

OK, go ahead.

Repeat the same?

Sure, yes.

My name is Lisl Bogart. I'm from Prague, Czechoslovakia where my maiden name was Winternitz, W-I-N-T-E-R-N-I-T-Z. I was growing up in Prague. My immediate family were my parents and a brother, Peter, who was four years older than I. And we had a wonderful life and childhood until March 15th, 1939 when Hitler occupied our country.

OK, can I ask you a few questions?

Go ahead.

Lisl, L-E-I-S-L?

L-I-S-L.

L-I-S-L, OK. And the date you were born, your birthday.

May 7th, 1926, which happens to be the day of my liberation too.

Aha, nice symmetry there.

Nice, yes.

Can I ask you a little bit about Prague when you were growing up, where you lived, if you remember the street, what your house was like.

Right, we lived in Prague 10, which was Karlin, K-A-R-L-I-N. The street was called Karlova, K-A-R-L-O-V-A, which later on under the Germans was changed to Nymburska on my identification. It's N-Y-M-B-U-R-S-K-A.

What did your parents do for a living, your father and your mother?

My father was a businessman. He had a store of-- wholesale retail place of floor coverings, which was, as soon as we were occupied, taken away by his own employees, Czech, later on by the Germans.

So the Czechs took to the shop over and then the Germans--

Took it away from them.

From the Czechs.

On their own. Was not the law yet.

Did you and your brother go to public school?

We went to public schools, to German schools. And in '37 when things became-- the unrest started, we transferred to Czech schools.

Did you speak German at the time-- during-- at home and things or did you speak--

Both languages. We were bilingual.

You spoke German and Czech? How about Yiddish? Did you speak Yiddish at all?

Not at all.

No?

Never. Never heard of lot of Yiddish.

You and your brother also, did either of you-- were you involved in youth organizations?

My brother was involved in the Zionist youth organization Maccabi Hatzair.

What kind of things did you do there do you know?

And he got me-- he got me to join against our parents wishes.

They disapproved?

They disapproved. And in the end, as I'm putting it together after the war, much later, due to the Zionist youth organization I was saved.

Why don't you tell me a little bit about that since we started to talk about it. Go ahead.

Well, it's a long story in itself but the leadership of the Zionist youth organization-- first we set up a whole Helping Hand group when the transports started. And later on, the same leadership in Terezin and other camps tried to get us into positions where we either could be of help teaching, helping, or as later on proved got me out of a transport and into the glimmer mica, which was a war production, which in the end saved my life. And a lot of-- many incidents during my stay in Terezin happened because the underground movement of this leadership--

Were able to do things for you?

--were able to indirectly, even though the leadership was all killed, all put into the gas and so on. Some of us were able to get to certain jobs and certain positions. But in the end, we were saved.

Right. Did either you or your brother-- and since your brother was older he probably did, I'm not quite sure if you did-- finish school, finish high school?

Neither one of us.

Neither one of you did before the war?

No, we were both thrown out. He was in his sixth year of Realschule and I was in my second year. Neither one of us finished.

Do you remember any incidences of overt antisemitism before, you know, the war started, like in the early '30s or when you were a child?

Not directly remember on me. I was really too young. But there were incidents of unrest in the streets and against the Jews, and in school some of the [GERMAN] JÄ¼gend and in our class. And BDM, which was Bund Deutsche MÄ¼del,] were against us. But personally on myself, the first day of our occupation when a teacher yelled at me "you dirty filthy Jew" and spit in my face and wouldn't let me come into class.

And that was the first day of occupation?

First day of occupation, March 15th, 1939. That was my first contact with personal hatred against me on my body, on myself. Until then I was only 13 years old so I didn't really identify.

When Hitler came to power, and I know this is probably hard for you to remember, but you may remember through your parents reactions or your brother's reaction, was there a feeling of fear about what was going on in Germany? Or did people really know what was going on?

We knew and I knew because we had family in Austria, in Vienna. They were occupied a year before. And they tried illegally to cross the border at night and to come to Czechoslovakia, and that's another whole story. They paid to be taken across the border illegally, and whoever they paid to took the money and never guided them across. There were many stories like that. They finally did make it on their own illegally across.

