

I have just a couple of other questions. Did you run into a teacher from your hometown right after liberation?

Yes, I did.

Tell me about that.

In the barn, very close to me, there was a woman that I thought looked very familiar. And after talking to her, I realized that she was one of my teachers. Because we didn't recognize each other. So somehow, we got a little bit closer. Because that was the only person that I could relate to, that I felt like it was my family.

So when the Russian soldier carried me, she said to him, please, don't separate us. That's all we have, each other. So he brought her in that same house that I was. She was put on the same straw stack, not a mattress. We didn't have mattresses. It was like a stack of straw.

And she was laying there. And I remember there were women in that room cooking water or doing something, some little bit stronger ladies, Jewish ladies. And one day, I remember them-- I begged them. I said give me a little bit of water to give to my friend here. They said she's dead. Why do you need water for her? And I didn't realize that the last person that I thought I had was dead. I remember them taking her out to be buried. And I couldn't even walk out to be there.

And in the hospital, was there a hunger strike?

There was no hunger strike for anybody. I see you really learned a lot about me. There was no hunger strike for anybody. But there was a hunger strike for me, after I was getting better really. And one day I thought I don't have anybody. My last friend is dead, that teacher. Now, what do I need to live for? It's really no use for me to continue.

So I thought if I would continue not to eat, maybe I would die and be with all my dear people that are not here anymore. But somebody in the next bed told on me. And then they started to watch me and make sure that I'm eating. I see you learned quite a bit about me.

Now, tell me how you and your mother came to go to Feldaafing?

How did we come to go to Feldaafing? We decided that there was no purpose for us to go back to Lithuania. Lithuania was already a communist country. So we hung around in the city of Lodz in case somebody else of the family will survive or somebody that we know. People started talking about Palestine, at that time how it was called. It was not Israel yet.

And by the later part of May, beginning of June, men started to come that were liberated in Dachau. And I remember a young man coming with the whole list saying that they send out, well, I don't know how many, half a dozen men to go and see if any of the families are alive. They should try to reunite somehow. On that list was my brother's name, Jecheskel Galperin, who was liberated in Dachau. He sent word that in case any of the family is there, that young men will meet any of the family, they should tell them that we should try to get to the American zone.

Now, before I continue, let me tell you, when we were brought to the concentration camp, the last words that we said to each other was in case we survived that hell, our meeting point should be back home in Lithuania. So each of us had that idea in case somebody else comes back, we should go to Lithuania. But that's why my brother also remembered it and made sure that in case someone of the family is alive, we should try to go.

Now, if you look through history at that time, you will see it really was not too difficult to go over the border, walk across the border, especially for survivors. They could tell we are survivors. Somehow, a group of people-- somebody said that the best way to get over to the American zone would be through Berlin. Because in Berlin, they had the Russian zone, the French zone, the English zone, the American zone.

Now, I remember riding on a truck and walking by foot. We wound up in one of the zones. I don't really remember anymore whether it was the English or the French zone. And we just walked over to the American zone. And there, we registered. And if you had family, they helped you to get reunited. And when we told them that my brother was in Feldafing, they actually brought us there.

So we wound up-- in October of 1945, we arrived in Feldafing. Took a long time for us together, you can see from some time in June till October. So it wasn't an easy thing. You went from one place to another. You had to wait for documents, your papers. In the time from June till October, I met my husband to be. And he joined us. And before we actually arrived in Feldafing, Jack and I were married.

In 1945. So tell me a little bit about that.

Well, this is always-- especially children in school when I talk to them about my experiences, they ask me, how did you meet your husband? And I always tell them sincerely, in those days, you needed each other. My husband is a survivor of the Holocaust. He doesn't even have a distant cousin. There was a long story behind it, how I met him. He was a friend of a friend of one of my uncles by marriage on my father's side.

And when we found these people in the city of Lodz, when my mom and I found his uncle and his friends, we became a little bit like a family unit. And that's who we traveled with from Lodz to the American zone. At one point, I remember in Lodz my mother saying to me, Nessela-- that's an endearing word for your name Nesse, Nessela-- we are two women alone, I think it would be a good idea if one of us would get married.

Now, my mom was 46 years old. And I thought in my heart, why would she want to get married? She has me. I was angry. But the next thing out of my mother's mouth was, my child, I had a wonderful husband. I don't think I will marry again. But I think you should marry. Look, here's a few guys. They're all very nice. Choose one, and get married. We'll have a man that'll help us and take care of us.

So honestly, I just looked at Jack and I thought he was cute. And many times I ask him, I say, Jack, who proposed? How did we decide to get married? I don't remember kissing him before we got married. I don't remember us being in love before we got married. We needed each other. But let me tell you, we are married a long time. We are very much in love now.

We have a little bit left on this roll. Just tell me what Feldafing is. I don't know anything about it.

OK. What I remember of Feldafing-- when I came to Feldafing, I was curious. It looked a beautiful place, with villas, with a golf course, tennis courts, with some bags down the town. And I was told at that time that this was a resort place for assessment, to come and enjoy themselves and have a good time.

It was a small little town. The town itself was maybe 10 blocks long, a small town, small European town, very pretty, very nice. And as you went down to the area where, we called, the DP camp was, you still saw those beautiful villas, you saw the beautiful trees, the beautiful area. But you have to understand, we were not given a villa. In that villa, 10 families had to live.

Slate four, mark.

So we were back at Feldafing, and you were describing the DP camp.

