

Questions to Consider When Viewing Video

1. In what part of Czechoslovakia did Mimi and her family live? What language was spoken there?
2. What happened to Mimi's education when the Nazis came to Czechoslovakia?
3. What was the Kindertransport? Why was Mimi's brother not able to join her on that program?
4. What kind of housing did Mimi live in when she arrived in England? What were some of the problems with this housing?
5. Why did Mimi eventually live with an uncle and his family?
6. What happened to Mimi's parents and brother during the war?
7. What kind of special training did Mimi receive in England?
8. Why did Mimi go to Palestine after the war?
9. Why was Mimi's experience after the Kindertransport and the war so different from that of many of her friends who had also come to England?
10. What important message, based on her experiences during the Holocaust, does Mimi have for all of us today?

Holocaust Survivor

Mimi Schleissner Ormond

Filed on October 31, 2006



*"Speak up when you see things
that are really wrong."*

- Mimi Ormond

Face to Face
A Holocaust Education Program at
Congregation Shaarey Tikvah
Beachwood, Ohio

Mimi Schleissner Ormond was born in 1927 in the German-speaking part of Czechoslovakia known as the Sudetenland. She attended German Catholic schools but felt no anti-Semitism from her friends or their families. But when Hitler occupied Austria, and then “liberated” her part of Czechoslovakia, she had to attend a Czech school.

Her parents did not tell Mimi and her brother what was happening, but they moved the family from their nice home to the country, to live with relatives, and then to Kolin in central Czechoslovakia. Hitler did not keep his promise and then occupied all the rest of the country.

A Christian family saved Mimi’s family by hiding them in a room behind a barn. The United States had strict quotas and Mimi’s parents tried in vain to get visas to enter the U.S. Fortunately, Mimi was able to go to England on the Kindertransport, a program which brought children to England without their parents. Mimi’s 16-year-old brother stayed behind because he was too old for the program.

Mimi left for England in May, 1939. Her mother assured her they would meet again, even though her mother wasn’t sure of this. The train had to cross Germany, and Mimi remembers the German soldiers getting on the train to check everyone’s papers. When the train got to Holland, the Dutch people had cookies and drinks for the children as they waited for the boats to take them to England.

Mimi traveled and lived with a youth group, which went to a farm rented by the Jewish Agency. They all continued to speak German as they worked on the farm. At first there were only 50 youths, but later 200 more came and there was no place for them all to sleep. Train cars were used as sleeping quarters. After children became ill from lack of heat in the train cars, they were moved to an abandoned castle.

Many years later, Mimi took her children back to her hometown and to one of the castles where she had stayed as a child. She still corresponds with the current owners, who renovated part of the castle as their home.

Because there was no regular school at the castle, Mimi arranged to live with her uncle in London and studied to become a nursery school teacher. She met an American soldier but needed parental permission to marry him, as she was only 18 years old.

Meanwhile, her parents had escaped through Italy and gone to Palestine. Her mother remembered her as the 12-year-old girl who left home, but she did give permission, on the condition that Mimi would come to Palestine to visit her before immigrating to the United States. Two years later, after the war ended, Mimi was able to do that.

Mimi will always be grateful to the good people who rescued 10,000 Jewish children. If you count THEIR children and grandchildren, there may be hundreds of thousands all together.