

1  
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:02,510

2  
00:00:02,510 --> 00:00:05,660  
This is a United States  
Holocaust Memorial Museum

3  
00:00:05,660 --> 00:00:08,119  
interview with  
Jaffa Munk conducted

4  
00:00:08,119 --> 00:00:12,770  
by Margaret Garrett on October  
8, 1996 in Baltimore, Maryland,

5  
00:00:12,770 --> 00:00:16,760  
take 3, side A. You were  
talking about asking

6  
00:00:16,760 --> 00:00:20,120  
for a job in the hospital  
where your sister was.

7  
00:00:20,120 --> 00:00:21,870  
So the doctor looked at me.

8  
00:00:21,870 --> 00:00:25,160  
And he said, what do you think?

9  
00:00:25,160 --> 00:00:26,570  
You look skeleton.

10  
00:00:26,570 --> 00:00:28,700  
You want to have a job?

11  
00:00:28,700 --> 00:00:30,530  
I explained to the  
doctor the need

12  
00:00:30,530 --> 00:00:33,740  
that I have to be

near to my sister.

13

00:00:33,740 --> 00:00:36,650

And he told me that it's OK.

14

00:00:36,650 --> 00:00:39,740

I can be in the hospital.

15

00:00:39,740 --> 00:00:41,190

I can be in a--

16

00:00:41,190 --> 00:00:47,320

17

00:00:47,320 --> 00:00:50,530

he said to me, I

understand the need of you

18

00:00:50,530 --> 00:00:53,470

to be near to your sister.

19

00:00:53,470 --> 00:00:54,700

And I tell you.

20

00:00:54,700 --> 00:00:57,730

There is a little

porch that is enclosed.

21

00:00:57,730 --> 00:01:00,930

I'm going to provide

there a little bed.

22

00:01:00,930 --> 00:01:02,500

And you'll be there.

23

00:01:02,500 --> 00:01:07,190

You don't have to work here

except if you want to cheer up

24

00:01:07,190 --> 00:01:09,070

the sick people here.

25

00:01:09,070 --> 00:01:13,030

He said, I see that you have  
some special ability in you

26

00:01:13,030 --> 00:01:15,420

and that you are a very  
cheerful type of a person.

27

00:01:15,420 --> 00:01:19,330

And I said, yes, indeed,  
I should be cheerful.

28

00:01:19,330 --> 00:01:20,860

Do you know what I went through?

29

00:01:20,860 --> 00:01:23,980

Well, look, I am  
here, and I am normal.

30

00:01:23,980 --> 00:01:27,340

So they made me a  
little room, and that

31

00:01:27,340 --> 00:01:30,310

was very near to the  
bed of my sister.

32

00:01:30,310 --> 00:01:33,070

She was unconscious.

33

00:01:33,070 --> 00:01:36,840

And yet I used to rub her feet,  
and I used to talk to her.

34

00:01:36,840 --> 00:01:40,420

And, slowly and surely,  
she came back to herself.

35

00:01:40,420 --> 00:01:43,360

And the other two  
girls also got better.

36

00:01:43,360 --> 00:01:45,910

And I used to go to  
the other sick people

37

00:01:45,910 --> 00:01:51,010

and sing for them songs that I  
remembered from my childhood.

38

00:01:51,010 --> 00:01:53,780

And my sister got better.

39

00:01:53,780 --> 00:01:56,710

When she was released  
from that hospital,

40

00:01:56,710 --> 00:02:00,360

they told us that we are  
not allowed to leave.

41

00:02:00,360 --> 00:02:03,060

Going back, we wanted  
to go back to Hungary.

42

00:02:03,060 --> 00:02:06,990

We wanted to see maybe somebody  
remained from the family.

43

00:02:06,990 --> 00:02:09,720

We hoped for my brother  
who was the oldest.

44

00:02:09,720 --> 00:02:11,850

He was 17 years old.

45

00:02:11,850 --> 00:02:15,210

We thought that maybe he  
came back, maybe our father

46

00:02:15,210 --> 00:02:18,540

because my father went from  
Auschwitz to Mauthausen.

47

00:02:18,540 --> 00:02:21,960

We didn't know that  
he perished later on.

