

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:00,580

2

00:00:00,580 --> 00:00:03,520

This is the United States
Holocaust Memorial Museum

3

00:00:03,520 --> 00:00:07,390

interview with Rene
Tressler conducted

4

00:00:07,390 --> 00:00:13,120

by Gail Schwartz on
February 20, 1997

5

00:00:13,120 --> 00:00:16,050

in Silver Spring, Maryland.

6

00:00:16,050 --> 00:00:22,570

This is tape number one, side A.

7

00:00:22,570 --> 00:00:25,030

What is your full name?

8

00:00:25,030 --> 00:00:29,680

My name is Rene Edgar Tressler.

9

00:00:29,680 --> 00:00:31,100

And where were you born?

10

00:00:31,100 --> 00:00:36,340

I was born April 16, 1927.

11

00:00:36,340 --> 00:00:37,960

And where were you born?

12

00:00:37,960 --> 00:00:43,380

In a small southern
Bohemian city of Strakonice,

13

00:00:43,380 --> 00:00:47,820
very famous by producing fezes.

14
00:00:47,820 --> 00:00:49,370
You know what a fez is?

15
00:00:49,370 --> 00:00:50,190
Fez hats?

16
00:00:50,190 --> 00:00:55,620
A fez hat, right,
and motorcycles.

17
00:00:55,620 --> 00:00:57,880
And your parents' names?

18
00:00:57,880 --> 00:01:01,620
My father's name was
in Czech originally

19
00:01:01,620 --> 00:01:06,720
Bedrich Tressler,
translated into English,

20
00:01:06,720 --> 00:01:08,730
Frederick Tressler.

21
00:01:08,730 --> 00:01:21,480
My mother's name was Bedriská,
which in English means Frieda,

22
00:01:21,480 --> 00:01:23,130
like in German.

23
00:01:23,130 --> 00:01:25,290
And did you have any--
do you have any siblings?

24
00:01:25,290 --> 00:01:29,130
Yeah, my brother
is Harry Tressler.

25

00:01:29,130 --> 00:01:34,320

Now his name is
[? Tarsi, ?] and he

26

00:01:34,320 --> 00:01:36,640

is five years older than I am.

27

00:01:36,640 --> 00:01:41,610

He was born the 22nd
of the second month

28

00:01:41,610 --> 00:01:45,798

in 1922, nice number.

29

00:01:45,798 --> 00:01:47,590

Let's talk a little
bit about your parents.

30

00:01:47,590 --> 00:01:49,090

Were they from that town?

31

00:01:49,090 --> 00:01:52,560

Is that where they
were born and grew up?

32

00:01:52,560 --> 00:01:56,730

No, my father was born in
Prague, which, as you know,

33

00:01:56,730 --> 00:02:00,480

is the capital city of what
used to be Czechoslovakia,

34

00:02:00,480 --> 00:02:04,530

and my mother was
born in Brno, which

35

00:02:04,530 --> 00:02:07,440

used to be the capital
city of Moravia,

36

00:02:07,440 --> 00:02:10,310

a part of Czechoslovakia.

37
00:02:10,310 --> 00:02:14,310
And what brought them
to this particular town?

38
00:02:14,310 --> 00:02:15,990
To what-- to Prague?

39
00:02:15,990 --> 00:02:17,845
What brought them--
no, you said you were--

40
00:02:17,845 --> 00:02:19,720
[? You mean to the place ?]
where I was born?

41
00:02:19,720 --> 00:02:20,520
Yes.

42
00:02:20,520 --> 00:02:25,680
My father was a music
professor and a musician,

43
00:02:25,680 --> 00:02:27,780
and he was teaching.

44
00:02:27,780 --> 00:02:33,000
And he had a job, which
was actually only temporary

45
00:02:33,000 --> 00:02:35,620
in the town where I was born.

46
00:02:35,620 --> 00:02:37,440
So it was just accidental.

47
00:02:37,440 --> 00:02:40,500
Most of our lives--

48
00:02:40,500 --> 00:02:45,300
most of their lives they lived
in Prague, and when I was born

49

00:02:45,300 --> 00:02:48,390

they were accidentally
in Strakonice,

50

00:02:48,390 --> 00:02:51,390

and I was born there.

51

00:02:51,390 --> 00:02:56,250

Did you have extended
family nearby or in Prague?

52

00:02:56,250 --> 00:03:02,490

We were a pretty large
Jewish family in Prague, yes.

53

00:03:02,490 --> 00:03:12,570

In fact, as much as I know,
there were close to 70,

54

00:03:12,570 --> 00:03:18,270

75 people in the close circle
of our family, and out of which,

55

00:03:18,270 --> 00:03:24,330

about 64 died in the Holocaust.

56

00:03:24,330 --> 00:03:28,320

Out of the close
family, my father--

57

00:03:28,320 --> 00:03:33,540

I must say, my parents
were divorced in 1937.

58

00:03:33,540 --> 00:03:37,950

And my father married
a German lady,

59

00:03:37,950 --> 00:03:41,670

and my mother married
another Jewish gentleman.

60

00:03:41,670 --> 00:03:45,600

And so my father did not go
to any concentration camp

61

00:03:45,600 --> 00:03:52,170

because he was so-called
"covered" by his Aryan wife.

62

00:03:52,170 --> 00:03:55,230

And until the last
three months I

63

00:03:55,230 --> 00:04:00,690

understand he was supposed to go
into that mixed marriage camp,

64

00:04:00,690 --> 00:04:05,670

but he was walking
through Prague

65

00:04:05,670 --> 00:04:08,790

with a white cane
and black glasses,

66

00:04:08,790 --> 00:04:13,170

pretending that he is a blind
man so they wouldn't catch him.

67

00:04:13,170 --> 00:04:19,500

And he slept every night
at another friend's place,

68

00:04:19,500 --> 00:04:22,260

so he never went
to any camp at all.

69

00:04:22,260 --> 00:04:25,440

And my mother, my brother,
and me-- we went, naturally,

70

00:04:25,440 --> 00:04:29,190

and miraculously,
all three of us--

71
00:04:29,190 --> 00:04:33,180
out of those 70
people, all three of us

72
00:04:33,180 --> 00:04:35,960
survived, my mother,
my brother, and I did.

73
00:04:35,960 --> 00:04:44,100
Unfortunately, my mother died
in 1987, being 85 years old.

74
00:04:44,100 --> 00:04:47,460
Let's talk a little bit
more about your childhood.

75
00:04:47,460 --> 00:04:50,430
How long did you live
in this smaller town?

76
00:04:50,430 --> 00:04:54,060
No, we actually did
not live in Strakonice,

77
00:04:54,060 --> 00:04:57,390
I think, more than a couple of
months or so after I was born.

78
00:04:57,390 --> 00:05:05,710
And then we lived in the
city of the name of Teplitz,

79
00:05:05,710 --> 00:05:10,500
which is a decently large
city in the northern part

80
00:05:10,500 --> 00:05:17,130
of Bohemia, and that was
the place where I started

81
00:05:17,130 --> 00:05:20,270
to go to elementary school.

82
00:05:20,270 --> 00:05:23,700
Yeah, in between, we also
lived in the city of Most.

83
00:05:23,700 --> 00:05:26,430
As I said, my father
was traveling a lot,

84
00:05:26,430 --> 00:05:30,550
and we traveled with him
to wherever his job was.

85
00:05:30,550 --> 00:05:34,680
And so in Teplitz I
started to go to school,

86
00:05:34,680 --> 00:05:39,450
and then we moved
to a city of ĀšťĀ.

87
00:05:39,450 --> 00:05:43,020
In Germany or probably
in English, too, the name

88
00:05:43,020 --> 00:05:44,610
is Aussig.

89
00:05:44,610 --> 00:05:51,990
And from there, when Hitler
occupied the so-called Sudeten

90
00:05:51,990 --> 00:05:56,940
area, the area of the
border of Bohemia,

91
00:05:56,940 --> 00:06:02,530
we escaped from there, actually.

92
00:06:02,530 --> 00:06:05,950
We were warned by a
friend of the family

93

00:06:05,950 --> 00:06:09,460

that they are coming,
that they will occupy

94

00:06:09,460 --> 00:06:14,440

the city within the
next 12 or 24 hours,

95

00:06:14,440 --> 00:06:18,970

and we had a pretty large,
nice, equipped apartment

96

00:06:18,970 --> 00:06:25,930

there with lots of
valuables, my father,

97

00:06:25,930 --> 00:06:29,560

being a musician, very
valuable musical instruments,

98

00:06:29,560 --> 00:06:34,750

and libraries, and, naturally,
furniture, and clothing,

99

00:06:34,750 --> 00:06:36,040

and everything.

100

00:06:36,040 --> 00:06:39,430

We left there
because we were told,

101

00:06:39,430 --> 00:06:42,850

you better go out of the
city, and it won't take long.

102

00:06:42,850 --> 00:06:44,980

You come back within a
couple of weeks or so.

103

00:06:44,980 --> 00:06:49,270

They will straighten out the
political situation somehow,

104

00:06:49,270 --> 00:06:51,960

Mr. Chamberlain and so forth.

105

00:06:51,960 --> 00:06:53,470

Let's back up a
little bit before,

106

00:06:53,470 --> 00:06:56,740

and we'll come to that time.

107

00:06:56,740 --> 00:07:02,100

You said you were living in
Aussig, and you started school.

108

00:07:02,100 --> 00:07:03,850

What kind of neighborhood
did you live in?

109

00:07:03,850 --> 00:07:07,570

Was it a Jewish
neighborhood or mixed?

110

00:07:07,570 --> 00:07:13,660

I think, generally, in
Czechoslovakia, especially

111

00:07:13,660 --> 00:07:19,300

in Bohemia, there was no such a
thing like Jewish neighborhood

112

00:07:19,300 --> 00:07:20,710

or so.

113

00:07:20,710 --> 00:07:26,620

We lived within the normal
population, normal people,

114

00:07:26,620 --> 00:07:30,940

and we had, naturally,
lots of Jewish friends.

115

00:07:30,940 --> 00:07:38,440

And my father and my mother went
to the synagogue once a while.

116
00:07:38,440 --> 00:07:42,970
But otherwise, I must
admit, the Czech Jews

117
00:07:42,970 --> 00:07:47,620
are kind of pretty assimilated,
so there was no such a thing

118
00:07:47,620 --> 00:07:49,060
like a Jewish neighborhood.

119
00:07:49,060 --> 00:07:50,305
We lived in a pretty--

120
00:07:50,305 --> 00:07:52,870

121
00:07:52,870 --> 00:07:57,110
not rich, but
well-on-people neighborhood.

122
00:07:57,110 --> 00:08:00,380
And yeah, that's what it is.

123
00:08:00,380 --> 00:08:03,260
So you said you had friends
who were Jewish and non-Jewish?

124
00:08:03,260 --> 00:08:04,040
Oh, yes, yeah.

125
00:08:04,040 --> 00:08:08,000
Did you have any
unpleasant experiences

126
00:08:08,000 --> 00:08:11,070
with the non-Jewish children
when you were very young?

