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About your sister, and then I'll ask you about resistance.

Here we go.

Rose, you were telling us about your father's decision to ask you to go to the Ober-Altstadt concentration camp. And you mentioned even though you hadn't known it at the time, that was a decision to save your life. Could you tell us about your arrival at the camp? Did you see your sisters right away? And what was taking place there?

Well, when I left the ghetto, and I would like to show you the picture of when I was just shortly before I left, that's how I looked like. I was just really a young girl. I was 13 years old. At 13, I was chosen for the concentration camp, even there, there was a selection. They were looking mostly for girls with small hands, because they needed us for spinning machines.

It was a long machine that had tiny little spindles. And you had to stop the spindle one at a time. And therefore, while the rest of the machine was running. Therefore, I was picked, not because I was strong, or big, or anything. I was just I guess lucky.

Mind you, to say lucky to have been chosen for a concentration camp, but that's what gave me a little more time to live. And I guess that's what my father had in mind.

You had seen your sisters the last time was in Sosnowiec. What was it like to be reunited with them there in Ober-Altstadt?

Well, when I arrived, both of my sisters were at work. So they did not know that I am there. When the second shift went to work, they-- and they met my sisters coming, because one shift was coming, one shift was going. And they told her that a Zaks girl arrived in camp because that was our name. And they said, oh my God. Then they thought of my cousin. They certainly did not expect me.

You cannot imagine the shock and the joy when they saw me at the same time. They were horror stricken when they saw me. And yet they were happy to see me. But they couldn't understand what am I doing here. And I told them what happened.

And they were just happy to see me. And I certainly was so overjoyed. I was-- the couple of weeks between my leaving home and arriving in the camp was horrifying. I was going into an unknown strange place. I didn't know for sure if I would find my sisters there.

So I suddenly found myself again with some members of my family. I wasn't alone after all. They will take care of me. My sister, Mania, I haven't seen for two years. My sister, Tola, I haven't seen for a year.

How did they look?

They have changed. They were both very thin, very pale. There was absolutely no color in their faces. Their hair was kept very short. They were wearing a little Navy blue uniform, with the Star of David. Everybody was given a pair of wooden clogs. All your possessions were taken away from you. I can't tell you of the joy. But let me describe the structure of the camp now.

There were first of all, our concentration camp was attached actually to the factory. Straight from, once you left the camp gate, you were on the grounds of the factory. There was a barracks, long gray barracks. In each barrack there were huge rooms. There were about-- we were assigned about 30 girls to a room. We were given bunk beds. And that's how we slept.

The structure was such, first of all, there was the UnterscharfÃ¼hrer. We called him Uscha. We had our own names for everybody, so they would not understand what we meant. Everybody that was above that was Nazi that we were

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petrified of that we feel that had authority, had a name. Under him was our lagerfÃ¼hrer, who was just a simple peasant woman before the war. And you just cannot possibly imagine what power does to people.

She became, as the camp grew, because it started just with few girls, till 2,000, her power and her terror grew. She became an unhuman beast really, and so did Uscha, the UnterscharfÃ¼hrer.

How did that manifest itself? What did they do to you?

What do they do? All kinds of things, punishment was an everyday thing. Beating was an everyday thing. Taking away the little bit of food that you had, that cup of coffee, which consisted of a cup of coffee, a slice of bread and water as soup, and which sometimes you find a bandage. Sometimes you find a potato peel. You were lucky if you found a potato peel. Because then the soup was a little bit more nourishing.

We were constantly being terrorized. We were constantly being punished. So under the lagerfÃ¼hrer, there was a Judenalteste who was a Jewish girl. She was in charge of us. And then in each stube, in each room, there was one girl who was in charge of the room. So everything was running so perfectly according to the plan.

I was working in the factory 12 hour shifts. Can you imagine me at 13, instead of going to school standing, in front of a machine? I was given three months to learn how to operate the machine all by myself. And I learned. Sometimes I even couldn't reach to thread spool, but I managed. You couldn't complain. You see our passport to life was work. The minute you cease producing, you were done away with.

After coming back from work, you were given your food. And every day, I mean I was so hungry that if I could take a bite of my machine and chew on it, I probably would have eaten it all up. I stood in front of the machine. And that's all I could dream of is food. I was so obsessed with nothing but food. And every day, I would plan how I would with my ration. But I came home. I was given my ration. Ate it up. Immediately I was hungry all over again. So it was a continuous hunger, and it never left me.

