

[INAUDIBLE] OK. Unfortunately, I have to ask you to repeat here.

That's fine. But tell me how to repeat it.

What role did luck play in your survival? Do you consider yourself lucky? Did-- why did you survive and so many people didn't?

When I think about my story and what happened to me, I think that I was extremely lucky person. And I have a lot to thank my husband who was very resourceful when it came-- when it came to our refugee times and how to get us out. I don't think I could do it without him for sure.

Why my family-- I was the youngest one. And here I had a beautiful extended family, not only my own family, but I had many uncles, and aunts, and cousins. None of them survived. I was the only one who survived. My father was a very believing man. He was a very religious man. And, yet he didn't survive. I just could not understand that.

And here I am, being here. And actually, the religious part was also, always, when I was a young kid a burden on my shoulders. Because I had to be at a certain time on Sabbath home, and I couldn't do certain things during the holidays because my father was religious. So, at first when I was out of the house, I felt kind of free. Here, I am allowed to do anything I want to. I didn't have any supervision of this kind.

And yet, I survived where my father was spending time in the synagogue and things. And I never did this. Of course, I was too young for all this. I think that I was extremely lucky person. All through the war I was lucky.

When live came to Canada, it was very, very hard. And I think my husband was taking it also much harder than I did. Maybe because he was the worrier in the family at the time. And I didn't-- he doing all the worrying for me. And mind you, I am also a worrier. Now that I am by myself-- my husband passed away about 12 years ago-- I'm doing my share. But I didn't-- at that time, I just didn't have to because he did just about all the worrying for me. And we brought up a beautiful family.

We had no money we came here, nothing. We had 20 American dollars, that's all. And look at it now. I mean, I consider-- and we never took advantage of anybody. We just worked hard. We didn't have any family. We didn't know the language. We had everything really against us. But we had one thing which was for us. We were both young. And we are not afraid of any work. We were not ashamed of any work. And maybe that's the result.

And I consider myself really lucky. I always consider myself lucky. I consider myself lucky as long as my family is healthy. That's for me the biggest luck, and as long as I'm healthy. But the family is-- I'm very family minded. To me, the family is the most important part of my life and for my husband it was.

My husband always used to say-- my children come every Sunday to my house for dinner. And I always have 15 people for dinner every Sunday. And before my husband passed away we had less, because the other ones were born, a few of them were born after my husband passed away. And he always used to say, look, we were just two around the table and look at us now. And he was just so proud. It makes me really sad that he can see all this.

I agree with you, family is very important. While you were in Japan, were you able to communicate with your family? Did you send postcards? Did they send postcards to you? What did they say? Why were they concerned?

While we were in Japan.

Sorry, I was speaking, so.

In Japan, in Kobe, they had a Jewish Community Center. They called it a JewCom And Japan and Germany where like Axis, they were friends during this-- they were allies during the war. We could send postcards to our family in Warsaw, even though they were in the ghetto already. And, of course, we used to send postcards because everything was

censored. We had to be very careful.

But what we did, we could send them food from Japan. So we used to send them parcels. Like we used to buy some sausages, rice sausage, and tea, and coffee, things like this which you can send. And we used to send them the parcels. And we got a few postcards from them. And they did receive our parcels.

But they were always complaining they didn't get enough letters from us. And so, we were in communication. And I still have those postcards to this day. And in those postcards they never complained about themselves. Because they had to move from their apartments. They have to find a place in the ghetto. And they were all living together. And it was very, very hard for them. But in their letters, they never mentioned it.

They always used to say, how are you managing? How are you? Because I was the youngest one at home and my husband was also the youngest one in his family. So the families were always worrying how does two young people, how did they manage? So this was the communication what we had.

And when we got to Vancouver, the war between-- was not on yet between the United States and Germany, but that was before Pearl Harbor. And since Nate was before in New York working for this company, so our families used to send letters to New York. And then those people from this company used to mail it to us to Canada, to Vancouver. So we were still in communication with them until Pearl Harbor. Because the minute the Americans went into war, all this stopped.

When did you find out what happened to them?

