United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Liselotte Epstein Ivry
November 29, 2012
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PREFACE

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LISELOTTE EPSTEIN IVRY
November 29, 2012

Gail Schwartz: This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Liselotte Epstein Ivry conducted by Gail Schwartz on November 29, 2012 in Washington, DC. This interview is being conducted over the phone. What is your full name?

Lisette Epstein Ivry: My full name.

Q: Yes, your full name.

A: Liselotte Epstein Ivry.

Q: When were you born and where were you born?

A: I was born in a little village called in Czech **Lednice** and in German Lichtenstein in Bohemia, Czech Republic.

Q: Now let's talk a little bit about your family. Your parents' names were –

A: My father's name was Victor Ivry, Victor Epstein. And then my son is Victor Ivry. And my mother's name was Elsa Epstein, born Sicher, S-I-C-H-E-R.

Q: Do you know when they were born and where?

A: I don't know when my father was born. But he was born in a village not far from where we lived in **Újezd** or **Aujezd Nadmezhi** [ph].

Q: How do you spell that?

A: I better check it. Ujezd, U-J-E-Zed-D and I don't know his birth date because my father died when I was three and a half so I don't know his birth date. And my mother was born on the 27th of September 1890.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about your parents' background. What kind of work did your father do?

A: My father you know as a young man was a soldier. He was in the First World War and when he came back, he got married to my mother in 1920 I believe and they had a general store. And then when my –

Q: Where was that?

A: That was in Lednice, in Lichtenstein. And when my father passed away, my mother continued the store. It was a very successful store.

Q: What kind of store was it?

A: All, we could sell anything. We were like. When somebody asks me what kind of store I said that was like in Canada, I would say Eaton's like. In the United States I would say like Macy's. The only thing Macy's didn't sell any food. We sold rice and flour and cream of wheat and herring and salamis and rolls and whatever you -- and I was also beddings you know to -- by the yard, yard goods and we sold things like buttons and silk and we sold petrol and nails and whatever you wanted, we had it.

Q: Were you an only child?

A: No, I had a younger brother by the name of, my mother called him Hans but it now is, in Czech **Hanush** Epstein.

Q: And when was he born?

A: He was born on the eighth of June 1927.

Q: You said your father died when you were quite young.

A: When I was three and a half.

Q: How religious was your family when you were growing up?

A: Well you have to understand in Bohemia, in western Bohemia, the Jews were not religious. They kept holidays. And in our little village we didn't have a synagogue. So we, so on the holidays we went to a next, to a next door village and there was a synagogue but soon after there were not enough people so we didn't, we stopped going there and we stopped going, we started going to another one in another village and that was called **Sheruby** [ph]. And there we went to the synagogue on the holidays. We kept the holidays.

Q: Did you observe the Sabbath or anything like that?

A: Well we baked our own and you know we – it's very funny. Your friend Michaela asked me how I called the bread for Shabbat, the challah and I would say we called it **barsay** [ph] and she said yes, that's how they called it.

Q: You observed the Sabbath, you observed the Shabbat.

A: Yes. My mother had the store opened but I wasn't allowed to do anything. I liked to do, when I was a little girl I liked to do handicrafts and she would never allow me to do any handicraft. She would say you have the whole week. You can do things, but on Shabbat you don't do that.

Q: Where did you live? Did you live in a Jewish neighborhood or was it mixed?

A: No it was a little village of 80 houses.

Q: Oh only 80 houses. And how many of them were Jewish?

A: There were, there were two other Jewish families.

Q: Did they have children?

A: Well the one was an older couple and the younger one they had one child. And he was born probably in 1935 or something. But he was a small baby that I remember him.

Q: Your friends were non-Jewish children?

A: That's right. I went to a public school.

Q: I was going to ask you about your school.

A: But you know this was only a village school. It had only four classes for eight grades. And when I finished my fifth grade, my mother felt that I was a smart girl, that I should go to high school. So she inquired the next city to our, where we were was called **Pilsen**, Michaela comes from and so she went to a school a German school and the principal said I have to write a little exam which I did.

And I went there to school but even so it only was 18 kilometers from our village. I couldn't do that. You know there was no transportation and the horse and buggy I couldn't do that twice a day. So my mother found a family where I was boarding. That means when I was 12 years old, I already left home. But you know I used to go to school and give lectures on the Holocaust and I would tell the children that at 12 years of age, I would be already on my own and they said oh how horrible. And I would say well it wasn't so horrible. I became very self-sufficient and I had to look after myself and I felt very important.

And well I was taught from when I was very young to be self-sufficient. My mother would send me on a train when I was six years old to visit an uncle and aunt who had no children in southern Bohemia. And I wasn't afraid at all. They put me on the train and I was the whole day on the train and on the other side my uncle would be waiting for me and I had absolutely no fear. You

know when you grow up in a village, it is different like in the city because in the village you don't have – well we did have burglars, they burgled our store but I wasn't afraid. First of all there was maybe one or two cars and one of them was when our doctor from the next village. And he came through the village like a crazy guy so you'd say go away, go away quickly because the **gonzerit** [ph] is coming. You know even the chickens and the geese were running away on the street. You know in front of our house was a pond. And as children we would go swimming there. Nobody taught us. We just went in the water and started first with one leg down and then we just lifted the other leg and that's how we were swimming.

And in winter it froze over and we would be skating on it. But I was, I didn't have a really proper skate. My mother had a pair of skates. Can you imagine from the turn of the century. They were iron skates and you attached them to your shoes you know like you had a key and you had to turn it. And I would put them on in front of our house and by the time I was at the pond I lost them about three times. But my brother, he was very good at it and he won the special skate and he told my mother you buy me, **Kanotski** [ph]. And these are already good skates and they had little, like little teeth in the front. And as a matter of fact one day he fell into the water. Because we had inns and the inns would take the ice from the pond, from the summer so that the beer would be cold in their cellar. And overnight it would freeze over and let's say there was a little snow so you couldn't tell where they took out the snow, the ice. And one day my brother crossed the pond and he fell in and we were standing in the window, my mother and I. We were absolutely going crazy because you could see him going up and down and up and down. And then a young man came and he lie down on the ice and he rescued him but he had pneumonia and pleurisy because he was in that icy water.

Q: Did you experience any anti-Semitism in the town or among your friends. You said you –

A: No, no, no. Because you have to understand that we didn't have a radio because we didn't have electricity. So nobody had radios. My mother I think was the only person who got a newspaper. So they really didn't know what was going on around them. And with a German speaking village, the people lived there probably I don't know 300 years, 400 years something like that.

Q: What language did you speak at home?

A: German.

Q: German. Ok. And did you have a large extended family? You mentioned some relatives.

A: Yes, my mother was, she had – there were ten siblings, five girls and five boys and my father there were five boys from the first marriage and then there were two girls from the second marriage. My grandfather married his niece, probably at that time it was allowed. I don't know. But she was his brother's daughter. And he said that she was so beautiful that nobody else would be able to have her but him. And he had five sons with her.

Q: So you would go visit all these relatives?

A: No they would come to visit us because we lived in the village and they lived in – like five of them lived in Prague and so on. So during the summer we always had visitors.

Q: Was your family a Zionist family?

A: No, you know living in the village and my mother took us to Pilsen. That was, as I said the next big town or city. And she would take us there for Hanukah and the holidays so we would you know be able to know what it means to be Jewish. And for Sukkot, we didn't have a sukkah but we put branches in, from the trees the branches. Of, behind all the pictures. This was that, so we knew it was Sukkot. And my mother which was very unusual knew how to **doven**, you know she knew how to read Hebrew because at that time women really didn't know anything. And to learn something about being Jewish, she engaged a rabbi from another town. It took him two hours by bus to come and teach us and of course we didn't like him very much because he was limping. And you know children are very cruel and because he was different right. And we always were somewhere. They had to look for us in the village where we were. So he was

teaching us some Hebrew and he was teaching us the **Sh'ma** and so on. So I knew that I was Jewish that you know –

Q: Hitler came into power in 1933 and you were only eight years old. Obviously you didn't –

A: At that time you know Czechoslovakia was a very wonderful country. There was no difference between religions. Everybody went to the same school. And it was really wonderful and the first president of Czechoslovakia was a man by the name of **Masaryk**. He was very forward looking. As a matter of fact he took his, he married an American. Her name was **Guise**. And he incorporated in his name, her name so his first name was Tomas and then it was Gari and then it was Masaryk. And he was very, I mean he was a socialist but he was as far as being Jewish, there was a process. One Jewish man was accused of black libel and he defended this man. I mean he was a fantastic man. The only thing he was already older. He was during the First World War he was a legionnaire and of course he was in touch with the United States and England and so on. And this is when Czechoslovakia became a country in 1918 because before it was part of Austro-Hungary but that was many, many, many years.

Q: When did you first starting hearing about a man named Hitler? Do you remember your first time you heard of him?

A: Well the thing is when I was in Pilsen, the family I lived with every Friday night we would go to another family visiting and they always were listening to the radio and the conversation always was about Germany, about a name named Hitler. But where I lived there were considered Germans. There was a man by the name of Hans **Henline** and he formed a party. And so I knew about the Henline party. And in our village there only were probably three people who belonged to the party. And they didn't live in – these were young people who went to school, university students who went to school in Prague. And they brought it, they talked about it but nobody else did. And so of course in 1937 I already was aware that there was a man by the name of Hitler.

Q: You were 12 years old then?

A: I was 12 years old.

Q: OK and you were still going to school away from home?

A: Yes and I came home during the summer and that's when it all started, 1938. And of course you know Czechoslovakia wasn't supposed to be occupied and, but Hitler had never – and you know they mobilized and of course people from my village who were German, they also were mobilized. They all went to the army. And then October Hitler decided yes, of course. No, that was like this. In the spring of 1938 Hitler occupied Austria.

Q: Right, the Anschluss.

A: And he promised of course he had the meeting with Chamberlin in the summer of 1938 and he said that he would not enter Czechoslovakia. Of course he was a liar. And you know what happened. And so first of October the Germans started crossing the border, you know from Bavaria and Saxony. But they said that our little village would not be occupied because we had a few Czech citizens and so my mother was worried, what's going to be but they said it's not going to be occupied.
But during the night from the 7th to the 8th of October somebody knocked on the door and it was an officer from the Czech army because they had some of the soldiers that were billeted in our village. And so he said that he could buy some petrol for the truck and my mother said what do you need petrol for the truck now in the middle of the night and he said that we are leaving because the Germans are going to occupy your little village. So she was very upset and she asked him whether they would take us along and he said yes they would. So in the morning.

