

Dalia Handelman: [00:00:00] So I'm just going to start with, this is Dalia Handelman interviewing Ann Jaffe on Tuesday, July 9th 2019 at 2 p.m. So just for the recording. Can you state your name, date of birth and location of birth?

Ann Jaffe: My name is Ann Jaffe. I was born March 5th 1931. So that makes me 88 [00:00:30] years old now. And I live in Wilmington Delaware for the past almost 45 years.

Dalia Handelman: So, can you so what do you remember about the place you were born place you grew up?

Ann Jaffe: Well, I was born in a very small shtetl, or village what you would call, where the population was about 1,200. That's all. Out of the 1,200 we [00:01:00] evenly divided about one-third were Catholics, one-third Greek Orthodox and one-third Jews. So, we had about 350 Jews in our little village.

Dalia Handelman: And can you tell me about your family?

Ann Jaffe: Yes, my parents and maternal grandmother we lived in a house. Not a big [00:01:30] house, but still it was a nice house, and it, life was very peaceful within our house was wonderful. But outside of the Jewish homes we were we had difficulties with the Catholic kids they would attack Jewish children after school and call them Christ-killers. There was a lot of hatred we could feel it [00:02:00] all the time. I mean even before the war it was going on, but we still had good relationships with many other Christian people with whom we did business or I knew them as neighbors, but there were a lot of the young people that with the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany it they would become [00:02:30] emboldened and started to attack Jews and call them all kinds of names and tell them, "Jews you go to Palestine. We don't want you here." Or they would stand in front of the Jewish stores and they would just tell everybody, "Don't buy from the Jews. We don't want them here." That's since 1935 this kind of thing started happening.

Dalia Handelman: Okay, so [00:03:00] it was definitely before the war

Ann Jaffe: Before the war there's, it was, definitely, there was a lot of anti-Semitism and hatred.

and we felt it right and then Once the war started it just grew when the war started it grew immediately. We noticed it in digit when the Germans came to us in 1941 in June when

[00:03:30] they attack the Soviet Union, they have asked for a volunteer militia from our local population and quite a few young people have volunteered to become a lie Chemin and they knew right away that this is something that their job is going to be to help the Nazis do their bidding whatever it was and one of them was, you know, take care of the Jews. [00:04:00]

Dalia Handelman: So what did your parents do? When you were growing up

Ann Jaffe: My mother was a seamstress and she worked only when she needed some extra money. Otherwise, you know, because she had five children and that was enough to take care of in a little in the little village where there was no electricity and no running water, you know, but every not every about the most of the households had the bigger vegetable [00:04:30] garden and a cow and a horse you It's like a farming community maybe a little bit more sophisticated than just a village but not much more

Dalia Handelman: and your father.

Ann Jaffe: My father was a merchant of fish. We lived on the largest lake in Poland and their their freshwater fish was very good and well known and so he partnered with a Christian [00:05:01] fisherman and he bought him nets and that fishermen would go and catch the fish and he would bring it to my father and my father would ship it to the big cities and all the prophets that was from the from the catch. My father shared 50/50 with his Christian fisherman.

Dalia Handelman: Um, so you have four siblings.

Ann Jaffe: I had if [00:05:31] I had to actually five siblings because my last sibling was born just 10 days before The Nazi's attack the Soviet Union, so he was only 20 days when they came in into our little town but before the war who are just five and then the sixth one was born just at the break of the war

Dalia Handelman: So you mentioned the acts of anti-Semitism before the war [00:06:01] ever even started. Do you remember any like personal?

Ann Jaffe: Okay. I myself have not experienced it because I was very young and I still went to the Jewish school. We had up to fifth grade. We had Hebrew school after fifth grade if you wanted to go to school you had to go to the what they call the public school and that was from 5th through 8th. [00:06:31] I think and those Jewish kids who chose to go to get a better education because we didn't have a full high school after we finish the eighth grade. We you had to go to the big city to study. So those Jewish children like my older brother who went to the so-called public school he had experienced it and their way home from school. They would attack the Jewish kids and throw rocks at them and call them [00:07:01] Christ-killers. So but I personally did not experience it because I didn't go to the public school yet,

Dalia Handelman: right. Um, how... do you remember how holidays were celebrated before the war

Ann Jaffe: before the war, Yes. Well, all those little villages they're what you call shtetls. Most of the people were very religious. I don't remember anyone that would [00:07:31] you know publicly it transgress or the Sabbath every Sabbath, of course in the Jewish Home. It was celebrated. It was good meals and a whole week. We might've eaten, you know poor food, but came the Sabbath we had to have you know, everything with the Holland cake and and Fish and Chicken and everything, you know that the Jewish families cooker [00:08:01] that time and within our own house or in every Jewish Home. We were a very happy, you know Family, it's only when we had to interact with the Christian people that it was, you know problematic what you call

Dalia Handelman: Yeah, would you say you were raised as conservative or

Ann Jaffe: religious. Orthodox. we didn't [00:08:31] know such a thing as transgressing the Sabbath and the Sabbath day, you did nothing, but you're allowed to study and afternoon if you wanted to take Book and study, but we obeyed everything the way in there Orthodox religion requires.

Dalia Handelman: Hmm. Did you have a bat mitzvah?

Ann Jaffe: there was no such thing. There's but Mitzvah and Bar Mitzvah is an American invention. Well [00:09:01] a bar mitzvah actually was was done in Europe also, but the Bat Mitzvah it was we never heard of such a thing. We didn't make a big fuss over it. You just bake

the big cake and brought in why into the shul where the child was, the boy was Bar Mitzvah, you know, and that was it. There was no big parties or presents, it was a different style of life.

Dalia Handelman: [00:09:31] So um, you had you, you, went to a congregation?

Ann Jaffe: I think it was only once synagogue and everybody went to the same synagogue. There was no such thing as divisions in the small towns

Dalia Handelman: Okay, and we're you like did you feel connected to that congregation?

