

I'm Leatrice Rabinsky. Today, we are interviewing Elaine Grunwald, a Holocaust survivor. The project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland section.

Lenka, as you are familiarly called from your childhood name, you were telling us about your experiences toward the end of the war already in being moved from camp to camp. And you were on your way to Bergen-Belsen. Would you like to tell us about that journey and then about your arrival in Bergen-Belsen?

Well, we arrived in '45 already to Bergen-Belsen.

Do you remember the month?

I guess it was '45 already. Well, it must have been, yeah, in January-- something like January or end of January, something like that. And again, they put us in blocks. And I cannot remember. What did I do from the beginning?

What was Bergen-Belsen like in comparison to perhaps Birkenau or Auschwitz?

It was a Vernichtungslager. It was a-- how do you say-- how you call it, Vernichtung?

It was a concentration camp.

Yeah. Well, but where they gassed people, too.

Right.

Yeah, same thing where--

Death camp.

Yeah, death camp. Yeah. And again, we worked. I worked again outside in the fields. And then later on, somehow I got in working in a block, like cleaning up the block. They call it [NON-ENGLISH].

Right, you were responsible for the barracks.

Yeah, we had to see the beds should be-- everybody had to make their beds. The blanket-- there we had blankets already with bunks-- three-story bunks. And that's what I was doing, cleaning up, you know, sweeping, straightening out the beds so when an inspection came, everything should be in order.

What was the daily routine like? Was it similar to the other camps?

Oh, yeah, Zahlappell Every morning, Zahlappell. Every evening Zahlappell, twice a day, before you went to work and after you went to work for the same thing, same food, nothing changed. So it was about the same like Auschwitz. But it wasn't as big as Birkenau. It was smaller. Yeah.

Were there any particular friends or people who went through the whole experience with you that were still with you?

Oh, yeah.

Do you remember any of them?

There was one. There was one girl who was like my mother, and we came-- and then I had two girlfriends. There were two sisters with whom I was together, too. And they worked there, too.

In fact, one of those two sisters, she had to go through when we were still in Auschwitz. She had to go through the

experiments that they went through. She was one of them, too.

Medical experiments?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. She went through. And then when we were liberated, we went together to a certain place, and then we separated. And then we got together again.

How long were you in Bergen-Belsen before you heard that it was coming to the end?

Till April. Was it April we were liberated? Yes, April 15, when I was laying on the bed. Because for the last few days, we didn't work anymore, and the Germans--

Why? What had happened?

Well, the Germans left.

Did they tell you anything?

No, no, they didn't tell us anything. No.

Well, how did you notice there was a change?

Because nobody worked anymore, and there was no--

Supervision?

Supervision.

They all left the camp?

Yeah, they all left. Yeah, and they were just the survivors. I mean, the people--

Prisoners?

Prisoners. They weren't taking care as much, because there was no food. For the last three days, we had no food.

There was nothing in the kitchen at all?

Whatever there was, they stole as much as they could. Everybody was-- whoever was good in it. And then we were just left on our own. So what was there left? Nothing, just laying on the bunks, and just waiting.

We knew something is going to happen, but, like, I was so weak from hunger and sick. I didn't care what's happening. I was just laying there and just waiting until something-- or I die or whatever, you know?

You had no idea who was going to come or what was going to come?

No. The only time-- the only thing, when I heard they were stabbing already to sell cigarettes, and flour, and food.

Who was that who was selling?

The prisoners. They already knew, you know, that they came-- the American or the English came in. But I still didn't know, because I was so sick. I was laying on the bunk bed, and I couldn't care less what's happening, you know?

Where did they get the flour or cigarettes?

Well, probably there from the kitchen they stole. They had access to a kitchen.

So they were selling their goods.

Yeah, they were selling already. And cigarettes, I knew. And they were selling cigarettes. Something must have happened. But I was too weak to go and see.

Then finally, somehow, somehow I picked myself up, and I went in the front. And there was that English soldier. And everybody was crying and screaming. And then I know that we were liberated.

What did you see there? Can you describe that exactly?

Well, people crying, and hugging, and kissing. And the English soldiers brought in food right away, and the people ate it, and they died.

What kind of food did they bring in?

