HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

SUZANNE LEIBOWITZ

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Josey G. Fisher
Date: April 8, 1981

This page left intentionally blank.

SL - Suzanne Leibowitz[1] [interviewee]
JF - Josey G. Fisher [interviewer]
Date: April 8, 1981[2]

Tape one, side one:

JF: Can you tell me where and when you were born, and a little bit about your family?

SL: Well, I was born May 27, 1928 in Prague. To be short, we had a factory outside Prague. And my parents decided to move in 1936, to a city in Moravia called, Novy Jičin.

JF: How do you spell that, approximately?

SL: Well, let me spell it in, it is two words. The first is: N-O-V-Y. The second one is: J-I-Č-I-N. We felt with what was going on in Austria and other countries in Europe, it will be wiser to live away from Prague.

JF: Why was that?

SL: Because at that time, Austria was occupied already. And many people said the Jews will be taken and transported. They will first take the ones from the large cities, and they were correct. My parents insisted that I leave, as a child, for England. It was a possibility for Jewish girls to leave for England, by themselves, in 1938. The parents refused to go, because my father was a very Czech patriot and he didn't believe anything could really happen.

JF: Do you have any memories of Prague before this move?

SL: I think it is the most beautiful city in the world. And I was very happy there.

JF: What kind of school did you go to?

SL: Well, I went to a *Realgymnasium*. I believe that is equal, the last two years would be equal to two years of college. But, that was not in Prague. That was in Novy Jičin. And in 1938, when the Germans occupied Sudetenland we had to leave overnight, leaving the properties and everything, and go to a different city, which was the so-called Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. I was allowed to continue school until 1940 or 41, I am not sure when Jews were not allowed to go to school anymore.

JF: Before we get to that point, can you tell me anything about your family's experience as Jews, in Prague, before the war started?

SL: My father was a very great Czech patriot. My mother was born in the German section of Czechoslovakia. She spoke only German. Therefore, I spoke German with my mother, Czech with my father. I was very embarrassed, many times, that my mother did not speak Czech, because I would give my life for the Czech nation. All my

[1]née Langer.
[2]Collateral Material available through the Gratz College Tuttleman Library: Photocopy of a first person memoir from Terezin survivor, "Making Moving Pictures." Jewish Exponent, November 21, 1988.

friends were Czech. I had no Jewish friends. I would not want to be seen in the company of Jews.

JF Why was that?

SL: Because I wanted to be totally assimilated. I didn't want to be any different.

JF: Were your parents also assimilated?

SL: Oh, definitely, yes, more so my father.

JF: Was there any kind of Jewish education that you had.

FL: None whatsoever.

JF: Were they affiliated with a synagogue or with any of the Jewish organizations in Prague?

SL: Well, they were affiliated, but I don't remember the names. But, I know that I had been forced to go once a week to the Jewish religion. And it was conducted in a synagogue. And I was so embarrassed and so ashamed to walk into the synagogue, that I would stand in a building next to the synagogue. It was a photographer shop, and I would look at the pictures, and just be very sure that nobody would see me go into the synagogue. Later on, I just dreaded it so much, and we had a group of children. We learned how to dance. We had an old-fashioned--what was it called? I don't know what we danced by. There was some kind of a music. And I would refuse to go to the religion classes. So, they didn't know what to do. So, the lady, who taught Jewish religion, said the only way she can force me to come would be to flunk me--give me--well, we didn't grade the way you grade here. It was 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. So, if it was 5, I would not pass on my report card. So, it was very strange. I had all 1's and a 5 in religion. Well, it didn't go through, so I stopped going altogether. My mother tried me, again, to attend Jewish classes once a week. I know she used to send my maid to make me go. Well, I wouldn't go.

JF: Did you experience any kind of antisemitism?

SL: I experienced it only in 1938.

JF: Nothing until that time?

SL: Nothing.

JF: And did your parents mention anything about any antisemitic experiences that they had had?

SL: No.

JF: Were there any brothers or sisters?

SL: No. I was the only child.

JF: Was anyone in your family in the national army--the Czechoslovakian that you know of?

