

This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Ruth Greifer. This is tape number 2, side A. Are you more comfortable being around survivors than non-survivors?

No. It really doesn't make any difference. I am very comfortable with non-survivors, and I'm comfortable with survivors. We have something in common. Our backgrounds are in common, and our backgrounds are not in common.

Our backgrounds, if I look at the 40 people that come to the meeting, to the survivors' meeting at the Museum, I say that we are entirely different. I think some of them are so different, I would say, as black and white-- not only in their backgrounds, but in their viewpoints. Some of us think very, very different.

It's very interesting. I like to go to these meetings and see the survivors and meet with them and talk to them. But some of them live a different life.

I live an American lifestyle. I feel that I'm completely Americanized. Some of these survivors, I think, live more of a European lifestyle than I do. And that's what makes us different.

What do you mean they live a European lifestyle?

They speak European language. Maybe they think more of where they come from. I think that I'm so Americanized that I don't even think back most of the time. I just think from day to day what I have to do here and where I have to go-- what I have to do for my family. And I've left Europe behind a long time ago.

You just said that you don't think of your background most of the time. When do you think of it?

High holidays. When it comes to the high holidays, that's when I miss my family. I would say, I miss my family-- miss talking to them-- just miss them completely. And I don't have any brothers or sisters. Yes, I have a cousin. I can make a telephone call, but it's all very superficial. It's nothing very deep, or anything like that.

And that's the only time I miss them. But otherwise, no, not at all. I'm very happy in this country. And I love it here. I do as much as I can. But I just love to be here. I would not ever go back and, say, move back to Europe. No.

When you pick up the newspaper and you see a truckload, let's say, of refugees in another country-- in Kosovo, or in Rwanda-- does that do anything for you?

Oh, absolutely. My heart goes out to them.

Do you identify, being a refugee?

Yes. Because you see them on trucks and going here and going there, not having roots. If you lose your roots, it's pitiful. It's pitiful for the families. It's pitiful for your lifestyle. It's pitiful for what you make out of yourself. I mean, how can you be on the bottom all the time? There's a time where you have to learn, where you have to go to school. You have to learn a trade. You have to do something with your life.

But being on the bottom all the time, my heart goes out to these people. If they're in wars all the time, or if they lose their home-- they lose wherever they're going-- what becomes of those families? When you're here, you raise your children. You want them to learn. You want them to make something out of yourself, so when you die, you know that they're taken care of.

But if you go to these countries, you see dirt. You see water. You see they lost everything. They don't have anywhere to go. They don't have any clothes. They don't have any schools. They don't have anywhere. What becomes out of those people? And it is very sad-- very, very sad

You use the expression, these people are on-- when people are on the bottom of things. Did you feel, once Hitler came

into power in 1933 and until 1945, that you were on the bottom?

Oh, I would think so, because all our dreams were taken away from us. And once you don't have any dreams, where are you going to go? So you don't have anywhere to better yourself. There was no place to better yourself for us.

That's why people asked me at one time, when I was in hiding, if I had made plans for the future. And I said, no, I had not make any plans for the future, because I didn't know if I was going to live the next day. They were at awe. They were absolutely at awe.

How can you live and not make any plans for the future? And I said, that's the way it was. Because at certain times in your life, you are at a place where you just don't know if you're going to live till the next day.

So do you feel that you were very much aware of the danger that you lived under?

Oh, absolutely, very much of the danger-- and deprived everyday of your freedom-- deprived of what you expected from life-- to go to school, to learn, to become somebody, instead of having to run away like a wild animal. And that's what it was. You had to run away. And you felt there was no schooling, there was no nothing.

And you didn't live like an animal, because the people that you lived with didn't live like an animal. But there was no future the way we lived in those years. There was absolutely no future that you can look forward to and strive and learn and live like everybody else.

So you lived like little animal in a hole. And you couldn't even peek out. Because if you would have peeked out, you probably would have been gone.