Cans, canned food, beans, wieners, everything canned. And people were hungry, and so they ate it, and they died.

And then the Hungarians, they were prisoners, too. But they took over, and they started to shoot. They shot a lot of people during the liberation.

The Hungarian--

Yeah, they were prisoners, too.

--prisoners?

Yeah. Yeah.

And they were shooting the other?

They were shooting. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Why did they do that?

I don't know. I guess they had access to munition or what. Because the Germans left, you know?

Were these Hungarian--

Prisoners.

Jewish prisoners?

No, no, no, men, men, men. They were soldiers or whatever.

Prisoners of war.

Yeah, prisoners of war. Yeah. And so they shot quite a few people. There were a lot of those anti-Semitic. You know, they called them Nyilas. And so they took over. And then little by little, it slowed down.

What happened that first night when the British came in?

Well, it was a lot of happiness, whoever was able to be happy. But so many people were so weak and sick. I don't know till today how I made it. I don't know.

What did they do with you and with the other girls who were in your barracks? Do you recall how you were organized or what happened right at liberation?

Well, nothing. Everybody picked themselves up, and we were able to mingle, you know? And everybody went to see if this one is alive or this one is alive-- to go see who is around. Because the camp was big. Sometimes you didn't see those people. So everybody-- and then we were free people already.

And then we started to see where are we going to go, how are we going to go. And then--

Was there anyone from the British army who organized you?

Yeah.

How did this work?

They put us on trucks, and they took us to Celle. I went to Celle first.

What is that?

That was in Germany. That was not far away from-- it's a town-- from Bergen. And so they took us to Celle with trucks. And there again, they had like stables, horse stables. And they put us there in those stables to stay.

But we met very nice Czech guys-- real nice ones, who were not Jewish guys. But they were real nice. And they said they will go to the stables to stay, and we should come in their barracks in Bergen. So that's how we got into Bergen. I at least got into Bergen like that. I think Bertha, too. I can't remember, but that's how it happened, too. That's how I got into Bergen.

And once we were in Bergen, we were free people. We were able to move around. We went to all those towns where-- and a lot of people went, and they went into the German houses, and they took whatever they can. I could never do that. I never did that.

Were they free to do that? Were the occupying armies permitting it?

Well, the army was not after us anymore. We were free people. All we had to wait, how to get out from Germany. Who is going to take us to wherever, our destination? A lot of people stayed there, and they went to Israel from there. Maybe even to--

Palestine, right?

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. I was one of them, which I wanted to go, too. But I don't know. I just had a feeling. I want to just-- I knew nobody lived from my family. I knew my mother and my parents-- my father came to camp, and my mother stayed with the kids behind. And I never heard when, but I knew in May, sometimes they took families who were left over still in town. They took them, so I know she must have gone with that.

And she had a baby, so I knew they put her on the side where they put her to the gas chamber, you know? So there was nobody. But I still wanted to go. So I went back to my hometown.

Well, who helped you with all of this, to go back?

They called it UNRRA, Jewish what do you call it?

Well, UNRRA was the United Nations Relief and Rescue.

Yeah. Yeah. They helped us. They gave us some clothes, because we had nothing. I remember I-- yeah, I was working. Because my last job, I was working like in a cleaning place where there was a lot of men's clothes. And they were cleaning their clothes. And then probably they shipped it someplace, you know, Germany or whatever. And so that was already to the end.

So I had a linen sheet. I had a men's shirt. I had a men's jacket and a men's pair of pants, which I organized. They didn't say stole it, you know? You organize.

And during the time I was in Bergen, and I was waiting to be transported back to Czechoslovakia. I made myself-- from the shirt I made a blouse. From the jacket, I made a little Eisenhower jacket. And from the pants, I made a skirt. So that's what I had to go.

And from the linen sheet, I made a dress, everything by hand. And so that's how-- that was my clothes that I had.

And then when we were in Bergen, we were able to get some underwear and here and there. We were free already, so we were able to get it.

I remember some guys brought stockings for us. And that's how we-- some people were lucky. Not lucky-- some people were more capable of--

Getting items.

--getting things, items and other. I was not. I was a very straight person, and I wouldn't go in any house or steal or something. I would never do that. So I just came with whatever I had home.

And what happened when you arrived back to your hometown? Did you find anybody of your family?

