

It was beautiful. We lived there for almost four years. Then we were there about five, six, seven--

I wouldn't have children, nobody, and I am today 50 years old, I move back to Israel.

If you were 50 and you wouldn't have children--

Move back to Israel.

Yeah. Would she go with you?

It's so beautiful, Tel Aviv.

Would she go with you?

Yeah, I would.

Yeah?

Saturday evening in Tel Aviv, [MUAH].

You like, huh?

It's alive, that. He is.

Pick up wherever you'd like.

OK, Mila. We were talking about how difficult it was in Israel--

Yes--

And that you had a cousin--

In Canada--

Who was going to send papers.

He did send us papers. Otherwise, my husband wouldn't take a chance to sell all the machines. But we need tickets to buy. We purchased the tickets. He made just our papers.

Now, was this a cousin that you knew in Poland or--

This was my father's brother's son. But he lived in Sosnowiec, which we saw him once a year, twice a year.

You knew him?

I knew him.

But not well?

Not well. And then we came there to Canada.

How long did you have to wait?

Oh, god, for two years maybe. We made papers through French, through Italy. Finally, through London, we got to go through London. And in London, we were not sure that we're going to go through-- we'd be able to go to Canada.

We sold everything and we came to London. We stayed there. That time, we had to send out some money in dollars to London to our bank in order, when we come to London, we don't fall to the London government for a handout.

Right.

So when we came there, there was a Jewish committee. And there were rooms with beds, not separate beds, but a big room with a lot of beds. And we got breakfast, lunch, and dinner. And we at the time didn't speak one word English. And we had to go to the council for--

Papers--

Papers. And we had to know where to go. London is big. So we paid a man which went with us. He had an office. And that was his job. He took us for lunch. He took us in the subway-- first time in my life I went in a subway.

So we went there to the government and went through health doctors that talked with us why we want to go, why we want to emigrate. And after two or three weeks, we got the permission to go to Canada.

So in order to go to Canada, I went to New York. In New York, I had no permission to go out where I didn't have no visa to leave New York airport. In airport, I met my mother's older sister with her husband. She lived at the time still. And her son and daughter-in-law came to see us in the airport.

Now, had this sister come to America early?

Yeah.

Before the war?

Before the war. I never--

So you had never met her.

No.

What was that like?

Oh, very unbelievable.

Yeah?

Yeah.

Why?

Well, it's somebody from close family.

Did she look like your mother?

No.

No.

No, she was a petite lady. My mother was taller. And as a matter of fact, there were older people at the time, where she was the oldest sister. So I was very happy to see them. And they used to-- we used to write to each other.

Where were you destined for in Canada? Where were you going?

Toronto.

Toronto.

Yeah. Then we came to Toronto. We stayed a week with my cousin. Then we rented a place in the same street where my cousin with his wife lived-- with their children lived. And we had a room and a kitchen. I went to work.

What did you do?

I worked-- I did-- I worked in an underwear factory. I made-- on a table, I put the cups-- the lace out. And I cut the cups.

This was my job. But I didn't know how to sew good, and I cut. And so that's what I did for about a year. And then when it came vacation, I stopped working.

And I went to my boss and told him, oh, give me \$0.05 more. I made \$0.50 an hour. Or I have to quit. So he didn't want to give me more money.

I had to send my son to somebody to keep my child. Somebody should take care of him. So I had to pay \$15. And I myself made about \$10 a week. So it didn't pay.

So I told him, don't tell him that I quit, just you laid me off. So I got unemployment-- stood in that a week. And I stayed home with my child.

Were you learning English?

Yeah.

Did you go to school?

From day one.

Did you go to school?

A little bit. I went to school here more--

In America--

In the United States. Yeah. There, I kind of-- well, I worked and had to take care of the family. It was hard for me. But the first time my cousin sent me to the store and told me, buy onions, buy this, she thought I was going to goof up. I bought everything what she told me, despite not knowing how to speak.

And then I worked in a fruit-- I picked apples, McIntosh apples, and got \$0.75 an hour and worked for two years.

How many children did you have by then?

One.

One.

My oldest son. Then my brother came to Canada and stayed with us. And he said, listen, I don't have even a cold. He's so cold here wintertime.

