklayers.

So they took him into a school. And over there, they had to give him food. And they were teaching him. And there were a lot of Polish teachers. They weren't SS. And they were nicer to people. And he got his strength back, and he survived.

And he was lucky that he wasn't castrated. But every guy in the 20s, and 18, 19, they were all castrated in those days.

Wow. Did-- yeah, he obviously talks about it. I mean, some people can't. But he--

No, he talks about it. And you know something, we get together every Sunday with our friends. We have a club. We get together every other Saturday and every Sunday. And we have a wonderful time.

And we play cards. And we eat, and we drink, and we always talk about it. They haven't missed one time. One has to say one word, and they can't stop talking. And then somebody will say, hey, it's enough.

Yeah, I don't know your husband very well, but he it's not limited-- he's very generous.

He's generous. He'll do anything. And he gets so upset. I mean, I cannot-- like if somebody says something about a Jew, I'm afraid of him. He once took a customer-- and even in the North End, you have to be careful. You're dealing with an element. And he's learning. He's been there now for 10 years. But don't talk about any Jews to him or anything.

Any negative thing.

Any negative things. A customer once came in. He says, why don't you Jew him down? And he let him have it.

Yeah, I remember hearing that myself once when I went to a store, a conversation that was being had. And someone said, oh, he really tried to Jew me down. And when I heard that, I just sort of like froze in my tracks.

I worked for two bosses. They're partners in my beauty shop, which is a very elegant place. And 90% of their clientele is Jewish, rich Jews. And my lady boss, the Italian girl, she's wonderful. I mean, I don't know whether she likes Jews or not, but she never shows any hatred or anything, any difference.

But the man, the male one, the gay guy, he's obnoxious. He hates Jews. And he'll sit with me at the table, and he says, no offense, Brenda, but she was a real Jewish [NON-ENGLISH]. And I cannot get--

You should say, offense taken.

Yeah. If it would be my husband, I think he'd slap him right there and there. I just walk away. And I just don't say anything. And I'm working there, and I walk out. And he's nothing to me, just my boss.

OK. Well, so let me ask you, what was your first son's name?

David.

David. And you had him in--

Austria, in Salzburg.

In Salzburg. And when was he born?

He was born in 1946, in August 1946.

OK. And you stayed in Salzburg how long?

Till '49.

Now what were your plans when you there? Were planning on staying there? Did you have thoughts of coming to the United States?

No, from the day we were married, we signed up to come to the United States. And every month we were hearing, and they were telling us.

What was the process that was taking so long?

Well, it was first-- first, they said alphabetically. And we had W's, so it took us a long time.

Well, let me ask you, what entitled you to come to the States? Because your husband had been liberated by Americans?

To come to America?

Yeah. Oh, you had relatives, right.

We had relatives. And the relatives signed for us. They did sign for our housing and for a job that we'll get, but they didn't pay for anything. And when we came here-- I had one of my father's sisters, who survived, who lives in California. She was here already. She came in '46. She came with the first ship.

And she knew how it is to live with relatives and what they do for you. They do nothing. So she went to the Jewish HIAS or the family--

HIAS, right.

And she told them about us, that we're coming with a child. And they would like to-- they should take care of us. Because the family's promising my husband a job, and maybe an apartment, but they should really take over. And they really did. From the day we got off the ship-- we came to Boston-- they took us straight-- HIAS was right there, with the music, and the coffee, and everything.

And they took us right to the most gorgeous family in Mattapan. It had nothing to do with my family, total strangers. The HIAS paid our rent. They gave us \$20 a week to buy things and food. If my son needed shoes, they paid for his shoes. If we needed a-- Beth Israel Hospital was open to us. I had two babies.

Beth Israel--

Beth Israel Hospital was-- I had my two babies through the clinic.

Right, so you had two more sons.

I had two more sons here.

yeah, what are their names?

Michael-- I mean, my second son is Allen

And when was he born?

He was born 1950. And my youngest son was born in '54 He was just 26 in April.

So you have David, Michael--

David, Allen, and Michael.

