

Do we know that picture?

Yes.

Is that all the way against the wall.

Here's where she'll be. How's that?

Yeah. Can you push it against the wall then?

Yeah.

But that helps me for the wide shot.

Oh, OK. Well, I can put it over a little bit farther.

Oh, that's fine. I was just saying the edge of the chair and the white one--

Oh, I see. How's that?

Far against the wall. No. No.

No. Back. Back. He wants it back.

Yeah, that's fine.

All right, so you'll have some leverage there.

OK, yeah, now, I can get the two shots.

OK. We're rolling.

Everything's rolling. OK. 5, 4--

I'm Sue Danford. Today, we are interviewing Louis Muller, a Holocaust survivor. The project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section. We thank Mr. Muller very much for participating in this important project Mr. Muller we would like you to begin with your life today. Could you tell us your age, where you live, and what you do for a living?

I'm 59 years old. I'm a cutter at Dalton Industries. And I live in Stillmore, South Euclid.

What do you do for Dalton Industries?

I'm a cutter in ladies clothing.

Are you married?

I'm married.

And does your wife work?

Yes, she's working for General Tire.

And how many children do you have?

I have two children. I have a son and a daughter. Daughter is married, has two children of her own.

And your son?

And my son is through with college. And he's working for Cleveland Board of Education.

And they both live in Cleveland?

They both live in Cleveland. Yeah.

OK. We're going to go back now to 1939. And could you tell us what your life was like before the war, how old you were, and where you were living?

Well, in 1939, I was living in Bucharest, Romania. And at that time I was learning for an apprentice to become a tailor until 1940.

And you were how old then?

About '39, I must have been about 15 or 16 years old, something like that. And in 1940, the part of the country where I used to-- where I was born became Hungary. So I went back home to Hungary.

Well, what was your town like, the general appearance and the industry and the size of it?

There wasn't much industry, more of a lumber industry. There wasn't too many industries in that town. Most of the industry, what it was there was lumber and lumber industries, the main industry over there.

And how large was Bucharest?

The town must have been, I think, it must have been around 15,000 people living in-- 15,000, 20,000 people in that town. So it was a main center in that area. It was the main town in that area.

And was the Jewish population large or small?

No, it was a large Jewish population. It was large. It was large. But I don't exactly how large it was because I was too young to know in those days how large the population was.

What about your family? Did you have brothers and sisters? Or--

Yeah, I have brothers and I had sisters, yeah. But we all were away from home because my brother was away from home. After '39, he left Bucharest to become part of Russia, Bessarabia. The Russians took over part of Romania, Bessarabia. And he went with my other relative to Bessarabia to become part of Russia because they were trying to escape from the Germans. So he went to Russia, what's now Russia.

And I went back home what became Hungary. That to stayed in town for a-- stay there for a year approximately. And then I left to another town. Then I went to Budapest from there on.

And what about your sisters?

My sister was-- they were too little. They were too little. They were home. They were home with my mother. And some other kids were home with my mother.

But you left at 16 and went on to Budapest, you said?

I went to Budapest, yeah.

And what did you do there?

There I tried to also learn to for tailoring to become a tailor, tried to be apprentice and working in a shop, working in a shop. Till about 1944, I worked over there.

So from the time you left home, you have been on your own since you were 16.

On my own, yeah. Since about 13, I was on my own practically all the time.

Well, what was your father's occupation?

My father was a upholsterer.

And your mother, did she--

My father was just a housewife. Sometimes she was working too. But mainly, she was a housewife at home.

Well, prior to your leaving home, would you describe your family as comfortable or poor or well-to-do or--

Well, I would say poor, more poor than anything else because my mother had to be on her own. My father left home. So she was on her own. So we were all-- we were all more poor than I would say comfortable because I was living with my grandmother for a while because my mother had to be somewhere else with my other brother. So I was with my grandmother many years.

