United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Ursula Pawel
September 9, 2004
RG-50.030*0488

PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Ursula Pawel, conducted on September 9, 2004 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

URSULA PAWEL
September 9, 2004

Beginning Tape One

Question: Good morning.

Answer: Good morning.

Q: It's nice to see you here.

A: Nice to be here.

Q: Good. Tell me your name.

A: I'm Ursula Pawel. P-a-w-e-l.

Q: And that was not your name at birth, was it?

A: No, my maiden name was Lenneberg, L-e-n-n-e-b-e-r-g.

Q: And when -- when were you born? Your birth --

A: Four 24 - 26.

Q: Four 20 --

A: April 24th, 1926.

Q: Uh-huh, okay. And where were you born?

A: In Dortmund, in Germany.

Q: And let's talk a -- a little bit about your family.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Do you have any recollections of your family before 1933 when the Nazis take over, or was it

--

A: Oh yes, I do.

Q: You do?

A: Yes.

Q: What do you remember?

A: Well, I remember the place we lived in, which was a suburb of Dortmund, called Aplerbeck. And my father was the manager of a department store, a chain of department stores owned by a Jewish concern called Karstadt. And I remember that department store, and I remember the -- some of the outbuildings that housed all kinds of boxes that we would play in, and play house in. And I also remember learning how to ride a bike. I was about seven years old, and one of the janitors taught me how to ride a bike. And I also remember when my father lost his job, and there was a change. We had to move out of our apartment, which was above the department store in a -- it was a huge building, because in 1933, that concern was, in quote, Aryanized. So my father really lost his job in 1933. And instead of leaving Germany, he bought a store just a few -- maybe a block up the road, and the owners of that store were a bit smarter. They went to South Africa. And I don't remember this, but it was repeated in my family ca -- so many times, that Mr. Rosenstein told my father that they're going to have signs on buses that Jews can't ride a bus. And everybody who was Jewish in that town thought this was hilarious. This wasn't going to -- I mean, what is he talking about, this guy is crazy.

Q: Not so crazy.

A: Not so crazy.

Q: What was your father's name?

A: Otto.

Q: And your father -- am I correct to say that he had one leg, that he had a leg amputated when he was a --

A: No, no.

Q: It's not true?

A: It was my grandfather.

Q: Oh it was your grandfather, I see.

A: Right.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah, was my grandfather, he had a leg amputated, and why, nobody really knows. They said -- there was some rumors that he had diabetes and they apparently weren't substantiated, and there were also rumors in the family that the wrong leg was amputated. So I really have no clue, all I know, that my grandparents who lived in Düsseldorf, there was -- there were no closets in homes in Germany. There was a corner that had a curtain, and it was used like a -- like a closet, and there was a wooden leg in that corner. And I was very nosey as a young child, I opened every drawer and every -- every, you know, I looked into every crevice. And I saw that wooden leg for the first time and it was kind of upsetting to me.

Q: Yeah, I would imagine.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you -- did you ask people about it?

A: I'm not sure, I don't recall.

Q: Excuse me.

A: Yeah. I know I wasn't supposed to look in there.

Q: Right.

A: So whether I had the guts to ask --

Q: Right.

A: -- I ma -- I really don't remember.

Q: And your mother's name?

A: My mother's name was Schneider. My mother was -- came from a Christian family. Her name was Lina Caroline, after she came to this country, but Lina Schneider. And it was a Protestant family, supposedly, but later on we found out that my grandfather was really from a Catholic background, which he never admitted while he was alive. And my mother had been a buyer for a department store where she met my father, who was also a buyer. It was not a s -- it was not Karstadt, it was another department store. She had been in training as a fairly young woman. In those days people didn't go to college. In Nassau's department store in Dortmund, my grandmother went to Mr. Nassau and said that her -- he -- her daughter was very interested in clothing and in -- in -- in mode. And Mr. Nassau -- my -- my grandmother was a good customer, said, "Well, why don't you bring her along?" And -- and this is where she started, and she was a very, very gifted woman, it turned out later on, and this is how she made her career, as a -- first as a salesperson, and then she became a buyer, and then she became buyer like -- Karstadt is like Macy's. She became a buyer at Karstadt.

Q: And -- but your parents met before she started working at Karstadt, is that right?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: They had met before.

A: Yeah, they -- they met, I don't know exactly when. They married in 1925, and my mother converted to Judaism. And I was raised as a Jew, and then my brother was born in 1930, and he was -- we were both raised as Jews.

Q: I didn't realize that your mother had converted. Was that unusual at the time?

A: Wa -- maybe it was for some people, but not for my mother. Don't forget, she really was in a Jewish environment fr-from -- as a fairly young woman. She was more Jewish than my father was, I mean as far as Jewish expressions, and as far as the Jewish food. My father was really an

agnostic, and my mother -- people actually, during the persecution, always thought my mother was Jewish, and not my father.

Q: And not your father.

A: Yeah. And -- yeah, she was -- sh-she -- and actually her family was wonderful. My grandparents loved my father, and this -- especially her two sisters, to the point during the Nazi time where my mother's youngest sister, as they always accused her that she couldn't keep her mouth shut, she ended up in a work camp. So, it just gives you just an -- and actually, my -- my mother's parents were much more tolerant of that marriage than my father's parents. My Jewish grandmother did not like the idea of a goyte coming into her house, and even though she converted.

Q: She still wasn't Jewish to her.

A: She wa -- she still wasn't Jewish, and -- and -- and the ridiculous part is that my grandmother Lenneberg, she was a total agnostic, she didn't keep any of the Jewish holidays, and they were totally assimilated. But the idea that her son, her favorite son would marry a goyte, didn't quite go down well. Then her oldest son, Erich, who was really like a black sheep in the family, not a very good person, and who she didn't like, but he married later. He met a Catholic woman who was a very good person, Erich was not. And she was a very strict Catholic, and she became pregnant before they got married. And don't you know that my mother -- my grandmother Lenneberg opened her arms to this Catholic woman, even though she got pregnant before they got married. And totally ignored all what she believed before, when her younger son married Lina Schneider.

Q: So how do you explain it?

A: I have no explanation for this.

Q: No explanation.

A: Neither did my aunts, my Jewish aunts, who loved my mother. Maybe there was a competition.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: I -- I have no idea, I really don't know.

Q: Tell me about the personality of your parents as you -- as you remember them. Were you close to both of them, were you more close --

A: Yes, very close to both of them. My father was a very intelligent man, and he was a very calm person, he was loved by everybody. My mother was much aggressive than my father. They had two different personalities. My mother always accused my father of being too decent, too good, whether it was to employees, or it's to who -- whoever, and I think she was right. And she -- she always felt that people were taking advantage of him. And my mother was much more aggressive.

Q: But he didn't agree with this, I gather?

A: I don't really know, he loved her, she could do anything. My father was totally in love with my mother, as long as I can remember, and nobody could say anything bad about my mother, so --

Q: And you were close to your mother as well?

A: I was very close. I was -- actually, when I was younger, I was closer to my father than to my mother. That doesn't take anything away from the relationship to my mother --

Q: Right.

A: -- but I was, you know, I was really close to my father. And some of it stemmed from the fact that my father was quite athletic, and my mother was not, and Jupp Geschind, who was kind of a

janitor at Karstadt, he taught me how to ride a bike. It was an adult bike, and my parents didn't know about that, and I put my leg kind of through -- you know, how I managed it, I don't know. And then I eventually got a wonderful bike, and we went on bike trips, but always with my father, and actually my cousin, my father's sister's daughter, who spent a lot of time in our house. My father tried to teach my mother how to bike, but it was always a disaster. And she screamed once he was trying to kill her, so she always -- as long as she knew that he was holding onto the back of the bike it was fine. As soon as he let go, she would fall.

Q: So you did many more things with your father?

A: Many more things as far as hiking and bicycle riding with my father.

Q: Did you eat lunch together, and dinner? What was -- what was the process in the house?

A: Yes, we -- we did, because lunch at that time in Germany was the main meal, and when we lived in Aplerbeck, children used to go home to eat, and my parents lived above the department store, they had a maid, and they would go up and have their -- their lunch, their dinner, at lunch time.

Q: Right.

A: And I would join them, both of us, my brother and I would join them.

Q: Were you glad when your brother arrived in 1930?

A: I think so. I don't remember. I loved him dearly afterwards.

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't really remember how I felt, you know. I know that I was crazy about him when he was a little bit bigger, and not quite a tiny baby, but was toddling around, and I was very protective of him.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: And what was his name?

A: Walter.

Q: Walter.

A: And I've always vowed I would never name a child after a relative who was killed or died, because my brother was named after the oldest son of my grandmother, who was killed in World War I.

Q: So you -- you're a bit superstitious.

A: I really am not, there is just something about --

Q: About that?

A: -- you know, I would not consider naming -- ya -- but Hans feels the same way, when I got pregnant, that we would name either David or Bruce after his father, or -- or my father. Plus there was something -- I didn't like German very much after I came out of the camps. Everything German was an antithesis to me. And so any -- I mean, names like Adolf, for goodness sakes, no -- which my grandfather was Adolf Lenneberg.

Q: Right.

A: And Otto was my father's name.

Q: So how -- how was the house religiously, since your mother converted --

A: Mm-hm

Q: -- because your father was agnostic and very assimilated --

A: Yes.

Q: -- did you celebrate holidays?

A: We did. At -- at times we celebrated both Christmas -- we always celebrated Hanukah, and my father used to call the Christmas tree the Hanukah bush. And that was really more done for our Christian relatives, who always came. Seder we went to Jewish friends. And I couldn't go to a Seder after I came out of the camps for years and years and years, because this was a couple, they had no children, and we always had Seder with them, and my brother used to ask the questions.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So I just couldn't --

Q: You couldn't do it.

A: -- couldn't -- Seder -- Passover was a terrible time for me.

Q: Right.

A: All the ho -- Jewish holidays were.

Q: Because of the memories associated, okay.

A: The memories, and I was much more -- I went through phases of being quite religious, and in 1934, I went to a Jewish school in Dortmund because I could not attend public school in -- in Aplerbeck any more. It was not a good school, and I wasn't -- didn't become a Zionist then, but then eventually my parents decided to move to Düsseldorf, where my father was born. Also, Aplerbeck was a small town, and very anti-Semitic. Many Nazis there. Boycotts in front of the store, don't buy from the Jew, etcetera. And then my father did sell that store, but I can't remember exactly, I think it was about 1936, and Düsseldorf had a private Jewish school, a very good school, and that was one of the reasons my father wanted to go to Düsseldorf, he was brought up there, it was a much larger, more cosmopolitan city, and it had a good school system. And that's when I became an ardent Zionist, and very religious, to the chagrin of my parents.

Very upset when my friends in Jewish school pretended to be fasting for Yom Kippur and were really cheating. I -- and I -- I went through that stage. I ran around Jewish ho -- houses and apartments, and collected for KKL for money for Israel to plant trees, etcetera. So you kind of get the picture.

Q: What is KKL, can you explain?

A: KKL? I don't remember what it stood for, but we call it KKL. There were blue boxes that had a Magen da -- David -- David on it, and they would put coins in it, and that would be eventually sent what was then Palestine to make the desert bloom.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: Right. Now, explain something to me. You were born in Dortmund?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes. And you lived there. Do yo -- you --

A: No, I li -- I never lived in Dortmund. I lived in Aplerbeck, which was a suburban town, but Dortmund had much better hospitals, so the --

Q: I see.

A: -- obstetrician my mother went to was going -- was in Dortmund, there were better physicians in Dortmund, and I w -- the delivery took place in a hospital in Dortmund. So my birth certificate says Dortmund, but I never really lived in Dortmund.

Q: Right.

A: And I did go to school -- to Jewish school in Dortmund, because I couldn't go to public school in -- to any public school any more.

Q: After '33.

A: After -- yeah, I think it was about ’34.

Q: Uh-huh. But your first school was in Aplerbeck --

A: Yes.

Q: Right?

A: That was a grade school, and -- and talking about remembering, somehow I do remember I had two very good friends. Now, I was about seven years old, and one was the daughter of the principal of a school, and one was a daughter of a local physician. And after the Nazis took over, and I don’t recall exactly how soon, but within a relatively short time period -- we used to run to each other’s houses and play, and I came to their house one day and they informed me, these two girls, that they couldn’t play with me any more because I was a Jew. Now that I remember, because it made such an impression on me, and I didn’t make -- I -- I didn’t understand it. And I think I asked my parents, and I do not remember what their answer was, but somehow it was an experience that I still remember, that all of a sudden I lost my friends. I couldn’t play with these two girls. I still have pictures of these two girls with me, and I wouldn’t have had those pictures, but the non-Jewish relatives -- whatever I have, after I came back, was on account of my aunts, or I wouldn’t have a thing.

Q: Do you remember if these kids were angry, did they yell at you, or did they say it quietly --

A: That I don’t remember.

Q: -- you don’t remember.

A: I think they just said you can’t come here any more, we -- yeah, they said you -- we can’t play with you any more because you are a Jew.

Q: And the friends that you had were a mixture of friends, Jewish and Christian friend, I gather?

A: In -- in do -- in Aplerbeck?

Q: A -- yes.

A: I think there were a k -- there were a couple of Jewish kids, I don't remember them too well, but a lot of the families I remember either had children who were older, or -- or the Kahns, like, had no children, and they treated me like their own child. So I really don't have any deep impression of friendship with a Jewish child in Aplerbeck.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Now, that changed in Düsseldorf.

Q: In Düsseldorf, yes.

A: But even the children at the Jewish school in Dortmund, they were -- they didn't make very deep impressions on me.

Q: Mm-hm. Were your parents good humored?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yes, yes, they were, they were. I think -- I think what helped me survive was the childhood I had. I think if there is an ideal childhood, I had it. And my parents were very loving, and the main thing is they were totally in love with each other, which I did not appreciate when I was a child, but as time went on, and I remember their -- the way they acted with each other, and the way my father suffered when he was separated from my mother, and the same for my mother.

Q: Then what do you think that gave you?

A: First of all, my father was an extremely honest person. Morally caring, whether it was for his family, for the people who worked for him. And I think that made an impression on me, the way he interacted with his not -- non-Jewish relatives, and his Jewish relatives. And his helpfulness.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: One doesn't appreciate it when one is eight, nine or 10 years old. And -- and the way he cared for us in Terezín. There was only one theme, when this murderer is gone, and we get back with your mommy, you know. And there was th -- he talked about my mother every day. So even though we were separated, that was the f -- the foremost thing on his mind, was my mother. When we were in Terezín, and my -- my brother was Bar-mitzvah'd in Terezín, and my father was an agnostic. But there is something about agnostic Jews, and I don't know what it is. There is a Jewishness that -- that you -- you might be an agnostic, but there is something more than the religion. And maybe it was also because we were in Terezín that the Bar-mitzvah of my brother meant so much to us. It might -- might not have meant as much to us if we would have not had the -- Hitler's ca -- catastrophe.

Q: Was it unusual for a woman who was a mother -- excuse me -- to be working the way your mother was? Was that unusual?

A: Yeah, my mother was unusual in every way.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: You know, she was unusual in every way. Yes, when -- when my father accepted the job that was offered to him by Karstadt to be in charge of this whole department store, and my mother was made the chief buyer for women's and children's clothing, there was no question that she would continue doing that. My father just accepted that, or encouraged her. She had a maid, and her youngest sister came quite often to help out, and was the recipient of a lot of good deeds from my father. I think she was really in love with my father, too. So that's more or less the atmosphere --

Q: Right.

A: -- I grew up in.

Q: So you did have a maid, it was this --

A: Yes.

Q: -- gre -- this was Grete?

A: Grete, yeah.

Q: Grete?

A: Grete yeah, she -- she was -- she worked for us until it became impossible, when the first Nuremberg laws came out that Jewish men were accused after that of having affairs with non-Jewish women, and ended up incarcerated. We didn't talk about concentration camps in those days, but that was a great fear many Jewish men had, that they were accused of having sexual relations with non-Jewish women, and especially a maid who was a live-in maid. So -- and I know Grete, when she left, she cried like a child. But it was just too dangerous to have her there.

Q: Right.

A: I mean she -- she did join us in -- a few buildings down when my -- my father and my mother unfortunately bought that store, and -- Steinweg, but they v -- they had to let her go, they just couldn't keep her.

Q: Did you miss her?

A: Yes. I missed her. She was -- she was part of the family.

Q: Right, right.

A: I mean, I grew up with her.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: So would you have considered your family fairly wealthy, or well-to-do, how would you have described it?

A: I think they were well-to-do. They were not wealthy that they had enormous wealth inherited from their parents. I think they lived pretty high. They went on vacations, they had beautiful furniture. Th -- I'm sure they made enormous amounts of money, both of them together. They had wonderful paintings, and especially at Karstadt, I mean, they had an enormous flat up there with uncountable rooms, and Persian rugs, and it was very luxurious, which I didn't -- I mean, it didn't strike me as luxurious, I was used to it, you know.

Q: Right, right.

A: Whereas my grandmother in Dortmund, my mother's mother and father, lived in a very nice house, in an apartment, a house that had maybe three stories. And it was comfortable, and was nice, but it wasn't nowhere as luxurious as my parents. I -- my father had a study with bookcases full of books, and it was -- you know, it was a different world, yeah.

Q: Right, right. We have to change the tape now.

A: Okay.

End of Tape One

Beginning Tape Two

Q: Ursula, I want to go back to the f -- your first year of school --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- or your second year of school, you -- you got some sort of tuberculosis of the lymph node? Of the lymph glands, yes?

A: Yeah, which was actually almost like kindergarten, and I don't recall exactly when it was.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: My grandmother, my non -- my Christian grandmother came from Hessen, which is an agricultural area not too far from Kassel. And it was thought at the time that during vacation, summer vacation, that was the healthiest place to send your children. So this was actually before the Nazis came into power, I was sent to Grabenstein, which is a small village where my grandmother was born, on summer vacation. And they had wonderful milk, raw milk, came right from the cows. Unpasteurized milk, they didn't use pasteurization there. And what is interesting is that my mother also spent her vacation in Grabenstein as a young girl, and she had a -- a condition in her groin where her lymph gland had to be lanced, and then she had a condition in her -- on her neck, too. But it was never connected that this came from tuberculous cows. It's called scrofula, and I had a neck out like this, and it -- it was here, where I have a scar and it was in the front of my neck that -- these lymph glands were all pus-y, and I went through this for more than a year. And my -- my mother was treated by a country physician who just lanced this with a knife, and she had a beautiful, straight scar. And my parents took me to Berlin to a specialist, who extracted the pus with a syringe, and consequently I am left with all this calcifications in there. But I lost a year of school, at least.

Q: Do you remember being in bed a great deal?

A: No, what I remember -- no, I wasn't in bed, what I remember is some horrible stuff, which I still remember the name, believe it or not, antiflogestine, which was like a gook in a -- a little can, that had to be heated very t -- very hot. It was -- and then it had to be applied to my glands. It was like putting hot compresses on something. I hated that stuff. I mean, it burned, and it was -- and I screamed even before they could put it on my glands. So that's what I remember, but I don't remember too much, and then one day it just seemed to -- to clear up, and it wa -- the glands were still draining a bit, and there was like a -- a band-aid on it, and then I went to school with it.

Q: But you were out of school for almost a year?

A: Yes.