Q: This is the three of you, your mother, your brother and you.

A: Yes so and we had a maid. Of course she was crying bitterly, you know because she was so attached to us. And oh yes, the people that assembled in front of our house. And they yelled at my mother and they said, they called her by her first name because they all worked together then. My mother's name was Elsa and they said Elsa what are doing. Why are you leaving? We are

not going to do anything to you and she said but I have children and I have to protect my children. So the officers sent a truck and the soldiers put things from our store on the truck and they didn't take anything from the house. Only things from the store. And she asked them whether they would take me along because we had some relatives in a – well a bigger village near Pilsen. It was called **Shemashna** [ph]. And they should take me there. So I went. I was twelve and a half year old. No I was 13 by that time, put me on the truck with the soldiers and I arrived at my relatives.

Q: But your mother and brother were still with you right?

A: No they still were, I was the first one to leave.

Q: Oh you were in a separate.

A: I was separate and these relatives had no idea that I was coming and I really didn't know them and so I said well we are running away because we are being occupied so they took me in and the soldiers would, the things they had on the truck, they put in a barn and then my mother and brother came in the afternoon. But during the night the soldiers came back and they stole all our stuff.
And so my mother got in touch with some of her brothers and sisters in Prague and they said well you have to come to Prague. And so I don't know how long we stayed with these relatives.

Q: Do you remember at that time being very frightened when you had to leave your home?

A: Well it was, it was you know you live –

Q: You were 13 years old.

A: We really didn't know what was going on. You know you are 13 years old and your mother says you go with the soldiers. You go with the soldiers you know.

Q: Did you take anything special with you when you went with the soldiers.

A: No, I really didn't know. Probably my mother took my clothes. I had no idea. And then we went to Prague.

Q: The three of you.

A: The three of us and some relatives waited for us on the train. And we went to an uncle and aunt that they decided what they're going to do with us. And so I was –

Q: How long had you stayed in that before you got to Prague, how long did you stay in that –

A: With the people in Shemashna.

Q: Yes.

A: Oh a very short time.

Q: A short time, ok.

A: And so I –

Q: So in fall of 38 that you got to Prague

A: Yes, on the eighth of, no it maybe it was the 14th of – I don't know. On the eighth of October we were occupied and we ran away. And then I went to Prague and they said that my uncle and aunt, it was the oldest brother of my mother, that they would take me in and I would stay with them. And my mother went to live with her -- she had a little sister and a bachelor brother who lived together and she went to live with them. And my brother went to live with a cousin.

Q: So you all lived in separate places?

A: We all lived in separate places and I, I stayed with my uncle and aunt for, yes well – so when I was there my aunt who was a former school teacher, she said that I had to, you know I cannot just sit around. I must go to school. So she took me to a school of course it was a Czech school. And she took me to the principal and she said you know here this is my niece. I would like that she should be able to go to school. And she says no problem. She can come tomorrow. But I didn't speak Czech. But you know when you are 13 years old, believe you me you learn a language one, two, three. And my aunt was very smart. She engaged a girl who was a year older than me who was smart. And she taught me the grammar because Czech grammar is like French. You know you have seven cases. It is not like English. And in English it's easy to learn. There is no grammar to it, because the words they are all the same. The endings are all the same. There is only one article, whereas in Czech you have three and seven cases and then the words change.

Q: Do you remember the name of the school you went to.

A: No.

Q: Who were the other –

A: But I went back in 19, wait a minute I will tell you. 1995 I went back to Prague and I went to the school or 96 rather. And now hold on. I went back to the school in 1999 and I went there and I said that you know I was on the march of the living and I, what I was doing and perhaps they would be interested that the students should hear me. And the teacher was very excited about this and I was talking to the children there. In 1999.

Q: Now you're at school.

A: Now I'm at school.

Q: You're 13 years old.

A: I was 13 years old and I went to school and my aunt was, she was looking after my homework, especially when I had to write a little story or something. To make me write, as long as I didn't make a mistake so when I came to school I wrote a little story and I always was 100 percent, better than anybody else.

Q: Wonderful, wonderful.

A: Well everything you know you go to school, you make friends. And you get used to things. And you don't take it so tragic at that point. Until one day –

Q: Did you ever listen to the radio and hear speeches by Hitler or did you know?

A: Yes but you know people look, I went to school. I came home. I did my homework and I went to bed. You know I'm 13 years old. My aunt and she had a married daughter and they probably talked about it but I was, I had to do my homework and I couldn't – it wasn't discussed kind of but this one day and you know we went home from school for lunch. Yes, all children go home for lunch because that's the main meal and then you go back to school. And you stay in school til about 4:00 but this particular day, it was a nice sunny day. It was March 15th. And my –

Q: and this is –

A: And I go from school.

Q: This is 1939.

A: 1939 and I come to the main street and got -- I mean it was horror because the Germans were marching in with their tanks and everything and people were standing on the sidewalks. Some were crying and some were Heil-ing and I didn't know what was going on. You know it was – and then I came home and of course my uncle and aunt were very upset and but I was allowed to continue my school, my class. My year. The Germans let us stay and finish the school year. But there were things. Every day was something different. The first thing you had to give up all your

radios. You had to give up your jewelry and I had a little ring and my mother gave it to me I think for my ninth birthday or something like that. Had a little ruby stone. And my aunt said you better give me that ring because you don't want to be punished because you didn't give up your ring. I had to give my ring which was dramatic a little bit. And then you were not allowed to go to the park. You were not allowed to go on the sidewalk. You were not allowed to go to the movies, not to the theater. You could only shop at certain hours because they, probably the end of the day when there wasn't very much left. That's when we were allowed to go shopping. On the streetcar we were, I think I had to go the last car and so on.

Q: Is this something you talked over with your friends, your Jewish friends?

A: In this school there were no Jewish friends.

Q: You had no Jewish friends at school?

A: No, anyway but then –

Q: Did you know any other –

A: And then so in 39 we could finish school and that was it. So my mother was – found out that this Zionist organization opened a school. It was a Youth Aliyah school and she made me go there. I mean it was a most wonderful school. And there I learned a great deal and our teachers were not very much older because they were university students and they couldn't go to school so they and they were Zionists and so they were teaching us and we were preparing to go to Palestine.

Q: This is September 39 that you started the Jewish school.

A: Yes. And we were planning to go illegally to Palestine. So we studied all the regular subjects, but we studied Hebrew, Jewish history and it was like that very, I mean we learned more than a regular school. It was like a university.

Q: Did the school have a special name?

A: It was called **Juven** Aliyah school.

Q: Youth Aliyah ok.

A: And so I was in a class at the beginning, a Czech class and then they moved me. Then I was in a German class. I mean you know I could go I spoke both languages fluently. And then I was, they made a class only with girls and we learned how to sew. That's because in case we got to Palestine so we would know something, so we learned how to make patterns and sew.

Q: What did Palestine mean to you at that age?

A: Oh we were Zionist. I belonged to a Zionist organization. As a side thing I want to tell you that there was a young man by the name of **Hanan Backri** who was with me in that Zionist organization. And I, then when the war broke out I you know we all went to somewhere else and I never heard from him again. I didn't know where he was and I received a newspaper from Prague, it's called **Iresh Chodesh**. And one day there was a little ad and he was, there was a man was looking for another man and he signed himself Hanan Backri and I said to myself there are not that many Hanan Backri's around and there was his address in Israel and I wrote to him and I said you know I think I know you. And you know me. That belonged to the cell at Lavan and anyway within ten days I got a phone call from him. I was so excited. He said yes, yes that's me. And unfortunately a few, I was in touch with him all the time. And when I went on the marches at Lavan the last time in 204, I met him with his wife in Jerusalem and I was now in contact with him emailing. But his email stopped. And I sent him a wish for Rosh Hashanah and I didn't get an answer and I started phoning him and there was nobody there. The phone was ringing, ringing, ringing. So yesterday I phoned Israel. I phoned **Beit Terezin** and I asked about him and they were telling me that a few days ago he had, was his funeral. So he was in my **fotsa** [ph] in the Zionist organization. So we were ardent Zionists and we wanted to live on a kibbutz and we wanted to do all the work and we were very excited.

Q: Did your brother do to the same school?

A: No, my brother was younger. He went to a Jewish school. They had a Jewish school for primary school.

Q: And what did your mother do while you all were at school?

A: Well I didn't live with my mother. My mother lived with her sister.

Q: But did she work or did she do anything?

A: No, she didn't do anything.

Q: So the war breaks out

A: So it's 1940 and I went to that Youth Aliyah school.

Q: Did you know about Hitler invading Poland? In 39?

A: Well then we were very well informed. And then of course there was, yes and –

Q: Do you remember being frightened at all?

A: No, no we were too involved with going to Palestine. And we thought that we would, even going by myself you weren't afraid. You were a youngster. You wanted to go. You wanted to build –

Q: You had also said when you were very young, you were very independent –

A: My mother did that and I think she did a fantastic job making me independent because she had not much time for me but she wanted – and especially I was the older one. I was the one you know. I could do things on my own.

Q: So now –

A: So then Eichmann was, came to Prague to the Jewish community and he said that anybody who will get a, would be able to get a visa from a country, they could go. That the Germans would like give them visas and let them go. So my mother, she – there were aktions they called it. You know there were organizations who helped people to go to different countries. And there was as you remember, Dr. Winton,. He was –

Q: Yes, Nicholas W—

A: But of course we didn't know a Dr. Winton. We called it **umulded** [ph] because it was near the museum that the office and so my mother also registered me there to go to England. And I had a **diransor** [ph] in England. It was a brother of my aunt who lived in London because you needed --

Q: A sponsor.

A: You needed somewhere to go. So he wanted to do that for me and I had a cousin who was, he was I think five years older than me and he went that was in August 40. In August, wait a minute. August. 41. No. August 41 I believe or 39. Or 40 and he – it was before the war broke out.

Q: The war broke out September 39.

A: Yeah so it was summer of 49 and he –

Q: 39, 39.

