

HOLOCAUST ARCHIVE PROJECT

Name of Interviewee	<b>HELEN STONE</b>		
Name of Interviewer	Judy Wayman	Date	1/17/85
Name of Abstractor	Michelle Heyer	Date	5/6/87

**NARRATIVE SUMMARY**

Helen Kahan Stone lives in Cleveland with her husband. She has one son, one daughter and a grandchild. Her husband owned a grocery business, and for many years Helen helped him run it.

Helen was born in Napszolak, Czechoslovakia and grew up in Nagydobryn, near the large city of Ungvar.

Helen was very close to her mother, but a bad relationship with her stepfather caused many family problems. She had five brothers and sisters, but had little contact with them. At one point, Helen's stepfather sent her to an orphanage, but she returned home at her mother's request.

In 1939, Jews began to feel tension. Gentiles stopped associating with them and they heard of executions in other countries.

Shortly after Passover 1944, Helen and all the Jews in her town were deported to Auschwitz. There, she and her mother were separated - her mother was sent to the gas chambers.

After spending 45 months in Auschwitz, she was sent to work in a factory in Altenburg or Waldenburg, Poland. As the Allies neared the town, Helen and her fellow prisoners were forced to march for many days. She was finally liberated by American soldiers, but as a resident of the Russian-occupied zone, she had to go to a Russian refugee camp.

Upon returning to Nagydobryn, Helen met an old friend, who was planning to escape over the border. He asked her to come with him, and shortly after their escape they married.

Helen and her husband contacted her aunt in Cleveland, who was enthusiastic to help. After many months of bureaucratic difficulties, the Stones were permitted to emigrate to the U.S. in September 1948.

## ABSTRACT

### VIDEO 1 OF 3

#### PRESENT LIFE

Helen Stone (maiden name Kahan), 67, lives in Cleveland. For many years she helped her husband in the grocery business he owned. She has a son and a daughter, and one granddaughter.

#### EARLY LIFE

Helen was born in Napszolak, Czechoslovakia (it was in Hungarian territory at the time of her birth). When she was four, family moved to Nagydobryn, Czechoslovakia (now Hungary), near the city of Ungvar.

#### JEWISH POPULATION IN NAGYDOBRYN

Of 600 residents, one-fourth were Jewish. Most Jews ran small businesses. Most gentiles were farmers.

#### HELEN'S FAMILY STRUCTURE

Helen's mother married three times. With first husband had two sons. Helen was only child with second husband, but he had two boys and one girl from previous marriage. No children with third husband. By 1939 the oldest brothers were married, one sibling had died and the others were living near Rumania. Helen had little contact with them.

#### HELEN'S STEPFATHER

Was Hebrew teacher, bookbinder, handyman. He mistreated Helen, creating an unhappy childhood.

#### HELEN IS PLACED IN AN ORPHANAGE

Stepfather no longer wanted to care for her. Soon she went back to Nagydobryn, learned to be a seamstress.

#### HELEN RETURNS TO FAMILY

Her mother wanted her home, but there was always tension with her stepfather.

#### FAMILY GETS ALONG WELL WITH GENTILE NEIGHBORS

#### FAMILY'S RELIGIOUS LIFE

Extremely religious - especially Helen and her mother. Even now, on Jewish holidays Helen dreams of her mother.

#### ANTI-SEMITISM BEFORE WAR

One man yelled "Jew, Jew" whenever Helen walked by. When Helen was ten, she beat up a boy who said anti-Semitic things.

#### FAMILY LANGUAGES

Spoke Hungarian at home and Yiddish. Many Jews learned Czech also.

#### ENTERTAINMENT

No cultural activities in town. Had amateur plays - Helen was always in them.

#### HELEN GETS TYPHOID FEVER

She almost died. No one ever wanted to go to the hospital, but Helen's stepfather afraid she'd infect his students. He asked authorities to take her away - probably saved her life.