Ann Jaffe: Of course, everybody felt connected because everybody Jewish person that lived in our little village went to the same. Shul and we met them and [00:10:01] I didn't go as a child every Shabbat but came a holiday old young and old alike. We packed the shoe to the room, you know, and not only that we the kids would be outside and playing with each other. Yeah. It was a festive thing. Yeah.

Dalia Handelman: So what was I know Israel wasn't established [00:10:31] when you were growing up? Yeah, okay. Um. so what was your-

Ann Jaffe your, if know everybody I know my father called himself as himself a religious Zionist, which means that [00:11:01] you know that it was Misrocki . I think they call them the Misrocki movement.

[00:11:31] -phone call interruption-

Ann Jaffe: I will explain to you How the People Express their Zionism, We're at the time when I was still a young kid, there were many of the young people [00:12:01] who went to the Hasharah it was called-

[00:11:31] -phone call interruption-

Ann Jaffe: . This is not going to be very long is it? **Dalia Handelman:** no

Ann Jaffe: I will tell you how we expressed our Zionism every household had this Karanpushka [00:12:31] you know, little box and even though we were not rich people but every family knew at the end of the week on Friday that you had to put Did you had to put some money in in the box and I always used to tell my mother. Why are we putting the money in the Box? I would rather take the money and go and buy some candy and she always told me no my child This is [00:13:01] very important. We have to collect every penny and so that we can buy back the land in Israel for the Jewish people. So every Jewish Family knew their obligation

Dalia Handelman: so you you had a connection.

Ann Jaffe: Oh, yes. It's very strong connection. If the British would not stop the Jewish immigration many few of the young people from our village went to Israel before [00:13:31] the war. But yeah, and if this would have lasted if the Germans would not have come I'm sure many more with the would have gone to Israel and what if it was only possible but there British wouldn't let the jews come

Dalia Handelman: so moving forward a little bit when the war broke out. When was the first time you realize that or your family realize that something was going on

Ann Jaffe: we knew [00:14:01] as soon as Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union we knew that we were in a lot of trouble because people from Western Poland who escaped who were occupied by the Germans two years earlier and they told us how harshly the Germans treat the Jews so we knew it that we're in a lot of trouble but there was no chance for us to escape especially for families with little children. Yeah, we had no [00:14:31] cars. The only mode of transportation was a horse and buggy and those few who tried to escape including my father. We're overtaken by the Germans with their mechanized army, they went around the small villages and came into the big cities. So when they arrived into the first big city where they could take maybe a train or something the Germans were there already so they had no choice and they had to come back. [00:15:01] The only ones who managed to escape were some of the young people who had bicycles and they didn't waste their time they immediately as soon as Germany attacked the Soviet Union they got on their bikes and they drove straight into Russia and they have survived.

Dalia Handelman: on bike they drove bikes from-

Ann Jaffe: bike from our little village all the way into Russia. Of course you stopped on the way.

Dalia Handelman: So how [00:15:31] old were you when the Nazis came into your village?

Ann Jaffe: when the Nazis attacked I was 10 years old when the Nazis marched in into my little village and I was under the Nazi occupation for three years and when we were liberated, I was 13 years old

Dalia Handelman: Okay, so can you describe what happened?

Ann Jaffe: Well I witnessed in the first 15 months that I have still lived [00:16:01] in my own village. I have witnessed the killing of most of the Jewish people from our village first in smaller groups and then in larger groups and then at the very end in 1942 on Yom, Kippur, they always chose a Jewish holiday for Mass executions. They came in and they rounded up all the Jews that are still left and they took them out to the nearby forest and they shot them [00:16:31] all which was what they have done in all the other towns. They killed the people by shooting

Dalia Handelman: so they would for three years you were you they didn't move you out as you stayed in your village-

Ann Jaffe: no only for 15 months I stayed in my Village and I did the day of the execution I was there too, but they were going to kill all of us. But a some kind of a very freak so to say good luck thing. The [00:17:01] Germans had such a thing as what they called useful Jews "Nestrusl" and they were looking for a few families that they can still use and my mother was well known as a master seamstress, you know, she was not only a seamstress. She was a designer, you know, and somebody told a German Soldier about it. So just hours before the execution. He came into the place [00:17:31] where we were kept in that public house and he let out a few families that he could still use they refer to them as you knew sleepy you and useful Jews and at the very end he had my mother's name there somebody in and he told her, you know, my mother came up to the door and He first she didn't want to let go all the four children, but she refused to she's is no it's you'd ever go [00:18:01] all or none. And so they let us out which was literally hours before the execution and the rest of the people at the last hundred and twenty Jews that we are in our village. We're shot the next at dawn the next morning.

Dalia Handelman: So it was it was you, 3 of our siblings and your

Ann Jaffe: mother and father and they took us the very same day. They took us [00:18:31] to a neighboring town and they put us in the ghetto. But it was a very small ghetto only for what they called for the useful Jews who had some kind of Trades and professions that they still needed and from there, you know, we had an extraordinary chance to escape. I had another incident that happened and that is my father had to go to [00:19:01] work everyday and one day when he walked by a warehouse where they collected plants and he was a naturalist he knew everything, you know, when he planted his own Orchards and crossed reason of this kind of thing and he saw they were plants that from which medication was extracted. He looked in and he is so that they are rotting there. [00:19:31] So he approached their manager of that warehouse and he said take a look what's happening the not just will see and they will accuse you of sabotage in you know, so he says I don't know how to handle it. They told me to collect it and I have no idea. So my father told him go to one of of the Nazi officers and tell them that you found somebody who knows how to run of the Jews from the ghetto and tell them that [00:20:01] he knows how to handle it and maybe he'll give you permission for me to work for you and he went and he gave him permission and my father started working in that plant and we felt a little bit better. They now my mother was already finishing the dresses for this Nazi officer it we feel felt that Father is useful, maybe next time when there will be a selection. They will not take us away. But that's not [00:20:31] how it happened a couple of weeks later two trucks rolled into together and with the list of people to be taken away and we were on that list and we were already standing up on the on the trucks. My father helped us up and we were standing there and as luck would have it It in the distance. He has noticed the men for whom he was working and [00:21:01] he called out to him and he said they're taking us away. Don't you need my help anymore. He says I do. So he says go quickly to the same Nazi officer that give you permission for me to work for you and say that you need me so he did and he came back with a permission slip to take us off the truck.

