

## **Holocaust survivor provides a glimpse beyond the literature**

*By Grace Burwell, published in the November 2018 issue of the RM Tide*

Manny Mandel, an 82 year old Holocaust survivor, visited RM to speak about his experience to Honors English 10 classes on Monday, Oct. 29. The visit gave the English classes an inside look into *Night*, a memoir by Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel that is a part of the Honors English 10 curriculum.

“My Holocaust experience was quite different,” Mandel told RM students. Mandel was born on May 8, 1936 and grew up in Budapest, Hungary, and he recounted a childhood memory that has stuck with him for life.

When he and his family visited his aunt in Hungary in 1941, police rounded up a large group of Jewish residents in the area for a census. “It was very unusual to have a census at that time,” Mandel said.

Hundreds of Jews were marched from their homes to an icy river, lined up, and shot into the waters. A police officer pulled Mandel and his family out of line, and they were spared from death. Mandel later found out that 700 Jews were killed.

Afterwards, Mandel and his family returned back home to Budapest, but much was changing. “I had to go to school with a yellow star on my chest,” Mandel said.

Soon after Nazis began to round up Jews for concentration camps, Mandel and his family were sent to the concentration camp Bergen-Belsen in Germany.

Mandel described his experience at the camp as mainly boring and eventless; he was sick with pneumonia for the majority of his time at Bergen-Belsen.

Mandel now has a family of his own, and his daughter attended the presentation as well. Mandel noted that starting his own family remains one of his most cherished memories.

Mandel spoke to the students not only about his personal experience but also about the importance of remembering what happened during the Holocaust.

“I find that most people are ignorant of what happened [in the Holocaust]. Become knowledgeable,” Mandel said. “You cannot learn from the future.”

The discussion inspired many students and gave them a better understand of *Night*. “Just the fact that he was able to survive at such a young age and be able to overcome this tragedy and still talk about it [was impressive],” sophomore Eric Caulfield said. “It makes a difference to hear from an actual person because they lived through it and can give you more specific details.”

Teachers talked about their opinions on Mandel’s visit as well. “The emotional discourse that needs to happen surrounding this event [the Holocaust] is really important for students to be able

to experience, and the only way to do that is to hear it from an actual survivor,” English teacher Miranda McLain said. “We’re really lucky that Mr. Mandel was able to come talk to us.”

Mandel’s words are still very relevant today. During the event, they sparked conversation about how anti-Semitism fueled the mass recent shooting at a Pittsburgh synagogue, on Oct. 27. The shooting, which killed 11 people, was determined to be a hate crime. In its aftermath, many across the country have offered support to the Jewish community.

“Anti-semitism is a disease that has been around for a very long time,” said Mandel to the students during his visit, “there’s always a category of people who say, ‘I don’t like you.’”

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