

I'm Sylvia Abrams. Today we are interviewing Mark Moss, a Holocaust survivor. The project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland section. Mr. Moss you have some pictures and memorabilia from the war. Tell us about the map first, and show us where you lived. Yes, show us where you lived on the map.

This is the map of Warsaw. On that map you'll find the street of Ogrodowa. It's between Solna and Leszno. There's a small dot in red ink, and that's where I lived.

That's where you lived. Thank you. Will you also show us-- you said you have a picture of yourself liberated from the Polish army. Why don't we put down the book, and let's show this picture of yourself in the Polish army?

This was the picture that you carried in your pass.

This is the picture which was separated when I was caught by the Russian NKVD, and told that I'm going to go and get away from somebody. It is left, the only memory left here.

Thank you.

And next is being a lieutenant the Polish army.

That's a picture of you as a lieutenant in the Polish army? Where was that picture taken? Do you remember?

In Warsaw.

In Warsaw. Now when we picked up on the last tape, you were telling me how you had been in the British zone, and we had talked a little bit about the way you looked at your war experience. Let's talk now about the new life you established. You were going to tell us how the Haganah, the Israeli army, got in contact with you and how you got to Israel.

I left Hamburg from the English zone and went to Munich by train. I came to Munich. I went to the Jewish Gemeinde, which was a federation. And one day, they told me that somebody is looking for me.

So I had a date with somebody. And he was a shaliach from Israel.

That's an emissary from Israel.

Shaliach. He said he's from Haganah. And here has my recommendation, I mean my more or less my file. And he knows that I was a Polish officer in the Polish army. And I think that we need people like you. We're not going to force you. But it was nice if you go willingly, willingly?

So I decided that instead of going to America which I had a chance, I'll go to Israel. And finally they made a date. It was after my conversation or about two weeks later that we put together a group. I didn't know the plans exactly how are they going to go. But we went through the Alps in Germany from Munich, through Switzerland, through France. Finally, I must say--

Now, is this still in 1945 or is this 1946?

'45.

Still in 1945? How many people were in the group?

Oh, in my group, you see they picked up from all kinds of people. My wife was in one of the groups, not my group. But I must say we have to march together with my wife. So in my group, there was only 20 people. And all together, in my barge, it was not a ship it was a barge, without water, without anything-- probably around 100, 200 people, I would say,

roughly.

Now the group you went with, that's the group that's known as Aliyah Bet, the illegal immigration into Israel?

Nobody said Aliyah Bet. Now you call.

That's what they called it afterwards?

Everybody knew that it's not legal, because the British were there. And it was Palestine. And they was watching every court and every port and everything. And finally we were quietly and without lights, and from a normal ship, it makes it in three days, four days. We on the Mediterranean 2 and 1/2 weeks.

I'm going to go back one stop. You said rather blasphemously that you went over the Alps through Switzerland into France like it was a walk. I'm sure that wasn't very easy to do either.

No, no. It was a lot of people, Haganah people.

And you crossed the borders in secret?

Oh, we didn't know anything. Yeah, in France we came not far from Marseille. There was a big, big [NON-ENGLISH], a big noise. Somebody says, they're going to arrest us and all that. Finally found out, so all of a sudden we just heard something. But we didn't see it. Finally, somebody came and said all is taken care of. Don't worry. We're going direct to bus here with the train. So no, there were guards all the time. Yes. They were quite solid. They know how to do a job, I'm telling you.

I'm telling you what they did in Cyprus, you know how many people were sent out from Cyprus?

Well, you'll have to tell us how you got to Cyprus. Then you're on this barge in the Mediterranean.

Yeah. That was the first I call it ship, it wasn't a ship. It was a barge without any food, without water. There the British, so probably they had planes flying around watching and ships, big ships too, cruisers. And finally they found us. They couldn't come close to us because we were without a neutral zone.

But all of a sudden, I saw that something is not kosher, not right. Because the captain was not a Jew. It was a Greek. And the helpers were Greek too. So they already put Israeli things, Haganah people. Oh, they were terrific. They know how to work. I'm telling you, at that time.

Finally, we had to give in because we came closer to Palestine or the state of Israel. It was already the zone. And they came close and ordered us out. We made a big fight. Oh, we made a fight. We threw the English people in the sea. Oh, it was big, big, fat guys strong men. And I remember they took one of the-- no, you have it, right in the sea.