SL: Not that I know.

JF: Then, start in 1938. And at this point, what happened to you?

SL: In 1938, the Germans occupied Sudetenland and we had to move. I didn't know anybody in the city we moved to. But, I was very, very friendly, outgoing, and I made friends very soon. I very soon had girlfriends, boyfriends. I was continuing going

to dances. Going to gatherings. And I just tried to forget what was really going on. The only thing which I can remember in '38, before I escaped, we had groups. I used to be the leader. And I would organize that we all would dress alike, would have the same skirts, the same tops, four girls. And there would be four boys and we would go together ice-skating. And all of a sudden it happened, maybe two weeks before we left. The two boys, which were so close with me, were stepping on my toes and making remarks about Jews. And that just stuck in my mind. And the strangest thing which happened and I can't really explain it, is that when I went back to Czechoslovakia, I associated with them, and it didn't even bother me at all. They were so nice. They were so kind to me. And I didn't even make a remark about it. Only two days ago, when I knew I was going to meet you, I had--I wouldn't call it courage--but, I was discussing about *Hitlerjugend*, which was the German youth, and saying that I know that he was in it, but I wasn't. And I just want to know what responses would be. But, for some reason, I have no hatred or anything. One of the boys which did it, became the biggest Communist. He was actually my boyfriend. And he is very clever. He has a very, very, good position. When I saw him, he was surrounded by secretaries. And he was very happy to see me. The other boy, when he saw me, I had no intentions of meeting him. I just wanted to see the city, where I left in '38. And the other boy saw me and he completely broke down, he started to cry. I don't know why. He was just very emotional.

JF: This was when?

SL: When I came back a year ago.

JF: A year ago.

SL: Yeah. And I really cannot understand why I don't have dislike or hatred, but I don't.

JF: Did you ever talk with these boys, when you were young, at the time you were friends? Did you talk about what was happening with the Nazi situation?

SL: No. I wanted to be one of them. I wouldn't discuss anything.

JF: When your family knew what was happening with Hitler, was there ever any feeling that they should leave Europe?

SL: Yes.

JF: What happened with those discussions?

SL: Well, my father wouldn't leave, because his brother was a very famous Czech general, a very famous writer. His other brother was very deeply involved in government. And my father was such a hundred percent patriot, he would never leave the country. The country needs him, why should he leave? And my mother, well, they wanted me to leave, but I just wouldn't leave my parents.

JF: When did you leave the first town that you arrived at?

SL: In 1938.

JF: You were there for how long, before you had to leave?

SL: About five years.

JF: You had been there for five years?

SL: Yes.

JF: And this is when you moved to the second town, which was called what?

SL: Yes. V-A-L-A-S-K-E. The second word is, Meziříčí [Valašské Meziříčí].

JF: And where was that located?

SL: In Moravia.

JF: In Moravia. And why did you pick that town?

SL: We didn't pick it. We just had to leave because Sudetenland was occupied by the Germans. If the Jews wouldn't leave, they would kill us immediately. I am sorry, in '38 they wouldn't kill. They would arrest.

JF: Did you know anybody in that town?

SL: No.

JF: When you got there, at that point, in Czechoslovakia, what was the attitude of the natives toward you, as Jews coming into their town?

SL: Nobody considered me a Jew. The most horrible thing happened when I had to wear a Jewish star. And, of course, either I didn't wear it, or if I was forced to, I would put something over the star, either my hand or a glove or something, and I would hide it until one time, an old Jew, just walking near the river where I was walking, went to the Gestapo and said that how come, me, as a Jew, I don't wear a yellow star, a Jewish star. And then he was a little difficult. And I just couldn't understand why a Jew would do it, but they said he was senile. Then I had to wear it.

JF: What about your family's economic situation? Was your father able to work in these towns?

SL: I think we were pretty well off. I don't remember that he had to work. The last town, it was very ironic, because for some reason I don't know why, he got a job at the Jewish, like at the synagogue he worked there. That was really funny, because he never had anything to do with being a Jew. So, it was very ironic. But, the monetary problem never came up, so I really don't know. But, it was well known that most Jews were pretty well off.