David, Allen, and Michael.

Yeah.

OK, so you came to the States in 1950?

1949.

1949. We came May 15th. May 15 will be 31 years-- no, 32.

In 1949-- well, '79, '80--

'81-- it will be 32 years on May 15th. We came on a Sunday.

OK, so you spent like four years in--

In Austria.

And your husband, during that time, worked--

He worked, like he had the canteen. He had mostly the canteen. And sometimes they used to-- you needed kosher meat, so he used to go to the farms, and buy a cow, and they used to bring it to the camps. I mean, just making enough to survive, like to eat good. I mean, I don't mean luxuriously eat, and to go out, to go dancing.

In the summer, we used to go in the mountains, and to pay them with food-- with eggs. Go to the farms, bring eggs to the hotels, where there was a few couples of us. My husband-- I mean, we just wanted to live life, you know what I mean? Just we didn't care for tomorrow or-- today, we want to live and enjoy life.

And wanted very much to come to America-- very much. When the day came-- we never thought for us, because everybody was gone by the time we left. Because then it started-- they told me that my baby-- I have to be six months pregnant, because I can't get on a ship.

Then when I was six months pregnant, they said the baby has to be at least a year old. Then when he was a year old, they said he's too young to be on a ship. And I gave up. And when the day came-- he was-- we came here in May, and he was three in August. He was not quite three when we came.

OK, so I guess I'd just like to ask you some questions now about how you feel the war affected you. OK? Like when you were going through all the things that you were going through, when your parents had been killed and everyone, how do you think the war influenced your values about things? Your values about life, or material possessions, or love, or--

I'll tell you, personally--

Your attitude about life?

Yeah. I think-- I mean, I feel-- my husband and I together-- I mean, he went through 10 times more hell than I did, because he was older. I couldn't survive in Auschwitz. I was too young. And personally, I think my husband's and my attitude are, from all the people that I know, friends, I think we are-- he is terrific.

And I take life one day at a time. And I'm trying to make-- and I taught my kids, because I think I brought up wonderful kids. When my son can sit and tell me, just recently-- my middle son-- he says to me, ma-- he says, I think when you leave a table, nobody has one bad word to say about you. It makes me feel good.

We like to live life. I mean, we're doing everything we can possible good for our kids. My two sons are married now. My other son, they have wonderful jobs. They got promotions, and they do very well financially. And they have beautiful wives, and they have good homes. And they're wonderful to us.

I don't mean financial-- we don't need anything, thank God, from them. But they are so proud of us. Because they know. I mean, we don't tell them everything, but 90%-- especially my oldest son. He's some day wants to be a writer, he hopes, if he can afford it. He always dreamed to be a writer. He studied journalism in school, and then he became a city planner because that was a better field.

And they-- we take life very-- I mean, I'm working now in a beauty shop, and I'm working very hard. And I'm not working to make a living. I can live on what my husband makes. But I love people. And sometimes, I say, why the hell am I working so hard? Like a day like yesterday, I killed myself. But if I'm there, I'm there to work.

But I love what I'm doing. And I feel good because I'm working. I don't think I'm the type that I could stay home and think. Like, if God forbid, if I don't feel good, I go crazy. Because I am not-- I don't knit. I don't crochet. I have no patience for this.

I'm very fast in everything I do. And I just love to be with people. That's why I became a hairdresser. And I think that life can be wonderful if you make it this way. That's how I feel about life.

How about religion? Before the war you were--

My family was very Orthodox. I came from a very Orthodox house. And I was a very spoiled brat as a kid. And I didn't do everything-- I tried to do everything my father told me to, but a lot of things I didn't.

And when the war broke out, and I was on the farm, and when they baptized me in that church, and that priest-- I was 12 years old, almost 13. And they gave me that Bible. And I believed like a fanatic in the Catholic religion. I really did.

I was walking all night-- special when I had to walk out of the house, I couldn't stay in the house anymore, I used to walk around with that Bible, and just read it over and over. And I always used to say to myself, they're not going to get me, they're not going to get me. And I felt when the war was over that it saved my life. I don't know, because I think it's good to believe in something.