I see. How did you get along with your grandparents and your parents? Was it a close family relationship? Or--

Yeah, it was a close family relationship. We all had a close family relationship.

Can you tell us what a typical day was in your home before you left? I'm going back to when you were 13 or 14.

Well, for myself is, like I said, I was living with my grandparents. And it was-- I was too young to pay attention to any welfare things. But going to school, getting up, going to school, going to a Jewish day school, and later on going to the parochial-- not parochial school-- to the regular schools in town, you know, until I was about 13 years old. At 13, I had to-- I left on my own.

How religious was your family?

The family was religious.

And you celebrated all the holidays?

All the holidays, yeah. We're all religious people at that time.

And did you belong to a synagogue?

Yeah, everybody belonged to a synagogue in the town over there.

Now, I don't know if you recall anything, but in the way of politics, did Zionism or other political organizations play any part in your life?

No. No. Not at that age. Not at that time. No. In my town, there was no other affiliates, just religion. That was the only

thing that was in town going on.

What was the main language spoken in your home?

Well, the main language at home was the Jewish language.

And what other languages did you speak?

Well, I spoke Romanian. I used to spoke Hungarian, two other languages.

Oh, OK. What kind of books did you have at home?

Well, mainly Jewish books.

Did you ever go to theater or entertainment of any kind? Or did your family ever take vacations?

No. Family didn't take no vacations. And while I was young at home, we didn't go to any entertainment.

Now, before you left home at 13, you personally, did you consider yourself healthy? And what kind of an outlook did you have on life? Were you optimistic? Or do you remember any of this?

Well, I was healthy, yes. Yes, I was healthy. And I just took life the way it came. I didn't think too much about it. I just-- I knew I had to go away. And I had to go to my relatives and to Bucharest. And I just took it on a daily basis. The way it came, that's the way I took it. And didn't think at that time too much about anything else, just about survival. That was the main thing for me in those days, the survival.

So you didn't have any-- did you have any special interests or talents or hobbies that--

No, it didn't have no special interest at that time, no.

Do you have any other memories from your childhood or your youth of your family life? Pleasant ones maybe would be better?

Pleasant ones, the only pleasant ones that it was for me that every time I'm-- like children, we played. We played games like every child is playing. And it comes the holidays, you're a joyful. And you enjoy the holidays. You're getting a little better food or you dress up nicer and you go with kids around, and you play with them. And that's what the joyful days when you're a child. Look forward to holidays, that's what you look forward to all the time. Holidays are for the weekend for the Saturday, that was the nice days of the week.

Do you remember any antisemitism from those days at all?

Antisemitism was always, always with us. As the child, as I grew up, I always knew about antisemitism, in the school and all over in the streets. We always knew about antisemitism.

Were there incidents directed at you or your family?

Well, there was always incidents in school, , in the public school. We always had to fight with the Gentile kids. There was always fighting going around in school, always calling you names. So you were always-- you were always aware of your religion.

Had the Nazis taken over by this time?

No, the Nazis weren't in the country yet. No.

Well, did your non-Jewish friends continue-- did you have non-Jewish friends at all?

We had non-Jewish friends, yeah. We had neighbors, there non-Jewish neighbors, yeah.

Did they offer friendship or help after the war began?

After the war, I wasn't home anymore.

No, when it began.

When it began, I wasn't at my hometown when the war began. I was in the big city.

By this time you were in Bucharest?

No, at that time, I was in Budapest.

Budapest, OK.

Budapest in 1944.

When were you first aware that there was the war?

Well, I was aware of the war all the time as far as knowing that there is a war going on. We always knew there is a war going on. Since 1939, it started with the Russian taking over part of Romania. And that started already. And then we knew all the time when the Russians entered any country, Czechoslovakia and Austria and Poland. All the time, we were aware of the war going on.

Well, in Budapest, you went there when you were 16, correct?

Yeah. yeah.