Now, when I came home from school that day, I was told to be very quiet because somebody was sleeping in our house that came. And I was not told then illegally because it was too dangerous for me to know. Later on I was told. I was 12 at that time. So we learned and we knew what was happening. We also had many friends from Germany come to Prague and relatives who were already before that persecuted and escaped to Prague. Of course, we were caught later on in Prague.

Yeah, was there-- I remember-- I just-- I'm in fact reading a book about Franz Kafka at Prague at the turn of the century. Was there a great rivalry between the Czechs and Germans going on at the time? Do you remember a whole lot of unrest in that kind of era?

Well, the unrest really came with the Sudeten [GERMAN] with the Sudetenland, which was the mobilization which was in the fall of '38. And that's really the time we became aware of all that and were taken out of the German schools and there were riots in the streets and all that where we were caught once trying to get home from where we were. And as Jews we didn't even dare to cross or go near it and it took us like three hours, four hours to get home.

To go around.

To go around. And I remember we were separated at a point and I got scared, and that stayed with me. But this was before we were occupied. This was when the unrest started. And from little things like that I remember the various tensions and feelings, but my parents always-- when they talk, it was always in whispers so we wouldn't-- the children should not know.

Right, sure.

We were at that time being protected. Later on the table turned and we had to protect our parents, but that came later on.

OK, why don't you tell me a little bit about when the city was occupied by the Germans in 1939? And you told me the one incident with the teacher.

That was the first day.

Yeah, what happened when the Germans came in? Did they immediately put restrictions on Jews or--

Slowly, day by day. The laws kept coming in day by day from all the things we had to give up, valuables, art collections, anything of value, and later on the radios, the telephones, the phonographs, and the restrictions later on. No public place allowed for Jews from amusement halls, movies theaters, restaurants, any public place, the playgrounds, parks, and so on, public transportation which was restricted. Of course, the identification with the Jewish star. You're well aware of that I'm sure. And the food stamps where we have the red J printed into it.

Were you made to shop at certain stores or at certain times?

Certain stores and certain times and only certain items of food. And the lines were usually very long, which was always very degrading for the older people [INAUDIBLE] And again, the Zionist youth organization, this helping hand, we would take the carts and go to the stores and stay in line and run back and forth and get the food, whatever was needed for the others.

So you and your brother helped out with this organization during the occupation?

Right.

Did the organization work to try to aid Prague's Jews? Is that what it was set up for?

That's what it was set up for, including to go on Hachshara. Hachshara meant the preparation to go to Israel, to work-- learn to farm and work the land. But again, you couldn't officially call it Hachshara so we were assigned to help the farmers in the country as unpaid labor.

So you went out in the countryside then, yeah.

So my brother went to a farm with about maybe 8 or 10 young people from, again, the Zionist youth organization and they worked various farms. And we younger could not go. We only went day time to the farms. And again, this was at the time when we no longer could take public transportation.

Only the last-- if there was a two car train, we were permitted to take the last car and the platform of the last car to go to this work. We had to separate permission slip. And if the tram had only one car, we were not permitted at all. And we had to be home before the curfew.

So you also went out--

This was before the transports started. Once the transports started, we had to stop on all of that.

So when did the transports start from Prague?

First transport went out in October '41, five transports at 1,000 each to Lodz. After that, two transports followed November and December called-- first one was 250 men AK eins which was Arbeits Kolonie one, working group one, which were only men to Terezin to build up a camp. Terezin was a garrison town. And the second transport, my brother was in that, were 1,000 young men, 18, 17, 18 years old and older called AK zwei, Arbeits Kolonie two to build up--

Terezin.

--Theresienstadt, the banks and the barracks and all that. And after that, transport after transport would always have 1,000 people each.

Every day or--

No.

--every few weeks or something?

No, sometimes two, three in a row then there were a few days of nothing and then maybe a week again follow with every day.