So what I started to say, those villas were beautiful. But you have to understand, if we were assigned a place in the villa, that meant that 10 families instead of one lived in that pretty house. For instance, my brother was there already with his wife to be. Well, she was his wife already actually, maybe. And they had one room.

Now, when we came, my mom and my husband and I, we were just given two beds in the kitchen. And the kitchen was used by the rest of the 10 families. So yes, the place looked beautiful, but we were still crammed into small places. We still had to go down to the main kitchen to get the food.

Because at the beginning, they did not give you for each family separate ration. You still had to go to the main kitchen with your little coupon to get your food. You also received a coupon for a pair of shoes, let's say. You went to that special place where they assigned you that you can get a coat or if you needed a dress or if you needed something else. So yes, we were free, but we were still in organized living.

So what else about the conditions? I mean, were there other things that were similar to how your life had been before?

Well, everything is in comparison. Naturally, when you start to compare to the concentration camp or the ghetto or the labor camp, this was heaven. But if you compare to normal lifestyle, this was still a camp. You still had a curfew, you were not allowed to go to the little town after a certain time at the beginning.

Later as time went on-- I was in Feldafing five years. So later on was different. Some of the people had already little jobs in the little town. Some people worked within the camp. Some people went to school. So things changed. But at the beginning, it was very organized living. We still were told we were not allowed to go out.

We were not allowed to-- and then we didn't have money to go. If somebody wanted to take a ride to Munich, unless they assigned you a ticket to go for a certain purpose, like if I had to go with my [? face ?] to the doctor in Munich, I had the ticket to go. But at the beginning, we couldn't go wherever we wanted. We were displaced persons. That's what our documents said.

So you sort of had no rights.

Well, I don't want to say no rights but very limited rights, very limited rights.

Did Ben-Gurion come while you were at Feldafing?

Yes. I remember. I remember it well. Because after we were there a year or so, within the camp, the Jewish community organized a little bit. There was a president of the camp. People were in charge of Cultural Affairs. They started to have-- some people started to come that were in hiding or in the Russian occupied areas, and they had some little children. Some schools were organized and different organizations, Zionist organizations.

And I remember Ben-Gurion coming to the camp and speaking about Palestine and about what's going to be. And I remember people going illegal immigration, leaving the camp and going there. But I remember Ben-Gurion with his hair standing out on both sides and giving us hope. And I'll never forget that.

Did they decorate Feldafing when he was coming.

Oh, yes. I don't even know how we got, maybe somehow with the help of the UNRRA. Blue and white flags and as much as we could decorate it. It was like a little parade and everybody coming. There was a big area. It was called the turnhalle. Turnhalle means the sports arena, which was a big building. And that's where we met that time.

And in this time, especially back in 1945, before you even got to Feldafing, were you afraid traveling [INAUDIBLE]

We were very much afraid. Because we heard already that so many people that went back-- not just afraid in Germany. We were afraid in Poland. We heard that people went back to their hometowns, and the people that lived in their homes or had their businesses killed them. So we felt like we were really not welcome nowhere yet.

Now, when we got to Germany, especially when we got to Feldafing, I had a very hard time. I tell you the truth. At that time, you were just free. But you were in the midst of a people that you were wondering which of them killed your father, which of them killed your uncle, your grandmother or your grandfather. It was very difficult, very difficult. You were suspicious. You were scared.

Wanted to get out.

Every one of us dreamed to be able to leave those camps as soon as possible. Now, I don't know if I mentioned to you, as soon as we arrived in Feldafing, we wrote a letter to my aunt to Washington DC. My mom's sister, we remembered her address. She lived in Washington DC. They had a tiny little grocery store on Sherman and Euclid St Washington DC. That's all you had to write, South Market, Sherman and Euclid. No zip code in those days.

My aunt received that letter. She went right away to the State Department. She found friends and family that would sponsor us, make sure that we wouldn't be a burden to the United States government. But because of the quota system-- in those days, we had the quota system. I'm saying it carefully because at one time, somebody wrote down Nesse didn't come to the United States because of a quarter. Quota system in those days. I was from Lithuania with a small quota. We had to wait five years, five years to be let in. We had to go through medical examination. We had to be checked and checked and checked until we were let go.

Tell me more about life in Feldafing and the organization.

After the first year, I would say maybe a year and a half, you get accustomed to your way of life actually. People started to have children. I, myself, my oldest daughter and my son were born in Feldafing. In 1947, I became a mom. I was not quite 19 years old. And then you saw those beautiful children, and people started to have a little more hope.

When you see children, you know there is a future, you know there's something else coming. And everyone was waiting. It was a time of waiting. But people really joined the Zionist organizations with the hope of having our own land. I remember when Israel was declared a country, we were in Feldafing. The celebrations, the ecstasy just to know that, in case we won, there is a place that will take us. It was very exciting.

[AUDIO OUT] the question once we get rolling.

Sweet.

This is marker five.

We were very much afraid of the MPs. Because when you are used to being afraid of the military, you really did not know yet, am I supposed to go here? Am I not supposed to go here? Even when we were free to go in the little town and we saw military police, we were scared. We thought of they're going to do something to us, they are going to tell us don't go here, don't go there, don't do this.

When you live through such a traumatic time as the Holocaust, and you know that these people assess and just stop where people in uniform mistreated you, sometime you make a mistake and even this police was being kind to you, you were afraid. I tell you the truth, I'm still afraid of military. I really am. Sometimes I think, oh, here goes a policeman, here goes a guard.

Thank you.

Now, we have--