So you felt like you lived in a little hole. And you have to be quiet and not to be seen and not to be heard of until, perhaps, the time will come that you can come out like a groundhog and look-- and if there's a world. That's the way it was. That's the way you had to live. There was just no joy it was all seriousness, scared, frightened. And you never know what the next day would bring. It's hard. It's hard to live that way.

The only thing that I did not have was physical beatings-- physical anything. I was lucky that I did not get hurt. It's hard. But I didn't bring up my children with regrets. I never hang it over their heads from day to day. We might have talked about it when the time came. But I wanted my children always to have a joyous time, and I think I succeeded with that. My children are very close-- very supportive of me and just wonderful.

And I'm looking forward to the future, to have my grandchildren with me, and that my grandchildren love me-- like I never had. My grandparents were too old at the time. And I grew up and I did not have much in common with my grandparents. But I hope to have a lot in common for a little while with my grandchildren. That's my pride and joy.

How did you convey your Judaism to your children?

When we moved here, I got myself on a telephone committee in Hadassah. And I wanted to know where Jewish people lived and where there was a synagogue. As soon as we moved here, we joined Agudas Achim, because I always had to have a place where we belong.

We always celebrated the holidays. I joined Sisterhood. I became active in Sisterhood. As soon as it was possible, our children went to Sunday school-- pre-school, Sunday school, all the way up.

And this is how they learned that they were Jews, that this was their religion-- because I felt this is what we needed to do. We went to synagogue. We took the children. And this is how I raised them, because we have belonged to this synagogue since we moved here in 1957.

We might not have liked all the rabbis. But I've never gone with the rabbis. We always stuck with the building, which was very important. We did not move from synagogue to synagogue. This was the building that we belonged. The

building is longer than the rabbis [INAUDIBLE], so this is [? what ?] [? we do. ?]

You and your family were deprived of your rights when Hitler came in. Did you identify at all with the civil rights movement here in this country?

No. No. That I've never done. I've never gotten myself get involved in any civil rights movement. I'm not that outgoing. I'm not that-- I don't say straightforward. No, I stay in the background when it comes to that. No, that's not me. I let other people do that for me. [LAUGHS] That's not me.

Do you ever feel at times like you're two different people-- someone on the outside and another person on the inside, who experienced what you did, whose life was in danger for so many years?

No, I don't think so. I think I'm pretty solid when it comes to that. I'm the same person that you see in and out. No, I'm pretty solid when it comes to all of that. No, I'm fine. I really have grown. Absolutely, I have grown-- very much so.

Grown in what way?

Well, I was never so sure of myself. I was a little bit more insecure. With the years. I have grown. And I'm pretty sure of myself now. I think that the Museum has helped me an awful lot, knowing who I am and what I stand for-- and that I can speak up and really be the person that I would like to be. And I'm fine. I can live now with what I went through.

And I think that the Museum has helped me a great deal, thinking about it in a positive way that has made me a bigger person-- and that I can help others, probably, with their problems, if they have problems that I do not have-- learning to live with your background. I've learned to live with my background. And I don't mind talking about it now. And I'm very proud of my heritage.

Did that insecurity that you once felt stem from the fact that your life was so insecure for those years?

No. Some of it stemmed from that I was in hiding, and that I was looked down on me of other people that had different backgrounds. I don't want to go into it. Yes. I've been hurt many times with that, but it hasn't happened for a long time.

Are you talking about in Europe, or?

No, here. Here, absolutely.

And these were Americans who were born in America?

No, these were people that went to concentration camps. And it hasn't happened for a long time now.

The people who wanted to compare stories? Is that what you're saying [INAUDIBLE]-- who felt that they suffered more?

Right. Absolutely. Yes. I got deeply hurt many times. And it's better now. But I understand this has happened to other people, also.

Without acknowledgment that your life too was in danger.

Oh, yes, absolutely right. Oh, there was a big difference. Look, I didn't have the physical abuse. But the danger was there 24 hours a day. And people let me know that. I got deeply hurt many times. But it's gotten better, absolutely. It's not there anymore.

Because of their approach or your response it's gotten better? In other words, they don't talk like that, or you know how to respond?