No. There was one lady who came to the-- who came to the station, to the railroad station. And her son was a very good friend of my sister. So she came to see, because they survived, because they converted to-- what you call? So they survived somehow. They had a big grocery store, and somehow they survived.

And so she came to a station. She looked who is here, and she picked herself up, and she went home. She didn't say, come on. We were a few girls from my hometown, about four girls from my hometown who survived. From our hometown, I don't know if there were 10 people who survived.

Do you remember what day that was when you came back to your hometown or what month?

Yeah, it was-- we left Bergen June 26 on the trucks. We came to Pilsen. How you say that in German? I can't remember how you say it. We came to Pilsen. And from there, they took us to a place, a restaurant, and they gave us food, and they fed us.

And people came. Like, I knew a man who was not a Jewish man, but he was a gentleman. He used to live in Pilsen. And he had a big winery, and he was a prisoner, too.

And after liberation, we met him in-- he was an older man, but he was a prisoner, too. And we met him in Bergen, and I remember we used to press his pants and his necktie. And he said, girls, if you ever come home back, I want you should call on me. And I want-- I will treat you very good.

So when he found out that we arrived to that place Pilsen, he came there. And he took us, all of us. I don't know how many we were. He took us all to his place. He had a tremendous big place.

He had a winery, and he fed us, and gave us to drink. In fact, some of the girls got drunk, because we're not used to

drink. And he didn't know what to do with us. He made such a spread for us. He was really nice.

So I remember there was 26. There must have been 27. And we stayed at 1/2 a day. And then again-- so about the 2th, one or two days later, we came to my hometown. And that was a terrible downfall, because nobody.

Did you go back to your home?

Sure, I went back to my home.

Who was there in your home?

Nobody. The house was even-- the house was flat. There was no house anymore. And I knew. I knew that my grandmother isn't there. I knew my aunt-- there was nobody, nobody from the family.

You were the only survivor?

I was the only survivor. And like I said, I had no money.

Didn't you find cousins, anybody?

No, nobody. Like I say, the only cousin who survived is the one who lived now in Czechoslovakia. And her father died, and her brother died. So she's the only survivor. So it was just the two of us who were in concentration camp who survived. That's all.

And then we have one cousin here, who came here in '38. And that was the one whose mother I told you I took her out and she went back.

And then we have two cousins here who were born here, from Cleveland. That's all. In fact--

What did you just-- I'm sorry, go ahead.

In fact, the cousins who live in Czechoslovakia, her kids just ran away from Czechoslovakia. And they're in San Francisco now.

Oh, really? So you are in contact with them?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

Lenka, what did you decide to do when you found that you were the only one left?

Well, it was a very, very hard decision to make what to do, because I had no money. I had no place to go. So, like I said, they gave us two weeks' recreation.

Where did they send you?

Up in the mountains. And that was an experience, because all of a sudden-- first of all, we were always eating. We were always hungry, no matter what food we got.

It was a recreation place, very beautiful hotel. And a lot of people came who were in concentration camp. And they were sent, and we met there. And we had a good time. We started to dance and go out for dinner, whoever had the money. Excuse me.

But there was never enough food for us, because we were always hungry-- hungry, hungry, hungry. We could eat three dinners, never too much.

So we were there. And then after two weeks, I had to go home. But I had two friends with whom I came home the same time. But they were different destination. I went different. So we parted in one of the cities.

And we promised each other, whoever will find something, we will let know each other. And then we will live together until whatever will happen, we get married or whatever.

So I was there for two weeks, and I had to go home. And I had no place to go. I have no money, no place to go.

So I asked the doctor who was in charge. He was from my hometown. I asked him if he could let me stay another week. And he said, OK.

Meantime, those two girls sent me a telegram, but I never received it. And then a friend went to see his sister. And somehow, they send a message with him that I should come there.

And meantime, I got a telegram, the second telegram they sent. And they sent a telegram I should come live with them. And there was a village. There was just one-- just the two girls, those two sisters. But I went anyway. I had no place to go. And we lived there together from July till March '46.

Meantime, I went to school a little bit there. It was very difficult, because I had to go many, many miles. I had to walk from one village to a city. Yeah, I took a little bit of typing there, and I took a few courses to finish my high school-- fourth grade high school.