JF: What were the other laws that affected you, that started to change your life, in '38?

SL: There was one law after another, and I really cannot remember.

JF: You were able to go to school again?

SL: I was able to go to school, but not for a long time. I remember that. Well, first of all, there was one law where you had to take all the jewelry to the bank. The next law was to give all fur coats for the German army, so they are not cold. And we had to leave our homes. And later on, we had to live always in a hotel. We had to live in one room, wherever we could find one room. You couldn't have more than one room for a family, how many people, it didn't matter. We had to give away our pets.

JF: You had to give away your pets? Why?

SL: Yeah. Because pets are not allowed to live with non-Aryans. It was hard.

JF: You had one, I assume.

SL: Yeah. I had a dog and a cat. And now, I have a dog again, which has the same name, as my dog had there. Then one day, when we were no longer allowed to go to school, we had to work for the Germans on fields. And I am very vague about it, but I know we no longer could live at home. We were called in an office. And I remember, I never discussed it with anybody, there was a German man which was in charge of the SS, which was recruiting me, and he apparently liked me very much. And as I came in, he said--he started to kiss me, and I was really scared because as he was kissing me, I was looking at the big picture of Hitler on the wall, and I wasn't sure what was going on. But, he promised me that I will have much better treatment, when I work on the farm, that he will visit me. I don't know what happened. I don't think he ever visited and I didn't have any better.

JF: What kind of work did you do on this farm?

SL: Well, whatever work you do. We worked with corn. We worked with potatoes. We worked doing the tying hay together. I don't remember much more.

JF: Did your parents also have to work in the fields?

SL: No. As I said, my father worked in the Jewish synagogue, something to do there.

JF: So, that kept him from the outdoor work?

SL: Yeah. I really don't recall if my mother had to do anything.

JF: These were all Jews then, who were working on the farm?

SL: Yeah. And I felt extremely there were girls and I felt extremely uncomfortable in their company, because they were talking about Zionism and going to Israel, and it was completely strange to me. I never had anything to do with such discussions. And I think all of them actually went, maybe four or five girls, which I can remember, they did go to Israel. And I think they survived. A few of them didn't. But, I had no interest, and I was totally bored to death with the conversations.

JF: How long were you able to stay in this town?

SL: Until 1942, when we were all sent to Theresienstadt.

JF: Is there anything else about those years before 1942 that you want to discuss?

SL: I really don't remember.

JF: How was the deportation handled? How did you find out about it?

SL: It is pretty much blocked in my memory, out of my memory. All I remember is the train station. And we were trying to carry as much as we can. It was because, I know I was with my parents. And at that time already, I was so totally isolated from the non-Jewish society, that I had a boyfriend. That was the first boyfriend I had that was a Jew. And he really adored me. He was very nice to me. I really didn't care too much for him, it was just a companionship. So, it was my parents, him and his parents. I

remember going, being together in the train. They took us in another city, where we stayed overnight. And then we came to Theresienstadt.

JF: How long were you on the train? And what were the conditions?

SL: Well, at that point, we were terribly, terribly crowded. There was no space to breathe, or anything. But, we still could sit. There were no cattle cars. That was still very civilized. I have no recollection. We were on the train twelve hours or something like that.

JF: Did you know anything about Theresienstadt before you went there? Did you know that that was where you were going?

SL: We knew, we hoped, we would be going there, and not going to Poland, because at that point, would we have stayed in Prague, we would have gone straight to Poland. And we already got letters from two of my uncles that they, from my aunts, that the uncles had died from hunger. All we were allowed to get was cards, but there was a code we had. And they all went to Lodz, Poland and they all died from hunger.

JF: They were deported to the ghetto in Lodz?

SL: Yes. I really don't know much about the situation.

JF: They were able to send you cards from Poland?

SL: Well, they were allowed to acknowledge packages. We were allowed to send them packages. And when they signed the name, they inserted a word--what my parents apparently worked out as a code. So, it would say the uncle's name was Dr. Leopold Langer. So he would write Leopold, hunger or typhoid Langer, so we understood it. We just knew it was terrible. So, when we went by train, we kept looking out. We were just so happy we were not going to Poland. We thought that Theresienstadt would be a paradise.