They don't talk like that anymore. They have gotten used to me, and they know who I am. This was years ago. No, I don't feel it. There were times that I was deeply hurt by them, but I don't feel it anymore.

Let's talk a little bit about the Museum now. How did you learn about the Museum? My dear friend Nesse Godin is the one. Once we got acquainted with Nesse-- through Amy, of course.

Amy is your daughter.

Amy is our daughter, and Eddie is our son-in-law.

Nesse's son, Eddie.

Nesse's son. She approached me. And she mentioned to me if I would like to be a volunteer at the Museum. And I had retired. I don't know. I said, of course, I would love, love to do it. She is my guide. She got me involved. And it's the best thing that has happened to me.

She introduced me to the Museum. She asked me if I would like to participate, to sit at the donor desk. And I was introduced. I was trained. And I love every minute of it. It's just wonderful-- not only to raise funds for the Museum, but to meet all these different people, daily-- just everyday people. I met people that were involved with my family. And it's just been a wonderful, wonderful experience.

When did you first become involved? Had the building gone up yet, or was this preceding the building?

The building had gone up, yes. I was not involved with the office. But I got involved after the building was up. And I really enjoyed being trained and have wonderful supervisors. And I've gone now for, I think, five years on Mondays. And I just wouldn't miss it. I absolutely love that.

What kind of training did you have?

Oh, we had a meeting a week with Dr. Bob Abramowitz was the leader at the time. And Jackie North was in charge of us. And we had a meeting a week. We would be introduced to all different phases concerning the building, the history, the locations.

I mean, they taught us everything and anything that we need to know about the building-- so we would be at ease if people would ask us questions, or that we could tell people what this building is all about-- and about the building itself and about the history-- why it was build, or who gave us the donations. Every week we had a different speaker, to make us feel comfortable to answer questions about the building.

And not only was it wonderful to work with Dr. Abramowitz and Jackie North. We used to have meetings more often than we have now about meeting with our coworkers. We exchanged thoughts, and we talked to each other. We got to know each other. And it's just a wonderful group who do the same kind of work.

You said Nesse had asked you to come work at the Museum.

Oh, yes. This is the one that introduced me.

Why did you say yes?

Because, first of all, I already was retired. And I thought it would be wonderful to work with the Museum, because this is where I want to be. This is where I want to pay back what I've lost. And it gives me a feeling of gratitude that I have to be alive. So this is what I like. And I'm there every Monday. It's wonderful-- absolutely wonderful.

Did I ever tell you the story about the Dutch people that came? People came to the desk, and they had a Dutch accent. I said, you're from Holland. Where are you from? They're are from Amsterdam. Nobody else comes from Maastricht or

Valkenburg.

I said, well, I come from Maastricht. And the woman says, well, I'm a nurse in Amsterdam-- I'll just Amsterdam-- and my best girlfriend's father lives in Maastricht. And I said to him, what is his name? And he she said, it is Mr. [? Somo. ?] Well, I said, I know a Mr. [? Somo ?] from Germany-- from JÄ¼lich in Germany.

And she says, yes, that's her father. They gave me her telephone number. Oh, we had a long talk. I mean, it was unbelievable. Here this woman is from Holland. Her best girlfriend's father, I know from when I grew up. I tried to get the daughter in Holland, and I could not reach her. But I tried.

So when we went back two years ago, I said to the girls, as soon as we get to Maastricht, we have to call this gentleman and tell him who we are. We got to the hotel, and we called-- in the telephone book, we saw his name-- and explained to him who I was.

Well, see, he was not a friend of mine. He was a friend of my sister's. And my mother would play the piano. And these young people would come to our house, and they would dance. And I remember him. And he had a twin sister. And he remembered my sister, but he did not remember me. See, I was eight years younger than him.

Well, I called him up and I told them who I was. He hurried to the hotel. It was 9 o'clock at night when he arrived there with his wife. We talked about my sister and his sister. But like I said, he did not remember me. He was very grateful that I had called him.