Q: Did that --

A: And I was tutored. I was --

Q: Oh, you were tutored at home?

A: -- tutored at home.

Q: So you didn't lose the -- the year of school, you were able to stay at your --

A: No, I was tutored, I was tutored from -- in Jewish school, Frau Buchheim, who was the wife of the principal of the school, and she would tutor me at my grandparents home in Dortmund. See, I had to commute to Dortmund to the Jewish school. We lived in Aplerbeck, but I couldn't go to public school any more.

Q: But in '36, you moved to Düsseldorf.

A: No -- in '36 we moved to Düsseldorf.

Q: Yes. Now, do you remember as a little kid in 1933, when the Nazis came in, did you see --

A: Yes, I do. I do remember it, because they were -- had this -- the black uniforms, and also gr -- brown uniforms, the either SS or the SR. And I remember them standing in front of our -- our door to -- to the -- the door to the -- the entrance to the store, and threatening people. And I also remember the atmosphere. My parents were very upset, so was Grete, our maid, and who saids all kinds of dirty words about them. And I picked all that up. It didn't make sense to me, but something changed, something happened. And I remember my parents talking about that no -- customers weren't coming into the store because they were being threatened. They stood right in front of -- of the entrance to the store, and any person who wanted to enter the store was intimidated by them. And then they used to -- they defaced the store windows with Jude, Jew. Don't buy from the Jew. So I remember that.

Q: You do?

A: And I remember them smashing windows, that I remember. In fact, I think I was in the store one day when these thugs smashed one of the big st -- windows, and it c -- it just came crashing down. And they did that to all the Jewish stores.

Q: And this was during the boycott of 19 thir -- not that you would have known at the time that there was a boycott in 1933.

A: No, I didn't know, I didn't -- you know, this -- all of a sudden -- there was a wonderful, tranquil life, which was changed somewhat because we moved from Karstadt to the Steinweg place, but that didn't register to me why we did, or what, but then, this did register. And also those two girls, I couldn't play with --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- the two girls any more. And they were at our house a lot. I mean, I have a lot of photographs with them.

Q: So, did life become lonely, or did you have a big enough family so that --

A: I don't think I -- I really felt very deprived. My -- my mother's sisters were all so wonderful, and my grandmother. I mean, there's nobody like my mother's mother. And I just felt very sheltered with them. And then when I had to go to school in Dortmund, and I spent an awful lot of time with my mother's parents, because Frau Buchheim would come to my grandmother's house, and would tutor me at my grandmother's house, because it was in the same town. And I would eat with them, and I would -- she would take me to the markets, and I -- I j -- I just don't remember feeling deprived at all.

Q: And when you moved to Düsseldorf, what di --

A: That changed my life completely.

Q: How so?

A: Because I went to a school, a Jewish school, and somehow I made an awful lot of friends. I had never been in a -- in a school that I felt so good about. I -- I made a lot of -- a lot of friends, and I went to their houses, they went to mine, and I was good in athletics, and they had a big athletic program, and I was good in jumping and si -- all kinds of things. And they had arts programs, they did a lot of things. And even though the Nazis were persecuting the Jews, but somehow there was still that feeling, well this guy isn't going to stay in power, and at -- and I felt sheltered. I was among people who were teaching me, and who were very -- were very wonderful. And we had one professor who later on I met in Los Angeles, Dr. Bergel, and he was a professor of history, and they really had attracted terrific people in that school. And he had traveled extensively in Africa, in Asia, and he told us all these wonderful stories, I remember that. Yeah, that was a -- it was a good time until 1938, when our school was destroyed completely.

Q: Oh, it was destroyed?

A: Kristallnacht. Completely burned to the ground, our school, our synagogue, everything, yeah.

Q: But when you moved to Düsseldorf, your father, he has a business in Düsseldorf, or he works --

A: No, see, my father used the money which he received from the people who bought that Steinwegs -- that second -- that store he bought. They were very decent family, a Catholic family, and they really paid him the market price.

Q: Really?

A: They did. And I would never -- my mother would never do anything to get any more money out of them, because she felt they were decent, which was very hard to find. Most of the Germans who bought Jewish stores were cheated, but my parents were not. And then he -- maybe he -- I would have been better off if -- they would have been better off if they had been cheated, because he took the -- the money from that store, when he came to Düsseldorf, he started a wholesale store not too far from the railroad station. Not in the best area of town, but that's where the wholestale businesses were. And that flourished, everything he touched flourished.

Q: Even in spite of the fact that the Nazis are in power for three years --

A: Oh yes, he -- he had a -- and a lot of these people were not really Nazis. And some of them turned Nazis, but they were -- you know, he had a -- also, he has a -- had a good rapport. Lot of them were people who sold door to door, and some of them were Gypsies, who bought from him. And I wish he hadn't bought that store, but that's what he did. In the meantime they tried to emigrate. You know, they tried to leave Germany, but they had to make a living. I don't think my parents had, you know, tremendous money reserves. They had lived pretty high, and all this

moving, and losing his job, and losing his -- his health insurance and stuff, and having to buy all this on his own --

Q: Cost [indecipherable]

A: -- I'm sure that there was a cost.

Q: Right. But your mother went -- after you moved to Düsseldorf, she goes to Berlin and gets a job?

A: She tries to. She goes to Berlin to visit her old colleagues, who used to be -- who were buyers for other department stores. And some of them had been working for manufacturers. But by that time, everything was, in quote, Aryanized, and they weren't working for Jewish concerns any more. And they treated her horribly. They didn't want to have anything to do with her. Whether they were just horrible people, or whether they -- it was self-protection, because having connections with Jews -- and my mother generally wasn't even known that she came from a -- from a -- a non-Jewish family. Fr -- my mother was a Jew.

Q: To everybody.

A: To her colleagues.

Q: I see.

A: To everybody. And so, my mother coming back and trying to get -- make some connections to earn a living, di -- it was a failure. And she was very disheartened. And then she -- and I don't know how she got to the Schreyecks, that I don't know. She might have told me, I don't remember that. She became a forelady in a leather belt factory which was owned by the Schreyeck family. And they were the most decent, wonderful people on this earth. And they protected her, and I -- they s -- I-I don't want to jump ahead, I think I'll let you ask the questions,

but they were very vital later on in -- in protecting my mother when we were deported, and the secret police, Herr Puetz, would not let my mother to go with us. So, they're wonder --

Q: And you think that had something to do with these people? The fact that she was not allowed to go?

A: I don't think so. I think -- what had to do with him not wanting my mother to go with us was strictly he hated her because he -- she got notification a few times, that I remember, to present herself at the office of Herr Puetz, he was the head of the Gestapo. And he belabored her to leave my father. And she made it very clear she would never leave my father, she rather die. And he then would not allow her to go with us -- we -- to the, in quote, labor camp. And she worked for the Schreyecks. So as soon as we were gone, this guy Puetz came, I think on a weekly basis, to interview her, and to interview the Schreyecks, and to make it very, very difficult, to make her feel very threatened, to the point where Mr. Schreyeck one day said to my mother, "Caroline, this guy is after you. He will get to you whether it's next week or the week after. You have to leave. I have a brother, as you know, in Vienna, and he has a leather factory. I'm going to get in touch with my brother and I think he will agree to shield you, and you work for my brother." That wasn't easy, because when you lee -- left a town, and I think it's probably still so in Germany, you had to go to the police, you had to fill out papers that you were leaving such and such a residence, and you were going to such and such a town, where you were going to live in such and such a place. Then when you got, let's say, to Vienna, you were supposed to go to the Viennese police and start papers that you were a new resident. Now, what they took upon themselves -- this is why I said to you before, these people did things that I am not sure I would have the guts to do for anybody. They provided food for my mother, so she wouldn't have -- because she was not registered, she wouldn't get food stamps. They provided a place for her to

live with a family where she had a room. And she was not registered with the police, and the Germans had no idea where she went. And Puetz came, she found out later, to Schreyeck in Düsseldorf, and said where -- they want to talk to her. And Mr. Schreyeck said, "I have no idea where she went. I hope she isn't going to take her life, because she was talking about killing herself," and stuff like that. And she stayed with the Schreyecks in Vienna for quite a long time, and -- you know, there's so many bad things happened to my mother, but this is almost unreal. I think she had the flu, or something, but sh -- anyway, my mother wasn't one to stay home if she just had a little cold, but she was sick. And she stayed home, and that day when she stayed home, the Gestapo came to the Schreyeck factory in Vienna and asked for Karolina Lenneberg. So, Mr. Schreyeck number two, the one in Vienna send somebody he trusted, I don't know who it was, to her -- to her room, and told her to immediately leave, take the next train to Kleve, which is close to the Dutch border, where a third Schreyeck brother had a tannery. So -- and then --

Q: This is like the underground railroad.

A: Exactly. And then the -- and the -- he -- she worked for the Schreyecks I -- only for several months I think. And the bombing attacks were getting horrendously bad in Kleve. I mean, this is historical, what was -- th -- it was almost flattened, because there was also -- lot of industry in Kleve, and also it was a very short trip for the British fliers, cause it was close to the Dutch border. And one day the house next to the Schreyeck's was bombed. It was one of those bombs that went into the basement and then exploded. And Mr. Schreyeck said to my mother, "Caroline, you have a sister in Lippborg. Why -- I think you should leave. I don't think any of us are going to survive." And my mother left, and the day my mother left, all the Schreyecks were killed in their cellar. One of the bombs went into their basement.

Q: Oh my.

A: And this is why -- you know, you talk about justice, and -- and belief in God, and all this, which my mother had lost completely -- the Schreyecks in Düsseldorf had a wonderful son, and they were such anti-Nazis. Their son was killed. He was drafted, and he was killed. And, you know, these -- the good people --

Q: Often get hurt, yes.

A: Right.

Q: Well, that's quite a story of your mother's, now let's get back t-to you. So until -- until Kristallnacht --

A: Yes.

Q: -- you seemed to feel pretty good. You're not feeling -- although you must an -- you must know that your parents are in some ways nervous about what's happening --

A: Oh, I was --

Q: -- and they tried to leave. You're very conscious of this.

A: -- I was very conscious of it and also, my parents prepared both my brother and me to -- for immigration. Our suitcases were practically packed. We got English lessons, I got fr -- English and Spanish lessons from an uncle of mine who also perished, who was a philologist, he s -- he spoke many languages. And my brother also got additional e -- when e -- we had English in s -- in school, but he got additional lessons. My parents had what was called an affidavit, which is a pledge from an American citizen to bring over a person from another country, and that they would take care of that person if that person would not be able to be financially self-sufficient. The idea is that this person will not become a -- will not use the social services of the United States. So we had this affidavit of a very distant relative in Chicago, Beifuss. And my parents had a number. To -- to get an interview with the American consul in Düsseldorf you had to have

a number. And the waiting time before you could see a consul was between a year and a year and a half. So they had obtained that affidavit a long time before they saw the consul. They saw the consul in 1938. I don't recall when it was, whether it was the beginning or the middle of '38. And the consul, who was known not to be too favorably inclined towards the Jews, like s -- it turned out later some people in the state department were, he decided that the affidavit that Morris Beifuss gave my mother and my father was okay, but they -- he considered it insufficient because Mr. Beifuss had given X number of affidavits to other people. And they wanted an additional affidavit from somebody other than Mr. de -- Mr. Beifuss. Now, Mr. Beifuss was an extremely wealthy man, who lived on one of the main, glorious streets near the lake, and that broke our neck. So my father wrote to a very distant relative nobody liked, who lived in Texas, and who had come to Germany on occasion. And he was an alcoholic, and he hated everybody who didn't drink with him. And my father was sure he was -- gotten into bad situation with this man because he would not drink with him. Well, he declined to give us an affidavit. And -- so you get the picture. My parents then tried to go to Uruguay. And it wasn't just my parents, it was a cousin of theirs and another couple. And they fell into the hands of a smuggler, a very good looking young man who -- who was such a con artist, he persuaded everybody. Plus, they didn't have too many options. They gave him a lot of money, and then he disappeared. So that -- that was -- what they should have done, I think, they should have just taken what they had on their backs and just tried to go either through France -- or France was already occupied, maybe, when was France -- I -- no, they could have gone through France, maybe to -- to Spain, etcetera. Some people managed to do that, but they didn't do that, all right? So they still hoped for writing and getting on the additional affidavit and nothing panned out, and then it was '38, and then was Kristallnacht, and -- and after that it only went downhill.

Q: Did you know people who had l-left in that way? Just taken what was on their backs and crossed -- tried to cross the border?

A: After the war.

Q: After the war, you had, but you --

A: I didn't know anybody who did it during the war, I mean not among our friends. But after the war, actually there was a -- a cousin of my husband, she was married to a Polish Jew, who was a watchmaker, and he couldn't make a go of anything, it was a wonderful guy. And they came to this country like that. And then he, first time in his life he had a wonderful job with Longine, and then he died of a bleeding ulcer. So you know, life is -- yeah, sometimes you can't win.

Q: Did -- do you remember having conversations with your parents, were your parents telling you we're trying to go to --

A: Oh yes.

Q: -- United States, to Uruguay?

A: Oh yes, I -- by that time I was old enough --

Q: Yes, you --

A: -- not only old enough, my mother was working, my father was working by that time in Tiefbau, which means very hard labor, for which he probably didn't get paid, you know, digging ditches, and construction, which was compulsory work because he had to give up his store in Düsseldorf, his wholesale store, because then an edict came out that Jews couldn't have -- couldn't own businesses any more. And then he was drafted to -- to work in -- in Tiefbau, which was digging basements and etcetera, and I don't know exactly for what. And I don't think he -- he got paid at all for that.

Q: So do you feel your circumstances getting worse and worse --

A: Oh yes.

Q: -- physically, because of the experiences?

A: Oh yes, and -- and I was -- and then my -- our school was burned, and -- and there was -- we had very limited education. And there was only one teacher and his wife left, and there was a laundry, the Elsberg laundry in -- outside of Düsseldorf, and these people allowed us to have school there. There were only, you know, relatively few people. There was not an accredited school any more, because some people sent their children to Duisberg, which was -- still had an accredited Jewish school, and my brother went to Duisberg on the train, and got special permission to take the train because Jews weren't allowed to go in the train any more. And so this is -- you know, I wi -- I -- then I had no more education, and I kept house for my parents, who were working very hard from morning to night.

Q: Cause there's no maid any more, there's no [indecipherable]

A: There's nothing, you know, there was no maid after -- after we went to Düsseldorf. Things went downhill very, very fast, yeah.

Q: Are you frightened at this point? Do you th -- do you have any recollection whether you're frightened, or --

A: I was never frightened. I always had that feeling that my parents go -- they were trying everything. They were going to get us out of this. And I was also very busy, I was learning English, I was learning Spanish, I was keeping house, I was taking care of my brother, who was four years younger than I was. And there was still that hope that this criminal is going to --

Q: To stop.

A: -- to stop, is going to be killed or something. And I remember in the last apartment we had, we -- my father -- this -- there were all non-Jews in that apartment, it was a most primitive

apartment, but on the top floor was a couple, and he was a communist. And he was very anti-Nazi. And when we went into the basements when there was an alarm, an air -- air strike alarm, my father and this man would be listening to the foreign senders. And it didn't look good at that time. Yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay, we have to stop and tape -- change the tape.

A: Yeah, I thought so.

End of Tape Two

Beginning Tape Three

Q: Ursula, by 1938, have you, as a young person, been hearing about concentration camps?

A: No.

Q: Nothing?

A: Nothing, nothing.

Q: And you didn't hear about people being taken away?

A: Yes, people were taking aw -- being taken away, but nobody ever mentioned concentration camps. You know, the -- the Gestapo did incarcerate people, but somehow it did not sink through where these people were going. It was taken for granted they were going to some prisons, people were imprisoned. And not only Jews, but political prisoners. I remember distinctly I was in my grandmother Schenider's house, who would go to church every Sunday morning, to a big Christian church, Evangelische Kirche in Dortmund. And my grandfather was suffering from cancer. And they were very fond of a minister who would visit my grandfather. And one day I was there on a Sunday, my grandmother comes home, her red -- her eyes are red, she is beyond herself because the -- the minister was taken off by black shirts when he was giving a sermon. And what he was telling his congregation is that they should be more tolerant, and what's going on with the Jews was incomprehensible to him. And two black shirts came up, took him off the podium -- I mean, off the whatever you call it in a -- in a Protestant church, and he was never heard from again. And my -- my aunts told me that they heard that he was killed in a concentration camp. So that has made a tremendous impression on me at that time, I remember that. And that was, you know, many, many years before people were routinely put into custody.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: But did they say the word concentration camp?

A: No.

Q: They didn't --

A: No.

Q: -- they just said --

A: It wasn't part of our vocabulary.

Q: I see, right.

A: No.

Q: Were you worried about Walter traveling by himself on the train to go to the school?

A: I wasn't, maybe my parents were, but I wasn't.

Q: And he came back and forth every day?

A: Right, yeah, he came back and forth every day.

Q: And what was it like for --

A: But he -- but -- but don't forget, we didn't wear this Jewish star yet at that time.

Q: Right, right.

A: So, you know, it's not too clear that anybody would have known that he was a Jewish child.

Q: Did -- but there was an a -- an I.D. card?

A: Yes --

Q: Was it --

A: -- we had I.D. cards.

Q: And didn't that say Jewish, or not?

A: And that said Jewish, I mean, if somebody would stop you, but how many people would have stopped a young boy and asked for the I.D. card? But that stop in -- that school in Duisberg closed, probably not too long, maybe six months or something after Kristallnacht.

Q: I see.

A: I don't know exactly, I don't remember that too well.

Q: Do you remember Kristallnacht?

A: Oh yes, oh yes, I remember it very well. I remember it because somebody, and I don't remember who it was, I think it probably was this neighbor of my parents, came down and told my mother to hide my father. And he was in a closet, and they never came into our house, as it turned out. And they -- a lot of men were being taken away, my -- my stepfather was taken away in Düsseldorf, my father was not. I'm not sure that he hid in our house, or somebody else's house, that I don't remember. All I remember distinctly is there was a raid before Kristallnacht, I think just a short time before Kristallnacht, where they went through Jewish homes and looked for, in quote, forbidden books. Now, forbidden books weren't necessarily books by Jewish authors. Anyone who was who in literature was a forbidden book, whether it was Bernard Shaw, or what. And I will never forget this, my father was -- downstairs in the basement there was a wash cellar, and a big stove where people would boil their wash in those days. And my father was burning books, and he was practically crying. And h -- he said to me, "I am getting rid of my old friends." And these were his books, because they were going through Jewish homes, and if you had a book that was on the forbidden list, forget it, they would arrest you. Now that I remember.

Q: So you watched him do that?

A: Yeah.

Q: Was this very sad for you too, or was it sad because you saw how unhappy he was?

A: He was very unhappy, and whenever he was unhappy it was very, very sad for me.

Q: Right.

A: You know, it -- it -- I mean, you sense when your parents are upset. I also sensed that my parents were trying so hard to get us out of Germany. And I remember maps on the floor, and studying South America, and ur -- Uruguay, and places like that, that they were hope there -- hope they were going to go, with their cousins. So --

Q: Okay, we have to stop the tap -- is -- okay. [interruption] Oh, I'm sorry, I was confused.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: What did you see on Kristallnacht? Did you see anything that night, or did you go out the next day and see the destruction?