JF: What had you heard about Theresienstadt? What was your understanding?

SL: That it was a very nice place. That it was a selected place. And we were going to be safe there. We are going to wait for the war to be over.

JF: And what was your experience when you arrived?

SL: It is so hard to recall. But, there is just one thing I have constantly in front of my eyes, and I discussed it with my psychiatrist, and we just couldn't get to any place. All I could see was people looking and looking. There were so many people looking constantly, from the windows at us and I can't get rid of that moment. It just bothers me sometimes. I just see this.

JF: When you first got off the train?

SL: No. When we got off the train, we had to walk a long way. And that was also torture, because we had to carry as much as we could, because we were afraid we wouldn't get the rest.

JF: Were you limited as to how much you could take with you?

SL: Oh, we were limited, but everybody would try to put on like five coats, five winter coats. I don't know how many dresses, but, we sure were limited.

JF: Were you allowed to take all those things in with you, when you reached the camp?

SL: We took--okay, we were one thousand people, in my transport. We went there. We were sent to the attic. And we were the best of friends, the thousand people. One day later, we were the biggest enemies, because from the one thousand people, only twenty people remained in Theresienstadt. The other ones just continued straight to Poland.

JF: They never stayed in Theresienstadt?

SL: No. And my boyfriend had to leave immediately too. And we were friends and kids, and idealistic. All of a sudden we were enemies, because the question was: why are you staying? People already knew that things are not good.

JF: Did you know what was happening in Poland, specifically?

SL: I had an idea that things were very bad. If so many of my relatives died, something was wrong.

JF: Why do you think you were selected to stay at Theresienstadt?

SL: Because of my family's association. Being such good patriots, being such good Czech people and because of my uncle being such a famous man in Czechoslovakia, and so we were protected.

JF: So, the three of you were allowed to stay?

SL: Yes.

JF: And what were the conditions for you, at that point?

SL: Well, while we walked from the train station, to the concentration camp, I could see the Jews, some Jews wearing stars were outside of the ghetto. And I was thinking, and I said, all I have to do is try to find a position, a job, so I could be one of those people. And I remember, I saw a beautiful girl with the sheep. And I said, that is a job I would like to get. Then I saw the girls who were helping. Young pretty girls were helping us to go, watching us as we were going from the station to the concentration camp. So, my first thought was I have to get a job outside of the ghetto, and I have to help my parents. And I tried to work for it.

JF: How?

SL: I could see, you cannot contact the Germans. I knew you cannot. There were Germans in uniforms and Germans in civil clothes. I knew you couldn't have any connection. But, there were also Czech policemen. And I was a pretty attractive girl. And, after a very short time, maybe being only a week or two weeks, it must have been a month, one of the policemen approached me. And he said, "Didn't I dance with you?" and this and this. So, I picked up really fast, and I said, "Yes." And we became very friendly together. Now, it didn't exist in our camp at all, that the Germans would physically abuse the prisoners. It wasn't there. It didn't exist.

JF: On the part of the Germans.

SL: The Germans were not interested in Jewish girls. There was only one single case, which we all knew about. But, there was nothing else. The Czech police were interested, again, not in us physically, but they were interested. They all knew that we had money. They knew that we wore jewelry. And the most important item in Theresienstadt was cigarettes. So, if I could work out a connection with the Czech police which wants to get something, then he will get me cigarettes. And if I get cigarettes, I can buy bread and butter for my parents.

JF: From the Czech policeman?

SL: Yeah, sure. It is very simple. I give him the most beautiful diamonds, which have no value for anybody in the ghetto, nobody can buy anything for it. He can buy it. He can bring the cigarettes. And for the cigarettes I can get everything. I can't get anything any other way. So, through cigarettes, first of all, I got a job working and helping when the people came by train.

JF: Doing what?

