

Demczyna, Antonia

skeletons. But we were grateful none of the girls died from starvation."

The factory work was extremely hard as well, noted Demczyna. Many days, they had to lift heavy iron rods by themselves and fit them into machinery.

Despite the hardships, she said the girls "never lost their desire and power to live. We helped each other lift our morale."

But there were some "happy moments" inside that factory, said Demczyna.

She met her husband, Stefan, and she gave birth to a set of twins inside the factory. For the last six months of her factory life, she was given some time off every day to look after her children.

When the war ended and the workers were liberated, Demczyna, her husband and two children, spent the next four years in various displaced persons' camps in southern Germany. The family then moved to England for three years where they had another child, worked and saved enough money to come to Canada in June 16, 1952. Almost a year later, they moved to Belleville to operate a farm.

Demczyna said her husband's death in 1980 triggered her long journey into writing the book.

"I joined a local writer's guild two years after my husband died and members encouraged me to write about my experience during the war. To ease the pain of losing him, I started writing my book."

It took her almost three years to complete the book with the help of her editor, Ruth Howard, and another four years to find a publisher, Essence Publishing, of Moira Street West.

The cover for the book was painted by well-known artist Igor Babailov, formerly of Belleville, and it depicts a young Demczyna beside the cattle train that herded young people to work in German factories during the war.

Inside the book, she writes, "In relating my experiences, I hope to portray my determination to retain self-esteem, even if it had to be hidden at times. Most of all, I want to characterize the strength of the human spirit and the will to survive."

Author Antonina Demczyna reads a passage from her book,

INTELLIGENCER PHOTO BY HENRY BURY

From East to West. The autobiography of the war years has been translated into Ukrainian, her native language.

