

I'm Sally Weinberg. I'm interviewing Sandra Mandel, a Holocaust survivor. The project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section. Sandra, we left off when you were working in the factory in Hatlerdorf in Czechoslovakia.

Yes.

Can you continue your story about your work there and what happened to your life from that point on?

In the factory, as I mentioned, we worked early in the morning until 7 o'clock in the evening, from 6:00 to 7:00 in the evening. We had a half an hour break at lunchtime, at which time we came upstairs. That is where our living quarters were. And it was going on like that. One day went into the other. At Christmas time, we put up a nice Christmas show for the SS women, a choir. We formed a choir for them.

And we were part of the worker's group. I was considered as a hard worker in that factory because I worked with two ovens and I was operating these two ovens back and forth. So I got a bonus on Christmas time. I got a bowl of potato salad. It was delicious. And you had to be privileged to get it because it wasn't for everybody.

There is one more thing I want to mention about this place. One day, they told us somebody is coming for inspection. We have to fix our beds beautifully, so it looks nice and neat, and sit on our bed. And soon, we found out who came to inspect us. It was Dr. Mengele. It was in March.

Of what year?

1945. We found out that in March 1945, Auschwitz didn't exist anymore.

How did you find this out?

That was later, after the war, because in January, Auschwitz was bombed by the Russians and he had to fled from there. And he became the doctor over there, over the other camps from Auschwitz. So he came to visit our place.

And he recognized one of the girls with beautiful blonde hair. And he said, boy, you look beautiful today. And for the first time, I heard him talk like a mensch. He looked human, and he even joked with us. And he asked one of the girls, would you like to go back to Auschwitz? And the girl just shuddered, and he shuddered with her and said, you know, I don't like to go there back, either. So that's what I know about Dr. Mengele. He came again later to see our camp, April the 10th.

1945?

1945. I mentioned that I had a very close friend, Clara, Clara Klein. She used to live in a nearby community back home and we've been very close friends. She took sick. She couldn't go to work.

Was she in the factory with you?

Us in the factory. And she was put in the sick room. There was one sick room with about eight beds. And the very young children who were there could not take the work they were doing. Many people worked at open gas. They blew these glass tubes on open flame, and apparently they got sick, and tuberculosis was very common in Europe. And these are the kids that couldn't digest the food, and I mentioned I toasted their bread.

Clara went into this infirmary. And she tried to get out from there as soon as possible because there was a girl who died and she knew this is the death room. And she was taken into the city at one point to have an X-ray. She had a chest X-ray. And they found out she had bronchitis, but they had no medication for it. So she said the only thing I could eat just eat something better, so I gave her all the potatoes I could get through my business. I had a place where to deposit my potatoes.

In the camp, many times in April-- April the 13th, we worked until 5 o'clock at one point, and they sent us up early. Apparently, there wasn't much to do anymore so they sent us upstairs. We didn't know exactly why. In May, May the 5th, was a turning point in the Lawrence factory.

Louisa, the girl who was-- she was also a survivor. She came along with a transport and she was the leader of us. She spoke German beautifully, so they made her to be the leader of the whole group. And she came to us and she said, listen, I'm going to take your names and birthplaces, because maybe soon we will need that. The war is about to end.

Was that the first time you heard that the war was coming to a close?

We heard rumors, and the rumors always came from the washroom because that is where we gathered and that is where we talked. And the rumors came from a very good source. We had French men working in our factory who used to fix our machineries. They were French prisoners of war. They lived in Hatlerdorf in the community. We lived on top of the factory in the outskirts of this little village.

But they were the ones-- there were two girls in our group who spoke French. They took French in school. And they communicated with them. They would bring us the news, that Budapest doesn't exist anymore, they already fallen into the enemies there anymore, and the Russians took over Hungary. A lot of news came in through these workers.

So when she came to tell us-- and it was very confidential. She told us, we are still in their hands. You're not allowed to talk. We don't know what their plans are with us. Are they going to march us away from here or are they going to abandon us? Or what will happen, we never know. They still they still have the gun pointing to us because they worked.