Dalia Handelman: Wow

Ann Jaffe: the two full tracks of Jews that were taken out from the ghetto that day not a single one of them [00:21:31] survived we found out the after the war with happened to them and it was a horrible, horrible, thing. So we were left by sheer luck. You know, we escaped a second execution so to say and we were left in the in this small little ghetto of the useful Jews. And if you there's no way you can escape you can't run away and even if you could run away who is going to give you shelter, you know, they're Christian [00:22:01] people were told that if they are going to help Jews, they too will be killed and so we were just waiting to see what's going to happen. But one morning you have you heard the term partisans. Yeah. These are those Freedom Fighters young man. Some of them were Jewish and some of most of them where Russian prisoners of war that the escape and they have joined into fighting [00:22:31] units in the try to disrupt the German war effort any way they could and one of those groups have decided to I don't know whether they decided to make a name for themselves or whether they have were given an order. I'm not absolutely sure but they have attacked the German Garrison in that town in which were incarcerated in the ghetto and we didn't know what was happening. We heard a lot of shooting and we just [00:23:01] laid down under the beds with nothing but the clothes that was near us, you know, and when the shooting stopped my father walked over to the window to see maybe he can see what's happening and as luck would have it he looked out

and what that she sees you are. This was the last house of the ghetto and the windows were boarded up from the outside so that we should not be able to open up the windows, [00:23:32] but he looked out and between the crevices he noticed a young man that you recognized. It was a Jewish young men from that Town who was with those partisans and they try to destroy the German Garrison and they were already retreating but my father knocked on the window quickly and he and around his what are you doing here? He said we have tried to destroy the German Garrison and we are retreating now and when I was coming [00:24:02] back I saw did they ghetto there was still under luck. So I broke the lock and I ran into the Jewish homes, and I told them if you want to leave run run quickly through the swamps into the forest. Somebody will meet you there and tell you where to go but ours was the last House of the ghetto nobody bothered to come and tell us that we too Need to Escape those first couple of houses all of them run away and [00:24:32] escape and so he would he did this partisan and he helped my father break or open the boards from the outside and break the window and he said don't waste any time because we are already retreating is as just run jump through the window and run straight. A through the forest and there will be a guide and they will tell you were to do that was the first time that we've heard of such a thing and escape [00:25:02] from a ghetto, you know by Liberated by the partisans. I don't think I've read a lot of stories. I don't think I've heard of another case like this and when we came we made it to do with nothing, but what we had on our back, that's it. We didn't have time to even grab anything because she says make it fast just jump and run and when we came to the forest those partisans, you know were nice to us. They made [00:25:32] us a meal, you know, then and then the, the, commanding officer took a look. I have no use for you. I need young people with rifles to help me fight. You're middle aged people with children. This is the only thing I can do for you. I am going to give you a a guide and they will take you to a 4 to a Faraway forest and there you'll have to fend for yourself. And I remember we walked a whole [00:26:02] night before we arrived into that other forest. And there they helped us make a bonfire. There's it guarded with your life because you let it go you'll freeze to death. This was already in November. It starts getting very cold, you know in Poland at that time of the year as a matter of fact About a week after we arrived in that Forest. It was already snowing, you know and with a baby on our hands. That was only what 15 [00:26:32] months old. I think at that time. That's right 16 probably months old and with nothing absolutely nothing to exchange for food or or warm clothing to a shelter as just a bonfire and we had to learn how to survive. It was very difficult at first if at least the first couple of months, we would go at night to The Villages.

Somebody showed [00:27:02] us where the villages are and we would beg for food and most of the farmers were very kind and would share something, you know, we hardly ever got the piece of bread. But if you piece of cabbage or beads, they would share with us and we would bring you to the forest and we would cook it and we would share between We want every member of the family and that was it. That was the only meal that we had for the day and we had to survive [00:27:32] it later things have gotten easier for us people helped us make a dug out where we could be hiding from from the you know elements and but at that time the blockade started the Germans found out where Jews are hiding and they were and the forest and they would go in a chain and try to capture as many as they could and so we went through three blockades [00:28:02] like this the first winter and it was at literally a miracle that that we managed to survive those 3 blockades, but my father said obviously they know where we are hiding. We were not caught this few times. They will be back we must move away. And so he moved he

found out that place where other Jews are hiding which is closer to the village where we came from [00:28:32] and he says we're going to try and find it place but at that time as soon as moved away every one of us it was a tremendous was already a springtime a tremendous downpour. We were all wet through and through because you're under the Open Sky and it's raining and raining, you know, And and all of us came down with typhoid fever all except for the baby. Would you believe it? [00:29:02] And and after we have gotten a little bit better we started out and slowly we made our way to the other Forest where we knew other Jews are hiding and there are things have changed for us, you know it to the for the better right because it was much closer to our village where we came from and people recognize my father and they helped with a lot more with whatever we could [00:29:32] I but don't want to go into too many details because you're going to watch the tape.

