

## Oral history interview with Mimi Weingarten RG-50.677.0020

### Summary

Mimi Weingarten, born on February 14, 1929 in Sighet, Romania, discusses her four siblings and parents (only two family members survived); growing up in peaceful pre-war Sighet; attending public and Jewish schooling; her first memory of antisemitism--someone on white horse waving baton, "Down with the Jews!"; later on, Jewish were thrown from moving trains, town square beatings, forced closure of family's cheese shop, "Any Gentile that wanted a Jewish business, could get it." (father formed quiet partnership with new owner); home invasion, announcing "All Jewish schools closed...children not allowed in public schools"; father's arrest/beatings from discovery of his quiet partnership; sister jailed defending father, mother doing payoff for daughter's release; Jews not allowed on streets, few Gentile friends sneaking food to family; rumors of only labor camps, not concentration camps; thwarting another home invasion by nailing fake notice to door (red note)-"Child in home has Scarlet fever"; Sighet ghetto; (1944) Mimi's family in last Sighet deportation to Auschwitz, included lawyers/doctors/government officials; first realization of gravity, hearing, "Stupid Jew - you're going to your death! What are you praying for?"; older sister running after little brother/father's cattle car - "Wherever you go-don't forget who you are from home," father told her.; Mimi/mother/older and little sisters in 3-day cattle car transport (no food/water/toilet); arrival to Auschwitz - person thrown on electrified train tracks; Mimi taken aback by "luxurious" toilets, so dehydrated, drank from toilet; women undressed, heads shaved, Mimi so disoriented, unable to recognize own family with their heads newly shaved; being lined up for selection, Dr. Mengele arrives - "very handsome, beautifully dressed, with white gloves, pointing - 'This one goes out - that one goes out'" Mengele ordered; older sister insisting Mimi eat the vile food - Mimi resisted; lice; Mimi's leg swelling, sisters begging Mimi to stand so she could survive Mengele's selection; leg turning blue; kind person in doctor's office, advising, "When Mengele comes through, pinch your cheeks" (arouse rosiness, look healthier); prisoner putting her bread under her dying body to save for Mimi; Mimi placed in Block 13, selected again by Mengele, taken to camp front, authorities not yet there, older sister advises Mimi to run back; sister sneaking Mimi into children's block so 15 yr. old Mimi (now looking age 7) might survive longer; rumors of "pretty women for special work" followed by murders in Gypsy camp (Zigeunerlager); in Barracks 34, Mimi selected again, older sister again telling her to run; placed in Zigeunerlager, given clean dress for "general selection"; kind German soldier had been hiding little sister but this time, Mengele ordered 10 yr. old taken away - Mimi's heartbreak; Little sister had always said, "You see the flames - that is where they burned our parents." Mimi would respond, "No, God wouldn't let them kill them. I was such a strong believer, I really believed God was shielding us."; enduring whipping after getting caught retrieving ditch water; (Mimi later asking a survivor, "How can you believe (in God) when all these things happened?" His response, "Do you know a better way?"); dressed for forced labor, train to Birkenau, everyone sat around for weeks then forced labor (so weak, unable to carry out); SS officer's rare kindness, encouraging Mimi to sleep and provided some food; 4-month workings on airplanes; 2-day march from factory to NE Germany (no food/water/shoes-cloth

covered, blistered feet); Russian liberation; sleeping in forest; tank arriving with bread; in barracks; American soldiers' warnings of the "wild" Russians - "Don't talk with them, don't go with them."; someone said they had seen sisters' father; return to Sighet to find father; Jewish family had moved in their home but would not take them in; searching for father in hospitals (never found); sister's marriage; homelessness; immigrating to America; Mimi shares family stories and photographs. "Not surprised that people deny it - it's such an unheard story. It doesn't seem real to even me. I'm proud of Jewish accomplishments after such tragedy." (Mimi's two children became doctors).