We are now resuming with part two of our interview with Rose Kramer.

We were talking-- or rather, you had raised many questions as the American army was on one side and the Russian army was on the other, and there you were in Neustadt and you were liberated.

Mm-hmm.

With all the questions to answer about picking up the pieces of your life again, could you tell us what your memories were from that time?

Confusion. Hope. Maybe somewhere in that Earth, under the Earth, I'll find somebody who I presumed was dead. And we got together as a group--

We?

--thinking-- the people in the camp there.

That you had come from Birkenau and RavensbrÃ¼ck with?

No. Who I met there in Neustadt labor. --to think together and see what we can do to start out somewhere. Where do we begin to look? Where are more Jews? This was the main thought. There must be others like we are who are liberated. And if we can get in touch with these people somehow, somewhere, we might meet somebody who met somebody who knows something.

And we decided the Russians were very misbehaving at the time. And we were very, very afraid-- a bunch of young girls. We barricaded the doors, of course. And we decided a few days later that we better move out of that camp, and we go to wherever they will take us.

Were there a lot of incidents with Russian soldiers?

They were, yes. Yes. They were very, the least I can say, misbehaving. Very much so.

What shape were you in then?

Who cares? I had my bones. We were told, as long as you have bones and skin, the meat comes later, or the flesh. That's what they said. And when I check myself out, I said, it's not that bad. I still have the bones, I still have the skin. And the flesh will come later. I am free, and this is all what matters. Not all. Not really. But at the moment, probably, I thought that's all what matters.

And we decided that we better-- people started planning of going back to Poland and see if there are any relatives. If they knocked on somebody's door by a Pole who, once upon a time, lived somewhere else and now he occupies the home where the Jews used to live. Maybe somebody returned. Anyways, we were put on trucks. I wanted to say buses but it weren't buses. They weren't large trucks. And all nationalities. They were people from Holland, from Belgium, from France, from wherever. And everybody-- at least my group, since I didn't know--

I have to make an adjustment. OK.

I didn't know where I am going, so I decided wherever destiny will take me. And it took me to a camp. And this part of Germany was by then occupied by England. And it must have been not far. I don't remember the name of the place. It must have been not far from Holland, somewhere. And in it, we found Italian prisoners of war. And they were, we were told, 10,000 of them. And in the midst of it all, we were 11 girls. We were put, then, into that camp. And it was a camp with-- how do you call these things when you go camping?

Tents.

Tents. A bare floor, nothing to sleep on, and we are just liberated. Where are we going to? You have to stand in the line to get your cup of soup all over again. So we were debating what to do with ourselves. We decided somebody's got to get out of that rut and look around and see what we can find.

Fortunately enough, some young men came to that camp too. And they were already searching. They have seen many places. And they told us, what are you doing here? There are so many Jews all over. There are camps, there DP camps. So we decided since we don't know and women are not as energetic as the men are and the strength isn't there yet-- because from that diet, what we were put on by the English, we really couldn't do very well-- that a few girls will get themselves together and travel on the open trains throughout Europe and see what they can bring back.

Of course, we gave them all the details, the names of the families, what we once upon a time had. And they wrote it down, they took it with them, and it took a week and two and three. And we haven't heard anything, and they are not back yet and our desperation grows because the conditions in that camp was horrible. After three weeks, I believe, they came back. And they had notes-- I found this one, I found this one. Among them, they found my brother who was already in a DP camp in Feldafing.

He was liberated right there, nearby on the tracks. They were taking them to-- where was it? Where all the Jews supposed to have died. One part of Germany. I don't remember exactly. They all were meant to go there. We all were meant to go there, and get rid of us all. The train was bombarded, what my brother was in. And that's how he was liberated. And he was already in that DP camp in Feldafing. Of course, I-- still with my two left shoes because who cares? I stole a bicycle from a Russian soldier so who cares? He didn't shoot me because I stole it and I ran away. I drove away on it. He didn't know what hit him.