In Canada, it's very miserable, wintertime. Summer is nice, but wintertime-- and I make so much more than your husband. My husband made \$1. Then he hardly made \$1.15.

What was he doing?

Mechanical-- his profession.

Yeah.

And so we decide to go to--

How long after you were in Canada did your brother come?

Three years.

Three.

So he made papers.

Where was he living?

In San Francisco.

And was he doing well?

Yes.

And he said, come. It's going to be much better here.

Yes. So by then, I was, as a sister, allowed to go to United States. My son was born in Germany. As a German citizen, he had the quota, but my husband not.

So I told the council, I'm not going. He said, go. And in six weeks, I promise you, you'll go there and make papers the day you come. In six weeks-- but one thing, you have to pay \$1.70 for the call where I'm not going to wait till the papers come from Washington. I take the-- once I have the number, I send your husband the papers. It was true,

So you went first?

I went first. I stayed--

And your son?

Yeah. I stayed with my brother, six weeks. Then I rent a place, a four-room cottage, and pay \$70 a week on 10th Avenue, which was nice-- a nice yard and was furnished. So after my husband came, we stayed there over the winter. This was wintertime.

And after the holidays, he came to-- when was it? '60? Was it? No, '56-- in '56. And then we moved to-- in 1957, we bought a house on Sunset, a brand new home. And we lived there 18 years.

Was your English getting better all this time?

Yes. Yes, I went to school to Poly, Polytechnic, in San Francisco. I don't know do you know. Is it still-- there is by Kezar Stadium-- used to take night school. And yeah, when we moved into the house, my second son was born.

How much difference between them?

Oh, boy, quite a few years. Yeah.

Had you wanted another?

Yes, very much. Matter of fact, I wanted a little girl. But my son is an angel. They're both terrific. But the youngest son is my angel.

My whole life are my two sons and the two granddaughters, my daughter-in-law. They're both-- they're all terrific. I love them all.

You like the daughter-in-law?

Yes, she is good. She is good. She has such a purpose that she is artistic, very much so.

Now, you were in Canada how many years?

Three and a half.

Three and a half.

Yeah.

What did you feel about Canada?

Canada was a nice country. At least we worked. We didn't make much money, but we bought from time to time a piece of clothing. We had food, good food, for the first time we had after the war.

And we saved up a few dollars. We got some money from Germany, too, for the concentration camp. He got \$1,500. I got \$1,500. So between us and the work, we saved up. And when we came here, we had a down payment for a house.

What did you feel about America when you came?

I like America. First of all, the climate is good. People are good. Nobody tells me "Jew." Nobody-- my husband worked in a shop for 25 years. And nobody told him any bad things. No.

Do you feel like it's your country?

Kind of. Yes, yes, yes. That's my second country, really-- really.

What do you mean?

Israel is our country as a Jewish country.

Would you hope to go back there?

By now, no. Just for a visit, maybe yes, once more. We were there six years-- six times in Israel.

What do you feel about Poland?

I was in Poland three years ago.

Why did you go?

I wanted to go to Treblinka where my parents passed. And we went to Auschwitz. I'd never been in Warsaw. I'd never been in Krakow. So we visited every place.

How did it feel to be there?

I felt good in Warsaw and Krakow. But in Czestochowa, no, I searched. I was searching for something, for-- I get goose bumps.

For family?

For family.

Memory?

Every stone, I looked. And that's so familiar, every street. Like my husband said, well, you know where to go here, there. I went like it would be yesterday, I left. I knew every place-- a little bit changed, whether they took off little houses, built big buildings.

Did you want to go back to those factories?

No, I did not. I did not go. I did not. I don't even remember which way to go. No. No.

Did you go back to the complex that your father had where he had the bakery?

Yeah.

Was it still there?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And a little boy in a yard became-- he asked his mother, is this the Jewish woman what sold the place to the butcher, the Jew?

That reminded you why you didn't want to be in Poland.

And we went upstairs. She was hesitant to let us in. So I said, listen, I give something to the children. She did. So then five children upstairs with us-- then she said she has more children.

But that's OK. We gave everyone some money. I was thankful that she let us and can see the place.