#### HELEN'S HUSBAND

Knew him since childhood. He married his cousin shortly before war. She and baby died in Auschwitz.

#### 1939 - SIGNS OF TROUBLE

During temple services, people threw rocks through windows. Had to walk home through side streets. Some German soldiers in town.

#### THEY HEAR OF EXECUTIONS IN POLAND

A soldier told them of seeing Jews undressing, digging graves and being shot. Helen's mother said he was lying because he hated Jews.

#### NON-JEWS STOP ASSOCIATING WITH JEWS

Refused to rent them houses or work for them.

#### WHEN JEWS ARE TAKEN AWAY, SOME GENTILES DRESS UP AND HAVE A HOLIDAY

#### HELEN TO BE DEPORTED

A few days after Passover 1944 two armed policemen came to say Helen had to leave country in 48 hrs. She still doesn't know why she was singled out - thinks it may have been to be a prostitute for German soldiers.

#### HELEN AND HER MOTHER APPEAL TO AUTHORITIES

They took train to Budapest, hiding their stars. On the train, a German soldier flirted with Helen, exposing her star. He immediately dropped her to the floor. The authorities in Budapest said they cannot help Helen.

JEWS ORDERED TO REMAIN IN THEIR HOUSES AND A FEW DAYS LATER THEY ARE TAKEN TO AN OLD SCHOOL

#### HELP FROM GENTILE NEIGHBORS

One woman told Helen's mother she'd hide Helen, but it didn't work out. Helen's mother gave family papers and photos to two gentile women - one kept them, one destroyed them.

#### JEWS TAKEN TO A BRICK FACTORY

Had to make their own shelter from old bricks. Helen's mother was separated from her stepfather by then, but she saw him one day, having his beard cut off.

#### FROM THERE, SENT TO AUSCHWITZ

Rode a train for many days. No sanitation; women had babies on train.

#### ARRIVAL AT AUSCHWITZ

Saw sign "Arbeit macht frei". Old people told to say they were 40 years old.

#### HELEN AND MOTHER SEPARATED

Helen's mother was 60 - when she said she was 40, the SS laughed and sent her away. Helen never saw her again.

AT THIS POINT, HELEN SHOWS INTERVIEWER PHOTOS OF HER FAMILY AND TALKS ABOUT THE PEOPLE IN THEM

### VIDEO 2 OF 3

AFTER LIBERATION, HELEN WAS ASKED IF SHE HAD RELATIVES IN AMERICA

Gave address of aunt in Cleveland. By the time aunt was notified, Helen was in Rumanian refugee camp. Aunt could not locate her.

#### HELEN ARRIVES AT AUSCHWITZ ON HER BIRTHDAY

She no longer celebrates it.

#### TAKEN TO SHOWERS

Hair cut off, given rags to wear. Helen saw her mother's shawl on a pile of clothes. Could not have it.

#### THE WOMEN CRY ALL NIGHT

Told they'd be given water if they stopped. Did not get water until three days later.

#### TAKEN TO BARRACKS LIKE "CHICKEN COOPS"

Over 1,000 women. Could not go to bathroom alone. Had to go in groups of 50 - many went in barracks. No mattresses in bunks, so urine fell on women below.

#### HELEN HAS SUICIDAL FEELINGS

One night, heard that all old people and children were dead. Helen wanted to run outside, knowing she'd be shot, or wanted to touch electrified fence. Friend, Ilanka, convinced her not to.

#### HELEN IS BEATEN

Found a tin cup. Didn't know it was forbidden. Beaten by Jewish barracks captain.

#### HELEN HAS NO CLOTHES FOR 48 HOURS

Taken to exchange dirty, lice-infected clothes for new ones. Eichmann was there. When Helen's turn came, none left. She got no others for two days.

#### DAILY ACTIVITIES AT AUSCHWITZ

Sometimes forced to listen to concerts or move piles of stones from one place to another. Some women forced to parade in front of SS wearing only blouses.