We found out one after the war.

Can you tell me--

Oh, I'm sorry. And so we're here. We knew about these things happening, that this war was on. But we still were confident-- when we were in Vancouver, we were still confident that someday we're going to reunite with our families. Because our visa to Canada wasn't an immigration visa. It was a visa which plainly says on the passport, for the duration of the war. That's what it said.

But the reason we did give our landing visa, our permanent visa here, because my husband joined the army. And because-- and after the war, because he was serving in the Canadian forces, we got right away our visa, the-- it's not an immigrant visa, but our permission to stay in Canada, a citizenship.

And when did you find out about the Holocaust?

We found out about the Holocaust about in-- right after the war ended, at the end of 1945. I got a letter from my sister-in-law, who survived. And she wrote me about what's happening to my family. That was the most terrible. I have this letter translated into English, because it came in Polish, so that my children would know. And she just told us the whole story of what happened to my family.

Is that bad?

No. Actually, on the lab it isn't too bad. I heard it though. Perhaps you could redo that.

We're still rolling?

Yeah, [INAUDIBLE] see how-- what's going to happen with this.

Oh, some noise?

Yeah. [INAUDIBLE]. So-- Cut.

Oh, now I--

OK, and rolling.

Speed.

Hopefully [INAUDIBLE] while I'm talking. Could you tell me--

We should [INAUDIBLE]

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

When did you find out about the Holocaust and what happened to your relatives?

Well, I found out about the Holocaust and what happened to my relatives in the-- after the war ended. Because I never knew about the camps. I didn't know anything about those things. We never heard anything. We knew there are some terrible things happening to our people.

OK, I'm sorry. We'll cut.

And rolling.

So, what happened to your relatives that were left behind? And when did you find out about the Holocaust and the concentration camps? And how did you deal with that information?

After the war ended, my sister-in-law survived the war. And she managed to get to Palestine I think. And she wrote a letter from there. And that was the first inkling what I had what happened to my family. I had no information. I would try to--

Sorry, but the saw was there.

Let's just-- why don't we-- starting over.

And rolling. Could you tell me when you found out about the Holocaust, how you found out about and literally what happened to some of your relatives?

Well, I found out about the Holocaust after the war. And I got a letter from my sister-in-law, who survived the Holocaust and who was in Palestine and she found me. Well, maybe that was like 1946. But I already heard the rumors. And heard about the camps, and extermination camps, and what was happening, about a liquidation of the ghetto. We knew about the Warsaw ghetto uprising.

And we really didn't know what happened to our family. Maybe somehow they survived. And for my sister-in-law I found out that my family really survived until the ghetto uprising. They had to be working in some different factories. Once you had that permit to work, you had a much better chance to survive. And after-- uh-oh. Uh-oh.

So we have--

What happened to your mother and father?

We were living in Warsaw on the principle street in Warsaw. We had a beautiful apartment. But the place was not in the Jewish part of town. And the Jewish part of town was designated by the Nazis as the ghetto. So my family had to move from their apartment. And also my sisters, who were living in this same part of town as my parents and my brother. And they had to find accommodation in the ghetto part of Warsaw. So a few families moved together.

And they survived the war until the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Mind you, one of my sisters, she didn't survive, she and her husband. Because they had a little boy, who at the outbreak of the war was about a year old. So he was maybe two or three years old at the time. It was in 1942. And he was just caught-- the boy was outside and he was caught by the Nazis.

And my sister and my brother-in-law, who were just crazy, just like anybody would be about his child, ran after him. And they just lost their life and the boy did too. It was just extremely tragic.

Now, my older sister and her husband, and she had a little child, who was a little girl who was about seven years old at the time, they survived just about till the end, until the Warsaw ghetto uprising. And when the Warsaw ghetto uprising, my brother had a chance to escape to the Aryan side of Warsaw. But it was already too late. Because in the meantime, the Warsaw ghetto uprising started. And they were all caught up in it.

And when the uprising ended, they still survived. And they were all sent to a place called Poniatowa, which was not far from Warsaw. And the Germans established there factories making baskets and different things. It was just a pretense. And after a month being there, they were all told to dig some trenches like. And they shot them all. And they finished them all off. And that was the end of them.