48  
00:02:21,960 --> 00:02:25,410  
Maybe someone is alive, but  
they said that we can't travel.

49  
00:02:25,410 --> 00:02:28,800  
She's much too weak  
for such a trip.

50  
00:02:28,800 --> 00:02:33,020  
And how they organized  
it, I really don't know,

51  
00:02:33,020 --> 00:02:36,300  
but we were given a  
room in a kitchen.

52  
00:02:36,300 --> 00:02:39,180  
And, every few days,  
we had to go back

53  
00:02:39,180 --> 00:02:43,460  
to the hospital for a  
checkup with my sister.

54  
00:02:43,460 --> 00:02:46,380  
And that time, I came down  
also with some kind of--

55  
00:02:46,380 --> 00:02:49,090

56  
00:02:49,090 --> 00:02:52,980  
I had staphylococcus  
infection all over,

57  
00:02:52,980 --> 00:02:57,640  
all kinds of things  
on my body, you know?

58  
00:02:57,640 --> 00:03:01,850

And the Russian doctor came.

59

00:03:01,850 --> 00:03:05,440

And, without any anesthesia,  
without anything, she just cut.

60

00:03:05,440 --> 00:03:10,030

I have marks from it,  
painful and whatnot,

61

00:03:10,030 --> 00:03:13,120

but at least I got here.

62

00:03:13,120 --> 00:03:13,960

Do you know?

63

00:03:13,960 --> 00:03:20,440

And, about end of August, we got  
the permission to leave Germany

64

00:03:20,440 --> 00:03:22,680

and to go to Hungary.

65

00:03:22,680 --> 00:03:28,200

Again, the Czechoslovakian  
organization, the army,

66

00:03:28,200 --> 00:03:32,100

gave us some money to purchase  
tickets with the train.

67

00:03:32,100 --> 00:03:38,010

And we went to Prague  
first, the capital of Czech.

68

00:03:38,010 --> 00:03:46,620

And there the Joint, the  
American Jewish organization,

69

00:03:46,620 --> 00:03:48,630

had already a headquarter.

70

00:03:48,630 --> 00:03:51,240

They had already a  
list of names of people

71

00:03:51,240 --> 00:03:55,860

who perished, not  
correct yet completely,

72

00:03:55,860 --> 00:03:57,750

but they had plenty.

73

00:03:57,750 --> 00:03:59,910

And, unfortunately,  
that was the place

74

00:03:59,910 --> 00:04:03,750

where we find that neither  
one of our parents and not

75

00:04:03,750 --> 00:04:06,840

our brother remained  
from the war.

76

00:04:06,840 --> 00:04:08,370

We were very torn.

77

00:04:08,370 --> 00:04:10,150

We didn't want to stay there.

78

00:04:10,150 --> 00:04:14,560

Maybe some cousin, maybe some  
uncle, maybe somebody remained.

79

00:04:14,560 --> 00:04:17,350

Let's go back to Hungary.

80

00:04:17,350 --> 00:04:19,490

And we took the  
train from Prague.

81

00:04:19,490 --> 00:04:21,959

We went back to Budapest.

82

00:04:21,959 --> 00:04:27,000

And, lo and behold, we found  
we had two uncles who remained.

83

00:04:27,000 --> 00:04:32,790

One of them was in the Swedish  
house of Raoul Wallenberg who

84

00:04:32,790 --> 00:04:34,680

gave them papers.

85

00:04:34,680 --> 00:04:38,230

And two of them were  
in the Jewish ghetto.

86

00:04:38,230 --> 00:04:40,520

And, in a miraculous  
way, they remained

87

00:04:40,520 --> 00:04:47,170

with their whole family, but  
they didn't have place for us

88

00:04:47,170 --> 00:04:51,700

because, after the war,  
everybody was living together.

89

00:04:51,700 --> 00:04:55,060

There was a shortage  
of apartments

90

00:04:55,060 --> 00:04:58,720

or maybe shortage  
of good will too.

91

00:04:58,720 --> 00:05:00,910

That, I don't want  
to go into it.

92

00:05:00,910 --> 00:05:03,200

It's a painful kind of thing.