How old were you at this point?

How old was I? It was in 1945. I must have been 21 years old, close to 21. 20, I would say. And May the 7th, at 10 o'clock in the morning, we went down to work that day. But at 10 o'clock in the morning, all electricity, all the factories stopped. We went on with the work in the morning as usual. At 10 o'clock, everything stopped. The electricity turned off. The lights went out. And we just looked at each other.

An announcement came. "Pick everything that you keep in this factory"-- somebody had a spoon there, somebody had a fork, or whatever, little packages we left in the factories many times. "Take all belongings with you until further notice." They did not tell us the war was ended. They just sent us back upstairs, and they locked us up there, because every night we were locked upstairs in our dorm.

In fact, we witnessed, during our stay in the factory, air raids. They would rush us up to the attic. They locked us up. And the rest of the workers and the SS would run to the shelters. And we were watching them from our attic upstairs, how everybody was running to the shelters.

And if the bomb comes, who cares for the Jewish girls? They will just go up in flame with the rest of the factory. But thank God it didn't happen. But we witnessed-- we knew that we were still prisoners at that time. So May the 8th, we were told that we can stay in the factory. The war is over.

And you know how we knew that the war was over? We went down to the bathroom and an SS woman was still there. And we stopped and asked her if we are allowed to go to the bathroom, and she didn't answer us. So we passed her and she didn't call us back. We knew the war is over. If she did not hit us for passing her, we knew the war is over.

We wandered down to the yard because we wanted to know how far we can go. So we did go all the way downstairs, all the four flights from the top of the attic, and it was wonderful. We were able to go down to the backyard of the factory and come back upstairs. And other girls said, did you know that you can go down to the backyard? So we knew the war was over.

And May the 8, that was the day when they told us that the factory is closed. We can stay here and wait for the Russians

to come in and liberate us, or if we want to-- we had to make a decision-- walk down to the nearby city, what is Hatlerdorf. And over there, they are already in, and we should do that.

So we made a decision, six of us, decided to walk down. And it felt beautiful to be a free person. We walked in the middle of the road. It was kind of a little walk. I don't know, two kilometers, I suppose, to this little town. And of course, I had two girls from my hometown, and Clara with me and some other girls, that we walked together. One was Blau Sylvia, whose father told her, in Auschwitz, we meet at home, and she stuck together with us. And Clara had a friend from her hometown. And we all walked together.

When we got there, the French prisoners who used to work in the factory were just about ready to leave home. They were first to go home. And they gave us-- their quarters were given to the Jewish girls to stay until transportation will be for them to go home. So it was nice. We were six people in a room. We had a bunk.

Wait, were you rejoicing? Were you happy?

Yeah, we were very happy and. See, this was a Czechoslovakian territory. And the authorities came up to tell us that we are going to be fed. There is an open kitchen for us. Any time of the day, we could go in and eat. Well, they had breakfast and they had noon and they had supper, and I think we were always hungry.

There was no time that somebody would say, well, you want to eat? Yes, we were always ready to eat. We were so very hungry, because toward the end, they cut our breads in 10 slices at the factory. There was enough food to go around, so food was very scarce. And it was just about the time for us to be liberated in order to survive. And so that kitchen was just the most marvelous kitchen that I will always remember.

And we stayed there for about two weeks or three weeks. May the 29th, 1945, we were ready to go home. They said the Hungarians are going home. Every day they announced who is going home. The Romanians are going home.

Who made the announcement?

Well, it was from the Czech government, officials.

Was it a newspaper or a bulletin board?

No. It was at this dining hall we got all of our instructions and news.

Announced out loud?

Announced out loud, so we knew. And they told us, go and welcome the Russians when they came in. We make a celebration. They freed you. So we had to go and say hello to the new people who really freed us, but soon we learned that they were very wild people. All they wanted is watches and girls. So the Czech government put up curfews for us. 9 o'clock, we had to be in our place. And they had soldiers watching our borders so nobody will intrude. So we really were protected and I think it was very nice to know that.

Did you at that point try to find any of your family?

At that point, our aim was to go home.

