One of them was a young mother, Yehudit Isaakovna. She was in her 80s, and didn't speak much English, but she was a survivor of the Holocaust. When Buzby met her, she was living in a small house in a village in Ukraine. She was the last Jewish woman to live in Ivankiv, a town outside of Kyiv. Buzby describes being shocked when she saw her, because she looked just like she did in the photos she had seen of her. She was thin and frail, but her eyes were bright and her spirit was strong.

Buzby offered Yehudit food, and a warm sweater. They sat together on the porch, talking about her life. Yehudit told Buzby about her family, and how they had been taken away during the war. She described how they were rounded up and sent to a concentration camp, where she and her brother were able to survive. They were then sent to another camp, where they were able to stay alive for a little while longer. Eventually, they were freed by Soviet forces.

Buzby was moved by Yehudit's story, and she wanted to help her. She offered to pay for her food, and to help her find a way to live. Yehudit agreed, and Buzby arranged for her to receive monthly payments from the Israeli government, which would help her pay for food and medicine.

Buzby describes being moved by her encounter with Yehudit. She says that it was a moment of connection, and that it was a reminder of the importance of helping those in need. She says that it was a moment of inspiration, and that it reminded her of the importance of living a life of compassion and kindness.

Buzby continues to visit Yehudit regularly, and she says that she is grateful for the opportunity to help her. She says that it is a privilege to be able to make a difference in the lives of others, and that it is a reminder of the importance of giving back.
Society

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D. Israelevna, a 102-year-old survivor presently in Ukraine

tiny rural Ukrainian village that is now part of Russia. She met her husband at college, and right after she became pregnant, he got drafted to the front. She sent him a picture of their newborn baby, which was found on his body when he was killed in battle. A few days later, Israelevna’s father’s chest, instantly killing him. Israelevna’s family buried him in the same hut bank. A farmer felt compassion for them and he named them onto his farm. Israelevna always regretted not putting his full name so she could thank him. She swore part of the way with the baby in her hand, as bombs went off in the distance.

By the time Israelevna and her family reached the other side, they were so desperately hungry that they drank from the river poisoned with gasoline. Farmers offered to lend lives by giving them porridge and milk. Israelevna came back to Ukraine after the war and remarried, had two more children and became a teacher. Israelevna hosted Buzby and her team when they came to Ukraine.

When Israelevna was very sick and could not see, she received a donation from Buzby. To thank her, Israelevna wrote: “You brought me back to life... Because you helped me, I was able to have the operation on my eyes, and now I can see.”

Israelevna died in 2018 at the age of 99. SMP continues to support her family. Israelevna’s granddaughter lives in a Russian-occupied town with her family, including her autistic young daughter who has been extremely distressed hearing bombs going off.

On March 3, she told Buzby’s translator in Poland, “Russians took our city. They are leveling everything we hold dear, bombing everything – schools, libraries, homes, businesses, all places of our culture, bombing even our gardens. We are running out of food. We are afraid to go to the one store still open because Russians are shooting us, also firing into windows of apartments to kill us.”

Regarding the possibility of evacuating, on March 17, she reported, “No one can leave the city, as they can’t cross the front line. No one is allowed in or out, but we do have our bags packed.”

SMP was finally able to get through to 83-year-old Ukrainian survivor Rita Borodanskaya, while she was hiding in a bomb shelter. She heard a familiar voice and exclaimed, “Your call is as if I found a diamond!”

Borodanskaya managed to cross the border and, by a twist of fate, spotted her daughter, granddaughter and great-grandson, who also escaped to Poland, and they all boarded a plane to Israel together.

“Miracles do happen,” says Buzby.