

Could you tell me why you joined a survivor organization? What were your motivations for joining it?

Most of it was just to meet people like ourselves and to be together socially.

So it was mostly a social organization?

It still is. And it was mostly socially to get together. And the best experience we had at our last Hanukkah party, they didn't stop talking. Nobody was dancing. The floor was empty. They talked their heart-- the men especially.

[CROSS TALK]

At this Hanukkah party, this was the one last week, right? About what?

Just to each other. I mean, I don't know, maybe--

They enjoy--

Mostly politics.

Did they have a common sort of--

One word about Israel, and everybody just going crazy. They talking. Mostly politics.

When you-- in the United States growing up-- well, raising your children, what language did you and do you speak in the house?

Well, 90% we speak Jewish. But when I'm outside of my house, in my husband's business, we speak only English.

So you spoke Yiddish--

Once in a while, we spoke Polish. To my children? No, I never spoke Yiddish to my children.

Do they understand Yiddish. I broke my tongue with my oldest son, who was a baby. He spoke German. And he learned English very fast. And I went to night school for six years, and I learned English very fast too. I really picked it up very fast.

But do your children understand Yiddish?

My oldest son speaks a little Yiddish, and he understands everything. My youngest son understands and speaks maybe three words. My middle son is completely out of it.

OK, he never got into Yiddish.

No, no Yiddish.

You said you didn't talk very much about the war to your children.

Not myself, no. If they said something-- when they were little I didn't talk about it at all. And when they became-- when they started to study in school-- and, of course, they didn't study no Holocaust in their days. But they read. My sons all read. They read more books than I did. And they don't believe it's real, but they know we were there.

Well, when they ask-- what do you communicate to them about the Holocaust? When they ask you questions and things, like about why or--

We just say to them that we were left on this Earth, I think-- I always say that that should never happen again. That's why we were meant to survive. And we hope that the new generation will work on it even harder, that those things shouldn't happen.

Do you think another Holocaust is possible?

The way things are going on now, I hope not. But I just think if something really happens as bad as it happened to the Jews, it will happen to the whole world. It's not just going to happen to the Jews. I don't think so anymore.

Because of the--

First of all, the Jews are stronger now.

--technological age were in?

Yes, and I think because of Israel. I mean, Israel gives us the biggest support. We are so proud of it I think. And the world won't have such a chutzpah to us, to do anything to us like they did before. Because Jews were treated just like worse than animals, I think, in Europe.

Well, do you think a Holocaust is possible in the United States, for example?

We feel-- a lot of us feel that there's plenty of anti-Semitism in this country. And we feel that the Americans wouldn't hesitate one minute to be just as mean as the Pollacks or anybody else. We feel like that, and we're plenty scared about it. Because we don't want to see it ever again. But we do feel. Because there's great--

But the United States is also a democracy.

Especially we feel more here the anti-Semitism that America ever-- that the American Jew can feel. We feel that-- we thought we were coming here, and you won't know the difference between a Jew, but you do. Especially when we just came here when there were hotels with the restrictions, with things. We couldn't believe that it's happening in this country.

When you first came to here--

Oh, yeah.

--and you saw the restrictions for the Jews.

When we heard about Arthur Godfrey, with his hotel, that Jews couldn't come in, we couldn't believe it. It's a country of freedom. When we came and there was-- I know there still are exists, maybe not too many. Because they needed the Jewish money. So they sell them the land, and the houses, and the hotels. So a Jew can move in. He buys it. And maybe that's why they resent us so much.

But when we came to this country, and they told us there are places-- I mean, when I wanted to move in Milton, they wouldn't sell a house to a Jew in Milton, not 30 years ago.

Did that make you afraid?

I couldn't believe it. I wasn't afraid. I said I would never want to live there. Why should I live in somebody who doesn't want me? It's a free country. So we couldn't believe it, actually.