A: And I, I was supposed to go with next transport and then the war broke out so the transport, the Kindertransport stopped. And so I went to this school and –

Q: Do you remember any of your teachers' names?

A: Of course.

Q: What were some of their names?

A: I was telling that yesterday to the lady from Israel. Well the man, the young man who taught me Hebrew. His name was **Be-ep Shek** [ph] and he survived and he went to Israel and he became an am -- I think he was ambassador or something to France. And his son Danny is also in the foreign service now in England I believe. Then I had a wonderful teacher who taught science and his name was **Willy Groat** [ph]. I found him again. He survived and I found him again in Israel and we corresponded for a while and then he died. Then I had a teacher by the name of **Gunda Redleigh** [ph]. He taught I believe history. I'm not quite sure. And he didn't survive. He was a fellow -- you will have his book I'm sure there. It's, his son found his book. His diary was found in Terezin. And it was published and I'm sure you must have it. The story of Gunda Redleigh. He was the one who put the names together for the transport from Terezin to Poland so he had a terrible job. So if you are interested, I am sure you can find it in your library. And –

Q: So you weren't able to go to England. So then what happened?

A: Well I continued going to school and we hoped to go to Palestine. But then in the fall of 1940 as I told you that Eichmann, that the Jews could leave. He grants us visas. So some people then got visas and went to England. Very few. Some, America had only had quotas so they didn't take us. And Mr. Roosevelt didn't want us because he was running for a second term so he couldn't use us. And some, a few people went to Cuba, to Guatemala, to Quito you know and South America. And they would go to a priest and the priest would give them a paper that they are Catholic and that's how they got to South America. And since Eichmann couldn't get rid of

us so he had to find a place where to send us. So he found this place called Terezin or Theresienstadt in the northeast of Prague. Before that he couldn't wait that long. So in October 1941 the first transports were sent, five of them, a thousand persons each to the Lodz ghetto. That was the beginning. And then they sent a young, about 450 young men to Terezin to prepare the camp you know to make bunks and the kitchen had to be – because it was a, it was a military time and so they prepared it and then the first transport to Terezin went in December 41. So then we knew that we will be moved. But you know nobody had any idea what it was like, where we are going to go, what's going to be and you know I didn't go – the school stopped. And anyway it was a very uneasy time.

Q: So you just stayed home with your relatives.

A: No, my relatives are fed up with me. Because after school, my school was til 6:00 and we had a long day because we had to accomplish a lot and because I belonged to a Zionist organization I still went to a – you know a get together from the Zionist organization and Jews had to be home by 8:00 and I would, you know I didn't want to – you know we had nice band with all these young people. We learned how to sing Hebrew songs. We learned how to march and you know everything was Zionist they're doing, preparing to go to Palestine.

Q: Did you wear a uniform or anything?

A: No, no, no.

Q: Just your regular clothes?

A: My regular clothes and I started running home like crazy because I couldn't wait for a street car because that was too slow because I had to be home before 8:00. Because if they would have caught me they could put me into jail. And my poor uncle and aunt they were on pins and needles because it was five to eight and I still wasn't home. And so I arrived maybe one minute past eight and my poor uncle was standing already in the door. My aunt must have given orders that he should give me a, give me one you know. And so they decided that they cannot take this

because it's you know – and doing terrible things to them. And you know I'm 14 years old or 15. You know you want to be with the young people and you don't take these things so serious. And so they asked my mother that she should find a place to send me somewhere. So my mother went to the Jewish community and the social services and says I have a daughter and I cannot keep her. Perhaps you have a place where you could place her. So they did place me with young women. It was a women's shelter. But most of them, they're a little older and they were not of very good repute. And they did things which I really didn't like and I felt, I went to school from there. But I felt that it wasn't the right place for me. So I myself, already at that time was very self-sufficient I tell you. And I went to the social services and I told them. Listen, this is not a place for me. These girls are doing things which --

Q: Were they Jewish girls?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: They were all Jewish.

A: Yeah they all were refugees. They mostly were from Carpatha Russia, which is now Ukraine. And I went there and he says well we have now a home for young girls and boys and we will place you there. And these were children from a town called **Ostrova**, where their fathers were sent to Poland to work. The Jewish fathers. You know. They took all the Jewish men and they sent them into what's called **Nisco**. And so the children were sent to Prague and there was, we were in two apartment house, in two different apartments. Like a large apartment. In one were the girls and then the other one were the boys. And we just got our food there. But the food was hardly any food. And I got extremely thin. And they became worried, so they found two families where I went for lunch, two lunches a week so I shouldn't get so skinny. And that's when I still went to school. And so then I was sent to another home. You know how you are being shuttled from one end, from one place to another. And the transports were going already. And my mother and my brother, even so, my brother lived in an orphanage and my mother lived with her sister but when the transport was called, my mother and brother went together with, in August of 42 they went to Terezin. And I went to Terezin on the ninth of September I believe, 1942, with

transport BS and my number was 992. I remember that very well. And I worked then. I came there. I knew someone a young man and I worked in the hospital, a nurse, as a nurse's aide. My mother worked also as a nurse and as a matter of fact we had typhoid and she worked in the hospital where the children had typhoid. And my brother he was very young then. He was 15. He was making toys for children. Wooden toys. I mean not for the children from Terezin. The Germans took all these things out. They were – they said, took it to Germany. And you know in Theresienstadt it was again we were the young people and I was already 18, no 17. And we would get together in the loft. We had lofts. You know the Germans kind of didn't know that we had these lofts and we would get together and we would, there would be somebody who would read poetry. And somebody would sing. I mean it was like what young people are doing. And but the thing was that people started to leave you know. And nobody knew where these people were going and people – oh yes, a lot of people came from Germany and German Jews were told that they are going to be sent to a bath, you know like serene bath, house bath you know to a spa and they were allowed to bring their mattresses along. And so they arrived and they said so where is the spa where because they lied to them. And there were loads of old people and they started dying out very fast. And we, the young ones, we kept on going. We had, we did our thing even when the only thing we were afraid, that we would be sent away and nobody knew where you're going to be sent. They sent you a little piece of paper and you said they said you have to be at 8:00 at this place and a family. And so my mother was one, got a little paper once. And because she was a nurse, she was looking after people who had typhoid so they took her out again. That was what Gunda Redlich was doing. And then one day she, again she came to me and she said she was called up again and that was September 43 and at night came my brother to see me and he says you know what I am going voluntarily with mother because I cannot let her go by herself. You know my mother wasn't that old. My mother was in her early 50s. You know that was 43. That means she was 53 years old. And but he said he couldn't let her go by herself. Anyway so they left and I this is the famous DM transport where I suppose you know that all of them was killed on the eighth of March 1944. But my mother died, she got diarrhea and when somebody got diarrhea they died from dehydration and my mother died on the fourth of January 1944.

And my brother who was in this DM transport, the whole transport was called up and they were killed, all of them close to 4000 Czech Jews were killed on the eighth of March 1944. And so

we were, we were left in that – in Birkenau and we were waiting when are going to be called up because you see when you arrived in Birkenau, in Auschwitz, Birkenau. You had to sign a paper that after six months it's going to be special treatment. And our six months would be up very soon. So we knew this is what's going to happen to us. But in the meantime the Germans sent in more prisoners from Terezin to day to be at that familial camp to fill it up and then what we didn't know was the invasion of Europe, you know in 1944 when British and went to Dunkirk and the Canadians and so on, they started invading Europe. We didn't know that. So one day, I mean, you know there were always rumors and there were rumors that there's going to be a selection. See in our camp there was never a selection like in the men. Where the men where in D camp there were always selections. And they always took out the people who were old or sick or couldn't work anymore and they took them out and they gassed them. That happened. I don't know how often during the week, but it happened very often.

Q: Can we go back a little bit in time and tell me going from Terezin to Auschwitz for you, can you tell me about that.

A: Yeah that was, that was terrible because I had high fever. I had a tonsillitis and so forth. They couldn't care less and they put you in these cattle cars and without water, without toilets.

Q: And when was this, what was the date that you left Terezin.

A: On the 15th of December 43.

Q: 15th of December.

A: Yes that was a transport DR. And we were one and then the next day came another transport that was –

Q: Tell me a little bit about that journey from Terezin. You said you were sick.

A: I wasn't very much with it because I was faced with you know with (inaudible) in this cattle car. There was nowhere, there were no benches, no nothing. I was standing, trying sit or something and they always, in they always moved you during, they always moved you during the night. They put you late, late afternoon. They put you on the trains and then you traveled and you had no – you know we tried to look out that knew that, knowing of course we had no idea where we were going. And then we arrived in the morning. And the doors opened and they started, the Germans started yelling.

Q: How long was the journey?

A: It must have been overnight.

Q: Just overnight. And were you with friends, your age?

A: No, there was –

Q: Who were you with?

A: All kinds of people. I don't have no idea. I have absolutely no idea who was with me. In that train. And so we jumped, they yelled us to get out, get out and we just jumped out and we saw young boys in pajamas running around and they would say, they would yell, say like don't go on the trucks. Don't go on the trucks, because if you go on the trucks you will go to heaven. But you know you are completely -- you don't know what's going on with you. You have absolutely no control about your thoughts or anything because it's just, it's like a strange land and they put you on the trucks and you go. And so they drove us from there into the camp and we landed in that family camp. And so they divided the girls separate and the women separate and the men separate and I landed up in this house or block number 11. And there were about 800 women in one of these houses, these blocks. And we had these bunks, three story high bunks and about eight, where eight women would like on one, on shelf kind of. And since then you were young so you could climb up so you were up there and of course when you are up there which was good

because you had air and when you were old and sick you were on the bottom and it was pitch dark and it was like hell there.

Q: What were you wearing? What did you wear?

A: What did I wear. I, oh yes, I know what I wore. Now you reminded me. I bartered, you know we bartered. In camps you barter for things. And I bartered with someone for a man's suit. I don't remember what I gave but I landed up with a man's suit. It was a very nice brown man's suit and there were women who were working in where they had sewing machines. They were sewing so they did things on the side you know for a piece of bread or something. I don't know how many slices of bread I gave her for that. But she made me a beautiful suit, a jacket, she turned it upside down or inside out. And I had a lovely jacket and from the pants she made me a skirt. And then I found somewhere a piece of fur and somebody made me a cap. A fur hat and I had a fur collar so I looked really snazzy and in that thing I came to Auschwitz. Now I remember that. I sometimes forget things already.