My father, on the other hand, actually, he died in 1942. That's what my sister-in-law wrote. Because there was an epidemic of typhus. And he was a victim of this epidemic. So he died a natural death. And as she said, we were so crying and so desperate when your father got so sick, but we didn't know what a blessing it was at the time, that he at least died a natural death.

How about your mother?

My mother, she died in Poniatowa, in this place.

Can you just tell me in a general way that you lost your family to the Holocaust and not specifically, and how you found out?

I came from a large family. In my own family, I was the youngest one. I had two older sisters and a brother, and my mother and father, of course. But we came from a very large family. I had many aunts. I had many uncles, a grandfather, and a grandmother. I had cousins by the dozens. And we were a very close family, very close knit family. And I lost all this. Every one of them was killed, were lost in the Holocaust. They just did not survive.

And again, how did you find out about what happened to your family?

I found out from two sources. One of them--

Start--

Can I just say something, before you-- so that you-- you see, I'll tell you what. In 1967-- I got this letter from my sister-in-law as I told, you know.

Well, we had to-- I need to get that story because of sound problems.

OK. But I want to tell you, because you asked me again exactly what happened to my family. She-- in 1968-- 1968, I found a cousin who survived in Paris.

[INAUDIBLE]

And he-- no, I don't want to tell you this story. But you see-- but what--

After the war, it was already 1945 at the end. We were looking for our family, hoping through all the different agencies, if anybody survived. But we never got any response. And then, I think it was beginning or so of 1946, which I got a letter from a relative of mine. And she described to me exactly what happened to my family. She happened to land in Palestine. It was not Israel yet.

And she just wrote to me about everything which happened to my family. And my family really ended very tragically. Because after the Warsaw ghetto uprising, which they were lucky to survive, somehow, they landed in Poniatowa. And there, they were shot by the Nazis.

Why is it so important for you to be here telling this story? Why?

It is very important for me to tell this story because I am the only survivor of my family. I don't want their deaths to be just-- I don't want to think that they just died without-- for nothing. I think that's the least what I can do to perpetrate-- I don't know how to say it-- their memory. To keep their memory alive. To let the world know what bestiality, and inhumanity, and a cruelty of one human being to another, for no reason-- for only one reason, that they were happened to be born Jewish. To me this bestiality, it's just beyond comprehension.

And I always tell this story to my children and to my family. And my family, luckily, they are very much interested in my story and what happened to their-- first, what their routes are and what happened to them. That's why I went twice back to Warsaw with some of my children. Because they wanted just to see where do they come from.

It's very important for everybody to know where they come from. And I really don't want this story to be forgotten. I'm not getting any younger, that's for sure. And I won't be too long on this Earth. And I just don't want this story to be forgotten. It's just as simple as that. This is my story. This is all I have.

Great.

Were you shocked when you learned about-- you must have heard in the news and stuff about the Holocaust. Were you shocked when you heard? Or did you hear piecemeal? Did you hear--

When I found out after the war what was happening to the people who were left behind, I still could not believe it. I mean, it was just hard for me to believe. And we were looking for our families. We couldn't find them. We didn't know what happened to them. But we still didn't lose hope, because maybe, somehow.

But when we got this letter from my relative, what happened to my-- that was the most-- I still remember to this day what a devastating-- it was the most devastating day in my life. I mean, it's had to say the most, because this is just without beyond comprehension, absolutely. What can you say?

Here I'm left. I mean, everything whatever was, no more. And yet, many people didn't understand that at that time. It was so unbelievable for many local people to understand what was happening to the Jewish people in Europe. And I'm not surprised. Because who can wonder even?

I tell you now, when I watch all those documentaries, and the new things being found in the archives in Great Britain, or who had in the archives of Great Britain, or from Israel, or all those documentaries, I cannot believe. In as much as I cannot be angry at the new, young German generation, because they cannot have fault at what their fathers did, but when I see what happened, I can't believe that the world forgot-- has such a short memory and forgot what the Germans did to the people. It's unbelievable.