127

00:08:11,070 --> 00:08:15,380

So being a child in that
time, a very young child--

128

00:08:15,380 --> 00:08:21,110

I said elementary school,
fourth, fifth grade, in ĀšstĀ,

129

00:08:21,110 --> 00:08:22,070

in Aussig.

130

00:08:22,070 --> 00:08:25,490

Yeah, I had here and
there some experiences

131

00:08:25,490 --> 00:08:28,910

which one, specifically
being a child,

132

00:08:28,910 --> 00:08:31,080

did not take too seriously.

133

00:08:31,080 --> 00:08:40,039

I remember I had a few kids in
the class who, once in a while,

134

00:08:40,039 --> 00:08:41,659

called me names.

135

00:08:41,659 --> 00:08:42,860

Like what?

136

00:08:42,860 --> 00:08:45,410

Dirty Jew and so.

137

00:08:45,410 --> 00:08:52,130

But as I said, not being very
religious and very Jewish

138

00:08:52,130 --> 00:08:55,670

brought up in that
time, I actually

139

00:08:55,670 --> 00:08:57,920

didn't know what
they mean by that.

140

00:08:57,920 --> 00:09:00,440

Did you tell your parents
about this experience?

141

00:09:00,440 --> 00:09:06,830

Yes, I did tell my parents, and
they said, just ignore them,

142

00:09:06,830 --> 00:09:08,870

and don't get in trouble.

143

00:09:08,870 --> 00:09:13,565

Don't fight, which I did anyway.

144

00:09:13,565 --> 00:09:14,680

So you did fight?

145

00:09:14,680 --> 00:09:16,850

Yes, I did, once a while.

146

00:09:16,850 --> 00:09:23,150

Actually, I want to
mention a small story that

147

00:09:23,150 --> 00:09:25,850

happened since you ask.

148

00:09:25,850 --> 00:09:32,780

We were supporting a
poor boy in my class

149

00:09:32,780 --> 00:09:34,760

who did not have enough--

150

00:09:34,760 --> 00:09:36,890

their parents didn't
have enough means

151

00:09:36,890 --> 00:09:40,470

to give him lunch
to take to school,

152

00:09:40,470 --> 00:09:46,610

so I, for a year or two,
took every day extra pack

153

00:09:46,610 --> 00:09:51,500

of lunch for this boy
and gave him the lunch.

154

00:09:51,500 --> 00:09:57,020

And one time I, for some reason,
after about a year and a half

155

00:09:57,020 --> 00:09:57,620

or two years--

156

00:09:57,620 --> 00:10:00,440

I forgot not just his lunch.

157

00:10:00,440 --> 00:10:02,990

I forgot also my lunch at home.

158

00:10:02,990 --> 00:10:05,120

I just forgot to take it.

159

00:10:05,120 --> 00:10:09,710

And he was so angry,
and in that time.

160

00:10:09,710 --> 00:10:16,700

He called me cheap, and
skimpy, and dirty Jew.

161

00:10:16,700 --> 00:10:17,630

He was not Jewish?

162

00:10:17,630 --> 00:10:19,340

No, he was not Jewish, no.

163

00:10:19,340 --> 00:10:23,900

And he hit me with the
pencil box in my head.

164

00:10:23,900 --> 00:10:26,810

So that was too much for
me, so I beat him up.

165

00:10:26,810 --> 00:10:30,260

And that's not the
end of the story.

166

00:10:30,260 --> 00:10:38,030

Afternoon, the doorbell
rang, and the mother

167

00:10:38,030 --> 00:10:41,330

of the boy and the boy
stand in front of the door.

168

00:10:41,330 --> 00:10:42,770

My mother was home.

169

00:10:42,770 --> 00:10:46,430

She opened the door, and she
said, look, Mrs. Tressler,

170

00:10:46,430 --> 00:10:50,330

what your son did to
my little boy here.

171

00:10:50,330 --> 00:10:52,790

And he had a black eye.

172

00:10:52,790 --> 00:10:56,300

And my mother said, yeah,
my son told me about it,

173

00:10:56,300 --> 00:11:00,060

and did your son tell
you what happened?

174

00:11:00,060 --> 00:11:04,910
And she said, no, they just
had some kind of a boy's fight.

175
00:11:04,910 --> 00:11:07,520
And my mother explained
exactly what happened,

176
00:11:07,520 --> 00:11:09,650
and the lady was
very embarrassed

177
00:11:09,650 --> 00:11:14,420
and really apologized
to my parents and to us

178
00:11:14,420 --> 00:11:17,150
for her son's behavior.

179
00:11:17,150 --> 00:11:22,610
That was just-- the
parents probably we are not

180
00:11:22,610 --> 00:11:24,950
as antisemitic as
that little kid,

181
00:11:24,950 --> 00:11:27,560
or the other kid, I'm sure,
didn't know what antisemitic

182
00:11:27,560 --> 00:11:30,650
means, just picked it up
somewhere in the street

183
00:11:30,650 --> 00:11:33,860
and called me dirty Jew
just because I forgot

184
00:11:33,860 --> 00:11:36,560
to bring both our lunches.

185
00:11:36,560 --> 00:11:39,530

Did you continue to bring
lunch after that for him?

186
00:11:39,530 --> 00:11:42,260
I don't think so, no.

187
00:11:42,260 --> 00:11:45,180
I don't think I didn't, no.

188
00:11:45,180 --> 00:11:48,830
What kind of school did
you go to as a young child?

189
00:11:48,830 --> 00:11:50,405
That was an elementary school.

190
00:11:50,405 --> 00:11:51,530
I think it was the fourth--

191
00:11:51,530 --> 00:11:53,420
A public--

192
00:11:53,420 --> 00:11:56,720
Yeah, public school, fourth
or fifth elementary grade.

193
00:11:56,720 --> 00:11:59,240

194
00:11:59,240 --> 00:12:01,880
Any problems with the teachers?

195
00:12:01,880 --> 00:12:06,590
No, I don't remember having
any problems concerning

196
00:12:06,590 --> 00:12:10,580
religious persecutions
or so, no.

197
00:12:10,580 --> 00:12:12,110
No, I don't remember that.

198

00:12:12,110 --> 00:12:17,690

And I don't think it was a
common thing in Czechoslovakia,

199

00:12:17,690 --> 00:12:18,800

no.

200

00:12:18,800 --> 00:12:22,130

Now, you said your parents
went to synagogue occasionally.

201

00:12:22,130 --> 00:12:27,500

How much of a religious training
did you have as a young boy?

202

00:12:27,500 --> 00:12:31,550

Religious training-- I
don't think I had any.

203

00:12:31,550 --> 00:12:35,240

The only thing I remember--
my parents, specifically

204

00:12:35,240 --> 00:12:39,770

my mother, went to the
synagogue at holidays,

205

00:12:39,770 --> 00:12:42,230

high Jewish holidays.

206

00:12:42,230 --> 00:12:44,460

Sometimes she
dragged me with her,

207

00:12:44,460 --> 00:12:46,730

and I didn't know
why I'm going there.

208

00:12:46,730 --> 00:12:52,640

No, I must admit, I did not
have any strong religious

209

00:12:52,640 --> 00:12:54,620
upbringing.

210

00:12:54,620 --> 00:12:59,020
I always knew, I'm Jewish,
and although, as I said,

211

00:12:59,020 --> 00:13:01,720
when I was very little I
didn't know what it means.

212

00:13:01,720 --> 00:13:08,080
And then definitely my
awareness of Jewishness I

213

00:13:08,080 --> 00:13:14,440
have to thank to Mr. Hitler,
that through the Holocaust,

214

00:13:14,440 --> 00:13:17,920
the suffering, and the
things that we lived through,

215

00:13:17,920 --> 00:13:22,750
naturally, I became a
scholar of Jewish history

216

00:13:22,750 --> 00:13:26,890
and "Jewishness" in quotations.

217

00:13:26,890 --> 00:13:31,750
So no, I was not really
brought up very religious.

218

00:13:31,750 --> 00:13:34,930
So your parents did not
celebrate the Sabbath

219

00:13:34,930 --> 00:13:37,270
or anything like that,
any holidays at home?

220

00:13:37,270 --> 00:13:40,810

Yes, on Friday evening
my mother lit candles

221

00:13:40,810 --> 00:13:44,450

and said the prayers, yes,
and that was one thing.

222

00:13:44,450 --> 00:13:47,800

And then the high holidays
we went to the temple.

223

00:13:47,800 --> 00:13:50,320

We both had the bar
mitzvah, my brother

224

00:13:50,320 --> 00:13:52,690

and I. We had bar mitzvah.

225

00:13:52,690 --> 00:13:54,490

But we were not kosher.

226

00:13:54,490 --> 00:14:02,350

We were not strict religious,
and they were both working

227

00:14:02,350 --> 00:14:04,930

on Saturday and Fridays.

228

00:14:04,930 --> 00:14:08,800

But I think that was very common
for Jews in Czechoslovakia.

229

00:14:08,800 --> 00:14:13,120

There were very few really
orthodox or kosher Jews

230

00:14:13,120 --> 00:14:14,420

in Czechoslovakia.

231

00:14:14,420 --> 00:14:16,690

What language did
you speak at home?

232

00:14:16,690 --> 00:14:22,240
We spoke Czech mostly, mostly,
but when I was three years old

233

00:14:22,240 --> 00:14:25,300
I spoke fluently
Czech and German,

234

00:14:25,300 --> 00:14:27,430
which I, naturally, still do.

235

00:14:27,430 --> 00:14:31,270
And thanks to-- we had a maid--

236

00:14:31,270 --> 00:14:33,280
as I said, we were
pretty well on.

237

00:14:33,280 --> 00:14:38,080
We had a maid, and the
maid was a German girl.

238

00:14:38,080 --> 00:14:40,330
And when she came--

239

00:14:40,330 --> 00:14:43,500
actually, she came while
I was three years old.

240

00:14:43,500 --> 00:14:45,790
When she left about
two years later,

241

00:14:45,790 --> 00:14:50,170
she spoke fluently Czech,
and I spoke fluently German,

242

00:14:50,170 --> 00:14:51,660
being actually five years old.

243

00:14:51,660 --> 00:14:54,520

244

00:14:54,520 --> 00:14:56,630

But the family
language, I believe,

245

00:14:56,630 --> 00:15:03,490

would be like 80% Czech, but
I must admit, like 20% German.

246

00:15:03,490 --> 00:15:07,690

Some of our relatives did
not speak too well Czech

247

00:15:07,690 --> 00:15:13,780

at all, just a broken Czech,
so we spoke German with them,

248

00:15:13,780 --> 00:15:16,000

some of them, not too
many, though, the older

249

00:15:16,000 --> 00:15:18,190

ones, the ones from
Austria-Hungary

250

00:15:18,190 --> 00:15:26,680

Empire, those very old ones, in
that time very old ones, yeah.

251

00:15:26,680 --> 00:15:29,080

Did you have any other
interests, like music?

252

00:15:29,080 --> 00:15:31,810

You said your father
was very musical.

253

00:15:31,810 --> 00:15:36,280

Did you have such
interest or talents?

254

00:15:36,280 --> 00:15:38,530

Yeah, I play the keyboard.