A: Went out the next day and saw the destruction. My parents wouldn't let us go out of -- get out of our apartment. I mean, my mother, I think. I don't know, I think my father was -- somebody, probably that couple upstairs, the communists probably had him in their apartment.

Q: Now let me ask you something. Your fr -- people are wanting to protect your father because he's known as Jewish.

A: Yes.

Q: But your mother's also known as Jewish --

A: Yeah, but they knew -- these people knew -- the Gestapo knew she was not from th -- racially Jewish.

Q: I see, so that she could be protected.

A: And -- and -- yeah, and these people upstairs -- he was only a worker, but he was a very intelligent man, he was a communist and he -- he knew what was going on. He was constantly

listening to what they call the Fremdhörer, which was the foreign sender, which was England, you know. So they were very well informed. I went out the next day, and there was nothing left of my school, it was all burned down. And my parents told me that the Düsseldorf fire department was there in full force, and they were putting hoses on the adjacent buildings, to make sure that the adjacent buildings weren't burning down, and they let the Jewish buildings burn to the ground. And these were enormous buildings, I mean, stone buildings, it was beautiful.

Q: Did you now get frightened?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No. I re -- when I think of it, it's just incr -- incredible.

Q: It's incredible, no?

A: Yeah, it's incre -- I just can't believe that this ever happened sometimes.

Q: Were you known as a Mischling or not? You were --

A: Not among -- not in school, and not -- no. I was a Mischling -- there were two kinds of Mischlingen. There were prefer -- preferential Mischlingen, those who were born to a Jewish parent, one Jewish parent, but raised either as a Protestant or a Catholic. They were the privil -- preferred -- preferential. And then there were the Judischer Mischlingen, that's was me. I mean, was far as the racial politics go, I was still a Mischling. But I was a Jew, and I was registered with my brother in the Jewish community, and I was given the ri -- Jewish religion at birth, and so was my brother, so there was no question, and the Gestapo had all the papers.

Q: Right.

A: And the Previligierter Mischlingen, they had a much easier life than the Jewish Mischlingen. They were able to go to -- to public school. I we -- we weren't. And they were not really terribly persecuted until -- and I don't know this distinctly, but somewhere at the very beginning of '45, when they rounded up Christian Mischlingen, you know, the pref -- prefer -- pre -- preferential Mischlingen, and sent them to Terezín. Now what I only learned not terribly long ago, which I didn't know, because we were deported from Terezín at the end of '44 -- I mean, October of '44, is that they were building gas chambers and ovens in Terezín, that I didn't know. And that supposedly, I mean this is what -- and I really want to research this, that the ovens were already finished, the only thing that was missing were the doors. Now, whether they were going to shoot people, or put them -- o-or how they were going to kill them, but they had ovens. So, all these people, who felt relatively secure until '45, wouldn't have been very secure.

Q: When does Walter have to stop going to Duisberg t -- for school? Do you think it's after Kristallnacht?

A: I think so.

Q: So it's the --

A: I think it was after Kristallnacht, but I don't remember how -- how long afterwards.

Q: Right.

A: I have a pretty darn good memory, and as far as my experiences go -- you know, I have a diary f -- which I should have brought, and I forgot that, from 1945. So I should have, you know --

Q: You wrote the diary in 1945?

A: Yes.

Q: Ah.

A: Yeah. I wrote it on the road back, on paper. And then I got to Lippborg and my aunt gave me the diary, and Buschi helped me be -- re -- I put it in my diary. Yeah, but that I didn't think about, yeah.

Q: So, at some point after Kristallnacht, Walter is home with you?

A: Right, and he has no schooling whatsoever --

Q: So do you --

A: -- except Uncle Karl, he got private lessons, and the Schnooks, and I don't know if they perished, I probably should look it up. They probably perished. They were the last teachers, and they also gave private lessons to my brother, and to me.

Q: And were they paid?

A: My parents paid them, yes.

Q: So your parents were st --

A: I mean, they didn't pay my -- my -- my uncle, but they --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- they paid -- yeah.

Q: So they're working enough where there's -- somehow there's enough to pay people, a minimal amount, I suppose.

A: Yeah, and also they had -- you know, they were constantly selling things. They still had a few paintings that they were selling, and my mother got rid of all her jewelry, she was selling things, you know, little by little. So that helped to a degree.

Q: Right. Did you notice depression in your parents, or did they --

A: They didn't try to show it ever.

Q: Yeah.

A: When we were with them, and that lasted, believe it or not, all the way to Auschwitz.

Q: Really?

A: My father tried to -- to put -- to hide from us as much as he could. I didn't realize it, I only realized it later, because my father was transported out of Terezín about a year before we were all transported to Auschwitz. And he was working on the bunker that Hitler was -- they were building for Hitler in Berlin. And when he came back, he seemed to me like a different person. He wouldn't talk about anything that happened to him working on this construction of the bunker in Berlin, but he -- he did tell me he was working with other people from concentration camps. And I think even though in Terezín most of us -- nobody knew that there was an Auschwitz, or there were extermination camps. I really -- later on am convinced that he got a full dose of what was going on from some of the people who are working with him in Berlin, and he never -- he never talked about his experience in Berlin, never.

Q: But you saw a change.

A: I saw a change in him.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: So essentially the -- the good spirits, however you wish to describe it was a question of ignorance of -- in some way, or ignoring evidence --

A: No, he was -- he was trying to -- to be so supportive and to give us so much hope. He wanted us to live, and he wanted to see my mother again. And he did this even after he came back from Berlin, but somehow -- he was always a very open person, but whenever I asked about what happened, what was he doing in Berlin, he was like a closed book, he would -- just would not open up. But no, he never -- I mean he -- he was encouraging us all the way.

Q: So that must have been important for you.

A: It was very important for us, very important. And that he also was able to give us a lot of food. You know, he -- he -- he was a man who had held an enormous position at Karstadt's. He was a terrific mathematician. But he could do anything. He could work in construction. And in Terezín what he did when they asked him what his profession was, he didn't say merchant or -- or whatever, he said he was a carpenter. And he ended up with a carpentry job in Terezín in the bauhof, which gave him the chance to steal as much wood as he could, to give it to the cooks, and to get extra food for us. So you -- do you get a picture?

Q: Yes, of what kind of a person --

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Do you remember the start of the war in 1939?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Is that big news, and --

A: Well, it was big news. I think my parents expected it because Hitler was going into adjacent -- you know, he was taking over at first Austria and etcetera. But we -- our last apartment was right by the railroad tracks, which used to be an -- was a house -- an apartment house owned by a Jewish family, and this was the last place we were allowed to live in, and it was not in the best area. Excuse me. And we could see the railroad tracks from our apartment, and we saw the freight trains passing for hours and hours and hours, loaded with equipment. Guns, and you know, war equipment. And my father and my mother were talking about it, and it was clear to us that Hitler was preparing for something, and that he was going to take over another country. So my parents, yes, I mean, they tried to keep it from us, but I was too old by that time, and I

realized that war seemed imminent. War seemed imminent and still there was hope, but war and extermination of the Jews just -- that's something that they never put two and two together.

Q: So even all of these restrictions on the Jews, and the taking away of apartments --

A: Right.

Q: -- and good jobs, etcetera --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- did not mean to you that something dire was going to happen.

A: No, this guy eventually was going to -- I -- I thought we were going to be restricted in our apartment, which from where we came from was, you know, pretty going downhill. My parents had to work very hard. I was prepared that maybe they would put me into a -- into labor for some war effort or something. But it never occurred to me -- I mean, da -- can a healthy human mind picture what eventually happened? You know --

Q: No, no and you --

A: No.

Q: -- at -- in 1939 you're only 13, you may be --

A: Right, right.

Q: -- more adult than you were --

A: I was much more concerned reading books by Karl May, which was an author who was very popular, who had never been to America, and who wrote all these stories about the fights between Indians and cowboys. And I was reading these books, I mean, I didn't read the books that little girls should read, I wrote these books, I -- it was -- I was insatiable. No -- and, you know, I'm -- I'm not sure whether -- what my parents, if they really thought that things were going to -- to get so bad that our life were threatened, they certainly didn't show it.

Q: They didn't say. Now, do you start dating at this age?

A: Yes. I'm trying to think. There were only a relatively small number of people my age left in Düsseldorf. A lot of people had been able to get out of the country, and a lot of my friends had left, some of them legally and some illegally. But there were a bunch of people, some of them I wasn't clo -- close with, but at least a half a dozen or so that I became very close to. They were older than I was by a few years. They were deported in 1941. I'm trying to think -- so I think I probably met Kurt in 1939, or '40.

Q: This is Kurt Eckstein?

A: Right.

Q: Yeah.

A: And he was learning to be an auto mechanic, because he felt, and his father felt -- his mother had died, that that would give him a better opportunity to emigrate into another country. And we -- we had -- we danced, we had a Victrola, and i -- I didn't know how to dance, they taught me how to dance. There were a couple of people, they were half Jewish. Their father had been Christian and he had died, so they were left with their Jewish mother, and a gra -- and a Jewish grandmother. And they were the most good looking guys you had ever seen. Tall and blonde, and just terrific guys. And then there was a girl, and she was part of the group, and I didn't care for her that much, I felt she was a loose girl. She let them touch her up and down and this is something that I just, you know, thought was really not right. And we had a very good time. And then in '41, when the first transports were leaving Düsseldorf, they all went into that transport.

Q: The two boys and the girl?

A: And the girl.

Q: But not you.

A: No, and Kurt.

Q: And Kurt.

A: And Kurt.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And I gave a pledge to them that I would visit their grandmother. Their mother was deported too, but their grandmother wasn't. So their grandmother was the only one left, and she was very old lady, she was kind of bent, and -- and inconsolable that -- and I went there a lot, and I don't know what -- where she ended up, I can't remember. She probably was deported to Terezín, and then, you know, Terezín was a transit camp.

Q: Right, right.

A: And they went to Minsk, that I know, that they went to Minsk. And in Minsk we now -- I just read an article about it not too long ago, they were all shot. So that was Kurt Eckstein.

Q: But Kurt was 18 [indecipherable]

A: Yeah, he was -- he --

Q: -- and you were 13.

A: No, I was a bit older than that, I was born in '26, and Kurt -- how old was I in --

Q: Well, '39 you're 13. So when do you meet him? Somewhere '39 - '40, right?

A: Yeah, I think --

Q: So you're 13 - 14?

A: -- '40 -- probably '40, yeah.

Q: '40, okay, so you're 14.

A: Yeah.

Q: Still not a grown woman.

A: But I was very mature for my age --

Q: Yeah, I was going to ask --

A: -- and I tell you where I met him. I met him at my Uncle Karl's house, who was my Spanish and English teacher, because Kurt was taking lessons from Uncle Karl, too. And Uncle Karl was vouching for Kurt, and rightly so, and he -- I remember, I mean my parents must -- now in retrospect that you ask me that, they must have had some questions about it. I remember Uncle Karl told my parents that he was the most wonderful kid, and he trusted him implicitly. And he had good reason to, yes.

Q: So your parents were worried that he might try to take advantage of you in some way?

A: Yeah, because my parents knew from me, what was going on with Ruth and the other -- you know, the other two guys.

Q: Right, right.

A: But Ruth was older, and -- and I'm sure they -- they were sexually active. Well, I'm glad they were, you know, because they --

Q: Considering what happened, yeah.

A: -- had -- they had, you know, they had a very short life left.

Q: Right.

A: And they seemed to -- you know, it's very easy to stereotype somebody, she was a loose girl and all this kind of stuff. She was --

Q: Well, especially when you're that age, it's very easy, right?

A: Right. And she was a very beautiful girl --

Q: Yes.

A: -- I remember, I was very jealous, she was very sexy looking.

Q: Yes?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you get your period?

A: Yeah, I -- I'm sure, yeah, I think I got it probably by the time I was 13, yeah. Yeah, I remember, yeah I did, yeah. But I was very, you know, I was very innocent. I didn't -- I wasn't -- you know, my mo -- my parents told me -- I knew where babies came from and all this, but I don't think I thought about it very much. It never -- there were certain things you did and you didn't do.

Q: Right, right.

A: And -- and I think th -- I think my parents were pretty open, but not like they are today, you know, I'm --

Q: Was it important for you to menstruate? Was th -- was that a big deal [indecipherable]

A: I think I was frightened to death. I thought I was getting -- you know, I think I menstruated pretty early, but I don't remember exactly, but I -- I know I went to my mother and there was something terribly wrong with me. So then I got a talk what this was all about, you know.

Q: Because you hadn't know this before.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Right. Well.

Q: Now, were you Bat-mitzvah'd?

A: No, that was not --

Q: That was never done.

A: -- that was never heard of in -- in Europe. That is a -- that's an American invention.

Q: Okay.

A: It is.

Q: Right, right. So do things get even worse, ’39 and ’40, as the war --

A: They -- they’re getting worse because we -- we can’t sit on benches any more because it says Jews can’t sit here. We can’t swim in the Rhine river any more because it says Jews can’t swim here any more. And -- and we can’t go to the movies. I remember when I was in school, and we used to walk -- from school we used to walk home, and we passed by a movie house, and there was a picture of a mouse playing the piano. We called it the American mouse, and we wanted so badly to see that picture, that Mickey Mouse picture, but there -- you couldn’t get in. There was a sign, Jews cannot enter. And Konigs Allee in Düsseldorf was like Fifth Avenue. And pretty soon there were signs all over, Jews can’t in -- enter, Jews can’t be serviced he -- served here any more, etcetera. Those were the stores that used to have, we speak English, parler Francais and all this as a -- for an international city. But on top of that we speak English and -- and parler Francais, no was, Jews can’t enter.

Q: So these kinds of signs proliferate --

A: All over.

Q: -- all over th -- the -- is it after the wa -- after 1939, between ’39 and ’41, it -- it gets considerably worse --

A: Yes.

Q: -- or it’s progressive from ’33, do you think?

A: No, no, no.

Q: No.

A: Not from ’33, but it was -- it was gradual even from ’33, you couldn’t go to school, to a -- you couldn’t -- you -- do many things, but the -- these drastic steps were coming in very short intervals, starting really, I would say, from ’38 on.

Q: Mm-hm. Right.

A: And then progressively worse and worse.

Q: And in ’41 you have to wear the star?

A: Yeah, and then we had to also have a new middle initial. Sarah and Israel.

Q: Israel for boys, and --

A: Right.

Q: -- or men.

A: And then our stamps, our food stamps had Jude, Jew, stamped all through the food stamps, and if I went to a butcher shop with my food stamps -- I did all the shopping for the family because my mother worked. And if the butcher didn’t want to wait on us, he had a perfect right to do so, because we had Jewish food stamps. Or he -- they could turn us back not to come into their establishment when we -- when we had to wear the Jewish star. And then they -- the Nazi youth would beat us up.

Q: Were you beaten?

A: Oh yes. I was scared to go out. And then they took my bicycle away, which was my form of transportation. You know, it was all gradually. Then they took all the jewelry away. And the only reason why I have things is because of my aunts. Because, don’t forget, I wouldn’t have a si -- I wouldn’t have the -- a -- anything, I wouldn’t even have some of the documents I’m going to give to you if it weren’t for my aunts, because my mother couldn’t keep them either.

Q: Right, right.

A: Even the police -- the police Aufenthaltsbescheingung, where you have to -- to inform them that you're leaving, I have that, I'm going to --

End of Tape Three

Beginning Tape Four

Q: Ursula, we're in sort of '39 - '40 - '41, we're in that period of time --

A: Okay, mm-hm.

Q: -- when things are progressively getting much worse --

A: Right.

Q: -- for you.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And I think when we ended the last tape, you were talking about even your bicycle was confiscated --

A: Yes.

Q: -- so your mode of transportation is lost.

A: Exactly.

Q: I wanted to know if you had bad dreams that you remember?

A: I don't recall that.

Q: You don't recall any bad dreams?

A: No, no.

Q: Cause I was just wondering if your anxiety was coming out somewhere.

A: I think -- it depends on the person, I think I'm -- it's very difficult to analyze yourself.

Q: Yeah.

A: But I think when there is tremendous pressure, I get -- become very strong. And I think that was actually true when I was a young teenager, and I think that I would never be -- have the tendency to kind of self-indulge and feel sorry for myself. It was always the idea of keep on going and survive. And I think that -- I'm -- don't know where it came from, it comes from my

parents too, and I think it helped me a lot. It helped me in Auschwitz. I mean, if you ask me the same question about Auschwitz, I can only tell you that I wrapped myself into a cocoon and I was living inwards. And somehow, it sounds strange or unbelievable to a lot of people, but it's the truth. What happened outside of me, even when that woman was shot in front of me, it somehow didn't totally touch me inside. You know, I was able to do that, and I didn't do it consciously, it came just naturally. The defenses kind of helped me.

Q: Right. But up until the deportation, you had your entire family, who was al -- who couldn't protect you from everything.

A: Right.

Q: But there was a kind of --

A: Right, right.

Q: -- buffer for you, right?

A: There was, and -- certainly, and I think what helps people young and old is when they are very, very busy and focused. And I was very busy. I was studying English and Spanish, I was getting some education by hook or by crook, which the Nazis didn't want us to have, and I was keeping house, and I was cooking. And my father worked from dawn till dusk in construction, and my mother worked very hard in the factory, in the belt factory. So I didn't have that much time, and somehow I was able, the little time when I had some was at night, and I wasn't supposed to read in bed until 12, one or two o'clock at night, but I did that, and I always had a flashlight, I actually, you know, read by flashlight. So --

Q: Did you read under the covers, or over?

A: Yes, when they -- well, I listened if somebody was coming, because they knew that I was reading, and I was reprim -- reprimanded many, many times, but those were the only times that I really could read. I was very busy, you know, taking --

Q: What were you reading?

A: Oh, junk.

Q: Was that the only thing that was available?

A: No, but it appealed to me, these -- these western stories. I must have read every one of these Karl May books, which --

Q: They were really popular, weren't they?

A: They were really popular, and they were really boys' books. And there were some girls' books that were very popular, but I didn't go for those. I went for the Karl May books, and I didn't go for the nice girl books, and the romance stuff, but for the Indians and the wars, and I don't know. A psychologist has to decide what's in it.

Q: And where did you get the books from?

A: I got them in school when I was still going to my school, and then my father got some for me because I was so interested in -- in them. And I don't really remember, maybe my aunts.

Q: Tell me, did your father burn all of his books, or a selected group?

A: No, just the books that he knew were on the forbidden list.

Q: I see.

A: But don't forget, my father had a tremendous library when we were in -- in Aplerbeck, in that suburb there of Dortmund. And then, by the time they moved to Düsseldorf, they had to get into a much smaller apartment, and they had lost a lot, and he had sold a lot of things. What he did with some of the books that he did not take to Düsseldorf, whether he gave them away, or sold

them -- I know they tried to sell a lot of things, I really don't know. But certainly that whole set of furniture, that was sold, I know that, in -- in his study. It was beautiful furniture with a bookcase that covered almost the whole wall, and leather chair and -- and a -- and a big desk, because I know that so well, I'm not -- wasn't supposed to go into my father's study, but I often did, when I know nobody was around, and I was rummaging around, and I did read some books that were kind of forbidden books for me, which were in his library and had a lot of sex in it. I don't think I understood a lot of it, but I read it. My parents didn't know that I read it.

