

# Holocaust Survivor

## Hannah Lenschitzki Rath

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Filmed on April 14, 2005



*"I never lost my faith."*

*- Hannah Rath*

### Questions to Consider When Viewing Video

1. Who was in Hannah's family? Who died? Who survived?
2. Why did Hannah go to live with her grandfather in Hanover?
3. What happened on Kristallnacht?
4. What did Hannah and her mother find when they arrived in the ghetto in Riga, Latvia?
5. What was life like for Hannah in the Riga ghetto?
6. What was the importance of Hannah's friendship with the other girl? How did they help each other survive?
7. What work did Hannah do in the concentration camp? How did this work benefit her?
8. How did the prisoners observe the Jewish holidays? What is the message of faith from this oral history?
9. What happened to Hannah after liberation? She and her friend were free, but what problems did they encounter?
10. What lessons does Hannah want you to remember from her talk?

Face to Face  
A Holocaust Education Program at  
Congregation Shaarey Tikvah  
Beachwood, Ohio

Hannah Lenschitzki Rath was born in 1922 and raised in Halberstadt, Germany, a small town with a small, strictly observant Jewish population. Her parents kept a kosher home and observed all Jewish holidays. Her father died before she turned 3. Hannah attended a Jewish kindergarten and day school and learned Jewish history, Hebrew, and Torah.

The Nazis came to power in 1933, when Hannah was 11, and things began to change. Many Jews tried to leave Germany, including some of Hannah's relatives. Jews needed many kinds of documents and visas to emigrate, but Hannah's family had none; however, Hannah's brother was eventually able to immigrate to the United States in 1938 at age 17.

In 1934 Hannah and her brother moved with their mother to Hanover to live with their grandfather. At the German public school, all students saluted the Nazi flag. Later, Jews were forced to attend Jewish school, which only went up to eighth grade, which was Hannah's last year of school.

Things got worse for the Jews on November 9, 1938. On Kristallnacht, a night of organized violence against Jews, synagogues, and Jewish-owned businesses, rioters burned synagogues to the ground, arrested Jewish men and looted or destroyed Jewish businesses.

One day in 1941, all Jews of Hanover were told to pack suitcases and were taken by truck to a Jewish ghetto in Riga, Latvia. Earlier 20,000 Latvian Jews had been

killed and buried in mass graves. The German Jews were housed in the homes of these people, with the clothing and possessions of the previous owners.

In 1943 the ghetto prisoners were taken to Kaiserwald. Men and women were separated; prisoners were forced to take showers, their hair was shaved and they received striped uniforms. Hannah, now 21, was separated from her mother.

Hannah worked in a cable factory outside the camp. Beatings were a daily occurrence, but Hannah and her girlfriend looked out for each other. Occasionally an SS guard gave them extra bread.

The prisoners were moved again to Stutthof by boat. Although they were crowded into the steerage of a boat, they were able to improvise a Yom Kippur service for the Jewish High Holidays. During these moves, Hannah's factory experience probably saved her life.

In January, 1945, the Nazi guards at Stutthof deserted their posts to escape the advancing Russian Army. After the war, Hannah recovered in a Polish hospital. Returning to her hometown, Hannah discovered that only 30 Jews out of 1,000 had survived. The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) helped Hannah come to the United States in 1945. She met her future husband on the voyage.