255

00:15:38,530 --> 00:15:45,100

I play pretty well guitar that
I learned both from my father,

256

00:15:45,100 --> 00:15:48,010

naturally, and then
developed a little bit.

257

00:15:48,010 --> 00:15:54,640

So I'm kind of a decent guitar
player, classical guitar, not

258

00:15:54,640 --> 00:15:58,510

modern, and keyboard
a little bit, too,

259

00:15:58,510 --> 00:16:01,360

but not professionally, no.

260

00:16:01,360 --> 00:16:03,130

Were you interested in sports?

261

00:16:03,130 --> 00:16:07,930

Yes, in fact, I was a
professional soccer player

262

00:16:07,930 --> 00:16:10,010

after the war, after
the camp, yeah.

263

00:16:10,010 --> 00:16:13,450

Yeah, but I'm talking now as
a child, as a young child.

264

00:16:13,450 --> 00:16:16,270

Yeah, as a young child I
was interested in sports.

265

00:16:16,270 --> 00:16:19,570

Yes, I played soccer, and
hockey, and ice skating,

266
00:16:19,570 --> 00:16:20,380
and everything.

267
00:16:20,380 --> 00:16:25,060
Yeah, I did a lot
of sport, opposite

268
00:16:25,060 --> 00:16:26,650
of my brother, who did not.

269
00:16:26,650 --> 00:16:29,950
He hated sports.

270
00:16:29,950 --> 00:16:33,130
It sounds like you were a
very independent young child,

271
00:16:33,130 --> 00:16:35,440
or were you very
quiet and withdrawn?

272
00:16:35,440 --> 00:16:37,222
How would you describe yourself?

273
00:16:37,222 --> 00:16:38,680
We're talking about
before the war.

274
00:16:38,680 --> 00:16:43,180
I think I always was an
extroverted child and person,

275
00:16:43,180 --> 00:16:48,040
which I am still, and actually,
this is a good question

276
00:16:48,040 --> 00:16:50,320
that I am asking myself.

277
00:16:50,320 --> 00:16:55,630
And many people ask me very

often, who brought you up?

278

00:16:55,630 --> 00:16:57,100

Who raised you?

279

00:16:57,100 --> 00:16:58,600

And I have no answer for that.

280

00:16:58,600 --> 00:17:02,050

Nobody because my
mother and my father,

281

00:17:02,050 --> 00:17:05,290

specifically my father-- he
was constantly traveling,

282

00:17:05,290 --> 00:17:08,109

and he was abroad
with orchestras.

283

00:17:08,109 --> 00:17:09,819

And he was a conductor, too.

284

00:17:09,819 --> 00:17:12,579

He was conducting in
different countries in Europe.

285

00:17:12,579 --> 00:17:22,030

And my mother had a very high
position in a coal concern.

286

00:17:22,030 --> 00:17:25,400

That was the coal area
that Teplitz, Aussig, ÄstÄ,

287

00:17:25,400 --> 00:17:27,819

and that was
Weinmann, Petschek--

288

00:17:27,819 --> 00:17:31,360

I don't know if that tells
you anything-- a very, very

289

00:17:31,360 --> 00:17:35,290
rich family in Europe.

290

00:17:35,290 --> 00:17:41,410
And my mother was a executive
secretary for the director

291

00:17:41,410 --> 00:17:43,870
in ĀsstĀ, in Aussig.

292

00:17:43,870 --> 00:17:48,310
And so she had a very good
job, and she was rarely

293

00:17:48,310 --> 00:17:50,320
home during the day to--

294

00:17:50,320 --> 00:17:52,240
that's why I said,
we had a maid,

295

00:17:52,240 --> 00:17:56,410
and sometimes I even had--

296

00:17:56,410 --> 00:17:59,830
what do you call it--
the lady just for myself

297

00:17:59,830 --> 00:18:03,370
to make sure that I'm not
getting in any trouble

298

00:18:03,370 --> 00:18:05,500
and that I do my homework.

299

00:18:05,500 --> 00:18:10,210
But parents' upbringing
of children--

300

00:18:10,210 --> 00:18:13,130
I am afraid there
was nobody there.

301
00:18:13,130 --> 00:18:17,200
And when I was 11 years old--

302
00:18:17,200 --> 00:18:20,650
10 years old, actually, or 11--

303
00:18:20,650 --> 00:18:23,440
as I said, we went
from Aussig to Prague,

304
00:18:23,440 --> 00:18:25,750
and we never came back again.

305
00:18:25,750 --> 00:18:29,080
I wanted to mention that, that
all those possessions and all

306
00:18:29,080 --> 00:18:33,520
those beautiful pianos, and
clothes, and furniture we

307
00:18:33,520 --> 00:18:36,640
never saw again in our lives.

308
00:18:36,640 --> 00:18:39,910
And we went to
Prague, where we had

309
00:18:39,910 --> 00:18:43,610
our grandfather and some
other members of the family.

310
00:18:43,610 --> 00:18:48,010
My mother married to a
gentleman who was so smart.

311
00:18:48,010 --> 00:18:50,740
He just came back from America.

312
00:18:50,740 --> 00:18:52,840
Living in America

18 years, he had

313

00:18:52,840 --> 00:18:56,410
to come back a year before
Hitler occupied Czechoslovakia.

314

00:18:56,410 --> 00:18:57,730
And he married Mom.

315

00:18:57,730 --> 00:19:00,820
And we didn't have an
apartment in Prague

316

00:19:00,820 --> 00:19:03,970
because they were not
available already in that time,

317

00:19:03,970 --> 00:19:05,320
and also it was expensive.

318

00:19:05,320 --> 00:19:09,460
We didn't have any means because
we left everything there.

319

00:19:09,460 --> 00:19:13,960
Even bank accounts my parents
left in ĀšstĀ, and so--

320

00:19:13,960 --> 00:19:15,790
Now, your parents divorced--

321

00:19:15,790 --> 00:19:17,500
--in '37.

322

00:19:17,500 --> 00:19:18,700
--in 1937.

323

00:19:18,700 --> 00:19:23,180
Was that hard for you,
difficult to see that happen?

324

00:19:23,180 --> 00:19:27,910

I would like to say yes,
but I don't think so, no.

325
00:19:27,910 --> 00:19:31,990
Actually, since my father
was rarely home anyway,

326
00:19:31,990 --> 00:19:34,900
I didn't notice too
much of a difference.

327
00:19:34,900 --> 00:19:37,030
In fact, when they
were divorced,

328
00:19:37,030 --> 00:19:41,390
he came more often to
see us than before.

329
00:19:41,390 --> 00:19:43,510
So in Prague-- that's
what I want to say--

330
00:19:43,510 --> 00:19:46,690
I was living with
my grandparents

331
00:19:46,690 --> 00:19:49,540
because my mother
and her new husband

332
00:19:49,540 --> 00:19:53,290
had a one-room
apartment in Prague,

333
00:19:53,290 --> 00:19:57,730
and there was not enough room
for both of us children, too.

334
00:19:57,730 --> 00:19:59,860
So we lived with
my grandparents,

335

00:19:59,860 --> 00:20:02,980
who had a large
apartment in Prague,

336
00:20:02,980 --> 00:20:04,330
but they didn't care for us.

337
00:20:04,330 --> 00:20:06,760
They just fed us,
and do whatever you

338
00:20:06,760 --> 00:20:09,130
want to do during the daytime.

339
00:20:09,130 --> 00:20:13,840
And then I went to the
camp when I was 15,

340
00:20:13,840 --> 00:20:16,690
so I don't know who brought
me up, actually, nobody.

341
00:20:16,690 --> 00:20:19,810
How close were you to your
brother when you were young?

342
00:20:19,810 --> 00:20:20,380
[? When-- ?]

343
00:20:20,380 --> 00:20:22,390
I know he's five
years older than you.

344
00:20:22,390 --> 00:20:26,260
Yeah, well, when we were
young, I was very close to him.

345
00:20:26,260 --> 00:20:28,640
In fact, I was
very close to him.

346
00:20:28,640 --> 00:20:30,550
He couldn't care less

about me, actually,

347

00:20:30,550 --> 00:20:32,920

being five years

older in that age.

348

00:20:32,920 --> 00:20:37,220

But I know that I copied

my brother very much.

349

00:20:37,220 --> 00:20:40,703

Whatever he did,

I copied, I did.

350

00:20:40,703 --> 00:20:42,620

And fortunately-- I don't

know if I should say

351

00:20:42,620 --> 00:20:44,600

fortunately or unfortunately.

352

00:20:44,600 --> 00:20:49,660

He usually stopped

doing things that he did

353

00:20:49,660 --> 00:20:52,320

and that I started

to do after him,

354

00:20:52,320 --> 00:20:54,690

and I became pretty

much successful

355

00:20:54,690 --> 00:20:57,060

where he just left it.

356

00:20:57,060 --> 00:20:59,970

Example-- sports, soccer.

357

00:20:59,970 --> 00:21:03,630

My brother was the one who

took me to a soccer field once,

358

00:21:03,630 --> 00:21:07,890
and being five years younger,
five years younger than him,

359

00:21:07,890 --> 00:21:12,120
and being chosen to play
with a team before he was--

360

00:21:12,120 --> 00:21:14,610
that kind of embarrassed
him, and he stopped.

361

00:21:14,610 --> 00:21:16,965
And I continued and
became, after the war,

362

00:21:16,965 --> 00:21:19,110
a professional soccer player.

363

00:21:19,110 --> 00:21:22,920
My brother one day
brought a guitar home,

364

00:21:22,920 --> 00:21:27,840
and he started to learn
guitar and show me the chords

365

00:21:27,840 --> 00:21:29,100
and how to play.

366

00:21:29,100 --> 00:21:32,220
And I picked it up, and
I played, and he stopped.

367

00:21:32,220 --> 00:21:34,320
I play until now.

368

00:21:34,320 --> 00:21:38,170
And there was a time--

369

00:21:38,170 --> 00:21:41,850
my brother was kind of

very famous in our family

370

00:21:41,850 --> 00:21:45,450

for writing short
stories, and he once

371

00:21:45,450 --> 00:21:50,620

wrote a Christmas-- a Jew
wrote a Christmas story, right,

372

00:21:50,620 --> 00:21:54,930

and the whole neighborhood
cried over that story.

373

00:21:54,930 --> 00:21:58,680

And I told myself, why don't
people cry about my stories?

374

00:21:58,680 --> 00:22:01,020

I have to write stories, too.

375

00:22:01,020 --> 00:22:03,750

And I did, and he
stopped writing,

376

00:22:03,750 --> 00:22:07,980

and I continued writing
and write until these days.

377

00:22:07,980 --> 00:22:12,090

Was your family Zionist at all?

378

00:22:12,090 --> 00:22:15,970

I think our family didn't know
what Zionism is in that time.

379

00:22:15,970 --> 00:22:21,690

My brother became
a Zionist right

380

00:22:21,690 --> 00:22:24,000

after the occupation of Hitler.

