

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

MALVINA LEBOVIC

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Josey G. Fisher  
Date: December 9, 1981

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Gratz College  
Melrose Park, PA 19027

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ML - Malvina Lebovic<sup>1</sup> [interviewee]

JF - Josey G. Fisher [interviewer]

Date: December 9, 1981

*Tape one, side one:*

JF: This is an interview with Mrs. Malvina Lebovic. Mrs. Lebovic can you tell me where and when you were born and a little bit about your family?

ML: I was born 1920, the 27 of July, in a little town, Kalnik.

JF: How do you spell that please?

ML: K-A-L-N-I...

JF: And where is that located?

ML: This is located in the Carpathian [Mountains], near Munkács.

JF: Can you spell that one for me, please?

ML: I'll try. I will write it down.

JF: This is in the Carpathian Mountains of Czechoslovakia.

ML: Yeah. This is Czechoslovakia, I don't know how to write this.

JF: And the larger town is M-U-N-K-A-Č-S with the mark over the C.

ML: Yeah.

JF: Can you tell me about your town, about how large it was?

ML: Our town was a little town, it was there about I don't know exactly, maybe about 100 families, Jewish families.

JF: 100 Jewish families.

ML: Yes, maybe less.

JF: How many total families in the town do you think there were?

ML: I really don't know. I didn't realize then.

JF: Was that, in other words, was that most of the town or were there many more non-Jews than Jews?

ML: There were more non-Jews than Jews. Yeah.

JF: Did the Jews live in one part of the town?

ML: No, the Jews lived between the non-Jews and when I was born, we was living with all of the people around, it was always antisemitic, always. [Tape off and on.] When I was five years old, I had a younger brother, and we didn't get along, and I was five years old for the first grade in school. This was a Russian school where non-Jews was going and there was a lot of antisemitic things about with the Jewish children, there was always bickering and you know, not agreeing with the Jews.

JF: This was a public school?

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<sup>1</sup>nee Kleinberger.

ML: A public school, yes. This was a public school, then, when I was six, my father was a very energetic man--he is still alive--and he organized a school only for Jewish children. That was Czechoslovakia there, a Czechoslovakian school and all the Jewish children went to this school.

JF: In other words, the public school, the language of the people was primarily Russian?

ML: Not Russian like they speak in Russia. This was, I don't know how to call it, another kind of Russian.

JF: Uh huh.

ML: This was another kind of Russian.

JF: But the school that your father organized...?

ML: This was Czechoslovakian.

JF: This was a Czech school?

ML: A Czech school.

JF: But primarily for Jewish...?

ML: Only for Jewish children, there was one Czech girl, she was my girlfriend. She was with us in school.

JF: And what language did you speak in that school?

ML: Czech.

JF: What did your father do that he was able to organize the school?

ML: My father, when he got married he was 19 years old, and when I was born he was 20, so he learned to be a butcher, and he start to be a butcher when I was already in the world and this was his profession, until today.

JF: Now, had he served in the First World War?

ML: Yes, he was serving in the First World War.

JF: Did he tell you anything about his feeling about the war or his experiences?

ML: He was very young, he was very young, and he was from a very religious family and my grandmother wasn't happy with this because he had to take off his hat for this. He never went to school because she said that boys are not allowed to go to public school, only girls went to public school. My father was a very talented man and he learned in the army German and Hungarian and then when the Czechs came he learned Czech language, and he had never went to school and he was writing and reading all the Czechoslovakian and German and Yiddish.

JF: What kind of experience did he have as far as his Judaism was concerned in the army?

ML: In the army? I don't remember anything. I don't remember all those things.

JF: Was he loyal to Czechoslovakia as a country? Did he have strong feelings?

ML: Yes, we had all strong feelings about Czechoslovakia. It was very good, we liked Czechoslovakia and we were there with the Czechs until the war in '38 and then the Hungarians came and took over. Only my childhood was very hard too.

JF: Can you tell me about that?

ML: Yes. When I was born, after me, there was nine children born. I helped all the children to raise with my mother.

JF: Were you the oldest?

ML: Yes, I was the oldest and I helped to raise all of those children. I think two, three, died. No, she had eleven and three died when they were little infants and eight we were alive. My childhood was very hard. I had to help with my parents. It was very hard, my father was hardly making a living, you know for all those children to get dressed and the food and everything, only it was somehow until '35 we was living there.

JF: Let me back up a minute. Your father was a butcher. He was a butcher for the Jewish community?

ML: For the Jewish community and for the non-Jewish.

JF: Also.

ML: Yeah, yeah.

JF: What was that like?

ML: It was hard; it was very hard, you know he had to get without money, to wait for the money, it was a very hard life, it was a very hard life and he hardly made a living.

JF: What was his treatment like by his non-Jewish clientele?

ML: It was good, we had a very good relationship.

JF: And you were living among non-Jews?

ML: Sure, and near us all of the neighbors were non-Jewish.

JF: Now, in that kind of community did you also experience antisemitism there?

ML: Yes, it was here and there. We was used to that, and then, compared to today, it was nice to live there.

JF: But you said in school, in the first school...

ML: Yes, in school there was antisemitism.

JF: And what happened that was difficult for you?

ML: Even the teachers were against the Jews and the children, because the children was, I think they was Roman Catholic and they was every time against the Jews. You know, like here, the same thing.

JF: But once your father was able to start this other school, then your school experience was different?

ML: Then it was better, the whole experience was very good. We got from the Czechs a teacher, and we had a very good relationship and the children was going forward with their learning.

JF: You had Czech teachers in school?

ML: Czech teachers, yes.

JF: Did you also have Jewish education in this school?

ML: I didn't have. My father then believed that the boys only have to get Jewish education so we used to hold a teacher in every house for two weeks, and I had five brothers so in our house was a lot of time the school, and we only had two rooms, two bedrooms and a kitchen and one room was the teacher sleeping with us too.

JF: The teacher came for two weeks?

ML: Sleeping and eating and learning the children, he was coming to us, all the children.

JF: For how long? Two weeks a year?

ML: I think it was, yes, two weeks a year, two weeks--three weeks.

JF: So the boys did not go to *cheder* every week?

ML: They went. This was the *cheder*, this was the *cheder*.

JF: But only for those two weeks.

ML: No, they went to other people, they went to other houses, too.

JF: I see.

ML: We went to public school, too. My brothers went to public school too, this was only *cheder* you know.

JF: Okay, so that it was the teacher who moved every two weeks, but the *cheder* moved with the teacher.

ML: So, I used to sneak in between the boys and pick up something too, I picked up a little bit, not too much.

JF: Now, the boys didn't go to the Jewish school you're talking about?

ML: No, this was only *cheder*, this was Czechoslovakia school, this was a public school.

JF: The school that your father established.

ML: This was a public school.

JF: It was a public school but only Jewish...?

ML: Only Jewish children went there.

JF: And your brothers went there?

ML: Yes, my brothers too.

JF: So, what language did you speak primarily in your home?

ML: Yiddish.

JF: Yiddish, okay.

ML: Yes, our language was Yiddish and until today I am speaking Yiddish with my husband. My husband's mother was my cousin, and when we were little children we used to play together with my husband. They used to call us *chosan-kalla*, [bridegroom and bride] you know, bride and a--that we will get married someday, they used to call us like this.

JF: I see.

ML: And, then in '35 . . .

JF: Let me back up just a minute. In '33 when Hitler came to power in Germany, what was the feeling in your town?

ML: In our town we didn't feel anything, we didn't know anything. We didn't know about those things. It was very primitive. It was a very primitive town. I don't know if there was even a paper. There was no money for a paper. It was a primitive life, only in '34 I think, in '34, we came to Karlsbad, we moved.

JF: Oh, you moved.

ML: We moved; my father saw that we can't make a living there anymore. The children were growing up and my father wanted us to see a better life than he had. So he took us to Czechia [Czech (western) part of Czechoslovakia], this was Karlsbad, in Czechoslovakian it was called Karlový Vary. It was a place that people used to come you know for healing, there was hot water, salty water, that came out from the--a resort place, this was a resort.