Q: This was your clothes in Terezin you think.

A: This was, yes, yes. You know we as girls, we wanted to look nice in Terezin. Most of the girls wore plaid skirts. These skirts were made from blankets. I don't know where we got these blankets but we had and we wore these --

Q: So that's what you wore, that new suit you had –

A: That new suit, oh yes. I --

Q: You wore that to Auschwitz?

A: That was very f, I was very fashionable.

Q: I'm saying that's what you were wearing when you got to Auschwitz.

A: That's what I was wearing, yes. And so we were there a little while and then they took us out to another block and there we, girls sitting, Polish girls sitting at little tables and we had to sit down at the little tables and that's where we, they tattooed us and I got my number and my number is 70663. And my number is very much on my forearm because that jacket had very tight sleeves and I couldn't move my sleeve up. Normally the number is near the elbow but number is very low down because I couldn't move up the sleeve.

Q: What was that like for you? I mean here you are what, 18 years old, and getting a tattoo, what –

A: You are in a trance. You are not, you are not there. When you arrive in Auschwitz, it was like you know you went from one, you were like a, like a marionette. You know where they put you, there you went. And you had no idea what was going on with you because like I say it was like being in a trance.

Q: Did they take off your hair, did they shave –

A: Wait a minute. So when we, we had the numbers we again lined up in front of the block and all the women were, the men were in different blocks and the women were in different blocks. And they started marching us to outside of the camp to a building. We had no idea what this building was. When we arrived in that building we had to get undressed and the only thing we were allowed to keep were our stockings. And they put something on our hair in case we had lice I suppose and they put us under the shower. Now you, we had no idea that these were gas chambers because this was -- you could use this as a shower place or as a gas chamber because the only thing, the difference was when they wanted to kill the people there were little openings in the ceiling and through those ceilings they put in the canisters of Zyklon B and the pebbles would slowly come down and the people would suffocate. You know but this our, it's around, but we had no idea. So then we took a shower and we were allowed to keep our stockings and there was a bench and they put the stockings there and when it came time for me to get my stockings, they weren't there. I was hysterical because it was December and I had no stockings.

So of course they took away our shoes. They took away our clothes, the shoes and everything. And but I found another pair, I don't know whose it was. Probably this person took mine so she left this. And they moves us to another room where there was a girl and she threw at us clothes. Literally. She had a, you know she had a big bundle of, and she would throw it. And whether you were tall or small or whatever, these horrible clothes. And I think we had, she gave us a little coat or something. And instead of shoes we got these **pantofels**. You know the wooden clogs. But that was really a savior because if we would have been standing in leather shoes would have been even worse. If they're wooden at least we didn't have frozen toes because you know we were standing outside for hours being counted in the morning and in the afternoon. And then they started moving, then they marched back to the camp and I was on that block 11. And we were not allowed to go out for – there was a quarantine of 14 days so –

Q: You're still talking about still the family camp?

A: That was in the family camp, yeah. But we were a quarantine of 14 days but as you know we found out things, what it was like where we were. You know I mean there's always somebody who comes in – the girl who brought the soup that -- and we would try to talk to them. I found out that the previous transport with my mother and brother is also there so I found out where my mother was. And when we were allowed to, after the 14 days, when we were allowed to walk around in the camp, I went to look for my mother and she was on block 27. So that was quite far away and you know having only those clogs and in Poland it's very – the mud is unbelievable because it's clay. You sink into it like you had to take a step, take your pantofel and put it down and then your foot and so on. I did find my mother and she was in a terrible state already. She had diarrhea. How do I know she had diarrhea? Because anybody you saw with a white mouth, you know they gave out a powder against diarrhea so I knew that already that she was not well. So I said well I have to do something. So I volunteered to carry the soup, because if you carried them – they were in barrels. It was heavy like hell. And the two girls were carrying the soup, one in the front and one in the back. We had like poles and over the poles there was some bands and those you put over your shoulders and that's how you walked. That's how you carried this. But the thing was when we went to pick up those barrels, you could scrape out the left over soup.

That was, so I said I'm going to go and carry the soup. At least I will be able to give to my mother a little soup. Unfortunately she got so very ill and she died a few days later.
So I stopped carrying the soup. And we didn't do anything. We did not go to work. We just sat, sitting there and most of the time we were standing outside being counted because they counted us in the morning and they counted us in the afternoon and we had to stand there and they had to calculate whether everybody was there. They had to actually count because the dead ones, people were put in the back of the block of the house. They went in the back and they counted the dead. And if the figures weren't right, they started counting again so we sometimes were standing there for hours.

Q: How supportive were the young women to each other?

A: We made, you know, we made friends but you know you became friendly with the person who lied next to you. To me this girl whom I never saw in my life and her name was Judy Seltzman and so she became my friend. And I mean I knew some other people from the – but what we did was, you know we didn't go to work so you spent the whole day in that house. And you were sitting there and very often we were cooking. You know imaginary cooking. And across from me there was a lovely lady. Her name was Mrs. Morgenstern. She was older. Her son was a very nice young man. And so we were making strudels and we were making all kinds of things and one would say my mother did this and another would say no, no, no. My mother did that. And so we were cooking. And we also pretended to take a bath. How wonderful it would be. Oh yes and I also want to tell you that young women, they're very conscious of hygiene. And we went into the bath house, every morning, got undressed and washed ourselves completely. It was cold water. We had no towels but we washed ourselves and, but you know we didn't care we were naked because nobody could see us. It was such a, it was like a fog because from our warm bodies and that cold place, it was all foggy. You could hardly tell who was who.

Q: Did you get your period in –

A: Well that was our luck. It is in a way. The period stopped because before that it was horrible. You had nothing. It was just terrible. But now we are paying for it because most of people who

lose their period when they are young, you get osteoporosis much faster. Like the runners, the people, the women who are runners. Actually they lose their period also. So one good thing, we lost the period.

Q: How was that handled in Terezin?

A: Yeah, well you know if you ask me what we did, I can't remember. Some things just escape you. And probably – I don't know. We probably took some, some pieces of cloth or something. I cannot, I don't want to make up any stories, because, but I can't remember exactly. I will not tell.

Q: You said you were standing around because you weren't working.

A: No, we weren't working. Anyway it came the seventh of March.

Q: This is 44.

A: Yes, 44. And they called out all the numbers from the previous, from the September transport. And they had to line up until they had everybody. They moved them over to the camp A. We were B. And they put them in the camp B, A. And I saw my brother there. And I had a pair of mittens and I called to him and I said would you like to have my mittens. I thought I would throw them over the wire.

Q: Had you had any contact with him before that in Auschwitz?

A: Very. No, very little. I went to – after my mother died, I went on the way down, I stopped at his block. He was in block 16, I believe.

Q: Block 16 you say.

A: I think so. I'm not quite sure but I think it was. And I went, you couldn't go in. You had to

say you want to speak to – so I told the guy who was standing at the door and I said I'd like to speak to Hanush Epstein. And he called him and he came out and I told him that mother died. And he didn't stay one word to me. He just turned around and he walked away because he was so attached to her. And I never saw him very much because he was painting the chimney. But everybody knew him. He was a very beautiful child and people were just taken by him. And I never thought so. That day you know he was on the other side. I saw him and I called to him and I said I have those mittens. Would you like those mittens. And he said to me where I am going I don't need any mittens. And during the night from the seventh to the eighth they took them by truck you know and they killed them all that night. And you could hear them singing. They were singing. They were singing the **Hatikvah**. And they were singing the Czech national anthem. And so we knew that we had three more months to live. But as I told you, in the meantime they sent another I think 7,500 people to fill up the camp. And then one day there was rumor that there's going to be a selection because as I said we never had a selection. That was end of June, I believe. You know because don't forget, we had no calendar. We, what we did is we made little marks on our bunk and, to see how many more days we have to, you know til we die you know. Kind of we scratched them out. And so if there were rumors because in camps there always are rumors and that there's going to be a selection. And sure enough, because Mengele used to work in our camp. He did his research on dwarves and twins in our camp.

So there came, you know there came the order that we have to line up. It was at the end of the camp, like near the, near where the tracks are now. And you had to get undressed completely and you put your clothes on your right arm because the left arm had the numbers and so you went one after the other. And Mengele decided who is going to live and who is going to die. And you know fate is unbelievable and that's why I'm so a fatalist. Because I suffered from psoriasis and just at that time I was completely free of it. I didn't have any blemish on my body and so when I went through so he chose me to live. Because he just moved with his thumb if you had known what he was doing and they were at the, men they were watching. And when he made one sign you lived and they took you and they wrote down your number. And the ones he – destined for death, they didn't need to write down the number. And so we didn't know what was going on. And then we got dressed and we went back to our bunk.

Q: Let's go back to Mengele. Had you seen him before that day or was that the only time?

A: No, we used to see him. He used to come to the camp.

Q: And so you saw him before. Did you know who he was or what he –

A: Yes, we knew that was Dr. Mengele.

Q: And did you know what he was doing, did you –

A: What he was doing. That he was doing. In our camp he was doing research on dwarves and twins.

Q: I'm saying, but you knew that.

A: Yes.

Q: How did you know that?

A: Well you know, we knew a lot of stuff but –

Q: How did you get information?

A: For instance we got information, there were young Polish boys who lived in the men's camp, in camp D. And they have the roofers. They were fixing the roofs of the houses and because they could go from one camp to the other, they were very knowledgeable. They knew what was going on. And they would tell us all the news. And also there were the craziest thing is. You know there was one camp that was all gypsies. That was the D camp. And the gypsies had better food than we had. And they brought the food from the gypsy camp to the hospital to give it to the people who were sick. Now that's sick, isn't it. You know you make, yes, people – but you bring food from the gypsy camp to give people who are sick. I mean this is absurd isn't it. So they, because they were moving from one camp to the other, they knew all the – they knew the news

what was going on. They were like our postman. And so we knew a lot of things which were going on.