381

00:22:24,000 --> 00:22:30,940

He befriended with a gentleman
of the name Jacob Edelstein,

382

00:22:30,940 --> 00:22:31,440

which--

383

00:22:31,440 --> 00:22:34,560

I'm sure you are
familiar with that name.

384

00:22:34,560 --> 00:22:38,130

And he became kind of--

385

00:22:38,130 --> 00:22:40,710

if one can even say
it, became a Zionist.

386

00:22:40,710 --> 00:22:43,140

He was 18 years old, 19.

387

00:22:43,140 --> 00:22:51,120

And when Edelstein was
taught to make a group

388

00:22:51,120 --> 00:22:54,540

that would go to build
up Theresienstadt

389

00:22:54,540 --> 00:22:59,040

to prepare Theresienstadt
for the city

390

00:22:59,040 --> 00:23:02,010

that Hitler gave to the Jews.

391

00:23:02,010 --> 00:23:08,610

And Edelstein put up a group
of, I think, 21 people,

392

00:23:08,610 --> 00:23:12,450

and they went to Strakonice

not knowing what's

393
00:23:12,450 --> 00:23:15,000
going to follow, naturally.

394
00:23:15,000 --> 00:23:19,980
And that group became
the Board of Elders

395
00:23:19,980 --> 00:23:23,940
of the Theresienstadt, of
which Edelstein was the elder.

396
00:23:23,940 --> 00:23:27,660

397
00:23:27,660 --> 00:23:29,430
Good, yeah.

398
00:23:29,430 --> 00:23:33,178
OK, now when did you
first start hearing

399
00:23:33,178 --> 00:23:34,220
about a man named Hitler?

400
00:23:34,220 --> 00:23:38,680
Do you know what
your first memory is?

401
00:23:38,680 --> 00:23:45,550
I think I started to hear just
before the Germans occupied

402
00:23:45,550 --> 00:23:49,900
the Sudeten of Bohemia, of
Czechoslovakia, the point where

403
00:23:49,900 --> 00:23:52,450
we had to leave to Prague.

404
00:23:52,450 --> 00:23:57,010

And short time
before that, there

405
00:23:57,010 --> 00:24:01,750
was a lot of talk about a man
by the name Hitler and actually

406
00:24:01,750 --> 00:24:06,940
more about the name Henlein, if
you're familiar with that name.

407
00:24:06,940 --> 00:24:09,940
He was the Gauleiter--

408
00:24:09,940 --> 00:24:11,530
I think was his title--

409
00:24:11,530 --> 00:24:15,130
of the Sudeten, the
leader of the Germans

410
00:24:15,130 --> 00:24:19,330
living in Czechoslovakia
and those border areas.

411
00:24:19,330 --> 00:24:21,430
And he was the
organizer, the one

412
00:24:21,430 --> 00:24:25,120
who prepared the occupation,
really, for Hitler,

413
00:24:25,120 --> 00:24:26,910
but we also heard about Hitler.

414
00:24:26,910 --> 00:24:31,180
And so there's also a little
story, if you interested,

415
00:24:31,180 --> 00:24:33,310
about Henlein.

416

00:24:33,310 --> 00:24:40,480

Before the Germans
occupied the Sudeten,

417

00:24:40,480 --> 00:24:45,970

the Germans already had marches
in the city of Aussig, of AšstA.

418

00:24:45,970 --> 00:24:49,460

They marched through town
with the flags of Hakenkreuz

419

00:24:49,460 --> 00:24:52,660

and still during Czechoslovakia.

420

00:24:52,660 --> 00:24:55,180

And people who
sympathized with them--

421

00:24:55,180 --> 00:24:58,630

they put up flags in
their windows and banners,

422

00:24:58,630 --> 00:25:02,800

and we lived on the
main street in kind

423

00:25:02,800 --> 00:25:05,470

of a villa of four floors.

424

00:25:05,470 --> 00:25:10,360

And we occupied the
third floor, that floor,

425

00:25:10,360 --> 00:25:14,440

and we had a large
balcony around the corner.

426

00:25:14,440 --> 00:25:18,990

And the people who were
above us were Germans,

427

00:25:18,990 --> 00:25:22,870
and they sympathized with
Hitler and with Henlein.

428
00:25:22,870 --> 00:25:26,080
And they had the banner
on the top of their--

429
00:25:26,080 --> 00:25:30,730
on their balcony, actually
hanging down towards our space.

430
00:25:30,730 --> 00:25:39,940
And when the Hitlerjugend
and the people marched by,

431
00:25:39,940 --> 00:25:42,640
they stopped, turned
towards our building,

432
00:25:42,640 --> 00:25:46,720
raised their hand in a
Nazi salute, and yelled,

433
00:25:46,720 --> 00:25:51,970
"Heil Hitler, Juden raus, Juden
raus," which means "Jews out,

434
00:25:51,970 --> 00:25:52,990
Jews out."

435
00:25:52,990 --> 00:25:56,070
And they thought that
the banner belongs to me.

436
00:25:56,070 --> 00:25:57,520
I was standing on the balcony.

437
00:25:57,520 --> 00:26:00,820
They thought I'm a Nazi
family or whatever,

438
00:26:00,820 --> 00:26:03,910

and they were yelling
at me, "Juden raus,"

439
00:26:03,910 --> 00:26:05,817
thinking that I'm one of them.

440
00:26:05,817 --> 00:26:07,150
That was just a funny situation.

441
00:26:07,150 --> 00:26:11,290
And what were you
thinking of at that time?

442
00:26:11,290 --> 00:26:14,260
I really hate to say that
I kind of didn't understand

443
00:26:14,260 --> 00:26:18,310
the situation, being 10, 11
years old, and I was laughing.

444
00:26:18,310 --> 00:26:21,520
I was, in that time, already
thinking, look at those idiots.

445
00:26:21,520 --> 00:26:22,660
They are waving at me.

446
00:26:22,660 --> 00:26:23,845
They don't know I'm Jewish.

447
00:26:23,845 --> 00:26:25,870
And then that time
I knew already

448
00:26:25,870 --> 00:26:29,530
a little bit I'm Jewish,
and so that was kind

449
00:26:29,530 --> 00:26:32,860
of a sad and funny situation.

450

00:26:32,860 --> 00:26:34,480

What kind of
relationship did you

451

00:26:34,480 --> 00:26:36,400
have with the people above you?

452

00:26:36,400 --> 00:26:37,760
I have no idea.

453

00:26:37,760 --> 00:26:39,380
I have no idea.

454

00:26:39,380 --> 00:26:42,760
I don't even know if our
family knew them too well.

455

00:26:42,760 --> 00:26:45,700
I think-- no, I cannot say.

456

00:26:45,700 --> 00:26:46,600
I really don't know.

457

00:26:46,600 --> 00:26:47,480
I have no idea.

458

00:26:47,480 --> 00:26:49,090
I just know they were Nazis.

459

00:26:49,090 --> 00:26:50,380
That's all.

460

00:26:50,380 --> 00:26:54,290
Was it a-- what was it like to
see all these troops marching

461

00:26:54,290 --> 00:26:54,790
below you?

462

00:26:54,790 --> 00:26:56,980
Were you impressed by
the way they looked?

463
00:26:56,980 --> 00:27:00,760
No, I must say, I was
never impressed by them,

464
00:27:00,760 --> 00:27:05,710
and I didn't take them
seriously from the beginning.

465
00:27:05,710 --> 00:27:09,580
I think that saved my
life during the war, too.

466
00:27:09,580 --> 00:27:13,780
I just didn't know better
because, being a child,

467
00:27:13,780 --> 00:27:14,890
I just laughed.

468
00:27:14,890 --> 00:27:17,740
I didn't know what's going to
come, what's going to happen.

469
00:27:17,740 --> 00:27:21,577
I thought they are just some
crazy people playing around.

470
00:27:21,577 --> 00:27:23,410
Did your parents say
anything or your mother

471
00:27:23,410 --> 00:27:25,600
say anything to you then?

472
00:27:25,600 --> 00:27:34,630
I think they did not really try
to explain the situation to me

473
00:27:34,630 --> 00:27:35,570
too much.

474

00:27:35,570 --> 00:27:38,230

I don't think they wanted
to worry me, naturally,

475

00:27:38,230 --> 00:27:42,910

but I'm sure they knew that
it is a serious situation,

476

00:27:42,910 --> 00:27:46,990

otherwise we wouldn't
probably run away to Prague.

477

00:27:46,990 --> 00:27:49,630

What were your feelings
about having to go to Prague

478

00:27:49,630 --> 00:27:51,730

and leaving ĀstĀ?

479

00:27:51,730 --> 00:27:53,710

Oh, actually, I
was pretty happy.

480

00:27:53,710 --> 00:27:55,510

I didn't have to
go to school, and I

481

00:27:55,510 --> 00:27:59,740

went to see my grandparents,
which I liked pretty much.

482

00:27:59,740 --> 00:28:02,320

And I liked Prague always.

483

00:28:02,320 --> 00:28:06,160

I was impressed by the city of
Prague whenever we went there,

484

00:28:06,160 --> 00:28:09,610

and we went there like
four or five times a year

485

00:28:09,610 --> 00:28:11,710

and traveled a lot.

486

00:28:11,710 --> 00:28:13,420

So I liked Prague, really.

487

00:28:13,420 --> 00:28:16,030

I was happy that
we moved to Prague,

488

00:28:16,030 --> 00:28:18,790

although I didn't realize
at that time what that

489

00:28:18,790 --> 00:28:22,710

moving actually meant for us.

490

00:28:22,710 --> 00:28:26,280

Were you aware of refugees
coming into Prague?

491

00:28:26,280 --> 00:28:28,170

Not in that time, no.

492

00:28:28,170 --> 00:28:31,170

I had no idea that we are
not the only people who

493

00:28:31,170 --> 00:28:33,950

came to Prague.

494

00:28:33,950 --> 00:28:36,850

I just thought we went to Prague
because it's a little bit more

495

00:28:36,850 --> 00:28:39,610

convenient for us,
but I really didn't

496

00:28:39,610 --> 00:28:44,798

have the grip of the
situation at all in that time.

497

00:28:44,798 --> 00:28:47,090
And now you're in Prague
living with your grandparents.

498
00:28:47,090 --> 00:28:48,382
You said your mother remarried.

499
00:28:48,382 --> 00:28:50,040
Did she remarry
another Jewish man?

500
00:28:50,040 --> 00:28:50,915
Was your stepfather--

501
00:28:50,915 --> 00:28:51,990
Yeah, he was Jewish.

502
00:28:51,990 --> 00:28:54,920
As I said, he just
came from America,

503
00:28:54,920 --> 00:28:58,050
living here in
Baltimore for 18 years.

504
00:28:58,050 --> 00:29:06,990
But he shortly left
Prague again for Israel,

505
00:29:06,990 --> 00:29:09,920
in that time
Palestine, naturally,

506
00:29:09,920 --> 00:29:13,070
thinking that he is
just going ahead of us

507
00:29:13,070 --> 00:29:14,600
and prepared the
situation for us

508
00:29:14,600 --> 00:29:17,810
and that we are going

to come after him.