What kinds of feelings do you have about the country in which you live? I mean, about the United States.

Now?

Yeah.

I think, to my knowledge, it's the freest and the best country in the world. Because I think that the Jews here are so strong, in America. And the other countries, the Jews in the other countries, and especially with Israel as a background, that shouldn't happen here again. I'm hoping not.

And my children are very Americanized. I mean, very strong Americans-- first Americans, that's how they feel about it.

As opposed to Jewish, you mean?

No, no, no. No, no, not as Jewish. Like my oldest son wasn't born here. But he feels very much as an American.

I see what you mean.

Yeah.

Right.

That's what I mean.

Right.

Yeah.

OK. In what ways do you feel the Holocaust affected the course of your life? I mean, that may sound like a strange question.

I don't think-- it's not a strange question. I don't think how it's affected-- had interrupted. We feel that we lost part of our life. Like my childhood was gone. I was 12 years old when the war broke out. That's when your life begins.

That's adolescence.

Because I was six years old. And as a six-year-old-- from six to 12, I had a very nice life. I was an only child. I always had nice clothes, and my parents-- I was an only child. I had everything I wanted, what I could have, what I could afford it in Europe.

But that's where your life-- when you see here what a 12-year-old kid goes through, having from 12 till you're 16 or 17. And not having your parents to be married. Not having your parents when you have your children. And that's the biggest loss.

Yeah. You didn't talk very much about-- you mentioned that your parents had died and everything.

Yeah.

Did you grieve much over that?

I grieve much more now than I ever did. I don't think-- I didn't even think it was real then. That's my mother's painting, and I cried the other day. And I said to myself, why did it happen?

You ask yourself those questions now.

Yeah, why? She was so young. But when I think of it, how young she was-- I'm now almost 52 years old. She was only

34 years old. She was younger than my daughter. And my sister was four years old. And they were in their prime of life. And you can't-- they didn't do nothing. You just think of those things.

They didn't do nothing to nobody. They minded their own business. And my mother, especially, was such a good person. But when it happened, because it happened to everybody, and we were so scared of our own lives that we didn't believe that it happened to them, that they really are dead, and that they'll never come back.

Sort of denying it. In other words--

Exactly.

--just. not facing it.

No, it didn't happen.

It's not real.

I remember the day when the boy came, and he told me that they were all taken away. I didn't even, for one moment, get emotional that I've lost my mother, because I felt like maybe they're not going to kill her. But I better watch out for me now.

Well, that's the first instinct, is to think about--

Exactly.

--preserving your own life.

And I know that there were stories-- and they were true stories, that in bunkers, and in hiding places, mothers choked their own babies so they can survive. And it's true. Things like this happened, not too much, but it happened. But if not for pictures, I don't think we could remember our parents.

You have pictures.

I have a lot of pictures, thanks to Israel. My aunts-- my parents used to write there. In fact, I want to show you. You want to stop this?

Sure.

OK, well, I think the interview is pretty much over. I guess I just wanted to ask you, we spent a couple hours talking about your experiences, and how have you felt answering these questions? Have they been difficult for you to answer? You said that you didn't really talk about your experiences.

To my children, no. When my children were younger, and now, somehow, when I get together with my children, we never discuss our experiences. If they would ask me, I would answer them. I would tell them--

Do they know--

--everything.

Do they know your particular story.

They know--

The outline maybe.

They know more-- yeah, more or less. They know where I was hiding, because we talked about it many times. And when my husband is around, and we start talking, his story is so much more exciting, so that he takes over. So they listen. His story is much more emotional.

How do you feel about that?

About him taking--

Yeah.

Well, I feel that for my age, I went through enough. And you can't really remember everything to tell when somebody interviews you. There were so many things that happened to me on the farm, experiences.