So during these years, you were living in Budapest. Was your life affected in Budapest by the war from '40-- '43 or '44?

It didn't affect me too much. But I mean, I was always aware about antisemitism. We knew that. And we always tried to cope with it. But it didn't affect us too much till the Germans came into Hungary.

Well, why don't you start with how the war then began to personally affect you and your personal experience?

Well, the personal experience, it started to affect me is when the Germans moved into Budapest. That was in March 1944. As soon as they moved into Budapest, I saw when they came in. Right away, next day, they started right away. Every day came out new laws about the Jews, what they can do, what they cannot do, where to start wearing a Star of David, a yellow Star of David.

And every day was new laws coming out for the Jews. That's when it started to affect everybody. Everybody was affected-- every Jew was affected as soon as the Germans came into Hungary.

And were you able to continue your apprenticeship?

Just for a little while. Just for a little while. It didn't last too long. After that, I was called into to a labor camp for working. And that's when it changed everything.

Well, which labor camp were you sent to then?

Well, we were called in to work, to go to work for the railroads, for fixing everything. Every time they bombed

somewhere a railroad tracks, we had to go. We were a group of people. And we had to go to repair it, to fix it. That was our mission.

How many in your group?

I think there must have been about 50 people. I can't recall exactly a number anymore. But it must have been around 50 people, I would guess.

All men?

All men. Only man, yeah. We all had to wear our yellow armbands at that time.

And when you were part of this group, did you live as a group? You weren't permitted to go back to your home.

No, no, no, we were moving around from one place to another one. And we were living in at that time abandoned homes. Or wherever we went, any place we went, we had to find a place wherever there was room, either it's empty house or a barn or whatever was available. Any place that's where we slept, on the floor or wherever, whatever was available.

So there was no organized camp type living?

No, it wasn't a real organized camp living, not in one place, because it was moving from one place to another one.

And how were you fed and clothed, for instance?

Fed and clothed, we had our own clothes. Whatever we had that's what we wore. They didn't provide us with any clothing, just food. Just food what they gave us.

Three meals a day?

Like three meals a day. Sometimes. Maybe, twice. It depends on the circumstance of where we were. Sometimes, maybe once. It depends. Sometimes there were planes come in to bomb the place, and we scattered all over. And then there was no food available till at night. So everybody had to care for themselves many times on their own.

And your basic job was rebuilding the railroad?

The railroad, yeah.

What happened if you-- did you come across people, injured, dead, children, women?

No, sometimes we came across dead soldiers. Like at one station they bombed the railroad wagons. And there was German troops. And some of them were supply, even like wine, even food to supply. So we came across some time, we saw some injured and dead people. But most of the time we had to just work fixing the railroad tracks, most of the time.

And this began for you in March of '44?

Began in March of '44. That's when we went into that labor camp. And from there on, that's the way-- that was the order of the day.

How were you treated by the authorities? The guards?

The guards weren't too bad because there wasn't regular soldiers. It was most of the time we had reserve, army reserve officers, which older people. So they weren't treating us too bad. But we had to do whatever we were told.

Were you abused? Or--

Well, we were abused only in that sense that we had to do the work whatever we were told and live in the condition whatever there was available.

Were you beaten?

No, not beaten. Only if the guard didn't like somebody, then you got beaten up too, you know. But most of the time we weren't beaten up. As long as we did our work, whatever we had to do, then--

These were long hours, right?

Yeah, it was long. Yeah. We had to get up early in the morning every day and till nighttime. Till nighttime, we had to work and then go back to the place wherever we were.

Did you travel by foot everywhere?

Most of the time we traveled by foot, yeah. Yeah. Most of the places, we had to travel by foot. And wherever we stopped at nighttime, sometimes when we were on the go, we had to sleep wherever it was available. If we found an empty home or we found an empty barn, that's where we slept over, we stayed during the night or sometimes for a day. And we continued to our place, wherever we had to go to do the work.