And we were sitting there for hours talking about his childhood, about our house. And not only that he remembered my sister and he remembered my parents, but his wife was, I think, born and raised in Maastricht-- and she knew my whole Dutch family. It was an unbelievable evening, that ended up in Maastricht, starting out at the desk at the Museum. It was unbelievable-- an unbelievable experience.

So he didn't remember me. You know, you come to see a young, pretty girl, you don't look at an eight-year-younger-old sister. I mean, they don't exist. But I remembered him very well. And this all started at the desk at the Museum. Unbelievable story.

Any other special stories you want to mention?

Oh, what other stories? Well, on and off-- it's a long time ago. Somebody had a German accent. I always ask them where they're from. The woman said, I'm from Dortmund. And I said, well, do you know [? Rosine ?] [? Bayer, ?] which was my aunt. And of course, she knew my aunt and knew my whole family.

These are the things that make the desk so important. I always ask them where they're from. The desk draws me, really. I don't want to work more than one day a week. But the people that I meet-- even so they might not be related to me or close to me, just the people that come and want to know about the Museum-- want to know me. I tell them my story all the time.

I tell them, I'm a survivor. And well, I tell them, I've lived the life of Anne Frank. And people sit down and they listen to it. It's unbelievable. Yes, I love it-- absolutely love it.

When you walk into the building on Mondays.

It's like old hometown, because you know everybody that works on Mondays. If you miss a day, they say, where have you been last week? They miss you, if you're not there. It's wonderful. If I walk in on a Tuesday, it's like a strange place. It's different. I know some people that work on Tuesdays, but it's not the same. And the people that work there on Monday, you know them very well. It's wonderful.

What about the structure itself? Does it do anything for you when you walk in?

Well, that will never go away. The Hall of Witnesses will never change. It will always be the Hall of Witnesses and what it stands for. It reminds you, from the bricks down, about the concentration camp. And that will never go away.

And I feel I need to be there. I need to be there not only for me. I need to be there to tell other people about the building and what it stands for-- and about myself, absolutely. I tell them all the time. You see a survivor. Just think, there are many people that have never met a survivor. I said, I want you to know, you have to tell people later on that we're not going to be here all our lives. You will have to tell them that you met a survivor. And maybe you heard a story of a survivor. And you have to carry it on, because we're not going to be here that much longer.

And it's very important for me to tell my story and to have people know what the building means. It means a lot to me. It means everything to me and it means a lot to all those people, really, that come-- all those millions that have been coming through. In five years, 10 million people-- and more right now. It's an unbelievable story.

There are not many there not many buildings that have a story like that-- at least not to me. I've never been in Israel, and I don't think I'll ever go. But this is fine. I'm perfectly happy with what I have here. It's very good.

Why haven't you gone to Israel. Bernie doesn't want to travel, and I don't want to go by myself. If anything would happen to him, I would never forgive myself. It's more important for me to be here.

You say you tell the people what the building means.

Oh, absolutely.

What do you say to them? Well, what it means, it reminds them of the years that Hitler was in Germany-- what it did to the six million Jews. I tell them that the first time that I went upstairs that I couldn't get past the shoes, because each pair of shoes belonged to a human being. And each human being-- each child-- had a mother, father, brothers, sisters, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins. And it just has to be told.

And this is what the building stands for it. It needs to be known. Thank goodness they can go and see in person. But we have to tell them.

And that's what we do when we're sitting at the desk. We have to be in close contact with these people. If they have the time, if they're willing to listen, this is what we do. It's wonderful. It's absolutely wonderful to be there.

Do you think you bring any special insights as a staff member?

I hope I do. I hope I do. I hope that I am as valuable as the other survivors. I respect them, and I hope they respect me. We survivors belong there, if we can-- not only to give out time, but to let the world know who we are and why we come to the Museum.

Some people will learn. Some people will never learn. Maybe they'll think back, like those students. I don't know. I hope they'll think back what they have learned coming to the Museum. I don't always get that feeling, but I hope they do. Maybe when they get older and read more about it, that they wake up and think what they have seen.

