

Holocaust survivor story best lesson for students

81-year-old woman gives her harrowing first-hand account of Hitler's hell to 250 Canadian pupils visiting Washington, D.C., memorial

BY SHELDON ALBERTS

WASHINGTON — In the 62 years since Susan Taube was liberated from a Nazi extermination camp, the horrible details of the Holocaust sometimes dissolve into a blur of unbearable memories.

But if there's one thing the 81-year-old survivor will always remember, it is the

ease with which the Nazis killed. Whether it was shooting an elderly woman for becoming too ill to sweep sidewalks in the Jewish ghetto, or shipping thousands to die in a gas chamber, the Nazis murdered with a casual indifference to their victims' humanity.

"People were killed for no reason," Taube told a group of 250 Canadian students who were visiting the U.S. Holo-

caust Memorial Museum in Washington on Tuesday. "They just took the gun, and you were shot."

Taube's harrowing account of a childhood spent living through "different phases of hell" in Adolf Hitler's Europe prompted an emotional response from her teenage audience, in Washington as part of the Asper Foundation Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program.

Many of the students, already deeply moved after touring the museum exhibits, crowded around Taube for impromptu hugs and expressions of gratitude. "It's really important to meet people like her, because we are the last generation who will get to hear the stories of Holocaust survivors first hand," said 15-year-old Meghan Plotnick, a Grade 10 student from Vincent Massey

secondary school in Windsor, Ont.

"It's up to us to carry on the message of the Holocaust to make sure it will never happen again."

Taube's speech capped 18 hours of intensive study designed to raise the students' awareness of the Holocaust and of the need to fight racism and religious intolerance in the 21st century.

CanWest News Service