

Surviving the Holocaust

Guests Interview by Sharon Ann Soudakoff

Love Conquered All Odds

Rose Steinberg Feld Rosman

This is part of an ongoing series of interviews with deaf survivors of the Holocaust during World War II. This personal interview took place in early 1994.



Rose Steinberg was born in 1917 in Pinsk, Russia. She became deaf as a result of an illness at the age of three.

Her family which included her parents and two hearing sisters moved to Warsaw, Poland in 1920 because of White Communism going on in Russia. When they discovered that Rose was deaf, they sent her to the best Jewish deaf school which was the Israelite School for the Deaf in East Berlin, Germany in 1923. Her parents remained in Poland and visited Rose often. Israelite School for the Deaf accepted only 60 students per year. It used the oral method. Rose spoke in German, Polish, and French. It was a very strict and kosher private school.

Rose met her sweetheart, Max Feld at Israelite School for the Deaf in 1923. Max Feld was born in Berlin, Germany in 1915. He was born deaf. He had two brothers. His father was a delivery man for medications. His mother sewed raincoats.

When Rose was 11 years old, she had a ruptured appendix so she was sent off to an emergency hospital to have surgery. The doctor gave her 50-50 chance to survive so her mother rushed on a train to visit her. Max decided to pay a visit to Rose at the Jewish hospital, when Rose saw him, she vomited! The doctor and her mom told him to leave. She developed a serious infection so they put her in a 'bad' room where patients were dying. The doctor said, he could give her a large dose of medication but there were no guarantees that she would get better, her mother said to go for it. She was in seclusion for three days before she asked for food. The infection was healing. She was released and returned to school.

Max was so mean and loved to tease Rose, pulling her hair, calling her names, etc. Then one day, he decided to ask her to meet him on Wednesday nights at the gymnastic class and Rose asked why should she! Rose decided to show up and they developed a love relationship thereon.

Rose's family had a summer house in Villepinte, 90 miles from Paris.

In 1935, Rose and her family moved to France. Max took a train from Berlin and visited her in 1937 during the World's Fair in Paris and stayed with her. They got married in 1939 in Paris at her sister's house with 40-50 people at present. Poland and Germany had just started a war.

Three months later, Rose discovered that she was pregnant. The Nazi soldiers had invaded Paris. Rose wanted to have an abortion but Max insisted that she keep the baby.

Max's family decided to move to Columbia and asked Rose and her mother to join them but Rose mother was so afraid so Max stayed behind as he did not want to be separated from Rose. Rose breast-fed Esther for 16 months.

Max worked as a dental technician for a dentist. Germany had announced that all Jews were to be found and reported to the soldiers. There was a drawing and Max's name was picked out. Rose was breast-feeding her six month old baby girl, Esther when the soldiers knocked her door and asked for Max. He was taken into the Camp Beuve LaRolanda in Paris. 2,000 men were sent.

Max's friend, Marcel and his wife Marcelle Demay, both deaf and non-Jewish visited them often. They lived in Cachan near Paris. Max and Marcel played football together in a deaf sports club. Marcelle took care of Esther when Rose went to work until they escaped from the French police. They were lucky to have such caring friends. In 1942, Max and Rose gave them a suitcase to hide in their pace which consisted pictures, jewelry, etc. and asked them to hold it until the war is over and if they survive.

Rose's mother paid a very high price to get false identification paper for herself, Rose and her sister. They decided to stop using it after two months because they were afraid.

Rose, along with her mother and Esther visited Max three times between 1941 to 1942. One day, Max and a hearing friend, Petros decided to escape, they took an electric train, 30 miles to Rose's apartment. Rose's mother was so terrified for everyone's life so he went into hiding in the basement. He was famished after a few days and came out and asked for some food, but no one had enough for themselves so he decided to return to the camps where they had served pretty good food. There were two deaf people in this camp besides Max. One of them was L. Ungar. Max was deported to Birkenau in 1942 from France and never returned. Rose's father was also deported and killed in 1942.



Rose worked for a company that manufactured furs. The people there who worked on sewing machines like Rose were limited to five needles per day. They would be killed in front of the building outside if they broke them all. It was difficult not to break the needles as there were some furs like cats faces that was thick that made it easy to break the needles. Rose had some close calls when she had one or two left. She worked as a slave there for two years from 1942 to 1944.

They paid for a Christian baby-sitter to care for Esther while Rose went hiding in the basement for nine months at their summer house. She took care of her until the war ended in 1945. They visited each other when time permitted.

After the war ended, Rose went over to the Demay's. She was so fortunate to have been able to have her suitcase returned. Max's photos show their school days at the Israelite School for the Deaf and their temporary escape to Paris and Max's arrest in Gestapo. What an unusual situation! Rose and her mother spent two years in Venezuela where they offered all survivors cheap rent and food.

In 1949, Rose decided to visit New York with Esther. They flew on Pan Am, and had a big scare as there was bad weather in New York. The plane was shaking so much that everyone fumed white. They were forced to make a emergency landing in Washington, D.C. From there, they took a train to New York. Max's parents met them at the station. Rose and Esther had a visa that allowed them to stay in New York up to two months, they asked for an extension~twice and stayed for another 5 months. Two weeks before it was about to expire and time to return to Venezuela, she met Ted Rosman, an Hungarian Jew who was hard of hearing offered to marry her. They got married in 1950. In 1952, Rose became an American Citizen. Her mother and sister followed her to New York and became U.S. Citizens too.

Esther got married in 1962 and was going to settle down in Los Angeles. Max's parents attended the wedding! Rose was too heartbroken to be separated from her only child, she decided to move to Los Angeles in 1963. She flew to New York often to visit her mother and sister.

Rose and Ted got divorced in 1979. Rose has been so busy volunteering her time to the deaf and blind people in the Los Angeles, California area. ***What a big hearted woman!***