Did you have any contact with the local population?

Sometimes. Sometimes we had contact with the local population because in '44 we used to see a lot of American planes coming by every day. And they used to sound the alarm. And many times we had to disperse and go wherever we can to find shelter. So many times, we got in contact with the local population. And we were able to get sometimes some food from them, to buy the food. So that's how we got in contact. But most of the time--

Did they give you shelter? No. No, not local population. We didn't seek shelter by the local population.

And what kind of interaction was there among your fellow prisoners? Did you form tight friendships? Or--

Well, everybody had some friendship with some people with whom they stayed together. We slept together in a room or sometimes rooms. So we all were known each other well and part of a group. But we didn't-- I mean we didn't have a real close friendship like when you go out, like over here, if you go out with friends, you go for entertainment. But just the daily living, that was differential.

Well, did you form any kinds of friendships that you have maintained for instance? Have you ever seen any of these people?

No. No. No.

Do you know happened to any of them?

I don't know what happened to the rest of the people. After the war was over, I didn't have no contact with anybody from the group, because everybody went different places.

Well, your Holocaust experience was mainly in the labor camps--

In the labor camps, yeah.

And can you give us an idea of the traveling you did and the miles you covered and--

Well, we used to travel many days. We used to travel, I don't know, mileage. I used to travel like all day long, sometimes walking all day long, stopping over at night, seeking shelter for sleepover.

Is this all in Austria Hungary?

No, that was in Hungary. That was Hungarian. Yeah.

That's all in Hungary?

All in Hungary, yeah. And then we used to wherever he had to go there and we had to stop and work. And that was our daily life in those days. And the main thing was for us to seek survival and escape.

Were you aware of the concentration camps?

Yeah, we were aware of the concentration camp because I saw-- while I was working with a group, I saw trains going by with some of the Jewish people in the wagons. So I knew they are taking them away. But we weren't aware 100% what was happening with the people in the concentration camps.

We knew they were taking them away, but we didn't know exactly at that time what they were doing with the people. We didn't know about the crematoriums or those things. We didn't know yet.

How long were you part of this labor camp group? From '44 till--

From '44 till the end of '44. Till the end of '44.

So nine months.

For about nine months, yeah.

And then what happened in December?

In December, we heard that the Russians are approaching, the partisans-- they're from Yugoslavia-- and the Russians are approaching our area where we were stationed. And we heard the artillery, the shells and the firing. And then we had to march on to another place.

And while that was happening, many of our people decided to split up, to remain in that area and try to fall in the Russians hands so we could get liberated. So I myself, with a group of a few men, decided we're going to move up on a hill. We got away from our group. And the people left, and we stayed on a hill for to stay overnight because we saw that-- we heard the artillery and the Russians are coming so we decided we're not going to go farther anymore. We're going to stay over there and wait for the Russians to come in.

And we went up on the hill. And we took a few blankets. And we covered ourselves. That was in December. And we were waiting for daylight, the next day, to see what's going on.

And during the night, I was aware of what-- I heard the soldiers coming, the Germans were retreating from the area because the Russians are moving in. And they went by us. But we were covered up with blankets so they didn't bother us. They didn't who we were. They just went by by foot.

And early in the morning, I woke up the fellas. And I told them we better get away from it because the Germans are retreating from there. So we got up.

And the next day, the Russians were coming in-- came in already to town. So for one day we were-- for the night, so we were waiting on the hills. On top of there was a hill. And that's what we were waiting. And then the Russians came in.



And you went with them?

And the Russians came in, and then we wanted to go home. And they took us, and actually, they told us where to go. We had to cross a bridge from the place where we were. And they told us we have to go with them because they wanted to fix up a bridge. And they took all of our people who were liberated at that time and put us like in a jail for to stay over. And they told us we have to work for them to fix the bridge.