After many 12 hours of work, we would be called to the zahlappell, where we would have to stand at attention for hours outdoors. Now while standing outdoors, that's when I would really firsthand see the inhumanity of men towards men. I know that men's capacity for evil has no limits. They would, while standing at the appell, our Nazi guards would humiliate us, degrade us. They would squeeze out of us the last reserves of human dignity.

What did they do?

When it was snowing, and don't forget we didn't have much outer clothing. They would tell us to lay flat on our bellies and crawl in the snow, and may God help you, if you pick up your rear end, you were hit, kicked with a pair of boots. And the German boots, believe me, when they struck a blow, you felt it for a long time.

When it was raining, they would tell us to make long lines all the way to the river, which was on the border of our camp. They would give us little pails that you play when you are a child. They told us pick up from each puddle pick up scoop up the water, pass the pail down the river. Pour it into the river. You know what happens to a little puddle of water when it pours? You empty it, it fills up all over again. This was no longer work to accomplish something or produce. It was to humiliate us, and make us feel as untermensch which means subhumans.

And sometimes they were succeeding. From time to time, they would tell us during the appell to take off all our clothes, drop them on the floor, and stand there in the nude. There were Nazi male guards as well as female guards. I don't believe that they did this because they wanted to look at us females, because believe me we resembled anything but females. Our bodies were nothing but skin and bones. Our hair was either shaved or kept very short. We certainly had no makeup or color on us. Our uniforms were either too big or too small, skimpy. So we resembled nothing, not females at all.

I think this was done to degrade us even further. Can you imagine what they did to us, to our own person, 2,000 girls actually, young girls standing there and viewing each other. Really, we began feeling subhuman. Like we are an ant that

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you can crush with one little blow. And this is what was so horrible that, degradation, dehumanization of us.

But I'll tell you that even though many times they succeeded in destroying our bodies. They did not always succeeded in destroying our will, our mind. Our will to live persisted. How? The girls, because of all the discrimination we have lived with, we have turned inward to our own people. And the girls would give courage and help to each other in order to maintain some kind of an order and unity in our life.

Do you remember any specific example of this, of how you helped one another?

All the time. If a girl, after coming from work, we would be called to barrack duty, to clean the barracks, or to clean the quarters, the Nazi quarters, the SS quarters, or the Gestapo quarters. We would be called to that duty. If a girl was too weak or too sick to go, another girl who was not much stronger, not much healthier, would go and do it for her, so that she would cover up for the weak girl that she is sick that she can no longer perform. Because as I said, this was our passport to life.

If in the middle of the night a girl would break down and start crying for whatever reason, thinking of home, longing for something, missing her parents, we all would come to her rescue to help her get over that horrible period. We would start singing. We would start talking, just to take her out of the depression.

What about your own sisters? How did they really survive through this ordeal?

I was the youngest, so they really took care of me. But my sister who was the older one, older than I, but not the oldest, she herself became very ill. She had typhus. Typhus in those days meant certain death. And believe me, we slept together. I don't know how my other sister or I did not become sick. But anyway, she was taken to a sick room. And in the sickroom, there was nothing to give her, no medication, just a girl who was a nurse at home in my hometown. She was taking care of them. There were no doctors either.

She was there a couple of days. And then the nurse told her, Mania, tomorrow you are going to work. And she helped her and several other girls to get dressed, and pushed them out of the room. And we thought her cruel that day. My sister barely made it to the factory. And there she could not perform any work at all. She lay in back of the machine like a dead dog. And the girl who was working the machine next to her was working both machines that day.

Whenever she saw the Nazi guard approaching, she would help my sister, lean her against the machine, just so she could pretend that she too is working. She was covering up for her. That day when we returned from the factory, we realized that what the nurse has done at the risk of her own life. Because that day, the Gestapo came and took everyone out of the sick room. And we never saw them again.

There was another girl who slept on the bunk bed across from me. She had epilepsy. And I was so petrified of whenever she had a seizure. And my sister said, don't worry. She's all right. She will not harm you. I have never seen that before.

And for two years, we managed to hide it from the Nazis. And then only one month before the war has ended, she had a seizure, was taken away, and we never saw her again.

Did any of the girls try to escape or did one-- were there any stories of successful escape?