509

00:29:17,810 --> 00:29:22,910

But he practically went
with either the last or one

510

00:29:22,910 --> 00:29:29,490

before the last possibility
of leaving the area

511

00:29:29,490 --> 00:29:31,620

that the Germans occupied.

512

00:29:31,620 --> 00:29:33,960

And there was a difference
of three or four

513

00:29:33,960 --> 00:29:37,800

weeks after he left that it
was clear that we are not

514

00:29:37,800 --> 00:29:40,470

going to go anywhere.

515

00:29:40,470 --> 00:29:43,330

Were you upset about leaving
your friends in ĀšstĀ?

516

00:29:43,330 --> 00:29:45,450

Not really, no.

517

00:29:45,450 --> 00:29:49,060

I wasn't aware of
the friend situation.

518

00:29:49,060 --> 00:29:53,670

I just made pretty
quickly friends in Prague

519

00:29:53,670 --> 00:29:56,040

at the school
where I went again.

520

00:29:56,040 --> 00:29:59,370

So you would say you were a
very sociable young child?

521

00:29:59,370 --> 00:30:00,645

I think so, yeah.

522

00:30:00,645 --> 00:30:03,620

523

00:30:03,620 --> 00:30:05,870

And here I went--

524

00:30:05,870 --> 00:30:10,070

in Prague, then, they put
me into the high school.

525

00:30:10,070 --> 00:30:12,080

No, actually, in
the gymnasium, which

526

00:30:12,080 --> 00:30:16,880

is a college, because I was
already in the sixth grade.

527

00:30:16,880 --> 00:30:19,620

And in Czechoslovakia
you had a choice,

528

00:30:19,620 --> 00:30:23,270

either continue high school,
and if you were a talented kid,

529

00:30:23,270 --> 00:30:27,860

you went into a gymnasium,
which is equal to high school,

530

00:30:27,860 --> 00:30:30,300

only a little bit better,
like college or so.

531

00:30:30,300 --> 00:30:34,100

It's a preparation
for university,

532
00:30:34,100 --> 00:30:38,060
which I was preparing to do.

533
00:30:38,060 --> 00:30:40,093
I wanted to be a doctor.

534
00:30:40,093 --> 00:30:41,510
You wanted to be
a medical doctor.

535
00:30:41,510 --> 00:30:42,468
Yeah, a medical doctor.

536
00:30:42,468 --> 00:30:44,600
I wanted to be a gynecologist.

537
00:30:44,600 --> 00:30:53,390

538
00:30:53,390 --> 00:30:58,490
This is tape one, side B.
And now you're in Prague,

539
00:30:58,490 --> 00:31:01,910
and then the next big change--

540
00:31:01,910 --> 00:31:03,680
you said you started
the gymnasium,

541
00:31:03,680 --> 00:31:06,770
and what was the
next big change?

542
00:31:06,770 --> 00:31:10,730
Or if you want to get
to September 1, 1939--

543
00:31:10,730 --> 00:31:15,710

No, I think I want to tell you,
I went to the gymnasium there,

544
00:31:15,710 --> 00:31:19,550
and they threw me out in
about two or three months

545
00:31:19,550 --> 00:31:24,770
because Jews were not allowed
to go to gymnasiums anymore.

546
00:31:24,770 --> 00:31:27,080
Gymnasium has nothing
to do with gymnastics.

547
00:31:27,080 --> 00:31:30,030
That's just the name
for higher education.

548
00:31:30,030 --> 00:31:34,190
And so they put me
in a high school,

549
00:31:34,190 --> 00:31:37,100
and they threw me out
from there in a few months

550
00:31:37,100 --> 00:31:40,370
because Jews were not allowed
to go to regular high school

551
00:31:40,370 --> 00:31:41,000
either.

552
00:31:41,000 --> 00:31:43,760
How did you feel
about that, being

553
00:31:43,760 --> 00:31:46,250
thrown out the first time
and then the second time?

554
00:31:46,250 --> 00:31:49,940

That was the time
where I slowly started

555
00:31:49,940 --> 00:31:55,580
to be aware of the situation
and the fact that I'm Jewish

556
00:31:55,580 --> 00:31:59,540
and that I don't have the
same rights as the others,

557
00:31:59,540 --> 00:32:07,840
and that kind of started
to bother me slightly.

558
00:32:07,840 --> 00:32:09,900
But as I said, I
was a happy kid,

559
00:32:09,900 --> 00:32:12,690
and I didn't take
anything too seriously.

560
00:32:12,690 --> 00:32:17,730
And they put me in a so-called
"Jewish" school, which

561
00:32:17,730 --> 00:32:20,460
was a Jewish high
school in Prague,

562
00:32:20,460 --> 00:32:21,760
and I was very happy there.

563
00:32:21,760 --> 00:32:24,790
I had a lot of friends
there and lots of fun there,

564
00:32:24,790 --> 00:32:28,870
and we played a lot of sports,
and soccer, and things.

565
00:32:28,870 --> 00:32:33,450

And actually, I noticed
that in that school nobody

566
00:32:33,450 --> 00:32:37,770
calls me dirty Jew
anymore, which was nice.

567
00:32:37,770 --> 00:32:41,640
In the first two schools,
when you were called that,

568
00:32:41,640 --> 00:32:44,160
that was by the other
students or by the teachers?

569
00:32:44,160 --> 00:32:51,570
By the other students and later
even by the teachers, too.

570
00:32:51,570 --> 00:32:53,400
Just before they
always threw me out,

571
00:32:53,400 --> 00:32:56,040
they said, we don't want
any dirty Jews here,

572
00:32:56,040 --> 00:33:00,180
so go somewhere else.

573
00:33:00,180 --> 00:33:02,970
When you then went
to the Jewish school,

574
00:33:02,970 --> 00:33:08,030
did you feel safe going to and
from school on the streets?

575
00:33:08,030 --> 00:33:09,260
On the street, yeah.

576
00:33:09,260 --> 00:33:14,450
On the street, I cannot say that

I would feel unsafe in Prague,

577

00:33:14,450 --> 00:33:16,670

no.

578

00:33:16,670 --> 00:33:19,990

I don't think on the
street people care

579

00:33:19,990 --> 00:33:23,870

to recognize if somebody
is Jewish or not.

580

00:33:23,870 --> 00:33:28,490

There were not that
many German children

581

00:33:28,490 --> 00:33:32,030

coming with the
occupiers, with the army

582

00:33:32,030 --> 00:33:37,730

and with the SS people when they
finally occupied even Prague.

583

00:33:37,730 --> 00:33:41,720

And so on the street
I don't think I

584

00:33:41,720 --> 00:33:46,120

had any problems like that, no.

585

00:33:46,120 --> 00:33:49,090

Naturally, there were
problems later in the press,

586

00:33:49,090 --> 00:33:51,110

and the radios, and--

587

00:33:51,110 --> 00:33:53,640

588

00:33:53,640 --> 00:33:56,430
So are we now talking
about March 1939,

589
00:33:56,430 --> 00:33:58,590
when Prague was occupied?

590
00:33:58,590 --> 00:34:00,720
Right.

591
00:34:00,720 --> 00:34:04,020
And was there anything
specific about the beginning

592
00:34:04,020 --> 00:34:08,820
of the occupation
that you can recall?

593
00:34:08,820 --> 00:34:09,480
Not really.

594
00:34:09,480 --> 00:34:12,150
I just were aware
of it, slightly

595
00:34:12,150 --> 00:34:17,310
became aware that it is a
political situation, that it is

596
00:34:17,310 --> 00:34:21,070
a probably worldwide situation.

597
00:34:21,070 --> 00:34:25,620
I heard the word "war"
mentioning more often

598
00:34:25,620 --> 00:34:30,810
and got interested what it
would mean, a war, and so far.

599
00:34:30,810 --> 00:34:35,760
And then I got aware of the
fact that the Germans, who

600
00:34:35,760 --> 00:34:41,550
occupied Czechoslovakia, do
also not like very much Jews,

601
00:34:41,550 --> 00:34:44,489
and then later I
learn that they want

602
00:34:44,489 --> 00:34:47,280
to somehow separate the Jews.

603
00:34:47,280 --> 00:34:52,440
And naturally,
even later I found

604
00:34:52,440 --> 00:34:59,130
that people were sent by
transports to different places.

605
00:34:59,130 --> 00:35:03,840
That time I already understood
the situation pretty well

606
00:35:03,840 --> 00:35:07,140
for my age, I'm
sure, that being--

607
00:35:07,140 --> 00:35:12,060
I'm talking now '41, when the
first transports from Prague

608
00:35:12,060 --> 00:35:15,330
or from Czechoslovakia
went directly to Lodz,

609
00:35:15,330 --> 00:35:22,410
to Poland, out of which just
a handful of people survived.

610
00:35:22,410 --> 00:35:25,770
So it's after March '39.

611

00:35:25,770 --> 00:35:30,450

You're a student in the school,
and life went on normally,

612

00:35:30,450 --> 00:35:31,170

in a sense.

613

00:35:31,170 --> 00:35:32,730

You're in the Jewish school.

614

00:35:32,730 --> 00:35:38,040

Yeah, even the Jewish school
after a while got closed.

615

00:35:38,040 --> 00:35:39,150

When was that?

616

00:35:39,150 --> 00:35:45,570

I think it was in
1941, beginning

617

00:35:45,570 --> 00:35:47,920

of 1941, the middle of '41.

618

00:35:47,920 --> 00:35:49,260

I wouldn't know exactly.

619

00:35:49,260 --> 00:35:52,710

But in that time, they even
closed the Jewish school,

620

00:35:52,710 --> 00:35:56,950

and so I didn't really
have anything to do,

621

00:35:56,950 --> 00:35:58,560

except we were--

622

00:35:58,560 --> 00:36:02,520

the only thing the
Germans allowed us to do--

623

00:36:02,520 --> 00:36:06,390

I'm talking about
the youth, the kids.

624

00:36:06,390 --> 00:36:11,360

There was a sports club in
Prague, a very famous one.

625

00:36:11,360 --> 00:36:17,420

The name is Hagibor,
and I don't know--

626

00:36:17,420 --> 00:36:19,940

really, we don't
understand it until now.

627

00:36:19,940 --> 00:36:24,290

They allowed that
sport stadium to be

628

00:36:24,290 --> 00:36:27,860

in the hands of the Jewish
community in Prague,

629

00:36:27,860 --> 00:36:31,100

and the Jewish kids
and even adults

630

00:36:31,100 --> 00:36:34,310

were allowed to go there,
and play, and play sports,

631

00:36:34,310 --> 00:36:37,130

and exercise, and so far.

632

00:36:37,130 --> 00:36:41,420

Fredy Hirsch, who
we mentioned before

633

00:36:41,420 --> 00:36:45,830

as a leader in Auschwitz
and Blechhammer,

634

00:36:45,830 --> 00:36:47,810
the children's barrack--

635

00:36:47,810 --> 00:36:54,020
he was also the leader put in
charge of that sports stadium

636

00:36:54,020 --> 00:36:57,500
during the Hitler-occupied
time before he

637

00:36:57,500 --> 00:37:00,360
himself went to the
camp, naturally.

638

00:37:00,360 --> 00:37:05,610
And so I knew him very, very
well, extremely well, really.