And we slept over in a jail in the town jail. Anybody, they captured-- they took anybody who was available. And they wanted to put them to work over there. They didn't provide us with food or anything. The local population provided for the people, I think, once or twice a day with food.

And from there on, we stayed a little while. After they took away all our papers, whatever we had from home and our money and our picture, they said we should leave it with them till we finish our work and then they're going to give us back. But we were there a few days, and we decided with the fellows that we were liberated are we going to run away from there.

And from there on we took a train to go in a boxcar where nobody could see us hiding us. And from there on, we went to Yugoslavia, and from Yugoslavia down to Romania by the train to Bucharest. That was in early 1945.

So you went back to Bucharest?

Yeah, we went back to Bucharest. And there I met an uncle of mine who lived there before. And then I stayed with him a little while. And then from there, we went into a-- we formed a group of people. From there started an organization to go to Israel. And we stayed with them for a while.

And from there on, we wanted to go from there to Germany. That's how we started from leaving Romania. We had to go to Germany, to Austria and then to Germany.

When you went back to Bucharest, did you ever see your brothers or sisters?

No, I had a brother with my uncle-- who was with my uncle in Russia there. And they survived. I found out from my uncle that my brother left in 1944. He went to Israel from Romania. He went by boat. And he arrived to Israel. A few of the boats that they went to Israel at that time were sunk.

But his boat survived and came into Israel. And that's how I found out from my uncle that my brother has survived, he went to, at that time was Palestine. He went to Palestine.

And what about the younger children in the family?

The other children was no nobody survived.

And your mother--

I didn't know-- I didn't know right away. But later on, I found out nobody survived. My mother and the kids and everybody, my grandmother, and all the relatives from the town, everybody got killed and cremated and in concentration camp.

And when you went with your uncle, did your uncle go with you to Germany then?

No, my uncle wasn't going with me together. I just went with a group of people where I was staying, like Zionist. We formed a Zionist group. And with them, we tried to cross the border to go to Austria.

We had to have different papers, because it wasn't-- we weren't allowed to cross the border. But we had to have papers to cross the border and that we are going to Austria. And we had to cross at night time and to cross by foot when we

came to the border.

And in the train there, one time, there was no room on the trains to go. We had to go on top of the roof. That way we were traveling with our luggage, what we had.

The Russians took your papers. So you had no papers.

The Russians. I had no more papers left. I left them over there because we ran away. We didn't want to stay there and work. And they were threatening us many times. So we ran away from them. So we left everything what we had, papers and money we left over there with the Russians.

And the second time we got in contact with the Russians was when we left Romania on the train on top of the roof. Whatever we accumulate a little bit in Romania, in Bucharest-- we got some help over there-- some of the Russian soldiers, they came up on top of the roof. They tied up all the luggages wherever they had the luggage. And as soon as the train started to move, they just pulled the string. And everything-- they pulled down all the belongings. Whatever we had, they kept it for themselves.

But we continued to go. Whatever we had, we continued to go to Austria. And from there we had to go to Germany, sometimes by foot. And it was cold at that time. But we were young so we were able to don't do a lot of hardship, whatever the condition was, until I got to Austria.

In Austria, we stayed a little bit, for a little while. And then I found out I had some cousins in Germany in one of the camps. So from there, I went to try to go to Germany. Also, I had to go by train. And it was difficult to go by train those days because there was no regular passenger trains. So we had to just on a freight train to try to go to different places until finally until I got to the camp where I found my cousin.

You did go into Germany?

Yeah, I did go to Germany.

Weren't you afraid to go into Germany?

No--

The war was over--

--because in Germany were all the camps. They had all the camps from the survivors. They had the camps in Germany. So I went to Germany. And there what I found my cousin. That was Bergen-Belsen. She was she was there. She was in concentration camp there.

And from there on, there was already like organized groups already. There was already a big camp. And from there, later on, I went to the American zone. Germany was divided in four zones at that time. So the I traveled to the American zone. The Bergen-Belsen was in the English zone. So I lived in the American zone for a few years. I lived over there.