JF: Like a spa?

ML: Ya--no, this was a resort place. The water came out from the ground and...

JF: What was the name of this place?

ML: Karlový Vary.

JF: Do you know how to spell that for me, please?

ML: K-A-R-L-A-V-Y [Karlový].

JF: And the next word is V-A-R-Y?

ML: In German it was Karlsbad.

JF: In Karlsbad, but this is still in Czechoslovakia. So, you moved there in 1934.

ML: Yes, we moved there in 1934.

JF: Was your father moving his business also?

ML: His business was--what was his business, nothing. We used to have a little place where he used to kill the animals and he used to sell the meat and it was all the thing that he had. Then, he was going by himself first, and we and mother was staying there for a whole year, we struggled, he struggled there and we struggled here, because he didn't make a living.

JF: So he actually left in 1933?

ML: No, in '34.

JF: He left in '34.

ML: Yes, and we struggled a lot; we didn't have even what to eat, struggling, and then after a year he opened a store there.

JF: Another butcher shop?

ML: Another butcher shop and this was in a market place, and all the stores was there and he was the only one kosher butcher in Karlsbad then, at this time, the only one.

JF: What kind of Jewish community was in Karlsbad?

ML: This was a nice Jewish community. I don't remember how many Jewish was there, but it was a nice community.

JF: But they didn't have a kosher butcher?

ML: They didn't have a kosher butcher and when my father came he opened. There was a kosher butcher only he used to have the *treffe* [not kosher] and the kosher together. When my father opened, he had only kosher. And it started to go good, and we were there for about three years when we had to run from there, from Hitler.

JF: In the two towns that you are talking about in your childhood, was your family involved with the *kehillah*, Jewish community organization?

ML: Yes, always.

JF: This was an important part of..

ML: Yes, this was an important part of us, yeah.

JF: Were they also members of the synagogue?

ML: Sure, sure.

JF: An Orthodox?

ML: Orthodox, yeah.

JF: In both towns?

ML: I used to have a friend, a girlfriend, and I used to run sometime, this was-- I don't remember what kind of temple this was, a Reform, I think it was a Reform--this burnt down to the ground, because we went there a few years ago and it had burnt down to the ground. I used to go to this temple with my girlfriend. My father didn't allow to go there because we was really religious.

JF: It was too liberal for him.

ML: Yes.

JF: When your family was having such difficult times as you said there was sometimes very little to eat...

ML: That's right.

JF: Was the *kehillah* [community] able to help you at that point?

ML: No, no, we never went to the *kehillah*.

JF: You never went.

ML: We never went, maybe they would help us, only we never went. When we came to Karlsbad, I have this to say to you, when we came in a year to Karlsbad, nobody want to give us a place to live because we were eight children. We couldn't get a place to live, we had to take a basement that was two rooms in a basement, the windows, if people was walking you could see their feet.



JF: Now this was the Jewish community in Karlsbad or just the people in general?

ML: No, the people in general. Nobody want to give us a place to live because there were eight children. They don't want to give eight children a place to live. So, we was living about a year in that basement in two rooms with eight children, with ten people, without water, we have to go upstairs.

JF: No indoor plumbing.

ML: No nothing. Very, very bad conditions.

JF: Were you still in school at the point you're talking about?

ML: No, when I came to Karlsbad, you know, when I was 13, my parents took me out from school because I had to help from my mother with the children. They said that's enough for a girl, this education, this was public school, because I start at 5, I finished at 13. I was already like a mother. And, when we came to Karlsbad so my mother went to work with my father in the butcher shop and I was cooking and baking and washing the clothes by hand, we didn't have a machine, for ten people, with my hand, and this was my childhood. I was 14 then, three years we were there and I was over 17 years when we had to leave.

JF: Now in Karlsbad were you hearing any more information about what was happening?

ML: Oh, yes, we start to hear that he came to Vienna, Hitler, we were very upset, everybody was very upset and then he started to go further and further we got scared and in '38 we left Karlsbad and we run back to the old place.

JF: You went back to your original, to Kalnik?

ML: To Kalnik. Yes, because we had our house. We went back to our house, we didn't sell our house. A little house we had there.

JF: Why did you go to Kalnik? Did you think that it would be safer?

ML: We thought there it would be safer, because we were born there, so we went back there. I don't know why, we should go somewhere else, we should go to America. We should go somewhere else--to Israel.

JF: But there was no discussion of leaving.

ML: There was no one to give you some advice or something.

JF: The *kehillah* was not giving any direction to the community?

ML: N, no, they didn't give any direction, we never had any direction, we never accepted from them anything.

JF: Did any of the people that you knew in Karlsbad try to emigrate? Was there discussion among the community about leaving?

ML: I don't remember those things, I don't know. I really don't know.

JF: So, nothing happened in your immediate town. You heard about what was happening in Germany but there were no changes?

ML: When we went back, this was in '38, we came there and the Hungarians start to come in to Kolni and the Czech people had to evacuate and run back to Czechoslovakia because Hungaria took over, our town too.

JF: And, that was how long after you had come back?

ML: This was about in a year when we came back.

JF: You had been there about a year?

ML: Yes, we had been there about a year when the Hungarians came in. Yeah.

JF: When the Hungarians came in, until that time, had there been any change in the treatment of the non-Jews towards Jews?

ML: No, it was just like it was, only when the Hungarians came, there was a change.

JF: And what happened?

ML: It happened that the Jews wasn't allowed to go out, the Jews weren't allowed to have a loaf of bread in house, they came to look at how many breads you have and if you had more than, I don't know how much, they took from you away. Jews wasn't allowed to go to the store when the other people went to the store. It start to be very, very hard and then the Germans start to come in.

JF: And you said when the Hungarians came in and took over your part of Czechoslovakia that the people had to leave.

ML: No, they didn't leave.

JF: They didn't leave.

ML: They didn't leave, only the Germans start to take first people that they weren't born there. They took them away. I think they took them away to Majdanek, those places. We didn't know where. People used to tell us it is no good, they are killing Jews. We didn't believe. We didn't believe that something happening like this in the world.

JF: Now, were the Hungarians rough with the Jews?

ML: Very bad.

JF: Were they beating them or abusive in any way?

ML: That's right, they was beating. You know if somebody was a Jew with a beard, then they used to pull his beard and to beat him and it was really bad. Only my father still got along with the Hungarians.

JF: How?

ML: He used to give them a lot of meat for nothing, so they let us live a little bit. We had more than the other Jews had. We had more a little bit of bread, and we had more a little bit of life - only this wasn't for too long.

JF: The Germans came in to your town...

ML: The Germans came in--this was 1944.

JF: All right, so the four years you were under Hungarian control.

ML: Not four

- JF: Three years.
- ML: Three years, yeah.
- JF: What changes occurred during that time? Was the *kehillah* continuing to function?
- ML: It was only a synagogue. Just a synagogue; there was a *mikva*. Nothing else was there.
- JF: The *kehillah* was no longer working.
- ML: No. There was no *kehillah*. There was nothing. I mean, what *kehillah* was there, there was if somebody died, there was people that made the burying.
- JF: But they had been active before the Hungarians took over?
- ML: Wasn't active. What they active? They had only the synagogue. That's all what they had.
- JF: That's primarily what the *kehillah* had always been.
- ML: There was nothing more. There was no organization. There was no, you know--things. The young people used to go to, there was a *Betar*, you know from Israel, some people had to go, nobody should see. They was not allowed to do it, too.
- JF: Did you know anybody who went to *Betar*?
- ML: I went myself, too.
- JF: Your parents didn't know.
- ML: My parents wasn't against it.
- JF: They weren't against it.
- ML: No, they weren't against it.
- JF: How long were you able to go to the *Betar* meetings?
- ML: I think about a year I was going to those meetings. Only, we couldn't do anything--nothing. There was nothing to do.
- JF: You mean there was no way of going to Israel?
- ML: No, no way, everything was locked up. You couldn't go out, you couldn't go in, you couldn't go nowhere.
- JF: The Jewish community then was still essentially functioning the same way under the Hungarians as it had been under the Czech government?
- ML: Yes.
- JF: Was there any change in the nature of the Czech population towards you once that Hungarians were in control?
- ML: Sure there was a change, the Czechs was very good to us. The Hungarians was very antisemitic, worse than the Germans. The Hungarians was worse than the Germans.
- JF: But the Czech people that you had been dealing with before then, the invasion of the Hungarians?
- ML: They left, they had to leave, they ran away.
- JF: The Czech people ran away.