How was it for you at Treblinka?

Terrible. Terrible. Worse than Auschwitz. We took from Warsaw a taxi. On the way to Treblinka, my husband felt the same thing as I. Every person has money with him when he travels.

And that was one taxi driver, a man, a Polish man. He didn't have nothing bad on his mind. He didn't do nothing to us. But when we traveled, he didn't say one word to us the whole thing. So we kind of felt maybe he's going to kill us.

And then when he came to a place and said, where is the boss of this, meaning where is to the camp, oh, I said, OK. He's going there. And then he waited for us, let us-- for an hour, he said, or whatever time he gave us to go around.

That's kind of far from Warsaw even. That's far. That's kind of outskirts of Warsaw.

How long did it take to travel in the taxi?

About an hour and a half, I think, one way in a taxi. We saw the train standing there and the metal things. And everything is still there, but there are no camps. Everything is demolished.

They destroyed.

Destroyed. But there are millions of stones.

Everyone brings a stone?

No, no, no. They're stones. I don't know who brought them. The biggest stone you will see is from my hometown, the biggest. And it says, "Czestochowa." Some stones don't say anything, just little stones and big stones, stones I don't know for miles.

I remember I was standing there by the stone. My husband walked away. I couldn't see him anymore. He was looking for some cities. Not every stone is marked. But the stones and stones and stones--

These are stones of the cities of the people who were brought there?

Yeah. But not every stone is marked with the city. Some stones are marked even to country, Holland and things and other countries.

Do you have any idea who put the stone?

No.

No?

No. That's what we wanted to do, to stay there for the bones. Maybe some bones are still there-- who knows-- for my parents and his parents and family.

Did you go to Treblinka first and then Auschwitz or the other way around?

No, we went to Treblinka first, I think. Yeah. But you see, to Auschwitz are going buses. You pay, and you go with a bus.

Here, you have to rent a taxi for 100-- a really very expensive one that takes three hours. In an hour, he has to work. He wastes almost a day. And the weather was still kind of-- like the heart, the weather was drizzly, miserable.

And what was it like at Auschwitz?

Auschwitz-- we went with our guide, tour guide. And he explained everything. It took almost a whole day. And so many-- he showed us where there was a bad German, which they hanged him in the end of the war. They hanged him and was blood there. He was shooting in this place so many hundreds of people.

So now, they washed away and put some little flowers as a memorial-- terrible. The feeling is-- how can I say? We felt very bad.

Were you glad you went?

Yes. Yes. Yes, that's what I wanted to do the whole time.

How about Krakow and Warsaw?

Krakow was a visit. We took a tour. We stayed in a nice hotel in Krakow. In Warsaw, we took a tour through whole city.

The ghetto?

The ghetto, the unknown soldiers. We saw everything-- everything. We traveled by bus. In certain places, we went to museums.

We had to change shoes where they don't allow to walk around. The carpets are so fragile. And beautiful things, we saw. And then we went in Krakow to Wawel, where the big dignitaries are buried, like Padniewski and the other guys.

Did it stir up feelings in you to be back on Polish soil?

Yes. The worst was in Czestochowa, but it's my hometown. And there, I went through the whole tragedy.

Do you think that something like this could happen again?

I hope not. But there are again so many Nazis, the skinheads and all kinds of others in Germany-- in Germany, which after the war, I thought that never, never nobody would say a word against Jews-- against anybody, but especially what we went through.

Are you proud to be a Jew?

Yes. In spite of everything, yes.

Would you have changed it if you could?

Change for what?

Not be? Not be Jewish?

No, I never was thinking of it, never. I light candles Friday night. I go to temple whenever I can. I'm not a religious person, but I taught my sons. Both were bar mitzvahed.

I took them Friday and Saturday night to temple-- Friday night and Saturday morning. I drove him. My husband bought me a Maverick special for the kids to-- I should have told it. But I used to stay and take a bus at night to take them to temple-- to school, to temple.

Where is your brother now?

My brother is in San Francisco. He's a very wealthy man-- very well.

Do you see him?

Not so often than I would like to. We don't get along together.

Mila, I want to thank you on behalf of the Holocaust Oral History Project--

You're welcome--

For this wonderful, wonderful interview.