And this also was the time already when all the H – they built the railroad into the camp because when we came it wasn't there. So they built that railroad so the trains could come straight into the camp. And we saw these big rail -- these trains arriving every day. And the camp next to ours, the C camp was empty but then started filling up with girls. And these were the Hungarian girls who they left, kept alive. We would talk to them. I mean probably spoke German to them. I don't remember because I don't know Hungarian. And we could kind of talk because the camp – the division was only wire so you saw what was going on next door and I mean we didn't go near the wire, because the wire were electrified you know. You could touch it and off you went.

Q: How did you keep yourself going? You had lost your mother and your brother and you're a young woman. How did you keep yourself going at that time?

A: You had this, this tremendous will to live. You had to, you wanted to show them that, that you are going to live. You are going to outlive them. And you did everything possible to stay alive. Like staying clean helped you, you know. And all, we were discussing all kinds of books and you know we were all very intelligent people so we were talking about Tolstoy and Dostoevsky and Schiller and Goethe and all these things. We somehow wanted to, you know in Hebrew say **Doske** [ph], you know what that means. We are going show you. We are going to live. We will manage to survive. So anyway, so when he chose us the next day we were called, all our numbers were called out of the girls who were chosen. And we were marched to the women's camp and when we came to the women's camp, the orchestra was welcoming us. They played for us. But there is a book, this girl wrote a book about her being the conductor in the women's camp. Yes, she was conducting there and they are playing very nicely and we were marching in. And they put us up in different bunks there. But the girl who was there, they didn't like us because we had hair. We are the only prisoners whom they didn't shave. So already that we were different. And so they already didn't like us. They were shaven because they, most of them came 1942 from Slovakia and Poland so they were there already, this is 1944. So they were already there a long time.

And when we wanted to go for instance into the wash room you know to get washed. There was a girl standing with the **laboir** [ph] and she, she let the water strike at us. I mean they didn't like us because they also knew already that we are not going to stay there. And can you imagine they being there since 1942. Now it's 1944. And that we are going to be shipped out and they just, they were not. I can understand it. They were jealous of us. And so we were there a few days. I don't know how long. I tell you what. I think it was the end of June and I think that we left a week later. Now I have literature from Hamburg. And there they write that we arrived between the 16th and 17th of July. But I think we came there sooner than that. I'm not quite sure.

Q: So you were sent to Hamburg?

A: Yes so, so anyway so they put together, they divided us and they added to us some Hungarian girls. And we were standing always in silence. They moved us around and we moved around because we wanted to be with certain girls and we didn't want to be divided and so on. So there was always a big doing on and they didn't do anything to us. Anyway they divided us. Part of us went to Hamburg and part of us went to **Shtutthof** [ph]**.** And they added some Hungarian girls but I don't know if ever anybody told you that. Before we left we were examined internally. Because perhaps we were hiding some gold or something. So and then we got brought to the train and when we were brought to the train and we saw that there were not only SS men but soldiers. But first of all it was a relief that we left, we were going out of Auschwitz because nobody in their right mind ever could fathom that that would happen.
So they put us on the train and we were, again there was nowhere to sit you know. Just the train. But we stopped quite often because there were air raids because we drove, we didn't know where we were going. We drove through the whole of Germany from southern Poland we went all the way to Hamburg. So when we arrived at that place the next day and I do think it was my birthday. And it wasn't the 16th or 17th. I believe it was my birthday. And so we found out that we were in Hamburg. And they put us up in a warehouse. I found out just a few years ago that it used to be a tobacco warehouse. Right now I have a picture of it because I told you, I got in touch with Hamburg and they sent me pictures. I have pictures of all the places we were. And there they write that we arrived between the 16th and 17th but I'm quite sure we came there a little earlier. And it was clean. And the bunks were only two stories. Like one on upper and one lower

so that wasn't – before we had three stories. And they were smaller ones. Only about two together and we each had our own little bed, kind of. And the soup was better. And there was no gas chamber, you know. I mean we were in heaven.

And but the first night the whole house started to shake and we didn't know what it was. It was an air raid. And some girls yelled to the others who were up there. Don't move. What are you moving. The whole thing shakes. We had no idea that the bombs are falling all around us. And so we started going to work. At first they put us on a shift and I mean we went to different places. Mostly oil companies, we were cleaning up. You know that's what we were doing first, to clean up. But I remember they brought me to this place and my first job was to wash windows and I have said to the fellow, could I have some newspaper and he said what do you need newspaper for? I said well to wash the windows you will see. And when I was finished they couldn't believe it, what a good job I did. And we got a little better soup. And there were other people working there but we found out later on were Dutch people and French people, not they weren't -- they were in work camps. And they were also working in these factories. To clean up after the air raids, but you know just to clean up.

And the air raids were continuous. During the night and during the day like we would go in the morning and there were houses standing nicely and on the way back there was nothing. You could see the bathtub was hanging on and the stove was on the other hand hanging there. I mean they did a real good job I can tell you. And but the British knew and the Americans knew where we were. That there were a group of women. They're not going to bomb us.

Q: The warehouse.

A: Where we stayed and even where we worked. And so we were there a few weeks. And I just found from Hamburg, I got this literature and it says let me tell you. We went to place called **Niue Graden** and we arrived there on the 13th of September and we left there on the 8th of February. So we were there the whole winter. We went to work. People worked all over, but my group went to work in a sand pit because they built little houses because don't forget the people of Hamburg, they had nowhere to live. And so we were building little houses and so I was in a group where we're working in a sand pit. And so we each got a shovel and started shoveling the sand and we had a little train that you know little wagons and they put sand there. And we had a

foreman who was an old German, skinny guy who was very decent. And he saw that I seemed to be a good worker. And it's funny when they see that you are a good worker, they always kind of find you a good job. So he stopped me and he said you are going to be the switcher. So I became the switcher on the train and you know there was a fellow who was the driver of the train and I was the switcher. And the driver, he was a communist and he had to go to the police, I believe every night or once a week so that he didn't run away or something like that. But the air raids were unbelievable and so when the air raids were, the thing was we had to watch out where the -- it was called flak. That anti-aircraft. You know it splinters, it splinters and if that caught you, you were dead. So when the train, when these little wagons were empty we would turn them upside down. We could do that and we would hide under, yes and you could hear ping, ping, ping, you know how these things are falling on it. So we were there for a while until I told you til the second, til the eighth of February. And then they moved us again.

Oh by the way, Niue Graden it's today a shopping center. And I had a friend. Her name was Ruth **Pinchovsky** and she, that name afterwards oh she married a fellow, **Fayon** and you know she was fighting with Hamburg that they shouldn't allow to put a shopping center there. But anyway, I have a picture of the shopping center, a part of the shopping center and there is a tablet where it says that we were there. That's what I read from.

And anyway so they moved us to a place called **Tiesstack** on the eighth of February right.

Q: How do you spell that?

A: Tiesstack, T-I-E-S-S-T-A-C-K. And I was chosen to work right outside of camp. I was making big bricks with holes you know. Like I had a helper. She was mixing the cement with a stone and then I would put it in the form and bang it down and make it so solid and then you put out this form. You lift it out and you had this brick. But you had to work hard otherwise it would fall apart. And then somebody came and they put it in the, it would be dried and they would make new houses. And it's a strange thing. I remember most everything but I could not tell you who was living with me in that room where I was. What it was like. They sent me from Hamburg a picture of that place. It doesn't say anything to me. I remember that there was a dining hall which was a long hall and I remember exactly where I was working. But I couldn't remember that place what it looked like or who was with me. Because very shortly after that one

day we went from work, which was around, I say you know that it was in, still in February but nobody wants to believe me. We went from work and we were standing to go in and as we were standing the siren sounded and they told you that the flyers were already crossing the Channel and that was called a full alarm. And we told the guard who was a soldier and he was a nice guy. He was a decent guy. He was kind of heavy rotund and we called him puppy and we said puppy look, there's an air raid. Can't we go in. and he says you know I cannot let you go in because you have to be counted.

And as we were standing there it became a full alarm. That meant the flyers really are already over the city and the bombs started to fall. And it killed puppy but of course he wasn't killed by the bomb but he was quite killed by the flak. The girl next to me, her name was **Tuli Klasa**, she was killed and I started running like crazy to the dining hall. And to this day nobody wants to own up whose plane it was. Do you know? They used to fly over us. It was in the spring of 45, when they were bombing Dresden to hell. So they were going over us every day. And because near us was a power station and this was like you know at that time radar didn't work so well. But this was a point they knew they had to fly over in order to go to the, on the way to Dresden. And, but the camp was gone and because the camp was gone, they had to move us. And they left us there a few days. There was like a factory and we were sleeping there on some benches or whatever it was. More outside. Because also luck was that we were the only ones who were in camp. The others, because it was early like must have been 4:30 so the girls still didn't come back from work. They worked outside of camp except we were near the camp. Yet nobody, only a few people was hurt and a few people was killed. Otherwise everybody would have been gone. And it was one plane which went in, got into trouble and had to let go. In order to save the plane and themselves they had to get rid of the bomb. And they fell on us. And I tried to find out about this plane. I wrote to a number of war museums in England and they don't know anything about it. I wrote to the war museum in Washington and there was such a clever guy who said sent me back an email. I should go to my home office. Like Montreal would be in the United States and I could go to the office. He had no idea what I was talking about. So til this day nobody wants to own up and I went to the war museum in Ottawa and I spoke to an officer and I said I'd like to know what happened to that plane because the camp was gone and because the camp was gone, we were moved to Bergen Belsen. And there half of the girls who would have survived died there of typhoid. So anyways after a few days we went to the train and as we were

waiting for the train there was an air raid. We were sitting there on the grass and we just didn't move. I mean we are not afraid of air raids. And we couldn't go anywhere because – and then the train came and they put us on the train and early in the morning we arrived. We didn't know where it was. And we had to carry some jackets or something. Air force, it was heavy like hell. And we schlepped it to this camp and then we arrived in the morning.

Q: What day was this, do you know?

A: That I don't know. I am saying the things that I am saying but nobody wants to corroborate it with me that it was sometimes in end of February. And they said it isn't so but my figure I'm sure it's so. And when we arrived they had a block there and there was nothing. There were no bunks no nothing and we had to lie on the floor and it was terrible because one was lying on top of the other and when you had to go the bathroom you had to step one bathroom. The toilet didn't work and we had no water. We had no toilet. There was nothing. It was complete chaos there. I mean most of the people were dead. It was typhoid was –

Q: This is Bergen Belsen you're talking about.