Finally, we had to give in. And on that cruiser-- no, it was not a cruiser. It was something. I don't know. It was one of the biggest ships. And that was the first thing, the first camp they opened up was Yagur.

So you were in the first--

First one.

In the first camp in Cyprus of survivors of the Holocaust who were all then--

After us-- who came a whole bunch of them. But we also left first.

When did you arrive in Israel?

We arrived in Israel when the British gave in. They said they don't want to have any state, and they already gave Transjordan, the other side of Palestine. And then all they have to do is leave. And when they left, then the Jewish people, whatever, and they took it also to the United Nations. If you remember. At that time, the United Nations decided to a partition, which was already a partition before decided on anything.

So you were able to come with the first group--

The first group.

--of people. That would have been late '47 or early '48, just before independence?

No, no it was late '46.

Oh, you came in late '46.

Yeah.

So you were a year on Cyprus?

Yeah. And when you were in Israel, you were part of then of the Israeli army, you said. Would you show us the pictures of you in the Israeli army?

But don't show my face. Here. You can pick it up? Here was in the intelligence.

So because of your war experience in Poland, you were put in the Israeli intelligence.

There's also making maps for the intelligence.

You were able to use your skills as an artist besides your skills as a--

Coordinations with azimuths, with everything. All right?

Yes.

Here is in Jerusalem on Notre Dame. Church Notre Dame.

That's you in uniform then? So you were really only out of uniform a very short time before you were gotten into another uniform.

I was a specialist. There I was taking pictures.

And you have one of the army in Jerusalem also there.

Yeah, this is Jerusalem too. This is in Jerusalem. Keren Kayemet LeIsrael.

At the Jewish National Fund, right in front of there. And what is the last one?

There are two more. This is not far from Negba. The police station in Negba, which we took from the Egyptians. And this was again mapping.

That was working in intelligence? Your experience then was to go from being a soldier in one place to being a soldier in another place.

This was when I deserted Polish army came to Munich. And the Americans took my uniform and gave me that coat.

You were a very handsome young man.

And here when I was in Munich, they sent me to Garmisch-Partenkirchen. I have all the pictures, which I ski. You didn't see?

And you were sent there?

Yeah, I was skiing.

When you put all this together, because of what happened to you, when did you get to settle down like other people? You went from being one soldier to another soldier.

Settle down? When I came to the state of Israel. And in Cyprus I met my wife. And we were living. There were tents. One tent near the other, all living. And we talked all the time. And when we came--

When did you get married?

Before I got married-- I got yeah, right after I got married, I was taken to the Israeli army. That was in 1948 I got married.

That's when you got married. When you were in the army.

When you were in Cyprus--

There's a picture also of me in my uniform, the Israeli army.

When you were in Cyprus, did you get any help from the Joint Distribution Committee?

No, the English.

Did the United Nations ever help?

No, they wouldn't let anything.

So only the English were there.

Just the English. But they fed us good.

When did you arrive in the United States?

You probably know, since you have been here longer than I probably, there was a McCarran Act.

Yes.

McCarran Act. That was a priority for close relatives. So my brother, he was in the Polish army. And he saw right away that the Polish army can do nothing. And he came close to Vilna. He threw this whole uniform, and settled in Vilna. Vilna at that time was not Russian. You probably know.

And people who were able to qualify who were from Vilna to emigrate then?

Yeah, right. So when he found out all of a sudden that Russia is going to take over, so he had already the papers. And he left for the United States with papers. The papers I don't think they were good papers. Anyway, he went through Bialystok, through China, and to the United States. That's the way they used to go.

So he came to the United States--

No, he didn't come yet. At that time, the Japanese had a war. So since he has papers to the United States, that he is an enemy. No, they didn't put him in a camp. But they had a camp. You probably heard about it in Shanghai. They had a camp.

So he was in Shanghai?

He was in Shanghai. And after the war, he came to Paris. In Paris, he met a girl and got married, a American girl. And he came here. And then when he found out that I'm alive, so he said, he was supposed to get citizenship. He was a few years before me. When he got the citizenship, according to McCarran Act, he could have asked me. That's what he did.

What year did you come to Cleveland then?

Oh, I was in Cleveland at the end of '54.

You came directly to Cleveland in 1954.

