

Remembering: Martin Lowenberg, 70, a Holocaust survivor recounted his life story for Clarkston Middle School students, telling them they must never forget the horrors of Nazi atrocities. Lowenberg is a speakers bureau member of the West Bloomfield-based Holocaust Memorial.



STAFF PHOTO BY STEVE CANTRELL

## Speaker recounts horrors of Holocaust

BY JAN BAKER

STAFF WRITER

His eyes seemed to dance when he joked with Clarkston Middle School eighth-graders Tuesday about restyling his thinning gray mane for a "weird hair day" at school.

And maybe that's because 70-year-old Martin Lowenberg appreciates adolescents more than most people. He never really had the chance to be one himself.

When he was 5, he watched his family's home burn in Germany.

When he was 8, he was expelled from school, accused of spitting on a picture of Adolf Hitler.

When he was 13, he was shuffled off to a rat-infested ghetto in Latvia.

When he was 15, he saw his parents and his younger twin brothers for the last time, before he, and they, were carted off to concentration camps.

But when he was 17, he gained the freedom to talk about it.

Lowenberg, a Holocaust survivor and speaker for the Holocaust Memorial in West Bloomfield, did just that Tuesday in the CMS gym.

According to Nancy Fiederlein, the CMS language arts teacher who arranged Lowenberg's visit, eighth-graders had recently read, "The Diary of Anne Frank." They expected to build on that knowledge with the oral history of the Southfield gentleman.

Perhaps the most piercing of Lowenberg's tragic account was his loss of his mother, father and twin brothers at 15. "It was November of 1943 ... They took my parents and my two little brothers — who were 9-years-old — to the freight depot and put them into cattle cars. Figuring the distance (from Latvia), they must have been on the train (to Auschwitz) for about five days. And when these trains arrived, they (the Nazis) would take them to the gas chambers. I do hope my two little brothers were included, right away. I'll never know. Nobody will ever know."

Lowenberg's voice trailed as he

explained his last comments.

"As soon as those cattle car doors would open at Auschwitz, there was somebody there that greeted every single train — and he was called, 'The Butcher of Auschwitz' or 'The Angel of Death' — the famous Dr. Josef Mengele. He did live experiments on twins. He did everything that he possibly could to butcher twins. Boys, girls — he did experiments on 3,000 twins. And that's why I said I hope my little brothers went right into the gas chamber."

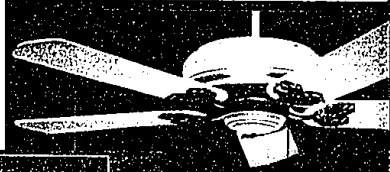
Silence blanketed the gym and some adults in the group wiped their eyes.

Afterward, CMS student Will Bliesath said the oral account heightened his awareness of Holocaust atrocities. "We talked about it before, but I guess I didn't know it was that bad," Will said. Lowenberg left the kids with this advice:

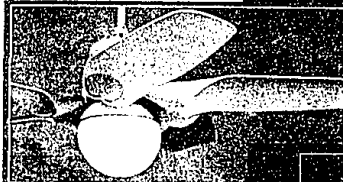
"Love each other. Don't hate and don't be jealous. And when you go home today, give your parents — and your brothers and sisters — a big hug."

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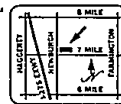
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