639

00:37:05,610 --> 00:37:09,710
And so we went there,
and we played soccer.

640

00:37:09,710 --> 00:37:12,980
And we had a gorgeous
soccer team, of which--

641

00:37:12,980 --> 00:37:14,990
the photograph you
can see over there.

642

00:37:14,990 --> 00:37:16,880
Too bad it's just around here.

643

00:37:16,880 --> 00:37:19,070
You see over there
on the wall is

644

00:37:19,070 --> 00:37:21,020
that photograph, those 11 kids.

645

00:37:21,020 --> 00:37:23,090

I'm the one in the
middle, and that's

646
00:37:23,090 --> 00:37:26,840
just before we
went to the camps.

647
00:37:26,840 --> 00:37:31,790
It's too bad it's just
tape because next to it

648
00:37:31,790 --> 00:37:33,770
there is a photograph of--

649
00:37:33,770 --> 00:37:39,890
this soccer team is 11 children
and the age of 14, 15, 16

650
00:37:39,890 --> 00:37:40,650
or so.

651
00:37:40,650 --> 00:37:42,800
And I'm in the middle
there, and there

652
00:37:42,800 --> 00:37:48,560
are-- five children survived
the concentration camp,

653
00:37:48,560 --> 00:37:50,570
and six died.

654
00:37:50,570 --> 00:37:53,000
And I'm in the middle,
right in the middle there.

655
00:37:53,000 --> 00:37:57,710
And next to it is a photograph
of 11 children again,

656
00:37:57,710 --> 00:38:04,190
but that is a few days after the
war, liberated in Buchenwald.

657

00:38:04,190 --> 00:38:07,490

That photograph I
discovered a couple of years

658

00:38:07,490 --> 00:38:11,720

ago when I visited
Buchenwald from here now,

659

00:38:11,720 --> 00:38:17,360

and I paged in a
guidebook of Buchenwald.

660

00:38:17,360 --> 00:38:18,890

There's a museum there.

661

00:38:18,890 --> 00:38:23,630

And suddenly I opened the page,
and I find this photograph

662

00:38:23,630 --> 00:38:26,660

there and said, that's me in
the middle right there, 11 boys.

663

00:38:26,660 --> 00:38:31,950

In the middle, exactly like
the soccer team, is me.

664

00:38:31,950 --> 00:38:35,490

Unfortunately, I don't know
any of the names of those 11

665

00:38:35,490 --> 00:38:41,160

people, where I do remember
and have in my mind and heart

666

00:38:41,160 --> 00:38:46,060

all those 11 names
of the kids there.

667

00:38:46,060 --> 00:38:47,260

Can you tell us their names?

668

00:38:47,260 --> 00:38:50,860

669

00:38:50,860 --> 00:38:51,500

Better not.

670

00:38:51,500 --> 00:38:52,000

OK.

671

00:38:52,000 --> 00:38:57,460

672

00:38:57,460 --> 00:39:00,340

Do you have any recollections
of September 1939,

673

00:39:00,340 --> 00:39:03,405

when Germany invaded Poland?

674

00:39:03,405 --> 00:39:03,905

Poland?

675

00:39:03,905 --> 00:39:06,620

676

00:39:06,620 --> 00:39:08,300

Hearing about it?

677

00:39:08,300 --> 00:39:11,910

Yeah, I heard about it.

678

00:39:11,910 --> 00:39:13,820

I couldn't tell
you now, honestly,

679

00:39:13,820 --> 00:39:20,510

if I really noticed it too much
or if I was very aware of it.

680

00:39:20,510 --> 00:39:23,690

I just knew that

the war started.

681

00:39:23,690 --> 00:39:28,440

That war that was talked
about for such a long time

682

00:39:28,440 --> 00:39:30,110

finally started.

683

00:39:30,110 --> 00:39:33,560

But fortunately
for me, although I

684

00:39:33,560 --> 00:39:36,350

wanted to know what does
actually war look like, what

685

00:39:36,350 --> 00:39:39,830

is it, I never
learned that in Prague

686

00:39:39,830 --> 00:39:42,970

because Prague was
never bombarded,

687

00:39:42,970 --> 00:39:46,670

or there was never fights
during the occupation.

688

00:39:46,670 --> 00:39:51,680

Only after the war and the
last few days of the war

689

00:39:51,680 --> 00:39:52,880

were in Prague.

690

00:39:52,880 --> 00:39:54,650

I don't know if you're
familiar with that.

691

00:39:54,650 --> 00:40:00,140

The war ended May 9, and
the last fights of May 9

692
00:40:00,140 --> 00:40:02,150
were in Prague.

693
00:40:02,150 --> 00:40:03,920
But I was not
there in that time.

694
00:40:03,920 --> 00:40:10,442
After the Germans invaded
Prague-- and you said

695
00:40:10,442 --> 00:40:11,900
you switched schools
and all that--

696
00:40:11,900 --> 00:40:14,750
were there any other
restrictions for you

697
00:40:14,750 --> 00:40:15,920
personally?

698
00:40:15,920 --> 00:40:16,760
Yes, naturally.

699
00:40:16,760 --> 00:40:19,070
There were
restrictions for Jews--

700
00:40:19,070 --> 00:40:20,240
Such as?

701
00:40:20,240 --> 00:40:21,170
Pardon?

702
00:40:21,170 --> 00:40:21,980
Such as?

703
00:40:21,980 --> 00:40:28,100
Yeah, such as we were
not allowed to use trams.

704

00:40:28,100 --> 00:40:29,750

In the beginning,
we were allowed

705

00:40:29,750 --> 00:40:34,070

to use the last car
and the last platform

706

00:40:34,070 --> 00:40:36,430

of the last car of a tram.

707

00:40:36,430 --> 00:40:40,520

Then later weekends we
were not allowed at all

708

00:40:40,520 --> 00:40:46,200

to use the trams or any
kind of transportation

709

00:40:46,200 --> 00:40:51,660

in Prague, which also
brings me to that problem.

710

00:40:51,660 --> 00:40:55,620

When the youth, the kids
went to play in the sports

711

00:40:55,620 --> 00:40:58,860

field on Saturday and
Sundays in Hagibor,

712

00:40:58,860 --> 00:41:03,720

it was very far out
south of Prague,

713

00:41:03,720 --> 00:41:07,650

and we had to walk because
we were not allowed

714

00:41:07,650 --> 00:41:10,200

to use any transportation.

715

00:41:10,200 --> 00:41:17,820

And it was about, I would say,
a 3-to-4-miles walk, maybe five,

716

00:41:17,820 --> 00:41:20,640

which for kids is a long walk
back and forth just to play

717

00:41:20,640 --> 00:41:21,870

soccer.

718

00:41:21,870 --> 00:41:28,020

Also, even it was made more
difficult because across Prague

719

00:41:28,020 --> 00:41:35,200

was the so-called "Golden
Road," and we were not allowed--

720

00:41:35,200 --> 00:41:36,390

which is the main road.

721

00:41:36,390 --> 00:41:40,530

And we were not allowed to cross
that main road during Saturday

722

00:41:40,530 --> 00:41:43,320

and Sundays, Jews,
and also, we had

723

00:41:43,320 --> 00:41:46,500

already the star
on our chest, which

724

00:41:46,500 --> 00:41:48,960

made us very recognizable.

725

00:41:48,960 --> 00:41:55,260

So there was one place
we could cross this road.

726

00:41:55,260 --> 00:42:01,140

There was a tunnel, an underpass
where the National Theater is,

727
00:42:01,140 --> 00:42:05,040
which is very far out
of the direct line

728
00:42:05,040 --> 00:42:07,470
towards where we were going.

729
00:42:07,470 --> 00:42:11,760
So we had to go like a mile
to the west and then a mile

730
00:42:11,760 --> 00:42:15,180
to the east again and
north to the sports field.

731
00:42:15,180 --> 00:42:18,180
So it made it even more than
the distance that I said,

732
00:42:18,180 --> 00:42:21,060
but we enjoyed it
because we knew

733
00:42:21,060 --> 00:42:23,370
we were going to have
a good time in Hagibor

734
00:42:23,370 --> 00:42:26,070
at the sports place, the kids.

735
00:42:26,070 --> 00:42:27,870
What was it like to wear a star?

736
00:42:27,870 --> 00:42:31,470

737
00:42:31,470 --> 00:42:36,580
Again, I think we children were
not that much troubled by it

738

00:42:36,580 --> 00:42:41,130

as probably our parents
and the adults were.

739

00:42:41,130 --> 00:42:46,170

We even played such games,
like we had a hand bag,

740

00:42:46,170 --> 00:42:48,840

and we put it over the
star so nobody could

741

00:42:48,840 --> 00:42:50,490

see it, which was not legal.

742

00:42:50,490 --> 00:42:51,450

It was illegal.

743

00:42:51,450 --> 00:42:55,680

We even get dared sometimes
to go into the tram

744

00:42:55,680 --> 00:42:59,190

and covered the star
with a bag or something.

745

00:42:59,190 --> 00:43:03,450

And luckily enough
I was never caught,

746

00:43:03,450 --> 00:43:05,790

and I don't even know
anybody who was caught.

747

00:43:05,790 --> 00:43:11,970

But I know the stories that some
people were caught and punished

748

00:43:11,970 --> 00:43:13,650

severely for that.

749

00:43:13,650 --> 00:43:17,040

Was this star sewn on
your clothing or pinned?

750
00:43:17,040 --> 00:43:23,830
The star was supposed to be
sewn on our clothes, but being

751
00:43:23,830 --> 00:43:28,530
a very inventive
race, we put them on--

752
00:43:28,530 --> 00:43:31,960
I don't know how do you
call it-- the clips--

753
00:43:31,960 --> 00:43:34,530
you clip it on.

754
00:43:34,530 --> 00:43:36,840
What do you call those
things, the metal--

755
00:43:36,840 --> 00:43:40,110
it has two parts, one you
saw on the clothes and one--

756
00:43:40,110 --> 00:43:41,520
A snap, like a snap.

757
00:43:41,520 --> 00:43:43,770
Snap, right, right,
right, snap, snaps.

758
00:43:43,770 --> 00:43:47,850
So we put the star on snaps,
and we put it up or down

759
00:43:47,850 --> 00:43:49,860
whenever we wanted to.

760
00:43:49,860 --> 00:43:51,930
But that was a
dangerous game, really,

761
00:43:51,930 --> 00:43:55,620
that we shouldn't have played.

762
00:43:55,620 --> 00:43:59,940
And again, when you
had to wear the star,

763
00:43:59,940 --> 00:44:03,600
did you talk this over with your
mother at all or your brother?

764
00:44:03,600 --> 00:44:07,080
No, just one day I was told
we have to wear the star,

765
00:44:07,080 --> 00:44:08,050
and that was it.

766
00:44:08,050 --> 00:44:11,000
And we wore the star.

767
00:44:11,000 --> 00:44:15,630
As I said, I think
we did not realize

768
00:44:15,630 --> 00:44:20,620
the importance and the seriousness
of the situation, children

769
00:44:20,620 --> 00:44:24,490
being 13, 14, 15 years old.