I could have stayed in New York. I could have-- I don't know maybe I would have made better. But my brother wants me here.

You became a commercial artist by profession. And I know you have quite a few things that show your kind of work. Would you show us some of them? You have some that you did for the British? Were those while you were in Cyprus?

Yeah.

Let's see the ones that you did--

Not for the British, that was done in Germany.

Oh, those were done in Germany.

Germany.

OK, I think were they on the table over here I think?

You shooting at me, no?

I think they were those cards. The Easter cards.

No, no, no. The card is here. Don't shoot my face.

Now those were done--

Those were done in Munich, an order from the English. The Americans didn't want my pictures.

So you did these for the English while you were there in Munich? Why don't you show us show us the next one? These were all done during 1945?

Yeah.

So you got to do your work as an artist right away.

And when you were doing this work, were you living in a displaced persons camp?

Yeah. Not in a camp. Well, they had camps too. But I was in a private home.

You were in a private home in Munich?

I ordered from a German a kapo, a room. Please? Why not? I brought a coffee, a morning cafe.

How did you get this job to do for the British?

Because I was looking for something, doing something. And in Munich they had a consulate, a British consulate. I asked the Americans. The Americans didn't need anything. Just stay, we'll feed you and this. But I couldn't stay just. I asked them whether he would like to do something. Oh, yeah. Yeah. [INAUDIBLE] Yeah.

So you were very enterprising. You got this right away. So you had work.

Oh yes, that helped me a lot. In Russia, I've been in Siberia did Losungen for Stalin.

But of course, all that work's long disappeared.

Didn't have even paint. You know what I did? Powder, white powder with milk, made white paint.

And that's how you made white paint?

Yeah, a red-- a red piece of-- I have some other things too.

Then when you came to the United States, you have examples of the kind of work you did in Cleveland. You told me you became an artist for American Greetings company?

No, I did before too.

Before that, where did you work first?

Here, there's all everything.

OK.

You want me to tell you?

Yeah, tell us and show us a few pieces of work. Tell us and show us a few pieces of the work.

Yeah. Here's is a thing I did for Pennington Press. This is the layout, and this is the finished art, two colors.

And that was the kind of work you did when came to Cleveland?

Yeah.

And then besides Pennington Press, who else did you work for?

It was Merrick Little. Pennington Press was in Merrick Little. Before when I started, I came, my brother had a little office. And he's an artist. So I worked for him but I realized that working for a brother is not good. So I looked for somebody else. And came to Merrick Little. Worked Merrick Little, and they bankrupted, it was big company, bankrupt. They still owe me money. And you probably know what I'm talking.

Tell us about--

Channel 5 should know Merrick Little.

Tell us who else you worked for after that then. And next was CalamÃ©o, Steinbrenner, Ed. The whole all the jobs for an art director and production manager.

So you were the art director and the production manager?

And production manager, because I know. These things I learned in Israel.

And show us a few examples of the kind of work that you did.

Here's another example I did for a printer in Cleveland. His son was a bar mitzvah. This is the inside, and this is the outside.

You have some cards that you did when you worked for American Greetings that are being distributed today. I'd like to have those cards shown that were from them. These are still being sold. These are presently being sold in stores today?

Probably sold today, because I made them five years ago. And obviously, they work five years ahead.

Here's directly for Mr. Stone Irving Stone, which I paid separately for these things. These are embossed in color.

And those are greeting cards that are presently being manufactured?

I believe so, yes.

I got paid I know that.

These are embossed too.

And now you do art of your own. Let's show one of the paintings that's the work that you do yourself today.

Well, I'm doing all kinds. As I said before, I don't know. I'm versatile. I'm not an artist like normally you'll see in any place in advertising. Because I can do a logo design. I can do finish art. I can do color. I also know a lot of scientific things which are directly with printing, the process of printing, layout, design layout. This is a layout design. See? One sheet. You fold it and here it is.

It's beautiful.

Here, another thing, this is a layout. This is a rough layout. It goes like this, see? Then you open up, and the cup inside. This is also a rough layout. We usually use to work for motors. You did very, very beautiful work that is in great contrast to the kinds of things you had to do during the war.

Oh, yeah.

When you look back now--

See this is also-- wait a minute. This you open up, you open up. This is for born children.