Hmm, so you'll get more details. Okay, and, and, so the second winter and the second spring, so to say it was a little easier for us to survive, but it was a total of 20 months that we had to hide out in the forest with this little baby of ours when we were liberated. He was three [00:30:02] three years old and he has never been into a house. He didn't know what it's like when we when we finally made it after the war after we were liberated from finally made it in into our village where we came from and the Christian family. Let us live there in their house because ours burned to the ground and my mother put him in the bed. He didn't know how to sleep in the bed. He curled up on the floor [00:30:32] down on the floor because you've lived in the forest for such a long time that you that you forget what the Civilized life is all about. Yeah. So I'm one of those very very lucky ones that I managed to survive with my parents and with most of my siblings because one of them my older brothers was caught by the Germans and killed and another one was taken [00:31:02] away for labor and we had no idea what happened to him. But luckily he managed to escape with the help of a relative of ours and he from one of the ghettos and He made his way during the Warriors. He didn't join the partisans in the forest. But he managed my, an older cousin who was [00:31:32] well-schooled in you know, in in the he was a soldier before the war you know, so he knew what was happening. He says we are going to try to cross the front lines and maybe we can make our way into Russia and they did they We were wandering around in the forest for weeks and weeks and then they found a place where the front line was. And [00:32:02] when the German Soldier would guard the line and when the he would turn around and go back they would run across those lines and when they made their way into Russia, and that's where he finished the Warriors in Russia my older brother and he had no idea what happened to us and but he took a chance when he heard on the radio that the Russian forces have just liberated this in this Village naming our [00:32:32] village. He says maybe maybe somebody survived and he wrote immediately a letter to whoever to whomever it may concern. If any one of this year's Skirvrosi family has survived. Please give them this letter and that's how I found out that he's alive. So, can you see how lucky we are out of the six siblings five of us have survived.

Dalia Handelman: Wow, and the older the one that didn't survive and you said he got caught by the Germans [00:33:02] how did that happen?

Ann Jaffe: well on the day on the day when they were rounding up all the Jews in their Village. He and another two little boys tried to hide and escape and where did they hide in our village We had only two German soldiers stationed and they were from regular army soldiers. They were not from the Gestapo or to for the for the to to take care of the telephone lines. [00:33:32]

And we knew that these are friendly Germans. They, they, you know, if they could have helped they would have helped us but they were not allowed to and so my brother and those other two boys ran into the barn of those ready to soldiers sleep and the to the soldiers saw them. And they brought them food and they let them stay over and they said look we cannot keep you here for a long time. We will give you Provisions for the road. And [00:34:03] if you need something to dress in but you must go and find another place and they didn't know where to go. So they went to another big every city where, where, there's still a ghetto and they live there and did get a for a while and then they were Taking away the people from this ghetto and they said that they're taking them to a bigger ghetto to Vilnius and unfortunately instead of taking them to Vilna They took them to this extermination [00:34:33] place called Poenari when they shot them all there.

Dalia Handelman: So he got separated from your family when you were still in

Ann Jaffe: Yeah. Yeah. by trying to escape

Dalia Handelman: How old was he?

Ann Jaffe: He was exactly 13 years old because when It was in the first ghetto there. I met somebody that I knew well and he says he met my brother and he says he came in one day and he said, you know [00:35:03] today would have been my bar mitzvah day.

Dalia Handelman: Wow

Ann Jaffe: so he knew and he didn't make it but what I want to tell you is this all that we went through we were still very lucky because we were not they did not ship people to concentration camps. From our area. I mean most of the people have died but single people here and there have managed to escape but when the war ended and we found out about the concentration [00:35:33] camp and how many Jews were killed there. I was then 13 14 years old. I was in a rage died was so angry because everybody said that the Free World knew what was happening and they did nothing to help us and so I was I didn't even know what the Free World meant that when they talked about the Free World. They, they, talked about England or the United States. So I didn't know it had no idea [00:36:03] but I kept saying I hate the whole free world. I hate them because they couldn't do it. They didn't do anything to help us and my father overheard me say it and one day he says come sit down. I have to have a talk with you. It says we were Were victims of hatred did you like it? And I told him I hated it. Of course. I hated it. He says then why would you do to others this the thing that is so hateful to you. He says [00:36:33] you will ruin your life. If you walk around hating other people. They don't know that you hate them it will destroy you and he says you have to take a different attitude instead of feeling this. And you you have to try to influence others to teach them to be kind to be tolerant to be accepting of other people. It is that you will [00:37:03] have a better life than hating others and I was so very lucky that I had a father that was wise enough to catch me early and and teach me the difference and not only me, but all the rest of my siblings and it is this really if I would still feel that hatred in my in my heart to this day. I don't hate anyone to be honest with you. I [00:37:33] it just it's not in it's a word that's not in my vocabulary, you know.

Dalia Handelman: So, um like a few clarification details, so you you left the ghetto with the-

Ann Jaffe: I never gave you the water I prepared for you **Dalia Handelman:** Oh its okay!

Ann Jaffe: And mine too

Dalia Handelman: I can get you your water if you would like

Ann Jaffe: go get your glasses? There are Fuller [00:38:03] one is yours. Oh I didn't fill it up

Dalia Handelman: Let me fill it up for you. So you said, "That when you were in the, the, ghetto not there your original like home village you [00:38:33] left and you ran out into the forest. You were like and you were like, you look all you had was the clothing on your back. Did you ever get Like New clothing?

Ann Jaffe: are you to know what. I don't remember. What I wore when we were liberated, but it was not the same thing in which I remember I escaped [00:39:03] from the from the ghetto into the forest. I had a very light blue spring coat. That's what I had on my back and my brother had even less. He only had two short jackets from his suit jacket that so the first year when we left the, the, first forest with the blockades took place. Therefore we switch to another forest. We were in the same clothes [00:39:34] November, December, January, February, March, April about a half a year in this the same clothes, you know, they were burnt into you know, when you sit near the fire and it's spark falls on you and you don't notice it and burns out there holes it was you know, everything was full of holes, but when we came to the new place when we came to the new place [00:40:04] and people and my father was recognized the people in The Villages where we went begging for food that people recognize my father and they try to help him so they must have given him something because I remember we did not wear the same clothes and I can't remember what it was

Dalia Handelman: [00:40:34] so there was the So when you guys got taken from your village to the first ghetto were you allowed to bring any belongings?