A: Bergen Belsen yes. It was horrendous. We hardly got anything to eat and water was, there was no water. As I told you, the toilets didn't -- I mean you couldn't even go. You know we went around the houses. It was terrible because – it was just awful.
And then one day there was a huge tent. And we didn't know the tent was full of corpses. And they made us drag those corpses to a mass grave because they wanted you know, they knew that they had to, that they're going to lose so they wanted to clean it up kind of. So we did that and when, certain hours they said enough and so we just dropped the corpse and went back and you saw like a row of corpses lying there and you know you become so not feeling. You know you become so nothing. You know, you know that it's goes on, this is what you're going to be like and you fight on.
And then the Germans ran away. And then they brought in Hungarian soldiers. And they didn't give us anything to eat either. So we went, tried to find some food and the Germans had storage. You know they stored potatoes and turnips and things like that under straw. Like earth and straw

and it was like, like big graves you know but a huge thing. So we went there to dig it up and these damned Hungarians they started shooting and they killed girls. And you know what, it's a funny thing. I'm the only one who remembers that. When you will read anything about Tiesstack they don't talk that Hungarians were there, but they were there. Anyway and then they left. And then there was no one. There were just a few of us who still were able to walk around. And they were (sound skip) including myself and we felt that Red Cross must be coming. You know somebody must be coming so we wanted to prepare for that. We found a little table. Believe you me it was a little table. And it was hard for us to carry that little table.

We carried it on the main road to the entrance of the camp. And as we were standing at the entrance somebody started shooting at us and the girl next to me was shot at but the bullet went into – she had a blouse with a, with a pad and it went into the pad, but nothing happened to her and as we were standing there a huge tank arrived with a white star. Who the hell knew what it was? You know we have no idea what it was. And then the turret opened and there was this young man and he said that the division of all the allies came to liberate us. He said it in German. **Atdalem Aleit Mezhde** [German expression – ph] he said and they started driving in and the soldiers came walking. And I spoke a little English already at that time. And he told, the first thing he told me is that Roosevelt died. Because Roosevelt died on the 12th and we were liberated on the 15th.

And I like an idiot was crying. I never cried throughout my whole three years but I cried. So now when I give a lecture, I tell the children that I am ashamed of my tears because Mr. Roosevelt could have saved thousands of Jews and he didn't do anything so that's why I'm ashamed of my tears.

Anyway so this British army came in. This was the first camp they liberated and they saw the horror because most people were dead and there were thousands of them. And they got in touch with their head office and the first thing they did, they put up showers. So at least we could get washed. And there was a town not far from where we were. It was called Bergen, which was an armory town. Of course the German soldiers were not there anymore and that they changed into a hospital town. And they tried to take us all the sick people first so I was, you know I wasn't sick. I was walking around. So you should have seen. They put down on the ground, the soldiers put down a stretcher. Before you knew there were ten naked ladies lying there because you were not allowed to take any of their clothes because it was full of lice. Right.

Anyway so I was one of the last ones going out. And we're coming to Bergen and there was a square and I was put up with some other girls in one of these buildings. And there was a kitchen and I don't know how smart I got, said I'm going to go and work in the kitchen. So I worked in the kitchen. And I stole some butter and I put it in my chest and I ran home because I wanted to bring it to the girls butter. And before I came it was running down. Anyway, so then the Red Cross started coming and they had clothes for us because after all we had nothing and I got a leather jacket. It was an old leather jacket, but it was a leather jacket. I got Eisenhower jacket. Yes, oh yes, but my director on our own before we were liberated, there was nobody, we couldn't walk around and there were warehouses. You have no idea what the Germans had warehouses full of what do you call it, attaché cases. You know these leather attaché cases that officers always used and you see films, they always had these attaché. A whole building full of attaché cases. A whole building full of jackets, flyers. You know for the air force. Beautiful jackets. And then there was old clothes and all kinds of junk. And I found myself a pair of pants. It was they were huge. So I put a, I think some kind of a just string around it because I weighed 46 pounds at that time.

Q: 46 pounds?

A: Yes. And I'm five, eight.

Q: You're five, eight and you weighed 46 pounds.

A: And anyway I found those pants and then I found the leather jacket. Not, the Red Cross didn't give me, there I found a leather jacket. And so the Red Cross there and when we were liberated they tried to give us clothes and so on. And then the British soldiers were very nice. And there was a movie house and you only were allowed to go to a movie if you had an escort. And you had to go with a soldier. And I found myself a soldier and his name was Goldberg and he says he was Jewish and that he came from Edinburgh, Liverpool, I don't remember what. Somewhere. And he became my friend, kind of. And they said when they said if we know of any people you want to write to, you could. So I raised my hand and they said you want to write to someone. I said yes. I have an uncle in Canada and they said but do you know his address. I said

damn well I know the address. And that is, 12, it's 1448 Bishop Street Montreal. And they looked like I was nuts. You know how could I remember an address in Canada. So I did write him a letter and my uncle got it. It was the first letter arrived from someone who was in a concentration camp and I believe it was even published in a newspaper. And so my uncle knew that I was alive. And after –

Q: Can I ask you this first? When you realized you were liberated, did you have any emotional feeling? Did it mean anything?

A: Oh wow. That's all I can say. Yeah I mean it was unreal. It was absolutely unreal but the thing was that we had so many friends who were sick and we tried to find them. And to find someone because there were hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of them lying in these places there. I had a lady how she got through, how Mengele didn't take her was unbelievable. She was much older and she was, looked older, she had hardly any teeth. And not a nice looking woman but heart of gold. She would do the dirtiest work and she would get a little extra soup and she would give me a little bit, bread or a little something you know to help me. So I went looking for her. It took me days to find her amongst, you know because there were no lists. You only went from bed to bed to bed to bed. And I did find her and she told me you know what. I have a son in Czechoslovakia and he, she told me where he lived and his name and after the war, I did find him. And he got her though. I never saw her again but anyway –

Q: Was there any, did you have any sense of celebration when you were liberated? Did you feel --

A: Oh we celebrated. I can tell you. We had party. Yes, even dancing.

Q: You did?

A: Oh yes, yes. You know we had, there were young men and the soldiers. And the funny thing was there were some French Canadians. They said they're from Canada. They spoke French. You couldn't understand it. How come they spoke French in a flyer. And also –

Q: You did feel liberated? Truly liberated?

A: Oh I mean it was something, you can't describe it. That you made it, you know. You are the ones who made it. These horrible people couldn't get you down. And you really made it. And so –

Q: Then you were talking about your relative in Montreal.

A: Yes.

Q: And you wrote to him and he got the letter?

A: Yeah, he got the letter. And we were allowed to go into the villages you know so we went into the villages and we didn't set the houses on fire and we didn't beat anybody up. And we were so happy to be alive that we just went into the houses. We looked around and we didn't steal anything. It was amazing that it didn't occur to us that we would take anything. And this is what I tell the young people that here we were and who, they did such terrible things and we went into the villages and we didn't do anything to anybody. We didn't steal. We didn't burn down the houses. We just looked in awe to all these things. And then I remember we had a big party on the square and we were kind of dancing and so on. Anyway, there was a girl whom I knew already from my Zionist days and she said that her h, she got in touch with her husband and he's coming. And she will go home with him. And so I said to her, Eva, can I go with you. She said sure. So I went with her. And then Ruth Bondy, you might know the name. She's a writer. She lives in Israel. She went with us on that. So we went on that rickety track and we drove through whole of Germany. Hamburg all the way to the Czech border. That's a long way. And we came there and we went into the inn and they didn't know what to do with us. They were so happy for us. And the next day we drove to the Czech border. We got off the truck and we stood there and we sang the Czech national anthem.
And then we drove into Prague. And this young man with whom I'm still friends he said ok girls. This is **Slatege** [ph], and this girl who was my friend, I called her Chinda. I didn't know her.

Orkin was her name but we call her Chinda. And the two of us, we looked at each other and we said so where we are going. So there was a young woman standing there and she saw that we didn't have where to go. She said what are you going to do girls? And we said we don't know. She said you know what. I got my apartment back. I even find my husband. You can come to us. So she and she left and she gave me the address. And she left and I knew exactly where it was. And so the two of us you know we traveled very light.
We didn't have a penny to our names. We did have a few clothes you know. Not much but a little something. And we went on the street car and we had no money so a soldier paid for us and that's how I started my life again.

Q: And so you stayed in Prague for how long?

A: Well since I got in touch with my uncle, I did not want to stay in Czechoslovakia and I came to Canada in 49. Even then it took four years for me to get a visa.

Q: What did you do in those four years that you –

A: Oh so I had a very good friend in Terezin. He was my boyfriend but it was a really girl boy, not, not lovers. He was a very good boy and he said and again I have to emphasize that all what we needed to know, we had to memorize and so he gave me his mother's name because his father went illegally to Palestine. In 1940. And gave me his mother's name and her address. And so when I came to Prague and first of all we had to, to go to eat we went to habitat. You know a Catholic charity. And to the nuns we went. The nuns fed us lunch. We were lined up. There were people from all over the place. And I came with my leather jacket and next to me there were two young men and they said would you like to barter it for a coat and I said yeah sure, if you have a nice coat. So they said ok tomorrow for lunch, you come and we bring you the coat. So they came and I gave them my jacket and they gave me the coat.
And so I started looking for this lady and when I came to the address, the super told me that they moved and he gave me the address but there was a building in the center of Prague where all the people like me would gather. And they would tell us, give us information where we could get a little money and how we could get food and so on. And in the foyer there were pictures and they

said this is my brother. He was there. This is my mother. She was there. And amongst the pictures I found the picture of this young man, my friend. I knew already that he is not back yet. And so I went to his family and I told them who I was and they were very kind to me. And the gentleman already knew that he was not alive, but the mother still didn't know. She still was waiting for him. He died in Buchenwald in January 45. And so if they would ask me to come for meals and I would go there for meals and then they realized that he's not coming back so and I said I don't have anybody and I told them that I have an uncle in Canada, that I want to go to Canada. I won't stay.

And so they took me in. And I lived with them and the gentleman was very practical and he said to me, since you want to go to Canada you better go and start learning English so I was, since I had somewhere to stay. It didn't cost me anything and I went to, it was called the Institute for modern languages. And I went every day and by the end of the year the, like you know winter, in the fall and the spring. I wrote my university exam and then I looked for a job.