ML: That's right, they ran away.

JF: Where did they go?

ML: They run back home to Czechoslovakia.

JF: I see. So, the population of the town changed?

ML: Yes. It changed, yeah.

JF: It was the Jewish population...

ML: The Jewish and the Rusnaks we used to call them. And, the Hungarian. I didn't know what the Hungarian, it was very bad for me because I had all Czech schools and I never learned the Hungarian language. I understand a little bit because I was in concentration camp with Hungarian people. They used to laugh at me, how I talk, so I start to talk Hungarian. I understand a little bit now, too, Hungarian, but I am not good talking.

JF: What happened then in 1944?

ML: In 1944, there was, I think it was in March. This year it was *Pesach* [Passover] or something like this. The last day of *Pesach* we had to go out from our houses and the Germans came and we could take only what we could take in our hand and they locked up our houses and took us to a concentration camp.

JF: How did you find out that you had to leave your homes?

ML: The Germans and the Hungarians came and they just went from house to house to the Jewish families and everybody had to take his *pechlach* [bundles] outside and put it in the wagons with horses, and they took us away.

JF: How long did they give you to get ready?

ML: A few hours.

JF: Did they tell you where you were going?

ML: No, they took us to Munkács, that was factories for, how do you call them, what they build houses, bricks, a brick factory and in those brick factories there was big places where we put the brick and we had to go there and every family went together and we was sleeping there and we were there about six weeks.

JF: This was inside the factory?

ML: Inside the factory and they used to beat people at night and they used to take out people and beat them--the Hungarians.

JF: The Hungarians.

ML: The Hungarians used to take them out and they had to dig deep ditches and then they beat them, they make all kinds of bad things and we were there six weeks.

JF: What do you mean bad things?

ML: Beatings, they didn't give us eat, we were hungry. We had luck because my father gave everything that we had. We had flour, we had meat, we had all kinds of things, so we gave it to our neighbor, to our non-Jewish neighbor and this neighbor came in every week and his wife was baking big loaves of bread and she used to bring in for us bread.

JF: She would bring it from Karlsbad? No, from Kalnik.

ML: From Kalnik to Munkács.

JF: She would bring it.

ML: Yeah, we used to come in, you know, smuggle in. They couldn't give it straight, to smuggle in and after six weeks they took us to Auschwitz. They put us all in the, in the train.

JF: Did they give you any warning that was where they were going to take you?

ML: Nothing, nothing, when the morning came everybody had to go out.

JF: Did you have any idea before this time about Auschwitz and what was actually happening there?

ML: No, no we didn't know anything.

JF: What did you think was happening?

ML: We were [unclear]...

JF: ...what did you think about camps?

ML: They used to telling us that we are going to work to places and that every family will go together and we will work and we will have food and it will be okay.

JF: Did you know anybody who was taken to a work camp or a work detail when the Hungarians were in power?

ML: Sure, my father was in a working camp too, and my brother was in a working camp.

JF: What was that like for them?

ML: It was very, very hard. It was hard labor. They had to, you know, they went with the army. Only it wasn't army. It was hard labor, you know, digging those, how you call them?

JF: Trenches.

ML: Trenches, yes, and without food, without clothes, we were very bad treated.

JF: How long were they away from home during this time?

ML: A long time. My father was away about a few months.

JF: And your brother.

ML: My brother and the aunt. My brother went and the aunt about in January; he wasn't home when they took us away.

JF: Your father was already back?

ML: My father was back. Only my brother, my younger brother after me; he was in the army.

JF: And he did not go with you?

ML: No, he didn't go with us. He went, you know, from labor camp they took him away to the concentration camp.

JF: Is that what happened to him?

ML: Yes, he is alive.

JF: He was taken to a different concentration camp?

ML: Mmm hmm [affirmative], yeah, yeah, yeah.

JF: Was anybody able to escape during that time? Were there any efforts to escape?

ML: No. If somebody escaped, they brought them back. They brought them back.

JF: And, what would they do?

ML: They beat them. They beat them very badly and the people were scared to run away.

JF: During that six week period of time before they took you to Auschwitz, was there any religious services that were carried on?

ML: No, nothing, it wasn't allowed.

JF: It wasn't allowed.

ML: No, it wasn't allowed, nothing, just what we was working there to put the bricks from one place to the other and the Germans was staying there, if somebody wasn't bending fast he got beating, and they just gave us to work, you know, just to put the bricks from one place to the other.

JF: And, you weren't building anything.

ML: No, no we weren't building anything, nothing, and then after six weeks we had to go the whole family together, only one brother, he went to other camp, Munkács, because his girlfriend was in the other camp, so he went to the other camp.

JF: He was able to leave your camp.

ML: I don't know how he left, I don't...

*Tape one, side two:*

JF: This is tape one, side two, of an interview with Mrs. Malvina Lebovic, December 9, 1981 with Josey Fisher. What happened to your brother that moved to this other camp?

ML: I think he died somewhere. I think they killed him because he couldn't walk anymore.

JF: You heard, you were mentioning, that you heard from a cousin that was with him.

ML: Yes, a cousin was with him and he is alive, this cousin is alive. He is in Washington.

JF: And the cousin observed what?

ML: He was very sick already because he was wounded in his head and he was very, very hungry and he said to him, "You go, I will go down here in a basement and I can't walk further."

JF: They were getting the march organized.

ML: Yes.

JF: Out of the camp.

ML: This was ahead-- the march with the Germans.

JF: Yes.

ML: And when he was probably left there and the Germans probably killed him.

JF: I see.

ML: They walked until the night, at night they was liberated. It was the day of the liberation that he died. Probably.

JF: What camp was this that he was in?

ML: I think it was camp Mauthausen. I really don't know, I think it was Mauthausen.

JF: So, two brothers were not with you when you went to Auschwitz.

ML: Yes. The brother after me, he, he was liberated a lot earlier than me, because he was liberated about in January, and we weren't home already a long time, and he came back to Kalnik. He was living there between the non-Jewish people, alone, he was-- he knew that everybody was killed, he was one left so he went to our neighbor and he almost got married with their daughter--only I didn't tell you, this was in between...

JF: That's okay, that's okay, do you want to finish telling me that?

ML: What? About my brother?

JF: Yes, and then we'll go back.

ML: Yeah, okay. My brother came back and he was there between the *goyim*-- you know, the non-Jewish people--and about in, in March I think, in March I think my sister-in-law, she and her sister was liberated very early, and she came back to this place

and my brother met her and he saw that two Jewish girls came back from the concentration camp. He went and married right away my sister-in-law. There was some Jews already and he married her, so he was having two sisters. When I was liberated--and I'll have to tell you how it was--when I came back they were already married.

JF: They were already married.

ML: Yes, so I found them and it was a very good surprise for me because I find my brother.

JF: Oh, sure.

ML: And, then I know that somebody is left from this family.

JF: Let's go back then.

ML: Yes.

JF: You were talking about the fact that you were put on trains to Auschwitz.

ML: Yes.

JF: Everyone that was in this place?

ML: Everyone was together in one train. It was like for the animals, an animal train. It was little windows. You could not reach those window. They put you in there and two buckets, you know, two urinals, for 100 people, there were 100 people in one of those trains.

JF: There were two buckets?