SL: We had to carry. When the Germans would be at the check point, and we would go and assist the people coming off the train, telling them what to do, what they can carry and try to make sure that we help them carry. We would carry their luggage and assist them. I did that work, perhaps, one year. Then the Germans decided it is no good if the non-Jews see the people walking on the streets. So, they decided to build a station in the ghetto, in the concentration camp.

JF: This was in 1943?

SL: That would be in 1943, yes. I am not sure, but it probably was 1943.

JF: Before that time, the transports would unload in the town itself?

SL: In the Czech town. And people would be walking. And the Germans decided that's no good. We would do it all in the concentration camp.

[End of tape one, side one.]

Tape one, side two:

JF: This is tape one, side two of an interview with Mrs. Suzanne Langer Leibowitz, on April 8, 1981.

SL: In 1943, when they built the train [station], I had no way of leaving the ghetto anymore. So, I decided now I had to find a job where I can again be out of the ghetto.

JF: Before this time, were all of the officers who were over you, in your job, Czech?

SL: Well, they were not all Czech. When we went to the station, there would be about twenty-five Czech policemen with us, and two or three Germans. Half of the no, three-quarters of the Czech policemen were very bad. They did what the Nazis told them--not to speak with Jews. The biggest crime would be to discuss political situations, or God forbid, to show newspapers or anything like it.

JF: Were they ever physically abusive towards any of you?

SL: Oh, yes, sure. They would hit you. And if they didn't like you, they would give an order that you will be transported away from Theresienstadt. We had no knowledge, at that point, about Auschwitz at all. Only when no longer we could go out of the ghetto, then in the trains were the people in the cattle cars, which would be going from there, there would be written things on the train: "Do not board this train, you are going to sure death." "Auschwitz is death." "Auschwitz is a death camp." It wasn't Auschwitz, it was called Birkenau.

JF: Where were these things written?

SL: The same trains that are coming back. The same cattle cars were coming back for the people. They were sending people to Birkenau. That is all we knew of Birkenau. Birkenau was the Jewish part of Auschwitz.

JF: And these messages were written...

SL: They were written in the train.

JF: Inside the train.

SL: Inside. They were just...

JF: Scratched on the walls?

SL: Scratched on the walls. And I would see them, and other people would see them. Nobody would believe them. I have been always very [unclear] and I believed it. Anyway, it had no sense for me to continue working there, because I would not be able to go out of the ghetto. So, therefore, I knew I had to work someplace else. I had to work now, in the so-called *landwirtschaft* [agriculture], which was work on the fields. Now, I again, could go out. And we would leave in the early morning. There were maybe twenty-five girls. And it was always that the girls which were picked out were pretty girls, so we showed the non-Jewish world how well we looked and how pretty we are. And we would be accompanied by, when we were twenty-five, we would be accompanied by maybe four

policemen and one German. And we would be leaving early in the morning, and coming back late at night. Now, it was possible, in the field, for instance, I would work on tomato fields. And we were so terribly starved, so we would eat like twenty-five tomatoes a day. Of course, if a German would see us, we would be shot on the spot, because it would be sabotage against the German Reich, because we would take away the tomatoes from the Germans. And they did shoot a couple people, right there on the spot.

JF: What about the Czech guards?

SL: Well, we knew exactly which guard is good and which is not. The word got around fast. And everybody in Theresienstadt suffered from horrible diarrhea, so it didn't make any difference if we ate the tomatoes or not, that way, anyway. But, we were able to smuggle through maybe two or three tomatoes again. And I would bring them back to my parents. And the reason I could work there, it was impossible to get the job. But, again, the Czech policeman helped me, because I would give him diamonds. And for about, I think it was twenty cigarettes, a pack of cigarettes, I could bribe somebody higher, in the Jewish circle, and he would get me the job.

JF: These were men on the Jewish council, within the camp?

SL: Yes. Hitler said, "If I will put Jews together from all the countries, they are going to hate each other so much, they are going to kill each other." And there is nothing worse than to put all the Jews from different nationalities together. He was right there, because at one time, it was the Czech people which were in charge of the concentration camp. Then the highest of the Czech people, which was a Mr. Edelstein[3] was sent by transport, and the Germans became the head people. Then it was a Mr. Eppstein.[4] So, all the Germans got the good positions. But, I was fortunate that I could get through the cigarettes, because there was a Czech guy there. I could get a job outside of the ghetto.