Because I have learned, also, from some of them, many of the people that come in, in many places, that the schools don't teach the Holocaust. Not every school teaches the Holocaust. People live where there are no survivors.

I ask them if they have speakers in their schools. No, never. And they have the opportunity to meet survivors, like I said. We don't live here that much longer. I don't know. How much do you think the youngest survivor is at this point? I have no idea-- how old they are, I mean.

I know I'm in the middle. I'm not the oldest, and I'm not the youngest. But I just wonder how young the youngest survivor is. I would like to know. But the building means a lot to me. The people in the building mean a lot to me.

Celeste Maier has been wonderful. She's a wonderful guide to us. We need her and Tina is in charge of our donor desk-- very, very supportive and very good with us and very nice.

This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Ruth Greifer. This is tape number 2, side B.

And we were talking about your work at the Museum. You did talk before about how the Museum affected your life. Has it affected your memories of what you went through at all?

Well, just entering the building, you can never forget what you went through-- otherwise you wouldn't be there. No, I can't say that. There are a lot of volunteers that are not survivors. I'm proud. It gives me such pride to be at the Museum-- that they accept me to be a volunteer, to be working there, and to just be part of what the Museum stands for.

I'll give you another example. When Bob Abramowitz and Jackie North were in charge, I'll never forget when I met Mr Spielberg-- when Mrs. Schindler got her award. She got a medal. And Jackie North asking us to be part of that meeting. She asked us to help. Not only did she ask us to help, but we helped seating people. And I felt so much part of what went on that day, because she included us. She helped us to not only participate, but verify what was going on.

We saw the Spielberg family. In fact, I spoke with Mrs. Schindler in German. It was an absolute wonderful, wonderful time-- very exciting. It was unbelievable. In fact, it excited me so much that we were given tickets for the opening night to see Schindler's List-- the movie. We were asked. It that included the president of the United States.

But it affected me so much, that instead of going to the movies with the president and everybody else, I went home. I just could not go. I did not have the strength that night to participate. I went home. It was unbelievable. But I was so involved. They asked us to help out. They asked us to be there. They asked us to join in there. And it just took so much out of me. I think I still have the tickets. I just couldn't go.

You're talking about you didn't have the strength physically, or emotionally?

Both. Both. I just could not go. And in fact, I never saw Schindler's List until about last year. I think Bernie and I sat together and watched it on television. I just cannot do that. I cannot see things like that. And I just could not. But I was so thrilled that they asked us to participate in that momentous event. And it was wonderful.

The Museum has done a lot for me. I've learned a lot. It's an absolute marvelous place for me to go. Love it-- absolutely love it. And now we have a meeting. We have a group that meets every two months with-- what's his name?

Marty Goldman?

With Marty Goldman. He's wonderful. He's very understanding. And it's an eye-opener to see other people's opinions. Some I like. Some I don't like. I usually do not say a whole lot. I like to just listen. It's good that he is the right person, absolutely, to lead us-- and gets us involved. And I really enjoyed being there. [INAUDIBLE]?

In what other ways are you involved besides the donor desk? He said he gets you involved.

Oh, I don't go in very much otherwise. I know there are a lot of good speakers. There are wonderful concerts. There are probably plays. But I don't go in that much. I'm sitting back, more or less.

I speak sometimes at the Museum. I'm asked speak at schools. And that is through the Speakers Bureau.

Who do you speak to at the Museum?

What's his name? I can't remember the names.

Do you speak to school groups at the Museum? Yeah, but not very often-- very, very little. But if they asked for me, I

will speak. I speak to high schools here, and I enjoy doing that. But don't forget, my background is exciting. But most of the times, they do ask for people that have through concentration camps.

They ask for people that have numbers on their arms. And I understand. So I sit back. If people ask for me, fine. If not, this is fine. Because like I said, I came out of it alive. And if people want to know how I survived is fine. And if not, then that's OK too.

If you have friends who are survivors and who have not worked at the Museum, do you try to get them to volunteer at the Museum?

