

Alice Tyroler

Tape 1 of 5

May 8, 2013

R-50.030*0701.01.05

Abstract

Alice Tyroler was born December 22, 1926 in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia as Alice Isler (?). She had an older brother, Kirk, born January 12, 1924. Her father had a store where he sold imported material. Both parents worked so Alice had a nanny. For her first five years of schooling, she attended a Jewish Conservative School and next she attended a German Gymnasium Public School for two years. When she was no longer permitted to attend, she went to a gymnasium that taught a mixture of Czech and Slovak. After a year, this school ended for her and she worked for her father's German friend who had a bakery and patisserie. In 1938 when she was 12, Hitler came to Vienna and they brought her grandmother to their home from Vienna. All Jews had to wear a yellow star. Alice and her brother were confronted on the street and one day her brother came home with a bloody nose. Alice witnessed their friendly neighbor being attacked and beaten by a group of men as he crossed the street after visiting them. The Steiners, a Jewish family who owned a book store, permitted children in their garden to attend Zionist group meetings, schooling or read. One day the guards came and took Alice and her mother to the Police Station and then to the Novaki (?) camp. Towards the end, in 1945, their nanny saved Alice's father and brother in her apartment.

Alice Tyroler details her stay in Novaki, a forced labor camp. She entered with her mother while her brother and father hid with the nanny. Her father worked for the State and was permitted to get the mother out of the camp. A week later Alice was expected to leave but no longer had permission. After awhile her father lost his position and the entire family was eligible for deportation. Alice indicated that no one starved in the camp and as long as you worked, you could remain. There were no more selections for Auschwitz after her arrival. At first she made knapsacks and later worked in the kitchen. She had friends in her barracks and when she was 16 she started dating Paul Tyroler who was 21. She relates a story of two children seeing their mother shot and their lives were saved by a peasant. Later, the children became her nephews and she brought them to the US.

Alice Tyroler continues talking about life in Camp Novaki. They learned about the outside world from the camp doctor who brought them the BBC news. Her work consisted of sewing clothes. Partisans opened the camp in August 1944 and let everyone out. Her future brother-in-law lent the partisans two trucks from his factory and they filled them with inmates. They picked up Paul's family and everyone went to Bakahisva (?) for awhile. Then Alice, Paul and his family including a baby hid in the mountains. People mistook them for Slovak peasant refugees until one day an elder got suspicious and asked Alice many religious questions. She knew the Christian holidays but did not know her name day so he suggested she leave immediately and he

would tell authorities in the morning. The War ended in April 1945 when Russia occupied the area. One of the soldiers they met was Jewish. They finally arrived at the nanny's house in Bratislava and Alice was reunited with her mother and brother. There they waited three years Bratislava for the father to return although a friend reported he died in a camp. Then Alice and her mother took a train to Paris where they remained for two years. From there they went to Israel for eight years where Paul became an Army inspector and then came to the US where they settled in Brooklyn.

Summary

- 00:00 Alice Tyroler was born December 22, 1926 in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia as Alice Isler (?) to Carmen and Anna Fisher Isler. She had an older brother, Kirk, born January 12, 1924. Her father had a store where he sold imported material used for suits and ladies clothing. Alice would visit the store but she did not work there. The store still exists in the Old City in the middle of Bratislava and sells china. Her father learned the business from the former owner.
- 05:00 Her mother was born in Vienna and was in the fashion business. She studied fashion in Bratislava and owned a store in Vienna. Her father died in his early 40s. Alice only knew her grandmother in Vienna as her father's parents had died before she was born. They only spoke German at home, no Yiddish. She learned Yiddish later in France. Her parents were conservative Jews and kept a kosher home. Since both parents worked, Alice had a nanny who was from the Sudetenland and was German and Roman Catholic. The nanny was close to her and her parents. Her parents were sociable and had lots of friends. The store was closed during the day on Saturday and reopened at night. They spent the day at home and went to the coffeehouse to meet friends. They attended an Orthodox Temple as her father preferred it. They attended services there on the High Holidays and attended services at local synagogues on Friday nights during the year. She spoke a little Slovak but did not use it at home.
- 10:00 Alice had non-Jewish acquaintances. For her first five years of schooling, she attended a Jewish Conservative School which had both boys and girls. Then she attended a German Gymnasium Public School. Her parents had non-Jewish friends. In 1938 when she was 12, Hitler came to Vienna and they brought her grandmother home. Alice was close to her brother who was about three years older, studious and attended the German Gymnasium. He was a good reader and in charge of her reading. She attended the German Gymnasium for two years and when she could no longer attend, went to a gymnasium that taught a mixture of Czech and Slovak. Czech is close to Polish and Slovak is close to Russian. Alice spoke French as she had a private tutor at home from the time she was seven years old. Her brother also studied with the tutor.