JF: Were the Germans, who were in the camp, treated any differently than the people from other countries? The German Jews.

SL: The Germans which were in the camp, only the German Jews were treated better, if the head of the concentration camp was a German Jew, then they were treated better. But, as far as I know, they were not at all assimilated.[5] They were Germans first, and only Germans. They didn't want to know that they are Jews. Before I worked on the fields, I remember working still at the trains. And there was a big load of very, very, rich, old Jews coming in. And, as I said before, my job was to help them out. So, I tried to help them from the train. I can remember one lady. She was dressed in a very fancy hat and wearing white gloves. And she wouldn't let me help her, because she said, the *Führer*

[3]Jakub Edelstein, a Czech, was the first head of the Council of Elders (*Judenältester*) in Theresienstadt. The Council was made up of Czech, German and Austrian Jews. The SS ghetto commander, Anton Burger, had a vehement hatred of Czechs and removed Edelstein. On November 9, 1943, he was taken to a prison bunker and eventually deported to Auschwitz, where he and his family were killed.
[4]Paul Eppstein, a German Jew, was appointed to succeed Edelstein. In 1944, he was shot in the ghetto police prison, the *Kleine Festung*.
[5]The clear meaning is that they <u>were</u> assimilated.

promised. She gave him all the money, all the property. He promised they are going, to a most beautiful rest home. And she doesn't want to be helped by a Jew. She wants the Germans to help her. And that is how they felt. Of course, the old people came in and the next day, well, everything what they had was taken away, and they continued to Birkenau--Auschwitz immediately. But, they didn't believe it.

JF: What were the living conditions like for you? Where were you living? What were your food rations? What were you clothes? Were you able to wear your own clothes, or did you have to wear a uniform of some kind?

SL: I don't remember too well. The men lived in one barracks, which was called Hamburger barracks. The women lived--I am sorry. The men lived, it is all named after German cities. The men lived in Hanover Barracks. And we lived in Hamburger Barracks. The prominent people and the officers of the head[6] of the concentration camp would be in the Magdeburg Barracks. There were other barracks for very old people and some for crazy people, and for people which would just come from the transport and leave right away. I lived in one room in the Hamburger Barracks. We were between forty-six and sixty girls in one room.

JF: Between how many?

SL: Forty-six and sixty. There were three tier bunks, one next to each other.

JF: What were they made of?

SL: I believe, wood.

JF: Did you have blankets?

SL: No. But, later on, we graduated and we had, I don't know how you call it, what you lay down...

JF: A mattress?

SL: Well, it wasn't a mattress. It was supposed to be a mattress, but it was filled with hay or something like that. But, that was absolutely beautiful already, because we graduated from sleeping on the ice cold attics because we worked so hard, we were privileged.

JF: This was within the same barracks?

SL: Yeah.

JF: Was your mother with you in this barracks?

SL: My mother was with me, yes, but she lived on a different floor and we just couldn't--we were not allowed to see each other.

JF: Were you parents also working in the camp?

SL: Yes. I believe that they both worked when the luggage came. The people came with the transport, from all various countries from Europe. They would come in, and most of them left the second day. And their luggage would be put in a big, big place. And my mother worked there, and they would sort out the clothes which was left. And I really

[6] *Ältestenrat*, or Council of Elders.

don't know whether the clothes went to the Germans or if we used it. I don't remember. And my father was helping out. After a couple years, he was very lucky to help out in the kitchen, which means that maybe he would get twice a little soup. I can't remember at all what we got to eat. I only remember we stood in line so we got some kind of soup which was called [unclear] which was a German name for--like if you would wash something out, whatever would be left over, that is what we got. And once in a week, I am not sure, we would get a little slice of horse meat. But, maybe it was once a month. I don't know. And when we worked as hard as I did, 14-16 days [hours] on the fields, we would be very fortunate, we would get, maybe one little drop of sugar and margarine, and a little bit bread. And my only wish, all these years, was if I survive, and I was sure I would not survive, because I took a lot of chances. I was sure I would not survive. I would do anything to save my parents' life. And when I mean anything, I would try to get cigarettes and with the cigarettes, buy a little bread for my parents. And my only wish was, if I would survive, I would want a whole loaf of bread, with as much margarine, I mean, butter, nobody forgot butter existed, and sugar. What we did was we would slice the bread, put a little margarine on it, and sprinkle it with sugar. That was the best thing in the world. That was all I wished to have.

