

IDA LOEFFLER



In Krakow, Poland, population 260,000 – where Adolph and Rosella Wolf raised five daughters and a son – nearly every fourth person was Jewish. Most lived in the middle of town.

“Jewish people kept to themselves,” Ida recalls, “because we couldn’t get help from anyone else.”

Her father, a tailor, had served as an officer in the Austrian Army, and came from a land-owning family that sold lighting oil. Her mother was working as a nanny when Adolph fell in love with her.

The Wolfs lived in a large apartment with electricity and running water. It was filled with nice furniture and crystal that Ida’s father brought back from his travels. A maid helped with the laundry and cleaning three times a week. With six children, Ida’s mother cooked most of the day.

“Everything fresh – fresh bread from the bakery every day,” Ida recalls. “When I was young, I was very spoiled and my mother had to buy little breakfast cakes for me.”

Ida’s parents valued education. Adolph Loeffler said, “I will give you education, which nobody can take away from you.” But it was a struggle. In public school, Ida could not get an “A” in Polish because she was Jewish. Gentile children threw stones. In gymnasium, an equivalent of high school, she worked especially hard. “They would kick Jews out for no reason,” she remembers.

Ida’s happiest days were spent in a Zionist youth organization, Akiva. Jews were not allowed to belong to organizations; if found out, she could have been expelled from school. In Akiva, she studied Hebrew, sang Jewish songs, learned about Jewish writers, raised money to help Jews in Palestine buy land from the Arabs, played games and socialized with friends. She held a job delivering hats to earn money for Akiva – and to buy an occasional treat.

Morris Loeffler and Ida, both liberated from concentration camps, met in Germany. Because Ida refused to marry in Germany, Morris found his brother in Sweden, and they decided to be married there – first by a justice of peace and later by a rabbi. Life was good in Sweden, but Ida became ill. She was 31 when Morris’ aunts in Kansas City sponsored them to immigrate in 1957.

Familiar with German, Swedish, Hebrew and Polish, English “just came” for Ida. She worked as a cashier for Katz Drug Stores and sold Avon products for 15 years. She learned to drive. She volunteered at Shalom Geriatric Center. Today she does needlepoint and is hard to beat at cards.

Passover was once her favorite holiday but, she says, she doesn’t like Jewish holidays anymore – “Too much memory.”

Her son, Stephen, born in Sweden, died at age 31. She has a daughter, Rose. “In the beginning, we didn’t want children,” says Ida. She and Morris were “too afraid to have a family – too afraid what may happen to them.”

“Survivors, we keep very close,” she says. “We are different. We are not happy people.”



Portrait by Gloria Baker Feinstein

Excerpt from *From the Heart: Life Before and After the Holocaust ~ A Mosaic of Memories*

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