Not only that 6 million Jewish people were killed, 25 million Russian people were killed. I mean, the cataclysm was so great that I just can't believe that those things can be forgotten. And just as much as I cannot feel really angry at German people, the young generation, yet I have something inside of me. I said, my goodness, how the world can forget something like that.

It's a very good question.

Something just start?

Yeah. Do you hear it?

Yeah, but [INAUDIBLE]

It's pretty low.

Tell me the story once again about-- located in Japan, about getting the visa to Canada. And you don't have to talk about having-- just your reaction of getting it.

When we finally got our visa to Canada, which was very hard to get because my husband only got one visa for himself, and he tried and tried again to get another visa for me. And finally, he was so desperate that he cabled to me to Kobe to come to Tokyo. And he said together maybe we will be able to do something about it.

So, I immediately left by train to Tokyo and joined Nate. And we went to this fellow who was distributing those visas. And Nathan said to him, listen, I will just not go without my wife. You just have to find another visa for my wife. And through some efforts-- I don't know, maybe he went to this Polish embassy, they did manage to find another visa for me quite shortly.

But we had very little time because we had to leave on this boat, which the passage was already arranged, within 24 hours. So, I had to leave immediately back to Kobe to pick up the few things, what we had, not too many, but still, like my pillow and all those things which so important to us. And I joined my husband in Tokyo. Then we boarded a boat in Yokohama.

OK, how was the jet?

Again, I heard it.

You can tell me, describe to me again what it was like to-- and tell me about the snow, and the dogs, and--

Oh, OK.

And about crossing the border into Lithuania.

OK.

When we decided to go to Lithuania, it wasn't like you take a train. We had to steal across the border. And we had a guide who was taking a few people with him. And he was living in the border city of Ejszyski, which was on the Lithuanian side. And we started to walk. We came close to the border, by train or whatever.

And then when we were a few miles from the border, we had to walk. And that was in the middle of winter. It was January. It was extremely, extremely cold winter. And the snow was just about to your waist line. And we had to walk across the snow. But the worst of it was, it was a very bright night. And there was-- the full moon was shining on the snow. So it was just like lit, like daylight, because the snow, the reflection off the snow.

And we went ahead, Nathan and I, because we were younger than the other people behind us. And the people behind us, all of a sudden, we hear this noise, were caught by the Lithuanian border patrol. And we managed to escape. And we hid behind a little house, petrified, shaking. And all of a sudden, we hear these dogs barking, and barking, and barking. And we knew that the dogs are going to give us away.

Finally, we saw a light in one house. It was a corner house, right on the border. We knock on the door. And the lady was good enough to let us in. She even gave us some straw on the floor. And we fell asleep because we were dead tired.

When we woke up in the morning, the lady was gone, but then somebody knocked on the door. And that was some-- that was our guide, who said, come on, you have to leave this house immediately, because this lady is an informer.

And we left this house with this guide. And we went to the guide's house. And then from there-- we stayed a few hours in his house. And then by sleigh during the night he took us to Vilna.

Great, Thanks. How old were you when you were a refugee?

I was 19.

OK, but--

Oh--

And--

Forgot about it.

Tell me does it seem like a whole lifetime ago?

Well, it seems to me--

Sorry, but tell me how old you were and--

OK. Well, the war started on my birthday, OK. And I was 19 on September the 1st, 1939. To me, I felt quite mature, though my parents didn't think so. But now that I have a granddaughter who is 19 years old, I just can't imagine her to go through all what I did, because to me she's still a child. She's quite a smart and mature girl, but to think that I was 19 and I just left home. And I was not afraid, absolutely not afraid.

The worst moment in my life-- one of the worst, because I had many-- was when I left my house, escaping to the Russian side. And I was in this freight train. And I said to myself, what am I doing here? I was extremely scared. That was a very scary moment. And I felt like I want to go back to mommy and daddy. That's how I felt then.

It was like-- I still remember this feeling. It was such a deep feeling that to this day I remember this feeling of feeling completely alone. Where are you going?

Great.