Ann Jaffe: We didn't have anything because the day when they kept us, you know locked up before the execution the this was their custom when they was round up the Jews for killing. [00:41:04] They would go to Christian people would run to the Jewish homes and Can we everything that was there? So when we returned when there's Nazi officer allowed us to go back the house was totally empty nothing. There was only one bench that was nailed to the wall.

Otherwise, everything was taken out. So we had absolutely nothing only what we had on our backs at that time

Dalia Handelman: So, where did they where did they round you guys up for when you were still living in your village? [00:41:34]

Ann Jaffe: they came in and we Felt that there's something wrong, but they announced that they're going to take us to a bigger city. We should all come out in the marketplace and the people were foolish enough to go and, and, once you were in the marketplace, you were surrounded with all this not, not, only our militia, but all the Gestapo that have come in, you know to take there was no [00:42:04] Escapes to say that time

Dalia Handelman: and they and you were living and sleeping in the marketplace?

Ann Jaffe: No. No, they took us from the marketplace. They took us to the only public house that we had in our village and that's where they locked us up. And from there. They took the people out to and shot them

Dalia Handelman: and when you so when you were in the second Forest, I'm sorry. The first forest was it just your family?

Ann Jaffe: not only our family did [00:42:34] where all the other people that escaped with us- Take a look at I'm watching that hummingbirds. Oh my God. I'm waiting. I purposely planted this red cannahear so that the hummingbird will come take a look at the Hummingbird is hovering over those nothing flowers and instead of coming to my red flower

Dalia Handelman: do they like red flowers?

Ann Jaffe: That's why I planted it here so they can come he'll find it. Yeah, he'll find it you [00:43:04] will see it really is skipped over a few things. because otherwise it would take us the whole afternoon right but if you will watch you just Google in Jaffe, Mississippi. You'll get the full. Because and then if you feel that you want to know more all you need to do is give me a call and I will fill it in over the phone for you

Dalia Handelman: Okay. Thank you. Um and then just one [00:43:34] more clarifying question. Were you when you were living in the forest? You were like, what it what were you guys doing all day every day?

Ann Jaffe: That's a good question. I do get this question very often because you're young kids, you know when the blockade came we were all running like mice like hiding where ever we could like sometimes in this swamp sometimes wherever we could find a little bit of it. I think place [00:44:04] and not be caught by them, but you're still young kids and and you don't can sit around all day, you know, just do nothing. Their first order of the day was always delousing yourself because we did not have a bath to take we did not have anything to change in we were infested with lice. And so the [00:44:34] first thing everybody went out from the from the little dug out in the sunshine and would look take off our clothes one piece at a time and de-licing ourselves they called that that we and we would make a game out of it. We would count how many lice and who killed more lice that morning. It's to you is strange. But this is what happens when people are you know, it is [00:45:04] sleeping on the ground or, or, even with later we made a little elevation but there's nothing you know, so that's one thing we would forage the the forest for for dry wood we would go all the kids were spread out and we would because we had a bonfire going and we needed wood. So we used to go and look and broken And you know [00:45:34] twig or something or or once we found the place where the farmers prepared they were seasoning food for the winter. So we were going and taking the wood from them and bringing for our bonfire the boys were a little bit more advantageous. there was no water anywhere because if you melt snow you can melt it a ton of snow and you'll get just a drop of water. We needed some water [00:46:04] even for to cook the few potatoes that we got in the in the village and there was one big hole. It was a watering hole for the horses at one time for the farmers have been daggered up that we would all go to try to bring water from that Watering Hole, you know, and it was a long distance by the time you got there and sometimes we would go back over head. Only can This size [00:46:34] and by the time we would come back who would sometimes sleep on the eyes and fall and spill the water we had to go back and and just to feed the fire. You know, they'll and the girls most of the time what we did is take care of the baby because my mother had other things to do, you know, she would go sometimes begging to the Village or anything that she could to help others, you know. Survive, and [00:47:04] should we do so if we were taking turns to take care of the baby

Dalia Handelman: and so you guys literally ate like a few potatoes as your meal everyday?

Ann Jaffe: There were times when the all we had was three potatoes a day and we would if you eat it all in the morning it night they were starving, you know, and I always tell them the story which is a funny story when I I found out [00:47:34] that it's very difficult to fall asleep with an empty stomach. So I've decided that in the morning when my mother cooked those few potatoes and she didn't distribute it to everyone equal number. I would say. Nope. I'm going to leave one potato for the evening. And so I'll have something to eat before I lay down to sleep. Otherwise, I will not be able to sleep. And so I hid the potato somewhere in the forest. And [00:48:04] my brother and my cousin who was with us, they were looking around and they found it potato. And of course they did that up. You've wouldn't I would find some potato I would do the same thing. And so I was out of potato and I couldn't I've had to find another method what to do. And so I decided that I'm taking one of the potatoes and I'm going to put it in my bosom and I'll keep it on me for the rest of the [00:48:34] day and then at night I will take it out and I will eat it. So I'll be able to fall asleep. And and can you imagine you're hungry all day and you know that there is a potato laying there and you said no. No, I'm not going to eat it, you know in the evening and in the evening when I would take it out and I wanted to eat it my sister who was two years younger than I would sit in front of me and look at me and say I am hungry I'm hungry. You know, I couldn't [00:49:04] even eat that potato. I had to share a piece with her because she constantly was moaning that she's hungry. Yeah. Those are the most difficult part what we're the first half year in the first and the big push to the Big Forest where the blockades happen but afterwards it was much easier for us because the people recognize my father and he was a very liked person. In the village [00:49:34] so they helped him with whatever they could

Dalia Handelman: So did you get more food after?

Ann Jaffe: Yes, oh, yes. Oh, yeah the second winter we get a lot more food,

Dalia Handelman: but you still had like how did you survive the temperatures of-

Ann Jaffe: There was an underground Dugout and we made the stove there from from the Rocks, you know, and we would heat it up and we kept warm inside.

