

We're now resuming the second part of our interview with Mrs. Sally Chase. Mrs. Chase, you mentioned that you decided that you would remove the number from your arm. Could you tell us a little bit more about that, please?

Yes. In 1953, I took a leave of absence from school and work. And I decided to take a trip to Israel, where my little sister at the time was residing. And one of my cousins, who was also a survivor, persuaded me to go and have it taken off. Because I told him that every time in the summertime I'd go to work and hang on to the strap in the subway, people stare at the number and ask questions. And I'm always very self-conscious about it.

So he said, now that you're free, why should you be branded for the rest of your life? And it was given to you, or put on without you-- it was not your choice to be tattooed. And now that you're a free person, you should really remove it. You don't have to be branded for the rest of your life. And so I decided to go to a surgeon, a plastic surgeon, and have it removed.

And now I'm kind of sorry that I did it because when I do lecture in different schools, and when I speak to children, and I try to tell them about the number, I have a scar to show rather than the number. But at the time it seemed reasonable to remove it. Because I used to get very nervous and upset when people used to stare at my arm, wondering why I have a number. So that was my decision.

Could you tell us how you think the experience of the Holocaust has influenced your sense of being Jewish?

In spite of what happened to us, there must be some sort of a religious or philosophical explanation. It's hard for me to come to terms with why this happened to us. But no one ever has come up with an answer. And I certainly don't consider myself smart enough to say such and such happened and that's why this happened to us.

But for 2,000 years the Jews have been persecuted because of their religion. And hopefully, one day I hope it will come, according to the Isaiah prophecies, that we are the chosen people and all the dead will come to life again. And part of the prophecy has been realized, that we have our own country now. Israel came to being.

At one time, the Christian religion was teaching that the Jews are the devils and all the evils of the world were blamed on the Jews. And I even am very shocked that, reading the literature of Shakespeare and Dickens, there was so much antisemitism in their literature, even people who were intellectual writers and scholars.

And it seems to me, especially the clergy or the pope, which I'm aware of the fact that they know Hebrew as well as anybody else, they know the scriptures, the Bible, the commentaries. And there are very, very many things that they interpreted to their liking, to their way of thinking, rather the way it should be interpreted. So hopefully, one day all is going to come very clear and we will be-- hopefully, will have a world free of hatred and prejudices. And the things will be seen as they really are.

And the fact that Israel did come to being, I really think if Israel was a state that would have never happened in Europe. The Jews had-- I remember reading that Hitler had proposed an exchange. He wanted trucks-- to acquire trucks from the United States in exchange for Jews and President Roosevelt refused to make that exchange.

It's a sad commentary on history, the exchange of human beings for trucks. But nevertheless, there was that chance and it wasn't being taken advantage of. The Jews were not wanted anywhere. And it seems to be now-- to me now that we have Israel and we hope that this will never happen again. And it can't happen because we have Israel. And this is part of the prophecy that really came through, if you are familiar with the Isaiah prophecy.

And the other thing I want to say is the Holocaust is a crime-- was hideous crime that men committed on Earth since men walked on the face of this Earth. And more shameful is the fact that these forces of evil now trying to deny that the Holocaust ever took place. And there are professors.

And one of them is Arthur Butz, of high standing from Northwestern University, wrote a book that the Holocaust is a hoax. It never happened. It's just the Zionist propaganda. And my blood boils in me when I read this at first. And it

really made me more eager to share my experiences and to speak out loud and clear. And let people know, Jew or Christian, of what really went on during the war.

And how dare he tell me to erase the memory of my parents, my relatives, my cousins, my uncles, friends, six million who perished for the only crime they committed, that they were born Jewish. And that in itself, it seems that it should not be permitted. I'm very-- very-- I'm a spokesman for justice and democracy, but things like that should not be permitted to be printed because it's a disgrace that this should even be printed on paper. Because they're a bunch of lies.

And during our lifetime they're trying to deny and desecrate the names of our loved ones who perished only because they were born Jewish. And can you imagine what's going to happen 50 years from now when we are not around to even fight it or testify to the contrary?

I remember reading in one of the newspapers many, many years ago, when rabbi, a survivor, said, I bet you-- he was speaking to another rabbi-- that during our lifetime these murderers are going to try to deny that they did that. And they're going to try to turn around this whole thing and say that the Jews are lying about it and it's just the Jewish Zionist propaganda.

What really upset me the other day, a friend of mine came and told me that she teaches in Colonia, and there was one little Christian child that said, all this about the Holocaust is really a way for Israel to collect money. I'm very anxious to get in touch with the principal of this school and go to speak to these children.

Because from my experiences-- I have spoken to high schools and junior highs in Edison, which was really inspired by my younger daughter. And these kids were very receptive. And they were very compassionate. And they were interested to know everything that went on. And they asked very varied and interesting questions.

And one little child ran after me when I walked to my car, and she said, Mrs. Chase, you were really wonderful. And I really admire that you have the courage to come and speak of all your experiences. And if I can help it, I'll see to it that it will never happen again. And this is the kind of response I had.

But to hear that this is just a figment of Jewish imagination and propaganda really is-- it's criminal as far as I'm concerned. Because it's-- these people perished and their ashes went into the winds. And they were burned in ovens. And they're not here.