93



00:05:03,200 --> 00:05:06,520

We were put into  
an orphanage home.

94

00:05:06,520 --> 00:05:11,120

And our education  
began right away.

95

00:05:11,120 --> 00:05:13,990

It's amazing how  
people who survived

96

00:05:13,990 --> 00:05:18,530

and were right away  
active and organized

97

00:05:18,530 --> 00:05:20,960

schooling for children.

98

00:05:20,960 --> 00:05:23,590

We both went to school.

99

00:05:23,590 --> 00:05:27,250

Although, my sister had to be  
in a sanatorium for a couple

100

00:05:27,250 --> 00:05:30,740

more months, but, once she  
was released from there--

101

00:05:30,740 --> 00:05:34,900

you see the typhoid  
fever was so strong

102

00:05:34,900 --> 00:05:37,450

that it attacked her lungs.

103

00:05:37,450 --> 00:05:43,000

And she had to recuperate  
fully from the sickness.

104

00:05:43,000 --> 00:05:46,270

And we both had been in school.

105  
00:05:46,270 --> 00:05:51,910  
And, in 1946, at the  
beginning of the year,

106  
00:05:51,910 --> 00:05:57,310  
they were talking about it that  
all the orphan children should

107  
00:05:57,310 --> 00:06:02,990  
go to Israel because the  
memories are much too

108  
00:06:02,990 --> 00:06:06,870  
heavy to be in Hungary.

109  
00:06:06,870 --> 00:06:09,600  
We can't return to our hometown.

110  
00:06:09,600 --> 00:06:11,400  
We have no parents.

111  
00:06:11,400 --> 00:06:14,190  
Maybe if we are in  
a new environment,

112  
00:06:14,190 --> 00:06:20,400  
maybe if we are  
in a new country,

113  
00:06:20,400 --> 00:06:23,340  
maybe it will be  
easier to forget.

114  
00:06:23,340 --> 00:06:27,030  
Psychologically, it will  
be an easier transition

115  
00:06:27,030 --> 00:06:31,980  
from the terrible experience  
that we went through.

116

00:06:31,980 --> 00:06:34,050

I didn't want that  
so much to go yet

117

00:06:34,050 --> 00:06:37,050

because I wanted at least  
that one school year to end.

118

00:06:37,050 --> 00:06:43,300

I felt that so much was deprived  
from me from my education.

119

00:06:43,300 --> 00:06:47,220

However, they said that, even  
though that I didn't finish

120

00:06:47,220 --> 00:06:49,410

the year, since I  
was doing very good,

121

00:06:49,410 --> 00:06:52,830

they are going to give  
me credit for that year.

122

00:06:52,830 --> 00:07:01,210

And, in 1946, about May, we  
went with the illegal boat

123

00:07:01,210 --> 00:07:06,230

to Israel, which was occupied  
at that time by the Britons.

124

00:07:06,230 --> 00:07:10,190

And, even though the Britons  
knew what we went through,

125

00:07:10,190 --> 00:07:16,490

they were not much of fans  
to admit us to Israel.

126

00:07:16,490 --> 00:07:20,620

We were a lot of orphans  
and a lot of broken people.

127

00:07:20,620 --> 00:07:23,000

And we went on the  
deck of the boat,

128

00:07:23,000 --> 00:07:27,410

and the British boat  
came to greet us.

129

00:07:27,410 --> 00:07:31,640

And they wanted to  
send us to Cyprus.

130

00:07:31,640 --> 00:07:34,770

We begged them that,  
please, we are so broken,

131

00:07:34,770 --> 00:07:37,890

and we need to  
get out from here.

132

00:07:37,890 --> 00:07:40,230

And we need to be  
in the country.

133

00:07:40,230 --> 00:07:43,700

After an hour-long discussion,  
they admitted us to Israel.

134

00:07:43,700 --> 00:07:47,000

We were put again in a  
camp for three weeks.

135

00:07:47,000 --> 00:07:51,470

But then some teachers  
from the Jewish agency,

136

00:07:51,470 --> 00:07:54,860

they came, and they released  
first the young children.

137

00:07:54,860 --> 00:08:00,200

And I arrived in 1946  
in June to Jerusalem,

138

00:08:00,200 --> 00:08:03,930  
and I was put up in an orphanage  
home, and I went to school.