Dalia Handelman: So how many siblings? Like I know you have [00:50:05] you had five and then but in the forest with you you had four siblings how many girls and boys were there?

Ann Jaffe: I and then my sister and then and then the two brothers my my younger brother is still alive. I see him every week he works here in Delaware and he comes in he stays with me every Friday and Saturday night and my younger brother and then the baby

Dalia Handelman: right

Ann Jaffe: we were four because my oldest brother was taken away [00:50:35] for a laborer. We had no idea where he was at that time. And the other one also know that her brother didn't I that's run away. We knew that he escaped because he wasn't with us in that public house when they arrested us, but we didn't know what happened to him. One of those three boys survived and I met him in Israel and he told me what happened afterwards.

Dalia Handelman: Oh my gosh. Wow. Yeah, so [00:51:05] what was it like when you reconnected with your the brother that got to Russia?

Ann Jaffe: it was it we didn't recognize him. First of all, we did not recognize him because He

grew up, you know, he left a 15-year old kid and and he came back. He was probably 18. We we didn't know who he was but my mother recognized him right away [00:51:35] and we found a way to smuggle him out of Russia. Because we ourselves didn't plan on staying in Russia. So we smuggled him out of Russia with false document and then we left Russia also and clandestinely believe we made our way from Poland to to Czechoslovakia to Austria and then to the western [00:52:05] part of the American Zone in Germany and there we were putting DP camps displaced persons camps where we live for about 4 years and from there everybody immigrated wherever they could and so my older brother went to Israel and he you know made this home there and the rest of us went through Canada and came into the United States.

Dalia Handelman: [00:52:35] So you're you're like from 10 years old until-

Ann Jaffe: from from 10 years old I was a Wandering Jew you would call

Dalia Handelman: when how old were you when you guys finally made it into America?

Ann Jaffe: was already at that time 20. I think you ought to American not yet 20 or 21 first we came to Canada right there. Is that by the stopover in Canada for three years, and then we came to the United States.

Dalia Handelman: So for [00:53:05] your entire adolescence you were not in school-

Ann Jaffe: you know, no no, no you immediately as soon as we were liberated even in Russia I went for two years to school there and I excelled so well, I this is how I learn. I still know a very good Russian I speak Russian. I can write Russian because of those two years that they studied in Russia and then we were left in the displaced persons camp. We established schools. [00:53:35] And for four years I went to school there. Okay, you know and that's right. And then when it came to Canada I started again and I took a high school equivalency diploma so that that i can go on to college

Dalia Handelman: and where did so where did you go to college?

Ann Jaffe: I this is a Hebrew teacher school. I wanted to be Hebrew school teacher because they're four years in and the displaced persons camps we started in. [00:54:05] Schools and they had their very good background of Jewish history and Hebrew language, you know, and then all the prayers and all that. So I said instead of starting from scratch. They need Hebrew school teachers and they had when we lived in New Jersey before we came here. They had a Hebrew teachers Institute. So I joined it and I that's where I studied that's where I came in. Yeah,

Dalia Handelman: so you got [00:54:35] Came to America when you were 20 around. Yeah, and that's and once you came to America is when you went to the Hebrew school college?

Ann Jaffe: No, they yeah, we went in the United States already. That's right in New Jersey.

Dalia Handelman: Okay. And what was when when the Nazis first came into your town when you were 10 years old? What was like the biggest like the hardest adjustment off the bat obviously Living in the forest-

Ann Jaffe: [00:55:05] This thing was to see our local young Christian man who have become militiamen and how they would single out some people and how they would torture them and how would they kill them this they it puts such a fear in our hearts knowing that today they live, you know pick that person maybe tomorrow, they'll come and take my father right? I understand. [00:55:35] That the relieved in constant fear from the moment. They're not just

came in into our area until Liberation. We were in constant fear of our lives.

Dalia Handelman: What was the day do you remember the day that you were liberated like-

Ann Jaffe: July 4th 1944. We really really are very lucky. We were liberated early the the war keep going for another year. All right, and [00:56:05] Brad because we are we where in eastern Poland or by now it was Russia. All right, they took over because where we where we were liberated early the rushes started pushing the Germans back and this is well known that our area was liberated July 4th, and I had no idea that this was a special date. And so when I got married we also picked [00:56:35] July 4th I said that's a special date my husband lived at that time in the United States and I said it's a holiday in America and we are going to America and I was liberated on the fourth. We're going to get married and its gonna be a remarkable day for us.

Dalia Handelman: Well, how do you so, how did they did they just come in and like like how were you liberated liberated that day?

Ann Jaffe: we were hiding in the forest, r [00:57:05] And then we knew that the Russians are pushing the Germans back because there was so much movement of planes and and cannon fire, you know, the constantly bombardments and says something is happening. The front is moving from from east to west and but you know your weight they had no idea because we are afraid to get leave the Forest to see and one morning. [00:57:35] one of the farmers that live not too far from us came running to the forest and he said you guys have free you the Germans left and the Russians came in we couldn't believe him so my brother and cousin was living with us then I ran quickly to the nearest highway and they said what does this farmer know, he cannot tell the difference properly from a German tank [00:58:05] And a Russian tank. This is no no. No, I'm telling you. I heard it's Russian soldiers and said they ran there and they said yes, that's it. We have free but we didn't leave the Forest right away. We were afraid to get out we wanted to make sure so we stayed on in the forest for another few weeks and then we went we didn't know where to go. So we went to our old village

Dalia Handelman: and saw that everything and it's burn down-

Ann Jaffe: burn down a few houses. [00:58:35] Has were left and one of those women was very kind and let us stay with her for a little while, but we didn't want to stay there much longer and my father found the job right away in a nearby bigger city. And so he says we're moving.