Now I am not Orthodox Jewish, but I'm very Jewish now.

You mean traditional?

I'm very traditional. My kids believe in tradition. My grandchild now goes to Hebrew school. And my son's joined a temple-- not an Orthodox temple. Because first of all, the one they wanted to join was very expensive. That had a lot to do with it. Because my kids are very traditional. And they like to go to shul.

And they do it for their father. They give up one day in their shul, and they come for the day. We belong to a very

Orthodox temple here. Not because we're Orthodox, because we can't afford it, this temple. The other shul, we just couldn't get in there.

And the kids come, and they spend every holiday with us. We have-- but I'm not religious or anything like-- fanatically religious.

Do you believe in God?

I believe-- I don't believe in Jesus or anything like that. But I strongly believe in God. And I always believe that when I fly-- and we fly a lot. My husband I have at least two, three trips a year. And two weeks, I'm a maniac before I go anyplace because I'm scared.

When I get on the plane-- my husband doesn't even know that-- I pray so hard. My own words-- I just talked to God. And I feel he takes care of me. I mean, that's how I am. There's a guy that works with me. He says he does exactly the same thing.

We were once coming, and it was a little bumpy. And that lady next to me was crossing herself. And she kept saying to me, don't worry, honey, don't worry. She was scared to death. She'd say, don't worry, don't worry. Once I'm on the plane, I'm wonderful. The minute he's got to take off, I close my eyes, I talk to God. And I say to God, take me there safe, and bring me back to my kids. And I'm happy.

And every time I have to go-- we're looking forward now to go to Israel, which is a very long flight. I'm a nervous wreck. Like a week--

To Israel, you mean?

Yeah, it's a long flight.

When are you going?

We're going to go on that Holocaust thing. We're already registered.

Right, that's June.

They went-- my husband went to the Holocaust meeting at the CJP. When we had the meeting-- you were at that meeting. Remember, when we had the New Generation after, from Europe?

Yes.

And everybody was so excited. Now, they gave them a place where to register. And they explained to them, if you don't register here, when you come to Israel, it costs you double to register, to join, or to participate. Now, there's maybe six, seven people that registered. Everybody was going right away, and everybody wants to go, but they think they don't have to register, see.

Well, we registered. And we got our receipt back from New York. And we're hoping we can fly out from Boston if it's possible.

Let me ask you, what kinds of feelings did you have about being Jewish after the war?

I don't know how to answer you that.

Did you feel--

I feel-- I don't know how I felt then. I feel now that the Jewish people are the strongest people in the world. Because

what has been done to Jews hasn't been done to nobody. I mean, even if you look now at the-- I mean, the other day, they showed something on Somalia. But nobody's doing it to them. You know what I mean?

I think if they would know how to help themselves, maybe-- I mean, it's horrible what I saw. I mean babies, just skin and bones, and like in Vietnam, and all the Cambodia. It's terrible, but I think--

Do you think that you feel for these places more so because of your experiences?

Very much. Very much.

You can relate to them.

Like my husband and I said, when we watched the thing in Somalia, why is it-- there's so much in here, what we throw just away the food, we can feed the whole world there, just what we-- America throw. And America is the only one that helps those people. Nobody else does.

We feel terrible. We cannot understand why. But now when I see that a lot of people here are thinking, why is it happening to us in Europe? Because I can see that. We're thinking about it, but what are we doing about it? All right, they come for donation, we give. But there's so much more that I think could be done for those people.

And that's how-- I feel very much for those people. But I still think that we were the worst put on Earth, to suffer, the Jews.

Well, Jews have been persecuted throughout history.

From the day they were born, I think.

As your children were growing up, did you talk about your experiences with them?

Myself, not too much. Mostly, I told them how I met my husband, because that's the funny part of my life. And they loved it. And they couldn't believe it that anybody can meet somebody one day, and three days later, you know. That was a very cute story.