Q: Tell me about your brother during this period. Now, he's not going to school, but he's significantly younger.

A: Well, he went to school longer than I did, because when our school was burned down, d -- Duisberg was the only --

Q: Right.

A: -- Jewish school that was still in existence, and so he traveled by train with a permit to Duisberg, and that was before we had to wear the star. And he -- wa -- he -- he got some additional tutoring from my Uncle Karl, and my father did a lot of tutoring in math, which was his strength, I mean, he was a man who -- who could give you fractions and anything by ha -- in his head. He didn't even have to use a pen and a -- a pencil and paper. So he did get s -- instruction. He also had a very beautiful voice, and he -- and he loved to sing. So wi -- you know, we made the most of what we could.

Q: Did he help you with the housework, was he in the house a lot?

A: No, not particular. I mean, I think he was willing probably, if I asked him something, but in Germany that was really a girl's work and a woman's work. Not -- my father would do anything,

but I'm -- I don't particularly recall that I asked him to do much in the house. I probably asked him to go and -- and buy certain things, or go to the store, but --

Q: But was that also difficult because there were certain hours only when you could go to the store, or you could be refused easily?

A: Well, we could be refused, but it was worse after we wore the star. See, before we wore the star, people didn't yi -- know you were Jewish. In Düsseldorf some of the people did know, who know the Lennebergs, which was a family who had lived in Düsseldorf for a long, long time. I mean, they're a very established family. But I recall mostly being beaten up and being refused when we first had these food stamps which had printed Jude all through them. And when we -- certainly after we had to wear the star.

Q: And who beat you up?

A: Well, bunch of kids who came out of school, and many of them in uniform. The Hitler youth and the BDM, I mean they were uniformed, and you know some people have made the connection, oh they are like -- they were like the boy scouts, and the girl scouts, well they were not. They were indoctrinated. They had leaders who actually told their -- the young people under them that it was their duty as good Germans -- and I'm talking now about Germans, not about Jews, to listen to their fathers, and -- to their father and mother and grandparents and family, and if they heard anything in the house, that anybody in their family said something derogatory about the Führer, it was their duty to tell him. This was the -- the leader, the boy scout le -- the youth leader. And there were many people who found themselves in trouble because their own children denounced them. And these were the kids who were made to feel like heroes if they di -- did that. And their leaders were usually young guys in their late teens, who were good scouts, very good hikers, you know, like -- like the boy scouts. And -- somebody they could look up to. They

wanted to be as good as climbing mountains and -- and swimming and all this kind of thing. And they were much more impressionable when these young people talked to them, and told them was to do, than their parents, which is a normal thing even in a normal society. And that's what happened. And then if -- especially after we wore the star, there were bunch of kids, they had these meetings almost on a nightly basis, where they were indoctrinated, they sang the Hitler songs. And they came out of these meetings, and if they saw a Jew, they would beat him up. And it's mu -- it's much easier for 10 kids to do it than for one. One would start, oh, there's a Jew, come on. And then they would start saying, Jude ist signate spitze augen ecke, arschloch dreckig, which is -- it's very vulgar, you know, I translated it in my book, but the Jew with the -- with the pointy nose, and a dirty asshole, and you know, things like that. And that's what we were subjected to every day when we were out. I hated to go out any more.

Q: Did you fight back when they beat you?

A: Oh, no, I mean --

Q: No.

A: -- if you fought back --

Q: It was worse.

A: -- and I was -- that's one thing my parents told me, never to fight with BDM, which were the girls, or the Hitler youth, because if you were one person they would gang up on you, and certainly the police would come, and y -- I would have put my parents into harm's way, too. Who told you to do that? Did your parents indoctrinate you to do that?

Q: So were you hurt?

A: No, I was never hurt. I was pushed against the wall a coup -- people were hurt, I knew people who were hurt, but I was never hurt. And my parents asked me couldn't I do my shopping and

stuff at a certain time, and don't go out in the late afternoon, and then pretty soon it was resolved, we weren't allowed to go out at dusk any more anyway. So --

Q: So in July of 1942, you get a notice to go to Terezín.

A: Yeah, I was the f --

Q: And on -- and only you.

A: Only I, I was the first one to get that notice. And my parents -- which again, you know, I was a young girl, I didn't quite a -- quite appreciate what my parents must have gone through. And I remember their discussions, what are they going to do. They would refer to me as a child, even though, you know, by -- by that time, in f -- in '42 --

Q: You're 16.

A: I was 16. They can't let their child go alone. And then they also, rightly so felt, well now, she's going to go now to a labor camp. Nobody knew about concentration camps. Extermination camps, nobody had -- could even imagine. Excuse me. Now then, she's going to go to one labor camp, and then maybe next month Bübchen, my brother would be sent to another labor camp, and my father -- we would all be separated. So I know they went through a terrible time, trying to figure out what to do. The conclusion they made was wrong, they should have let me go alone, but they didn't, and they all volunteered to go with me.

Q: Including your mother?

A: Including my mother. And I had -- believe I had mentioned before that Puetz, who was the head of the Gestapo, hated my mother. And I'm sure it was just to hurt her, certainly no -- he knew where we were going, but certainly not out of compassion that he wasn't going to let her go with us. And he probably felt because I say this since he pursued my mother at the factory where she was working, at the Schreyeck's, almost on a weekly basis, he probably felt that if he

couldn't have her, if -- he was going to trap her, and she was going to -- to get to what the Germans used to call numero sicher, number secure, which was a camouflage word for sending people to prison. So then he said she couldn't go with us, and she appealed, and no way was he going to allow her to go with us. So my brother and my father and I, we were deported. And in Düsseldorf they had a wonderful place to deport Jews from, which was a Düsseldorf slaughterhouse, the Schlachthof. The reason was probably partially vicious and partially convenience, because the Schlachthof had a lot of train rails, so they could divert trains to the Schlachthof without having a spectacle at the main train station deporting the Jews.

Q: Do you think this guy Puetz wanted to have a relationship with your mother?

A: Oh, I'm sure of it.

Q: You're sure of that.

A: I'm sure of it not just from my mother, but I'm sure of it from things my father said, and what the Schreyecks have said. Because even under the circumstances my mother was racially not a Jew. And this was a racial thing, and after he had made sure she couldn't go with us to the camp, he still pursued her, you know, which was somewhat unusual.

Q: Right. At the time -- w-were you included in the conversation about what to do, whether they all should go, or you should go alone?

A: Not directly.

Q: Not directly.

A: No. I was included, of course, when we had to make a similar decision in Terezín.

Q: Right.

A: But at that time it was mostly my parents. And I know that they didn't get any sleep, that they were constantly throwing it back and forth. And I would have to make it up, and I don't do that. I try to be as truthful to my memory as I can.

Q: Right.

A: Whether I said something, I can go alone, which is probably -- it's most likely I said it, but I can't remember that.

Q: Right, right.

A: So I don't want to say that.

Q: Do you have any recollection of feeling relieved that you weren't going alone? Do you have any recollection of what it felt like once the decision was made?

A: I don't think --

Q: Cause you may not.

A: -- I don't think I remember having that kind of reaction.

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: I think it was a terrible trauma for me, for my father, which I sensed. I mean, even though he tried to have a stiff upper lip, but that he wasn't able to do any more. I was getting older, and I knew my father. And this separation from my mother was very, very difficult for him. And times were so uncertain. But yeah, I can't really --

Q: So are you folks hearing any rumors in 1942 about what happened when the Nazis go into Russia? When World War II fully starts in 1941? You don't hear anything?

A: No, we only hear what the Nazis told us in their propaganda. We heard through my father's communist friend in the same building, and when my father listened to also, which was British news, what was happening in the world, in the war. And it didn't sound very good at that time, as

you know. But nobody that I know of ever made any -- gave any explanation to what happened in the camps. And as you know, that even when people managed to escape some of the camps, and try to bring it to the attention of the American government, which I didn't know, we -- we only learned that, you know, after the war, nobody wanted to listen, nobody wanted to -- to believe it. And what I have to say to you is had I not been in Auschwitz, had I not been a witness, had not -- had I not seen what I have seen, I'm not sure I could believe it. A teacher at one of the high schools was very upset with two students. It's a very large high school in a working class area in -- in New Jersey, and in New Jersey it's compulsory to teach about the Holocaust. And these kids, at least one of them claimed, and maybe the other one agreed then, that this was all made up, this never happened, and when she said, "Well, we're going to have a speaker who was there," they made fun of that. So when I came to this high school with ha -- which has two and a half thousand students, I was told that these two guys will be put right in the front in the auditorium. And their attitude was such I knew this meant trouble. So I made eye contact with them, and I said, "I understand that there are some people here who believe and are convinced that this never happened." And they were, you know, they were perking up. And then I said, "Well, I can understand it. If I hadn't been there, I wouldn't believe it either." And from then on, I had no more problem with them.

Q: Interesting.

A: You know, it disarmed them. But I didn't say this t -- just to calm them down, I really mean that. This is totally, totally incomprehensible to any normal human being, what I saw. Totally. And so I -- I -- I really think it's beyond a civilized person's comprehension.

Q: Well let me ask you, you must have met people -- this is going beyond where we are in the time, but you must have met people who went through something of what you went through.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Perhaps were even in the camps longer than you were.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: Who did realize what was happening before they saw it. Do you -- do you have an understanding of how some people can imagine this happening? There were people who left Germany.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: This -- this guy who said, you know, I forget who it was, who left and said the -- you know, soon you're not going to be able to ride the buses, and everybody was laughing.

A: Yes.

Q: So he seemed to be able to imagine at least some stuff.

A: Yeah, but he was one in a million.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I mean, don't get my statistics --

Q: Yeah, yeah, right.

A: -- I didn't mean this --

Q: It doesn't ma --

A: -- you know. I think ho -- Mr. Rosenstein was very different from the majority of Jews. I can't talk about the eastern Jews. They -- except I have friends, and I made friends in the displaced person camp, and I made friends in the camps, who came from cultured eastern Jewish families. I'm not talking about that. I mean the shtetl Jews. They were different from a lot of us, and they were much more in their own circle, and I don't know how they reacted. I -- I have -- I have no clue.

Q: Right, right.

A: Some of them had been subjected to persecution in Poland and in Russia in the -- in the shtetl, but I just could never have imagined what happened. And I think these unconscious decisions, believe me, there were many people who fell to pieces.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: People who ran to the wire to electrocute themselves. The only time Buschi and I and Zdena were thinking about that, when we were going to be transported back to Auschwitz, because we knew what was awaiting us. But the instincts to live are very, very strong, and are stronger in some people than in others. The strength physically of some people, can not be measured in height or weight. It is something else. I think that supports means a great deal. Now maybe if I would have been all alone someplace in an extermination camp, without anybody to support me, but I with all the mizaira, I had the luck to be with these five women, and the way we supported each other really helped us, and helped us to, as I like to put it, put ourselves into a cocoon and not to even be aware of what was happening outside of us. So we all need some support, and it can't --it cannot all come from the inside, but a lot of it does come from the inside.

Q: But tell me, do you remember what it was like in the slaughterhouse as you were waiting? Had you --

A: It wasn't -- it was confusion, and we didn't know -- we knew we were going to a -- in cold -- in quote, labor camp called Theresienstadt. Well, I had no clue what Theresienstadt was, we knew -- we knew that. We were told that the transport would go to Theresienstadt, and we knew it was in what was then Czechoslovakia, and we had our --

Q: Is that what the notice said to you, or did the notice just order a deportation?

A: The notice just ordered us whether the -- the Jewish Judische Gemeinde is a Jewish organization in Düsseldorf, whether they were told that it would go to Theresienstadt, but I, myself didn't remember that particularly, how we found out, but the -- the piece of paper I'm going to give to you, in my father's handwriting, at the police station in Düsseldorf, where he had to notify them that he was leaving Düsseldorf, in that it says Theresienstadt.

Q: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

A: So -- you see? So I know that somehow we knew we were -- I knew we were -- knew we were going to Theresienstadt, but how we were informed of that, I cannot rec -- recall.

Q: So even though he was being deported, he has to go to the police station and tell them?

A: Yeah, I gave it -- I have that piece of paper for you. I have that.

Q: Quite amazing, isn't it?

A: It's an apmeldunk for my brother, and with our names, Ursula Sarah, Otto Israel, and Walter Israel. So that -- that piece of paper is in there. I don't think I've given you these papers yet. Yeah.

Q: Quite amazing. Okay, we're going to have to stop the tape now and change.

A: Okay.

End of Tape Four

Beginning Tape Five

Q: What was it like in that slaughterhouse? Were there just hundreds of thousands of people --

A: Well, is -- that was like bedlam, and don't forget, by that time, in '42, a number of transports had already left Düsseldorf at the end of '41, and at the very beginning of '42, and -- which were not going to Terezín, but many of them had gone to Poland. And a lot of the people in our transport were quite old, and not in good physical condition. And I remember there were tables which were manned by Gestapo secret police, and there was one table which was manned by a representative of -- from the Jewish community, which had the list of names of all the Jews in Düsseldorf, who belonged -- who -- o-of Jewish faith, and the Jewish community had this list. And they were checked off, you know the Germans were very good at ch -- at anything that was lists or bureaucracy. And so we were checked off by the Jewish -- a representative of the Jewish community, and we were checked off by the SS, to be sure that everybody who had gotten -- gotten the notification to present themselves had appeared. And then we had to go to another person, a -- a Nazi at a -- at a table where the name, like Ursula Pawel was twice now -- Jewish community the -- the SS, and then the secret police, a third one, were given a sign, which were put on around our neck, which I don't recall whether it had a number, that I can't recall, but it had my name on it.

Q: On the front?

A: Yes. Everybody on -- in the transport was given a sign. It wasn't huge, you know, it was a sign that -- with a string around the neck.

Q: And was this -- do you remember if it was handwritten?

A: I think it was. It might not have been all of it, but certainly the number, I think, was handwritten, and if I recall it correctly, it was written with pretty heavy black ink, or you know, pen or whatever.

Q: And you were supposed to wear this on the train -- wear this [indecipherable]

A: Oh yes, we had to wear this on the train, and then we were told to put our suitcases at a certain place and not to touch them, they were going to take care of the suitcases. Of course, we never saw the suitcases again. These were the suitcases that had been packed for -- from 1938 on, to go to this country. And if it hadn't been for the American consul, we would have been in this country. And those suitcases, we never saw again. N-Nobody on the transport. The only thing that we were allowed to keep was some hand luggage, which was made out of like -- like a small rucksack material, which I remember I had, it was one of those, like when you go on a hiking trip, and it was a bag like that. Now, that's all I had.

Q: And what -- do you remember what was in it?

A: I can't recall exactly. Probably some food or something, but n-nothing that I remem -- no clothing, nothing.

Q: And this was the summer. So what were you we -- were you --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- you had nothing for cold weather, obviously.

A: No.

Q: And was it very hot?

A: It was extremely hot, and we -- we -- when we arrived by train in Baushowiczy, which was Bauschowitz, because there was no train station, no rails to Terezín, they were only built later for the sole purpose of transporting Jews from Terezín to the east. But we arrived in Bauschowitz,

and there were trucks there with Czechs who had been in Terezín since ’41, and some of them had striped uniforms on, which also was not continued, you know, after more and more transport arrived, they did not give uniforms to inmates any more. And they had to -- they worked for the Nazis to -- to take all the luggage out of the luggage cars, and put them on trucks. And of course, they were then transported back to Germany. We were given some clothing later on in Terezín, which -- what transport they came from I don’t know, but they were pretty bad clothing. But as far -- y -- one thing I do remember, that my mother insisted that we wear our coats. Now why she insisted that, I don’t know, but it was something we did not put in our luggage. We either had it on our arm, and so we did have our coats.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And these coats, I remember these coats, and my mother reminded me many times, because she had a German tailor who was an anti-Nazi and was very good to -- to her, and he -- she got some material and he made these coats for us. So they were supposed to also take us to America. So my brother -- and I remember the coat too, because I blamed the coat very much on the fact that my -- my brother was selected immediately to be -- to be killed. You know, he was 13 years old, and he was of average height for his age. He had a very young face, and he had this coat, which he had outgrown. And a boy with a coat, with a gray coat -- and you know with a -- half the arms are -- are showing, it makes a young child even look younger. So, you know, you can argue. I went through this in my mind, you know, how big was he, because there were some kids they were 14, by some -- somehow they managed to survive, but my brother didn’t. He looked like a -- a young kid.

Q: When you got on the train to go to Terezín, what sort of a train was it? Was it a passenger train, was it a --

A: They had some passenger cars, and they had some cattle cars, and we were in the passenger car. And I am not sure that it -- there was any significance to that, whether this was calculated or not. And I remember the two people who were on the train with us, and in the same -- on the same bench, or whatever you want to call it, and one was a nurse, Bella, and one was a woman my father knew, he -- she was a radiologist in Boston. And they were in the same compartment. There were other people in --

Q: A radiologist in Boston? You just said --

A: In -- in Düsseldorf.

Q: Ah, sorry.

A: Yeah, I'm sorry.

Q: It's okay.

A: I didn't mean that. Sorry about that.

Q: Yeah.

A: I think my association with saying Boston is because as you know, I went into x-ray, and I was in touch with a lot of radiologists in Boston. No, she was from Düsseldorf, and she was on the transport, and I don't know what happened to them. I mean, I know they got to Terezín, but I don't know what happened to them, and I couldn't -- I couldn't remember the physician's last name, I only remember Bella. I was very impressed with them, because there was a lot of medical language going back and forth between Bella, who was a nurse, and this physician. And I thought that would be really neat for me to be in medicine. That I remember.

Q: Was that a terrible trip?

A: I don't recall that it was terrible for me. I think it was terrible for older people, and some of them were in cattle cars. We were in a passenger car. I think that we had some food that my

mother had prepared for us in our sidebags, and somehow between the conversation we had, and my father had a -- some -- there was some men he was friendly with, and they had lively conversations. We weren't depressed. I think he was more than we were because of the separation from my mother, but I'm not sure that I understood, or that anybody understood what we were facing, because we were going to go to this wonderful labor camp, and then somebody spread the word this was a privileged camp for German Jews. And when we came to Terezín, the first thing that was very difficult for me was the language. The Czech prisoners descended on the train, and this was a language I'd never heard in my life, and I couldn't make out what they were saying. And most Czechs speak German, especially educated Czechs. Of course, we all hated anything German. And even though we were Jews in Terezín, do you think the Czechs would have spoken one word -- the ch -- Czech Jews would have spoken one word of German with us? I mean, I was completely lost. And I tried to -- to get some help from some Czech inmates. As soon as they heard German, that was like raising the red flag, you know. So we had to -- we had to really battle on more than one front. And the Czechs had come to Terezín, they were the first people to come to Terezín. So all the good quarters were occupied by Czechs. The jobs that were really good, like in the kitchen were by the ch -- the Czechs already held those. And I was just very lucky. A lot of people weren't as lucky as I was. I immediately volunteered to work. And they asked me if I had any experience working with children. They first send me to the bauhof, which was my father worked, to carry wood and stuff. But then I had told them that I was good with children, and what made me do that, I have no clue. And then I got in t -- was told to present myself, that they were going to send me to work in the youth home -- the youth barrack, L410 it was first, and then it was 414. And it was -- the youth barrack was just starting, it was at the very beginning. We -- we didn't really have -- there were some pr -- rooms didn't even have

beds, so we got thre -- three tier bunkbeds, and my father did a lot of work to make it more livable for us.