Dalia Handelman: Is that where you met up with your the your brother

Ann Jaffe: Much later but ya that's where he came that city.

Dalia Handelman: How long did it take him to get [00:59:05] to you guys

Ann Jaffe: you know, you know he worked in Russia. Once he crossed over he worked in a factory and he had to wait until he'll get at like a vacation time or something. And so when they got vacation time, he immediately got on a train and came because we were corresponding with him and he immediately came to us and my father says he's not going back to Russia or or he'll never get out of there and you know, it will [00:59:35] bought papers from another person from a Christian person and we made it in his name and he managed to leave Russia and we go into-

Dalia Handelman: Yeah. So you you got to america and went to school when you were 20 years old to become a Hebrew school teacher and then when did you what happened after

Ann Jaffe: I was probably [01:00:05] older then that because I stayed home to raise the children.

I had three children my I've got married. My husband was a scientist and he worked for the DuPont company was chemist and very successful one i must say

Dalia Handelman: when did you meet your husband?

Ann Jaffe: I knew him from Europe yet. I knew him from the displaced persons camps where we lived in Europe and he was from also from a village not far from ours and [01:00:35] my My parents knew each other and he used to come there. So when he found out that we came to Canada he came to at that time. You could cross the border from the United States to Canada. You didn't even have to show your driver's license.

Dalia Handelman: So you you guys met in Germany at in your displaced persons camp. And then once you went to Canada, he came to Canada as well

Ann Jaffe: and that's right, and we got married. Actually [01:01:05] I Then was in Canada and then we came here to the United States and then the rest of the family my father unfortunately died early in Canada, but my mother and the other brothers came here.

Dalia Handelman: What did he die from?

Ann Jaffe: a heart attack.

Dalia Handelman: Okay How old was he when he died?

Ann Jaffe: 57 years old. That's the only thing that I wish I wish that he could have lived at least another Ten Years After. [01:01:35] All the suffering that he has gone through to enjoy a little more life.

Dalia Handelman: Yeah, so your mother and and the rest of your siblings came to America when you did?

Ann Jaffe: yes shortly thereafter. And we lived in New Jersey. My mother also lived in New Jersey very close by which each other all the time until you know, because my husband worked for did you find company they transferred him from New Jersey to Wilmington because this was the headquarters of [01:02:05] Dupont and so we came here and my mother died in New Jersey. I used to go every second week. I used to go to see her

Dalia Handelman: and your siblings where are they?

Ann Jaffe: Also in the same area. My oldest brother went right away. As soon as you Israel declared its independence. I remember he came in and he told my father this is my chance. I'm 20 years old. I'm going to Israel to help them fight for their independence and he [01:02:35] Went to Israel his State and made a very good life for himself there and my baby brother. The one that came with us here. He's the one that was educated in America and spoke without an accent because he was still so young. so he went one day to visit his older brother in Israel, and he was an architect and he took a look and he says there is so much to be done. [01:03:05] he says Jerusalem is in the ruins. I am going to go to Israel and I'll help them rebuild.

Dalia Handelman: So your baby brother also moved to Israel?

Ann Jaffe: Yes, lived in Israel and had three beautiful girls. He unfortunately died also younger than I would have wanted him to live because I only he was ten years younger than I and I always hope that you know that someday he will he was very eloquent speaking so [01:03:35] So, you know poetic phrases and I said that I was thinking gold was it can properly be Sheldon who will eulogize me someday. Well, unfortunately it was not not to be like the earlier

Dalia Handelman: right but what age did he die?

Ann Jaffe: 72

Dalia Handelman: Wow, and for just like health reasons?

Ann Jaffe: also heard attack the same as my father in the same as my older brother all of them my father my [01:04:05] The two brothers died of heart attacks.

Dalia Handelman: wow, so it's like kind

Ann Jaffe: I don't know but I will tell you at that time. We didn't know how harmful that fats that we are eating our for us. We in Europe the more butter you put on the and your bread the fatter the meat the better it is [01:04:35] And we didn't understand that It's a killer

Dalia Handelman: Yeah, of course. Once you were in you had your three children in New Jersey and then you guys moved to Wilmington?

Ann Jaffe: Yeah. Well, my older daughter was already in college. So she stayed behind and she went to Lehigh University. You know where yeah, and she was [01:05:05] signed up on this special program. They took her because she was extremely diligent and smart, you know, and so she went for a program that is go is six year program college and medical school together

Dalia Handelman: Wow.

Ann Jaffe: she graduated medical school and she didn't finish High School mind you she took all the major credits and she says I'm not going to waste another here. I don't need any more credits as a matter of fact, she [01:05:35] I got science, they credit French credit and that something else when she started college. She didn't even have to take those subject because she already studied it in high school and did so well, so so she was one of the youngest when she graduated medical school. She was only 22 years old some kids just graduate from I from college that age

Dalia Handelman: yeah. Yeah and most people graduate medical school when they're like 30 [01:06:05] or something like that. Yeah, so you so you when did you move to Wilmington? How old were you

Ann Jaffe: in 1975

Dalia Handelman: okay with your two children

Ann Jaffe: and the children, of course it when I came here and I have three children. So my oldest daughter was already in that six-year program medical school and my other daughter the one that called I have to call her back. [01:06:35] Is was still in high school and my son was in high school and now they're all adults my youngest my younger daughter is already talking about retirement.

Dalia Handelman: Oh my gosh, wow

Ann Jaffe: She doesn't want to she and she is right. She says she doesn't need the money and she wants to do something else with her life than just she's a assistant to a federal judge and she says I don't want to work anymore [01:07:05] from from nine till five. I want to be free to do as she has grandchildren now already. So she says so I want to be able to spend time with my grandchildren and my kids

Dalia Handelman: so you have great grandchildren. **Ann Jaffe:** Yeah.

Dalia Handelman: Wow, that's incredible. So when you move to Wilmington, did you get involved in the Jewish Community here?

