

Esther and Solomon Distenfeld



Esther and Solomon Distenfeld (Source: USC Shoah Recorded Testimony)

Solomon Distenfeld was born in 1901 in the town of Złoczów, Poland (now Zolochiv, Ukraine). At the time, Zolochiv was a part of the Tarnopol Voivodeship, meaning at the time it was technically part of Poland, following World War II, it became part of Ukraine. Solomon raised his family in Podlipce or Pidlyptsi, Poland which was about fifteen kilometers away from where he was born. Solomon was married to Esther Distenfeld. Esther Distenfeld was born Ester Hochman in Złoczów, Poland (now Zolochiv, Ukraine) in 1903. Esther and Solomon had two children. Nella and Yetta. They lived with Esther's sister, Clara Hochman. The Distenfelds had a farm with three acres of land which had many orchards. Solomon owned and operated a flour mill in Pluhiv about five kilometers from their house. The Distenfelds were an orthodox jewish family. They had two Torahs in their home and had many prayer books. One of the most remarkable aspects of their experience was the fact that the two Torahs survived the war.

The Distenfelds were able to stay in their home for about a year at the start of the war. When the Germans came in 1941, they were forced from their home. Prior to getting forced to go to a camp, Solomon was hidden in an attic by a Catholic family in Podliptsi. While Solomon was in hiding, Esther and Clara worked in a labor camp as cooks for the Germans. While in a Labor Camp in Pluhiv, Yetta and Nella were with other Catholic Ukrainian families from around the area. In 1943, the camp which Esther and Clara were at was being liquidated. They were told by one of the guards to not come to the camp the next day. They went back to Podlipsti to reunite with Solomon. They hid in three or four different places. Aunt and Yetta in one place, Solomon, Esther, and Nella in another. They stayed in the attics of Ukrainian families. When they were able to reunite, the Distenfelds hid in the surrounding areas. In the summer they would hide in fields and the woods. In the winter, they hid in barns, haystacks, and the attics of other Catholic Poles and Ukrainians.

When the Russians liberated Poland, and the Allies defeated Nazi Germany, the Distenfelds traveled to to a Displaced Persons camp in Ainring, Germany. They stayed in Ainring for seven months until they were able to rent an apartment in Augsburg, Germany. They stayed there for two years until 1947. Esther had family in the United States and they reached out to them in order to get visas to come to the United States. Once they received their visas, they traveled to the port city of Bremerhaven. They left for the United States aboard the Marine Marlin in late May of 1947, and arrived in New York City in June. The Distenfelds lived with Esther's cousins, in Brooklyn for a couple of months, until they were able to get on their feet. Then they moved to their own place on the Lower East Side of Manhattan until 1952. Yetta married, and stayed with her husband in New York, while Solomon, Esther, and Nella came to Vineland, NJ to own and operate a chicken farm. They later bought a second chicken farm in Vineland. Esther died of ovarian cancer in 1978, while living in Vineland with Solomon. Solomon eventually relocated to Arizona to be closer to his children and grandchildren. He passed away in Scottsdale in 1998.