770
00:44:24,490 --> 00:44:25,210
What do we know?

771
00:44:25,210 --> 00:44:28,240
We just made fun
out of everything.

772
00:44:28,240 --> 00:44:34,480
Only later I realized how

serious it really was.

773

00:44:34,480 --> 00:44:36,380

You said that you
had a bar mitzvah.

774

00:44:36,380 --> 00:44:36,880

Yes.

775

00:44:36,880 --> 00:44:37,990

Can you describe that?

776

00:44:37,990 --> 00:44:40,600

777

00:44:40,600 --> 00:44:45,820

I even have a invitation
card for my bar mitzvah

778

00:44:45,820 --> 00:44:47,440

somewhere here still saved.

779

00:44:47,440 --> 00:44:49,000

It's the only one that I had.

780

00:44:49,000 --> 00:44:51,610

781

00:44:51,610 --> 00:44:55,120

I was a member--

782

00:44:55,120 --> 00:44:58,700

and I'm coming to another story.

783

00:44:58,700 --> 00:45:00,310

I don't know if you
want to hear it.

784

00:45:00,310 --> 00:45:06,850

It's also a part of one story
that I am using in my writings

785

00:45:06,850 --> 00:45:08,920
in my book.

786

00:45:08,920 --> 00:45:14,080
It's a story about a singing
choir, a Jewish singing

787

00:45:14,080 --> 00:45:19,240
choir which is described
in literature of Terezin

788

00:45:19,240 --> 00:45:21,790
and art of Terezin over there.

789

00:45:21,790 --> 00:45:27,010
It's mentioned there, that
choir, led by a Professor

790

00:45:27,010 --> 00:45:31,450
[? Wachtel ?], musician,
who did not survive either.

791

00:45:31,450 --> 00:45:35,650
And the plan was
to create a singing

792

00:45:35,650 --> 00:45:41,500
corps of Jewish children
that should be something

793

00:45:41,500 --> 00:45:45,220
like the Wiener
Sangerknaben and the corps

794

00:45:45,220 --> 00:45:50,410
was supposed to go on
a tour through Europe

795

00:45:50,410 --> 00:45:55,220
and stay in some of
the Western countries

796

00:45:55,220 --> 00:45:58,480
unoccupied countries I
mean-- not to come back

797
00:45:58,480 --> 00:46:03,610
to the occupied area
and therefore saving

798
00:46:03,610 --> 00:46:06,760
the lives of some 50 children.

799
00:46:06,760 --> 00:46:09,700
Unfortunately, we
were very good.

800
00:46:09,700 --> 00:46:14,920
We were extremely good,
in fact, by professionals,

801
00:46:14,920 --> 00:46:17,350
Jewish and non-Jewish.

802
00:46:17,350 --> 00:46:22,330
We were considered equal
to the Wiener Sangerknaben.

803
00:46:22,330 --> 00:46:25,930
And we had a [? tour ?]
planned already,

804
00:46:25,930 --> 00:46:32,110
and there was a manager
who got some money.

805
00:46:32,110 --> 00:46:34,600
And they sent him
out to Switzerland

806
00:46:34,600 --> 00:46:42,100
to prepare the road for
us, and the hotels, and all

807
00:46:42,100 --> 00:46:45,880

those things, like
an agent, a manager.

808
00:46:45,880 --> 00:46:51,640
And he got, I understand,
something like a million

809
00:46:51,640 --> 00:46:55,000
dollars, and he left.

810
00:46:55,000 --> 00:46:59,020
And nobody ever
heard of him again.

811
00:46:59,020 --> 00:47:03,460
And 50 children died in
the concentration camp.

812
00:47:03,460 --> 00:47:10,980
I am the only one who
survived, the only one.

813
00:47:10,980 --> 00:47:17,690
And that is one of
those things that--

814
00:47:17,690 --> 00:47:19,700
what was your question?

815
00:47:19,700 --> 00:47:21,650
I'd asked you about
your bar mitzvah.

816
00:47:21,650 --> 00:47:23,910
Bar mitzvah, right.

817
00:47:23,910 --> 00:47:25,190
Why I'm talking about that?

818
00:47:25,190 --> 00:47:29,090
Because my bar mitzvah
was held together

819

00:47:29,090 --> 00:47:35,830

with another member of this
choir and in the choir uniform.

820

00:47:35,830 --> 00:47:38,510

I mentioned the short pants.

821

00:47:38,510 --> 00:47:49,070

And it was held in a synagogue
in Prague in the DuÅ;nÅ street,

822

00:47:49,070 --> 00:47:53,990

which later became
a carpet museum,

823

00:47:53,990 --> 00:47:59,600

and I think it still is
some kind of a museum now.

824

00:47:59,600 --> 00:48:04,280

And it was one of the very
pretty synagogues in Prague.

825

00:48:04,280 --> 00:48:05,970

There were many
of them in Prague,

826

00:48:05,970 --> 00:48:08,570

and that's where I had
my bar mitzvah, yeah.

827

00:48:08,570 --> 00:48:11,090

And I was saying the prayers
and all those things.

828

00:48:11,090 --> 00:48:12,980

I didn't know what
I'm talking about,

829

00:48:12,980 --> 00:48:16,940

which I, until now,
still do sometimes.

830

00:48:16,940 --> 00:48:20,570

I mean in Hebrew, and I didn't know what it means at all.

831

00:48:20,570 --> 00:48:21,560

And I still don't know.

832

00:48:21,560 --> 00:48:24,080

I still don't know Hebrew.

833

00:48:24,080 --> 00:48:25,760

We're talking about 1940--

834

00:48:25,760 --> 00:48:27,170

That was 1940.

835

00:48:27,170 --> 00:48:31,310

--and your city being occupied.

836

00:48:31,310 --> 00:48:32,150

Right, yes.

837

00:48:32,150 --> 00:48:37,920

That was all during, actually-- yeah, '40 or '41.

838

00:48:37,920 --> 00:48:41,300

Yeah, anyway, it was occupied already by the Germans, yes.

839

00:48:41,300 --> 00:48:44,390

It was already not Czechoslovakia anymore.

840

00:48:44,390 --> 00:48:47,990

It was Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia

841

00:48:47,990 --> 00:48:51,860

since the Slovaks separated themselves.

842

00:48:51,860 --> 00:48:54,860

They stayed a separate
country, yeah.

843

00:48:54,860 --> 00:48:57,830

But there was no
restriction on your having

844

00:48:57,830 --> 00:49:01,370

this religious observance?

845

00:49:01,370 --> 00:49:03,380

Strangely enough, no.

846

00:49:03,380 --> 00:49:09,710

There were still synagogues open
for high holy days, at least

847

00:49:09,710 --> 00:49:12,440

some of the synagogues,
and there were still

848

00:49:12,440 --> 00:49:16,550

bar mitzvahs performed,
even during the first year

849

00:49:16,550 --> 00:49:18,710

of occupation, yes.

850

00:49:18,710 --> 00:49:21,590

Were you wearing
your yellow star?

851

00:49:21,590 --> 00:49:22,910

I am thinking about it.

852

00:49:22,910 --> 00:49:24,290

I don't think so.

853

00:49:24,290 --> 00:49:29,450

No, I don't think we had
stars at the bar mitzvah

854
00:49:29,450 --> 00:49:32,770
in the temple, no.

855
00:49:32,770 --> 00:49:36,340
Was there any kind
of celebration?

856
00:49:36,340 --> 00:49:41,110
We had a celebration
in that choir.

857
00:49:41,110 --> 00:49:45,460
Within that choir there was
kind of a big celebration.

858
00:49:45,460 --> 00:49:50,170
We had a lunch, and in
that time there was already

859
00:49:50,170 --> 00:49:52,930
restricted rations of food.

860
00:49:52,930 --> 00:49:58,950
And so there was not that much
available anymore but much more

861
00:49:58,950 --> 00:50:01,200
than later on, naturally.

862
00:50:01,200 --> 00:50:03,960
Were there any curfews then?

863
00:50:03,960 --> 00:50:06,810
Yeah, there was those curfews
that I was talking about.

864
00:50:06,810 --> 00:50:10,140
We were not allowed to go
out on Saturday, Sundays.

865
00:50:10,140 --> 00:50:12,810

We were not allowed to
use the transportations

866
00:50:12,810 --> 00:50:18,450
except the rear platforms
and so lots of--

867
00:50:18,450 --> 00:50:21,820
I don't know at that time
or a little bit later--

868
00:50:21,820 --> 00:50:25,860
there were rations, and
there were ration tickets.

869
00:50:25,860 --> 00:50:29,190
But the Jews didn't get
any rations, not at all,

870
00:50:29,190 --> 00:50:36,330
so we had to organize just
to get any way we could,

871
00:50:36,330 --> 00:50:37,570
black market.

872
00:50:37,570 --> 00:50:39,180
And so I didn't
do it, naturally,

873
00:50:39,180 --> 00:50:40,600
but I just heard about it.

874
00:50:40,600 --> 00:50:43,830
My parents and my grandparents
were involved in that,

875
00:50:43,830 --> 00:50:46,140
naturally.

876
00:50:46,140 --> 00:50:48,720
Did you talk to
your grandparents

877
00:50:48,720 --> 00:50:52,160
about the changing conditions?

878
00:50:52,160 --> 00:50:55,980
To be honest, no, I didn't talk
too much to my grandparents

879
00:50:55,980 --> 00:50:56,480
at all.

880
00:50:56,480 --> 00:51:02,960
As I said, I just came in the
evening and talked for a while,

881
00:51:02,960 --> 00:51:05,870
not about political
situation, so no.

882
00:51:05,870 --> 00:51:08,570
And also, I didn't
mention, actually,

883
00:51:08,570 --> 00:51:11,630
that later at the
grandparents' place

884
00:51:11,630 --> 00:51:15,050
I was staying only for about
a year or a year and a half.

885
00:51:15,050 --> 00:51:18,170
Then later we had an apartment.

886
00:51:18,170 --> 00:51:22,980
My mom finds somehow
an apartment,

887
00:51:22,980 --> 00:51:26,360
which strangely
enough was a apartment

888

00:51:26,360 --> 00:51:30,230
in a very modern building.

889
00:51:30,230 --> 00:51:36,470
That building belonged to the
religious group of the Czech

890
00:51:36,470 --> 00:51:40,160
Brothers, the
so-called Hussites,

891
00:51:40,160 --> 00:51:42,680
and it was a gorgeous
building where

892
00:51:42,680 --> 00:51:47,150
downstairs, on the first
two floors, was a church.

893
00:51:47,150 --> 00:51:50,570
And above that,
five or six floors,

894
00:51:50,570 --> 00:51:55,100
were very modern apartments,
which-- we had one of those.

895
00:51:55,100 --> 00:51:59,480

896
00:51:59,480 --> 00:52:04,760
Now what's the next big change
that you noticed in your life?

897
00:52:04,760 --> 00:52:09,350
The next big point of
that time was the fact

898
00:52:09,350 --> 00:52:16,220
that my brother, who was working
in that Zionist organization,

899
00:52:16,220 --> 00:52:20,240

was choosing to go, as
I said, with Edelstein

900
00:52:20,240 --> 00:52:21,470
to Theresienstadt.