But my husband always tells them. And I always stop him. Because he gets very emotional. I mean, he gets so emotional. I mean, you'll need with him six weeks. But, I mean, it's true--

Well, I have time.

And he lived-- I mean, when you think what he went through, and he saw-- I mean, he's so calm and normal. We have friends. They play cards every Sunday. My husband's not a sore loser. My husband doesn't insult anybody at the card, which some of the guys are very rude.

And If he gets excited, I mean, it takes a long time. And with my self--

He's slow to anger, but when he--

If not for me-- if not for me starting it, I don't think we would ever fight. I'm very fast, but I can fight with you an five minutes later, it's over. I am not going to walk around-- he gets mad, he wouldn't talk for days. I mean, I have to come to the conclusion that I was wrong. I'm very stubborn.

I have a son like this. My middle son is just like me in every way. And he's wonderful. He can do anything. I tell his wife, I told her.

So you're saying that you're quick to anger, but you're quick to calm down.

Very quick to calm down.

He's slow to anger.

And very quick to make up. And I just don't want to talk about it. Let's forget it. So it happened. Like when you walked in, I talked to one of my girlfriends, who we are very close. Because we've been here together all those years. And she feels that we are-- from all the friends-- we are the closest. And it's true.

And last year, we did a dirty trick. We went away New Years without her, because she didn't want to spend the money. And we know that she can spend the money. She didn't want to. And I just wanted to let her know that you can't live like this. You have to go along with the majority.

But it killed me. It bothered me. And we finally got it off our chest. And I said to her, I would never do that again. I should have left everybody and stayed with her home or do something with her. It bothered me to death.

But my husband kept saying, why should we? Thank God we're alive. When we can, why shouldn't we go? So this year's she's going with us.

That's good that you could talk about it. So your husband, then, is the one that talked a lot about the war afterwards.

Yeah. To the children, yeah.

OK, and what was-- what kind of values do you think you tried to give to your kids as they were growing up? About life-- in other words, like--

We wanted them-- we wanted them very much to go to Hebrew school because of tradition, not because we're Orthodox. Because we figured in school at least they'll learn something about Judaism, more than I can explain to them and tell them. I know what I am, but it's harder-- I can see it helped. Not that they loved Hebrew school that much, especially my middle son. He hated it.

But he went. And they all graduated. And my daughter said, it's wonderful. I mean, they're both American born girls. And I'm very proud of them.

How about people-- I mean, you went through a-- what do you feel in terms of trusting, let's say, people, or trusting non-Jews. I mean, do you feel-- do you understand what I mean? Because of growing up in a place where all the sudden everyone around you was trying to kill you.

I know. I know.

I mean, do you think that's affected-- do you feel you're more wary or more suspicious of people?

That's very possible. I think so. I definitely think so. Sometimes, you look at a person, and say, oh, my God, he looks terrible. I mean, I have experience at work now. A customer-- a new one can come in, and I said, I'm scared. She looks so mean. And then when I meet her, she's so wonderful. So sometimes, maybe that did it to us, the not trusting, and not believing immediately that somebody is good or bad.

What kind of-- when you came to the United States, what kind of reception did you get from non-survivors?

Well, there were quite a few here already. Because the first boat came in '46. Fortunately, I already had two cousins-- my aunt was here already. And a cousin of mine was here already, with her husband and a child.

These are from other survivors, right?

Yeah, survivors.

How about people that weren't survivors? What kind of reception from did you get from Americans in general?

My family-- I mean, I had so much family here. I mean, not-- very far, like aunts twice removed. And they were very nice to us. But the strange Americans that I lived with-- a lot of people are complaining that they were taken advantage. I went through an experience that--

Well, you wanted to ask me how the Americans were towards us, treating us.

Right.

Well, I had a wonderful experience. Because we came here to Boston on a Sunday. And right away brought into a beautiful family, who gave us a gorgeous room. And we had a crib for the baby.

This is in Mattapan, right?

In Mattapan, on Avalon Street, 33. And there was a Mrs. Gordon, who had at that time eight daughters. I mean, they were all married. Only one lived with her. And can you imagine those daughters, they showered me with clothes. They took me shopping. They didn't know what to do for me.