One.

Would you tell us about that please?

Out of the 2,000 girls, only one escaped. But believe me if she would know how much we suffered because of that, I don't think she would have done it.

Do you recall how she escaped?

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You see, we had no access to the outside world. We were completely cut off from the outside world. As a matter of fact, we knew nothing of what's going on. In our factory, there were many prisoners of war working. They were in camps, POW camps that were not near ours at all. They were bringing supplies to the machines. And there were also a lot of Czechoslovakian people working in the factory. Don't forget that the place where I was in Ober-Altstadt, one time belonged to Czechoslovakia. That was Sudeten gau. But in 1938, it was annexed to Germany by the will of England and other free nations, who really had no right to give up a part of another country.

So there were Czechoslovakian people working in the factory too. And they managed to smuggle out from the factory, never mind from the camp that was an impossibility, a girl whose name was Hoffmann. She was either Czechoslovakian or Hungarian girl. I don't remember. Must have been Czechoslovakian, since Czechoslovakians helped her. The Czechs smuggled her out. And for this we were punished so severely, more so because the name of our lagerfÃ¼hrer, the head of our concentration camp, her name was Irma Hoffmann.

And maybe she was a little petrified for her own safety that maybe she will be accused of extending help to the girl whose name also was Hoffmann. Believe me, we have suffered so mercilessly.

What did they do to you?

First of all, our food was cut off completely. We were made to stand indefinite hours at the appellplatz. We were even forbidden to use the shower room, shower room which was our shower room was a long pipe from which ice cold water was dripping. That was our shower room.

Everything that they could direct at us to extend the punishment and humiliation they would do. Beating for anything. If your shoes didn't shine and we had no polish, you were beaten. If you didn't walk straight in line when you were marched to work, for that you were beaten. If you just made one wrong step out of the line or something, you were not going anyplace. You were surrounded by SS all the time.

Beating was an everyday, nothing unusual about beating anymore.

When you talk about the camp and the life there, can you tell us what your ideas of resistance were at the time, or did you see examples of resistance?

There was resistance every place in all walks of life, in the ghettos, in the camps, in the forests. In the forest, we know that the partisans were fighting as an underground movement.

In Ober-Altstadt?

In Ober-Altstadt, yes, you see we tried to sabotage in whatever way we could. Now, let's say my machine, my machine the thread was from different spools. They were trying to make one thin thread. Now if one on top tore, you were supposed to stop that spindle and connect it, so it would be the same thickness. Ofttimes we let it go as long as we were not spotted.

The end product of our factory was German uniform. When the girls were sewing in the sleeves, sometimes they tried to sew in the wrong sleeve, or the wrong pocket. They tried to do little things in whatever way they could even to stop the process.

Some of our girls, there were 200 girls that every day were marched to a different factory. They were marched through the city. They were working in ammunition factory. They were stuffing shells with gunpowder. They tried to put a little bit less gunpowder than it was required. Once the shell was sealed, they were hoping they wouldn't be discovered. There were all kinds of attempts.

And even in the ghettos, in our ghetto too, there was an underground at work at all time. But resistance, there is a passive resistance, also it's not always picking up a weapon resistance. Passive resistance is even just refusing to die, trying to hold onto life by the thinnest of threads. You see, they wanted us dead. And eventually, we all would have

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died. We were kept alive because we were needed. Our labor was needed.

Do you recall-- excuse me.

That's all right.

Do you recall any specific examples of people whom you knew, either in Ober-Altstadt or before or at the time of deportation, that gave example of this passive or spiritual resistance? Did you have a friend or were there relationships with children?

Well, you see, even prior to the ghetto, our Judenrat asked for a small parcel of land that was not worked before the war, and that the Jewish people will work that land. And there, there were formed little plots that the Judenrat was supposed to distribute to different groups. Instead, they distributed it to different Zionist organizations. And that's where I myself was first introduced to Hanoar Hatzioni. That's a Zionist organization.

And there instead of working the fields as we were supposed to, which we did also, we also were having our meetings and our inspiration about the land of Palestine. About that there is a place that someday we may be free and go. And we were taught about not giving in about fighting. In the ghetto itself, there were several leaders. I know that two of them were brothers, and they were members of Hanoar Hatzioni who were working in the resistance movement.

