

## SECOND PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL PROSE

### *An Intangible Hope*

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Survivor Testimony: Bertha Haberfeld

In the heart of Auschwitz, where the air was thick with fear and despair and the possibility of death hung over their heads every day, Bertha Haberfeld carried with her something no one could take away: hope. It wasn't tangible, like a photograph or a letter; it was the belief that she would live to see another day.

"We never think that we are not going to survive. We were young and full of hope," Bertha remembers, thinking of the hard days in the labor camps during the war. And yet, even with all that was happening around her, she pushed forward.

Bertha Haberfeld was one of ten children born on May 29, 1920. Her family wasn't wealthy, but their lives were happy and lively, and that was all that mattered to her. Bertha's father ran a small grocery store, while Bertha spent her time making dresses. Bertha had always dreamed of starting a family and being in a happy marriage, but the war robbed her of the opportunity. She was ripped away from her family and beloved home and taken to the ghetto with her sisters and parents. Her life was nothing like what she once dreamed it would be.

Living in the ghetto was miserable. Nazi soldiers constantly beat up the Jews. Bertha witnessed a man die from his injuries. After six weeks of enduring life in the ghetto, she and her family were taken to Auschwitz. Upon arrival, she was separated from her mother and father, which was the last time she would see them alive. Bertha never got the chance to say a final goodbye. Later, Bertha and her sisters were sent to several other concentration and labor camps.

When Bertha spoke of hope during her testimony, it wasn't just a feeling to her; it was a testament to the strength and courage her hope provided her in the hardest of times. Anyone could have easily given up hope, but Bertha didn't. She dreamt of a better life with her reunited family. Her hope illustrates just how much courage and inner strength she required to withstand the terrible conditions she endured in all the camps.

As a teenager, I will never be able to fully comprehend all the horrors and inhumanity Bertha Haberfeld suffered or the amount of hope and courage it must have taken to get through day-to-day life in the camps. Bertha hoped and believed she would live, and she did. For her, hope pushed her forward and gave her the will to live. To me, hope inspires me to work towards a better future, whether it's working on personal growth or overcoming challenges. Like Bertha, I also dream of one day living a happy, hopeful life, with people I love. Bertha's hope gave her courage to survive, and if she could do that, I, too, can keep working to reach my own hopes and dreams.