And he thought that he would open a little store for me like a flower shop. Is that he would finance it and I would be running it. And nothing came of it. And then he had a friend who opened a store and they hired me. You know what I had for sale? Three bales of clothes. That was my inventory and one day I came and somebody broke in. So that was the end of my job. And I went to the Jewish community and I got a job which was a horrible job. Back in the place where I was once, where I lived it was above the synagogue. There was a big hall and there were clothes brought back from Terezin which was a horrible thing. And we went through them and put them like the better ones aside and so with people like me could get some clothes.

And also we had the divisions from America. People from America sent, were sending parcels and so we had there and there were blankets. They were not wool blankets but there are blankets. And you know what, we stole them, a lot of them. And I had from one of the blankets made a coat. It was, it's made of blankets. It was a brown and I had a beautiful brown winter coat. And I didn't stay there too long. And I was hired to work in the, we had a newspaper which is now Iresh Chodesh. At that time it was called the **Biesnik** [ph]. And I was working there with a lady. We did the addresses you know. We had little plates and we put the addresses on and I also was – would retype the articles people wrote by hand and I would type them so the proofreader had an easier time to do that.

But what happened was my mother's cousin whom I called uncle was brought back from Israel and he became chief rabbi of Prague. And his name was **Gustav Sicher** so you know I was kind of a high ranking (both talking) there. And one day I went downstairs and I met a man and the man knew that I knew English and he said listen I have a good job for you. Would you like to work for this American Joint. I said well, why not? So he sent me there. I had to go and I worked from the American Joint and my salary was twice what I had and I didn't have much work. I filled out little pieces of paper and I went to the bank to get thousands of dollars because in order to emigrate, you had to pay in dollars. Now we provided the people with dollars. And so I waited til — yes, and my visa didn't come through. It took you know four years. And they were looking for girls in Australia. There was a shortage of young girls. So I had a relative who was working in immigration for the Jewish community. And she says you know what. Why don't you make out an application for a visa for you? You know you're not getting the visa to Canada so you might as well try to go to Australia. And one day I got the visa for Australia and the next day I got the visa for Canada. So I didn't go to Australia. That's too far away.

Q: So then you went to Canada?

A: I came to Canada to my uncle. Yes and he always wrote to me that I should learn to become a hair – he had a hair dressing salon that I should learn to be a manicurist or something like that and I would tell him yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean well I knew that I didn't want to do that. Anyway so, but he paid for my fare and I went by train to Belgium to Ostend and from Ostend I went to Dover.

And then by train I went to London and this relative who said I should apply to, for Australia. She had friends and she told them that I was coming. And she went with me on the train to – she wanted I should smuggle through for her a ring. And I refused. I said on account of a ring I'm not going to be put in jail. I'm sorry. I cannot do that. But these people waited for me at the station in London. And the first thing they asked me was I brought Czech salami. I did have some Czech salami. And they lived in St. John's woods. How do you like how I remember all that?

Q: Wonderful. How long did you stay in London?

A: Well just a week. I wanted to see London before I go to --. So I came to St. John's Wood and they, the first thing they offered me was I want a rum and coke. What did I know what the rum and coke was? I said yes. So I took a few sips and then they told me that the apartment was too little, that I cannot stay with them there. They arranged for me to stay somewhere else.

Q: Then you got to Montreal?

A: Just one second. I went, they put me up in a hostel from the Jewish community. It was like back being in Terezin. It was a huge hall for women and underneath that was a huge hall for men and the food was served on metal plates, just like camp. It was such a shock to me. You have no idea. And I had a cake in my valise and there was a little boy and he knew that I had this cake and during the night he would say mademoiselle, gateau, mademoiselle s'il vous plait, gateau. He was from Egypt. Because at that time the Jews from Egypt and India who wanted to go to Palestine had to go through London. So these were the people who I stayed with.
And but I wanted to see London so I took off in the morning and by myself but on the way back I always had problems. Obviously some man would follow me. Because it was in Old Gate East which is a very bad part of London. That's where the London Tower is. And I was smart. I said to a policeman I would, would you please take me home because I am being bothered by a man where they don't leave me alone and that's how I managed to go out and go back in and so on. And then I took a train to Liverpool and I went on the Empress of France where I was deathly sick to Canada.

Q: And then what did you do in Canada?

A: Well I, yes and all these ladies who were on the train, on the boat were there. Mothers of war brides you know. I was deathly sick and they took me to the doctor and since my name was Epstein, he said to me oh you must be a relative of Sir Jacob and I happened to know just by accident because I always was interested in art I happened to know that he was a famous sculptor. And I said yes, of course. And I was, I got better treatment kind of. And so they always said how will you know your uncle? I said I don't know. So we come to Montreal and I'm

standing up there on the boat and I look down and I said there he is. That's my uncle. Yes. Anyway that's how it was.

Q: So you got to Montreal and then you met your husband just very quickly.

A: I was married in 1950.

Q: Was he from Europe or was he from –

A: He came from Lithuania in 1923. His family, his father was here before the First World War and then he came, he went back. No, before the turn of the century I must say.

Q: And his first name?

A: His name was Sidney.

Q: Sidney Ivry. Did you have a family, did you have children?

A: At the beginning we couldn't have children so I adopted a girl. She was 17 months old. Her name is Elsa and then four years later I became pregnant and I had a son and his name is Victor. But Elsa is not very nice and she doesn't talk to me now. She is 60 years old and she has two children and they have, I have two grandchildren from her and five great grandchildren but I don't see them. Anyway that happens. What can you do? And my son has three daughters and he lives in California. He lives in Orinda, just outside of San Francisco.

Q: Can I ask you some questions, just general questions now?

A: Sure.

Q: Just to finish up. Did you work when you –

A: When I came here yes, I worked. In, but first in the beauty parlor which I despised because the ladies who came there, there were real bosquey type and they were talking about their birdies and their doggies and then after what I experienced, these things were so banal. And I told my uncle that I really didn't like it. So he knew somebody at Bell Telephone. You know Bell Telephone is a big company. And I was the – you know in Europe you learn how to do design, you know construction. So I thought I could to draw plans and things like that. So I went there and I had to pass an exam. Everything was fine. I could answer everything except when it came to feets and ounces because after all I learned everything in the metric system and so I failed. And so I got a job in a, in an office where I did invoices. And that's where I met my husband.

Q: Ok, let me ask you some general questions. What are your thoughts about Germany today?

A: Well I say the people who were born after the war they are not responsible for it. I, I don't like, when for instance I go to a store, not now it's not so obvious. But years ago I would stand in line and I would see a German, I would immediately turn around. And when I saw a person who was about my age, I had very bad feelings, because I knew he must have been somewhere, you know. And of course I, a friend of mine, he ____ a little bit out there, but he says eventually forgive but one never forgets. I really don't forgive them either because for instance the guards in Auschwitz, nothing happened to them. They went home and they got married and they are grandfathers now or whatever. Nothing happened. You know they caught the tops, but the regular soldiers there who did that dirty work and kicked us and beat us and helped us into, pushed us into the gas chambers, he went home like nothing would have happened.

Q: Did you tell your children your life story?

A: Yes.

Q: How old were they when you told them?

A: Oh I told them gradually. They always, first of all I had the number you know so I had to, I couldn't say well I put it there for, for nothing you know. I had to tell them who put it there.

Q: When your children were the age that you were during the war, did that bring back a lot of memories for you?

A: No. No. You know what. It's much worse now. Right now because I live by myself and I'm not well. It haunts me much more than before. When I was young I was busy, bringing up a family you know. You know having children and doing things and school work and all that. I belonged to a Zionist organization. I belong to what do you call, Hadassah. I belonged to Hadassah and I was very active. I was a president. I was a this and I was a that. And you know always working for Israel. But the war years were pushed aside because I was busy living.

Q: Do you feel that you're a different person? You would have been a different person today if you hadn't gone through what you went through?

A: Oh certainly.

Q: In what way would you –

A: Well first of all I would have been a professional person because you can hear I'm no dumbbell. And I would have become some, who knows what. And so my life would have been different. And I wouldn't have been a different person as a person because that's what you are. Whether you know you are kind or miserable so I still, like I like to help people now. I'm sure I would have liked to help people then also. And but I would have been, I can tell I'm sure I would have been quite an outstanding person. I was very talented as far as art was concerned. I, when my children were small I took art classes and I went back to university. I took, my major was don't laugh, German literature. And fine arts. But then when I tell it to somebody German because I think yes, I studied Thomas Mann and Heinrich Mann and Kafka and Heine and after all these are all Czech Jews. But Heine was not, but Rilke and so you know and I, I did extremely well. I finished with magna cum laude. And then I was teaching pre-school art for 13 years.

Q: Is your husband still alive?

A: No my husband died in 96.

Q: I'm sorry. And I understand that you do a lot of speaking to –

A: I used to. Right now you know I – yes I did it for 25 years. But I published a book. You have the book now in the library because I sent you one.

Q: And the name of your book?

A: It's I Am Their Voice. I felt that six million people lost their voice so I tried to, a presumption on my part, but I thought that – and it's not about me. The book is not about me. it's quite different. It is letters, poems and drawings from children I spoke to. So it is, you know there are so many books written about people. They write their stories and you know what, the sad part is nobody is reading it. Young people they are on their texting business you know. So my book is different because it shows how young people really can feel with you, the understanding and, and want to, you know are really very sensitive. So if you will read it. The poems are outstanding. They are written by 12 year old kids and I couldn't write poems like that. I had an idea that since I'm not so well, it would have taken some time , to find somebody to put these poems to music. Maybe sometime somebody will do that because they're absolutely wonderful.

Q: Are you angry that you had to go through what you did and have the losses that you have and other people your age living over here did not have to go through that? Are you angry about that?

A: No. No, no, no I'm not angry about that. You know as I said I'm a fatalist. You know it just happens that I was born in Lichtenstein and I wasn't born in Washington, DC or I wasn't born in who knows where.

Q: Do you feel Czech or do you feel Canadian? Do you feel Jewish? How would you describe yourself?

A: All of the above.

Q: All of the above.

A: And yet I speak fluently Czech, even though my mother tongue is German. I probably speak better Czech than German now because I don't speak and I have a cleaning lady who speaks Czech so I speak Czech to her. And what nobody can get over is that I speak so well Czech without mistakes you know. Czech is quite a difficult language.