They were caught. And one of them was hung by the ghetto gate. And the other one was taken to the inner city, or out of the ghetto, and put under a guillotine. And his body was left there in the two pieces for everyone to see what happens.

Well, his wife who was a girl of 19 years old at that time, she-- I don't know how. But she was a smuggler in the ghetto. Because she looked very Aryan, that means non-Jewish. And they had a way of smuggling her in and out of the ghetto, I suppose she was-- because she was working with the underground. She went in the middle of the night and she stole the body from the square, and she buried him, gave him a ritual burial. Those are acts of bravery.

Not everyone could pick up weapons. But also you must remember, if a young person of 18 or 19 is ready to go and fight for a cause, he knows that if he gets caught, he surely will die. And he's ready for it. But often there was something attached to that. There was a responsibility. You had to know that if you pick up arms, and if you get caught, you surely will die. But also your whole family will perish, will be wiped out, and sometimes the whole city or the whole village. And Lidice, which was not a Jewish village in Czechoslovakia, was an example of that.

So there was like so much responsibility in resisting. But each of us resisted in his own or her own way, to a certain extent.

You mentioned too, Rose, that there was always hope in Ober-Altstadt. Do you have any indication of how this hope carried you to the point of liberation?

Yes. Well first of all, apathy and submission to the enemy destroyed your will to live. You had nothing. If you had no hope in your heart, don't forget we were all mostly-- most of us were deeply religious. And we never lost our belief, or most of us in God, and certainly hope. You never lost hope. And you know, Leatrice, that the more your enemy is trying to destroy you, the stronger your will is to live. As I said, the courage, girls would help each other. The girls would cover up for each other. Girls would tell stories.

If a prisoner of war who delivered flax, flax to our machine, for a second could throw even a word, it was a word of hope. We in turn passed it on to the rest of the girls. This was the only thing that kept us going, that hope that tomorrow. And we actually lived one day at a time.

Had I known in 1943, when I came to the camp that I will have to live through this ordeal for two years, and had I also known that my parents are not alive, I don't think there would be anything to sustain me, certainly not the food. So that hope, that hope and that strong belief in God that's what really saw us through this ordeal.

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Did you develop any very close relationships with other girls in the camp? You were there for two years.

Very close, very. So close that we don't write to each other maybe so much, because there is so much writing to do. But we see each other. We-- I saw a lot of them when I went to the world gathering of Holocaust survivors in 1981 in Jerusalem. I went to kibbutz Netzer Sereni in which my cousin lives. And before I knew, there were so many girls that came that were from Ober-Altstadt. I have not seen them seen them since 1945.

And here were. They came strong. They are the people that the former concentration camp, former inmates, who were builders of Israel. They came strong. They came with their children, their grandchildren. They held their future of Palestine of Israel in their hands. I was so happy to see them, to know that they are alive, to know that they are reproducing, to know that we are still here.

Right. Did those feelings then carried you to the time of liberation? So after two years of enduring this in Ober-Altstadt, did you have any indication that the war was coming to an end?

Yes. I knew, not really-- that something was happening. Because shortly before the end of the war, our factory was closed because the supplies couldn't come through. So we were ordered to work in the fields, either plant potatoes and work in potato fields, plant potatoes, and other vegetation. And we were also ordered to dig, I can't think of the word for-- trenches.

We knew that something was happening, why was the factory suddenly closed. And then we heard the planes overhead. They were coming and the bombers were bombing nearby places. So we knew that the war is still going on. You see, all the Nazi and the German workers would be herded to the bomb shelters. We in turn were forced to stand outdoors. But to us, what was the sweetest sign, the sweetest sound. It was a sign that the war is going on, that it isn't over yet, that there is still hope.

And those were-- we got very little signals. But each one we built on it. We hoped on it. And we lived with it.

What were you hoping to find when the war would be over? What were you talking about together with the other girls? What were your plans?

Oh, they were very simple. We were going to go home. We were going to be reunited with our families. And perhaps we could pick up our pieces, and life would go on. Of course, we found out that this was not so.

You didn't have any indication or communications that led you to believe otherwise?

Well, by that time, we knew of Auschwitz. How did we know of Auschwitz? In 1944, some Hungarian girls came from Auschwitz. They came to Auschwitz, but by that time Auschwitz was being already torn apart, because the Russians were approaching. So they were shipped to-- and they came and they told us about such and such a place. But still, I don't think that our imagination could have grasped it all.