And your cousin, did she live with you?

My cousin stayed in that other camp in Bergen-Belsen. She remained over there. And we found some other cousins in Bergen-Belsen at that time.

What did you do when you lived in Germany in the American zone?

In the American zone, I was like in, they call it a kibbutz, what time we were like together. And our time was hoping to go to Israel. At that time, our aim was to go to Israel in those days. So we were just working with whatever needed to be done. And it was like a big mansion where we stayed.

And all young people, most of them, young people, we stayed there until we had the chance to go to Palestine, at that time, they called it. Not what we were waiting and just spent the days till we get the opportunity to go to Palestine. That was our aim at that time.

Did you get there?

No, I didn't go there. Then I found some other relatives. From Canada, I had some relatives. And I had relatives in the United States, in Cleveland.

And when I found out from other relatives, and I got in correspondence with my brother, then I changed my destination. Then I wanted to come to the United States or Canada. My aunt and uncle were in Canada. So I got in touch with him.

And the first place I was able to go after the war was Canada. So I was in Germany until 1948, from '45 till 1948. And from there on, I went to Canada. After I got my papers, permission to go to Canada, '48, I left for Montreal by boat.

And when I came to Canada, then that was the-- I was very happy to be there. Life was completely changed at that time. Relatives helped me a little bit. And I found a job there. And that's where I stayed till about 1954, '54 I think.

Let me ask you a couple questions about the Holocaust. Can you remember what was the most painful thing that you went through?

Well, the most painful through that, you're always unsecure. You were always afraid of the Germans, that you never know every day, what will happen to you. We always tried to avoid to get in touch with the Germans, not to see us. And many of the local population, because even the local population, you couldn't trust everybody because you didn't know who will harm you, who will report you to the Germans. As long as we were with the Hungarians with this labor camp, it wasn't so bad.

But the fear was always they might take us away somewhere else. So we were always with fear. We don't know what will happen the next day. That was our daily living over there.

Did you think you would survive?

Well, I was always-- we're always hoping, yeah, yeah. We were young. And, of course, you always hope for the survival, yeah.

Were there any fellow victims who helped you or others to hold on to or people who spirits you could lift or they could help you to get through these difficult times?

Well, we were all together as a group. So we were all hoping for the survival. We were always counting on the survival because we knew that the war is coming to an end. We heard that the Russians were moving in closer where we were. So that's why we always-- our survival was always on-- we were always hoping for survival because the war were coming so close to an end. So we were hoping that we're going to survive, we going to be liberated by the Russians.

That's what we try to-- a few times we try to break up to remain. But we kept going till the end of '44. That's when I decided that that's it, I'm not going to go any further. Because from there on, we were supposed to go to Austria if I would have kept on going with the group. So that was our aim.

And that was the only time-- we were always fearing. As long as we were with the Hungarians and Germans occupying Hungary, we were always fearing for tomorrow. We never know about what will happen to us.

Did you go back to Bucharest hoping to find your family? Is that why you went back there? Because you left so young.

No, I didn't go back to find the family. The family was in another part of my birthplace. I didn't go back there because the first thing I just went to Bucharest because that was the center. A lot of the survivors went to Bucharest. And from there on, they got support and some shelter until they were able to locate and go to other places.

That was like a stopping point for the survivors. We found out over there that a lot of survivors were coming to Bucharest. And we get some support over there. So that's how I went to Bucharest.

Were you ever ill or physically harmed or sick during these years when you were on your own?

No, I wasn't. No, I wasn't ill. No, I wasn't ill. And--

Then in 1954, you decided to leave Montreal-- or before you answer that, let me back up a minute. Is there anything more about the Holocaust years or your survival during that time that we haven't touched upon that you would like to share?