ML: There was a bucket--two--I don't remember. There was old, young, sick, all kind of people, we were lying like herring together. We couldn't move. My mother was sitting there and crying the whole time. She didn't want to eat, we still had some food because they didn't give us any food. It was a few days; I even don't remember how many days we were on the train. Only I know that a few people died in, in this place where I was.

JF: How many days were you on the train?

ML: I don't remember. It was--maybe it was about three or four days. Could be three, four days. I can't remember.

JF: And at any point did the train stop for you to get out?

ML: Even when the train stopped, they didn't let us out. No, no, no.

JF: And several people died on this train?

ML: Several people died, there was babies born, in the train, in the train there was babies born and when we came to Auschwitz...

JF: Did you know that you were going to Auschwitz?

ML: No, we didn't know that we were going. Only we saw in one place, we saw people when the train stopped, somebody went out-- looked out this little window he was that people was doing like this, you know, they knew probably where we are going. They was looking at us like we are dead people already.

JF: You mean villagers along the side of the road.



ML: Villagers, yeah, yeah; villagers. They was looking at us like we are already dead people. When we came to Auschwitz, first they took separately the men, and the women separately, and I went with my mother and my brother was 12 years old, my little brother, he went with us and my two sisters--we were three sisters--my mother went with us a few steps and then the Germans came and took away my mother separately.

JF: They just took her.

ML: They just pulled her back from us, and her last words she said in Jewish, in Yiddish, "*Yetst zi ich schoen oys.*" [Now I really see what is happening.] You know like, "Now how I look." She was left alone, and when we start to walk, a German came and took away my brother, so we told him, "Go, run to Mother, run to Mother." So, probably he went with my mother, we don't know. We don't know. We don't know anything.

JF: You never heard anything more about your mother and your brother?

ML: Never, never, no, never.

JF: Can you translate for me exactly what your mother said?

ML: My mother said, "Now I look nice. How do I look?" The whole family was taken away from her and she's alone. Alone. So, we start to walk, they took us, me and two sisters, we went together and they took us to the place, there was a shower place, where showers came down. First we took off all our clothes, naked, they shaved us all over, all the places, and there was men shaving us, Jewish boys.

JF: Jewish boys shaved you.

ML: They had to do that, Jewish boys and they shaved us all over.

JF: Your whole bodies were shaved.

ML: Whole body was shaved. You know, where we had hair, and when we came out-- I had beautiful long hair and my sisters had beautiful hair--when we came out from there we didn't recognized each other because, you know, we came out with no hair, naked. We didn't recognize. We start to cry and they gave us shoes--they took away everything ours. They gave us the same shoe on both legs. They gave us a big dress with, with--how you call it?

JF: Straps, stripes.

ML: Stripes, yeah. A big dress without nothing, just a dress, nothing else. Not underwear, nothing, nothing. And we didn't have on our heads anything and there was very bad, the sun. It was a bad place, always very cold weather or very hot. The weather was very bad.

JF: What month was this in 1944?

ML: It was about in June, it was about in June and the weather was very bad, all hot or cold, we got frozen or we got burned. We had to get up every--the first night...

JF: There was no actual selection when you came?

ML: Yeah, it was selection. It was the selection.

JF: When they grabbed your mother, that was the selection?  
ML: That was the selection. Yeah.  
JF: Were you aware of going in front of anybody who made this decision?  
ML: No, just people right and left.  
JF: People were just taken away.  
ML: Taken away, yeah.  
JF: There was nobody making the decision, one person making the decision?  
ML: Later, later.  
JF: Later, but at the time...  
ML: At the time there was Germans.  
JF: At the time that you arrived people were just taken out of line as you came off the train?  
ML: Yes, this was German, this was SS. They was taking away.  
JF: Did you have any idea where your father and...  
ML: No, I didn't know where he was and he didn't know where we are. Nobody knows, we didn't know from each other.  
JF: And what kind of barracks?  
ML: They took us to barracks, there was, that was our *Lager*, it was our *Lager* [barrack] was number one, I remember this. We came in there and there was little places made and we used to call it *Koyas* [cots], and in this *Koya* there we were 10 girls and I was maybe the oldest. I was maybe from those children the oldest and we were there 10 girls in one such *Koya*.  
JF: How big was this area?  
ML: It was very small, at most it was a little bit bigger than this table.  
JF: Than your dining room table?  
ML: Yes, yes. We couldn't stretch out our legs, we had to sleep with our legs, you know, under and the first night, when we wake up in the morning, we was sleeping and there was a dead girl already, she had a heart attack at night. She died, a young girl about 18 years old. She died the first night. They took her out and in the morning they start to give us our food. They give us in one big bowl, they give us for all 10 people. In one big bowl without a fork or a spoon or something it was like grass, grass with a little bit of flour. It was bitter grass inside; we didn't want to eat it. So those people, they was Jewish, we called them *Blockälteste* [term used in concentration camp referring to those in the block for some time.] They was Jewish girls they came already before us and they were there about three or four years and she said to us, "Your will not--don't eat, you will eat tomorrow, if you do not eat you will die, you'll die anyway," she told us, right away, so we didn't eat one day, and the second day we had to eat. So we were very good in our *Koya* because everybody was cooperating, and we got along to eat this little bit of food from this...  
JF: This was a solid mush of grass and flour.

ML: Yeah, it was a little bit like water inside and a little bit thick.

JF: It was cooked?

ML: Probably, probably cooked grass; just grass, plain grass.

JF: Now, how long were you kept in this small area?

ML: In this small area I was six weeks, six weeks.

JF: During the day did you go out of it?

ML: Yes, we had to go every morning out, early in the morning, six o'clock in the morning and it was cold, freezing cold, and we had to stay *Zellappel* [roll call], it was called *Zellappel*, straight like soldiers and they count us, they make counting on us, and also was there, I think, Dr. Mengele. He used to come there to select, there were selections. If somebody wasn't right for something they just took them out and they took them to the gas chamber.

JF: This was every morning?

ML: This was every morning and every evening.

JF: Dr. Mengele was there?

ML: No, he didn't come every morning. He came, like, I don't know every few days he came. Usually he came in the afternoon when it was very hot and people fainted. I fainted once too, only I had there my sisters and they pulled me up. They saw him coming and they pulled me up and my sister fainted once. You don't have anything on your head.

JF: The sun was on your head.

ML: You are so hot and you are hungry, you are just collapsing and to the toilet we could go only when they wanted. They took us 100 people to go to the toilet. If you need or don't need. If you need you can't go by yourself. This was the worst part of this. You know, we got all diarrhea from this food and you know you couldn't hold back and it was really bad, it was bad. It was very bad.

JF: Now, in this area that you were living in were you able to lay down to sleep?

ML: On top of each other.

JF: On top of each other.

ML: That's right; you couldn't move, you couldn't move, and this was for six weeks and we had a little bit luck. I had two aunts, my mother's sisters, and we went to work, we were working and those people went to work where they brought people and they took off the clothes and they had to make--you know, we had to sort the clothes and we got there some food more, so they used to smuggle in to us a little bit food and they brought us shoes. How they brought us shoes, they took our old shoes and they put them on their legs and when they came back we put on new shoes and they brought for us the shoes so all three of us we had new shoes. I had a pair and my two sisters had a pair and this was thanks to our aunts, one of them is not alive anymore, one is alive. And those two sisters they told me that my mother is not alive anymore because they found some

clothes of my mother and I didn't believe my aunt, I was hating them when they told me that my mother was not alive. I didn't believe until I came home from the concentration camp. I still don't believe. I still think that my mother is somewhere. She was 44 years old, a young woman. And then, after six weeks they took us again to a place where there were showers and there was 1000 girls, 1000, together in one place and we were standing the whole night like herring. Like this.

JF: Standing upright.

ML: Standing up and there was a doctor from Czechoslovakia, she lived through already things like this and she said, "You know children they are going to gas, they are going to kill us this night, we are going to die this night." There was so much crying, there was so much agony. This night, the whole night, we were standing not sleeping, just standing and in the morning they told us that we are going to live; they brought us some food, they brought us about a half of a loaf of bread for two people and they put us on the trains and we went to another place. This was, this was Stutthof this was in Poland too, this was near Danzig.