139

00:08:03,930 --> 00:08:08,220  
So most of my education  
is really from Israel.

140

00:08:08,220 --> 00:08:12,350  
I have my BA from the Hebrew  
University of Jerusalem.

141

00:08:12,350 --> 00:08:16,490  
And I became a certified  
teacher over there.

142

00:08:16,490 --> 00:08:19,675  
And then I continued here in  
Lehigh University in Allentown.

143

00:08:19,675 --> 00:08:23,650  
And how did you  
get to the States?

144

00:08:23,650 --> 00:08:29,560  
To the States I came as an  
exchange teacher to New York,

145

00:08:29,560 --> 00:08:33,370  
to Brooklyn, Flatbush,  
to Yeshiva of Flatbush.

146

00:08:33,370 --> 00:08:34,780  
The principle visited.

147

00:08:34,780 --> 00:08:36,669  
I was teaching already.

148

00:08:36,669 --> 00:08:37,990  
I was newly married.

149

00:08:37,990 --> 00:08:39,730

And I was teaching  
in Israel when

150

00:08:39,730 --> 00:08:42,100

he visited me in that class.

151

00:08:42,100 --> 00:08:47,230

And he asked me if I would  
want to come for a little bit

152

00:08:47,230 --> 00:08:49,470

to America and teach here.

153

00:08:49,470 --> 00:08:52,800

And I had my only sister  
Esther was married,

154

00:08:52,800 --> 00:08:54,160

and she lived in America.

155

00:08:54,160 --> 00:08:57,390

And I thought to myself,  
for sure, I want to go.

156

00:08:57,390 --> 00:09:00,350

This is my only family I have.

157

00:09:00,350 --> 00:09:04,010

And for two years  
is not so terrible.

158

00:09:04,010 --> 00:09:07,850

And the two years  
lasted for 38 years.

159

00:09:07,850 --> 00:09:11,560

And I'm very happy to  
be in this country.

160

00:09:11,560 --> 00:09:18,230

So now I would like to tell I  
have been first in the ghetto,

161  
00:09:18,230 --> 00:09:19,540  
DiÅ³sgyÅ‘r.

162  
00:09:19,540 --> 00:09:23,230  
Then I was in the brick  
factory in Miskolc.

163  
00:09:23,230 --> 00:09:25,390  
We were taken to Auschwitz.

164  
00:09:25,390 --> 00:09:28,900  
I was in the Birkenau lager.

165  
00:09:28,900 --> 00:09:32,950  
And the camp was  
named [? B3, ?] which

166  
00:09:32,950 --> 00:09:36,080  
was a camp of elimination.

167  
00:09:36,080 --> 00:09:37,600  
Everyday, they eliminated.

168  
00:09:37,600 --> 00:09:40,330  
It was called the  
vernichtungslager.

169  
00:09:40,330 --> 00:09:43,000  
It means that camp.

170  
00:09:43,000 --> 00:09:46,390  
From there, luckily,  
in end of the summer,

171  
00:09:46,390 --> 00:09:51,250  
about beginning of September,  
I was taken to Bergen-Belsen,

172  
00:09:51,250 --> 00:09:56,020  
in December, from Bergen-Belsen  
to Rochlitz where we

173  
00:09:56,020 --> 00:09:59,430  
worked in a munition factory.

174  
00:09:59,430 --> 00:10:03,690  
We made little  
appliances for airplanes.

175  
00:10:03,690 --> 00:10:09,870  
From Rochlitz, we were  
taken to Rochlitz, Graslitz.

176  
00:10:09,870 --> 00:10:11,980  
Graslitz, we were  
in a jail house.

177  
00:10:11,980 --> 00:10:15,520  
And our work consisted  
of piling stones

178  
00:10:15,520 --> 00:10:20,260  
from the top of the mountain  
down and up and down and then

179  
00:10:20,260 --> 00:10:23,800  
for six weeks about the  
Todesmarsch, the death

180  
00:10:23,800 --> 00:10:31,290  
march, and liberated in nearby  
to Libschitz, [PLACE NAME],,

181  
00:10:31,290 --> 00:10:34,300  
Libschitz-- that's  
Sudeten Deutschland--

182  
00:10:34,300 --> 00:10:40,300  
by the Russian army, living by  
a Catholic priest for a while,

183  
00:10:40,300 --> 00:10:44,770  
then in the hospital, and  
then in a little apartment



184  
00:10:44,770 --> 00:10:47,020  
in the city of [PLACE NAME].