- 15:00 The family was comfortable but not rich. They did not have a car but had more than one radio. She would spend Saturday nights listening to detective stories in the dark. Her life was pleasant until it became unpleasant. During her first five years she had more Jewish friends than non-Jewish as she attended a Jewish school. She was a quiet child who read and played jump rope. She learned to swim when she was young and, also, did gymnastics. In Europe the emphasis was on individual sports rather than team sports. She first heard about anti-Semitism on the radio in 1936 and the family talked about what was going on in Germany. Nothing was going on in Slovakia. Everything changed in 1938. Hitler occupied Vienna and her grandmother, leaving her store, was brought to their home.
- 20:00 They had been frequently back and forth between Vienna and Bratislava as they just had to cross the Danube. Starting in 1938 they were not liked, were insulted and no longer went to their store. They belonged to a Zionist organization and had to watch out on their way home. One day her brother came home with a bloody nose. They were occasionally confronted on the street with name calling and insults. Alice no longer went out by herself at night. She did not tell her parents about her experiences if she did not have to because it was unpleasant and did not want to make them unhappy. She had belonged to the Bar Koch bar Swimming Club and is still in contact with some of the members. Swimming and gymnastics ended. Her father's best friend, Mr. Bichler (?) who lived across the street (Durrenmatt?) also had a store there that sold oriental rugs. One day after the friend visited them, he crossed back and a group of men attacked and beat him. Alice watched from the window but could not do anything. They had to leave.
- 25:00 They had an apartment on the 2nd floor with six or seven rooms including bedrooms for her parents, the children, and the Nanny, a library and a guest room. A non-Jewish cook and a non-Jewish maid lived with them who were permitted to have a Christmas tree in their rooms. In 1938 all the household help had to leave but the Nanny took an apartment far away and worked for them during the day. Towards the end in 1945, she saved Alice's father and brother in her apartment, knowing that she would be killed if found out. She was like an aunt to them. At the end of the 30s, they had to move to another apartment as their apartment was no longer available to Jews. It was in a different neighborhood but not a bad neighborhood. Hitler annexed Czechoslovakia in 1939. The Slovaks were different from the Czechs who were against the Germans. The Slovaks greeted the Germans with pleasure. Their president was a Catholic Priest and he cooperated with the Germans.
- 30:00 Her father's business was aryanized. He was an optimist and she saw no change in him. He felt the troubles would not last. He did not want to leave as he felt that everyone were his friends and would not do anything to him. The Nazis came to get her but she was sick with an infectious disease so returned later and took her and her mother to the Police Station. From there, they were taken to the Novaki (?) camp. Alice felt the country was

willing to sell the Jews. Dr. Nesse (?) was paid for each Jew by the Germans. The guards were young Slovaks. Alice was almost 16 in 1942. After school ended for her, she worked for her father's German friend who had a bakery and patisserie, Konditoree Mayer, just four stores away from home. They were very nice. The owner who she called Uncle Mayer said she could learn to bake and cook if she worked for him. She asked why it would be useful to learn to make hors d'oeuvres. Her father responded that when you have a cook in your house, you can supervise her. It did not make sense to her but it was better than doing nothing. She worked for a few months or a year. It was hard work.

35:00 She learned to make nice things. They all had to wear the large yellow star at that time. The Jews got organized at the well-known book store, the Steiner Book Store with a large summer home and a garden. They allowed large groups of Jewish children into the garden. The Steiners were Jewish and the store was in the family for 200 years. One of the owner's sons, David (Ziggy) Steiner, went to school with her and died two years ago in Jerusalem where he worked for Yad Vashem. His sister was the leader of the Zionist group, B'nai Akiba, which Alice belonged to. The sports group was called Maccabiah. Alice's brother belonged to another Zionist organization. The Steiner family was good friends with her family. The sister died in Auschwitz. Another friend was Leo Lachner, a composer, who died in Switzerland a few years ago.