JF: Now the doctor, the Czechoslovakian doctor?

ML: She came with us.

JF: She was a prisoner?

ML: Yes, she was a prisoner too. Like we.

JF: I see, and the name again of the Polish camp was Stutthof.

ML: Yes, Stutthof.

JF: S-T...

ML: Stutthof, I don't know how it's spelled.

JF: And, it was near Danzig?

ML: Yeah, near Danzig, yeah.

JF: Where did you think you were going when you went on the train?

ML: They told us we were going to work.

JF: You were going to work.

ML: Yes.

JF: Now, in Auschwitz you were not doing any work during the day?

ML: No, no nothing, just sitting.

JF: You were sitting in this small enclosed space or outside?

ML: There was hours when we could sit there; there were hours when we had to go out. Even in the rain we had to sit outside.

JF: I see. So, now they told you that you are going to work.

ML: Yes.

JF: And, what was that train like?

ML: This train was a little bit better than when we came. We were still about 100, the same trains only they opened at least for us sometime, and we were about three

days on this train. They opened for us at least sometime the door, and they took out, you know...

JF: The pails.

ML: Yes, the pails and they took out, and the Germans started to talk to us too, they talked to us, and I got very friendly with one of them and he told me that he was forced, he was not doing this from his own will he was forced to do it. They came at night and they made him the tattoo. You know, the SS, they had the tattoo.

JF: The SS had a tattoo.

ML: Yeah, the SS. They took him in by force, they put him on the tattoo, they forced him to be SS.

JF: What was the SS tattoo?

ML: I don't know.

JF: Did you see it?

ML: No, I never saw it.

JF: What did they do, did they threaten him?

ML: Yes, he had to go by force and he told me--I talked the German language then, I forgot it already--he talked to me and he told me that I was very like a German girl, I wasn't like a Jewish girl, my hair was blonde and I had blue eyes, and he was thinking that I am a German girl, so he told me, "Why are you here?" And I said, "Because I am Jewish," so he started talking to me and he said he is from Vienna if we will go through Vienna he will give me a chance to run away with my two sisters. Only we never came to Vienna, and he never was standing all the time with us. They took him probably away to another place. We came to Stutthof and there was the same things like in Auschwitz, they cut again our hair--we had already a little bit hair--they cut our hair, they put us again in the same place--no, there was already a bed for two people, one bed.

JF: A bunk bed.

ML: Yeah. We were three sisters, we never parted. When we went to the toilet, we were holding hands. We never parted and we were scared that they would part us, so to the toilet if one had to go, all three went. We got a bed, we could get two on this bed. So we took, all three of us, on this little bunk bed. We never parted, never. Because we were scared.

JF: Do you think that helped?

ML: Yes, it helped. In Stutthof we were selected again. We went through all those hard things. The very strong, we went first to work. We worked very hard labor. And we brought them back sick in Stutthof.

JF: What kind of labor were they doing?

ML: Digging ditches for the soldiers in the woods, and in the forest and we brought them back and after about five weeks they selected us too. They selected me.

JF: And not your sisters.

ML: Not my sisters because one was 13 and the other was 14 years old. We was very young and we was very skinny. Only, I smuggled them in. Somehow we tried to run in [unclear]. So we went together. It was very hard.

JF: I see, where did they take you?

ML: They took us, it was in Poland too, not far from Stutthof. They took us on a very elegant boat, and we got no food, nothing. And they brought us to a place that was only tents. Is that the right word, tent?

JF: They were made out of cloth?

ML: Cloth, they gave us a little bit of straw and everybody got one blanket and we were ten in each tent.

JF: Now, how many of you were there do you think all together?

ML: About 2000 girls.

JF: About 2000 girls were taken out for each of these work details. Did this place have a name?

ML: This was Baumgard.

JF: Baumgard? B-A-U-M.

ML: I think so, Baumgard, yeah.

JF: And what did you do there?

ML: When we came in there I saw always that if somebody--you know, I want very much my sisters should be alive and myself too, so I was thinking what to do. So I was thinking that if I will choose to work something in the concentration camp, in the place, not to go out...

JF: In Stutthof.

ML: In this place, in Baumgard.

JF: In Baumgard, where the tents were.

ML: Yeah, where the tents were. So they asked who knows German. So, I went out. I say, "I know German." So they selected me to work in the camp. My sisters they went out to work. They used to come with swollen hands from hard labor and when I was in the camp, they sent me out for the people in the town to work, like hard work to work, only they used to give us food.

JF: You worked for the people in the town?

ML: In the town. It was summer, you know their men was in the army and the women was alone in the home and they had fields so they used to take a few of us out to help them.

JF: So you worked in the fields.

ML: Yes, I went in the fields and some of the people was very nice, Polish people, and they gave me bread and I said they should give me more for my sisters and I used to bring so much that for all ten girls, I used to give everybody a little bit.

JF: Did the people that you met this way have any idea what was going on?

ML: Yeah, yeah, they know it. Some of them was crying and some of them thought--I don't know what.

JF: Could they have gotten into trouble giving you bread?

ML: Yes, we had to hide what they give us.

JF: But they gave it to you anyway.

ML: Yes, they give it to me. I used to bring a lot of bread home and I used to bring soup and all kind of things, you know, all ten of us used to share every little bite. I didn't give only to my two sisters, for all ten girls that we were together. We were like sisters. Then I was working where they used to give clothes for the winter, so I smuggled out sweaters or coats; we use to make from the sweaters, from the sleeves, stockings because we didn't get any. It was winter and it was very cold.

JF: I see. You were working in the distribution center for the clothes.

ML: Yes, only I could be killed if they catch me, when I took out only I had to do that because--for all ten girls I organized sweaters, a coat, a pair of shoes, but the shoes were already gone.

JF: And, they never checked you to see if you were wearing these stockings or extra clothes?

ML: No, somehow I smuggled in. But if they would catch me they would kill me right away. On the spot I would be killed. They shot. They didn't ask you anything, they just shot you.

JF: But, once you were wearing them? Once you had the arms from the sweaters for your stockings...

ML: I left them for the girls.

JF: They never looked?

ML: No, they never looked. It was very bad there because it was cold and the water was running, it was raining and we were lying in water.

JF: The beds in the tents...

ML: We didn't have any beds.

JF: There were no beds. Just straw and blankets.

ML: One blanket and from the blanket we used to take out the yarn so that we would have something to sew with, you know. It was very, very hard.

JF: Was there any kind of, again, religious activity?

ML: No, nothing. You know what, we forgot everything. I remembered some prayers like we used to have when I was a little child and in the concentration camp, in this time, I forgot everything. I couldn't remember a word of anything and we never talked about parents or brothers or somebody else, only that we were there. They probably give us something in the coffee, something that we shouldn't think about anything and we shouldn't rebel. We didn't have a period the whole time.

JF: Do you think they were giving you something in the coffee that calmed you down?

ML: To calm us down, yes.

JF: And none of you had your periods.

ML: No, never. When I came home after about three months I got my period.

JF: Was there any effort to escape from this?

ML: No, one girl tried and they caught her and they almost killed her. There was no way to run away. No way.

JF: Who were the guards in this camp?

ML: SS.

JF: All SS?

ML: Yes, there was one, every morning when it was *Zellappel*, he used to tell us every morning, "Even if we do lose the war, even for a half hour before, we will have time to kill you. All of you will be killed." And every morning we heard the same thing and we heard that for a long time.

JF: How long were you in this camp?

ML: Well, a few months, it was almost a year and then one day they came and told us that the Russians were coming closer, they took us to go further, we called this march a "death march."

JF: A death march from Baumgard?

ML: From Baumgard we walk to Stutthof. We walked.

JF: The SS had you walk back to Stutthof?

ML: Yes.

JF: What month was that?

ML: This was about in '44. No it was already '45, I think in February, I think it was about February. I can't remember exactly.