I do that. But most people-- it takes a certain person that is not only-- no. I was going to say it's interest in the Museum. Everybody is interested in the Museum. But not everybody is a person that makes a commitment. And if you want to work [? aid ?] at the Museum, you are supposed to make a commitment of working at least four hours a week-- or possibly eight hours every other week.

I find that there are not that many people that are willing to make a definite commitment. And when I make a commitment that I'm going to work there on Monday, then that is my commitment day. And there is barely-- I mean, I would say 99% that I'm going to be there. A lot of people, I find, do not have that feeling of commitment. And I've asked people, and they said they would not do that.

I have a lot of friends, but they are not ready to give up. And you give up of your time. And I don't say I give up. I say, I gain from it. I stand way above that. And I really don't have a personal friend that I could have convinced to go and volunteer for the Museum. There are some people that volunteer. But you have to be very committed to do that, to give up of your time.

You're talking about other friends of yours who are survivors.

Not survivors.

Cut it.

Was it survivor friends that you were talking about, about asking them to work in the Museum?

No, just friends. And like I said, you have to be very committed to do that. You have to be committed to give up of your day.

Why would you not ask other survivor friends to come work?

We don't have any survivor friends. I'm married to an American. Completely, we just don't have any survivor friends. I know of some survivors, but I wouldn't call them friends. And because most people that I meet at the Museum that belong to the group, I just met through the group. Even if they live here in the area, I didn't know them. I don't know.

What is your impression of the Museum's volunteers and staff who are non-survivors? And if you want to make a distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish, that's fine.

OK. Volunteers--

And staff.

--and staff.

Who are non-survivors.

Well, there's pros and cons. There are people that are very friendly, and there are people that walk by you like you don't



exist. Some of the upper echelon just whiz by-- even so when they talk to us. I said, of course, we have to say hello, and other people have to say hello.

They know that most of the people that sit at the desk are survivors-- not all. But not everybody does. And I take it with a grain of salt. Either they are in a hurry, or they can't be bothered. And I don't push myself. If somebody doesn't want to say hello to me, I just leave well enough alone. I'm beyond that. I'm above that.

But otherwise, the Monday people that I know are very nice. Most people are nice-- very kind to say hello. And if they don't want to, it doesn't bother me. I'm still Ruth Greifer, the survivor.

Are there any other memorable experiences that you've had while you've been working at the Museum, besides the ones you've already talked about.

In many cases, we met people from South Africa. We met Jewish people from Australia. They are so excited to meet survivors. And many times they want to have their pictures taken with us. And in fact, I think I have a letter over there that they sent back to us-- pictures with us and them. I guess they don't find that in Australia, or in South Africa.

Yes, nothing really personal. Because, I tell you the truth, there are not that many German Jews or Dutch Jews that have survived and that can talk about my family. I find very few of those countries that have survived. And due to that, I don't know that many people. So no, just those few personal experiences. For the rest, everybody's just been wonderful.

Are there any particular exhibits at the Museum that you identify with?

Well, I would say number one would be the Anne Frank exhibit. I mean, that is absolutely the number one to my estimation. I'm sorry. It's very small. It's pushed in a corner somewhere.

Some people don't even see it, but that's fine. I identify-- not with my personal experience. I identify with the shoes. I identify because of all the people that we've lost. I identify with the rusty blue bolts, or sifts-- whatever it is. And I asked what they were for. And they mentioned to me this was from Auschwitz.

And I said to myself, I'm so glad that my aunts were gassed within a few days of arrival, so they didn't have to suffer the filth, the dirt, the thousands of people that they're with, knowing what kind of lifestyle they led. There let a very pristine, quiet lifestyle-- lady-like, having friends, cleanliness, warm, and loving.

What else? I mean, if I look at all the things, like pictures, I can compare some of the girls that I grew up with. I can compare some of it with eight-year-old Anita Lichtenstein, who was taken out of her house because she was Jewish-- beautiful girl, gorgeous girl.

Now the German government in my little town has built a school and named it Anita. Yes, I would say going up there and looking, everything-- the [? torn-- ?] not only everything that pertains to the concentration camps. But looking at the Torahs-- the burned Torahs-- our synagogue in my little town was set afire and burned to the ground.