#### TWO COUSINS IN AUSCHWITZ

One died. One - Etta Glanz - in Israel. Helen trying to find her.

HELEN IN BLOCK 17. COUSINS IN BLOCK 19. ONE COUSIN IS FAVORITE OF THE BLOCKALTESTE

Cousin received extra food, better treatment. Arranged for Helen and three friends to trade places with four women in block 19. But they returned to block 17 the next day because they missed being with others from their town.

HELEN ESCAPES A SELECTION

Had to walk past Mengele with one arm raised so ribs showed. Helen told to go with weaker group. SS began hitting friend of hers. In the confusion, Helen returned to line and walked past Mengele again. Passed selection.

A FRIEND OF HELEN'S LEAVES MESSAGE FOR HER BROTHER

As she was taken away to gas chamber, she yelled that if anyone met her brother after the war, tell him to have Yahrzeit for her. Helen later met him in N.Y., gave him the date.

HELEN LOSES TRACK OF TIME, BUT SPENDS 4-5 MONTHS IN AUSCHWITZ

A VITAMIN DEFICIENCY MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR HELEN TO EAT

IN 1950s HELEN IS GIVEN A MAGAZINE ARTICLE ABOUT EICHMANN

Mentioned Jewish doctors forced to perform human experiments. Told of one doctor allowed to visit wife and child. They were in Helen's block - she remembers the visit.

HELEN ASKS FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT, SEES MENGELE

Wanted treatment for her gums. In the examining room, several women had just given birth. Mengele killed each baby with an injection.

MENGELE KILLS A WOMAN IN HELEN'S BLOCK

Woman in terrible pain. Fourteen-year-old daughter asked Blockalteste for help. She called Mengele, who gave the woman a lethal injection.

HELEN'S STEPFATHER KILLED UPON ARRIVAL AT AUSCHWITZ

HELEN AFRAID HER NEPHEWS WERE EXPERIMENTED ON

They were triplets - triplets and twins often used in experiments.

#### HELEN'S BROTHER A ZIONIST

Did not go to Israel before war because of his family.

#### MENGELE MAKES SELECTION, THEN THEY GO TO TRAINS

One of Helen's closest friends selected. At some point, Helen and friends given a whole salami and a loaf of bread.

#### ON TRAIN THREE DAYS TO ALTENBURG OR WALDENBURG - HELEN NEVER KNEW

Worked in factory making bomber parts. Better conditions 0 straw mattresses, baths, better food - including beer. Worked 12 hours per day, alternating day/night shift.

#### ILANKA BECOMES SICK

Got diarrhea. They agreed that Ilanka would receive all of their constipating foods. She was cured.

#### HELEN IS GIVEN MORE MEDICAL TREATMENT

Given shots for her gums. Overheard doctor say she was lucky she wasn't going to be killed.

#### HELEN IS PROPOSITIONED BY A GYPSY WOMAN

Gypsies in camp could receive packages. Sold food they received. Helen wanted to buy onion for Vitamin C. Gypsy woman said "I'll give you whatever you want if you'll marry me." Another Gypsy woman told Helen to leave or she'd kill her.

#### HELEN SABOTAGES WORK

Thought "Why should I do a good job on parts that will kill our allies?" Intentionally mixed up bolts. Taken to office and yelled at. Said it was mistake, given one more chance.

#### CHANGED TO A WORSE JOB

Inspected parts - had to lift heavy parts all day. Previous worker weakened, vomited blood. Begged foreman to give her old job back - refused.

#### HELEN SNEAKS BACK TO OLD JOB

During bomb raid, foreman injured. Helen returned to old job. Two weeks later, when foreman came back, nothing was said.

#### PRISONERS HAVE NO CONTACT WITH LOCAL POPULATION

#### HELEN ALLOWED TO LICK SOUP PAIL

Supervisor left, other inmates almost killed her fighting for soup.

#### HELEN REMEMBERS AN ALLIED LEAFLETTING AT AUSCHWITZ

Leaflets dropped by planes. Also heard many rumors of Hitler's death.