JF: You were working 14 to 16 hours a day?

SL: Yeah. And that was why I got a little extra bread and extra margarine. I don't think the other people did get the margarine. I am not sure.

JF: When you say that there were things that you tried that were dangerous, you were talking about using cigarettes to get extra food?

SL: I was talking about the policeman, which I was friendly with. He would walk through the concentration camp--they were allowed to walk through, because they changed shifts. And when they would walk through, they would in their uniform or in civil clothes. And the policeman would on the street, I would just approach him and give him the diamonds, and he would give me the cigarettes. Then whatever I could buy, bread or some extra rations for my parents.

JF: You were able to get the food through to your parents, even though you had trouble seeing them?

SL: Yes. And, of course, if anybody would catch us, it would be terrible. So, the policeman tried to work it out, that me and two of my friends would get another--that we wouldn't live in the barracks where too many people would see him. So, we would live close by. So, there was barbed wire and a big wooden fence separating the place where the policeman lived and where the ghetto was. So, there was a real little hole in the wall, which used to be a bathroom. And, again, the Czech policeman would get an order to make a room out of it. It was just so tiny you could hardly move. But, they managed to make a little hole, with one three tier bunk bed in it, and three of us lived there.

JF: This room was close to the policemen's barracks?

SL: Okay. People lived in barracks. The policemen didn't live in the barracks. It was a nice house they lived in. But, there were not only barracks in Theresienstadt, there were also homes. But, it was mostly old people which lived in the homes. And he managed, by giving me the cigarettes, that I would get a place close by, so he has no difficulty giving me the cigarettes for the jewelry. So, all the policemen had Czech boys which helped them out, shine their shoes, did their errands. So, one time, he tried to get me--what was it?--it was a big. I think it was Christmas or Easter, I am not sure, a big celebration at home. So, he brought me a whole loaf of bread. That was just the one time. And the Jewish boy was bringing it to the house. Unfortunately, one of the Czech policeman saw him from the window. So, the three girls, me and the other ones, were ordered immediately, to be sent out to Birkenau. But, what happened, the policeman had to leave then too. And then I was in a really bad situation, because as long as he was there, and as long as he had any power, and they did have power the policemen, he could pull out the cards of my parents, so they are not sent into a transport out to Birkenau.

JF: He was no longer working at Theresienstadt?

SL: He was sent away. Because another Czech policeman saw it.

JF: And you were on the list to go to Birkenau.

SL: Yeah.

JF: What happened?

SL: What happened? Another person got cigarettes from the Czech policeman, and they pulled out my turn and my card which meant for us to go to Birkenau. There were always people--they would say tomorrow five thousand people will go. Everybody got a notice that they were going. Well, if our cards disappeared, we couldn't go.

JF: And somebody else, another Jew was able to bribe one of the Czech policeman, to remove yours and your parents' cards.

SL: Right. And then he left. And nothing happened to us.

JF: This was the same Czech policeman that had been your friend?

SL: Yeah.

JF: I see. This was the last thing he was able to do for you then, before he left.

SL: Yeah. Well, he, unfortunately, after the war, he was immediately arrested, because all the diamonds, which I gave him, he was not very smart, he bought a lot of land. And then they jumped at him that he was a collaborator. If he was or wasn't, I don't know. He helped me a great deal. And, of course, I got him out of jail.

JF: You had contact with him then?

SL: Yeah.

JF: Do you still have contact with him?

SL: No, he died. Once I came to America, I didn't. I wanted to look him up, but he is dead a long time.