No, I don't mean how you feel--

Oh, you mean how--

How do you feel about the fact that sometimes because his story is more interesting or more exciting--

It doesn't bother me. It's not an exciting story. It's a horror story. And I think my kids should know about it. And maybe someday, when they have-- can afford and they have the time, maybe they'll write about it. Because all the stories-- my story is more like an Anne Frank story.

Yeah.

It's just that she wrote about it. She kept a diary. And I don't think I knew what a diary was in that war.

I guess when you were telling me your story, I was thinking-- I was thinking about the diary of Anne Frank. And she was pretty much the same age.

Yeah, she was.

Just sort of like you were just--

I just saw the show again. And I said to my husband, my God, I lived through much worse things than-- much more traumatic things than her. She at least was with her parents till the last minute, because she went in with them. And then they were all killed, I think, wasn't it?

Yeah.

Well, her father survived.

Right, her father is the only one.

Her father survived.

But the thing that you both did have in common was that you both were just sort of beginning to blossom in terms of--

That's right.

--a woman.

We were at the beginning of life. When I became a woman, I didn't even know what it was, that I'm becoming a woman.

Right, and that's not--

And that is something that I think that was a big loss in our lives, I mean for girls like myself, not to have your mother to be excited with you, till you meet a man. I mean, when a girl is young-- I mean, I didn't even dream about it at 12. But after the war, I never dreamed I'll get married so fast.

But I used to lie in bed sometimes, and saying, oh, someday I'll meet that one, the Prince Charming. There was a boy that I-- he was very good looking. And I just looked at him, that's all. But it never dawned on me. Because everybody treated me like a kid, even in the camps, after the war.

In the DP camp.

Yeah. There was a lot of guys and girls, but we were called the kids. They called us the kids. The boys that were our age, they called us kids. They were not much older. Maybe they were 17. But I was flat chested.

I was very skinny. I had straight hair, never wore lipstick or makeup. I put on lipstick for the first time the day of my wedding, and I never put it on again afterwards. I didn't need it. I had red cheeks, and I blossomed right away. I became pregnant. And I looked terrific. But all this, we missed.

And as much as you try to make it up-- I mean, I am trying so much to make it up. I said to myself, if I have it or I don't have it, when my first son is bar mitzvahed, I'm going to make the biggest party that I can make it. And I did it. I had 120 people. It was-- then it wasn't that much money, but I made a beautiful party. I invited relatives and friends.

And when my first son was getting married, I thought the whole world is wonderful. And they didn't want to have a big wedding, and I insisted. I said, if they don't make it, I'm going to-- I mean, we wanted so much to have all those things that we hoped to have, and we couldn't have for ourselves.

So we're trying-- I think now we're still trying to live-- to do things that we think that we missed in life. And we're trying to do it as fast as we can. Because life is passing us by so fast.

And the scary thing is that so many of our friends, at our age-- I mean, maybe not my age, but my husband's age, you hear so many sicknesses. Because I think all those good things that happened in the camps are finally--

Catching up.

--catching up with people. The pressures, the blood pressure, and the head pressure, and--

The psychological--

Yeah. And as you get older, and if you think about it, affects you much harder. And I think when you were younger, you were so busy making a living and trying to make a life in a new country, that now you have more time to think about it.

And you're getting older too.

And you're getting older.

And so you're starting to realize-- you're getting older--

And look at what we went through, and how did we do it? And every time I think about it, I just say, how can any human being-- like what my husband went through-- unbelievable. Thank God we made it.

And you felt pretty content with your life in the United States.

Very much. We are very happy here. And we have a lot of pleasure from our children. And we think we brought them up beautifully. And they're good kids. And I don't-- I just pray to God for my husband to be well so we can go to Israel.

And he would love to live in Israel. He would love it. Because he has nobody here at all. And he has a big family there-- I mean cousins-- first cousins, that they were in Auschwitz together. And his cousin was here twice already. My husband brought him over for the wedding and everything.

OK, well, thank you very much.

It was my pleasure. And you'll get my husband next.

Right.