Well, the only thing that survival was all the time with us, even since 1939. Because after I left Bucharest in 1940, if I would have stayed on for another few months in Bucharest, there was a big pogrom of Bucharest. They captured a lot of Jewish people on the street wherever they were able to catch them. And they were slaughtered in the slaughterhouse. They just like cattles.

And I was lucky. I was found out that I was able to get away just before from Bucharest. If I would have stayed there, I don't know because a lot of people got captured because at that time, the government after that became pro-German in Romania and was a big pogrom in Bucharest after I left. So I felt lucky that I went away from Bucharest when I left.

And you had told me prior to the interview that your father had left home. So he had gone somewhere else?

My father left while I was still a young kid. He left to South America. And I didn't know too much what's going on with him. There was no corresponding with him. So I didn't know anything about him till I found out later on after I was liberated in Germany. When I was in Germany, that's when I found out that he's still alive and where he is. I mean where he is. That's the only thing I know about my father.

And did you ever find out about your mother's second husband?

We know that everybody died. Everybody died, including my mother and the children and the grandmother and uncles. We knew everybody went to concentration camp. And most of them perished as soon as they got there. Because my mother with kids, as soon as they came to the camp, those people, they sent right away to the crematoriums. Grandmother, all these people, anybody with children, they were sent to the crematoriums right away.

Did you ever see the concentration camps after the war?

No, no, I didn't see. Only part where I saw was in Bergen-Belsen after the war.

When your cousin was there.

Yeah, after the war. And what happened to your cousin? Do you know?

Well, my cousin, this one where I went there, she is still here. She's in Cleveland. Some other cousins went away some other place.

But the one that you went--

The one I went came to Cleveland. She's here in Cleveland.

Did she also go to Canada?

Yes, she went to Canada too. She went to Montreal. She went to another city. She stayed in Toronto-- for the same time I was in Montreal, she stayed in Toronto.

Also with family?

No, she wasn't-- well, she had her brother-in-law living in Toronto too. And so she decided to come to the United States too. We came to the same people, to Cleveland, to my aunt. So we came almost at the same time.

When you fled to-- when you got to Canada, did you come with other people from the camps?

We came with other people. But it wasn't as a group.

You had no good friends with you, in other words?

No good friends, no, because we all went in different directions. So I didn't come with any close friend or anything to Montreal.

And you stayed from '48 to '54?

'54, yeah. '54.

What did you do those six years in Montreal?

In Montreal, I worked in a factory as a seamstress. And I stayed at different places because I was single. And so we stayed different places. And I was hoping to come to the United States because I had some other relatives in the United States. And I was always looking forward to come to this country.

And how did you arrange it then?

Well, my uncle, I had an uncle in New York State, in Albany. And he sent me some papers to come to the United States. He sponsored me.

So you went to Albany, not to Cleveland first?

No, I went to New York first, there where I started to work there for a little while. I went to Albany too, but mainly to New York first. And then from there, I came-- when I got my papers to come here was the main thing to come to Cleveland. That's where I came. I didn't stay too much any other places, except I wanted to come to Cleveland.

When did you arrive here?

I came here in April of 1955. '55, actually, I came to the United States.

Did any individual or an agency or a religious organization welcome you?

No. No, didn't welcome me because I had my aunts over here. So I just came to them.

Your aunt being your mother's sister?

No, my aunt being my father's sister.

Father's sister.

Father's sister. They're still here. So I came to them. And from there on, I found a job where to work. And that's what

I'm still working all these years, still staying in the same place.

So you're still at Dalton.

Still at Dalton, yes.

Did you join a synagogue?

Yeah, I joined a synagogue and send my kids to the Hebrew schools and send them through the college. And now, they're all on their own.

How do you feel as a Jew in the United States?

Well, I feel safer than any other place. But I still get in contact where I work with people that they still hate Jews. They still talk against the Jewish people. But otherwise, I'm used to those things. So I don't think too much already. But I'm grateful that the government is-- I know it's not anti-Jewish, and it's a democratic government. So that makes me feel good being in this country.