Ann Jaffe: right away, of course, we're joined this synagogue and I got involved.

[01:07:35] I mean I was teaching for quite a few years still. and and then when they when they closed the head here Hebrew High School to Gratz Hebrew high school, but when they closed the gratz Hebrew high school and you know, I started- my husband was retiring. So I stopped teaching also and and I started speaking in schools and I have already given more than 450 presentations [01:08:05] well in know the school's last enough a lot, but I will not give up as long as I can stand on my two feet

Dalia Handelman: that's incredible. Did you raise your children Orthodox the way you were raised

Ann Jaffe: no no my children are free to choose and they try for my sake they try to keep kosher, you know, yes. Otherwise, I wouldn't eat in their house right by they come every Friday to my house [01:08:35] and we have a Shabbat dinner as usual, but I'm not too Orthodox anymore because I go every shabbat to shul but I drive I don't because i cannot walk long distances.

Dalia Handelman: Right Right. So you you where did you teach when you were when you first came out with the

Ann Jaffe: Hebrew schools here in the area and our synagogue and then in the Gratz Hebrew high school,

Dalia Handelman: did you [01:09:05] when you were in New Jersey? Were you active in the Jewish Community?

Ann Jaffe: Oh, yes. Yes.

Dalia Handelman: So your main connection to your congregation here is like going every week to services

Ann Jaffe: :I go every week to the synagogue I'll be giving a Dvar Torah not this week but next you know you get involved in you do things for your community,

Dalia Handelman: Right. How [01:09:35] does your connection with Israel shift? I mean you spoke before about you know the box of money that

Ann Jaffe: My love for Israel was from the time I was a little child, Until my dying days. There's nothing more important to me than the safety and well-being of the state of Israel because if we would have had the state of Israel during the Holocaust many Jews would have been saved but we didn't [01:10:05] and so every Jew I feel has this obligation. There are many American Jews who want nothing to do with Israel, but that's their choice, you know, but there there is a hummingbird. Can you see it? Can you see on the other side? They have?

Dalia Handelman: Yeah, well, it likes the red flower!

Ann Jaffe: I will have to tell my son. He's gonna go crazy. He planted it because he wanted to see the hummingbird coming.

Dalia Handelman: Its beautiful [01:10:36] So your your connection with Israel with has-

Ann Jaffe: is very strong. I went to Israel every single year when I was still able to it's too difficult for me. No, I cannot go on a flight for 12 hours. You know, that's I go in the car for two hours and I'm tired

Dalia Handelman: Yeah, so what would you what do you think the biggest threat [01:11:06] to Jews Judaism is today like modern day?

Ann Jaffe: It hurts me terribly to see the antisemitism that has risen all over Europe and not only all over Europe here in this country to you know, I don't know whether we and I don't know. I'm not smart enough to know exactly what we can do about it how we can educate the public, [01:11:36] you know, not to you know, Jews have never done anybody any wrong. On the contrary we have contributed so much to every society wherever we live and we do not deserve the hatred besides the the church itself has changed their doctrine that I don't know if I'm pronouncing they were teaching when I was a child that church was teaching [01:12:07] to their congregants that the Jews are Christ killers and deserve to be despised you know, they have changed it in 1960s three when they had the Vatican to I think there was a cold and they have changed and they said that the Jews were absolved of those accusations and the Catholic church should not hold it against the Jews and on the contrary. We should [01:12:37] teach Judaism and about the Holocaust in in in our schools. And I hope that they do I'm not a hundred percent sure. What can I tell you this is I think it's built in and I will finish with this. I think it's built in in our upbringing our teachings. Do you know any Hebrew?

Dalia Handelman: Yes

Ann Jaffe: It says in our Shema [01:13:07] two words, V'lamadatah V'nacha and you shall teach it to your sons. To your children and it was meant at that time that we should teach to our children the Torah but the Jewish people have taken it a step further and not when we came out into the world it when we were exiled from our country. We [01:13:37] have decided that we must teach our children. We must educate our children. So the Jews have always strived for one thing. You must educate your children. I remember when I was as a child people would go around and say, "If you don't educate your child is the same as if you have, you know, like killed him." If when he was a child when he was a baby. You have to educate your children. [01:14:07] And as a result of it we strive for education you to find very few Jewish families where children don't go to college nowadays. And because we are better educated, we earn a better livelihood. And it becomes an enviable thing to those who have not achieved it. Yeah, you understand. It's like a two-edged sword. We do what we think is good [01:14:37] for society, and for our children, and at the same time it creates envy and hatred.

Dalia Handelman: Right. Which you spoke about before. Someone carries hatred and yeah, it's...

Ann Jaffe: Very good. That's right. That's so I don't know all I can tell you with we have many very good organizations here that are trying to fight this battle and the only thing I can do is to contribute to them so that they [01:15:07] will be strong and continue fighting it. Right.

Dalia Handelman: And then, so my last question because he said you had to go was based off your life experiences. What advice would you give to, to, the Jewish people, but also, I mean, it can be anyone there.

Ann Jaffe: The greatest thing you know, not to hate others. We're not to discriminate against others and the contrary whenever we can help. [01:15:37] They are less fortunate ones. We should be in the forefront of doing it. Always as an example to others. My own children, I have raised, so that they will be very tolerant and very accepting of other people to be kind to others, which is extremely important. Instead of being whenever I see a Jewish name in the [01:16:07] news that is either, you know a crook or has done something bad. Like now they have this Jewish man that billionaire and it turns out that he was he was running some kind of a prostitution ring or something it. I feel so disgusted that they are the ones who give a bad name. Every time you will not find many Jewish murderers [01:16:37] if you know, but, but when it comes to white collar crimes I'm not only disappointed by am disgusted. If they do it because they are the ones who give a bad name to all the Jews.

Dalia Handelman: Right.

Ann Jaffe: If we miss something you can always call me.

Dalia Handelman: Thank you so much.