

From Poland. The project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland section. Mike, let's go back a little bit. And I want to ask you, of all of the experiences that you had in the camps, what do you think was the most painful to you?

My experience, from all the camps, I got to take Gross-Rosen. And I got to take Hersbruck. That were two camps I never thought I going to survive because there was written death all over if you get into them camps. Just with good luck and God over me, I survived.

But you feel that those camps were the worst ones for you in terms of the physical punishment that you suffered and just the desperation that you felt?

This was another one, Hersbruck, climbing the hills, with all the snow laying on the ground, and sliding back and forth. Lots of people over there didn't make it. I was-- maybe it was a few of us left with-- they had good luck to survive.

You told me before that you thought it was luck that kept you surviving, that somebody up there liked you. When you came to the States, and after you were settled in Lorain, did you find that other people wanted to know about your experiences? Or did people not want to talk about it?

Lots of people asked me, how come you survived? So many millions of people died-- got killed. And I gave them the same answer. I said, I wasn't a hero, just my time wasn't up. And I tried to stay on my feet as long I could. And I mentioned to them, once, I laid on the ground and begged to be killed. But it must be somebody watched over me.

Do you feel that people are more interested now in hearing about the Holocaust than they were immediately after the war?

Yes. Because after the war, didn't know so much. Now, they came out on television with different pictures to show. And people once in a while-- Mike, I saw the picture on television. Oh, you guys went through a lot.

And when you keep repeating, people start to really realize, it was true. Some hoax or just a bunch of baloney-- it's not a bunch of baloney. I rather not to be on television and tell the people what happened with lots of people were to be alive.

Mike, did you tell your children about your experiences?

Not when they were little, when they could understood already. See, now, even now, we sit down once in a while.

You mentioned your daughter, though, in-- your daughter-in-law in Columbus. And you mentioned to me that you had talked to her about--

Yeah, she made a little tape. I just talked to her not long because she's a teacher. And she want to-- the kids want to know about the Holocaust. And she mentioned my father-in-law is a member from the survivors from the Holocaust. And they really want me someday to come over. They want to meet me. So we made a little tape, just talking.

But to use in the classroom?

In the classrooms.

Do you think often now about the Holocaust and your own experiences?

It comes back once in a while, like sometime, you dream, they're chasing you, they're chasing you, no place where to go no more. And all of a sudden, you catch yourself, you in your own house, you in your own bed. But you're sweating a little bit when you're dreaming.

Do you feel that the Holocaust affected your physical health and that it has affected it to this present time?

I tell you something, it didn't help me. It must affected me because five years ago, I had open heart surgery. And when I got hit in the head with the butt of the gun, laying and losing blood, it didn't help me either. So thanks god for coming out, and being married, and raising a nice family.

Do you think your Holocaust experiences affected the way you treated other people in this country and the way you treated your children? Did it make you different?

Really, I treat people-- I tell them, you treat me good, I treat you good. It affects you, sure. I was affected a little bit because you always think somebody is behind your back with a gun. Just is so many years here in this country, and special from the beginning, you go out, you're a free man, you go into any store, you going to buy what you want. My dream was always, when I was in camp, concentration camp, to sit by a table and to cut bread from a bread how much I wanted. This was my dream.

Do you think survivors are different from other people? Do you feel close to other survivors in your city of Lorain? Do you feel closer to them than you do to other people?

Not really. I know what they went through. And I know they suffered a lot too, even they were less years in the concentration camp. I watched POWs coming back from-- they was in the camps. And I watched them coming off the plane. I was crying like a baby. I felt for them. I know what they went through.

Their faces, they look so sad because all-- some of them was in five years, four years, or three years. They fly us. And I looked at their faces. I know they suffered a lot. Just I can see the bleeding inside. Just I couldn't say nothing then. After this, they come out with different books. And you start to read about them.

Mike, you mentioned to me that you had been to Yad Vashem with your son. Would you tell us a little bit about that?

I don't know where they got everything. They got everything so beautiful put up where you want to see. You find every city in Europe and what they did and everything. My son didn't-- he wanted to go through every bit of it. You showed him Poland, Bedzin, what happened over there, what happened over there. And after, I looked at his face, he was crying. And special the people who work over there-- you got all the information. You got everything you wanted. It's well put together, really well.

How long ago were you in Israel at Yad Vashem?

I was in '82 with my son.

And you mentioned to me that you're going to another gathering of survivors.

Probably. My daughter, she says, Dad, let's go to the Philadelphia. If we're going to have a doing in Lorain-- so we can be in one place in the same time.

Would you tell us a little bit about what Lorain is doing in commemoration of the Holocaust memorial?

Lately, see, they got together. And some people involved, survivors-- it was Sam Rosen, Henry Libicki, and Irvin Frumer my brother-in-law. And he's a survivor, Rosen's a survivor, Libicki is survivor, and their wives. So we tried to get together to show the people what happened.

And you are dedicating a memorial, a Holocaust memorial, on April 21 of this year.

Yes. And we get it-- we got it to try to do everything within our power to keep the second generation-- keep on going. Don't stop. Because bring it up, bring it up again.

All right. That brings me to another question, Mike. What made you decide to share your experiences with us?

Because I was called-- Mrs. Goldberg. And she asked me if I want to do this and the same other members of the-- what were in the Holocaust. And we talked it over. And see, some of them went through this experience from home. Some of them didn't have so much experience. So I figured, I was already around and talking to people, might as well, I said, bring it on the open. It's nothing to be ashamed. What you tell, it's the truth.

Do you have a personal message that you'd like to share with us concerning the Holocaust, perhaps in our treatment of other people or in-- for the future?

Yes, I like to bring a message, special to the second generation-- don't let it up. Keep on going. And let the whole world know what your parents went through. And if we can't stop, not to happen again. This would be my best message for all the people-- and to help the Holocaust all the way around the world.

Mike, I want to thank you really so much for sharing your past with us, for opening up old wounds that I know were very painful, but I know which will help future generations. Without survivors like yourself, many people would not have the opportunity to hear this and to help prevent it in the future, which is, of course, our ultimate purpose. On behalf of the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland section, I want to, again, tell you, we are deeply grateful to you. Thank you, Mike Prayzer, and good luck to you.

You're welcome.