40:00 Alice had a nice teacher, Dr. Albion Goy (?), for her first two years at the German Gymnasium. She did not know the Slovak people's attitude. The children would read in the garden. Two refugee women came from Berlin and started a religious school for girls in the Steiner garden. It was a refuge. She is still in contact with Mrs. Steiner. Their cousin was in their store until recently. Alice was arrested with her mother. Her father and brother were not at home. Their radio and jewelry were already taken by the State and they had to leave the rest of their belongings.

43:00

Alice Tyroler

Tape 2 of 5

May 8, 2013

R-50.030*0701.02.05

Abstract

Alice Tyroler details her stay in Novaki, a forced labor camp. She entered with her mother while her brother and father hid with the nanny. Her father worked for the State and was permitted to get the mother out of the camp. A week later Alice was expected to leave but no longer had

permission. After awhile her father lost his position and the entire family was eligible for deportation. Alice indicated that no one starved in the camp and as long as you worked, you could remain. There were no more selections for Auschwitz after her arrival. At first she made knapsacks and later worked in the kitchen. She had friends in her barracks and when she was 16 she started dating Paul Tyroler who was 21. She relates a story of two children seeing their mother shot and their lives were saved by a peasant. Later, the children became her nephews and she brought them to the US.

Summary

- 00:00 Alice Tyroler completes her discussion about the Germans making an announcement to bring things of value to a certain place. Good things such as their radio and pictures were confiscated. From the police station, Alice and her mother were taken by train to Camp Novaki (?), a forced labor camp that made some selections for Auschwitz. Alice knew about the selections and had an idea where the people went. It was 1942 and there were messengers who spread the word about what was happening to the Jews in Europe all over the world including the United States. When Alice was taken, her father and brother went into hiding with the nanny but neither she nor her mother knew about it. Her brother worked for an illegal Jewish organization and since her father was an expert in textiles, he worked for the State. This enabled him to have the privilege to wear a small Jewish yellow star instead of a large one. Her father got permission to get her mother out of the camp and Alice was to follow a week or so later. Her mother did not want to leave her alone at the camp.
- 05:00 Alice sent a note to her brother and he replied not to come yet. She told her mother that she had permission to go later so the mother left. Alice was glad her mother got out so was safe with the nanny. Her mother was officially permitted to live with the father as he had a job but the brother was not included. Her brother never talked about this period of time after the war as it was too painful. Later, the father's work permit was withdrawn and the entire family was eligible to be deported. Alice owns a document stating this. Her mother and brother hid with the nanny, Anna Weiss and her sister, Francisca Yachan (?).
- 10:00 Glizzi (?) Fleischman came into the store. Alice was not permitted to leave the camp a week later as previously promised. Nevertheless she was free to do as she wished. She worked underground but was too young to do much. It mostly consisted of men. One, Mr. Helfgott, had a connection with Auschwitz and went back and forth until he was caught. Everyone who went into the Army wore green uniforms but the Jewish soldiers wore black. In 1943 the Sixth Division of Jewish soldiers were placed in the camp. One soldier, Yankel Sertey (?) came from Elabata (?), a political camp and he had typhoid so was placed in a tent instead of the barracks. Alice took care of him and did not catch

typhoid and he recovered. She knew his family. His father was a psychiatrist and had been killed earlier.