But still we didn't think that everybody was sent to Auschwitz and perished. We also thought of a place for individuals that people were punished for whatever reasons. You must remember that many victims that perished in Auschwitz were not Jewish. But all Jews were victims. That was the difference. And like today, I feel that if my parents would have died through bombing, or my father or my brother would die holding a gun and fighting for Poland, that was my country at that time, I would feel easier.

But knowing that they died in vain for nothing, for committing no crime, for doing nothing, such a waste, merciless death. And that is so hard to deal with.

Rose, tell us about your liberation. What was the first indication that you were free? How did you react? How did the girls react? What happened?

Officially, the war was over on May 8. But we did not know it. We went to sleep after we worked in the fields, as usual.

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And you know what 24 hours in our life meant, that perhaps a few more people would have survived. We went to sleep as usually. Next morning, it was still. There were no whistles for work, no calling, no Nazi guards running, no hitting, no screaming. It was so peaceful, so quiet. It was frightening to us.

Anything that was out of the ordinary was a frightening experience. We did not know what this means. But eventually, the girls began moving about. And one girl approached the gate, and believe me to her surprise and ours, pushed it open. And it was then that we realized on May 9th that the war must have ended. We all ran towards the gate, ran into the streets. And soon we were greeted by the oncoming Russian army.

So in other words, there were no Nazi officials left.

Nothing. They all escaped in the middle of the night. They just disappeared. But I would like to tell you that we did catch one of them. After the liberation, which was the most exciting day in my life, I couldn't begin to describe liberation, what it is. It's you're free. What it means to be free. You can move. You can go. You can talk. You can look at people because we were not even allowed to in concentration camp at work, we were not allowed to look up at anyone.

It was exalting. It was beyond-- it was mind exploding really, to be liberated, to be free, standing on a street looking at people, trucks, the soldiers. We were singing to them. We were hugging them, kissing them. They were, after all, our liberators.

What did they say to you when they saw the girls?

They greeted us greatly too, of course. They say, we came to liberate you. We came to free you. We'll give you your freedom. There were episodes with the Russian soldiers afterwards. But that's really minor.

You said you caught one of the Nazi officials.

You see, of course, the impact was to go home immediately. But the transportation of Europe was completely paralyzed. So we had to remain in the camp for several more days, until we could eventually make it home.

While remaining in the camp, the prisoners of wars that were in other camps, began coming to us. After all, those were girls, although believe me nothing exciting about the looks of those girls. And the soldiers began walking with the girls all over. And one day, some of-- those were British soldiers that were imprisoned were walking with some of the girls through the forest that was bordering our camp. And there they discovered that our lagerfÃ¼hrer, the head of our concentration camp, was hiding out in the forest.

Obviously, she was originally from Ober-Altstadt, so she didn't have where to run to, like the others that were brought from different cities. Anyway, they brought her and turned her over to the Russian authorities. The Russians--

Do you recall her name?

Irma Hoffman, yes, that's the same one. The Russian authorities, since don't forget that the Russians had suffered an awful lot by the Nazi hands also. So they were not creating no Nuremberg trials. They did their job immediately right there and then. They told us, she is all yours. You take her to your camp. You can kill her with one bullet. You can kill her by cutting her to pieces and putting salt actually on her body. Punish her in whatever way you feel it's suitable to you, to we could get our anger out.

And believe me, there was still enough hate in our hearts towards that woman. So we brought her back to the camp. They put her in the middle of our appellplatz, where we always stood for hours, right in the middle of the appellplatz on a chair. She was sitting. And 2,000 girls surrounded her. And you know what? Out of the 2,000 girls, not one of us could go and kill her or harm her. The only thing that was done to her, her hair was shaved in the ridiculous manner in which ours was shaved when we were punished.

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You see our hair was kept very short. And when we were punished they made, shaved across on your head. So you would look even more ridiculous. So the girl, one girl, did this to her. And we were standing and asking, who wants to kill her, please? And not one of us could do it. And today, I'm very proud of that fact. Because even though we were suffering so, even though we were faced with so much inhumanity, we still had enough value in us for life. We valued life so dearly, it was so precious that we could not take a life.

And today, I am proud of it that there was still enough humanity left in us.

Rose, from that point, what did you do? Where did you go?