Q: So, are you taking care o -- didn't at some point you also take care of teenage kids, or did you go immediately to the orphans?

A: Yeah, my first job in the youth home was really -- not to have my -- the sole responsibility, but I was working with Hilde Dublon, who was at least four years older than I was, she came from Hamburg. And she was what was called the head betreuer, you know, the chief betreuer, chief caretaker of the 30 children in our room. They were -- some were between 14 and 16 years old in the first room.

Q: So they're not much younger than you?

A: No, no, but somehow I -- I got that. I was quite mature in my ways. And Hilde and I hit it off beautifully. There was never any tension, or any rivalry, and I loved her. She was a beautiful woman, very intelligent woman. And then we had a few terrible situations health-wise in Terezín. We had a lot of lice, and particularly Kleider Lause, which are the lice that cause typhoid -- typhus. The bad stuff, not the paratyphoid, but the bad stuff. And they lay their eggs in the seams of clothing, and they transmit that disease. And there was an epidemic that broke out, which nobody realized was typhus, and some of the kids in our room got sick. And then there were kids in other rooms that got sick, and they had -- we didn't know what the symptoms were, and we had some very good Czech doctors, but they had no medicines, and they had no way of combating these illnesses. And then we lost a couple of kids, and then Hilde got sick. And we didn't associate it w-with the other deaths, we didn't know what it was. And she told me she couldn't eat. Now for anybody not to be hungry in Terezín, you really had to be sick. So, she had her rations on the plate, and she couldn't finish it. And I shared the same bunkbed with her, there

were three -- they were three story high -- stories high, and we had the top bunkbed. And Hilde said, "You know, I can't eat my food, do you want to finish it?" So I finished her food. And you know, typhus is very contagious, and I'm not even sure whether I used another spoon, we weren't very careful. And one day Hilde died. And we lost a few more kids. It was a terrible epidemic. And then we were told by Dr. Freund who also perished -- he was a gorgeous guy, a Czech guy, and the most bud -- bud -- body, I tell you, everybody was in love with this guy, but unfortunately he was married. And he -- what this man did, he did -- he was a fairly young doctor, he was maybe in his mid to late 30's, and he -- these doctors di -- did heroic things, they had no medicines, they tried everything they could. And he said to me, "The first thing you have to do is clean this place." And we did get some Lysol, and we had a cleaning procedure that we cleaned every bunkbed. And we had the floors, and the walls, and everybody helped, and the place stank from Lysol. And then the ghetto elders sh -- told everybody they had to -- they had to clean their places, that was the only way to stop the epidemic, and eventually the -- we managed to stop it. And my father and my brother got typhus too, but he did not get the real typhus, he got the paratyphus, which gives people a fever, but doesn't affect their body the way the real typhus does, and he recovered from that.

Q: And did you get typhus?

A: No, I didn't get a thing.

Q: Even though you had eaten --

A: I had eaten, I was next to her, I ha -- I got nothing. I -- I -- how can you explain it? Nothing. Then we had another epidemic after -- well, let me go on first. These were older ch -- young people, and they needed a -- what they called a betreuer, a person in charge of the young people, which was really 24 hour job. And they needed somebody for younger children in another room.

And the head of our youth home, Sigi Kwasniewski, who also perished, told me that he was going to give me a room by myself, and as there were at least 30 children in there, but that they were younger children, and a lot of them were orphans, and a lot of them had come from Poland. And they didn't know what happened to their parents. And some of them were quite traumatized, but wouldn't talk about it. Th -- I got that room, but then Sigi Kwasniewski decided it was too much for one person. There was another woman from Vienna, Trude Blau, who was made the head betreuer in that room, she was quite a bit older than I was. She also had an affair with Sigi Kwasniewski, and that wasn't a happy time for me. She was not an easy person to -- to deal with, and she was very ambitious, and eventually I -- she married Sigi Kwasniewski, and she got a job in the -- what do they call it, the office of kanzlei, and I had the sole responsibility for my room.

Q: Was that better?

A: Much better. Oh, I was all ready to quit. I was ready -- I was going to go -- I hated to do that to -- to -- it's -- it's the strange thing. You know, my mother and my aunts sent uncountable packages to the Red Cross, with fictitious senders, but I knew where they came from, because it came from -- anything close to my aunts. And there were a few packages that came from Vienna, and my father recognized my mother's handwriting, and he was sure my mother was alive in Vienna. But she made up all these -- these people, you know. Marie Unterbottom, and you -- you name it, I mean, and she made up addresses. And my aunt told me -- my aunts, after the war, that they constantly sent packages. And my aunt did a lot of bartering because her husband made furniture, and it was in an area that was totally unaffected by the war, and she would barter with the -- with the farmers, and then she could use some of the stuff to get vitamins and things, and also sausage that was highly smoked so it wouldn't spoil. And even if we only got 10 or 20 percent of the packages -- it didn't go on all the time we were in Terezín, but for a period of time

we got packages. And Trude's brother, came down with TB, and there wasn't a package that came from my mother and my aunts who I didn't share the vitamins and the food with Herbert Blau. And hi -- and her parents never forgot that. So in other words, you know, we separated ways, but she al -- but she -- I don't think she had bad feelings towards me because I was very generous to Herbert.

Q: Did you notice a lot of sexual activity in Terezín? That there were a lot of people coupling?

A: Well, there was a woman, a Czech woman who was as sexy as anybody can imagine. And she was supposed to help me in the room. She was much older than I was, and I was horrified because we had ladders to go up to th -- to the third bunkbed, and she doesn't -- didn't wear underwear, and she was, you know, she was very sexy, very flirty, and I'm sure she had her experiences. My kids were too small. There was no sexual activity. I had none. I'm sure that some people did. I could have had it with Louis Lowy, but I -- it's not that I was prude, I mean he just -- I -- I loved him as a friend, but he just didn't turn me on. I'm sure there was a lot going on, especially among the Czechs. Some of the Germans were quite old, but that's all I witnessed. And the kids were really too small in my room. And then I'm thinking about the -- the people who had the same job that I had -- excuse me.

Q: Sure.

A: Louis was a good friend of mine. The idea to have any sexual contact with him, I couldn't even have fathomed. There were Kurt Kohorn, who didn't do anything for me either, and he probably wasn't interested in me either. Whether they had any sexual activities, I don't know. I was younger than they were. I mean, they were my friends, but -- because in many ways I was mature, but sexually I'm not sure I was that mature, you know.

Q: Right, right. Did you go to seminars and lectures and concerts?

A: Oh yes, oh yes, and don't forget, in -- when we came to Terezín, we were not supposed to teach or learn. That was strictly verboten. So all the teaching of our children, all the lectures, were all done clandestinely. And I remember distinctly that we were taking turns watching whether the SS was descending into the camp, and giving, you know, sounding the alarm when they did, not knowing what they were up to. So --

Q: Do you remember hearing opera, or hearing --

A: Oh yes.

Q: Yes?

A: My brother sang in the children's choir of Carmen, he had a very good voice.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, we saw Brundibar, and Carmen, and -- and I --

Q: And did he sing in Brundibar as well?

A: Yes.

Q: He did.

A: Yeah, and the Angabilda ti conquer, and you -- you name it. Natung avisor, you know, I mean, the things we did, and the talent we had. I was nothing. I was a young girl who -- who had very limited experience, but I really matured very much among these people. We had professors from Vienna and from -- from Germany, and they would give lic -- lectures, and we had musicologists and I tried to -- to learn how to read music, and I'm not sure that I applied myself, or maybe I'm too stupid for it, but that I didn't manage too well. We had classes in algebra and arithmetic, particularly Louis, who was a lifelong friend of mine, was very bright. He eventually became a professor at BU, was a very close friend of my husband's. He -- he tau -- he gave so many lectures. And there was a biologist from Vienna, and -- and these people were so eager to -

- to teach us, because we er -- weren't supposed to learn. If you are not supposed to do something, there is a tremendous incentive to do it. So yes, we tried our best to educate our kids, but then there were transports going all the time. We had no clue where they were going.

Q: You still had no clue.

A: We had no clue, especially the orphans. I mean, I still see them today, some of them. There were a couple of girls, one was very tall Mira Hankriff, and one was very short. They had been orphaned. Their whole families had been killed. And they never talk much about it, and I think now if they had I'm not sure we could have even believed them. But they had formed such a bond with each other. I have never seen anything like that in young people, wa -- the bond they had. And it only reminded me of the bond Hannah and Zdena and Buschi and I formed later on. But, you know, this was -- there were -- kids were coming and going. And then you heard these rumors that there were s -- one transport came in with kids, they were all full of lice and they were so undernourished, and they were in such bad shape, and this and that was supposed to happen to them, and then there was a name, I don't know where it comes from, maybe there's a Yiddish in it, bonkes, which means rumors. Anything that anybody said that couldn't be quantified, or really you didn't know where it came from was called bonkes. So they said, oh, these are just bonkes, you know, you can't believe everything you hear, they just make all -- and these are kids, you know, they make these things up. And then the Nazis send transports with orphans and young people and I remember this horrible thing where they said they were going to Switzerland, there was a transport. And then later on we found out, you know, Switzerland was going into the gas. I don't remember whether they went to -- which extermina-ination camp they went to. So, it was difficult to get news when you were in Terezín, and I'm afraid that we

weren't any better than the outside world. Even when we heard some rumors, we didn't believe them, you know.

Q: We need to stop the tape now --

A: Okay.

Q: -- change the tape.

End of Tape Five

Beginning Tape Six

Q: Do you remember the "Verdi's Requiem" being sung?

A: Yeah, but I don't have very, very, you know, distinct memories of it, yeah. But I remember it was sung.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah, I don't remember whether I saw it or not, that -- you know, I -- I -- when I'm positive, I'm positive, you know?

Q: Right.

A: There -- there were lots of things going on, but I also had my job, and I couldn't always attend everything that was going on.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you remember somebody by the name of Freddi Hirsch?

A: Oh yes, definitely.

Q: What do you know -- what do you know about Fred?

A: Well, Freddi -- I think Freddi perished in -- in the -- in Auschwitz. I get the goose bumps when I think of it. Freddi and a lot of families were sent to Auschwitz to the Familienlager. And I don't remember the -- the -- the month when it was. I think it was in '44, but I'm not, you know, I'm -- that was very unusual that they allowed whole families to go, but we didn't know it was going to Auschwitz, but we -- only after the war did I learn that they had this Familienlager in Auschwitz where they had set aside a whole area where families could live together, because in Auschwitz, as soon as you got there, the children and the women and -- and men were separated. And they were in Auschwitz for quite a long time. And Freddi had -- did a lot with the

children, and he was highly respected. But he had also some contacts with people in Auschwitz, who had contacts knowing what was happening. And if I recall that -- my recollection after the war, when I came to Deggendorf, which was mostly occupied by survivors of Terezín, I think the Blaus told me, because you know, I -- we were not in -- in Terezín the whole time any more, that Freddi and I forget who else, somebody else who was very prominent, knew when the Familienlager was going to be eliminated. And they went through this terrible agony, whether they should inform everybody and fight back in some way, and you know, and cause a tremendous disruption. All you could do is cause a disruption, because you had machine guns from all corners, I mean nobody could have any illusion that they could survive. And from what I understand, Freddi and some of the other people came to the conclusion that if they will do so, they would cause such bedlam and such fear, and nobody was going to be saved anyway, and the children, instead of going into the gas not knowing where they were going, they were going to be, you know, like hunted animals. And they all went into the gas. Now, I don't know if my recollection is correct. I'm sure you know Freddi Hirsch's story. I was not in the family camp, so -- so I can only tell you what some of my friends told me happened.

Q: Do you remember Freddi from Terezín?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you -- did you know him at all?

A: Yes.

Q: You did?

A: Yes.

Q: And what was he like?

A: I we -- I mean, I reme -- I -- I wasn't a close friend of his, but I remember him as th -- he was very sporty, he did a lot of sports with the kids, he was very encouraging. He -- he was, you know, the -- some people you can't analyze what makes this guy be appreciated and respected by everybody? What makes him a leader? And that was Freddi Hirsch.

Q: Was he much older than you, a few years older, do you have any recollection?

A: I thought he was quite a few years older, but I -- you see, when I came to Auschwitz, in 1944 -- I was born in '26, so what -- I was 18 years old. Freddi might have been in his early 20's, you know, but I can't be -- in other words, you know, he -- I was this -- this 18 year old girl, not -- you know, mature as far as m -- my ability to take care of young people, but sexually and every other way, I was not a very mature person. And young men that age don't bother with younger girls like Ursula, you know.

Q: Right.

A: They called him Uschi, by the way --

Q: Uschi?

A: -- nobody knew me as Ursula, yeah. Yeah.

Q: But your family didn't call you Uschi?

A: No, that came about -- well, some people did, but -- maybe alluded to, but in -- in Terezín everybody called me Uschi.

Q: Do you remember food in Terezín?

A: Yes.

Q: Was it horrible?

A: Well, it was horrible, but my father did so many good deeds for the cooks, that we got much better food. I mean, was the same type of food, but we got more of it, we got puddings, which

nobody could even dream about. We got knoedle, you know, the dumplings. Yeah, he -- he -- he built -- you know, he could do anything, and he built cabinets for the cooks and chairs for the cooks, and benches and all this for their quarters, and he was rewarded with food.

Q: Right.

A: We got chocolate pudding, and we got -- we got all kinds of stuff that he brought.

Q: Chocolate pudding?

A: Oh yes, chocolate pudding. Don't forget, some of them also cooked for the SS, you know.

Q: Some of these cooks.

A: Yeah. Oh yeah, the cooks were -- they were as fat as -- we hated them.

Q: Yes?

A: Yeah, we hated them. We had -- th-the Czechs make a dish called knodlicki, which is -- it's a flour dish like a dumpling with some sors -- sort of a buttery, sweet sauce on it. We had some of that, and -- and of course coffee, which was not coffee, which was like black -- some black sauce of some -- some sort. And spreads which were undefinable what they were, were supposed to be marmalade, and wasn't a real marmalade, lot of artificial junk in it. One thing that might be interesting to you is that I think they put something in our food, or maybe it was just the nourishment itself, but the -- most women didn't menistrate any more.

Q: I was going to ask you.

A: Yeah. I lost my -- I lost that, completely, until I came out of the camps, and then I think it took probably a year or more before it came back. So -- and there were rumors that they put certain things in the food, I really don't know, I have no clue what they did.

Q: But in some sense was that a relief or was that -- did that frighten women that they stopped their periods?

A: I don't know that I thought much about it.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: It's not something a young girl is too eager about anyway. They said they -- they put some additive, and I can't remember what it -- some soda -- sor -- some -- something which is supposed to prevent menistration, but I don't know if that's tr -- was true or not.

Q: Yeah, I don't think so.

A: And they had black bread, you know, horrible looking bread. But -- and potatoes --

Q: A lot of potatoes.

A: -- in the skin, and a lot of them were half rotten potatoes, but again, we had much better food than most, and so did my room, because my father never just brought the food for me or my brother. Was our room, and Louis' room. And Louis never forgot that either, and he smuggled things into there.

Q: So you ate in your room with the kids?

A: Oh yes. And also what my father did, when we -- when I took the room over, they kept their bread rations, all that stuff, in their beds. And then my father felt that that was also breeding a lot of disease, and -- and el -- you know, fl -- we had a lot of fleas and all kinds of stuff. So he made a cupboard which had 30 compartments in it, and each child had their own compartments, and then in my room nobody was allowed to have any food in the compartments. These were kids who were starved, and I can tell you, there was so much discipline in my room. I was very young, but Papa Lenneberg, Papi they called him, because I called him Papi, he was only known as Papi. He told them, and -- and em -- emphasized that you don't touch anybody else's compartment. And you know, in all that time, I don't remember once a kid stealing out of another compartment. You know?

Q: And how old are these kids?

A: Well, they were between -- they were about t -- 10 - 12 - 13.

Q: Needing a lot of food, I would suspect.

A: Yes.

Q: Yes.

A: But you know, like I said before, I didn't sit there and eat the stuff my father brought. We shared everything. And all the packages that I got, they were opened on the table. There was a table with a long bench on each side, and -- and I would -- we would cut everything. We would cut th-the chocolate, and whatever was in it, and everybody got something. And we shared. And I don't recall that any other children got packages, because how many children in -- in Terezín had aunts in Germany who could do that kind of thing?

Q: Right.

A: You know, so with all my venom against the Red Cross, you know, we did th -- we -- because my venom, you know what they stems from, from -- from the Red Cross visit to Terezín. But then I sometimes think you're not just -- the Red Cross did get a lot of packages in. Probably of the -- of a hundred packages, even if you -- if only 15 made it --

Q: That was something.

A: -- and they were sent to my father, my brother, and to me. And then also, to Herbert Blau, because somehow my -- my father was able to thank you for the package, and Herbert Blau really enjoyed it too. So then my aunts send another package to Herbert Blau.

Q: And were you teaching these kids? What did you do all day?

A: I was learning, and I was teaching. I was reading with them, and I was lacking a lot of education, but I was also learning a lot and taking seminars, etcetera. I did speak English quite well.

Q: Really?

A: Oh yeah, because my parents -- I mean, I had a lot of education, even when -- after our school was burned down, because I learned English and Spanish and some French, which eventually was too much, because I was speaking French with a Spanish -- I mean, was just getting too much. But whatever I learned, I taught my kids. Then there were some people who were very artistic, and they learned to draw, etcetera, and make poems, they were encouraged to write stories. And then some of these professors gave lectures, and gave them homework, and they learned, and then if the SS came, everything was shoved aside, and we had certain places, you know, under the boards, and we would hide things. And then later on, I think a lot of those restrictions were not enforced as much any more, yeah.

Q: What was the mood of these kids? Do you know?

A: It depended. There were some who seemed somewhat depressed, especially the ones who had no family. Were some who very busy reading. Do you -- have you heard about Ruth Klueger?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: She was in my room.

Q: Really?

A: She was one of my kids. And she is in a category all by herself. She wasn't the eady -- easiest person. She wrote a book, as you know.

Q: Yeah, I interviewed her.

A: She had a very bad relationship with her mother. And she upsets me because her mother saved her life. I talked to her after she wrote the book. And she -- in her book she's -- only has bad things to say about her mother. And I can't help myself, I'm thinking about my family, my aunts, what I would give if they had survived. And she's spewing all this venom, who actually, her mother saved her. Without her mother, she would not have survived. But she is -- she was way beyond anybody else in intelligence, reading, she was devouring everything. And she had a friend, Hannah Ungar, who is now in Australia, which I didn't know, Ruth Klueger told me. And these two, they were like this. And Ruth, she hated every -- she hated her father, she hated her mother, she hated her relatives.

Q: And was that clear then, that she was so --

A: No, she was -- it was -- was sh -- it was clear that she had a bad relationship with her mother, that was clear. But except for ha -- ha -- for Hannah Ungar, they -- they were very close. But the rest of the girls completely left her alone. She was in a category all by herself.

Q: Was she difficult for you?