JF: So, the Russians were moving closer.

ML: We had to go away and when we walked and who didn't walk fast enough, he was killed. They shot him. They shot who was on the end, he was killed. So I tried always with my sisters to take in front and to run, not to get shot, and on the way we had all kinds of complications. You know, we would be killed, we didn't have what to eat, we were sleeping outside in the big frost and snow. It was very, very hard.

JF: How long were you on this march?

ML: About two weeks, this was a death march, from 2000 there was left maybe 600. This was maybe left, 600. When we came to Stutthof again it was already March and it was very hard there and I got sick of typhus, I was the first.

JF: You got typhus when you got back to Stutthof?

ML: I got the first one, typhus. And then my sisters...

JF: When you had typhus what did you do?

ML: Nothing.

JF: Were you put in a special area?

ML: My sisters were hiding me.



JF: No one told the SS that you had typhus?

ML: No, they went to work my two sisters and I was left, I couldn't work and I couldn't stand on my two feet. I had very high fever and who was sick he didn't get any bread, nothing. He didn't get bread, he didn't get food.

JF: And, you just stayed in the small area, the barracks?

ML: Yeah, and one day they came, the Germans came to see who was left there and they took us out, all the sick ones, and then I got a beating. I got very bad. The typhus and the beating made me deaf.

JF: They beat you around your head.

ML: Around my head.

*Tape two, side one:*

JF: You were talking about when you had typhus, when you got back to the camp.

ML: My sisters took me in and I was very sick. My sisters went to work and...

JF: What kind of work were they doing when they got back to the main camp?

ML: Digging ditches. Very hard work, it was very hard. And one day when I was outside I got beaten...

JF: The Germans took you out of your bunk?

ML: Not only me. There was others too.

JF: Other people who had typhus or who were sick?

ML: Yes, all sick.

JF: And, you said they beat you around the head primarily.

ML: Yes, beat me with the boots, they were dancing on my head

JF: They stamped on you with their boots?

ML: That's right.

JF: And this is where you lost your hearing?

ML: I lost my hearing. Yes.

JF: Was it obvious right away that you lost your hearing?

ML: Yes, I didn't know what happened to me because I couldn't see too, you know the typhus and the beating, the typhus alone could take away my hearing because even my vision was bad. Because when my sister stopped to talk to me I didn't answer, they didn't know what happened to me, I didn't know about that. Then they discovered that I can't hear.

JF: Were you able to get any kind of medication at all?

ML: No, there was a doctor, the same doctor what she came with us.

JF: The Czech doctor.

ML: The Czech doctor. She told my sister because my sister told her that I am very sick, so she said I will tell you the truth, nobody can know the truth because they will burn up the whole camp if they will know it's typhus. Only this is typhus, and probably we will all die here. You know the typhus was very bad with high fever, the lice, we had big lice, and the lice was crawling over us everywhere, everywhere.

JF: Everybody had that?

ML: Everybody and when somebody died the lice ran away. They didn't stay on dead people, never. Every morning if you went out the corridor there was lying dead people, bodies of people. One night I had to go to the bathroom, I got diarrhea, so if I wasn't working they took away my shoes.

JF: This was during the time that you had typhus?

ML: Typhus, yeah. They took away my shoes and I didn't have any shoes and when I went down I wanted to go to the toilet, and what toilet, it was a hole, you know holes.

JF: At that point you were allowed to go to the bathroom?

ML: Yes, there we was allowed already. There was something else, but not in Auschwitz. So, I went down in the night and I grabbed somebody else's shoes, some girl's shoes and I put them on, I didn't close them, just put me feet in it, and when I went to the toilet, there was holes, my one foot went in one hole and I lost the shoe in the toilet because it was very deep. I was so unhappy; I was crying and I was scared to tell the girl that I took her shoes. She got up in the morning and she had to go to work and she didn't have her shoes and I was scared that if I would tell her that I did it, she would kill me. So, I didn't say and until today--until today I didn't say that I am sorry for this shoe. Because this girl was so crying I don't know how she managed because I was very sick.

JF: You don't know whether she was able to get another shoe?

ML: I don't know anything, I don't remember, only I know that I was very sorry and I am sorry until today. It wasn't my fault because I came back without the shoe and I was so sick that I didn't know what was going on, nothing for maybe a long time I don't know, maybe three weeks. I didn't eat, nothing, I didn't want to eat. We even didn't get food. They didn't give us any food.

JF: They didn't give you any food?

ML: No, if somebody was sick they didn't give you any food.

JF: Were you able to get food from your sisters?

ML: Yes, my sisters used to give me food from their portion only I didn't want to eat. I didn't eat for three weeks, nothing. After I got already better, I was very hungry, then I could die from the food because I was so hungry I could eat I didn't know what. Whatever, rope, papers and everything. Before I was sick I used to work in the kitchen to peel potatoes, so when I got a little bit better when my sisters went to work, I said to myself, I am going to the kitchen to work so I will something grab to have for my sisters. You know, something more.

JF: More food.

ML: Yes, so I went in and we was peeling potatoes, little potatoes like this.

JF: Like the size of a 50¢ piece.

ML: That's right, and we was peeling. When I got a little bit of a bigger potato I put it aside, you know. Then when I will go out, I will take a bottle of water and put it in and nobody would see when I take it out of the kitchen. And there was a Jewish woman, but she was with the Germans very good and she was standing in the door with a German and she was looking how I am putting away the potatoes, and they came to me and they said, "What are you doing, why are you putting away the potatoes?" I said, I was smart, I said "I want to peel first the little and then I will peel the bigger, and for this

I am putting them aside." Only they didn't believe me, they took me out and I got beaten. Oh, I was beaten up bad. My God. It wasn't worth those potatoes.

JF: They beat you again?

ML: Again. I got beaten out of nowhere. I don't know.

JF: You said that this Jewish woman was very good with the Germans, what do you mean by that?

ML: She was sleeping with them.

JF: She was sleeping with them?

ML: That's right, and I think that she is not alive. I think that after we was free somebody killed her, I think.

JF: One of the other inmates?

ML: Yes.

JF: Was she treated that much better?

ML: Sure, she was treated better. She was stealing with the Germans together from us the food. They didn't have enough food too, the Germans.

JF: The Germans didn't get enough?

ML: They would steal our food.

JF: And, where was she living then, in the German barracks?

ML: Yes, with the Germans, she was living with them, I think so.

JF: So, the soldiers were also stealing food because they were short on food?

ML: They didn't have enough food either.

JF: Were there any *Kapos* [overseers]?

ML: Yes, she was a *Kapo*.

JF: Can you tell me what your experience was with this one woman?

ML: This was the one thing that I had experience with the *Kapo*. I don't know anything about *Kapos* bad, to be bad, because in Auschwitz we had a *Kapo* too and she wasn't bad to us. She was a Polish-Jewish girl and she was only telling us that we will die, like all those people. She was telling the truth, only she wasn't bad. I didn't have any experience, bad experience with the *Kapos*.

JF: Except this one woman.

ML: Except this one, yeah. And then my sisters got the typhus too, and this was almost at the end when the Russians came. You know, we was building there, an airfield, we girls built this airfield and when the Russians start to come closer we had to put everywhere mines, you know, if the Russians will come, they will blow up everything. So when the Russians start to come, one day they blow up all our place where we used to be.

JF: The Russians blew-up.

ML: No, the Germans blew-up because the Russians were already on their back.

JF: So, the Germans blew-up, what?

ML: Everything we blew up. A lot of in-mates was killed.

JF: They blew up the barracks?

ML: Yes, they blew up the barracks and we had to run out, you know, far away.

JF: Where were you when they blew up the barracks?

ML: When they blew up the barracks we had to run out in the field, so we run out in the field with the Germans together. And when we came back all the barracks was gone. Only one bed was standing up, and on this bed was a girl she had frozen legs and she couldn't run away, and she was there and she was in shock. She is all right, I think, she is somewhere alive.

