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MARK MANDEL

Born 4/5/30 in Deblin, Poland . Also lived in Warsaw. Born Moshe Mandelbaum. Maternal grandparents Moshe Melech and Sarah Leah Rochenswalb. Paternal grandparents Isaac and Zlata Mandelbaum. Zlata, along with father's sisters died in Treblinka 6/41. Observant but not Orthodox. Only Yiddish spoken at home although he spoke Polish. Father a shoemaker. He had 6 sisters, but one died of kidney disease 1/20/39. Family lived in a gentile area and he was bullied from age 8. Attended cheder ages 3-7 and public school until 1939.

War began and family moved into Jewish neighborhood in Warsaw. Father went back to house to clean up after an air raid and was killed in another raid 9/14/39. Buried in a mass grave. In order to survive, Mandel stole gas from a ruptured tank and sold it. Sister Mindel jumped on a coal car and stole coal for fuel. He and sisters sold cigarettes, soap and candy. As they were Aryan appearing, they pretended to be gentiles, leading a "double life." In 1940, Jews ordered into ghetto. Family kept smuggling from the outside, but had to burn furniture for fuel. By 6/41, Jews were rounded up and taken to Treblinka. Father's grandmother died of hunger at this time. Aunt and cousin went to the station on the promise of receiving bread and jam, but were shipped to Treblinka and killed. Uncle killed by Poles while trying to get to Russia. Two of his sisters got jobs on a Polish farm, passing as gentiles. Mandel and sister Etta used to take streetcar from Aryan sector and jump off as it passed through a sliver of the ghetto. Early in 1942, he was caught with non-Jewish friends and claimed to be gentile . Had to show genitals and pulled foreskin down to cover up circumcision and was released. Mother and 2 sisters (Masha and Riva Kabord) stayed in ghetto and he smuggled older sister (Anna Ptaszek) out of the ghetto. Mandel went to Deblin which was Judenrein, cleared of Jews. Saw Jews shot for no reason while others were taken to the cemetery and shot and buried there. Sisters also escaped the ghetto, but minutes later, his mother was picked up and sent to Treblinka along with uncle and some cousins. Mandel used Polish name Manjek to avoid detection when he was swept up in a roundup. He saw 500 dead Hungarians in town square. He entered a work camp outside of Deblin and avoided deportation by hiding in the toilet while 4 sisters hid in a dumpster. In camp, they slept in barracks. He worked storing (and stealing) potatoes while sisters worked in greenhouse and cooked. He slept in the women's barracks until 1943 and then moved into the men's barracks.

In 1944, as Russians approached, 600 inmates taken to Czestochowa. Fifteen of the taken were children and they were killed.. In new camp, he made bullets and Riva picked up scrap metal. Spent 6 months there. On January 15, 1945, many inmates removed and on 1/16/45 rest were marched to a warehouse. The next day, the Germans disappeared and the Russians marched

in. Mandel and others burned the commandant's house and raided a warehouse. Mandel and sisters decided to return to Deblin and went on foot. Saw many dead Germans and escaped drunken Russians by hiding in a farmhouse. Met up with other survivors and found there was a cousin in Lublin. In Lublin he and two sisters entered an orphanage, while older sister got an apartment.

Soon, Mandel and a friend joined a Zionist organization and were accepted to go to Israel along with sisters Riva and Etta. Took train to Czechoslovakia and ended up in Prague. Then back to Landsberg, Germany to a sanatorium to recuperate. He learned Hebrew and Zionist theory in order to go to a Kibbutz. Two sisters married and Mandel and other two sisters went to Munich to live with them until 4/46 when they connected with Jewish Sochnut. British allowed 1000 Jewish children to go to Israel, including Mandel and 2 sisters. Took Champaleu from Marseilles to Haifa, arriving 4/27/46. Sent to Kibbutz Kfar Menachem with 15 others associated with Hashomer Hatzair. Worked half days in construction and went to school the other half. Joined Haganah in 1947 at Kibbutz Nekbah. Joined the navy in 1948 and stayed until 1950. "Very proud" to fight for Israel. Learned other sisters went to the US as the British would not let them come to Israel. After the War of Independence, he was assigned to a kibbutz in Galil. Wanted to spend some time with sisters, but was denied leave, so he quit. Moved in with sister in Yafo and worked construction. Sister did not adapt to Israel and went to Germany. Three other sisters moved to the US 1947-9. Mandel tried to get a visa to go to the US but once he arrived in Paris on the way, the visa was found to be fraudulent. He took a train to Austria but jumped off in Munich and joined sister in a DP camp in 1952. Joined ORT and learned to become a tool and die maker. He also started a fur business. Finally granted a preference visa along with sister with the help of Sen. Hubert Humphrey. Arrived US 2/3/55.

Met wife in Minneapolis. Now Conservative, but questions why God allowed so many Jews to be killed. Believes in Israel and supports Technion of Haifa and the Anne Frank Haven for education of deprived Jewish children. Family has grown to 55 from original 5. Says he will never forgive the Germans.