- 15:00 Yankel became editor of a newspaper after the War. About 200 soldiers were admitted. The camp was surrounded by barbed wire and had three divisions. She was in the third barracks, the family barracks, as she had arrived with her mother. There was a barracks for single men. The camp had a swimming pool; perhaps, like Thereisenstadt, they wanted to show how nice they treated the prisoners. She was a good swimmer so one Sunday after work she wore a bathing suit and robe to go swimming. She heard that Glizzie (?) Fleishman was brought in so Alice tried to help her. She was the aunt of her brother's best friend and had lived in Australia. She was active in the underground and had a secret role. She was 40 and Alice was too young to know about it. The guard let Alice in as Glizzie was in a separate room for interrogation. The aunt was happy to see her and she said that she would see her tomorrow but two days later was taken to Auschwitz. A big guy was walking along with Alice who became her future husband. Mr. Garrote (?), who later became her brother-in-law, was the director of the marmalade factory in the nearby city of Previtu (?). The Hymans, a Jewish family, owned the factory. Mr. Garrote exported so was permitted to be the director for awhile. Alice's future brother-in-law visited his sister and her two boys, ages three and six, in the camp
- 20:00 In 1968 she brought the boys to the United States. Her sister-in-law took the boys into her home later. The mother and two boys were caught and taken to be shot. A peasant who happened to be there begged for the boys as she had no children and it was permitted. The mother was shot in front of the children and the six year old still remembers. Alice worked in two or three places in the camp. She made backpacks for the military and worked in the kitchen. The more you worked, the longer you could remain in the camp. Alice was not scared as she was young and stupid. She lived in a barracks where she had friends and dated the man, Paul Tyroler, she had seen near the pool. He was visiting the sister of the future brother-in-law. He was from Slovakia and belonged to a free-thinking Jewish organization. She was 16 and he was 21. He lived in the first barracks and came after work.
- 25:00 His work group was called Linka (an anti-Semite) La Guardia, the group of people who supervised the camp. The future brother-in-law had connections with the guard who permitted him to visit his sister. He was still legal on the outside. No one starved in the camp; they just worked hard. Later, the uprising came. There were no more selections after Alice's arrival so it was just a forced labor camp for families. Paul was her friend. The camp's doctor, Dr. Spieler (?) was a friend of the future brother-in-law and had contact with the guards.

27:00

Alice Tyroler

Tape 3 of 5

May 8, 2013

R-50.030*0701.03.05

Abstract

Alice Tyroler continues talking about life in Camp Novaki. They learned about the outside world from the camp doctor who brought them the BBC news. Her work consisted of sewing clothes. Partisans opened the camp in August 1944 and let everyone out. Her future brother-in-law lent the partisans two trucks from his factory and they filled them with inmates. They picked up Paul's family and everyone went to Bakahisva (?) for awhile. Then Alice, Paul and his family including a baby hid in the mountains. People mistook them for Slovak peasant refugees until one day an elder got suspicious and asked Alice many religious questions. She knew the Christian holidays but did not know her name day so he suggested she leave immediately and he would tell authorities in the morning. The War ended in April 1945 when Russia occupied the area. One of the soldiers they met was Jewish. They finally arrived at the nanny's house in Bratislava and Alice was reunited with her mother and brother. There they waited three years Bratislava for the father to return although a friend reported he died in a camp. Then Alice and her mother took a train to Paris where they remained for two years. From there they went to Israel for eight years where Paul became an Army inspector and then came to the US where they settled in Brooklyn.

Summary

00:00 The doctor who was appointed in the camp since it opened was Dr. Spieler (?), a local doctor. Codeine and aspirin were the only medication available. Every day he went by bicycle with the prescriptions and returned with BBC news so the camp was well informed. Alice does not know how many inmates were in the camp. Her work there consisted of making knapsacks, men's shirts and other clothes. When she finished, she would fold men's shirts. The camp had few fatalities. The guards did not cause them problems as long as they behaved properly. One girl her age was alone and got hysterical. Life in her camp was easier than in others. Her future brother-in-law's sister was shot in the mountains after the camp closed. Alice was in Novaki from July 1942 to August 1944. During that time, she had no news of her family. They just got news from the BCC. In August 1944 the Communist backed partisans were operating in Slovakia. Some of the partisans were Russian. 200 young men tried to stop the German tanks and few returned.