And I lived with them until one got married. We still lived in that one village. So he was very nice. When he had to buy-- when he bought a pair of stockings for his wife, he bought three pairs, because he had two women around. But he was very nice.

And then they moved to a bigger village, and we again moved with them, the three of us. And there at least each one had a room already. But before, we all stayed in the same-- there was just one room. So the newlyweds and us, we all stayed in the same room. But when we moved to the bigger village, at least there we had already separate rooms. It was a nicer house.

And so then the second sister got married. And I said, well, there's no future for me. So I got in contact with my cousin, which didn't have a place on her own. They had a house, but it still wasn't in their hands, you know? The lawyers were still working on it. And so I went there. I was promised a job, but I didn't get the job. And I had no place to live.

So she was staying with her fiancÃ©, and her father was staying with her fiancÃ©. They have just two rooms. And her brother was staying, and his sister was staying.

All in those two rooms?

And then I came. Yeah, all in those two rooms. And I came. So we slept on the floor. And every Friday night, when one of them lit the candles, I always cried so terrible. I don't know why. When it came Friday, it was very hard. I woke up always with swollen eyes.

And I stayed with them for a little while. And it took me about six weeks until I found a job. And it was a terrible time. I didn't have money. For breakfast, I would have a roll, or a horn, a little bit soda water. I couldn't afford to buy more than soda water. And for lunch, I would have some fruit, maybe an apple or so. And then supper, there was a kitchen where there was--

A community kitchen? Yeah, a community kitchen where they supplied food for those people who came from-- were survivors. So food wasn't good. But we loved to go there, because we met all the people who came back. And every time we found somebody else, you know, we didn't see, we didn't know who survived. So there was a place where we liked to go, and even the food was bad.

So then I found-- then when I started to work, I made a little bit money. I found a place with another girl. And we took it out, and we rented a room together. And I stayed with her.

And then when they got back the house, I moved in with my uncle and with my cousin. But it didn't work very well, because my cousin was jealous. I had a boyfriend, and he didn't like it. He was about two years younger than I.

Oh, I see.

So I figured no, that doesn't work. I have to move out. So I moved out, again with somebody in another place, until my cousin moved out. He moved out, and I moved back with my uncle. Because somebody had to--

Take care of him?

To take care of him, yeah. He had bone TB. He came back from concentration camp, and he had TB-- bone TB. And then they had to amputate the leg.

Anyway, so I went back, and he moved out. And then I met my husband.

What city was this in now?

In Kosice.

This is also Slovakia?

Yeah. This is the place where my cousin used to live.

Where did you meet your husband?

Well, I had a boyfriend, like I said. And he was in concentration camp, too. And when he came back from concentration camp, he went to Italy. And he came back from Italy, and he had no place to go. And my husband was rooming with his brother.

So my husband took him in, and they stayed all three together. And then he found out that I-- from one of my friends, he found out where I am, so he started to come after me.

And so we were dating for more than a year, and then he brought me once to my husband. He brought me to his house to introduce me to his brother. And his brother wasn't home.

And I had a girlfriend in that same town in Presov. So I slept-- she was a good friend of mine, so she asked me to come. So he brought me to that town, and I stayed with her. But he took me over to his room, so introduced me to my husband.

But after a year, he had to go for 2 and 1/2 years to the army. And Mike Lautman, he said, you cannot wait for 2 and 1/2 years. He says, you need a home. He said, what, are you going to wait for him for 2 and 1/2 years?

And I was thinking about it, and I said, he is right. So I talked to my friend, and I said to him, look. You know I have no home. I want to go to Israel. I don't want to stay here. And I don't know, 2 and 1/2 years.

I said, I like you, and he liked me. But I say, if I don't get married, and you don't get married by the time you come back, or wherever I be, I said, I'm still willing. Because he asked me to marry. I said, well, I'm going to get married to you if you have to go for 2 and 1/2 years to the army. I have no home.

So when my husband-- my husband was the one who gave him every week money to come and visit me. Because he didn't have the money either. He just came from Italy, and he didn't work. So my husband gave him every week money

to come and see me. But he didn't know me.

So when he left to the army, my husband started to-- no, I was in a play. And we came to that town where my husband lived. And then he started to come after me. And then he started to come and visit me.

