

It was. I was something very special. I'm alive, I'm Jewish, I came back. And of course I knew my husband and I knew his whole family from the time I was a child. So I stayed there, and six weeks later, we got married.

Go back again to where you said that Jewish women were something special.

Well you see, what happened is from our area and from Hungary, the men inducted to the military services. Instead of sending them to concentration camp, they had him in a work camp, just like the army except they had to do work-- the clean up, the preparation for the war, they dig the holes for the things and whatever they were told, they had to do. So when Russia was occupying that part of the country, these men, or some of them were freed. Some of them were taken back to Germany into the concentration camps.

But a lot of them escaped, like my husband and his brother. But there were no women, no Jewish women to speak of, the war still was going on for a long time. Like my husband got freed in '44, months earlier. The thing was that they didn't know, and besides, even when the war was over, women were afraid to travel because in military times it's a big danger for women to travel. It doesn't matter if they were in a concentration camp or not, especially when it came to the Russians.

So when I came back, Jewish women were very special. As far as I was concerned, I could have gotten married five times a day. Every young man who saw me, young or old, wanted to get married. First of all, it was the loss, that everybody felt they lost their sweetheart or their wives or the whole family, and they wanted to start a new family. Everybody wants to have somebody. There is a need in human beings to belong.

So certainly when I came back there were even fights among them that everybody wants to marry me. My brother-in-law said, you're going to marry one of my brothers. He said to me, you're not going to go anyplace. You're tired. You're exhausted. You're hungry. Stay here. Why should you go to Romania? My brother will go with you there. He wants to go to Israel too.

Anyway, I stayed. I came there on Wednesday and Saturday night we got engaged. It was that fast. I wasn't in a hurry to get married, and I didn't want to get engaged, but I came to a place that it was a home established. And people I knew who were left, so it was kind of automatic. I'm not trying to say that I'm not in love with my husband, I am, but at that time it was a very sudden type of thing.

Anyway, we weren't going to get married but I didn't want to stay there. We were going to wait for a while. My husband said if we travel before we get married, what do you think? Can we afford two separate rooms in hotels or wherever we are going to go? Why not get married? So we got married. And then we left and we came to Germany. And that was very hard. Again we didn't have money and I was pregnant already. So because I had to wait until over the high holidays to leave there, we left when the borders were closing.

From the Russians there were flares going up, and we're just left with our clothes on our backs. We had no money. It's not just that we didn't have money, but they were changing the money from the Czech money into Russian money. And the same in Hungary. And so even if you had money, you couldn't use it. It wasn't any good.

So we were jumping trains. We went first to Romania. From Romania we went back to Czechoslovakia to part of Morava. We were jumping when the soldiers came to examine the train, because at every station we jumped off the train. Then when the train started we jumped on the train. Then in Prague we couldn't even get into the train station. I was pregnant about three months at the time, and at this point there was about a group of 10 of us that met and we were going to go to the same place.

And we came to Prague, to the train station, and there was no way to get in and they were just going to turn back and I said, no, we're not going to turn back. I climbed up on a very high wall, probably about two stories high, and I jumped into the train station and then they all did it after me. You could climb up from one side, from that side, but you couldn't-- So we jumped. For sure I thought I'm going to abort, but I didn't. It's kind of miraculous how things happened.

Then we traveled to Munich, and we walked between some station-- and I don't remember exactly where that was-- from Czechoslovakia to Munich, where we walked through some woods where we were again met by somebody from the UNRA Jewish agency. And we were taken to some shelter and stayed in Munich a couple of days. And then we were sent to-- Most of the camps were filled up by them from the people that were established.

DP camps.

The DP camps. So they send us to a kibbutz which we wanted to go, we asked for one. And we went to Frankfurt am Main. That was Kofering. Was it?

[FOREIGN LANGUAGE]

Sulzheim. I'm mixing up the two. We went to Sulzheim. In Sulzheim this was a kibbutz yahud. And we were told that they just accept single people because these people are being prepared for Israel. And we wanted to get in there, so we pretended that we are not married. So we lived apart. He lived with men, I lived with women for about a month. Then we send a telegram to his brothers to come.

And finally we had to admit that we were married. They didn't throw us out or anything, but they kind of made a big deal out of it. They carried my bed into his room with me in it. But that was in the kibbutz. And then my first child was born while I was there. And his two brothers came to there, but once my child was born, we found out that our going to Israel is non-existent because they said that if I was going to go when I'm pregnant, then I might have the baby someplace on the route and they would still send him ahead or we would be separated. I mean, we think it was difficulties, but I think logically it was correct what they were doing. One of his brothers will go to Israel.

They wouldn't let you go after you had the baby?

No, because I had a baby. Israel still was not a state. So in the meantime, I found my family here in the United States. I knew about them, but I still wanted to go to Israel. And they send us affidavits twice. Finally, after my child was almost two years old, I decided I'd better make a decision because the camp was going to be closed up where we were. We got out of the kibbutz and lived in Sulzheim in a very tiny room for the three of us, sometimes four of us, his brother too. And then we were there until '48.

We have a very hard time to correspond with my family here. We corresponded through a chaplain and through our newspaperwoman, Elizabeth Sakharov. She was from New York and my aunt wrote to her and she came and looked us up. And I was also, even after the war, I don't need to tell you the DP camps weren't exactly luxury hotels either. That were very difficult.

As a matter of fact, I couldn't have the child normally because I didn't have enough energy. I was malnourished. I was in a German hospital where they threw out my baby and they said to my husband she was dead. This was in '46, the end of May. And I had a Cesarean. And they were going to take her in pieces. And I screamed. They called the UNRA, the UN, to say that we have here a woman who is under your authority and we are going to have to take the baby in pieces. And I screamed and I said, no! They're not going to take her in pieces. They're not going to take my baby in pieces!