Everything up there in one way or another, if it doesn't pertain to me, it pertains to my friends. It pertains to my family. It pertains to my brother. It pertains to just being Jewish. Just having been born in Germany and had the German and the Dutch family, I would say everything hits you hard. You look at these pictures-- just the pictures. They look like they could belong to my family.

You go upstairs to the fourth floor. You look at the cattle car. All the family has been in it. There is not one thing more or less that would not pertain to my family. If it's not to me-- they're for this body, but it is for everybody surrounded that is involved with my family that reminds me of everything that is up there. There is not one thing that I can say that did not pertain to either family, friends, and all the loved ones.

It's very difficult to go up there-- very, very hard. And that's why I wonder sometimes why I am still here and what the reason is. So I have to make the best of it. I have to be very positive. I have to let the world know. And the demands

they want from me, I will be glad to participate at the Museum as much as I can. I will give the time as much as I can give, between Bernie and me. There might be a time that I can't give that much anymore.

But it means everything to Bernie and me. He doesn't show it. I'm the one that shows it, but it means just as much to him as it does to me. He's very, very supportive, whatever I do, and he wants me to be there. I mean, going back-- it just brings back everything. You just can't throw it off. It's a story that will never go away. It hurts. It hurts.

But I can't make myself sick about it. I have to be strong and just live from day to day and roll with the punches. That's it.

Are you a member of the survivors group here in Washington?

Yes. I'm a member of the Survivors Group, and I'm a member of the Generation After-- because my parents were survivors. So I belong to both of them. I have a job. I'm the head of the Telephone Committee. And I have wonderful people. I make my telephone calls to them, and they make their telephone calls. And we try to get as many members to come to the meetings.

Of course, I got this through my dear friend and Amy's mother-in-law-- the most wonderful person, Nesse Godin. And I'm grateful for that. I go to a lot of meetings, but I have a drawback-- I don't drive at night. Any meetings that are at 7 o'clock at night. I cannot go. Bernie and I will go to the meetings that are at 3 o'clock. We go to brunches.

We go to meetings that are at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. But when it's at 7 o'clock at night, that's not for me. I just don't drive the highway at night. I don't mind driving to highway during the day. That doesn't bother me. I drive Beltway, Shirley Highway-- anything. But at night, no.

Are your children involved in the Generation After?

Amy is the only one. Yes. Amy and Eddie-- in fact, Eddie is past president and so is Amy. Amy is a past president. And both of them were very active in the Generation After. I know that she is not on board anymore, but she'll have something else to keep her busy. Yes, I think they're wonderful organizations. Absolutely.

But Bernie and I go to most of the meetings that are in the afternoon. It's very nice. You meet your friends. It's always the same group that usually comes to these meetings. And they have wonderful speakers and wonderful programs. There's nothing like this here in Alexandria. For anything that like that, we have to go to Washington, DC, to Maryland.

Are you more comfortable with these people than a group of not survivors?

No. I am not that particular. I'm very comfortable with the survivors, and I'm comfortable with non-survivors. It doesn't bother me. I'm very comfortable being with survivors. And I'm easy to get along with.

You said you've changed in the last few years, since we did our last interview. In what way have you changed?

Well, I think I've grown. I think that the Museum has had a lot of influence on me. I'm much more at ease. I'm much more at ease to go and speak. I think that I have grown having been involved with the Museum. I really have.

Why did that do it for you?

I don't know. I don't know. I just feel that I've learned so much.

Learned historically, or emotionally?

Emotionally, a lot-- an awful lot. Historically, no. Yes, I've learned a lot what happened more in detail to other people-- what happened in the ghettos-- yes, more than I ever would if I wouldn't have gone to the Museum. Because I still don't read books. No, I don't. I can't. I absolutely cannot read books.

And I still don't watch television if there's anything pertaining to the Holocaust. It's still very hard for me to do that. And I'm sorry that I don't read books. I know I miss a whole lot, but I just cannot do it. I just cannot do it. And I don't force myself, either. I know I should, but I'm not. So that's the way it is.