To go back, everybody back to their own city?

Everybody wanted to go home. And we hoped, still hoped, that somewhere our family survived. The way we survived here, maybe they survived somewhere else. And finally, we got a freight car, because that was the only transportation they had those days, and we left home. We got food for the road, bread and liverwurst, and we had utensils at that time already.

And we made some suits for ourselves from blankets. We sewed by hand. Everybody was a seamstress over there. We tried to fix our hair, and so on. So we started to begin to be human again.

But our train stopped. It didn't go very far because it was right after the war and there was no room for our train to go through. So they took this locomotive from here and they put it to a passenger train. So we had to wait and wait. And nothing happened, so we walked into that city where we waited. And we found out there was a station not far from there, and the Red Cross was there serving out hot soup and bread. Wherever we went, the Red Cross always showed up to help the people after the war. At one point--

Was that the American Red Cross?

No. It must have been the Czechoslovakian Red Cross. We couldn't even speak to those people. We didn't know their language. But it was always a place where there was Kitchens and food prepared for the people who came home from the war. And this is the only way we survived. We got to a little community where there was an open kitchen, where they served scrambled eggs all day long. It was scrambled eggs and bread.

And so that was wonderful. We slept in a school room and we went in for scrambled eggs. And then over there, one of my friends got acquainted with a Romanian officer, who took home his own people, back home to Romania.

And we said, we are Romanians, too. We come from Romania. So she told us, don't speak Hungarian, because we spoke both languages. Speak only Romanian, because the Hungarians were on the German side and they think you as an enemy if you speak Hungarian. So we became Romanians again and we spoke Romanian. And this officer helped us get to Prague, to the big city, and from there to Budapest.

And how did you get there?

By train. But every train was laden with people. People were hanging from windows. People were sitting in top of the train just to get home. Soldiers were all over. And this officer said, toward his soldiers, you know these girls? These are soldiers, too. They suffered plenty in the war and we're going to take them home. And I remember, they threw us through the window into the train in order to get home to Budapest. So that was my trip to Budapest.

How far was Budapest from your small community?

Well, see, we went first to Prague in Czechoslovakia. And then from Czechoslovakia, we waited through the night-- waiting through the night wasn't so easy, too, but at least we knew we were going home.

And you were free.

We were free. In Budapest, we had a beautiful welcome from the Jewish community. At the train station, there were people there waiting already for the people who came home from the war. And they had donuts and some kind of a drink, I don't remember. Some kind of a fruit punch or something they had.

And they told us that we have a place for you. And they had beds, clean beds. And the Joint worked in Budapest to welcome the displaced persons. And they are the ones who fixed up papers for us so we can continue with our trip from Budapest. We got a train to Nagyvárad. We went home. We went to Nagyvárad, and over there, from there, we took a little train that took me home.

To your little town?

To my little town. My friend stopped at her community. We said goodbye. I didn't see her since then. Our pad stopped there. And I'm still looking for her. Somebody told me that she is here in the United States, but I didn't find her yet. And when I came home--

Is that your friend Clara?

Clara. When I came home to Romania, that was in June already.

Of what year?

1945.

'45.

There was one old lady who wasn't deported from our community because she was a widow of the First World War. And this police chief said to her, you are immune. You do not have to go with anyone because you are a widow of the first war, and we honor that. And they didn't want to take her. And she begged them and she cried, please take me along. Don't leave me alone. All my Jewish people are leaving.

In fact, she had a husband, a second husband, but they were married only in the Jewish way. Because she didn't want to lose her pension, so she wanted to go so badly, but they wouldn't take her. This is the lady-- we called her Aunt Helen-- who waited for us. She will cook for us and she welcomed us home.

How many of you were at that point going back to your little town?

Well, by the time I came home, the people who went on forced labor, the men were home already. They came home much sooner than we did because they were liberated much sooner. I think in January of 1944 they already came home.

Were any of your relatives among the ones that came back?

Well, not in this community. I had no relatives in this community. But many of the men came home, but not the women. The women went into Auschwitz with the children. They did not come home. Only two women came home, one who did not have a child and one who had a baby.