185  
00:10:47,020 --> 00:10:52,340  
And, from there, we  
returned to Hungary.

186  
00:10:52,340 --> 00:10:59,990  
I can thank to my  
parents that I was

187  
00:10:59,990 --> 00:11:07,020  
able to hold out in the  
depth of the darkness

188  
00:11:07,020 --> 00:11:12,330  
and the most difficult days  
due to their upbringing

189  
00:11:12,330 --> 00:11:18,280  
and due to the special  
supervision of God

190  
00:11:18,280 --> 00:11:24,180  
who, even at the time when  
there is darkness in the world,

191  
00:11:24,180 --> 00:11:32,040  
he wanted people to remain,  
perhaps to tell the story what

192  
00:11:32,040 --> 00:11:34,610  
took place.

193  
00:11:34,610 --> 00:11:37,400  
And I am very happy.

194  
00:11:37,400 --> 00:11:39,580  
I have a nice family.

195  
00:11:39,580 --> 00:11:41,300

God was very good to me.

196

00:11:41,300 --> 00:11:47,680  
I have four lovely children and  
13 beautiful grandchildren who

197

00:11:47,680 --> 00:11:50,050  
know what I went through,  
and they are really

198

00:11:50,050 --> 00:11:57,370  
trying in each day and in each  
moment to sweeten my life.

199

00:11:57,370 --> 00:11:58,680  
And you married a rabbi.

200

00:11:58,680 --> 00:12:00,920  
And I married a  
rabbi who happened

201

00:12:00,920 --> 00:12:03,980  
to be my teacher in Israel.

202

00:12:03,980 --> 00:12:06,820  
And we got married  
in the Israel,

203

00:12:06,820 --> 00:12:11,240  
and we had two children there  
and two in this country.

204

00:12:11,240 --> 00:12:14,870  
And your name when you  
were born was Naomi.

205

00:12:14,870 --> 00:12:18,760  
And now you use  
a different name.

206

00:12:18,760 --> 00:12:23,940  
My name was-- you  
see, in those days,

207  
00:12:23,940 --> 00:12:26,950  
Jewish people gave  
a Jewish name.

208  
00:12:26,950 --> 00:12:32,280  
And they had to give also  
a name that was accepted

209  
00:12:32,280 --> 00:12:35,490  
by the country where you lived.

210  
00:12:35,490 --> 00:12:41,350  
So my Jewish name was  
Shaindel, which means pretty.

211  
00:12:41,350 --> 00:12:49,490  
And my Hungarian name was Naomi,  
spelled in Hungarian N-A-O-M-I,

212  
00:12:49,490 --> 00:12:49,990  
Naomi.

213  
00:12:49,990 --> 00:12:52,630

214  
00:12:52,630 --> 00:12:56,740  
When I arrived to  
Israel, the people,

215  
00:12:56,740 --> 00:12:59,110  
they thought that  
I am not Jewish.

216  
00:12:59,110 --> 00:13:02,890  
I was blond, very fair face.

217  
00:13:02,890 --> 00:13:05,650  
And they asked me,  
what is your name?

218  
00:13:05,650 --> 00:13:09,820

So I said to them Naomi  
because, in my papers,

219  
00:13:09,820 --> 00:13:12,610  
it is the official name.

220  
00:13:12,610 --> 00:13:16,660  
They said, oh, this  
is not a Jewish girl.

221  
00:13:16,660 --> 00:13:18,770  
And I said, what do you mean?

222  
00:13:18,770 --> 00:13:19,840  
I have a Jewish name.

223  
00:13:19,840 --> 00:13:21,700  
My name is Shaindel.

224  
00:13:21,700 --> 00:13:25,280  
Oh, Shaindel, that means pretty.

225  
00:13:25,280 --> 00:13:27,940  
Why should you have that name?