Do you remember how people were notified for these transfers? Like your brother went. Did a letter come or did someone just show up?

From the Jewish [GERMAN] was what? The elder of the Jews.

The Jewish Council or something.

Jewish council, Jewish office. They had to put together the list which they had to go to the SS, to the Gestapo. And then from the Jewish elders, you send out in that time we still had young people working there with the notification. We would get a notification with the name of the transport and our number.

And with that we had to go to the holding place which was an old exhibition hall emptied out called the [GERMAN]. And sometimes we had a couple of hours, sometimes even more. We were permitted to take one small suitcase or a backpack, something we could carry.

Was there a limit on how many pounds that could be do you remember?

There was, and I don't remember it anymore. It was something like 20 kilos, but I'm not sure. I really am not sure.

That's OK.

But I know there was a way we could pack. And again, the JÃ¼gend organization we called that form Helping Hand would send us out to the older people that couldn't carry and couldn't pack and we would pack for them. Like we had a way of packing the shoes to the side and the blankets.

And since in Europe you had this old style heavy down feather [GERMAN] it was called blankets, we established a sewing room where people could bring ahead of time in preparation for transports their blankets. We would empty out the feathers, we would stitch it small and flat, and restuff it with their feathers. And that was called-- we sort of established a room this size-- the sewing room so everybody was prepared and had sort of a blanket you could roll up and put on top of your--

Sure. That's interesting.

Which was all done by the Zionist youth organization. So all volunteers we helped do these things.

Did you have any contact with your brother after-- you know, between the time that he left and you left, were there-- did letters come back from him or--

No letters, nothing. He was able to send out through somebody on a little-- I remember that so clearly-- a little piece of paper with one word on it, Terezin.

So you knew--

So we knew where he was at the time.

But that's it.

But that was it. And that was pretty dangerous to do in any rate for smuggling was the word. The way he smuggled it out, if it would have been caught, including whoever helped him--

Smuggled it

--smuggle it and brought it back to us. Later on we followed and we saw him in the camp. We were in the same Terezin.

Right. Was there-- let me backtrack just a little bit.

OK, go ahead.

When you-- let's see, you said the transports began in October of 1941. So you were basically in occupied Prague for over two years. Was there any ghetto ever set up in Prague, or were you forced to move to a certain area?

No, we stayed in our apartment. We were very lucky at that. My aunt lived in the same building and another aunt had to move out of her apartment. I don't remember why. And she moved in with us. But we could stay till we were transported in our apartment. We had to give up all our belongings from there and everything, but we did stay in our apartment.

Because I remember-- I'm trying to remember. I've been to Prague once and I remember the Karlin area. And I also remember that there was a Jewish ghetto just where people-- where Jews lived.

Which was in the alt stadt, the old part where the eldest were set up and where the-- we had-- it was called [? maydan ?] the Zionist organization had their people live there, the young people that came from other towns and cities as they were being all brought in to Prague for transports.

So when people were brought in to Prague, they were housed there.

They were put into the center.

But the rest of-- any other Jews--

More or less stayed. And if there was need, they were put into apartments with other Jews. But in that sense, we were very lucky. Just my aunt was put in with us.

I see, OK. OK, so now at this point after your brother's left, it's you and your aunt and your parents are living in the apartment?

Right.

When were you all forced to leave?

My aunt left before we did. And my parents and I left July 13th, '42. The transport was-- I just gave the number for the-- here for the office.

You have it, and it's upstairs.

Upstairs.

I can find it then.

It's AAR395 was the number. The name of the transport was RRL. It started with A to Z. Then came AA to AZ, and we were in AAR.

So you're almost at the end of the second--

No, the third time alphabet round.

I see. Now, we're--

They were almost daily.

Did they come to your apartment and just ask you to leave, or were you notified ahead of time, like given a week or something?

No, no, no. Never a week. A few hours or the most was the day. But hours at a time.

Hi. Are you all-- you're all back? OK.

Let us interrupt you.

I really would like to tell you a little bit more about my brother.

But Susie has your story?

Right.