A: She didn't give me too much trouble, and she -- it's interesting how she -- she refers to me in her book without name, but as somebody who is not much older than she was -- I mean, she's a few years older than I am, and who was in charge of the room. But it wasn't anything derogatory, or anything complimentary.

Q: You're just there.

A: I was just there, I was just there.

Q: Well, that's interesting.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you learn Czech?

A: A little bit, but not much, you know how you learn a language just to get by a few things. I'd hardly know anything any more, but I -- I never really tried very hard.

Q: So then who did you talk with?

A: Well, they all spoke some English. Once you became friends -- English, some German.

Q: German. Once you became friends.

A: Once you became friends, they accepted you, they spoke German to you.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah.

Q: But it couldn't have been so easy to become friends if there was no language, or am I wrong?

A: Well, they all speak -- I mean, the educated Czechs all speak German.

Q: German.

A: And -- but they hate German, like I hated German.

Q: But that's all you had.

A: Yes, but I can understand them better, because when I came out of the camps, I spoke English very well, and I had to speak German to my mother, and to my family. And my mother learned English very fast here. But if I could avoid German -- th-the language itself just grated me, you know, it brought back so much, and I hated everything German. And I think Hans helped me a lot. I mean, I wouldn't go as far as the Israelis who were trying to shake, you know, to -- to be aggressive to a pianist who is playing German music, but I couldn't stand anything German, either.

Q: Mm-hm. Do you remember your brother's Bar-mitzvah --

A: Yes.

Q: -- and what that was like?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Can you describe it?

A: Well, he was very good at it. I don't remember that he made any mistakes. And he was very bright. It was not a very festive thing for me, and I'm sure it was a terrible thing for my father, because it brings -- brought it very much back that where's a -- where's my mother, and etcetera. But it was just something that he wanted to do, and my father -- I don't recall whether my father ever said to him, you know, why do you have to do it. My father was such an agnostic, it didn't matter to him.

Q: But your brother wanted to do this?

A: He wanted to do it, yeah, he wanted to do it.

Q: And was it done in a synagogue, or a synagogue setting?

A: No, there was no synagogue, but there was a room that was used for services.

Q: Right.

A: And there were some rabbis, and there was, you know, I forget what that was Kline, or who -- who coached him, I don't remember. I have -- would have to make it up, I don't remember. The reason, excuse me, I think I don't remember is, don't forget, this was very close to the time when we were deported to Auschwitz. And somehow there, lots of things became a blur, you know.

Q: Yeah, cause this is September '43, and you're deported in October, you know.

A: Not '43. We were deported i-in '44.

Q: '44.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: So it's a year later.

A: Yeah, but still, you know, there -- so many things happened, it -- it seemed a short time. Maybe it was a year, but I don't remember exactly. Maybe I wasn't totally with it. And I don't remember who the instigator was. I can't believe it was Louis, who was in charge of his room, because Louis was an agnostic too. But somebody must have persuaded him he should make his Bar-mitzvah. And my father was in a room on a -- in a different street, in a different house, with a couple of guys who were quite Orthodox [indecipherable]. So whether they had an influence, they probably had an influence. But I can't recall that. I don't want to claim anything I can't be -- yeah.

Q: Right, right. Maybe ritual counts in those times, even if you don't have a belief. Maybe.

A: I think that it -- th-that's what it was to a large degree. I mean, I started to learn [indecipherable] in Israel. I mean the -- in -- in Terezín. I really wanted to go, if we would get out of this mess, I wanted to eventually go to Palestine. There was no Israel then.

Q: Right.

A: And I really wonder if I would have ended up in -- in Palestine if my mother hadn't survived. But I found -- I felt that it was just too much to ask my mother to go to th -- what was then Palestine, the conditions, and for her to learn Ivrith would have been a lot harder than to -- you know, she knew a little English. I think the idea probably wo -- came to me because when you have been persecuted, you just wonder whether you can exist among non-Jews. You feel so vulnerable, the idea that there could be a country where people are of your make-up, and wouldn't persecute you because you are a Jew. There is something attractive to that.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: In -- a couple of months after your brother's Bar-mitzvah, there's a huge, sort of -- everybody is taken out of the barracks.

A: Oh, maybe that's why I don't remember the Bar-mitzvah too well. Yeah, sure.

Q: Cause this is November '43, right?

A: Mm-hm, yeah, that was the worst day I ever experienced in Terezín. One day we were all herded into the Bauschowitz basin. And the reason for that was given by the commandant of the SS, that th-the elder had not given the right numbers of inmates.

Q: This is Edelstein?

A: Yeah. And then I think he just had some venom against Edelstein, who was a wonderful man, and he also, if I remember it correctly, I think accused Edelstein of using his bicycle and riding beyond the borders of was permitted in the ghetto. And they herded us into the Bauschowitz basin. And it was a very drizzly day. Young and old, and some of these old people were in such decrepit condition, and we were supposed to be counted, because the count didn't jive, as far as the SS was concerned. And we had to stand there at attention for hours and hours and hours with the rain coming down. And SS were stationed -- the basin was like a flat area, and it was surrounded by a dirt wall, and they were positioned on the dirt wall with machine guns, etcetera. And we were sure we're all going to be murdered right there on that -- in that basin. And you know, they -- they were beating people up, and they were screaming and they had their guns drawn, they were very intimidating, and it was just horrible. And everybody thought this is it, we're going to be executed. And then eventually, was already beyond dusk, I don't remember, was very, very late, we were all herded back into the ghetto. And I don't remember how many people were in Terezín at the time, but the ghetto was very full of people. What -- I've to -- forget what the height of the population was, 40,000 or something like that. And that was about

it, because after we came back, shortly after, there were lots of transports going east out of Terezín. And while we were in the Bauschowitz basin, the SS searched the -- the houses, the youth homes. They ripped out mattresses and I don't know what all, they were looking for valuables. Then they had the excuse that somebody had hidden valuables and money, because you were not supposed to keep any of that. And actually, I understood -- I was not a witness to that, that in fact in one place in our building, that they found some money somewhere, and that that person was taken into the Kleine Festung, which was a notorious prison. But I -- I was not an -- an eyewitness to that, I was an eyewitness to when we came back and everything was torn apart. Yeah, that was a very scary time. It was -- it was awful.

Q: Now, you mentioned that Edelstein was a wonderful man.

A: Yes.

Q: Ho -- do -- is this by reputation that you say this?

A: Yes, and I met him a few times, not that he had any interest in Uschi Pawel -- Uschi Lenneberg, but there were occasions that he came to the youth home and stuff, and I thought he was a very nice, mild mannered man. Not everybody in the Judenrat had the same reputation. Murmelstein had a terrible reputation. And you see, that is the justice of the world. Who survived? Rabbi Murmelstein.

Q: Right.

A: And he had the reputation among us that he was hand in glove with the SS. And Edelstein was deported to Auschwitz, and so were many of the others. And one of the people on the Judenrat, Zucker, was on our transport, and also sent right into the gas.

Q: Okay, we have to stop and change the tape.

End of Tape Six

Beginning Tape Seven

Q: Uschi.

A: Uschi, yeah. Well --

Q: Do you remember your birthday party?

A: Yes.

Q: When you were 18?

A: Yes. I still have -- I still have that's -- I should -- why didn't I bring that? Buschi -- well, when -- you mean in Terezín the birthday party?

Q: Yeah.

A: Yes, I remember that, but I was thinking about another birthday party --

Q: Oh yes?

A: -- in Merzdorf, yeah.

Q: Oh, well, we'll talk about that later.

A: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: Was it nice in Terezín?

A: Yes, the kids made all kinds of little presents for me, you know, handmade.

Q: The little -- oh, the kids you were taking care of?

A: Yes. And they -- they put on a play for me, and it was a complete surprise, and my brother -- and he -- ya -- ma -- wrapped up little tiny things, things that probably my father got for him, and -- and he put on it, Für meine liebe schwester.

Q: Aw.

A: Yeah.

Q: So this was not an adult party, this was a party for these kids, yes.

A: No, this was my chil -- my kids, and my father and my brother.

Q: And your brother.

A: And maybe Louis and a few of the betreuer, but I don't remember exactly --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- but it's the kids that made the big impression --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- because they had -- you know, had this play that they made up, somebody had written it, and I don't even remember the -- to be truthful, the contents of the play, I was so overwhelmed by the whole thing.

Q: And since you were with them so much, when could they have rehearsed, and done all this?

A: Yeah, I -- they could have because I had a lot of friends there, and they could have done it with the -- all kinds of excuses, you know. Apparently there were a few people helping them, yeah.

Q: I see. That's very sweet.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And I'm sure you remember the pending Red Cross visit. Do you remember all the preparation for this?

A: I remember everything because my kids were part of some of this.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Not that they volunteered, I mean, they were just told. The Red Cross was going to visit, and we had what was called verschönerung, beautification. And first of all, they had a huge transport leaving Terezín, to make the town look less crowded, that was the first thing. Then the commandant felt he didn't want any ugly and old Jews in the streets. So when he saw like an old

person, or -- some of his deputies went in and rounded up old people, and they came into the next transports. And transports were going constantly, to the east. Of course we know now they went to Auschwitz. And then people were given the job to clean the streets, they actually scrubbed the streets, the sidewalks, with soap and water. They got paint, they painted the houses. They started to build a -- an area and decorated it with flowers and green to make way for the orchestra. And another one for the band shell. Then they -- they established a café. And they would just go and say you -- I mean, some good looking young women, you, you, you, you're going to be the waitresses. And these waitresses were strutting around with little white doily aprons, and you know, those curlicues, stupid stuff in their hair, and they were going to wait on customers in the café house. They -- some of our kids were rounded up, and they had to approach the SS Kommandant, who was an awful guy, and call him uncle. I wasn't involved directly myself, I just visited all this, I just saw all that. One thing I did see, that the elder, our elder, was decorated with a gold chain and a new suit and Nazi limousines were chauffeuring him around with the people from the Red Cross.

Q: This is Marmelstein -- Murmelstein.

A: Yeah. And so it was -- it was a stage and we were the actors. And they were planting flowers all over, and the band was playing. And then they started -- they established a bank -- I'm trying to remember, a store. And -- and they made this fake Theresienstadt money, which on one side had Moses with the 10 commandments, on the other side it had the -- you know, the ghetto in kröne, I think it was, 20 - 50 or what kröne. And then the transports, which were always coming and going in Terezín. You know that they confiscated all the suitcases. Well, they took some stuff out of these suitcases and they put this -- this stuff in the stores to be sold, supposedly. So the Red Cross got the impression they have a this store and a that store, and they have a bank,

and they have the -- they have a barber and they have a beauty parlor and so on, and so on. I'm -- it was unreal. Houses were scrubbed and painted. And then these idiots from the Red Cross, that's why e -- e -- ev -- ever since I came out of Terezín, I have no good word for the Red Cross. They would -- they were dined -- wined and dined by the SS, and riding around in the SS limousine through Terezín. Do you think they got out once to ask anybody a question? Or to try to go into one of the houses? I mean, they didn't even go into the barrack, nevermind these individual houses, where old people were put in the attic, like my grandmother. And they had not any more space than that rug in the foyer there, to just spread their blanket, and -- during the heat, or the cold, or whatever. And so these -- so many people died in Terezín in -- in those days, it -- before -- even before -- died before they had a chance to transport them to Auschwitz.

Q: So the Red Cross, th -- they didn't walk around at all, they just -- in the car, the whole time?

A: N-N-No, they -- they were in the car, and if they walked around -- they might have walked around and strutted around where the band was, and where everything -- the SS wanted them to see. They -- I didn't see it myself, but they might have walked into the bank or stuff and -- and convinced themselves that this was a wonderful Jewish town where, you know, Hitler schenkt den Juden eine stadt. Where Hitler was giving the Jews a present of a -- of a -- of a town. And they swallowed it all, lock, stock and barrel.

Q: Do you remember a film being made, you --

A: Oh yes, and I rem -- I knew Kurt Gerron very well.

Q: You did? Uh-huh.

A: Kurt Gerron was a filmmaker from Holland, and he was rounded up by the Nazis, and he was brought to Terezín. And Kurt, I don't know whether he originally came from Holland, but I am quite sure I remember that he was -- he was arrested in Holland. At least that's what I was told. I

see him with -- this reminds me -- of course, this was 1944, of all his equipment, making this film. And, you know, as I said before, we were a stage, we were the actors. My kids were -- were in the films. And as soon as Kurt Gerron had finished the film, he was put into a transport to Auschwitz, and perished. So yes, I will never forget that.

Q: And how did you come to know him?

A: I think he came to the youth home. I also came to know him -- not -- you know, we were not friends, but I spoke to him because he wanted s -- he needed some of the kids to be part of what he was filming. And some of the kids had been selected, I don't remember it was the SS or who, they needed so and so many kids. And some of my kids were in that. And I didn't even see the -- the elder, that he had this gold chain on. My kids told me that. You should have seen him, he had -- he had a new suit, and a gold chain, and he was being driven around, you know, as a mayor of the city, with the Red Cross.

Q: So it made you live him even more?

A: Oh God. No, I -- and we all feel that way, I mean he came from -- from Vienna, and Dita and Louis, and Dita still is my very good friend, she still lives in Boston, and Louis we lost many -- before Hans died, many years ago. And di -- Dita came from Vienna. She hated this guy. I mean, nobody liked him. But he survived. And he collaborated very much with the Nazis.

Q: Mm-hm. So the Red Cross is there in May of 1944, right?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: A few months later your father gets a deportation. It -- it seems, a -- at least according to your book, that there's a notice that comes to your father about being deported.

A: Yeah, I happened to be in his room --

Q: When he got it?

A: Yeah, and he got it, it wasn't sent by mail. These notices were given to the elders, they were either the room elders or the house elders. My father was in Q 600 dreizehn, I think it was, 613 in a -- it was like a private home originally. And the elder -- I was visiting my father in his room, and the elder comes in and hands him the summons from the SS that he has to present himself on such and such a date, and he changed color. And I never forget that. And then we had a big struggle, and -- and it was my fault, and -- and it haunted me for years and years. And I pressed him that we should join him. And I should have never done that, and he fought me tooth and nail. And I said to him, "Well, what was the purpose of you and Bübchen going with me? And then now we're going to be separated again. I mean, the idea was that we were going to stay together." So I decided that Papi is going next week, and I am going the week after, and Bübchen is going to be all by himself. So we went with him, supposedly to a labor camp near Dresden. See, that was the terrible thing, and they say that Murmelstein knew where we were going, and -- and he helped the Nazis by facilitating, you know, their mirage, we were going to a labor camp.

Q: Now, but you think at this point that your father knows what's going on, because --

A: I don't know, he -- all I can tell you is that when he came back from Zossen, which is near Berlin --

Q: Right.

A: -- where he worked in Tiefbau supposedly, what was it, for the bunker --

Q: Right.

A: -- that Hitler's bunker, and he came in touch with a lot of other workers from different camps, he seemed like a changed person. But he also knew that transports were leaving Terezín on a daily -- on a daily is too much, but at -- on a weekly, or sometimes daily basis, to in quote, other

labor camps. So maybe he also felt that we are all going to be getting out of here sooner or later, and now we at least know where we are going, and I can't recall at all, I might have it in my book, what the name of the labor camp was that we were supposed to go to. It was near Dresden, and my father was familiar with the name, and that sounded pretty good. And this -- we were told that by the -- by the elder, by Murmelstein, that our transport was going to that place. And I remember when we were on the train, which eventually ended up in Auschwitz, my father and some of his friends were looking through, you know, it's trying to see where they were, which wasn't always possible, and they f -- one of them said, "Otto," to my father, "we're not going," -- it'll come to me, the name of that place, "where we can't possibly go there, we're alya -- already east of Dresden." And that's when he changed color, and when it probably sank in, we're not going to a labor camp, we're going east of Dresden, we're going to go to one of the camps in Poland, and I think that -- this is conjecture, I have no proof of that -- I think that maybe he did meet up with people. He told me that there were people from different -- different ghettos, or whatever he said, who were working with him on the bunker. And so I think that he got a good idea what was going on in some of the eastern camps. But I really feel that he believed that our transport was going to a labor camp near Dresden.

Q: But nevertheless, you had to fight with him about going?

A: Yes, I did, and he didn't want me to go.

Q: Right. And you won.

A: But -- I won, unfortunately, and believe me, it's laid on me --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- for -- it still does to this day. Because then I figured if we hadn't gone, because there were -- we were not the last transport to leave Terezín, as you know, but maybe we would have had

enough of a respite that we would have stayed. And my father was such a strong, healthy man, that maybe he would have had a chance to survive. What I really think happened -- and this again, is conjecture -- when we got to Auschwitz, of course you know women and men had -- were separated, and my father was with my brother, and my brother was in his winter coat, it was Poland, and it was October, and you know, that he had outgrown, and he didn't look like a -- you know, very big teenager, and I think Mengele, who happened to select us, probably put my brother on one side, and my father on the other, but my father, I'm sure, would not have let his son go alone, and maybe said can't I go with my son, not knowing where he was going. Maybe even if he had known where he was going, he wouldn't have let my brother go alone.

Q: Was this at the begin -- do you remember if it was the beginning of October?

A: Yes, at the very beginning oc --

Q: At the very beginning.

A: -- of October.

Q: So it -- it's before the uprising?

A: Yes. It was at the beginning of October, yeah.

Q: Well, you know, you couldn't have known either. You didn't know.

A: No, I -- believe me, it's been on -- it's been -- and you know, I want to tell you something, I never discussed this too much with my mother. She asked me questions and I told her the truth. And I don't know, maybe I camouflaged it a little bit, but I couldn't even talk about it, because I really felt that burden for such -- for the rest of my life.

Q: And you still feel it.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: I have my brother and my father [indecipherable] deaths, and I feel I'm responsible that they aren't here any more.

Q: You didn't kill them.

A: But it was the wrong thing to do. Was absolutely the wrong thing to do, cause he really didn't want us to go with him. Of course, we didn't know that we were fairly close towards the end of the war. We didn't get -- you know, that's been -- so many times there were hopeful news, that oh, the allies are here, and there, and the Russians are very close, and -- and it never materialized. So we really didn't know. But it's -- it's done, you know, it's a long time. Ma -- ma -- as you get older and you have sons like I do, who are now -- my oldest son is the same age that my father was when he was killed. You know, I mean, you -- you get from his history, he was a strapping man, he was -- he could do anything, whether it was carpentry or -- or digging ditches, or what. Physical work -- not everybody was able to do that. People collapsed, people gave up because they couldn't do it. Well, he could. But we came to the point, and I think I had a part in it where you couldn't -- there's nothing you could do.

Q: But you -- you probably need to remember that the family made a decision early on to join you.

A: I know, I know, I know, this --

Q: So everybody's making decisions based on what they think is the best.

A: I know, my husband talked to me.

Q: But rationality doesn't count when you have certain kinds of feelings.

A: No, no, no.

Q: So you are separated from your brother and your father, and --

A: Right, right.

Q: -- do you know that they were killed immediately? Is that what you think, or you don't know?