And so we were dating for about six months. And then we got married in November.

It was already 1947.

'47. Yeah. So I came back in '45, in June. And in '47, November, I got married. Yeah.

Did you remain there in Kosice?

No. After I got married, I moved to his hometown. And we were there from November '47 till January '49. Yeah, January '49. And in January '49, we went to Israel. We arrived in Israel. We left on January 20, and we arrived to Israel February 2.

And how long did you live in Israel?

Seven years.

Did you find that you associated a lot with other survivors?

Mm-hmm, yeah, very much so. Very much so. Somehow, I don't know what it is. But it's just when you meet somebody who you didn't see for 20 years, it's just like you know that person very well, like it's your sister or something. You have so much in common with that person. And no matter where you start to talk and what you start to talk, you always come out remember this and remember that? So it's--

You bring up your concentration camp experiences.

Always we bring up the past. Yeah, always.

Do you still find that you do that now, too?

Yeah, but not as much. There aren't so many people anymore. You know, there's just the two or three that I was together with them, you know? And so you don't bring it up as much, you know?

But I bet if you go to a convention, like the one in--

World gathering?

Yeah. It must be very exciting. I think there's going to be one in--

Right, the American Gathering.

--in Philadelphia.

In Philadelphia. Lenka, after the seven years in Israel, those were very crucial years.

Very hard years.

What did you decide to do then?

Well, I loved Israel. We both liked Israel. I was constantly sick. And I guess what it must have been, the TB that I had. I

must have had it, but it was-- it still didn't come out. It was still dormant.

And I was constantly sick and sick. And I went from doctor to doctor. And nobody knew what was wrong with me-- constantly sick. And I just couldn't take the climate. We thought it was the climate, you know? But it wasn't. Maybe it was the climate, too. Yeah. But so then--

Did you have both your children by that time?

Yeah. Both were born then, yeah. And, in fact, I didn't have my daughter for five years later, because I just couldn't-- I just couldn't-- I couldn't believe that I could carry another child the way I was sick.

But then, somehow I felt a little bit better than before I got pregnant with her. So I decided to have another child.

To what did you attribute your illnesses? Was it your camp experience?

Oh, yeah. That's what the doctor said, yeah. Yeah, that's what the doctor said. Those two girls that I mentioned they're living now in Canada, we lived together. Both had TB, you know? But I didn't know that until I had it.

And when the doctor asked me, do you know somebody who had it? So I knew my uncle had it, but it was bone TB, you know? And so they said it has nothing, because I didn't have TB in my lungs. I had on my kidney TB and my bladder-- kidney and bladder, yeah.

You suffered with that.

Oh, I suffered, and I was so sick. And took them here over a year to find out what was wrong with me.

How did you get to the United States?

Well, like I say, my husband had a brother here. And I came to a point. I said, I can't go on like this. So we were supposed to come in '51. My husband had an aunt here, and she wanted us to come, and she wrote to us.

But in the meantime, we started to work on it, and then she died. And we said, if she died, we don't want to go. Who else do we have here? Cousins, you know-- my husband has quite a few cousins here, and a brother. But the brother was a single man, so we didn't want to come.

So we put it up again till '56. And in '56, Bertha started to write and write and come and come.

That's Bertha Lautman, with whom you were in the camp.

Yeah, and come and do. So we decided we're going to. And one day, we just get our visa. We got our visa, you know? And so then we decided that we would go again. And so that's how we came.

And like I said, and I-- it was very, very hard on us. And to live without having a little help from here, it was very difficult, you know? And I said, I don't want to live all my life like that. And the climate was the most--

Was it the heat that bothered you?

Yeah, very much so-- very much so. So then we got a visa, and so we came.

Did you come straight to Cleveland?

Yeah, straight to Cleveland, straight to Bertha's house. They came to pick us up.

She must have been a good friend.

She was. She was a wonderful friend. She is a good girl, but I can't--

Yeah, so when you came to Cleveland then what, did you decide to do? What kind of work did your husband get?

Well, my husband got-- we were one week at Bertha's, and then we went to our own house-- I mean apartment. It was a house. Yeah, it was a big house.