She had a baby when she went in and she gave her baby to her mother, to the grandmother. And she came home, the baby didn't. So two wives came home in our community, and they both live in Israel now. So I stayed there for a while in my hometown. And Paul, whom I knew from before, came down to get me.

Who is Paul?

Paul is my husband. He heard about me because the names that Louisa took in the camp, in the factory where we worked, she sent them in to Romania. Because we came from Romania, all our names that she took were sent into our communities, to the authorities. And they were placed on bulletin boards everywhere so survivors could see who is alive, and he heard about me being alive.

And where did you meet at that point?

He came to Borod.

And you knew him when you were younger?

Yes.

You were friends?

We were friends. He used to be the teacher in my community, the Hebrew teacher. That was in November. He helped me dug out the tub. And of course, from there, I went to a cousin of mine, to Sibiu.

How do you spell that? S-I-B-I-U. And I stayed there with her. And in November of 1945, Paul decided Romania isn't a

place for us to stay, we are going to America. But we had to get there, and by then, the Iron Curtain closed all the gates and there was no way to get out legally. Israel didn't exist yet.

So in November, he just left with other guys. And they just walked through the borders, to Hungary, and from there to Germany, from there to Austria. And in Austria, they formed a committee, like a community, for all the displaced persons. And the Joint Distribution Committee again helped them survive.

The food came from the Joint. A lot of people started working or planning or going and papers being made, and so on waiting, for a quarter to go somewhere. So this is where he sent somebody for me. There was a boy named David Stern who came to Romania to get his family out, two sisters and a brother-in-law, and I don't know who else. And he told him, when you go, bring my bride along.

Were you married at that point?

No, we were engaged.

You were engaged.

So that was the time when, in April, I got a long distance card, in 1946. The long distance call was very interesting. In Romania, you didn't get it to your house because nobody had telephones, but there was a telephone center where you could call in, like a post office. And they send you a notice that you have to be there at 4 o'clock tomorrow afternoon because somebody wants to talk to you.

So this is how I got this long distance call. And David called me, and he told me he has a message and a long letter from Paul, and he wants me to go to Austria. And he told me the procedures and he told me when he is leaving. And of course, I made calls, made the arrangements here to go. I packed up.

Now, what do you think I could take along from all the trousseau that I found? I found, actually, a real trousseau in my tub. I could only take along what I carried on my back in a backpack. So I put in it my father's praying shawl, my father's kettle, and some of the embroidery from my mother, what I still have.

We had to walk. We were not going on a regular train to Hungary. You couldn't go. So you had to go walking through the borders. It was an illegal way of getting out. So you couldn't carry too many things. May the 1st was a holiday. It's a Labor Day type of holiday.

This was 1946?

'46 was the time when we crossed the Romanian border to Hungary, and we stayed in a farmhouse.

You were traveling with this other family and David?

Yes. And we were waiting there until a train passed by. And we hopped on the train. We paid our fare. We had already money with us at that time with little packages. And we spoke Hungarian. Again, we all spoke Hungarian. And we went home to Budapest. If anybody should have asked us, we didn't have any identifications at that time, but we didn't look very suspicious because we spoke Hungarian.

And we got to Budapest, and the Joint Distribution Committee helped us. For 12 days we spent there. They got us papers to go to Vienna. I don't remember my name, what name they gave me. But this girl once lived in Vienna and they had her name, and I got her name with my picture on it.

And so we traveled by train, in a normal passenger train, to Vienna. It was a nice trip, all six of us. When you got into Vienna, we were told we can sleep at the Rothschild Hospital. The Rothschild Hospital was converted. It wasn't a hospital at this time of the war. It was bombed, and so on. But there were a lot of mattresses available for passersby. You could get a mattress to sleep there until further travel.

So the only thing, in order to get a mattress, you had to get some shots, because so many malaria and other things were coming in. So we were immunized and got our mattresses and went to sleep there. And from this immunization, we were so sick because it reacts on you. The shots are very dangerous, I guess. I was sick for three days with high fever. But after then, the food was there, was available for us. And we got new papers from Bregenz, Austria. Paul sent us our new identification cards as being local residents of Bregenz, Austria.

