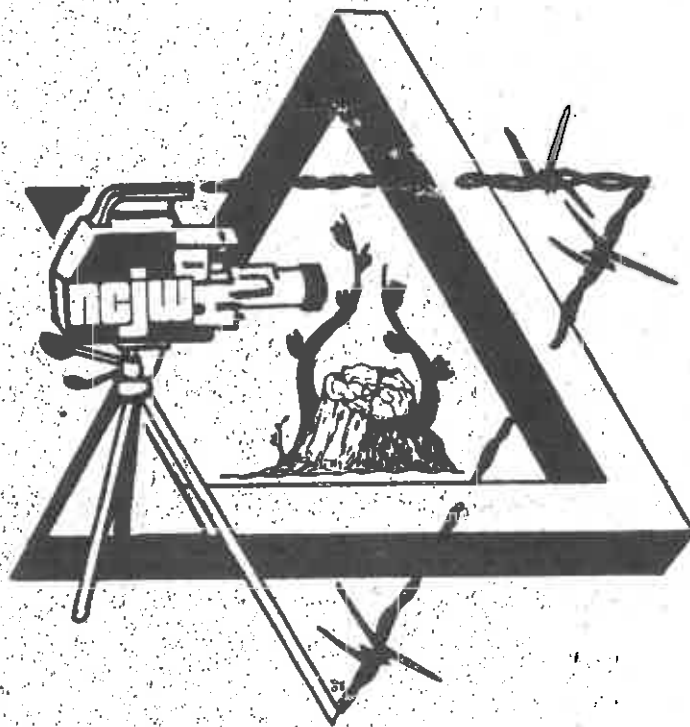


NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JEWISH WOMEN CLEVELAND SECTION

HOLOCAUST ARCHIVE PROJECT



*After nearly 40 years, "witnesses," survivors
of the Holocaust, have come forward with their
stories. We have listened we shall
remember.*

Rhoda Shapiro
President

Terri Day & Lynn Schmelzer
Co-chairpersons

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From the past for the future . . . the Holocaust Archive Project of National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section, is a living memorial to counteract forgetfulness, ignorance, and malicious denial of the atrocities of Nazi Germany.

The project consists of *videotaped* testimonies of 136 Cleveland area Holocaust Survivors, Righteous Gentiles, and Liberators. Cleveland, with a large survivor population, was an appropriate community to undertake such a project. With the survivor population diminishing at a rate of 10% a year, time was of the essence.

During a 2½ year period, more than 300 people, representing in excess of 4,000 volunteer hours, donated their time and expertise to research, plan, and implement this project. National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section, provided \$25,000 seed money for this \$100,000 undertaking. Additional funding came from local foundations and private donations. Local and national dignitaries lent support by serving as honorary chairpersons. Steering Committee members included individuals from Cleveland Section as well as local experts in Holocaust study.

Interviews were conducted at WEWS-TV, the Cleveland ABC affiliate, by volunteers who completed required training. The training reviewed history and sensitized the interviewers to the emotions expressed by the survivors in telling their stories.

Each taping session ran approximately three hours. Many survivors recounted their experiences for the first time and expressed relief at having finally told their stories.

In an era of television and film, these videotapes will become essential tools for the study of the Holocaust and its historical and humanitarian implications.

National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section, in conjunction with WEWS-TV, produced a 30 minute documentary based on these personal testimonies. "A Time to Remember" narrated by Robert Clary, a survivor and national spokesman on the Holocaust, is available for community education and national distribution. This documentary is a tribute to the strength of those who survived.

National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section, is proud to have played a part in insuring that future generations will remember the Holocaust.

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An Introduction to the Project

The Holocaust Archives Project is a collection of interviews which document the experiences of 136 Holocaust survivors, righteous gentiles and liberators from the Cleveland area. The National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section, undertook this project to ensure that their stories will be preserved in the historical record.

Participants were sought through advertisements in local Jewish newspapers and community newspapers. The Kol Israel Foundation was also helpful in locating participants.

Interviews were conducted from July 1984 to January 1985 at the studios of WEWS TV5 in Cleveland. Trained volunteers served as interviewers, but the goal was to focus exclusively on participants. Therefore, the interviews are not structured as question-and-answer sessions; instead, they serve as a forum for the open sharing of recollections and perceptions. Each interview does begin with a few standard questions about participants' present life and early childhood, but after asking these questions, interviewers were instructed to prompt and guide participants only if necessary.

An Introduction to the Abstracts

These abstracts are intended to guide the user to interviews of particular interest to him or her. They are not meant to be used as substitutes for the actual interviews; we cannot stress enough the importance of listening to the interviewees tell their stories in their own words.