Thank you.

It's been a pleasure to--

Thank you--

Do this.

A pleasure to meet you and you, too.

Thank you.

This is Treblinka. This is the stone from my hometown. And this says, "Czestochowa." And like I said, that's millions of little stones for various cities. And this is the stone, Czestochowa.

The one on the bottom on the right, that's--

Czestochowa.

Czestochowa. Czestochowa?

Yes.

And then this last picture here on the left?

This, that's my husband. Same thing-- the stone, the memorial stone from our hometown.

It's just an article. I went to the Jewish paper. And this is the-- I gave them an article from where I was--

Very good--

In Auschwitz and Treblinka.

This was--

Crematorium--

The crematorium. It's in a bad shape. This is the tallism, the tallit what you pray for-- the prayer shawl for the Jews.

This is suitcases. This is shoes. This is the cans what they gas the people.

Just a moment. OK, I've got the-- could you-- oh, I see. We're looking at the picture of shoes right now. And there's some glare that's part of the actual photograph, because you took it through a window. And then these are cans of Zyklon B gas?

Yeah. They gas the Jews.

Yes.

This is the place where the Jews, so many people, get shot from this Nazi.

And this is also from Auschwitz?

This is the ovens. That's the place, the wires--

Auschwitz?

Electric wires.

These are in Auschwitz? Yeah.

The place when you come in to Auschwitz. You go in there. And that's just the-- there was a crematorium, too. But some of them is already rotting away.

And that's the wires. There are still wires. And that's the barracks there.

These are the wires.

The electric wires. They all were electric wires.

And then this last one on the right here at the bottom is barracks.

Barracks. And I want to--

Outside from Auschwitz, when you come in, the other part is here. And this, I don't know what this is. That's part of the barracks.

My hand got stuck to it. I couldn't take it away, my hand, the one where they pushed in-- put the Jews in.

The corpse.

The corpse. Some of them maybe were alive. This is the oven where they burned the people.

This is also in Auschwitz?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Crematorium-- you see? That's a crematorium. And these are in the barracks. That's the toilets. In the barracks were holes and that-- unbelievable.

And the people-- and that's the barracks where you walk up.

Wait one second.

Go ahead.

All right.

That's the barracks outside. That's the places where you sleep.

The bunks.

The bunks. And then you go up. And this is the place where he was shooting the Jewish people.

Who is that down in the corner?

Oh, I just found a-- that's from the day from the liberation. That's a concentration camp man. And that's an American man, a soldier.

You don't know who they are?

No, no, no.

That's me. That's my mother, my father, my brother.

Any idea what year? No.

No.

Before the war?

Yeah. Oh, my. Yeah.

A hot--

Go ahead. Tell us.

A hot spring in Poland, my mother and me.

In a hot spring? You were there for treatment?

Not me, just for summer.

Like vacation?

Vacation, yeah. We went.

That's me and that's my Jewish Star of David.

Where?

In the ghetto.

On your arm?

Yeah.

This is in which ghetto? The small ghetto?

Big ghetto.

First ghetto.

The first ghetto.

Tell us again what we're looking at.

That's me and my mother and myself and my brother.

Is this during the war?

No-- maybe during the war, maybe in beginning.

OK. Go ahead.

That's my parents, my grandmother, and my brother.

Oh.

It's before you're born.

My mother.

What year? You know?

No, she was an unmarried lady. And so I don't know.

Before she was married?

Yeah, before she was married.

Wow.

That's me after the war.

What kind of document is this?

Polish document.

What is this? This is in the Jewish cemetery. We bought land, everybody, and paid for it. And this is names from my parents and from my husband's.

This is in Israel?

No, that's right here in Carmel.

Ah.

Yeah.

And who's standing next to it?

That's me in both pictures.

That's very nice.

Poland in Czestochowa, where I used to live. I used to go up on the first floor.

And who is that standing there?

Me.

But this is much later?

No, that's three years ago.

OK.

That's me and my husband in Treblinka. That's the stone, memorial stone from our hometown.

Yes.

That's me in Yad Vashem in Israel, in Jerusalem. And this is Polish placards so the Jews shouldn't go there or--
restrictions.