Of course, eventually we made it back to Sosnowiec, only discovered there was really nothing to come home to. That's when we found out that my father, my mother, my younger sister, my oldest sister, her little girl-- that they all perished in Auschwitz. And I dare not think. But often I think how terrible they must have died, pushed into a gas chamber, how they were trying for their last breath. How perhaps their brain was still working. And they were thinking, what is being done to us? Why?

And I cannot accept their kind of death. That I cannot-- never accept. As I said, I would be more at peace if I would know they died for a cause, or they died by accident of war, but not this kind of a death. I cannot accept it. I cannot forgive or forget that.

Rose, you were there then with your sisters without the rest of your family.

Yes.

You were still very, very young.

After the war I was 15 years old.

Right. What did you do? What did your sisters do? And then how did you eventually come to America?

Well, the first impact, my sister decided that, well, life has to go on. We have to pick up our pieces the best way we can. I needed to go back to school, of course. But I couldn't go to school in my hometown. Because the first day I was greeted, the Jews are back. And I could not endure that no longer. I went to Chorzow, which was a town nearby. It was 15 minutes by streetcar from my hometown. But I had to live there in order to go to school there. There were only Jewish children who survived through hiding or through camp. Because children like myself, very few in our camp, out of the 2,000 girls, there were only seven girls my age in the camp.

So I lived there. It was simply said an orphanage. And I lived there, and I went to school there. But in a way, it was a happy place. Because I was among my own people, among children my age and younger. And that's where I attended school. But eventually, we saw that there was no future for us in Poland. And we had to leave Poland. And it wasn't easy. We had to smuggle ourselves out of Poland. And I was smuggled out as a Greek citizen leaving Poland for home.

Because you must remember, there were many camps on the Polish soil. I'm sorry to say, that only on Polish soil, because Poles would stand for it. While as the people of Netherlands and other countries would not allow death camps on their soil. So we were smuggled out of Poland, and went back to Germany, where I joined a kibbutz.

And I lived there preparing myself for life and eventually what would be Palestine.

A kibbutz was a collective settlement?

It's a collective settlement that you have them now in Israel. Of course, I wanted to get out of Germany. Of course, we didn't see a future there. But of course it wasn't easy. I was in Germany for two more years. Eventually, I was convinced by my sisters and a man who worked, an Israeli man who worked the Aliyah, that is the immigration to Israel. He told me. He convinced me to go with my sisters to America. And as luck wanted it, I being a teenager, made it to America in

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1947.

My sisters being already older, did not make it until 1949. So I came to United States on September 21, 1947.

Do you have a picture with you? I thought I saw it there.

Oh yes, I have a picture on the boat. This is the Ernie Pyle boat on which I came. And here I am.

Can you hold it straight front of you?

Yes. Here I am. And this is the picture. And this group were all teenagers and children of all nationalities, and of all religions that came to the United States aboard this ship with me. I can't--

Do you recall which organization helped you?

Well, that was the branch from the UNRRA. The UNRRA brought us. That's the United Nations. And once here, the HIAS, the Jewish distribution joint.

Right.

Yes.

Hebrew immigration.

Hebrew integration, right. They took care. I stayed in New York because they tried to place us in different homes. And I was assigned to go to Cleveland, because I had relatives here. And I came that same year in '47, I came to Cleveland.

Did you start your schooling again?

Yes, I returned to school. I was already 17 years old. I spoke no English, except a few words that I have learned in Europe. I started with ninth grade, Alexander Hamilton, I went to Alexander Hamilton Junior High School in the ninth grade. Then I went onto John Adams High School. And I made the three years in two years.

I also requested to go back to Hebrew school, since I really had no formal Jewish education. And I really wanted to know why. I suffered so much because of being Jewish, yet I knew nothing about my religion. I knew so little about it. And I needed a Jewish identity. I needed to know who I am first and above all.

So I went to Hebrew school, religious school as well as high school. I loved high school with everything. I embraced it with everything. I took more subjects. I had to go for special permit to take more subjects than necessary, because to me education was a thing that I have lost. And you just don't know how precious it was to me to get free education.

You subsequently became a licensed Hebrew teacher and Sunday school teacher?

Yes, I did. And I am very happy and proud of that fact that I can give a little bit of myself. And I'm also happy about speaking on Holocaust to schools, Jewish as well as non-Jewish.