- 05:00 Her future brother-in-law lent two trucks from his factory to the partisans who were mostly people from the camp. They loaded the trucks with children and the elderly and Alice along with Paul sat on top with guns and went to Bakahisva (?), a peaceful place where they were free. The people cared for them there. There was shooting and the people jumped up and down. The planes took down many people in the city. She hid in the trenches next to the highway so the planes did not see her. Once she stayed on the truck and the German pilot saw her but did not shoot. In Bakahisva (?), a family of Poles had friends there and they stayed in their house. When they left the camp, they picked up Paul's family. The Partisans had opened the camp and let everyone out. They remained in Bakahisva (?) awhile. One day there was an air raid when Paul's sister was serving tea to a group of men. It was dark and she fell down the stairs and broke the collar bone of her shoulder. Her baby was three months old and lived and everyone took care of it.
- 10:00 The sister's arm was placed in a sling and it healed. They went to the mountains. The school principal in a village in the mountains took them in for a couple of days until they found something else. In a room behind a wall in the school, they hid two badly injured French partisans. They were not Jewish. One was a nine-year-old boy and the other was his father. The son looked for food and was quiet. They walked up a hill when looking for a place in another village and a guard with two guns stopped him and did not understand him. The son did not look Jewish as had reddish/blond hair, and was a 6 foot tall Slovak. Overnight they went to a peasant family and heard shooting and the neighbors came and asked if they heard shooting. One peasant said, "Don't worry, they only shoot Jews" as thought they were refugees. They were walking in the snow with a baby carriage with the 4-month-old baby. A German car with an officer stopped and said they could use gasoline and left. Alice made believe that she did not understand his German. They found a place to stay as refugees as the people did not know they were Jewish. Paul's mother, sister and her husband and baby were in the party with them.
- 15:00 Alice encountered another plane. After they escaped the camp in August, they went for Paul's family and started hiding in one place or another. They saw a peasant they knew as the man wore tefillim. They had a sick baby who was the same age as the sister's. There were no doctors in the mountains so Alice placed the baby in a sheet with lukewarm water to cool it off and it recovered. They wandered from August '44 to April '45. They went as Slovak peasants. Someone became suspicious and the patriarch of a family called her in and asked her questions and she knew Alice was Aloisia (?). In one village, Paul went to the commandeer and obtained papers giving permission for everyone to travel from one place to another as refugees. Alice was questioned on the Christian holidays and she knew the correct responses as her nanny taught her. Then she was asked what her name day was as in Catholic Europe the name day was celebrated but she did not know the answer so was caught.

- 20:00 The patriarch told the priest that she is either Jewish or Gypsy and not a Slovak and should leave immediately as there was a snowstorm and she won't leave a trail. The priest would report them to the Germans in the morning. Alice's mother was with the nanny. Her father had a professor friend who was hiding in the hospital. The SS came and checked and a young man from their home told on them. He was the super's son and her father had obtained a job for him in an oriental carpet store where he learned the business. In '44 her father was happy as knew he couldn't be traced but the young man took him out and he went to Auschwitz and Sachsenhausen and died. Later a friend said he saw the father one night and planes came to liberate them but in the morning the father was missing. Around Christmas they were in a peasant's house and she asked for a postcard to write to her nanny. She wished her a Merry Christmas and wrote in German, "Don't look for Liesl, she has been shot."
- 25:00 The nanny knew her handwriting and did not want her to get into trouble. In this manner, Alice let her nanny know that she was still alive. After the War, Alice returned home to find her family. Trains were not going as mines were on the tracks. She and Paul stood on the round bumpers between the trains as they could not enter them. The War ended the beginning of April '45. They had a meeting with the Soviet Army at a peasant's house. The Soviets entered and the peasants hid their wives where they kept the potatoes. Alice wore boots and went to the highway to find out how to travel. A horse and buggy with four Russians stopped for them. There were two in front with the horses and two officers sat in the rear. They asked if they could be taken to the next village. One asked her if she was Jewish and she said, "Yes." He said in Russian that he also was Jewish. He gave them bread and told them where to get off.
- 30:00 From the train station they went to the nanny's house. They walked upstairs to see her mother and brother who did not know that Alice was alive. They had received the postcard months before. Alice did not say much, just that she was fine. Her mother got a room and Alice and Paul got an apartment but did not want to get married yet. Her mother thought her husband would return and Alice looked at her mother as being old and sick and was not sure that her father was returning. Her brother went to Hamburg to work with a group of Czech people from UNWRA who wear a British uniform. Alice remained in Bratislava (?) to support herself. Her brother got married and went on the Exodus where the British caught him and wanted to discipline him. The Czechs got him out as he did not steal or hurt anyone. One day the brother came home and said that UNWRA was transferred and Alice told him not to return as now it was Communist though under British rule. By that time she and Paul got married.
- 35:00 Alice and her mother went on vacation by train to an immigration hotel in Paris as they wanted to go to Israel. Later they got visas for South America. It was 1948 and Alice got a job translating. They had waited three years for the father to return. Her mother did not give up until then. They were three years in Bratislava. Paul worked in Bracha (?),