Why do you say you should? Here, you yourself have experienced it firsthand.

Well, I think that each book is different, and each book has a different story, and each book has a different history. And it wouldn't hurt me to learn, and it wouldn't hurt me to know. I just cannot do it. And I'm just not forcing myself. I know I miss a lot. I buy the books from the book luncheon, and I never look at them.

And all these books that I'm exposed to are at the bookstore. And it's not me-- absolutely not me.

Why do you think your daughter is involved in this, or was so strongly involved in the organization?

I think it has a lot to do with having gotten married into the Godin family. I think that Eddie has made an impact on Amy-- not Eddie, but the whole Godin family. And since Amy is also a daughter of a survivor, she feels the same way, and she felt good about participating-- and be part of the Generation After, and even becoming a leader and a president of the group.

And I'm very proud of her. I'm very proud that she felt that way I felt very close to the Generation After-- and that Amy did what she liked to do. And she felt very close to it.

Yes, I think that the Godin family made a big impact on her. The Godin family has made a big impact on this family, also. If it wouldn't have been for Nesse, I don't think anybody would have asked me. And I didn't even know. Look, I live in Alexandria. I didn't know about the Club Shalom.

Nobody ever told me that there was a Club Shalom. I could have belonged for many years, but nobody told me anything. And having lived here in Virginia, I wasn't aware. And even so, maybe people knew about me. Nobody ever asked me to join.

How did you first hear about it? From Nesse.

How did you first meet her?

Through Amy. This all began when Amy met Eddie. And that's how we met. And if Amy wouldn't have met Eddie, I probably would never-- I don't say I would have never been to the Museum, but I don't know who would have asked me. No, this is all through the Godin family-- Nesse and Jack and Eddie. And if Amy wouldn't have met Eddie, I don't know. This is a big question mark I have-- no idea. Is there anything else we haven't covered today?

I think we've covered pretty much of my life. What do you think? I think we haven't left anything untouched. And I have to say that the other two children are interested, but not the way that Amy does. Amy has really helped me a lot. And so has Nesse.

Helped you in what sense?

Well, supportive-- very supportive of me.

Supportive of you in dealing with your [INAUDIBLE]?

[INAUDIBLE] me and brought me out-- like, I've lit the candles [INAUDIBLE] Shoah. I walked down the aisle with Amy and lit the candles in memory of. So all these good things has happened through the Godin family. And I really am grateful for their support and helping me becoming active in something that I absolutely love and need to do.

Why do you need to do it?

To satisfy myself. I have to, because I want to keep all the memories alive-- not only of my family, but about the six million. It's very important to all of us. That's my brother.

That's a picture of your brother?

Right.

How often do you think of him?

How can you forget? How can you forget? You can't forget.

Did you find out what camp he was in? Oh, and I had written it down. No. He probably was in a small work camp. I have it written down somewhere. But look, he's gone. There are no signs of him anywhere-- nothing.

Did you and your sister talk about him a lot, when you first came over?

Oh, of course. Of course. My sister, she was closer to him than me, because there were only three-years difference between the two of them. But we could not come to America, because we didn't have any blood relatives. So there was just no way for him to get away.

And like I said, the first transport went and the second transport went. And we had time. God give us time to find places to hide. That's all I can tell you. What happened to the families happened to so many of us. Families are gone.

I don't have much family. I have-- how many cousins do I have? Two, four-- two, four-- I think I have five cousins left. That's it. That's the rest of the family. And we're all getting older. My oldest cousin is going to be 90 in Brazil this month. He's the oldest one.

And once we're gone, the family is not going to be together. Because they speak Portuguese. I don't even know where they live. I correspond with them. And once we're gone, it's different. I don't know if they're interested, or not interested.

But I have no idea. I don't know what's going to happen. I would say, as long as my three children get along and they love each other, that's all I want. That's all I hope for.

Wow, that's a beautiful note to end on.

Thank you.

That's a lovely note. This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Ruth Greifer. Thank you. Thank you for doing the interview.

Thank you.