901
00:52:21,470 --> 00:52:24,350

902
00:52:24,350 --> 00:52:28,490
The year before, there were
already transports going,

903
00:52:28,490 --> 00:52:31,520
those that went directly to
Poland, as I mentioned before,

904
00:52:31,520 --> 00:52:32,090
and that--

905
00:52:32,090 --> 00:52:33,770
Did you see any of
the people leaving?

906
00:52:33,770 --> 00:52:35,400
Oh, yes, yeah, yeah.

907
00:52:35,400 --> 00:52:38,570
In fact-- you were
asking what I was doing--

908
00:52:38,570 --> 00:52:40,760
since we didn't go
to school anymore,

909
00:52:40,760 --> 00:52:45,290
we were ordered to
help those people who

910
00:52:45,290 --> 00:52:49,190
went to transports, to
carry their possessions

911

00:52:49,190 --> 00:52:55,700
and put them in cars and wagons
to the place where they were

912

00:52:55,700 --> 00:52:58,850
gathering before they
took them in the train

913

00:52:58,850 --> 00:53:01,600
in the camps, which-- we
didn't know that they are going

914

00:53:01,600 --> 00:53:04,250
in camps in that time.

915

00:53:04,250 --> 00:53:07,610
We were told that
they are changing

916

00:53:07,610 --> 00:53:13,070
the living places of the Jews
in different cities only.

917

00:53:13,070 --> 00:53:16,490
We didn't have any idea
about concentration camp

918

00:53:16,490 --> 00:53:19,790
or any kind of
incarceration or something.

919

00:53:19,790 --> 00:53:21,980
Who told you to
carry the luggage,

920

00:53:21,980 --> 00:53:23,990
the Jewish organization
or the Germans?

921

00:53:23,990 --> 00:53:27,890
Yeah, the Jewish
Community Center

922

00:53:27,890 --> 00:53:30,830

was the organizer
of that group that

923

00:53:30,830 --> 00:53:36,170

helped those people to
carry their luggages

924

00:53:36,170 --> 00:53:40,610

because sometimes there were old
people that couldn't carry it,

925

00:53:40,610 --> 00:53:45,500

so we had to help them to carry
it to the gathering place.

926

00:53:45,500 --> 00:53:47,580

Did you know any of
these people personally?

927

00:53:47,580 --> 00:53:48,080

Oh, yes.

928

00:53:48,080 --> 00:53:49,820

Yes, very much so.

929

00:53:49,820 --> 00:53:53,840

Yeah, I knew very many
of them, and in fact--

930

00:53:53,840 --> 00:53:56,300

but we are jumping
here a little bit--

931

00:53:56,300 --> 00:53:59,930

later they threw us out
from that nice apartment

932

00:53:59,930 --> 00:54:02,840

from the Czech Brother
Church building,

933

00:54:02,840 --> 00:54:08,480
and they put us in a very
old quarter of Prague,

934
00:54:08,480 --> 00:54:13,100
into a very, very old
building, an old apartment,

935
00:54:13,100 --> 00:54:16,370
and together with
another family.

936
00:54:16,370 --> 00:54:20,860
So there were three bedrooms
there, but we were--

937
00:54:20,860 --> 00:54:25,550
let me see-- about seven people,
eight people living there,

938
00:54:25,550 --> 00:54:26,575
maybe 10.

939
00:54:26,575 --> 00:54:27,950
It was a pretty
[? big ?] family.

940
00:54:27,950 --> 00:54:33,620
And that family left long
before we did to the camp.

941
00:54:33,620 --> 00:54:35,720
The owners of the apartment?

942
00:54:35,720 --> 00:54:39,080
No, the people who lived there.

943
00:54:39,080 --> 00:54:44,420
They left, so we then
later had, for a while,

944
00:54:44,420 --> 00:54:47,120
that apartment for ourselves.

945
00:54:47,120 --> 00:54:49,790
But it was kind of empty anyway.

946
00:54:49,790 --> 00:54:52,670
And so I knew those
people very well, yeah.

947
00:54:52,670 --> 00:54:56,340
Was that hard for you
to say goodbye to them?

948
00:54:56,340 --> 00:54:58,610
It was kind of hard
to say goodbye.

949
00:54:58,610 --> 00:55:01,310
It was like saying
goodbye to anybody

950
00:55:01,310 --> 00:55:05,780
who changes his living
place, moves to another city

951
00:55:05,780 --> 00:55:06,500
or something.

952
00:55:06,500 --> 00:55:10,580
As I said, we were not aware,
and specifically the children

953
00:55:10,580 --> 00:55:15,230
were not aware that there's
some kind of a tragedy brewing

954
00:55:15,230 --> 00:55:16,040
there.

955
00:55:16,040 --> 00:55:18,650
And we just said, oh, yeah,
they were just moving out

956

00:55:18,650 --> 00:55:21,950
somewhere else, although we
knew they had to move out,

957
00:55:21,950 --> 00:55:23,750
they were ordered to move out.

958
00:55:23,750 --> 00:55:27,920
But we still did not have
any idea what is coming.

959
00:55:27,920 --> 00:55:30,230
And you continued to go
to the sports center?

960
00:55:30,230 --> 00:55:31,310
Yes, right.

961
00:55:31,310 --> 00:55:34,340
We went to that sports
center to the last minute,

962
00:55:34,340 --> 00:55:39,030
just before they sent us to
Theresienstadt in, as I said,

963
00:55:39,030 --> 00:55:43,010
November 1942.

964
00:55:43,010 --> 00:55:46,670
And my brother went
in 1941, as I said,

965
00:55:46,670 --> 00:55:51,890
and we went with
my mother in 1942.

966
00:55:51,890 --> 00:55:56,970
When your brother
went off in 1941--

967
00:55:56,970 --> 00:55:57,470
'41.

968
00:55:57,470 --> 00:55:59,480
Yeah, in 1941.

969
00:55:59,480 --> 00:56:02,550
How was that for your mother?

970
00:56:02,550 --> 00:56:05,790
I think it was not very easy.

971
00:56:05,790 --> 00:56:09,060
I remember the discussions
she had with him

972
00:56:09,060 --> 00:56:15,670
not to join that group because
it was kind of volunteering.

973
00:56:15,670 --> 00:56:18,990
Actually, my brother
did not have to go.

974
00:56:18,990 --> 00:56:21,270
Edelstein chose a group.

975
00:56:21,270 --> 00:56:24,420
He was told to build
a group and to go

976
00:56:24,420 --> 00:56:28,590
there to prepare the situation,
although they, I'm sure,

977
00:56:28,590 --> 00:56:30,720
didn't know what
situation it was.

978
00:56:30,720 --> 00:56:33,990
And my brother said,
yeah, he wants to go,

979
00:56:33,990 --> 00:56:39,660

and most of those people were
really from that Zionist group.

980
00:56:39,660 --> 00:56:41,040
And they went.

981
00:56:41,040 --> 00:56:46,110
In fact, they went with a
private passenger train,

982
00:56:46,110 --> 00:56:48,620
without any guards whatsoever.

983
00:56:48,620 --> 00:56:52,200
In fact, as I understand, they
arrived in Theresienstadt.

984
00:56:52,200 --> 00:56:55,680
Nobody knew what to do
with them, why they came,

985
00:56:55,680 --> 00:56:59,880
and so then later the
German authorities

986
00:56:59,880 --> 00:57:03,420
there started to
understand the situation.

987
00:57:03,420 --> 00:57:07,020
And they kind of put
them in the camp,

988
00:57:07,020 --> 00:57:14,370
in this city, which
was a fortress city,

989
00:57:14,370 --> 00:57:16,330
and then since then that was it.

990
00:57:16,330 --> 00:57:19,260
They never came out again
until they went to the--

991
00:57:19,260 --> 00:57:21,560
Now, did you say that he
was with 50 young men?

992
00:57:21,560 --> 00:57:22,060
Is that--

993
00:57:22,060 --> 00:57:25,440
About 20, I think, 20 or 21 men.

994
00:57:25,440 --> 00:57:28,320
In fact, if you're
interested, I can

995
00:57:28,320 --> 00:57:31,170
find-- the transport
is here also listed.

996
00:57:31,170 --> 00:57:33,870
The book I have
here is a listing

997
00:57:33,870 --> 00:57:39,900
of all Jews from Czechoslovakia
that went to the concentration

998
00:57:39,900 --> 00:57:43,380
camps, and if they lived
or if they survived,

999
00:57:43,380 --> 00:57:46,620
and which transport they
went, where they went,

1000
00:57:46,620 --> 00:57:49,500
Theresienstadt, Lodz, Auschwitz.

1001
00:57:49,500 --> 00:57:53,580
Everything is listed in here,
very, very good statistics

1002

00:57:53,580 --> 00:57:54,420
here.

1003
00:57:54,420 --> 00:57:59,190
Did life change a lot for
you after your brother left?

1004
00:57:59,190 --> 00:58:04,620
For me, personally, no, except
I missed my brother, naturally,

1005
00:58:04,620 --> 00:58:06,300
for a year.

1006
00:58:06,300 --> 00:58:11,760
But for me, personally, no, it
did not change too much really.

1007
00:58:11,760 --> 00:58:15,000
You're 14 years old, and
you're living with your mother.

1008
00:58:15,000 --> 00:58:17,670
And what else are you
doing with your time

1009
00:58:17,670 --> 00:58:20,700
besides helping to carry
the belongings of people?

1010
00:58:20,700 --> 00:58:23,370
When there was a transport,
which wasn't every day,

1011
00:58:23,370 --> 00:58:26,010
naturally-- it was
once in a while,

1012
00:58:26,010 --> 00:58:30,360
sometimes more, sometimes
less transports going.

1013
00:58:30,360 --> 00:58:34,590

Then the only thing I did
was spent my time in Hagibor

1014
00:58:34,590 --> 00:58:36,210
at the sports place.

1015
00:58:36,210 --> 00:58:38,220
That's all we did, the
youth, because there

1016
00:58:38,220 --> 00:58:39,990
was no more school.

1017
00:58:39,990 --> 00:58:43,590
Did you have a sense of
isolation feeling Jewish?

1018
00:58:43,590 --> 00:58:48,240
In that time, we already
understood, we Jewish children,

1019
00:58:48,240 --> 00:58:54,840
that we are being isolated
from the Christian children,

1020
00:58:54,840 --> 00:58:59,070
from the Christian public,
too, the whole family.

1021
00:58:59,070 --> 00:59:01,920
And so yeah, we started
to understand that,

1022
00:59:01,920 --> 00:59:06,900
although we still thought it's
just a temporary arrangement

1023
00:59:06,900 --> 00:59:08,370
somehow.

1024
00:59:08,370 --> 00:59:12,930
We were actually told by
our relatives and parents

1025

00:59:12,930 --> 00:59:16,020

not to worry, that this
is just a temporary thing

1026

00:59:16,020 --> 00:59:18,930

because it's a war,
and when the war ends,

1027

00:59:18,930 --> 00:59:23,630

everything will come
back to normal way again.