Each abstract consists of a Narrative Summary, which outlines the interviewee's life story, followed by a chronological abstract of the interview. The Narrative Summaries are based on the interviews; therefore, they do not contain any information which cannot be found in the videos themselves.

For researchers, teachers, and other viewers interested in particular topics, there is an index beginning on page 381. It includes major subjects and geographical names, and refers the user to specific page numbers in this book.

Because these interviews represent intensely personal histories, no attempt was made to verify or correct dates, names or places. If there are any factual errors, they should be considered an unavoidable part of the oral history

process, and not a reflection on the overall accuracy or truth of these narratives.

Abstract Methodology

These abstracts were compiled directly from audiotape copies of the videotaped interviews. Some were written by volunteers; most were written by professionals, who also edited the volunteer's work. Ultimately, all abstracts were reviewed by a series editor.

Stories are generally told in chronological order. Frequently, however, talking about one event triggered memories of another, which happened months or years earlier. Therefore, to provide a chronological synopsis, abstractors wrote a Narrative Summary of each interview.

Major events or themes are presented in capitalized headlines, written in the present tense. Where necessary, elaborations are provided below these headlines, in the past tense.

To help researchers locate information within interviews, the abstracts are divided by video number. Within each video, events and themes are presented in the order in which they were discussed; however, the abstract does not necessarily indicate how far into the tape the information occurs. (In other words, the number and spacing of headlines correspond to the amount of information, rather than to the time elapsed. But if an interviewee discusses a particular theme at great length, this is usually indicated in the headline.)

Personal and Geographic Names

Except for well-known historical figures, personal names are not included in the index. This is because names were often mentioned in passing, and frequently last names were not provided. Moreover, accurate spellings cannot be ensured.

The spelling of personal names was left to the abstractors. They were not verified with interviewees because re-contacting them could have been too disturbing. Many were clearly upset by telling their stories, and a large number were sharing their experiences publicly for the first time. It was felt that forcing them to recall these painful events again would have been intrusive and traumatizing.

Spellings of all geographic names were verified by the series editor, using atlases and gazetteers published for individual countries; where possible, pre-1960s editions were used. In some cases, there were several possibly correct city names. Using contextual information from the interviews, these were cross-checked against maps to determine the correct one.

In the index, most camps are listed as concentration camps, extermination camps or labor camps. These designations, as well as camp locations, are from Every Day Remembrance Day: A Chronicle of Jewish Martyrdom by Simon Wiesenthal (Henry Holt and Company, New York 1986).

Series Editor's Note

These abstracts are the result of six years of part-time work. Since beginning the project I have moved seven times (including an overseas move), completed a Master's degree, and started work on law degree. I have also held various full-time jobs and internships. But no matter where I was or what I was doing, the Holocaust Archives Project was a constant presence in my mind.

In 1986, I was one of three editors hired to write abstracts and review the work of several volunteer abstractors. Gradually, the others moved on to other projects, and I was left as the sole abstractor and editor - which often seemed a daunting task. With 136 complete interviews, the thought of listening to all of them sometimes filled me with inertia and dread.

Eventually, the project coordinators and I decided to narrow the scope of the abstracting process, focusing on just over one-third of the interviews. We tried to choose interviews which covered a wide range of experiences and locations, so we selected interviews with concentration camp prisoners, liberators, members of the resistance, and people who had spent the entire war in hiding. We included many who had lived in countries with relatively large Jewish populations, such as Poland, Czechoslovakia and Germany, as well as those who came from countries such as France and Belgium, where the number of Jews was relatively smaller. In the end, we chose 50 interviews.

Still, there were times when I couldn't bring myself to work on the project. Sometimes, it was because I had too many other things to do; not much was accomplished during the two years of my Master's program. Sometimes, it was because I couldn't stand to listen to any more stories of pain, cruelty and loss. And sometimes, it was because I

realized that I was becoming numb to the terrible stories I was hearing -- that was the worst of all.

I have learned a great deal from my work on this project. I had studied the Holocaust in the past, but these interviews taught me many new things. One of the most interesting revelations was the important role women played in helping themselves and others to survive. Many women -- both Jews and gentiles -- were left on their own for the first time, when their husbands, brothers and fathers were deported or drafted. The strength and resourcefulness they discovered in themselves, and the courage they showed in using these qualities to survive, are truly inspiring.

Working with these interviews also gave me a new perspective on my personal history. Most of my Jewish relatives left Europe many years before the Holocaust, but I do have some distant cousins who are survivors. This project made me feel a stronger kinship with them, and with all other Jews who share this tragic history. As a non-observant Jew, I have also felt an awakened interest in Judaism, and a new respect for the power of its history and philosophy.

I hope these interviews will teach and inspire others as they have taught and inspired me.

Michelle Heyer
October 1993
Cleveland, Ohio