We started out little by little, like we divide. We went to different parts of Europe in order to find whoever is left. And I went to see my brother. And the first thing he bought me a pair of shoes, of course. And he let me ride his bicycle. And I fell off and I wound up in the hospital. I split my knee. This is not important. The important thing is that I found him, and life must start all over again.

How did it start all over again for you?

My brother introduced me to a man who he knew before the war. And that's how it all started. And we are all longing for a home, we all long for a new life to start. And what do you do? You marry that man. So I married that man. He was a very nice man. Very nice. And I was longing for a family, coming from a large family, and nephews and nieces. Besides being eight children, and they all had children. And when we got together, that joy and that-- I was lacking that terribly, and I wanted a family for the price of my life. Unfortunately, this man couldn't have any children. So we lived for 10 years together.

Where? In Germany?

No. I came over here already.

When did you--

'49.

'49?

1949.

Your brother and you and your husband?

No. My brother remained in Germany. He was a German, through and through. Deutschland Ã¼ber Alles.

He had no desire to come to America or to go to Israel?

Well, he came a few months later but he went back. He didn't like it. The streets are not paved with gold as he expected it. You have to struggle in order-- I came here with my husband in 1949. He had relatives here, an aunt. And the aunt rented a furnished room for us. I arrived, I remember, the end of the week or something like it. And we had no money, we had nothing really. It was just-- you remember the long $2 bills? I don't know. Maybe you are too young to remember that. All we had is one of these $2 bill. And we were taken to that room, that furnished room. And we decided we better go to work, not knowing the language, not knowing anything.

I slept the first night, I think, in the HIAS. It was a Friday and that aunt happened to be religious and she didn't travel on Saturday, so she didn't pick us up. And Saturday morning, my husband and I picked ourselves up, and I wrote down on a piece of paper the address, and I couldn't say where I want to go. I showed it to somebody who read it, and he said-- in that case, it's your hand and your facial expressions tell you a lot. So he told us to get into the train, and he's going the same way-- from what I understood at the time-- and he will take us there.

I remember getting off that station in Brooklyn. I don't know if you are familiar with Brooklyn. Saratoga Avenue?

Yes.

That's where that aunt lived. When I came down the steps, and there are these--

Girders that hold up the L?

No. Right in the station. The gates, what they close-- what they are steel and very tall. Where the--

Turnstiles. The turnstiles.

Turnstiles, but next-- the doors which you are not allowed to walk out--

They have bars on them. Yes.

Oh, God, I said. Where am I? It's just-- you know, it brings back these-- I was pushing at the gates not realizing that you have to go out the other way. I saw people rushing. And anyway, so we went out and we surprised the aunt, and we came there. And we decided that we better go to work. So Monday morning, I went to New York not knowing the language, not knowing anything, but that's how a survivor does. You just do what you have to do.

And they told me that the best thing is the garment center. They speak Yiddish there, and they need people. They employ a lot of people who came before you. And I went to 40, 38th Street, somewhere there, I was told.

7th Avenue.

7th Avenue. Between 7th and 8th Avenue. And I was looking for a job. I couldn't find anything. And I went back to the subway on my way home, and a young man approached me. And he said to me, are you a refugee? I said, yes. Are you looking for work? And I said, yes. And he said to me, you know what? My wife is pregnant, and she has a very good job. I'll give you the address, go to that place. Maybe they will take you. But you have to know how to wear a thimble, how to sew with a thimble.

I never in my life before had a thimble on my finger. He said, if you don't know how to sew with a thimble, you are not going to get a job. He gave me the address, and I went home. I bought myself a thimble, and I set probably most of the night, I believe, teaching myself how to push the needle with that thimble. The following day, I went looking for a job again. And I went to that place where he gave it to me. And sure enough, this young lady wasn't there because she's not coming back to work.

It was a small place, but at that time, the Jews were very-- what's the word-- very compassionate to the refugees. Very much. And the women who work there were also very, very compassionate. And they took me in and they taught me how to do things. And I work there but I couldn't produce. This was piecework. I cannot produce because I don't know anything what I am doing. After a week, he paid me the first week, which was, I don't know, $25 or $30 because it was, I believe, $1 an hour at the time.