Bregenz? How do you spell Bregenz?

Bregenz. B-R-E-G-E-N-Z. Bregenz is a beautiful, little community on the Bodensee. Bodensee is a lake and it is the border of Switzerland. It's a very nice community, and by then it was an established Jewish community for displaced persons.

Was anybody helping you at this point, other than the Jewish agencies? Were any of the local people--

I really don't know. I don't know how we governed ourselves exactly. But I know this committee was very active, and Paul became the rabbi over there. And we had a beautiful temple, schul, so to speak. We had a Torah, and Jewish lifestyle began in Austria.

And this is in Bregenz?

Bregenz, Austria.

And were you married then?

Yes. We were married in July the 7th, 1946. It's very interesting. We didn't have clothes, too many, anyway. We started anew, from scraps and so on. But the bridal dress was very hard to get. One kibbutz in Germany owned a bridal dress, and one girl got married in our place. And she, a brother or somebody who lived in that kibbutz, brought the dress for her. And three brides got married in the same dress, and I was one of them.

We lived in Bregenz and it was nice. We lived at the rooming houses. Actually, we rented a room, but then we were in touch with the brother in America.

Your husband's brother.

Yes. And he sent us a very nice wedding gift.

When did your husband's brother come to America?

He came after the First World War, maybe 1918. I don't remember exactly the date. But my husband didn't see him since he left Romania.

But they had kept in touch?

They kept in touch.

And where did the brother live in America, what city?

He lived in Cleveland, Ohio. And that was our destination, to come here. It was our aim to get to Cleveland, but that wasn't an easy road. From Bregenz, the quarter was still closed to come to America. The displaced persons quarter wasn't open yet.

If your life was so nice in f why did you want to leave?

Well, there was no reason to live there. It was a temporary place until we find our way to get to America.

You wanted to leave Europe?

Definitely. Actually, the Berihah is an organization formed by the Haganah. The Berihah worked with the underground and smuggled transport into Israel. We had to join the Berihah in Austria to get to Italy, because they will bring people to Italy, and from there they will go to Israel. And if not for the brother in America, in Cleveland, we would have gone to Israel. But of course, that was a very important thing, and that road was a very hard road.

Were your husband's family all gone except for the brother? Nobody survived?

He is the only survivor from his family and I am the only survivor from my family. See, there were children in this group that we crossed the Alps from Austria to Italy. And they would give sleeping pills for the children so they wouldn't cry at night, because we had to cross the Alps by foot. Our packages were taken by trucks.

Trucks were passing by on the road, but people could not be in the truck. They would transport us to a certain place, the narrowest passage, where they could take the people across. And at night, they would drop us off on a field and the truck will go on. And in that field, we had people guides, who came along with us, of course. And we had a trail to follow.

Were these guides from a Jewish Agency? How did you find-- or were they the local people?

Well, I'm sure they had some local people who knew the roads. They were probably paid well to show them the roads. I am sure of that.

Paid by whom?

By the Jewish agencies. As I said, as far as I know, it was the Berihah who transported these people. They from Romania, from Czechoslovakia. We met all kinds of Jews.

Even though you weren't necessarily going to Israel, they were helping anybody.

Anybody who wanted to cross the border. And our first stop-- we had two nights to walk. And in the daytime, we just stayed put in a farmhouse.

So you slept during the day and walked at night?

Walked at night. Our stop in Italy was Chiari. Chiari is--

How do you spell that?

--was a very important stop. C-H-I-A-R-I. Chiari.

In Italy?

In Italy. We stayed there two weeks. That was almost like a rehabilitation camp. By the time the people got to this point, they were so exhausted from traveling, from everything, with children. I was lucky I didn't have a child yet.

The Joint put up the most beautiful kitchen. That was the first time I saw sliced roast. I always saw roast at home in chunks. I never saw it sliced so beautifully. But they had the best cuts for this group because of the children and the people who had to take another road from here to Israel, and they had to build them up to be able to make that trip. So you see, this was a very important kitchen, and they had the best food that you can imagine for us.