I don't have my parents. Whoever was alive found each other. And believe me, out of 4 and 1/2 million Jews-- Poland was-- in 1939, the population was 32 million, out of which 4 and 1/2 million was Jewish. Out of the 4 and 1/2 million Jews, I don't believe there are more maybe than 50,000 survivors, if that. I don't know the exact figures.

How could they come and tell me that this is just a figment of my imagination or Zionist propaganda. Or like Professor Butz states in his books, that are the pictures that were found and produced of the bones, of the bodies that they found after the liberation, that the Germans did not have a chance to burn, this was done by the Jewish artists. They're so talented. And just paintings. They're not the real thing.

I remember going to a memorial of the Warsaw ghetto to Temple Emanu-El in New York. And there was a colonel from the American army who liberated Dachau. And he got up and spoke a few words. And when he got up, he was shaking. And he said, when I entered Dachau-- his name was Colonel-- I don't recall, but I'll think of his name. He said when I entered Dachau to liberate that camp, I found thousands upon thousands of bodies and bones that those murderers didn't have a chance to burn.

And he shook his hands and he said, I saw Lucifer at work. He said he couldn't believe that one human being could do this to another. And the enacted all these brutalities in the background, to the background of Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, et cetera.

The German Nazis were a kind of being who could torture a Jewish baby and child without any feeling, without any remorse, and yet embrace his own child lovingly. And have no pains of conscience or remorse. And go to sleep without

washing the blood off his hands.

He-- for centuries we have nurtured the illusion that culture, and education, and noble and civilized men. I say to the German people, your universities, and your education betrayed you because it failed to convert you into a decent human being. These people had no remorse, have no feelings when it came to kill a Jewish child or baby, not even talking about a grown person.

These people-- these children didn't even know the meaning of Jewish or non-Jewish. And this has always bothered me for years, to be able to understand how could a cultural nation-- because the German-- the German nation was really the cradle of culture in Europe. And they were really looked up to in all intellectual circles. How could they get themselves to commit all these crimes and be so insensitive to another human being? And I have never found the answer to that.

You said something earlier about speaking in schools. And you used the phrase about being inspired by your daughter, I believe. Could you tell us a little bit about what your children have-- what way they have influenced what you're doing right now?

They're very proud of the fact that I'm doing this. They really started calling on me before anybody even thought of speaking about the Holocaust. It was something that most people didn't want to remember, didn't want to talk about it.

Because when we first came to this country, everybody was very busy putting-- getting their pieces together, putting their life together, starting all over again. We came penniless. We came without knowing the language. And lots of them had families already. They tried to make a new life for themselves.

And they worked very hard. And they didn't want to remember what happened. They didn't want to speak about it because it was too painful. And yet, I, myself, felt that oh, everybody must know what went on. I mean, it would never occur to me that the information and that people really did not have the details of what went on. And I was really taking for granted that everybody knew. It wasn't necessary for me to speak, or inform, or relate my experiences. It was a known fact.

But I found out it wasn't so. Because all the information was withheld from the population. I read many books written by, for instance, *The Abandonment of the Jews*, between 1939 and 1945 by--

David Wyman.

--David Wyman. And I found things out that I was utterly amazed. And these dates corresponded with the dates when they took my parents, when they took my brothers. And these telegrams were coming in to Washington letting President Roosevelt know what's going on, that the Jews were being slaughtered. And yet, President Roosevelt said we-- hushed it up. Pushed the telegrams into the drawer. Don't tell anyone. We're not allowed to make this known to the people.

I still wonder why. I feel it was immoral. I feel it was unjust. Maybe there was a way of saving some Jews. There were times where Hitler did say he wanted to make exchanges for different things. And yet, no one was willing to save these Jews. I still don't understand why. It always puzzled me.

And it doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense why they wanted all these people killed and let this go on. And I think the world's silence and the apathy of the world was Hitler's best ally. And this is what I feel very hurt about. I always felt that President Roosevelt was a friend of the Jews.

We were always hoping he was going to help us. When we found out that he died a few months before the war ended, we all cried. We said that he was our savior. Now he's gone, who's going to see to it that we'll really come out of this hell. We really never believed to come out of this hell. Because I remember the discussions we had amongst ourselves.

We used to say an hour before the war ends, they'll kill us. They cannot permit the world to know what we went through, to know the truth about what we went through. But the world really didn't care. They really didn't care. They didn't do anything to lift a finger to help.

And even they say that the Vatican did help, that they took some Jewish children. And they say-- they didn't save them. They converted them. They raised them Christians. But did not really save them as Jewish children. They never spoke out loud and clear or threaten the German Catholics to say-- at least threaten them with excommunication. I'm not saying it would have helped, but at least to make an attempt, to show that they cared.

No one ever, ever tried to do anything to help the Jews. So that's what's really still bothering me. I'm wondering why. And how inhuman that is. And how unethical in the name of humanity.

Are you encouraged by the revival of interest and the willingness of people to speak out? Do you think that we have turned, perhaps, a corner in our understanding of the Holocaust for future generations?

I absolutely am happy that it's being done. Because as I said before, I started doing that before anyone even was willing to talk about it. And I went to schools. And in my own little way I tried to inform and relate my experiences. I wasn't even aware of the fact that people didn't know, but I wanted to share my experiences and tell them what I went through. So that to make sure that this will not happen again.

Thank you very, Mrs. Chase, for sharing your experiences with us. This has been one of a series of interviews with survivors of the Holocaust sponsored by the Kean College Oral Testimonies Project.

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