### VIDEO 3 OF 3

#### EVACUATED FROM FACTORY

Walked day and night. Didn't know where. No food or water. Those who couldn't walk were shot. Helen's shoes hurt - feet bleeding.

#### WALKS THROUGH ALTENBURG

A woman came out of a house with food. Helen told her to go back inside or she'd be shot.

#### HELEN CAN NO LONGER WALK

Female SS reached for gun. Helen no longer cared. Another SS said "Keep going - your brothers are coming."

#### U.S. BOMBING ATTACK

Germans ran to bunkers. Prisoners hid on mountain. Stayed all night.

#### LIBERATION

American soldiers appeared. Male prisoners also - had been walking behind them. Taken to schoolhouse, given milk. Gave rabbi address of aunt in U.S.

#### NEXT DAY TAKEN TO A DEPARTMENT STORE

Soldiers told them to loot it. Many took cameras, jewelry. Helen wanted only potatoes. Found some, ate too many, and ended up in Red Cross hospital.

#### SEVERAL WEEKS LATER, ALL PEOPLE FROM RUSSIAN-OCCUPIED ZONE MUST GO TO RUSSIAN CAMPS

Russian soldiers rougher than American.



#### HELEN ALMOST RAPED

Russian soldier asked for volunteer to sew in exchange for food. That night he returned, tried to rape her. Helen and friends left train. Begged for food, slept in barns.

#### ARRIVE IN BUDAPEST

Most Czech train stations were welcome centers for survivors.

#### GO TO HOME TOWN

Nothing left. They stayed with a friend of Ilanka's.

#### HELEN'S HUSBAND RETURNS

They said they had little time - he knew her family, she knew his, and they should marry. He was crossing the border that night and could take only one person.

#### THEY WALK TO SLOVAKIA, TAKE TRAIN TO REICHENBERG

Husband bought Helen clothes, got her a room, sent telegram to her relatives in America.

#### AMERICAN RELATIVES SEND FOOD, CLOTHES, MONEY

#### HELEN AND HUSBAND COME TO AMERICA - SEPTEMBER 16, 1948

Had 18-month-old son. Stayed with aunt in Cleveland a few weeks, then got an apartment. Husband worked in meat market, eventually bought own business.

HELEN NOTES THAT ANYONE ABLE TO FIND RELATIVES AFTER WAR WAS LUCKY BECAUSE MENGELE SEPARATED PEOPLE WHO LOOKED ALIKE

#### HELEN MEETS HALF BROTHER IN BUDAPEST

His daughter had been tied to a horse, dragged to death.

#### IN CLEVELAND, JOINS TAYLOR RD. SYNAGOGUE

Gave up on religion during war, but didn't dare stop believing in God. Still can't be as religious as before war.

#### HELEN VERY PROUD TO BE A JEW

Feels she saw and experienced many miracles. Thinks Israel was created because of Holocaust, but it was high price to pay.

HEALTH HAS BEEN PERMANENTLY AFFECTED

Irregular heartbeat, fainting spells, high blood pressure, bowel problems.

DOES NOT DISCUSS HER EXPERIENCES A LOT

But probably more than others. Wants next generation to know. She and husband discuss it more now since they are getting older and are last witnesses.

BECAUSE OF HER EXPERIENCES, HELEN CAN NEVER BE HAPPY

FEELS TERRIBLE WHEN SHE HEARS ABOUT AN EXECUTION

Knows how it feels to go to your death.

NO ONE IN HELEN'S HOME TOWN FELT SORRY OR APOLOGIZED

HELEN'S OPINION OF THE MESSAGE SURVIVORS HAVE TO GIVE

Help each other, support good causes, make sure it never happens again.

DOES NOT HAVE A TATTOO, BECAUSE SHE WAS ALWAYS ON BRINK OF DEATH

FEELS THAT BY BEING INTERVIEWED, SHE HAS GIVEN SOMETHING TO HISTORY