NAOMI WAS BORN to the Abadi family in Jerusalem’s Old City. Her father, an immigrant from Aleppo, was a scribe, and her mother was the scion of an old Sephardic Yerushalmi family. In the 1940s, her family relocated to a poor neighborhood in south Tel Aviv.

Naomi remembers the public rejoicing when the UN General Assembly passed the Palestine Partition Plan, which recommended establishing independent Jewish and Arab states in Palestine. But soon violence came to her family’s doorsteps, and she remembers having to flee her home “half naked” on at least one occasion. Although it was deeply frowned upon for girls with religious upbringings to join youth movements or underground militias, Naomi joined the Haganah shortly before Israel declared its independence. After the state was established, the Haganah morphed into the Israel Defense Forces, and Naomi became one of the first women to wear an IDF uniform. She served throughout most of the war in the Haifa area working as a sentry and telephone operator.

After the war, Naomi got a job with the newly established American Embassy to Israel. She immigrated to the United States in the 1950s and settled at first in Oregon. Naomi now lives with her daughter in Seattle’s Seward Park neighborhood.