So here we were, waiting for our packages to arrive, because we had only a dress. That was all I had on my back. After



two weeks, we left the group in Chiari. We met some people who lived in Rome.

Were the Italians helpful to you at this point at all?

Very helpful. From there, we went to Ostia, Lido de Roma. Ostia is the beach of Rome.

How do you spell that? O-S-T-I-A. O-S-T-I-A. And in Lido de Roma-- that is the same thing. Ostia, they called it lido in the beach, "beach of Rome." And as we got familiar with people and we met some people-- and Paul, of course, met the rabbi who was over there-- they invited us to live in the kibbutz. They formed a kibbutz. It's a transit camp, that's what it was, for people, until they go either to Israel, they have to go to America, or wherever.

And the Joint, again, from Rome, will provide us with a lot of canned goods. And a lot of people already worked in Italy here, and they had a beautiful kitchen set up in this transit camp. And we got this camp from the Italian government. They gave us a villa to form our camp. It must have been some kind of a Nazi who lived in there. And so they just gave it to us to live until we needed it.

I understand that the Russians have come out now, also have a stop in Ostia. I found that it looks like it is a very close place to Rome, where they can be helped because it's only a half an hour ride from Ostia to Rome with a little train. So we were in Rome often. And we lived in a place like Miami Beach. Ostia is a beautiful summer resort.

So I got pregnant in Rome, in Ostia. And Barbara was born in February 26th, 1949. By then we already had papers sent in, and the quota opened up for the displaced persons to go to America. We had to send in a picture of Barbara after she was born, the baby with me, so she can be put on our affidavit so she could travel with us. She was nine months old by the time we came to America.

And when did you leave?

In 1949 in August, we were called in. Our papers were ready. We were called into the American consulate. And we were accepted. We went through all kinds of examinations, because only healthy people could come into the United States. They didn't want to get in any diseases or so on.

So we passed. And they right away separated us, calling us Americans. They sent us to Salerno-- Salerno is not far from Naples-- to wait until they find a boat for us. This was still closed after the war. They didn't find a boat. So finally, we got a boat, and the name of the boat was Marina Jumper. And November the 9th, 1949, we left with the Marina Jumper to sail to America. And November the 21st, we got to the New York Harbor.

You mean December?

No, in November. It took only two weeks. 20 days, something, 21 days. In November the 21st, we got on the boat, the 23rd. The 9th. The 9th, I'm sorry. The 21st we got to New York. We didn't stay long in New York.

Who met you in New York?

We had a cousin and I have an aunt in New York. My mother's brother and his wife lived in New York at that time.

You were able to locate them?

They came out to the harbor to meet us there. We didn't want to stay long in New York because my husband was very anxious to meet his brother. So two days later, it was November the 23rd that we came by train to Cleveland.

Did you learn any English before you came to the United States?

Yes. My sister-in-law used to correspond with us, and she told us, the most important thing for you to do while you are in Europe is learn the English language. And we took her advice. And I knew already a few English words, but of

course, it wasn't very much, only to get by.

But it was a memorable day when we came in. It was Thanksgiving Day, and we had a lot to be thankful for in this free country.

That's when you arrived, in Cleveland on Thanksgiving Day?

Thanksgiving Day.

And what has happened to your life since you arrived in Cleveland? Tell us what your husband did, how you got along.

We lived with my brother-in-law and sister-in-law for eight years. We learned the language. We Americanized a little bit. And after that, a small community not far from Cleveland-- New Philadelphia, Ohio-- looked for a rabbi. It was during the high holidays.

And my husband applied, and apparently they liked his chanting the services. And that was on Rosh Hashanah. And on Yom Kippur, they invited me and the children to go down there.

What year was that?

Let me see. It must have been 1963.

How many children did you have at that point?

Three daughters. Two girls were born here in America.

In Cleveland? Your other two were born in Cleveland?

Yes. Gina and Barbara were born in Cleveland.

What is your daughters' names?

