

Now We Have A Home

As told by Judy Feld Carr to Eli Rubenstein

My father, Jack Leve, was a fur trader with the Indians in Northern Ontario. He was based in Sudbury, where I grew up, a child of one of the few Jewish families in this remote northern mining town. (When I was born, it took three months to track down by dog-sled on Baffin Island to inform him of my birth.)

The year was 1947 and I was an eight year-old girl attending elementary school. The State of Israel was on the verge of being declared but my enthusiasm for this development was not shared by my classmates and teachers at the school.

In 1947/8, my father shipped mink, muskrat, otter and marten pelts to Israel. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, many of Europe's finest tailors were survivors who had immigrated to Israel, where they designed and manufactured high-fashion fur coats for sale in the lucrative European market. But my father's shipments had a far more crucial purpose. My father concealed bullets in the furs which were ideal for this purpose because of their thickness. On occasion I too would quietly slip into the basement of our home and help my father tuck the bullets into the furs bound for Palestine.

When the smuggled bullets arrived, they were given to the Israeli authorities who were involved in the defense of the State of Israel against hostile Arab nations.

The story was verified to me during my honeymoon to Israel in 1960 when my father insisted I meet a furrier on Ben Yehuda Street in Tel Aviv. The owner of the fur store told me the full story of how my father had shipped the bullets to him and other furriers.

In May of 1948 my father was visiting relatives in London, England. Excited by the news of the establishment of Israel (which took place on May 14) my father decided he had to see the land for himself. He made his way to Marseilles where he boarded the "Kedma", a ship which was loaded with refugees from the Holocaust. When my father arrived in Israel he was just the third visitor to be granted a foreign visa by the new Jewish state. In Israel, he shot footage on a movie camera, which he later shared with Jewish and non-Jewish groups throughout northern Ontario, giving them their first glimpses of the promised land, of the maaborot, of Jerusalem, of refugees arriving in Haifa.



One of the frequent visitors to our home in Sudbury was my mother's mother, my grandmother, Esther Rives. Born in Russia she moved to Brooklyn where she and my grandfather lived, but she never learned to speak English, only Yiddish. A few times a year she would take the train to Montreal on her way to Sudbury. Though she could not communicate with the porters, they all recognized her because of her regular gifts of gefilte fish and chalah.

My grandmother was with me in my bedroom on that fateful day, November 29 1947, when the United Nations was deciding whether to partition Palestine into an Arab and Jewish state. Hours before the vote the outcome was uncertain, since a two-thirds majority was required. As the proceedings were broadcast my grandmother and I sat, side by side on my bed, listening to my little yellow radio as each country cast its vote.

My grandmother could not understand English, and I was not old enough to spell the names of the countries. So my grandmother gave me a pencil and sheet of paper. She divided the sheet in half and at the top of one half of the sheet she wrote in Yiddish “yes” and at the top of the other half she wrote “no”. Every time a country responded in the voting, I made a check mark on the appropriate side of the sheet.



After the successful vote, my bubby was very, very excited. She turned to me as I sat on my bed, looked at me with tears in her eyes, wrapped her arms around me and said: “Judy, Ich bien do” (“I’m here”). “I’ve lived for this moment. Now the Jews have a home. I won’t see it, but you will.”

And my bubby wept...