The beautiful work you've shown us that's the kind of thing you do today. And you look at the Holocaust and what you went through as a soldier. Do you think these experiences still affect you now?

No. I don't believe in these things. See you, when you watch TV, you listen to the radio or reading the paper. And

because you went through so much, he's-- I went a lot. That didn't affect me. In fact, I was stronger, stronger every time. I had to pass something. I was much stronger than before. I don't know. I don't believe in these things.

You don't think so?

No. Here it is too if you want to see.

Yeah, show that one.

This is a logo design which I designed for the Kol Yisrael foundation, rough. I already did the finished art. They're printing it now. This I did, which they today they're going to bring it, if we're going to stay here. This is an invitation card for the 25th anniversary of the Kol Yisrael Foundation. This is a two color, silver and blue. Process blue and screen. And the silver is going to be thermal graft.

You're a very talented man. And you say that the war to you was just something that you had to go through. We're going to try to wind up by trying to tie this all together. With whom did you ever talk about your war experiences? When did you begin to talk about them?

About what?

About the war experiences, when did you begin to talk about them?

Oh, see I don't believe there's any use to talk about it. You have to be active. When I came here I tried to do something, which I did. Kol Yisrael was founded to me and some other people.

You were one of the founders of the survivors organization?

Oh, yes. Yeah, 1959 I believe. And we were active. Right away, we went to Columbus. We put down by a lawyer, a Constitution. And that's the way we go. That's the way we're working. Right now, I'm not active. But right now I'm doing the artwork for them. For instance, here we want to make a close shot here. These are very cheap ones, but still flyers which they needed.

So you donated your time to them doing this?

I don't charge. I never charge for these things. These are flyers, never charged, even when I have bulletins too. I will show you, drawings and things, and never charged a penny.

When you look at all of this, you hold it all together very well. Do you feel that the Holocaust affected your present state of health at all?

No. It didn't affect, but it is accumulation. The fact is, in my situation a lot of people did not live to this date because they were not strong people. I know that my mother was a strong lady, very strong. And that's why my blood is some fibers, which I could stand it. But it's not because of the Holocaust. Sure, I went through a lot. It's accumulation, and that's how.

Do you think now, I'm pressing this a little bit-- do you think--

No, that's all right.

--that your Holocaust experiences and being a soldier has affected the way you relate to your family at all today?

My family? Not whatsoever. See my son is a lawyer Good lawyer. And I wish I would have been younger and having his money. He's not married. You know how much he--



He's a talented man.

\$2 million just settled last week.

Well then, when you look at people today, do you think survivors are different from other Jews?

No. The only thing they are different if they went to my school, Israel. They made them different. You probably know that.

Why do you feel that being in Israel as well made them different?

Because it's the urge, it's the chutzpah. It's that you're never afraid for anybody. You go. You have to do something, you do it. You don't talk too much. You don't have the preliminary the sessions, you go and do it.

When you take this all together, when you yourself--

Here's some-- here's some layouts which I did 20 years ago. It was supposed to be big signs, neon signs, plastic. If you remember there was a Falcon 4. That's what they bought. But I had to make small miniature sizes. But it's also embossed.

When you look at all of this and you show us the artwork, which shows you as really a very sensitive person with a tremendous amount of talent, and you put it together--

Thank you.

--with what you've done, what kind of a message through this tape do you want to share with future generations?

Oh, if somebody can analyze it any way he wants it. Who am I to say what he wants to get from my tape? If he can do whatever, I mean, it's a good way of telling my story, my side of the story. And if he's going to learn something, the main thing I would advocate anybody to learn from the past that he should know the future.

I think that's a very important message.

Yeah.

I'd like to see one last thing and leave everyone--

These are also from Pennington. These are also miniature sizes. But these layouts are all hand work.

I think what you've done with your last thought about that no matter what, you've kept up with your own work and your own art, and that you want to leave us this message for the future I think is very important for everybody.

I write it all the time.

Is there anything special that you want to share as a last thought?

Try not to be naive. That's another good statement. If you're naive, you sooner or later you're going to fall in.

I want to--

Try to be conscious. And with preaching, you never learn anything, the action you learn. Maybe you don't like it. That's the way I feel.

I think it's a very important message. And I want to thank you very much.

You're welcome.

This is Sylvia Abrams. Our Holocaust survivor today has been Mark Moss. This project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland section.