So they had to operate. And they operated on me with their instruments and I got an infection. And I was in the hospital for five weeks draining with tubes. And the thing that kept me alive from getting an infection was alcohol, which my husband was buying from the black market until another doctor who was in and the kibbutz with us let my family know through the chaplain what the situation is. And then they somehow got penicillin to me that saved my life.

Your baby survived?

They threw her out, yeah. They threw her out and they told my husband she was dead. And at 5 o'clock in the morning, the nuns, they also have-- for infectious diseases in this hospital they have nuns working-- at 5 o'clock they're going to their chapel for prayer and they saw this baby lying in the hallway, blue, dead. They picked it up, they wrapped it, and they inserted a tube in her and rinsed her stomach, they said, with the whole pint of black tea. I think she was full of--

I guess they put me to sleep with ether or something. And I went through 26 hours of labor anyway. They let me go until I was still alive. Then while I was still in the hospital I guess I had an infection and they put me to die in a bathroom for overnight. Mind you, this was in '46, after the war. And when I was in this bathroom where they kept their linens and stuff like that, that's where they put the people could die so you wouldn't die in the ward. They put me down to die. And they came in the morning I wasn't dead, so they put me in my bed.

Actually, what's happened is my whole incision opened up all by itself and I started the draining. And I felt better but they thought I was dead. So then I guess I couldn't get out of bed or I couldn't move. I couldn't even move or an arm or anything. My husband would bring a whole quart of some type of alcohol, it doesn't matter. Sometimes it was rubbing alcohol that you can get poison from. They would put in eggs in it. He would have to bring it, if not they wouldn't do it. Put eggs so it wouldn't burn my throat. Then they put the things in my mouth, because I couldn't move, and the thing would just-- I would just swallow the thing and then I didn't know anything until the next day. That keep the infection from spreading until I got the penicillin.

When they got the penicillin to me, as I say, from the United States, from my family, and they had to give it-- then they were giving penicillin every five hours. The doctor who was giving me the penicillin wanted coffee or cigarettes for his work because he gave me the shot. It was that bad. I also couldn't urinate because I guess I was just all messed up, infected, and so my stomach was extended. They put me to sleep and they were going to do some more surgery on me. But because my body relaxed, I urinated and they found out that that's all it was.

They were going to cut some more. In Germany they experiment on people, especially if they're Jewish people, not on animals. That was my experience with the Germans. So certainly when it came an opportunity to leave there, I wanted to go to Israel, to come here. I came.

When did you come to the United States.

February 5, 1948. 41 years ago.

And how many children do you have?

I have three children. I had two miscarriages afterwards and doctors here said that I'll never be able to carry a child because they also tore some female organs or completely made them disappear, so my pregnancy was almost unbelievable. My other two children how they were born completely non-orthodox, but the doctors almost danced when my children were born because they said nothing like that happened. I'm written up in the medical journals. And I was very sick for a long time when I came here.

And I think even 10 years ago I couldn't have talked about this. And I didn't say everything because it's impossible. Each time it gets a little bit easier because my uncles wanted to know all about it. I could never talk to them about it because they would feel so bad. When I started talking I got so emotional that they always said, that's enough, that's enough. We don't have to know.

How much have you told your children?

My children, know. One of my daughters wrote her thesis on the Holocaust. But she also did research on her own about the psychological experiments. And she has all of that documented. And I have all of her journals that she has written. And so my children are-- She's also in Seattle. She is the coordinator for the Jewish Community Center on the north end. And she started there a Holocaust of the second generation. And she belonged in Boston to one. And she worked for the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. And she got her masters from Brandeis in Jewish Communal Services.

And my children, my grandchildren, as a matter of fact, my grandson is going to have his bar mitzvah in April, and he is planning to say something about this to my grandchildren also now. And my youngest daughter says that she can't participate in any of this because she gets very upset, but my other two children-- Well, she knows about all of this but she has a hard time to come to any things that have to do with the Holocaust.

Because I guess my children never had grandparents my family actually, losing seven brothers and young parents. And it doesn't matter how much you try to not bring it out for your children, they know that most children have grandparents, uncles and aunts. From my side there is nobody. I'm like I fell out from the sky. There is nobody who-- I lost everybody. My father had one brother and five sons. I don't know. I tried to find if anybody surviving. My mother had two sister's, children, grandchildren. There is not the one left. The whole family's like that wiped off of the planet Earth. There is nobody left. Not a grandchild, not a child, nobody.

So luckily I had here some family. But somebody in the beginning I couldn't identify with. They're very good people and all of that, but it's very hard for children to grow up and-- Like I had to come-- Other children would get from their grandparents things. I would make for my children gifts and tell them that they're aunt sent it to them from my husband's side or things like that. It's a very difficult thing on everybody's side that your children.

Like my children say that, I feel like my grandmother watches over me. Or if I have some things I call upon my grandfather. Or maybe you remember the good things, but my father was supposed to have been a very learned man. My grandfather was supposed to be one of those just people that I heard here, not from home, that there is just a few on this Earth. And it doesn't matter if it's so or not. But does make a big difference when you're raising children to have to explain what's happened to them. And it's hard for them to listen, because most of the time they want to spare me. And what they do is they say, oh, that's OK. We'll talk about it another time.

Thank you very much.

You're very welcome. Did I get too emotional?

Very, very powerful.

No. It's too hot. It's too long ago. And besides it's been such a long time ago.