A: Well, I'll tell you how I found out that they were killed. You know, we got off the train, and we had to form in fives, and I remember trying to look back to see my father and my brother. This was a huge, huge transport, enormous. All I could see is a sea of people. And then looking down towards the camps, all I could see is high tension wires, and barrack after barrack after barrack. And then we were pushed again to walk past this elegant looking SS officer with shiny boots and leather gloves, either pointing to the left, or to -- pointing to the right. I didn't -- I didn't know what that meant. I followed where he pointed to. And then we had to form in fives again, and there was an SS man to the left of me, and he pushed us into this muddy road, which was snaking between camps. And whenever a transport arrived in Auschwitz, nobody was allowed to get out of the barrack. But somehow a woman was outside of the barrack, very close to the electric wire, and recognized somebody in our transport, and screamed out a name, and cried. And this SS man, who was next to me, fairly young, maybe 18, something like that, with his rifle drawn, screamed at her, "Get in or I'll shoot you." And with that he shot her. And she screamed, and she was lying there, literally in the mud, pooled in her own blood, and I was convinced then I would never get out of there alive.

Q: And that's the first time you thought that?

A: I have ne -- had never seen a person being shot. There were people being killed in Terezín in the Kleine Festung, but I was not witness to it. And apparently there were some people shot in the basin when we had the counting, but I didn't -- nobody close to me. That was the first time I ever saw a person being shot point blank. And that is something I will never erase out of my mind. And I think this is when I decided, not consciously, to just not even see what was going on around me. And then we were, as you know, we're put into a s -- brought into a sauna and

stripped of everything. Our hair was shorn, our body hair was shorn and w-we were screamed at. I never forget that sauna for the rest of my life. It was a very large room, it was a brick building, and there were SS lined -- male SS lined on both sides of the walls, making dirty jokes. You know, we were all naked while we were being shaved. And that is too much for anybody to even think reasonably. I mean --

Q: Prisoners shaved you, yes?

A: Prisoners shaved us.

Q: Did they talk to you at all?

A: No, they were too busy. And -- and they couldn't even tattoo us any more because by that time they -- they couldn't -- they had so many transports coming in, they weren't tattooing any more. They did these idiotic things. They gave us dirty dresses, no underwear, no socks, just wooden clogs and a dirty dress, and this is the -- Poland, the winter, in October. And then we had to get past another prisoner who had a -- a can of red paint, and put a stripe of glossy red paint on this black, lousy rags that I had on. I mean, really idiotic things. And then they pushed that into the muddy road again, it was still raining, and that's when we ended up in Birkenau in one of the -- the barracks. And they couldn't cope with all the people they had. Buschi claims we were eight on a cot, Zdena says we were seven on a cot. It doesn't matter. We could -- nobody could turn without everybody else turning. And we never saw utensils. We -- there was one dirty blanket to cover all of us, and it was so filthy it was horrible. And then the next morning, people came in to -- or the next day some time, they brought in some soup, some -- you know, in -- in a big canister, and they dished it out into metal dishes, and each plank bed got one metal dish, and we had to use our hands to eat, and it was quite liquid, that stuff. And whoever could shovel it the faster -- in the fastest got the most. But I don't remember whether it was the same day, I think

it was the following day, that there were a few people who threw themselves against the electric wire. And men came in to pick up the dead, and -- with pushcarts. And one of the men was a friend of mine, and he knew my father, too, he was in our transport. And he -- his wife was also in my camp, and he whispered to his wife, "Tell Uschi that Walter and Otto didn't make it." And she told me that. And from that day on, I never had any hope that my father or my brother had survived. And then, years later, the Holocaust museum, my brother and my father's names are right there. The wonderful Nazi records --

Q: Of who they killed.

A: Of -- they were killed that same day.

Q: That same day?

A: That same day.

Q: Okay, let's stop the tape and we'll change the tape.

End of Tape Seven

Beginning Tape Eight

Q: Do you have any recollection of the uprising at the end of October?

A: Mm-mm.

Q: No. You didn't hear anything?

A: You mean in Auschwitz?

Q: In ow -- I'm sorry, in Auschwitz.

A: No, I don't. I think I was too occupied with myself. I was too new in -- in Auschwitz. I didn't know people well enough. The only thing that is really imprinted on my memory is this incident, I don't know if -- if you read it in my book, when we had selection and the Hungarian girl fled into our barrack. I don't -- and I also learned from other prisoners, and I really didn't believe it, that they were doing experiments on people, and I didn't believe that either. I just -- I mean, I just could not comprehend some of the things that I heard.

Q: So, did you not believe they were gassing people?

A: No, that I believed.

Q: You believed it.

A: I believed that, and I -- and I know that my friends from Terezín, the Hirschfeld's wouldn't have told me that my father and my brother didn't make it into the camp, that was right after I arrived. And I learned from others in the camp that people were being gassed, and that -- that this -- there was a horrible smell in Auschwitz, too.

Q: I was going to ask you.

A: But I think I experienced that more when I was selected for work. Well, before I was selected for work, we had this horrendous experience with the Hungarians girls. They were fairly young girls, and there was as -- some of these people who had been in Auschwitz for any length of

time, they didn't look like human beings any more. They're called the musselmen, a -- I don't know where the heck that came from, but they were really walking skeletons. And their skin, and the expressions on their faces, and their eyes, th -- cannot be described. And next to our barrack was a barrack that housed Hungarian women. A lot of young women, who had been there a relatively long time for Auschwitz, you know, a number of months, and they have been through I think what -- two selections before, so there were no older people left in that barrack, they were all younger pl -- people. But they were coming closer di -- to the description of these musselmen. They were in terrible shape. And they had a selektion, and of course, I did -- never heard of a selektion, we had only been in these barracks for a relatively short time, and they were shooting, and we thought this is it, they're going to just shoot everybody around. And then one of the girls managed to get into our barrack. And apparently another girl was killed, was shot by the SS, but our elder, our block elder knew this girl, and they had been in Auschwitz for a long time, and apparently she has -- had escaped selektions a number of times. And here we were fairly new, and all this was -- we were being told all these horrors that I couldn't digest. And here, I will never forget this girl, she's standing there at the end of the barrack, and the block elder, who seemed like a pretty brutal woman herself, was shielding her. And she told us that she'd been there for such and such a time, she'd been selected a few times, and that people were being selected after they were not physically strong any more, and they were being gassed. And she gave such a vivid description and she told us about how many of her friends had been -- had been gassed, that it finally dawned on me, ma -- maybe this is true. Maybe this is so. It wasn't just when you come there that they select you like Mengele, but they select you afterwards. Now that was -- that wa -- made a terrible impression on me. And then shortly after that, we had a selektion for work. And it was a fairly large table outside, and it was pretty cold, and we had to

all strip naked again, and walk in front of this table. And there was a man, a representative from industry at one end, and two SS officers at that table. And he selected very few people. And we were kind of standing in line, naked. And when I got to this man from industry, he asked me to show him my hands, which I did. I -- I don't have a very small, fancy hand. And then h-he motioned obviously that he was going to take me for work at the factory he represented. And the people selected for work, as I said before, were a relatively small number. And we were then pushed into the road again, and you know, we had -- we could put a -- we only had a dress anyway, put our dress on, was pushed into the road. And we were put into a s -- we were in front of another sauna, a bath house, and by that time, I believe that people were being gassed, because we could smell the burning flesh, really. And when the SS guard told us that we had to strip naked before we even got into the shower house, the sauna, I really thought that was it, because I also had learned that people were gassed in a sauna, that the gas came through the shower heads. So it was welcome when we felt the ice cold water dripping on our skin. And we again just got a shift, and no underwear, no socks. And we were pushed into the road and we ended up in a women's camp, which had mostly non-Jews in it. I believe they were all Polish, at least the ones I saw. The elder was a Pole. And they had different insignias, which I learned there designated whether they were political prisoners or murderers. And I understood from people there that the block elder was a murderer, that this particular triangle or whatever she wore, represented the identification of a murderess. And she was very brutal, and horrible, and she beat people very readily. And she s -- put -- she gave us different chores to do, and one of the chores that she dished out for me, was to carry the feces to the latrines during the night, with another woman, and accompanied by a Nazi guard. You know, the women were not SS, they were Nazi guards in uniform. And I shall never forget that night. It was a very dark night, and there was a horrible

smell, and the whole sky was bright red. And these very tall chimneys were spewing particles into the air. And the woman who carried the buckets with me, who had been in Auschwitz a lot longer than I had, she said, "Another transport must have arrived. These are our people going through the chimney." You know, a normal person would have collapsed right there and there, and I don't think things really penetrated. We had much better bedding and plank beds. They were the same size, but instead of, you know, eight people, or whatever, or seven or whatever we were on one, there were three of us. One was Zdena from Prague, and one was Buschi from Amsterdam. And we became friends for life. And one day we were told to get ready for work and we were marched to the railroad trestle, and we were put into a transport. And I cannot recall how long we were on transport, but then the trains stopped eventually -- because we were in cattle cars, and there was really no way -- you know, some cattle cars were older, and they were -- you -- you had an idea, looking through some of the little spaces, but there weren't too many spaces to be found. And we ended up in a place called Kudowa-Sackisch. In other words, we had been going west, not east. This was an airplane factory, and the man who had selected me worked -- was a representative of that airplane factory. And I never forget that night. We were so happy. The beds were better, the blankets were wonderful, the food was better. And, for the first time, we had shower, a hot shower, and we got a piece of soap. And then the next morning we had to form a circle in the factory yard, and the German foreman stepped into the middle of that circle, and he looked around, and he decided he didn't like anybody to work for him in the factory who wore eyeglasses. I wore glasses and Zdena wore glasses, Buschi did not. And he -- we stepped forward. At first I didn't want to step forward. And Buschi said to me, "Haven't we played enough fate?" You know, and she was referring to my volunteering to go with my father, and my father and my brother going with me, and I put my glasses back on. And of course he

selected me to step forward, and Zdena step forward. And then for some reason, he told Buschi to step forward. And you know, either Zdena or I said to her, "But you don't wear glasses." So, I never forget Buschi's words. She said, "That's fate. It's supposed to be that way." "Das ist das Schicksal. Es soll so sein." And there were six of us, and he called us garbage, rejects, who were not going to work in his factory, and we were going to be sent back to Auschwitz. And we were rounded up by a woman, a Nazi guard, but she was different from any of the guards that we had encountered. She didn't scream at us, she was kind of nice, she ki -- she somehow behaved as if she didn't belong there. Now, I don't know what her history was, whether she wad -- was drafted into that, who knows? But she -- she took us to the railroad trestle, and then I did something I felt terrible about for a long, long time. And Buschi and Hannah and Zdena were very upset with me, because they felt very strongly that I had saved their lives. It wasn't just -- there was one other woman. There were two other women who felt the same way, but we kind of lost contact after liberation. And I pleaded with this guard, and I told you she seemed more accessible, because I would have never dreamt to do this in Auschwitz with any guard. And I pleaded for my life, and I told her that I shouldn't be there. I was really not Jewish. My mother was a Christian and I -- I shouldn't be here. And she answered in a way like somebody would who really felt badly about it. And she said, "But there's nothing I can do about it." "Kann nicht sta fur mat -- kann nicht daran tun." And then she left us, asked us to -- first she asked us to stay together, there were six, we didn't know the others. And she was flirting with two German soldiers who were accompanying the train. In the meantime we realized that there was one other German woman, she had lived in Prague. We never got too close with her, she was much older than most of us. And there was another Czech woman, Hanka, she was a communist, through and through. And I can say that I never felt a relationship with Hanka. I mean, we all helped each other, but it wasn't

the same relationship I felt with Buschi and Hannah and Zdena. And there was one woman, Hannah, and we three became very close friends. And then one of the soldiers came to us. In the meantime -- I must say this first, there were hundreds of inmates on the railroad trestle. They were Hungarian workers who had worked in the factory, and who -- they had worked these women practically to death. They could hardly stand, they had open sores, impetigo, whatever it was, they were in horrible shape. And they had been pushed by the SS into cattle cars until the cattle cars were full to the brim, and then they locked the cattle cars. And our guard had stayed with us in the meantime, and then had gone over to the soldiers, and the SS had left. Because I think that we were the responsibility of that Nazi guard. And then one of the soldiers came over and told us to follow him and he put us into the last cattle car. And we were the only six in this huge cattle car, and then he locked the cattle car. And I have no idea any more, and I'm not sure even would have had an idea when we came -- when we finally ended up in Merzdorf, how long we had been in the cattle car. But the soldiers finally opened the door and joined us in the cattle car. One was relatively young, and you know, the -- Hannah thinks this guy was this old, I don't remember. And the younger of the soldiers cried, and he told his buddy that if his people did that to human beings, he didn't want to live any more. And they gave us bread, they gave us cheese, they gave us privacy. I mean, we hadn't seen white bread for years, and cheese. And they gave us privacy to use a bucket. And we sat in this huge cattle car in one corner, and deciding what are we going to do when we return to Auschwitz. And the only language that Hannah, Zdena, and the -- and the other Czech girl, and I and the -- the -- the German girl we didn't have too much close relationship with, spoke, was German, because they were all educated people, and this -- most of the Czechs spoke German, and of course the Dutch do. And Buschi's family originally came from Germany anyway, so I don't remember whether she had some German grandparents

or what. And Buschi and I decided that we were going to throw each -- ourselves against the electric wire instead of being gassed. And the German soldiers heard that, you know, we spoke their language. And the train came to a standstill. I have no idea what they did while we were in the cattle car before the train left Auschwitz -- left the labor camp that we had been in before. They must have spoken to the engineer of the train. They must have coordinated it somehow. But on the other hand, you have to realize that this was the very beginning of 1945, and things weren't looking too great for the Germans. So they told us to jump out of the cattle car and follow them. And when we got onto the platform, we realized it said Merzdorf, it did not say Auschwitz. And we followed them through the small village of Merzdorf. It's a very mountainous region. It's a beautiful region. It was very cold. It was probably the very beginning of January, with snow and ice on the road. And here are these decrepit looking women, with a thin shift, and wooden clogs, no hair, following uniformed German soldiers through the village of Merzdorf. And the villagers were coming out of their doors look -- staring after us. And we went through a big gate, into a work camp. It said, "Kamsta, Mettner and Frahne," it was a factory. They made linens there, which we later found out, from the original raw material of flax. And they told us to wait, and then they went to see the commander of the camp, who was a woman. The most vulgar looking woman I've ever seen in my life, Anna Rinke. She might only have weighed 300 pounds, I remember her weighing 400 pounds. She was tall and big. She was bursting out of her Nazi uniform. And she stood in front of these soldiers, quite a ways from us. We were on one side of this very big area, within the factory buildings -- yard, and -- and they had to get into her place on the other side. And all I remember her coming out and screaming at them, "I don't want them here, get them out of here, send them back to Auschwitz. That's it." And they stood in front of her, they gave the Nazi salute, they clicked their heels, they left us

there, they never looked back. So, with all my hatred for Germans, we owe our lives to these soldiers. And not a letter or a telephone call for many years, whether it was from Hannah, or Zdena, or Buschi, without questioning if we only would know the names or where these people are, they saved our lives, I'm sure at a considerable risk to themselves. But again, they probably couldn't have taken that risk if we would have come there much earlier than we did.

Q: So she let you in?

A: She had no choice.

Q: She had no choice because you were standing there.

A: The train was gone, we had no choice, I guess.

Q: I want to ask you two sort of si -- simple questions.

A: Yeah.

Q: Ho -- how did you know it was Mengele in Auschwitz?

A: I was told that in the camp by some of the people who had been in the camp longer than we were, and especially by the Hungarian girl. And they described him to me, and I remember him. I certainly wouldn't have recognized his features. I don't think I would have had the guts to look in his face.

Q: Right.

A: And I only later learned that there were other physicians or SS who were selecting. But I was told, and I took this, that they knew what they were talking about, that these transports were selected by Mengele. And I was told then, for the first time, that -- by is -- people, you know, in the camp, who had been in Auschwitz much longer, that they were doing experiments on people, which also didn't penetrate my he -- my brain. I mean, I -- I didn't know what they were talking about.

Q: The other question is, how in heaven's name were you able to keep your glasses?

A: Well, that I don't know. You tell me.

Q: Well, I don't know.

A: I don't know. I had a pair of glasses, they had a pearl matte frame, and I had them when I left Düsseldorf. I was very careful with my glasses because my vision was very poor since my birth. And I can't comprehend it, because here I'm in this country with wonderful technology, and it wasn't too long ago, with a different pair of glasses than these that I was accompanying a friend to the hospital and the lens fell out on the floor. And these glasses lasted. I think they were thicker glasses in those days, the frames were thicker, I don't know. I was very careful with them because they were part of my life. I can't see without glasses. When I was in Terezín, I had a special place for them on my bunkbed, and the girls would never go into my bunkbed, that was my bunkbed. When I was in Auschwitz, I didn't take them off at all, ever. When I came into the next camp, where I've met Buschi and Zdena, I also kept them on the bunkbed, or on my nose. And the same in Merzdorf. And believe me, I was really frightened that something could happen to them. But I wasn't beaten up ever, which would have caused them to be thrown on the floor, so they somehow survived.

Q: I was actually more curious in Auschwitz, even though you weren't tattooed, you were shaved, and you went through the sauna.

A: Yeah.

Q: So did you hold them in your hand? Did you hide them from people?

A: That I don't remember.

Q: Because they took things away from everybody.

A: Yeah, but they --

Q: They didn't touch you?

A: I -- I kept my glasses.

Q: It's interesting.

A: They must have been on my nose, because if I had them -- I don't recall putting them in my -- but the same thing with Zdena. Zdena came from the sa -- it was a ta -- same transport as I, and Zdena wore glasses, and they didn't take her glasses either. They took the glasses, of course, of people who were gassed. So, whether they took glasses routinely of people they were sending to work, would it make sense to take glasses away from people you want to work -- for -- who -- who have to work for you? I don't know. But of our six, Zdena and I were the only ones who wore glasses, I think. Hannah doesn't wear glasses. So while the others were -- he probably didn't like them. One of them was pretty short. I don't know. It's -- it's -- it's, you know -- I have --

Q: It's a mystery.

A: It's a mystery. It's -- it's -- it's an absolute mystery.

Q: Right, right.

A: No, I have no clue. And I was very -- I was very much aware of the necessity of guarding my glasses, yeah.

Q: Okay, we have to change the tape.

End of Tape Eight

Beginning Tape Nine

Q: Ursula, I'll go back to Ursula.

A: Yeah?

Q: Your friends, Hannah, Buschi, Hanka, Zdena --

A: Zdena.

Q: Zdena.

A: Yeah.

Q: Sorry. And Hilde.

A: Well, Hilde is Buschi.

Q: Hilde is Buschi. Oh, okay.

A: Right, that was her nickname.

Q: Okay. Did you meet in Auschwitz?

A: Yes, we met in that women's camp, which was mostly all -- not all of them, only Buschi and -- and Zdena and I, and then we met the other ones when we were round -- when we were rounded up in Kudowa, and we were rejects.

Q: Uh-huh. Yes.

A: But only -- only Zdena and -- and Buschi and I met in Auschwitz. And Hannah and -- and the others two, we met when we are all rejected.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: And what was it about all of you that you think brought you together and allowed you to be so good for each other? Do you have any idea?

A: Well, I think that Hanka, who -- just to differentiate her from Hannah, she was Czech, and sh -- I'm sure she was a communist. I mean, we all knew she was a communist. I -- I had nothing to do with her -- with her communism, but her whole manner and all this, I'm not sure that if it would just -- just been Hanka, that we would have become very good friends, okay? But we were the six who were selected to be sent back to Auschwitz. And so we really stuck together. My closest friends were Buschi and Zdena and Hannah.