He tells me that he can't keep me because this place is very small and I am just taking up a place where he can have an experienced worker and produce the work. And I can't do it. My tragedy started all over again. Here I have it, here I don't. I cried very hard, and I was really very desperate. Somebody suggest I go to the Union. I wasn't even familiar what a union is. Anyway, so I went to the Union. They found me a job. And I was an Italian bourse. There were many other refugees, and he really gave me a break, I have to admit. He was very nice, but I am an excellent worker. I give it all, and particularly when it comes to survival, it's really it's my life against what I am facing.

And he liked it. I stayed with that company for eight years in the same place. And when I left, I was the highest paid worker because I am good at it. I am good at it.

How long did you stay there?

Eight years. Eight years. And I decided I want a child. We can't have it, let me adopt. Artificial insemination at the time was very rare, but I have heard of it. And I said to my husband, please, let me do it. He said, no way. If I can't have my own, I don't want anybody elses. So I am not growing younger. There is a limit how long I can wait. I said to my husband, if that's the case, we are going to get divorced. And it was very rare in 1955. Very, very seldom. But I had a good friend who really supported me, a woman. Not a man. And I went to a lawyer, and he took care of it. And we were divorced.

The following year, I met Mr. Kramer. And we got married, and a year later, I had a daughter. And a year and a half later, I had a son. So my life is completed.

Who did you name your children for?

My parents. My son is named after my father and my daughter is named after my mother.

Would you say-- or rather how would you say that all of these experiences, particularly related to those darkest of years, have affected your life?

It affected my life just thinking how cruel the world can be. But if we as individuals, with compassion in our hearts and without prejudice, if a world can only be without prejudice, nothing like that could ever happen. Love it and your fellow man. This is the most important consideration, love. I very often find that-- it's sad to say-- even among Jews, there is a lot of-- with all our experiences and all the consequences of prejudice and hatred, what we experienced ourselves, we still didn't learn the lesson of tolerance. I feel that this is our tragedy, the human race tragedy.

I was hurt very badly during the war. I lived through hell. But in spite of all that, I would want to see a world without prejudice. Just see the human being. Don't analyze the religion, the color, his background. Learn about people. Don't judge people until you know who they are. And I argue very often, and I find that very few people understand me. Very. How can you say that, they ask me. I could say it because that's how I feel in my heart. It's very easy for me to say it. I hope that we never again go through anything like it. And it depends entirely on the human race and nobody else.

How have your experiences affected you in terms of being Jewish? Do you have a stronger identity?

Absolutely, yes.

And your children?

I've changed enormously. As I said in the beginning, I grew up in a family where Judaism was not really that I was

taught about or cared about or-- it's embarrassing for me to admit that I knew so little about Israel before the war. But when I came to the United States and I saw the people, the Jews, working as a group, as Zionists-- I don't know. I don't want to call them Zionists. Jews with a Jewish heart who care for one another. This made me think, where am I? I was left out throughout all those years. I had no information, I didn't know who I am actually. I was persecuted for being a Jew. Now, at least let me feel it in my heart that I am a Jew.

I want to participate, I want to know Israel, I want to know Jewish organizations, I want to know what they are doing, how they are working for the good of the world, and especially for the Jewish race. And I think that gradually I feel in my heart that I accomplished a little bit of it. Whatever I do is not enough. But in my capacity, whatever I do, I do it with all my being because I love Israel. I love all of the Jewish people, and I hope that never, never again, anybody throughout the world will have to tell you a story like that.

Thank you, Mrs. Kramer. I thank you. You've given us a great deal of inspiration--

Thank you.

--and enlightenment.

I feel a little bit better.

Good.

Good.

It came off my chest, but there is so much more. My God.

Now you have to sit down with your pencil or your paper or your tape recorders.

There is a million things I have [INAUDIBLE].

Yes, yes, yes. You have to. You have to.

Probably what I have told, you have heard before.

No. Well, not in this pattern. It's your pattern.

[MUSIC PLAYING]