And so my husband had a cousin here, and he found him a job where they were assembling sewing machines. So that's what my husband was doing for one week, and then he got the flu, and the whole family had the flu. And we were very sick.

We never experienced a cold. We thought a cold is a cold, but it wasn't a cold. It was a flu. We were very, very sick, the whole family. So after two weeks, they sent us-- he worked there for one week. After a week, they sent him a check and his clothes, and that was the end of the work.

Then Mike Lautman found him a job with Dave Teitelbaum, who died since. And my husband worked very, very hard. He was delivering furniture, extremely hard. But he was younger, so he could do it. And he worked for five years there.

And then after five years, he was laid off, so he was home for three months. And after three months, he got a job with his boss, the one who he worked for 20 years until he retired and he closed the stores. So now he's retired for that. It's going to be 40 years this month.

Was there any organization in town that helped you here to establish yourself?

No.

You received no--

No help.

--subsistence of any kind.

We were very lucky, because my brother-in-law, my husband's brother, when we came here, he bought just the necessary furniture-- the beds, and a table with four chairs, and a dresser, and a washing machine, and a-- no, not television. No television, just those most important things.

And he paid our rent for three months. And then after three months, we were on our own. In fact, when came September, he came to me, and he wanted to give me \$200 to buy clothes for the kids for them. And I said, no. I said, you did enough for us. And I say, my husband works, and we can manage. And he said this was first time in his life somebody refused to take money from him.

Did you ever work during those years?

I'm working for the last 26 years.

What are you doing?

I'm sewing.

You sew from your house?

Right now, yeah. But I worked at-- this one time I worked for Marion Nisbet, you know, down on Cedar and Fairmount-- very exclusive store. And then I worked for Yvette Sharp. Now, for the last quite a few years, I'm working at home.

Lenka, what perhaps are your most memorable experiences from the Holocaust, something that remains with you most strongly over the years?

That Block 25, when I saw people living, breathing, and being already on that bunch with people who-- see my aunt, my cousin there. So terrible to see all my family one by one go, and I was there.

I was the first one who came there. And I was the only weakling, how they always called me. I was the weakling, you know? Always sick as a child. I was always sick as a child. And I was the one who survived.

And somebody asked me if I am a religious person. Well, I said, to an extent, I believe very much in God and in faith. I think that's what-- I think that's why I survived, because I believed in God, and I believed in faith.

Did you think about your religion during the time of your imprisonment?

Always, always. I always fast on Yom Kippur. I never ate on Yom Kippur.

That's the Holy Fast Day. Yeah.

Yeah. I mean--

Do you feel that that helped you or sustained you to have those beliefs?

I feel I was a fighter. I think I was a fighter really. I just didn't give in. That's my nature. I don't give in. I was very sick here about 14 or 15 years when they found out what was wrong with me. And I was six months in bed. I was two years under doctors' care. But not for one day I thought I'm not going to make it-- not for one. I cried when nobody saw me, but I never--

Never gave up your hope.

Never gave up. That's what I tell my kids. Never give up. Never give in. Things are all in place back.

Lenka, do you find that you still associate with other survivors?

Yeah.

Do you still feel that bond with them?

I do. But I think as time goes on, we are so scared that all over, you know, that you don't have so much contact. Like I said, here in town, there just about three that I--

That you went through the experience--

That I went the same time, a couple or more. And so I really don't have-- but I'm in contact with some of them. We write to each other. Yeah, I do.

How do you and your husband recall those years? Do you ever talk to each other about those years?

Yeah. Yeah, we talk sometimes, when there is some food, and you can't eat. I mean, you have it, and you are not allowed to eat. And then he will say, remember we went, and we saw a potato peel, and you went and scraped it out and you ate it?

Do you think that the lack of food at that time has influenced any of your behavior, or your management, or how you run your household now?

I don't think so. I don't think it has something to do. Because I think that's a nature. If some people may be compulsive buyers.

My husband, for example. I think it has something to do with him. He loves to shop food. He likes a lot of food at home. Not he's a big eater, but he likes always to have food in the reserve. So I think it's something to do because he was hungry once in his life. Yeah. He was hungry a lot, he says, you know?