JF: You mean the entire barracks was blown up.

ML: Yes, everything was blown up and only she, one, was sitting on this bed.

JF: And she lived?

ML: She is living somewhere, she is somewhere alive, I don't know where. Only, this was something that we didn't believe, we didn't believe it.

JF: But, it was the Germans that blew up the barracks and the Russians were advancing?

ML: When the Russians came we went to a basement, there was a lot of potatoes.

JF: You went back to the camp.

ML: Yes, we went back to the camp and we run into a basement because there was shelling there, the war was in this place, the Russians was shelling.

JF: What did the German guards do?

ML: They run away.

JF: They ran away and you went back to the camp?

ML: We went back to the camp and we were alone about two days in this basement because the Russians were scared to come in, if there were Germans there. So one day I run out because we were very hungry in this basement, there was nothing to eat, and there was the kitchen right near this basement so I run out to the kitchen and there was bullets, the bullets was flying, I guess I didn't know to be scared, nothing, I went and I grabbed a big loaf of cheese and I brought it in there and there was about 200 girls in the basement and I didn't have even a little bit of cheese, they almost killed me because of the cheese.

JF: 200 of the 2000 lived?

ML: Yes, this was 200 what we was alive. When we was free, 200. From 2000--200.

JF: Including your sisters.

ML: Including my two sisters. Yes, and they both had typhus.

JF: They had typhus when you were liberated?

ML: Yes, so they was in a Russian hospital, they made like there right on the spot they made the hospital, and I was working there with the sick. I said that I am a nurse because I wanted to be near my sisters.

JF: So you worked in the camp.

ML: I didn't know anything about nursing, only I didn't want to leave my sisters. You know, if I am not sick they will not take me into the hospital, so I was working there like a nurse, and you know, they put me there with a Russian soldier, he had you know from the war, he was in shock or something, and I didn't know what to do with him, and they gave me to give him [unclear] and I didn't know how to do it. I didn't know anything about nursing only I was a nurse, because my sisters were there.

JF: And, they didn't find you out?

ML: No, they didn't throw me out, they gave me to eat, only I had already some clothes, they steal my clothes.

JF: Who stole your clothes?

ML: The Russians, they steal my clothes. I organize some clothes; I went into Danzig. Where--you know, the people left, they run away, the Germans--so where I find some clothes, I took them, and then the Russians took them away from me and we start to go home.

JF: Your sisters got better?

ML: My sisters got better and we start to go slowly home, we were about a month on our way, without food, we were better off in the concentration camp than on this way home, on this journey home.

JF: When did the Russians liberate the camp?

ML: It was about the 25 of March.

JF: And, when did you start this journey?

ML: In about two or three weeks I start the journey home.

JF: It took about a month?

ML: Yes, this journey was very bad. It was worse than concentration camp, without food and without shelter, without anything. You were like lost; you were lost; we were lost.

JF: Were you in danger?

ML: Yes, we were in danger.

JF: The Germans were still around?

ML: No, the Germans weren't around even, the Russians.

JF: The Russians--you were in danger of the Russians?

ML: That's right, the Russians, some girls was raped from the Russian soldiers even if they were sick. They gave us some food when they put us on the train; they want to take us to Russia so they gave us some food. But in the night they steal the food from us. The Russians themselves, soldiers, they steal the food from us.

JF: The Russian soldiers gave you the food and then they stole it back?

ML: Yes, and we were without food, without anything.

JF: Now, did some of the girls go on the train into Russia?

ML: I don't think so, because most of the girls with me together was from the Carpathian, almost from one place, so we went near Munkács. We came with the train near Munkács and they wanted to take us to Belaja Cerkov [75 miles from Kiev, Ukraine]. This was in Russia. When we came to this place, I know the place, so in the night we run away.

JF: They were not interested in having you stay in Czechoslovakia. They wanted to take you to Russia.

ML: So, in the night we run away, without anything, barefoot, we was going and going, and we kept walking and walking until I came to the place where my brother was.

JF: You went back to your own town and you found your brother?

ML: I found my brother.

JF: His wife?

ML: His wife, yeah.

JF: And you were still with your sisters.

ML: Yeah. My sisters was there still and I went first. I left them and I told them that I would come back to take them.

JF: From the train?

ML: From the train. I left them there and the next day my brother went there because the train couldn't go--because of bombardment.

JF: The track was bombed.

ML: Yes and it couldn't go further, and the other day my brother went there with horses and he got my sisters.

JF: And, the Russians were guarding the train?

ML: Yes.

JF: But your brother was able to get through anyway?

ML: Yes, he got through. Somehow he stole them out and then they came home and then in about a week I found out from somebody that my father is alive with two other brothers.

JF: And they had all been in Auschwitz, as well, with you.

ML: Yes, they were all in Auschwitz, my father too and my two brothers they were together all the time and they were in Karlsbad. You see, my father went back there. I came back and because I came this side, I came through the Carpathian.

JF: I see.

ML: So, I found out that my father is alive with two brothers. You know that I lost all my teeth in the concentration camp. My teeth fell out.

JF: They just fell out?

ML: Yes, they just fell out, everyday I had out one tooth. Everything was loose and when I came back to the town, the non-Jewish people were saying look what they did to her they pulled out all of her teeth, you know they was making fun of me.

JF: They made fun of you. These were non-Jewish Hungarians.

ML: No, no the people that we were living with the Rusnaks. Only then I went and made my teeth and when my teeth was ready I took my one sister; one sister she fell and made something to her leg and she couldn't go with us, so she was left with my brother and I with my sister started the journey to Czechoslovakia, you know from Carpathian to Czechoslovakia. That was a journey of about two weeks.

JF: This was to find your father?

ML: This is our own journey and on this journey we were more hungry, we was so hungry there was no food, nothing and everywhere the places was bombarded and we couldn't go through, to took us about a month to get to Karlsbad.

JF: You went totally on foot.

ML: Totally on foot. Sometime we got from somewhere--stealing--we got somehow, only we were very hungry, we didn't have what to eat.

JF: Were you able to get clothes once you got back?

ML: When I came back our brother gave us some clothes.

JF: He gave you clothes, but you were not able to take much food with you on this journey?

ML: No, we couldn't, no. But on the train I got very friendly with, from Prague a boy he was a non-Jewish boy and he was in the concentration camp too and he tried to give us some food. He organized some food and gave us. When we came to Prague, we had to sleep there over night in the train station because we didn't have money and we couldn't go to a hotel, so we was sleeping on the train on the station, so he brought us things and then, this night in Prague in the station, I got back my period. And we didn't have clothing. I told him, so he ran out-- he fell in love with me--so he ran out and he brought me something, I don't even remember what and then...

JF: You also took the train, part of this trip was by train?

ML: Only by train.

JF: Between Kalnik...

ML: Kalnik and Karlsbad, yes.

JF: I see, you were not just walking then on that trip.

ML: No, no, on the train. Only the train was sitting sometimes two or three days in one place.

JF: I see, and this is where you made friends with this young boy from Prague.

ML: Yeah, I made friends with him and he wanted me to come to his mother's house and he tried to persuade me. I said to myself, "No I have to go and find my father," and he was persuading me that he wanted to marry me and...



JF: Why was he in a concentration camp? Did he tell you?

ML: Czechoslovakians were in the concentration camps too, only they had it better than we had, and when I came to Karlsbad I didn't know where my father is, I didn't know where to look for my father, so, somehow I was smart, I went to the police. I went to the police and I said that I am looking for this man and this man, so they told me that he lives right here in the neighborhood. Then I found my father.

JF: Did he have any idea that you were still alive?

ML: No, he asked us--the first word was where mother was and it was terrible, it was such a horrible day--crying--and he was with two brothers. One brother, the younger, he went to look for us because my father heard already that we are alive, so he sent my brother to look for us. He didn't want to go back there, to Kalnik, my father. And my brother went there and we just crossed each other, he went there and we came here, and he had some money and he had some clothes for us, the Russians steal everything from him and they almost killed him on the train and he came back, and then..