Would you like to tell a little bit about your efforts in Holocaust outreach education? Because it's important for everyone to know the extent of your work for these great number of years.

Well, I have been really doing it for the last 10 years. I have traveled throughout Ohio, even once I spoke in Florida. I go mostly to schools, Black schools, and white schools, and Jewish schools, and Catholic schools and universities. I try to share a little bit of my experience with them. I try to teach them, so they will know. So they will be able to spot the signs. There are all about us. We live in a horrible world. It's a beautiful world, and at the same time it's horrible. Man has not learned how to live in peace as yet.

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I'm still hoping. Maybe I'm just a dreamer. But I'll never give up that hope that maybe someday we will learn to live in peace--

Rose--

--with each other.

I think that is our hope, too. But I would like for you to share what happened to your sisters and where is your family located now, your extended family?

My sisters live, two of them live in Cleveland. One lives in Detroit. I have, as I said, three married children. One lives in Baltimore. She's a social worker. Perhaps because I was supervised in Cleveland by a social worker and she heard me talk so much about her.

I have a lot to be grateful for to her, because she gave me guidance. And my middle son, he is a businessman. And my youngest son is an attorney. But I think that their lives have been enriched through my experience. I have always taught them to be tolerant of other men, and not to be prejudiced.

What about your sisters? Do you frequently get together with them?

We are--

Are you close?

Extremely close. My children can't get over my closeness with my sisters. But because of that, they are much closer also. We still stress the family unit is the most important. It's the focal point in our life. I am happy that my children can learn a lot from me. I was happy when my children saw me, and I wish they could have gone. But they couldn't go to the American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors, which was in Washington. I believe that it was an enrichment for me. It was another fulfillment of a dream.

Again, I met people whom I have not seen for nearly 40 years. And--

So you feel that these two post-holocaust gatherings had a tremendous sense of fulfillment for you? The first one, the world gathering in Jerusalem in Israel in 1981, and the American gathering in 1983. Rose, I know that you were instrumental for the Jerusalem gathering in putting together a book of a [NON-ENGLISH], witness pages of testimony from Cleveland survivors. And you also made a contribution when you submitted your own story in Washington.

Would you like to share with us what you have written for the American gathering?

Oh yes, I wrote just very short, a very condensed story of my life. And with it, I enclosed something, a personal message to the American people. I would like to--

Would you share it with us?

I have to put on glasses for reading. See, this is the form that I have submitted. And this is a copy.

And this will be in the archives?

This will be in the archives of the Washington Holocaust Museum, whenever it will be built, I mean whenever it will be established. It is being established now. And this is what I wrote. Dear fellow Americans, I am writing this in the hope that someday when I no longer am here to tell you personally about my life under the Nazi tyranny, you will have a better understanding of what really took place. You and the generations to come must know the truth about the darkest chapter in the history of mankind.

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You must know about the most inhuman treatment of men towards men, about men's capacity for evil. You must try to understand what can happen when the people of a highly cultural and civilized nation follow their leader blindly, obediently, and unquestionable. You must also learn about Auschwitz, a place where the German scientists conceived the death factories and invented the most efficient methods of mass extermination.

Remember, that while 6 million of my people were being slaughtered, the conscience of the free world was on trial. But it failed. My people, and among them a million of children, died only because they were Jewish and for no other reason at all. If you should forget them, they would have died in vain. I know that it is difficult for you to understand this. Perhaps your mind cannot grasp it yet. You must. There can be no eradication or distortion of history.

Learn from the past, so you will not repeat it in the future. I hope that by the time you read this, you will have learned to live in peace and harmony, you will be able to tolerate others and have compassion for your fellow men. Judge him by his merits, and not by his race, nationality, or religion. God was kind and gave you a beautiful world. Don't destroy it. Strive to make it a better place for your children and mine.

I hope you will never experience the brutality, hunger, and pain that I had to endure as a teenager. I have suffered enough for all of us. You are fortunate to be living in these United States, the wonderful land where I found shelter and the opportunity for a new life. I love this country with all my might, and am forever grateful to her people. I hope you will be able to preserve the principles on which this great country was built. But above all, always remember that we were all created equal.

And I strongly believe in that.

Rose, with that beautiful testimony, perhaps you can add your feelings of what would be the best way for each community in our country to commemorate the events of the Holocaust, the tragedy, and some of the uplifting experiences that did happen, of man's help to each other in this darkest hour, and also to create an awareness to the young people who will follow in succeeding generations. How would you characterize this commemorative place or whatever you would have in mind?