226  
00:13:27,940 --> 00:13:32,240  
That name in Hebrew is Jaffa.

227  
00:13:32,240 --> 00:13:34,510  
Jaffa means pretty.

228  
00:13:34,510 --> 00:13:37,660  
In Yiddish, Shaindel  
means pretty.

229  
00:13:37,660 --> 00:13:43,080  
So they said, from now  
on, your name is Jaffa.

230  
00:13:43,080 --> 00:13:45,910  
And, from then on  
really, in all my papers

231  
00:13:45,910 --> 00:13:49,640  
is both of my  
names, Jaffa Naomi.

232  
00:13:49,640 --> 00:13:52,350  
The only name that I  
do not carry anymore

233  
00:13:52,350 --> 00:13:57,660  
is what had been given to me in  
the Jewish language, Shaindel,

234  
00:13:57,660 --> 00:14:01,530  
by my parents, which one  
is translated into Hebrew.

235  
00:14:01,530 --> 00:14:06,210  
And that's why it's the  
different of the name.

236  
00:14:06,210 --> 00:14:10,650  
I also forgot to ask  
your father's name.

237  
00:14:10,650 --> 00:14:14,252  
My father's name  
was Philippe Donath.

238  
00:14:14,252 --> 00:14:15,210  
And your mother's name?

239  
00:14:15,210 --> 00:14:20,960  
And my mother's name was  
Olga Donath born Shick.

240  
00:14:20,960 --> 00:14:26,810  
My grandfather, Rabbi Shick,  
was a very great rabbi

241  
00:14:26,810 --> 00:14:30,980  
who established a very special  
kind of high school, one

242  
00:14:30,980 --> 00:14:35,615  
of its kind in Hungary, that  
people not only learned Bible,

243  
00:14:35,615 --> 00:14:36,365  
but they learned--

244  
00:14:36,365 --> 00:14:39,390

245  
00:14:39,390 --> 00:14:41,300  
it must like a vocal school.

246  
00:14:41,300 --> 00:14:46,340  
They also learned some kind of  
trade, either being a tailor

247  
00:14:46,340 --> 00:14:50,120  
or being a shoemaker  
or carpenter.

248  
00:14:50,120 --> 00:14:52,580  
My grandfather  
believed that a person

249  
00:14:52,580 --> 00:14:56,480  
should have some kind  
of a trade and not

250  
00:14:56,480 --> 00:15:00,020  
depend on it that,  
from somewhere,

251  
00:15:00,020 --> 00:15:02,460  
he is going to have an income.

252  
00:15:02,460 --> 00:15:06,050  
And I am very proud  
of him because I

253  
00:15:06,050 --> 00:15:10,640

think that that's how we should  
be in life, combining the two.

254  
00:15:10,640 --> 00:15:13,140  
It's one thing not enough.

255  
00:15:13,140 --> 00:15:15,230  
You have to have both.

256  
00:15:15,230 --> 00:15:20,110  
And my brother's name  
was Joseph Donath

257  
00:15:20,110 --> 00:15:22,920  
who perished in the Holocaust.

258  
00:15:22,920 --> 00:15:29,870  
And my sister Esther Judith,  
Judit in Hungarian, Judit,

259  
00:15:29,870 --> 00:15:34,130  
she's alive, and she  
lives in Montreal.

260  
00:15:34,130 --> 00:15:39,230  
And my name now is  
Munk because I am

261  
00:15:39,230 --> 00:15:44,510  
married to a rabbi, Yona Munk.

262  
00:15:44,510 --> 00:15:46,780  
Well, your story has  
been very important.

263  
00:15:46,780 --> 00:15:50,310  
Thank you very much for  
giving your testimony.

264  
00:15:50,310 --> 00:15:52,700  
And thank you for your time.

265

00:15:52,700 --> 00:15:56,570

This concludes the United  
States Holocaust Memorial Museum

266

00:15:56,570 --> 00:15:59,240

interview with Jaffa Munk.

267

00:15:59,240 --> 00:16:00,560

Thank you, Mrs. Munk.

268

00:16:00,560 --> 00:16:02,410

My pleasure.

269

00:16:02,410 --> 00:16:04,000