And she was so wonderful. She used to tell me to go out, and she'll take care of the baby. And my son called her Bubbe Gordon because she was wonderful, just like a grandmother. I hated to move out of there. But I wanted to have my own place. I lived there for four months.

And then one of my aunts, my great aunts, happened to have an apartment in Dorchester. And she let us move in. And my husband fixed it up. And in those days, we used to have a cousin's club. And the cousins club used to have a happy day fund for certain things. So they gave us \$100 to paint. And my husband did his own painting and papering.

And they gave us money for a snowsuit. They had money. We had a cousin's club.

What is that?

All the Cousins-- American cousins, they had a cousins club. So when I came to this country, I joined the club. And we used to meet in a house. And they served food. And they paid dues. And they had money to put away for things.

This is your family then.

My family, yeah. But the strange family, even after I moved out, I socialized with them. Because they were total strangers. You get off a boat, you don't speak English. I spoke maybe three words of English, from the American soldiers that we learned certain words-- gum, and chocolate, and all those other words that weren't important.

And then my husband was here, like I said, a week. And he went to work immediately. He got a job as a bricklayer. They were building the Franklin Park Project. And he was making \$75 a week. It was a fortune to us. I mean, really. And, of course, I used to spend \$5 a week for meat, because steak-- who believed in steak?

I wish I wouldn't believe in it today either. We ate chicken and hamburger. And we always bought kosher meat. And my groceries, and we handled everything terrific. And the ladies that I lived with-- that woman, her daughters opened up a charge for me at Cummings.

Did you or your husband apply for reparations?

What is reparations? For things, like--

No, I mean like from-- well, I think your husband could have for being in a camp, asking Germany to pay you money.

Oh, yes. We applied, and we have received, and we receive pensions.

For both you and your husband.

Yes. I got a smaller sum because I was given for being underaged, and being in the ghetto, and being-- they call it versteckt, which means hidden. And for losing the eyesight, and for certain things. But I was given in a lump sum, a small amount. Like in those days, \$900. But I'm going back 20 years ago, which in those days, my husband got like \$2,000 for being in Auschwitz.

Later on, people were getting \$10,000. Because they were going back for all the years they didn't pay you. But whoever got it first, just got a smaller amount. But then they gave us-- they established a pension fund, which we all get. Everybody gets 25% of disability. Like that's all they acknowledge, unless you are--

So what does that amount to?

Well, it depends how the dollar is. We used to get-- we started with \$60 a month. And then when the dollar went down, went to \$130. It's only because-- and then they give us-- like every so many years, they give you a raise. And then--

And that continues to happen.

Then your pension contentions-- and continues to happen. Now, the thing is with them, that once you die, nobody gets that money. So our lawyers were trying to get a raise or to give us like an a lump sum. Because where is the money going to stay? With them, with the German government. Because everybody is in their late 50s, and 60s, and 70s. And the people are dying.

The wife cannot get it for the husband. The children cannot get it. But so far, nobody got anything extra. But that pension fund we've been getting now for the last few years.

Did you join any survivor organizations when you came to the States?

Oh, yeah.

To Boston?

Immediately. I mean, we had the New Americans. That was there-- they called it then the Hakoah Club. They formed a soccer club.

Soccer?

Soccer, yeah, because that was a European game, and it was quite-- they were all young. The men that are today late 50s were in their 30s. And they could play. And then they organized. And we had dances. And that's how we became the New Americans.

And you've been active in that organization--

I've been active from, I think, the day I got off the boat. They got me into it. I started in with being in all the committees. And then I became vice president. And then I became chairman of this. And there's only-- from 15 people, always three, four work. And it's still today.

Now I'm just an honorary member. Because I was president, and I couldn't elected twice. But I still do the work because nobody wants to do it. We're having nominations now. We nominated the whole committee. Half of them don't even want to be nominated. Then we wanted to nominate new people. They refused.

So it's going to be-- again, I said to the president, we should nominate 10 people and have five--