Q: What were your thoughts during the Eichmann trial? Do you remember?

A: I saw Eichmann sometimes. He came to Auschwitz you know to inspect everything.

Q: You did see him?

A: Yes, well you know probably cause you know you were, he just was passing by kind of. And the thing is of course, I was in Prague when **Heydrich** was killed.

Q: Oh yes.

A: And you know what they did because they knew that they on bicycles. So they woke you up in the middle of the night. The police came and said do you know how to ride a bicycle and I would say yes. Do you own a bicycle? I said no. They look. And do you know what they did. After that they sent a thousand Jews right after Eichmann did that, a thousand Jews immediately to Poland to death. A thousand. And the funny part is that the initial of that transport is A, A, H and we call it **Authentat** of Heydrich. It just happened that way. Like I am DS but that transport in May was A, A Ha, if you look at that it's a thousand people from Prague that went directly.

Q: And were you aware of the town that was destroyed after Heydrich was killed? **Lidice**?

A: Lidice**,** yes, we knew about Lidice. It's a terrible thing that Lidice and do you know that some of the children from Lidice came to Terezin. And some of the children were small. I don't' know how many but I was told. I never saw them. And you know I had a gym teacher. We were talking about did I remember teachers. His name was **Fredy Hirsch**.

Q: Oh yes, well known. Yes.

A: But he was my gym teacher. And do you know what happened. There came a transport of children and they put them not too far from Terezin. And because he was so fond of children he went there to look what, how it's going and the SS found him there and that's how they sent him to Auschwitz. Otherwise he might have survived. And you know he committed suicide and Freddy he was such a fantastic guy. And you know he was gay but there was never ever any suspicion that he would mistreat anybody. Never. And he was my gym teacher and all the war years we went to gym and we had a place. It was the only place we could go which was of course Higibor and there we would be able to run and he had a table you know. He was standing on the table. And he would be whistling so you know we were doing gym. He was so handsome. There's a little book about him, a young girl who did a research. It was for her doctorate or something. She wrote about him. and I have this book. And you know Wexler, you know the one who ran away. Yes, so they went to Fredy, already when the whole transport was in the A camp. And they went to Fredy and say listen Fredy we really want to be make a, you know we don't' want that we all go to hell tomorrow. Let's do a something. You know to disrupt the whole thing.
And he said to them, give me I don't know how many hours he gave them and they came back and he was dead. A doctor gave him some pills and he swallowed them and he died. He was such a handsome man, but there was never any, any, anything that he would go after the boys. Never. And you know he looked after the children in Terezin. They had, as a matter of fact, today I send you through the Holocaust center, ten year old kids wrote a newspaper and somebody gave me a copy. It's not some of it is not very clear but anyway they made copies for me here at the

Holocaust center and they send it to Michaela and you will be able to see it's like a newspaper. The hand writing of these ten year old kids and yet and I went through all the lists because I have the book from Terezin so I can tell when they were born and I can tell which transport. I made a list. So of all these children who wrote in that little newspaper, one survived. You know there were 15,000 children in Terezin and from the 15,000, 50 survived.

Q: Are you more comfortable around other survivors?

A: No, to me it doesn't make any difference but Hungarians bother me, sorry to say. You know because I left in 1938 my home and they left in 1944. They had six years to the good. They did to, they killed so many of them. And you know what when they tell the story, they say that when, that Mengele was the one who did the selection at the train so I always tease them. I said tell me, did he introduce himself or did he – how did you know he was Mengele because there were so many other SS men who did the selection. But they say because that's the name they know. And I always said don't say that because you know we have deniers and if they find out that you are telling a lie, that's not very good.

Q: Do you think the world has learned a lesson about the Holocaust?

A: No, no. No. Not so, none whatsoever. I can only say –

Q: Can it happen again? Do you think it can happen again?

A: Yes. It doesn't have to happen to the Jews. It can happen to another, to another nation that there is crazy guy and says all these people are no good. But we Jews have a – but they can't get rid of us you know. We are here a long time and there are so many pogroms, and so many, so many things they've done to us and we are still here. I believe that the Jews in Bohemia are Spanish Jews. And my family are Spanish Jews because if you would see the pictures of my aunt and you would say my goodness, gracious. Look at them, big black eyes and the huge black hair and I have – on one side my family, from my grandfather's side, I can go back to 1752. And the other one to 1715. And as a matter of fact, I was telling Michaela that there is book out,

interesting author, written by a woman by the name of **Butchkova**, about the Jews in my area. And the first ones arrived there in 16 something. So I wrote to her an email and I thought you know to thank her for all the work she did for all the digging and uncovering all these facts about all the Jews. And she's not Jewish. But one thing I want to know is where did they come from? And I also was at the main archives in Prague and where they did research for me and they said that my family they can date back to 1715. But where they came from, they cannot tell.

Q: Do you get reparations?

A: From Germany?

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, very little, yes.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to talk about before we close?

A: You tell me what interests you.

Q: Any message to your grandchildren that you'd like to give or –

A: My grandchildren, I want to say that they should never forget where they came from. But you know what my granddaughter just got married and I could not go to the wedding because it was in San Francisco and I wasn't up to go, but she married a non-Jew and but he – they had a **huppah** and he broke the glass and so on.

Q: Do you feel more Jewish because of what you went through? Do you think that your experience made you feel more –

A: No, no I was very Jewish to begin with. My mother was very Jewish. Yes. Oh yes. You know we always like for instance, when my children were small I, when I went to synagogue, I

always walked and it wasn't around the corner and it was in honor of my mother because when we went to our little synagogue, we had to go through woods and fields and meadows and we always walked you know. The only thing on Yom Kippur when **Admile**, the fellow who looked after the horses, he came there with the horses to take us home, but my mother would never walk. Would never drive, never. And so I did the same thing. I always walked with my children to shul. And my children went to a Jewish school. My son spoke very well Hebrew. And he studied **Tenach** and all that. Yes.

But you know now he's far away and he's in a surrounding which is not very Jewish. He does go on the holidays to a temple. Because the woman he married, they belong to temple. As a matter of fact my son where he worked after 28 years, I was sick and he got divorced. Everything at the same time. It was very hard on me.

Q: Do you feel that you're two different people because of what you went through – someone on the inside and different than the one on the outside.

A: No. No, no. I never hide who I am. I, you know, this is who I am. I had the misfortune to live in Europe in a horrible time and but I'm a fatalist and it was my fate that I didn't have psoriasis and Mengele chose me to live and otherwise I would have been dead a long time ago. And right now I'm sick and I'm very much alone and that is worse than anything else you can imagine.

I am always by myself and I have a friend whom I played bridge twice a week and he's getting on and he's now 92. And he is now in a residence, but in a very beautiful residence. And I phone him and he cries. He doesn't stop crying. He says you know what. When I was young I did all these things and now this, it doesn't leave me and I'm just a wreck. And so it comes back more than before. It haunts us much more. And this is the bad part. And you see, a person like you can understand it. But how could you tell that to your neighbor. You know how would they know what you feel like. So you are there and you just, you have to keep on fighting. And hoping that you are not going to die by yourself. That's all I'm worried about.

I have a lifeline so but the thing is that I still try to, as a matter of fact, now I'm doing research on Mrs. Albright. Mrs. Albright lies. You know that I met her cousin.

Q: You did?

A: Yes, I met her cousin in, **Dasha**, I met her cousin in 1998 I believe because this friend of mine whom I told you. He was in Prague at the same time and he was standing in a hotel and I phoned him and he says come on over. I have a visitor here. Come on over. So I went to the hotel and her cousin Dasha was there and we talked, you know but nothing much. You know like visiting in a hotel. You talk about the city or whatever it was. Because he comes from the same town as Dasha, and he knew her as a young girl and her parents. Her father was their family doctor. And so he says I have to go now. He says I have to go now too – and so she left and we went downstairs and we crossed the Mensa square and I said to her, tell me, how can she say that she didn't know she was Jewish. So she said to me, my mother, her daughter said, mommy when she looks in the mirror, doesn't she see who she is? You know. I tell you. I cannot understand it. She came back to Prague in 1947. That means she was ten years old. Her cousin Dasha who was older came back at the same time from England and her cousin Dasha, her parents weren't there. They were all killed. And her grandparents. Didn't she ask what happened to uncle so and so? I mean even you are ten years old. You know the bad person is her father. I hate him because he was such a bureaucrat. He didn't want that anything should interfere with his climb. He wanted to become ambassador. You know being a Jew he was afraid. Maybe they wouldn't promote him you know. So they all became, they all were baptized in England. I mean she's such a smart woman.

Not only that, she was teaching history so didn't she teach history what was going on in Europe. Didn't she know? I mean how could, if I would meet her I would say Mrs. Albright you are such a smart person but you are such a damn liar.

Anyway what I am doing now research on, in her books, if you seem to have the book, on page 276 there is an article, by (sound skip) by the name of Eugena **Smolkova** that she was in Auschwitz and she was pulled out by an SS man and that's how she survived. You know went to Hamburg. This is a bloody lie. Because we were not, we were not in the showers, we were selected in the camp. And when she arrived she went to Niue Graden which is a lie too because we went from Auschwitz, we went first to Hamburg, Freihaven, and then we went to Niue Graden. So the whole thing doesn't make sense. And not only that, you know I have the book where everybody is listed who went to camps, to, from Terezin right?

Q: Right.

A: I cannot find her. They cannot find her in beit Terezin so we don't know who she is. She writes there that no, that she, her daughter is working for a Mrs. Albright. So I told your friend Michaela, I said why don't you ask this daughter which transport she went to Auschwitz. Because we cannot find her. Her name is **Eugena Smolkova**. We cannot find her anywhere. So this is my latest thing and I want to write to the publisher. And I don't want to say they should change it now, but in case there's a reprint. Either you leave the whole thing out or say the truth how it is, because Eugena Smolkova can't be found to go to Auschwitz.

Q: Well I wish you good luck on that research. And we're going to have to close now. So I want to thank you so much for doing this interview.

A: You're very welcome.

Q: And I'm going to close with this. This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Liselotte Epstein Ivry. Thank you.

A: Thank you. Have a nice day.

(end interview)