Q: So ha --

A: And the other two, Hanka and I forget the other name, the -- the other German woman, she had lived in Prague for awhile, she was considerably older, and I was the youngest of the whole group. They called me das Kind. And Hannah, when they used to call home, and Hans would talk to -- they would never talk to each other that how is Uschi, [indecipherable] macht das Kind, you know. The Czechs speak some German too, but the -- my husband very seldom spoke German, but it was always when they referred to me as th -- some Kind, you know?

Q: Right.

A: And -- and Hannah is still kidding about it, yeah.

Q: So this was -- this became another family for you.

A: It became a family. Zdena and Buschi and I worked outdoors in transport, and the other girls worked in the factory and I don't think that we three could have survived without the girls in the factory, because they stole flax and -- and yarn, and we made warmers to put in our wooden clogs, on our head, and chest warmers, and I think that was a horrible winter in those mountains, and I don't think we could have survived. We supported each other constantly. We more often found something in the garbage at the railroad station because we had to unload coal cars, and flax cars, than they did. They had no way to get anything. And anything we found we would

carry back to the camp and divide it between the six of us, we would never eat it alone. If somebody was sick, we supported them. We -- it was taking your life into your own hands if you -- if you even went to the so-called doctor, who happened to be a -- a dentist. There were no medicines anyway, and I never was sick except for one day when I'm sure I had a fever and I was ready to topple over, and Sunday were wonderful days in Merzdorf for Anna Rinke, she would torture us standing for hours and hours. It was very cold, and I was ready to pass out. And both Zdena and Buschi were much taller than I was, especially Zdena was very tall. And sh -- Zdena stood in front, and Buschi in back and they literally supported me. Because to -- to -- in those -- at that time still, if you told them you were sick, I mean, there was always a danger they could transport you back to an extermination camp.

Q: Did -- could you notice, or did you notice that other women in the camp were doing something similar, or was -- were -- the working of your group was unusual?

A: No, it was unique.

Q: It was unique.

A: I think we were unique, and then we were the last ones to arrive in Merzdorf, and there was a large cons -- contingent of Hungarian women there, who were constantly fighting which is -- which -- with each other, or cooking together, you know, imaginary cooking. And they were -- there was -- there were a few Germans -- German Jews, but the rest of them were all Poles, Polish Jews. And they didn't want to have anything to do with us, especially the Polish Jews, who had been there much longer than any one of us, so any new person who arrived was just -- they probably felt depriving them of food and so -- you know, it's -- it's very hard to understand, we were all Jews, but we -- we were not supportive of each other. I hate to say this, but that's -- that's the way it was.

Q: So you saw a lot of conflict?

A: I saw conflict, and I didn't -- I did not see a group that stuck together the way we did. And some of the Polish Jews who had been there for a much longer time, some of them had better positions, some of them worked in th -- in the kitchens, and they knew each other, and they would give food to -- to others, you know, who came from similar background. But relatively speaking, we were not in aush -- i-in Merzdorf that long. From January to liberation, which seemed like a lifetime, but without that friendship, you know -- and I was very lucky that I was asked to spread salt, rock salt on the scales. The s -- some of the stuff coming in had to be weighed, and the scales were all frozen, they weren't working, so I was given the job of spreading rock salt. So I reasoned, if cattle can eat rock salt, why can't we? And the camp had run out of salt for months. And that is very weakening whe -- when you have to work. So I stuffed my pockets full of rock salt, and the six of us lived off that rock salt until liberation. And we -- we dug up horse -- we f -- I found -- I don't know if I found, or Buschi, or one of us found a horseradish patch, which we dug up. And I think the Nazi guard probably realized we were doing it. And it was coming towards the end of the war, and one of the worst guards ever, we called her Pigface -- and I knew there was hope one day when I was coming up the stairs onto our dormitory and the SS were a fl -- a flight above, and she was coming down the stairs, Pigface. She looked like a pig. She was very brutal and horrible, and she had this porcelain dish, which had sauerkraut and mashed potatoes, that's all I remember, there might have been something else on it. She shoved that onto me, and she said, "Friss." Now friss is -- is a word that is not used for human beings, that shows you what she thought of us. You only talk frisson about pigs, about animals. There is a big distinction in the German language. So I was on the level of an animal, but at least something was in the wind. Pigface was giving me her dish with food, and

I was delighted, and I carried it up to the dorm, and of course we all shared it. And we thought this was a good omen.

Q: What was your physical condition? Had you deteriorated a great deal, or --

A: I was very, very thin, but I think I was relatively healthy. I -- I th -- I think -- I know that Buschi and Zdena and I were healthier than the other three girls, and -- and I believe that it was the fresh air, and the physical work, even though we got very little to eat, I mean, watery soup. But we did find some discarded carrots in the garbage, and we found some turnips in the garbage, and we ate grass. So that somehow -- actually, I was stronger, and Buschi too, even though she was quite a bit older than I was, even than Zdena. Because after liberation, they all -- w-we got these six bikes from the Russian officer, and we were all going to bike to Prague, and the girls couldn't do it. Only Buschi and I. Even Zdena got weak, but Buschi and I were able to do it.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: And that's pretty far.

A: Well, we separated in -- at the border, because Hannah suffered a heart attack, and we had to leave her at the hospital. So that we decided, Buschi and I, that our plan was to go with a -- our Czech girls to Prague, and then take t -- public transportation. But a Russian officer told us there was no transportation, nothing, and his advice is everybody should go back to the country that they came from, to their home. Well we had no home, we told him. Well, he said, "Well, you have to go back to the country you came from and then try to get out of Europe." And si -- that's what we -- we did. We separd -- separated at the Czech border, when the girls had to go south to

Prague and we went on, destination Lippborg, which was the designation of a little village my aunt lived in, and my parents had said, "If you get separated, we meet at Aunt Minchen's house."

Q: Now, let me just go back a little bit.

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you remember the day when you're free?

A: Yes.

Q: What was that like?

A: We were fr -- we -- we heard a lot of commotion the night before of valises being dragged a-around and -- and there were trucks outside on the -- on the ground -- the factory grounds. And we were, you know, we were not allowed to open windows, everything was closed, the windows were locked, and some of the Hungarians were imagining we were all going to be gassed in there. This is why they locked all the doors and everything. They were came -- became very hysterical. And then it was the next morning, after our -- the SS and the guards, everybody had fled, that the door was opened by a German soldier, who appeared all alone, and said, "Meine Damen, sie sind frei." "My ladies, you are free." We looked at each other, we're looking for the ladies. And we couldn't believe it. And we -- of course, we didn't believe him. And he was a German, how could we believe him? And it was Maurice and his -- his Belgian friend, and also prisoner, who we had befriended, especially I had befriended Maurice very much, and he had promised me he would take me through the meadows, who literally had to drag us out of there. And to --

Q: Maurice was another prisoner?

A: He was a French prisoner, a prisoner of war. These were two prisoners of war. There were more than two, but these were the two that we ha -- occasionally came in contact with, who kept

our spirits up, and -- and that wonderful advice. If -- everybody was afraid they were going to put us on a forced march, and don't go on a forced march. I never even thought of a forced march till Maurice kept saying this. And I said, "Well, how can we refuse it if it's going to be enforced with machine guns?" Well try everything, you know. But he said that's going to be the death of you because it was, you know, pretty horrible weather. So --

Q: Fortunately you didn't go.

A: Yeah, we didn't. Fortunately they decided to -- to flee.

Q: Right.

A: I think the Russians were coming in too fast, because the -- the German soldier opened the door, and the -- I think the Russians were coming in the afternoon. And the first Russian soldier was on a bicycle, believe it or not. And he -- you know, he was just trying to find out what was going on, and -- and he later identified himself as Jewish. But a lot of these Russian Jews, they weren't very Jewish, you know, they -- but he said he was really born a Jew, too.

Q: So you went back to Lippborg to find your mother, and the other relatives, yes?

A: Right. Yes, Buschi and I -- the bicycle that -- bicycles that were given to us, we -- by the Russian officer, we -- we avoided the main roads, and we found a German s -- a dead German soldier. Buschi found him. We usually picnic at the side of the road, secondary roads only, because we were warned not to take the main roads. And he had a map in his -- in his pocket, and that map got us all the way to -- I mean, got Buschi to Holland.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, yeah, we followed that map. Had swastikas on it, but it follow -- it -- it really helped. It really helped. It was a very, very good map. And we -- we sh -- sought shelter, and we stayed with people, and I must say, in the Russian -- what is now the Russian -- what used to be the

Russian zone, East Germany, people were much nicer to us. I think they were scared to death. Most of them had fled, and they were scared to death of the Russians. But there was one place over the Mulde River where we had to cross, that was a separation line, the demarcation line of the Russian and the American forces, and the Russians let us go over. Half the bridge was Russian, half American, the we -- Americans wouldn't let us cross. And we pleaded, and we came back, and came back, and I think it was two or three days later, Buschi finally persuaded them -- we -- we both spoke English, but Buschi's English was better than mine at that time. And they told us to come back the next morning, and if they are busy on the field telephone, we'd better follow their instructions. Well, we got to them exactly when they said we should be there, and they were busy on the field telephone, and they said, "Get the hell out of here." And we sure did get the hell out of there. We -- we bicycled like the devil was after us, and we were in the American zone. And then we -- I'll never forget Dresden, never. I mean, the lamp posts were like straws, and the -- everything was in -- in horrible condition. I mean, the pictures that my husband took of Kassel -- and of Kassel too, we came through Kassel, is exactly what we saw. And we just had one goal, I mean, to get to Lippborg, and for Buschi to get to Holland. And I won't go into any detail, you don't have the time, but you know, in my book I go into all these details, and if you want any other details, you can ask me.

Q: Right.

A: And I remember going over the river in Kassel, the Mulde, and I really thought we wouldn't make it. I mean, the bridge was so bad, it was so bombed out it was just horrendous, but we made it. And eventually, I mean after bicycling for almost a month, and one incident was we were almost overtaken by Russian soldiers who -- who thought girls were a nice catch at that time, and the Russian officer saved us there. But when we came close to -- to Lippborg, which is

from where we started out from, about 500 miles by bicycle, in our condition. We -- there is only one street in that village, called Dorfstrasse. And it's -- it's pretty hilly, and we were pushing our bikes up Dorfstrasse, cobblestones Dorfstrasse. And it has a very narrow sidewalk, and I saw a woman who was carrying a big load of wash. She had gray hair and I recognized that woman, even though I'd remembered her with jet black hair, it was my mother. And she recognized me too. But she came over, and she just barely embraced me, she just her hand on me, but she was looking back. She was expecting some others to follow me. She was looking for my father and my brother. And before she said anything else, she said, "Papi," which we called my father, "and Bübchen are not coming back?" And then she screamed. "My child is back." "Mein Kind is zurück!" And the villagers came out of their houses, and everybody asked, because we had visited my aunt so many times as children, you know, where's your father and where's your brother. And we stayed in lip -- I mean, Buschi stayed in Lippborg for I don't remember exactly, maybe a couple of weeks, and my grandmother and my aunts, you know, they bro -- they -- first they got everything going, hot water, and they didn't have, you know, automatic hot water, they had big stoves and they were heating up the kettles, and -- and the big bathtub on the huge kitchen tile floor, and then Buschi and I were getting baths with -- they were scrubbing us, and my grandmother was saying, "Well you know, you still have to go over the neck, and they are still filthy over here and there." And they discarded our clothes, they gave us new clothes, and they nursed us back to health. And they persuaded Buschi to stay longer than he -- she had wanted to, and then Buschi had to go back to Amsterdam, she had to tell her in-laws that she, the Jew survived, and that her husband, their only son, was killed by the Nazis. And Buschi and Hannah stayed friends for -- and I, we stayed friends for life. And finally my mother and I were able to come to this country in 1947, and I shall never forget that -- the er -- S.S. Ernie Pyle

taking us into New York harbor, and that Statue of Liberty, and I think that most immigrants never forget that picture, you know. They all think like I did, she's giving a special welcome to us. So, it would have been nice if we could have come here in '48. We would have had -- our family would have been together, but that was not to be.

Q: You mean '38.

A: In '38, yes.

Q: Right, right.

A: I'm sorry. But that was not to be. And I love this country, it's -- it's a wonderful country, and I met my husband here.

Q: And you had two boys.

A: And two boys.

Q: And your mother remarried?

A: Yeah, a wonderful stepfather, who I must say I liked, but I don't think I appreciated him as much as I should have. I think I missed my father so much that there was such a resentment that he didn't survive. I mean, don't get me wrong, we had a very good relationship, but sometimes I feel maybe I could have been more loving to him.

Q: Oh.

A: The boys only knew one grandfather --

Q: Right.

A: -- that was Siegmund, who could not have been more wonderful if they had been his own grandchildren. And they loved their grandmother. So that's my story.

Q: Well, there's obviously more to tell, but -- thank you so very much for coming.

A: Oh, you're welcome, it's -- I think it's -- it's a -- it's a wonderful thing you are doing, and -- and I'm very appreciative.

Q: Well, I know this was not easy to -- to do. The loss is very great.

A: Well, yeah, I -- somehow, sometimes it's harder than others.

Q: Right.

A: You know, I talk about it. I'm not talking about it as much any more as I did. I can't write Hans' story and keep going out and --

Q: Right.

A: -- and it's -- I do it at [indecipherable] Valley college. I think it's so important. We are busing in 3000 kids every year, and we can't -- we don't -- many, many more want to come, and it's a wonderful program. And we have speakers, and we have a discussion group with survivors, and righteous and liberators. And I think it's -- it's a wonderful program, but I'm not sure how much more I will do going to individual schools. It -- it does take a lot out of me, mm-hm.

Q: Right, right. Well, thank you very much, I'm very grateful that you came.

A: You're welcome. You're -- you've been great, you're a wonderful interviewer.

Q: You're very kind.

A: And I have given very few interviews. I have given some after the book was published, to, you know, television stations, etcetera, but you are unique, you're very, very wonderful. And the atmosphere is just -- how can you top this?

Q: Yes, can't top it. You can't top it.

A: You can't top this, this is wonderful.

Q: So thank you again.

A: Oh, you're welcome.

End of Tape Nine

Beginning of Tape 10

Q: And who is this good looking person here?

A: My mother, (1) Lina Lenneberg. She called herself Caroline when -- after she came to this country. Approximately 1925.

Q: And this picture?

A: (2) My mother and I. I was a very young child, and I don't know exactly how old I was. Ursula.

Q: And who is this good-looking gentleman?

A: My father, (3) Otto Lenneberg.

Q: And what year? It s -- it says 1935 or '36.

A: Yeah, it's either 1935 or '36. There is no date on the picture, so this is my guess.

Q: And this picture here.

A: My father -- my -- excuse me, my mother's brother Konrad, my (4) Uncle Konrad Schneider. And I was a small child, and I loved him very much.

Q: And this shot, three of them?

A: (5) My parents, and I was a baby, and that was taken in Dortmund, so it must have been 1926.

Q: And this shot?

A: This shot was taken on the roof garden of Karstadt. And this my (6) baby brother, who was born in 1930, and myself, Ursula.

Q: And what year do you think that is?

A: '31.

Q: And this shot here?

A: This is (7) myself, and probably 1931, also on the roof garden of the Karstadt building in Aplerbeck.

Q: And this shot?

A: This is approximately 1936, it my -- my (8) brother and I and this is already in Düsseldorf. I think it's the outskirts of Düsseldorf.

Q: And you're wearing glasses.

A: Yes. I wore glasses since I was in kindergarten.

Q: Okay, this shot?

A: This is my brother, (9) Walter, and this is probably 1939 or 1940, in Düsseldorf.

Q: And who's this?

A: This is my (10) grandmother Lenneberg, my father's mother. She perished in Terezín.

Q: And what is this document?

A: This is a (11) card written by my brother Walter from Theresienstadt. These were cards which prisoners were encouraged to write to give the impression that we were in a wonderful place. And it was supposed to go to either relatives, or Germans, to give the impression that we were really living in a wonderful Jewish town. So what he wrote is really what he was allowed to write.

Q: He had a very straight penmanship as a young boy.

A: Yeah. See, at that point, it was already Hauptstrasse. They had changed the Q's and -- so this is -- this is what, instead of 1114 now I ha -- I remember, now it's Hauptstrasse, it was -- 14.

Q: And what is this?

A: This is the (12) fake money that was issued in Terezín for the benefit of the Red Cross inspection of Theresienstadt in 1944.

Q: And this picture?

A: This myself, (13) Ursula Pawel -- Ursula Lenneberg, sorry. Pr-Probably 1940, in Düsseldorf.

Q: And this?

A: This was a (14) blanket issued to me in Merzdorf, and it had my number on it. I never had a tattoo, and the number was -- was embroidered on the blanket. I carried that blanket all the way from Merzdorf home. I still have that blanket, and I have cut the number out, because I used it for some demonstration.

Q: And this?

A: This is (15) Orange, Blanche, Bleu, which is a Dutch flag. The roads were very insecure after liberation. There was still fighting going on by partisans, and anybody who spoke German was taken into custody. And my life was threatened after liberation. So my Dutch friend Buschi suggested that I do not speak at all, that I was in shock and I lost my ability to speak. And -- and I was -- we were both Dutch, and we made these -- these flags, and put them in our clothing and e -- we made a little bigger ones and put them on our bicycles. The old manuscript pa --

Q: And this shot?

A: That was taken in Deggendorf, in the displaced person camp after liberation, and as you can see (16) I gained quite a big of weight. I was very thin when I came out of the camps, and it took me, I think, a couple of years before I went back to normal. I really blew up like a balloon after getting proper food.

Q: Are those the same glasses that made through the whole ordeal? Your eyeglasses?

A: Yes, those are the same glasses. I don't think I got new glasses until I eventually came to Düsseldorf, and I think they were terrible. Yeah, they made it through the whole ordeal.

Q: And this shot?

A: I believe that was taken (17) in either Düsseldorf or Munich, and it was after the war. I think it was 1946. I still had a pretty full face, but I think I was getting down to more normal proportions.

Q: And who is this?

A: This is my husband (18) Hans Pawel, and this is in 1948, when I met him. I only knew him six weeks and we got married.

Q: Oh, you got married after six weeks --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- not just engaged, oh.

A: No, no engagement. We got married after six weeks. And we were married for almost 51 years when he died.

Q: And the gentleman on the right?

A: His father, (19) Dr. Emil Pawel. He was a physician and he attended soldiers in the trenches of Verdun in World War I, and his country gave him the Medal of Honor for that, des Eiserne Kreuz 1st Klasse. And to top it off they then killed him in Izbica, or one of the other extermination camps.

Q: And this on the left?

A: Hans' father, my husband's father, (20) Dr. Emil Pawel. It's pronounced in German Powell. And I believe it was 1942.

Q: It says '38 to [indecipherable]

A: Oh, '38, sorry. And what was the '42, then? Oh, when he was killed, yeah. So, I don't know, I'm guessing. I think it was -- I -- don't I have a question mark there?

Q: Yes, you do.

A: I guess it's '38.

Q: And on the right?

A: His mother, (21) Olga Pawel -- Pawel. Her maiden name was Neman. And she and her husband, they were deported together to Izbica.

End of Tape 10

Conclusion of Interview