

HANNAH BEER

RG.50.323.0001 (recorded 1987)

Hannah was born in 1925 in a small town in Czechoslovakia. She was an only child of a father who was in the import export business. The family was not very religious but Hannah remembers only having Jewish friends. She was interested in fashion, but had to stop school when the Nazis came to power, and had to leave her job as a dressmaker at 17. She remembers many prohibitions from that time like not being able to go to the park and having to give over their valuables. When the war started her grandfather and aunt had to move in with her and her parents and then they had to take in strangers too. Her uncle had gone to American, but somehow, they did not receive affidavits to emigrate.

Hannah and her parents stayed in their home until they were moved into a ghetto in southern Bohemia in 1942, Theresienstadt. Her father died several months later. At first the sexes were separated, but after a while the families were able to be together. She remembers there were few Germans there; the ghetto was run by Jews and Czech police. She remembers that they were able to have music and some coffee shops, but much lack of medical care. She was sick in the hospital with hepatitis for three months. She also mentions that pregnant women had to get abortions as it was impossible to have children there. Hannah's mother was selected to go to another camp but Hannah wasn't allowed to go; she never heard from her mother again.

Hannah didn't know about death camps at that time, so she had hopes of staying alive. She stayed in the camp from 1942-1945 when the Russians liberated the camp in May. She went to Prague and at first wasn't allowed to go to her hometown because it was in the American zone, but eventually they did get there. She remembers feeling numb about liberation. She stayed in her home town and was able to recover some, but not all, of their property left with neighbors. Her piano was still in their old apartment. Hannah went to England and eventually the US. She met her husband, who was also a survivor, and they have two daughters. She thinks that her daughters are interested in the facts of their parents' ordeals, but really don't want to hear about the emotional part. Hannah said she never went back to Europe and she won't even watch programs about the Holocaust on TV.