Are you active in organized Jewish work at all here in the community?

No, I'm just active in my synagogue. Just in the synagogue.

What do you do for them?

Just I'm a board member. At one time, I was vice president. And going there whenever it's possible, I go there. I belong to a STEM club organization and a coin club. And that's activities mainly, activities what I'm doing.

And now do you think about the Holocaust much? Or do you ever discuss it with your family, your children?

Well--

Do you dream about it? Those kinds of--

Well, sometimes you dream about it what you went through. Discussing, I used to a little bit with my children. But my children know what went on. They saw it on television many times. So they know about the Holocaust. But I don't discuss it on a daily basis or something. We try to look on the future. We don't discuss too much the past.

How did you meet your wife?

My wife, I met-- my wife after the war she was in Italy in displaced camp. And my uncle was in the same camp, like with my wife's family. And he told me about my wife when I was still in Europe. And he knew that they came to Cleveland because they were pretty close friends with my wife's family.

So when I came to Cleveland to settle here, to my aunt, I went to visit them a few times. Even before, whenever I came to Cleveland, I went to visit them. That's how I met my wife. And when I came permanent to this country, that's when I started to go out with her permanent. And that's how I met her.

Do you think that Holocaust survivors are different from other Jewish people?

Well, they just have more experience because of what they went through. So they have a little more experience what they went through on a daily basis. Because a person who lived in this country wouldn't know the experience what a person went through in Europe and how much hardship he went through. Because people didn't go through personally, he wouldn't feel the same way.

Right. Is there anything else that you would like to share with us or that we haven't touched upon?

Well, the only thing what we didn't touch that while I was in Europe I was still young. Every daily life was hardship because every day was a day of survival in Europe for me because we always went through persecution. We always had to know that we have to be afraid of the local population. Gentile population was always hostile. Many of them was very hostile, even in my country where I was and so was in the other country where my wife comes from.

Like my wife was-- my wife's was surviving for a few years, for three years she stayed with a Gentile family till somebody always threatened the Gentile family that they're going to report them. So that's when they had to-- she had to get away from there. So we know there was always hostile people against the Jewish people.

And your daily life from the time you were 13, you were on your own you said.

I was on my own. My uncle was in the same city. But I was on my own all the time, working hard from morning till nighttime and just to survive.

Right. So you had a personal survival struggle besides the Judaic one.

Besides, yeah, it was always a personal struggle to survive. Every day, you were under hardship all the time, not living in a private room like we live over here, sleeping wherever you can. Even when I was working, I had to sleep under a certain bench, or eating just whatever they gave you. There wasn't big salary like you have over here, just survival. All the years while I was in Europe was always the struggle to survive.

And when you lived in this big mansion after the war with these other young people, you had no means of earning a living.

No, we didn't earn money. But it was already better that you had the food available for you. And you had the hope. See, after the war, that what you had, the hope. That was the best thing what it was the hope, that you know you are free, and you were able to go wherever you can go. And that was our-- that was the best thing in life when you have the hope. You're still young, and you have the hope for a better life. That was our main goal.

And you have anything else that you'd like to share before we close? It seems that we went through this a little quickly. But you were fortunate enough not to be in a ghetto or in a concentration camp.

Yeah. That's right. I was fortunate to be to left town, from my own time where I was born. Otherwise, I would have probably not be here to tell the story because everybody from my family who was in town where I was born were sent to concentration camp. And most of the people perished over there.

I was fortunate enough to be there in Budapest. And that's how I was survived. Otherwise I wouldn't be here. And that was the good part of it. But my mother and the rest of the family, all of them were sent to the gas chambers.

Well, we thank you very much for your time.

You're welcome.

This is Sue Danford. Our Holocaust survivor today has been Louis Muller. And this project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section.