Barbara is my oldest daughter. She was born in Italy. And Regina.

Regina?

Regina and Sally. She got a real English name. My doctor asked me, what are you going to name her? And I said, I don't know yet, but I know I'm going to pick a very English name. And every day he came to visit me and he asked me, what is the name? And of course, Sally, she lives in Youngstown. The other two daughters live here in Cleveland, and I enjoy my family very much.

Well, in New Philadelphia, we stayed for eight years. And then Wooster needed a rabbi, and Wooster is a much larger community. And they invited him, and he auditioned. And apparently, they enjoyed having him there and he was hired. We lived in Wooster, Ohio, a very lovely community. And I really enjoyed every day that we lived there.

I'd like to back up just a little bit. During the eight years that you lived in Cleveland and you lived with your brother-in-law and sister-in-law, did the Jewish community help you in any way? Did you take English classes?

My husband went to night school.

Where? He first went to John Hay. That was the first classes he took. Of course, it was more important for him to go to school than for me. I had a baby, and in Europe, you don't have babysitters. And my sister never had children, and it was very hard for me to go back to school, so it was more important for Paul to continue and have his degrees.

Meanwhile, while we were in Cleveland, he worked in different places. He was an insurance salesman at one point and he worked in real estate. My brother-in-law was in real estate, and so he was working in the same business until the job in New Philadelphia opened up. Apparently, he felt more comfortable being a rabbi because that is what he studied for all his life.

Did he have to go back to rabbinical school here at all?

No.

Did he remain--

He was accepted.

--as an Orthodox rabbi?

Yes, we are very Orthodox. But his community in Wooster is a conservative community, a conservative shul. The people over there, at that time anyway, the elderly people, who were very respected by the children, were very Orthodox. So in a community like this, you find Orthodox Jews and conservative Jews. But Wooster was just a marvelous community. The temple in Wooster is everybody's second home.

When you think of that, they're treating it like their own home. It's always updated and decorated, redecorated, and new dishes, and the women are very active. We had a community Seder. Every year I used to be the chairman of the community Seder. And the students in the College of Wooster, the Jewish students, were always invited to all our affairs. I always had a house packed of students at holiday time.

Did you talk about your experiences, before and during the war, to anybody during all of this time?

Yes. In New Philadelphia, the Daily Times over there asked me to give my story. And a lady with the name Sally Steis from the radio station there, said she will help me put together my story-- I wasn't that good in English yet-- to put it down in words, that people would really get the story. And she helped me with the story, and it was published.

I can even tell you the date when it was published. That is important. Here is a picture they put in the paper. 1964.

We just have a short time left, Sandra, and I wonder if you have any thoughts that you want to share in your experiences as to why you survived the Holocaust and your family did not? And do you think that survivors have a message for other people?

Well, it is hard to tell why one survived this horrible experience. It is maybe your religious belief that kept you alive. That kept me alive.

Your belief in religion?

My belief in God was so strong and I didn't think that God would allow such atrocities. I didn't want to believe that something like this could happen to humanity. And I think that is what kept me alive, because if I would have believed it-- I couldn't believe that I would survive. And I knew, even in Auschwitz, that I will have to survive. I have to come home and meet my family again. That is what kept me alive. I really think that being religious helps you overcome your troubles. Life is not that smooth always, but you learn to accept things.

What appropriate way do you think we should commemorate the memory of those who lost their lives in the Holocaust?

Have to commemorate them? We believe in the art side. But I think the stories told is the way to commemorate them, because as we survived, we were always thinking of, will anyone believe us, what we went through? Does the world know what happened? And that is why I think this is a wonderful thing for me to tell the story.

That's why I came forward, to tell my story, and I feel very good about it because I always wanted somebody to know about it. And I think this is the way to memorialize those who didn't come home. They were not fortunate enough to be here and survive. So we, the survivors, do have to come forward and tell our story to the world so that this will never happen again to anybody.

I want to thank you very much. It was not an easy task for you to tell your story. It was very difficult. I'm Sally Weinberg. Our Holocaust survivor today is Sandra Mandel. This project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section.