her brother worked and she bought parachutes and cut and painted them to make scarves. They did not suffer much from food shortage. They lived in the same house as originally lived in. Alice had to say good-bye to her nanny when she went on vacation. The nanny said she was too old at 80 to come to the US and wanted to remain with her sister. Alice and her husband brought his family here in '68. After two years in Paris, Alice went to Israel for eight years where she spent eight months in the hospital.

40:00 It was very nice in Israel where they lived in a small Arab village near Haifa. Her husband was an inspector in the Army. He started as a driver and then when he learned Hebrew, he was a tank instructor. Alice only speaks a little Hebrew. When they arrived in the US, they first went to Kingston where her brother, his wife and daughter lived. Then they moved to Brooklyn. Her husband's brother died young and they are still in contact with the daughter who was the baby in the carriage when they were hiding. She married a doctor and lives in London. Israel was nice as they were free. They never saw the super's son. She feels lucky as most of her relatives survived and she is married 50 years to a nice family. She feels she already had her revenge. She will search for some documents and photos for the interviewer. Alice was nine years old when the War started and was in the partisans when it ended. She saw Glizzi Fleischman. Her papers are not translated. Rabbi Chassen Sofer (?), well-known in the dynasty of Rabbis, had a school behind the Jewish school.

45:00 Yad Vashem has information on Paul's sister going on the first transport to Auschwitz. The transport was from his home and two other cities. Paul got permission to go home for a day and missed the train by a few minutes. His sister was 16. They lived in Slovakia. Alice has a document from the Minister of Slovak with her DOB, that she was in Nazi-occupied Slovakia from '42 to '44. It indicates she was racially persecuted because she was Jewish. She was recognized as a partisan. Alice has a document from 1991 from the Czech Republic that shows she paid \$25 consulate fee but the document was not sent to her. Alice did not tell her children about her experiences though they questioned her. She did not want to talk about it. She shows the interviewer her medal for Jewish Resistance in Slovakia. Alice has a paper that her mother, Josephine Gymnasium (?) Strasse was buried in Vienna in October, 1938. She has a document with official advice that the contract on her apartment is ended. There were three women including a cook in the apartment. There was a notice for men in the Vienna newspaper that at noon they will not accept Jewish tenants.

50:00 Alice shows her ketuba (Jewish marriage certificate) and note that 11/9/38 was Kristallnacht.

May 8, 2013

R-50.030*0701.04.05

Abstract

In tape 4 Alice Tyroler discusses why she did not want to give an interview earlier.

Summary

00:00 This is an add on discussing why Alice Tyroler did not want to give an interview earlier. She did not believe that children needed to know about her experience when they were young. They have time to learn about it when they are older. She indicated that there are two kinds of people: One who have heart and will get hurt from hearing such a story, and the second type who dislikes the Jews and will get pleasure from hearing such stories. Alice did not want to hurt her children. She felt they learned sufficiently from their studies and from the literature. Her grandchildren requested her history so she gave in. Alice questioned whether writing down the story was suitable. The interviewer responds by telling her that her experiences are real and she passes them on to others. Alice thanks the interviewer for coming. She says that she found the 20th anniversary program of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC to be interesting and meaningful.

03:17

Alice Tyroler

Tape 5 of 5

May 8, 2013

R-50.030*0701.05.05

Abstract

This concludes the interview with Alice's final thoughts.

Summary

00:00 Alice indicates that her final thoughts were that so many years have passed that she decided it was time to tell her story. She felt lucky to be married for 50 years, to have three children, six grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. These relatives plus both niece's children requested her story a long time ago. It was her attendance at the US Holocaust Museum's 20th Anniversary ceremony that made her realize her family was right in requesting her story so she gave it.