Well, of course, there will be a museum established in Washington. And there is Yad Vashem in Israel. But how many children will have opportunity to go and see it? What I would like to see is a Holocaust center built in Cleveland, so that the future generation, it isn't for me that I need such a center. I need not be reminded. I'll never forget what happened to me. But we need a place like this for the future generations, when I no longer am here to tell them about it, to warn them, to teach them. We need a place like that so that the future generations might learn, a place from which material, education can go out into the city, a place where they can come and do research, a place where they can find books, a place where they can find material, where they can see displays, where they can see movies, where they can see photographs of what happened, a place of learning. But a place that is within their reach.

And that would be the greatest monument to the memory of those who have perished to all the people whom we have loved and lost, and the greatest contribution to the generations to come.

Do you see this as part of every community structure?

I would like to. You see, if we do not learn from the past, then we will destroy ourselves. The world is a beautiful world, but we make it ugly. The action of men destroy the world. And who knows which nation might be the first one to pick up the atomic warfare, and use it. So I only hope that if the young people and today's young people are aware, there is so much to learn. And they have so many opportunities. If they only would know what education meant to me, they would not take it for granted.

I've been going to the College of Jewish Studies for 13 years. I would like to learn as much as I possibly could. There is no limits to learning. And the opportunity in this land is here. It's for everybody, for the rich and for the poor. And no matter how poor and I'm appealing to the poor children, it's there. Take whatever it offers, because it's free to you.

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I hope that they learn mainly about the Holocaust. It's the greatest lesson in the history of mankind. It shows what man is capable of doing. But it shows also that man can raise up above it, and live, and build up a life of his own. And that there is life beyond all that. That we should strive to bring out the goodness. Although I have seen men at his worst, I believe in the good heart of men. And a center such as I am speaking of would help us to understand a little bit better of what this is all about.

If we forget, if we neglect it, then in a way we contribute we help those that wanted to destroy us. And if this happens again, another Holocaust, although there is on smaller scales they are happening. But if it does happen on a big scale, who knows who might be the victim, who might be the bystander, and who might be the killer. We don't know.

And in order to protect, and I want to protect my children, your children, your children, anybody's children, from having ever to live through what I lived. And only through knowledge, through understanding, we can achieve that, no other way.

Rose, we understand too that your life experience here in America you have shared together with your husband, who is also a survivor. Do you find that indicative of many survivors who have married among others who have emerged from the Holocaust?

Yes, well, I met my husband here. So I did not come-- I did not meet him in Germany, or after the war, or anyplace else. I met him here. You see when I came here, I tried to really absorb myself into the mainstream of American life. And I did. I was extremely active in school. As a matter of fact, I was an extremely conscientious student. I graduated fifth highest in my high school. I was supposed to go on to college, and I even got a scholarship to go to college. I probably should have taken advantage of it.

But I was older already. I was 20 years old when I graduated from high school. And by that time, I was a little bit tired of being a little Orphan Annie who was given clothes, who was given food. I needed to make a life for myself. And that's why I got married. Why I chose a survivor, I didn't really choose him because he was a survivor, although I always looked for survivors because we had so much in common. We could understand each other much better.

I had a lot of American friends from school with whom I was very close. Yet, I felt most comfortable near or with a survivor. And I suppose that's why I married a survivor also.

And you and Henry have created a beautiful family. And I've had the privilege of being the teacher of Ronnie, who traveled with us on the journey of conscience to the sites of the Holocaust, and then to Israel. That was very, very meaningful to him. It has changed his whole outlook on life really. And I'm grateful to you for that.

Rose, your contribution to Holocaust education and really to the education of humanity, caring for each other, has really been of great value in our community, and in the greater community of Cleveland. And on behalf of National Council of Jewish Women Holocaust Archives Project, on behalf of our entire community, we say Thank you to Rose Kaplovitz, for such an lightning, enriching, and fulfilling interview.

I would like to add something to it. I too am grateful to the National Council of Jewish Women for undertaking this, probably the most important, the most meaningful project in their history. And I hope that they will be rewarded in knowing that it might help the future generations. And I really thank them from the bottom of my heart.

Thank you. Rose Kaplovitz.

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