OK, I'll talk to her. OK, go ahead and tell me anything you'd like--

Not Susie. What was the lady there?

The lady that was just here, Susie Cohen.

Oh, OK, Susan Cohen.

One of her volunteers.

One of her volunteers called me and she has my whole story over the phone.

OK.

And then we can fill in the areas if you need to.

That's fine. That's great.

But we started in and out with my brother, right?

Right, I think the last time we talked about him he'd just been sent on the transport.

Right, and then we followed later on, my parents and I.

So yeah, you can tell me when he was in Terezin.

In Terezin he was assigned to work for the SS to take care of their horses, one of the jobs, as a stable boy. And for that, he also had lumps of sugar, which the horses get at night, right? And at one point, my mother was very sick and he tried to smuggle out some of the sugar to her barrack and he was caught by one of the SS and was taken to the Malá; pevnost which is the Kleine Festung on Terezin which was the punishing center about a mile, two miles out of Terezin.

Out of the ghetto?

Right, where the artists of Terezin were taking and so on. And from there, nobody ever returned. Usually you were tortured to death. They are sent out to the gas chamber. But after about three days he came back. They still needed him as the stable boy. But in those three days he was so tortured or beaten that we didn't recognize his face almost. It was just a few lousy lumps of sugar. That was one story about him.

Did he say anything about what they've done to him or-

No. We did not--

You didn't talk about--

No. We didn't have the opportunity or the--

Or the inclination.

--inclination. We really couldn't.

Yeah, I understand.

We knew what happened. Another story that I'm putting together now as a matter of fact, just a week ago or two weeks ago, he worked for the SS. He was very handy. And he was given materials to do for either the wives of the SS or the German soldiers, I don't know, like pens or book markers, little things like that out of metal and leather straps. And he made some for me. And I saved them. I have those various things.

Oh, and you still have them, yeah.

I have them. But I found in a book, in the precious legacy book, which is now in Prague, the exhibition, but it travels through the United States, a picture of one item that was made for the purpose-- when the Red Cross came to Terezin, there was a sports event staged.

Oh, there were?

Right, a football game was staged in one of the barracks. And for that event, like a-- what would you call it, a tankard?

Trophy, it was a trophy that he made for the--

Or a medal or something like that.

Right, with the leather strap, and I saw the picture in this book which is identical to what he made. And it was found after liberation in camp, this item. And I would say 99% sure that he must have made that. I have no proof, but I--

But that's what he did.

He did. And I have an item almost identical to that, right? It's in the same shape and all. So I gather that was one thing he did-- was forced to do for the SS. And the other story I like to tell about him that my parents and I, we received the notification for what is now called the Masaryk transport, which was the transport of 5,000 Czechoslovakian Jews sent from Terezin to Auschwitz.

At the time, he was not in their transport because he was covered, protected working for the SS. They needed him, so he was not in that transport. He volunteered to go on that transport. And as we boarded the cattle cars for their transport, I was taken out of this transport already on the ramp to the car, which later on I put together, as I was telling you about the Zionist youth organization, due to them I think.

And also the Germans wanted 5,000 and not 5,001.

That I put together later. There were four.

And they had-- it was their choice whom they would take off. The Jewish Elders select a few to be released.

And they have 5,000 left. This is the transport-- I don't know if you're familiar with it. When they arrived in Auschwitz they were kept together as familienlager Birkenau, which is where I have the cards that I received which are upstairs too. He perished in that transport. He volunteered.

He took my number I found out later on, my transport number. Later on I also found out that there were 5,004 on this



transport and they had said only 5,000 can be, so four were taken out since there were obviously four volunteers, one of which was my brother.

He went to be of help to your parents. He thought he might be [BOTH TALKING].

To help them in some way, yeah.

And I in turn was taking out, due maybe to the influence of the Zionist youth organization.

It was their choice.

Or lack of faith.

It was their choice.

It was their choice to decide for--

As it was their choice for whom to send.

But I think also because from the last numbers and we were in the 4,500 category, so that also was part of it.

OK, well why don't we stop here and I can--

OK.

We can--