JF: You were allowed to travel freely on these trains, they didn't stop you?

ML: No, it was for those people from the concentration camp.

JF: You were able to travel without paying?

ML: Yes, without paying.

JF: Because you had been in the camp?

ML: Yes. Sometimes some places they gave us bread. They gave us bread and they gave us some food

JF: Whose control were those trains under, the government of that country?

ML: I think the government. When we came there and I met my father he was living already in a German's house, we were very friendly with those before the war too, Germans.

JF: These Germans. This German family?

ML: Yes, this German family took in my father. When I came with my sister, we took a place for ourselves and he start again his own business, my father.

JF: Now, did your other brother come back and join you?

ML: Yes, he came back.

JF: And, what about your brother who was married.

ML: Who was married, he came later, and his wife gave birth to a little boy. I have to cry. The first child after so many children was killed, this was the first child.

JF: The first child that was born.

ML: Our wedding, my husband's and my wedding, was the second in this city after the war. My cousin was the first, and then my husband came back, he heard that my father was alive and he came to us. One morning, early in the morning somebody rings the bell and I was still sleeping and I went to open the door and some soldier started to hug me and to kiss me.

JF: He was a soldier?

ML: Yes, my husband was a soldier, my husband.

JF: What kind of soldier was he?

ML: He was a Czechoslovakian soldier. In the war they organized a Czechoslovakian army and he was with the army.

JF: He was with the army throughout the war?

ML: Not throughout, a few years in the war. And when he came back--you know, we used to like each other before the war--and when he came back we start to go together and then we got married and we had our boy--this is my boy there--we had him. I couldn't bear children, I lost two times until I had my son because of the concentration camp.

JF: In what way?

ML: I was undernourished or something and I couldn't hold and then I had him in 1948, and we was then in Czechoslovakia. When he was not a year old, about nine months old, no eleven months old, we came to Israel.

JF: In 1949?

ML: Yes. We came to Israel.

JF: Did you have trouble getting to Israel?

ML: My husband went into the *Haganah*, in the army. He left me with the baby and he went himself into the army because he wanted to go to Israel.

JF: I see.

ML: So, he was in the army a whole year in training and then we came to Israel. You know like he was a soldier and he went straight to the army and I was with the baby.

JF: Where did you move in Israel?

ML: We moved first to Haifa.

JF: What was it like in Haifa?

ML: It was very nice only there was no food, it was very bad, there was no food. You know we didn't have a good place to live. It was raining on my face and we had one room with a baby and my brother was sleeping in my house too.

JF: Which brother? One of the younger brothers came with you?

ML: Two. The two younger brothers.

JF: Oh, your two younger brothers, and your sisters, and your father stayed?

ML: Yes, my father got married again, remarried, to a widow whose husband was killed too and my brothers--I was already in Haifa. I made for them weddings; they got married.

JF: You brought your brothers with you when you came.

ML: No, my brothers was before me in Israel. They came before me. They went in the *Haganah* before me and my two sisters too. My sisters met their husbands in the camp and got married.

JF: They got married after the war though.

ML: Yes, after the war, they were young girls.

JF: And they went to Israel before you did?

ML: Yes, they went before me, yes.

JF: And your two brothers had already enlisted in the *Haganah* before you and your husband went over?

ML: Yes.

JF: I see.

ML: And the brothers were living with me until they got married. We had one room and it was very hard. No toilet, just a big hole. You know, an Arabic place and it was hard for us. There was no food, I think maybe it was the hardest thing in my life because I didn't have enough food for my baby. After this--my husband brought from Czechoslovakia a truck with him to Israel.

JF: A truck?

ML: A truck, yeah. And he was working with this truck. And then we moved to Givat Olga that's near Hadera, and after 40 years I had my daughter. She was nine months old, she got polio. She is ambulated today. Both legs are paralyzed. So, I lived through and I still live through a very hard life. I am going tomorrow to Boston to see her.

JF: What does she do in Boston?

ML: She is now a teacher, a high school teacher in special education, and she will finish like a counselor. She wants to be a counselor. She is walking on two crutches.

JF: She is walking?

ML: Yes, she is walking with braces on crutches and she is very bright. And she lives in Boston. She doesn't want to live with us, she wants to live on her own. I taught her to be independent but now she is too much independent.

JF: Is there anything else you can tell us about your experiences in Israel during that time. What it was like living with the Arabs?

ML: Yes, it was hard in Israel because my husband was more in the army than he was home and at this time they didn't pay for the people, you know like for the wife and children, we didn't have money and I didn't have even to buy the liter of milk for the children. If he was in the army I didn't have anything. I didn't have any pension, anything.

JF: His pay was not sent to you?

ML: Nothing, nothing. It was hard. We went through very, very hard. When we were living in Givat Olga we didn't have electricity we didn't have enough water. You know they used to bring us water. They didn't have enough water. They didn't have a street. It was sand until the knees. I used to carry my daughter when she was already--you know, I used to carry her on my hand on the boards. You couldn't go out, the sand was until here. It was very bad. It was like in a desert. Later we had already electricity,

later we had already a street to walk. Then, in '60 I came here. In 1959 my husband left because we couldn't make it. We want to make some operations for our daughter. We made already there operations only it didn't help anything. Somebody told us that here is a doctor that can make a spinal operation and all those things, so my husband went first. He is a cantor and he came here.

JF: He studied to be a cantor in Israel?

ML: No, he studied to be a cantor when he was a little boy. When he was a little boy he started to sing already.

JF: Oh, I see.

ML: And in Israel he was a part-time cantor too, only part-time, you know, just for the high holy days. When he came here a year he was without work and I was in Israel without a penny. I was going through hell, and after a year he got a position in Brooklyn, NY and then in '60 I came here, to the United States, and I went to, to Buffalo and I was very happy and there was a doctor, I forgot his name, he made an operation for my daughter, a spinal operation. It helped her a little bit but not too much.

*Tape two, side two:*

JF: You were speaking about your daughters operation in Buffalo.

ML: Yes, they made the operation and they corrected her hand too a little bit. Her fingers.

JF: Her fingers?

ML: I think on the left hand. And he corrected this. We even didn't know that her fingers were damaged too--her hand. Only when she was 16 years old and she started to drive--she learned how to drive--the doctor said we have to take out the rods from the back, the support, and this was a very bad thing to do, what we did, because now she is suffering. She will have to have probably another operation but I don't know when. This is very dangerous, and I don't know if she will do it or not.

JF: Now, your husband was a cantor in Buffalo?

ML: Yes.

JF: And what brought you to Philadelphia?

ML: Then he changed--our son went to the yeshiva in New York. We want to be closer to him and it was very cold, it was very difficult for my daughter to be in Buffalo so we came here and he got here a position, B'nai Aaron in 67<sup>th</sup> Street.

JF: And what year was it that you came here?

ML: We came in '64, I think, to Philadelphia.

JF: Is there anything else that you can tell us about those years in Europe or in Israel that might be important for us to know?

ML: What can I tell you, we went back twice already to Israel.

JF: To Israel.

ML: Yes, my daughter went a year, I think from Gratz college she got a scholarship for one year to the Hebrew University. She was there a year by herself.

JF: Did your father stay in Europe?

ML: My father is in Israel.

JF: He moved to Israel?

ML: Yes, he moved the family to Israel and he is staying there.

JF: I see.

ML: Yes, he was coming here almost every year, and now he is too old already, he is 83 years old.

JF: What do you think kept you going during those times in the camps?

ML: What keeps me going--my two sisters, we lived for each other. We know that nobody is anymore alive, only we three. We didn't know anything. We didn't even think because probably they gave us something in the food so we shouldn't think. We only think about food, that's all what we think. To get something to eat--we was very, very bad.

JF: But you feel that you lived for each other.

ML: Yes, we lived for each other.

JF: And that's what kept you--moving.

ML: That's what kept us going.

JF: Thank you very, very much for talking to us.

ML: You're welcome. That's only a part that I can do, you know.