So maybe-- many times I wonder, because whatever, a lot. He likes to have a dozen tuna fish or whatever-- a lot. And it doesn't bother me. I can see one in the reserve, and I say, OK, tomorrow I'll buy another one. But I don't have to have a lot. So I really don't think it has something to do with--

But I know when we were in concentration camp, all we had a wish to have a small little room, and a clean bed, and have once a day dry potatoes or dry bread.

That was your dream.

That was our dream. Yeah. But I guess human nature is different, you know? You forget those things.

What about your experience with relationship to your children as they grew up? Did you share those experiences with them?

Yes, I did, but I think my children think because of that, that they have some problems that they had that had something to do-- because I must admit, I used to say, well-- gave them some food, let's say, a steak. And they used to say to me, give it to the poor people.

I used to say, you know what? When I was your age, I would love to have a piece of meat like that. And they didn't like that, you know?

And I think they-- in fact, I had a good, good talk with my son. And he thinks some problems that he had had something to do with my experience what I went through or with his father's experience, you know? I don't know if it's right. Because I read that book that Epstein wrote.

Right, Children of the Holocaust.

Children of the Holocaust. And I don't believe it's so. I don't believe it's so. She blames certain things--

On her mother's experiences.

I don't believe it. We did the best we could with raising them. Because I see that people who were not in camps, and they had problems with kids, or the kids had problems, you know? So why?

Maybe there are exceptions. I'm sure there are exceptions. But I don't think that's something to do with it. We just did the best we could, the best we knew how to raise the kids.

Do you think your children in any way have felt deprived because they didn't have an extended family of cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents?

Yeah, I think so. Yeah. Yeah, but they still were lucky, because we had a landlady who was an older lady. And she was like a make believe grandmother to them. So that's one thing.

It's true. We didn't have uncles. We didn't have-- well, they had one uncle who died when they were already older.

Do they ever talk about not having grandparents? They didn't.

No. No. No, I think now that they are older, they realize more about our backgrounds, our experiences than when they were younger. I find it out with Ruth, for example. I find it out with my son. I think before, I don't think it was so important to them, you know?

Do they question you?

Oh, yeah. Yeah, now. But when they were younger, they were not so much. In fact, when Ruth was in college, her professor said, Ruth, take some notes from the horse's mouth. Make a tape. But I think she was very interested at that time.

But she went to one of those Children of Holocaust classes. She did go. And she came back, and she says, Mom, I didn't realize the problems some kids have from parents, from Holocaust survivors. She says, we are very lucky, she said. Because I didn't have big problems, you know?

But they think that certain things that they had-- they had something to do. At least my son told me that. Not so much Ruth.

Lenka, how do you feel about this great emphasis throughout the country now on implementing Holocaust Studies programs in schools and in colleges?

I think it came too late.

Too late?

It should have [INAUDIBLE]. It should have been earlier, too. I think they should have started earlier. They waited too long. Don't you think so?

Well, many survivors were not able to confront this before--

That's true.

--and talk about this earlier.

That's true, too. That's true, too.

Do you feel it serves a purpose?

Very much so. Yeah, I believe in it.

Would you like your grandchildren to study what happened?

Yeah. My grandson, he knows. He knows. Yeah, he does know. We talked about it with him, whenever he wants to talk about it, you know? Now, I can see that he's getting older, he starts to question here and there sometimes-- not before, but now. But we told him. Sometimes we talk, and he's there.

And so even my kids before, they were not very anxious. But now, in the last few years they-- but we talked. We never kept it away from them. We always talked about it.

Lenka, there are many experiences of groups which go back to the sites of the Holocaust in Europe. Would you be interested in confronting some of the places you have been?

I can't, no. I don't think so. I can't do it. Because my cousin who lives in Czechoslovakia, she went, and she said it was a terrible experience, she says. So I don't know if I could do it. I don't think that I want to.

How do you feel about the survivors organizing now, such as the World Gathering that took place in 1981, and now '83, and now again.

I think it should. It should. Of course, some people say it's too much, but I don't believe-- never too much. I don't believe it's too much.

The sharing of experiences and letting the world know.

Yeah, I believe in it.

Well, Lenka, we are grateful to you for having shared this today with us.

Oh, be careful.

This is Leatrice Rabinsky. Our Holocaust survivor today has been Elaine Grunwald. This project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland section. Thank you, Lenka.