JF: Did you know anything about any resistance movements that were going on inside the ghetto?

SL: No.

JF: Any kind of underground contacts?

SL: No.

JF: Any radios, or contact with the rest of Europe, to find out what was going on in the camps or in the war?

SL: No. We knew everything, because I continued working out of the ghetto, and we knew exactly what was going on from the Czech policemen.

JF: The Czech policemen would tell you?

SL: Yeah, they would tell us.

JF: And you then passed that on?

SL: Yeah.

JF: Did the people that you knew in Theresienstadt believe what was happening in the camps, in the death camps?

SL: No. It was never discussed. As I told you, I was very realistic and I knew something horrible is going on. But, it was never discussed.

JF: The other people who saw these signs did not believe them either?

SL: No. In 19, in the beginning of 1945, they started to build the gas chambers, in Theresienstadt. And nobody believed it. And I was sure that was what they were doing. People thought it is possible, but they didn't believe it. So, I had an idea how we are going to be saved. I said we are all going to try to get some sheets. We are going to tie the sheets together, and we are going to escape, because it [the ghetto] was built on top of a hill. And I was very sure that was the way we were going to escape. Just slide down. So, they went along with that the girls. They said that is an excellent idea. That is how we are going to escape.

JF: And?

SL: Well, they never finished the gas chambers. But, that is what I was sure. My plan will work, and I was the leader. And they all went along that is fine. If they are really building it, that is what we are going to do.

JF: Did you know any of the artists or the musicians who were performing, and working at Theresienstadt?

SL I knew many of them, but I was really never into them, because I was totally preoccupied in getting food for my parents, and for the food trying to get their name removed from the list of being sent away. That was my total preoccupation. My cousin's husband was very much involved. He was in charge of many [unclear]. His name was Eliash, because they lived in Czechoslovakia, it was Eckstein at that time. He worked with the production. He worked---he helped with "The Bartered Bride." He worked with Raphael Shachter. But, it was far away from my mind. I was not very interested. I did go to the shows.

JF: You went to the shows?

SL: Yes.

JF: What was it like?

SL: Beautiful, just beautiful. But, I didn't--I knew that they had something in their mind when they are putting on the shows.

JF: What do you mean?

SL: The Germans had something in their mind. They were preparing for the German Red Cross. That is why I knew a Potemkin village, and building up the whole ghetto. I knew something was wrong.

JF: Can you recall the Red Cross visit?[7]

SL: Oh, very vividly.

JF: Can you describe it to me?

SL: Well, instead of working on the fields, we were all of a sudden ordered to scrub the pavements, because it was precisely outlined the streets where the Red Cross will walk. We had to go down on our knees with really terrible ice cold water. And we had to scrub and scrub. And the SS men--it just didn't come out without soap I don't know what they--I don't believe we even had soap to scrub it with. We had steel brushes. And it was an old, old city--Theresienstadt. And we just couldn't make it so clean. But, while we were scrubbing, they were kicking us. And all this time when they were kicking us. That is good. I hope they are going to walk on the street next to the one we are scrubbing, and they will really see the people dying. And, of course, they never did. I remember that all of a sudden, they made a big park in the middle of Theresienstadt. They played the most modern music by [unclear]. Two very good--the musicians, they were entertainers. They made records. And we would hear music all of a sudden, after all these years. I remember the *Lager* Commandant. I can see him today with a basket of apples, walking around and offering apples to the few children which were there, and telling them "Have an apple." And they said, "Oh no, Uncle [unclear]. We have too many apples today already. Thank you, we don't want any." I am sure they didn't know what it was, because they never saw an apple. But, it was amazing what the Jewish people could do in a short time. They made a playground. I have never seen a playground with swings and see-saws, so beautiful, in such a short time.

JF: After the visit, was any of that left?

SL: No.

JF: It was all removed?

SL: It was all removed, yeah, so were the children and the parents.

JF: You have memories of the children?

SL: Yeah.

JF: What do you recall?

SL: Well, there were so few children. I just know that what really struck me was that when we were the sixty girls in the room, that one woman had a baby and we were

[7]A reference to the visit by the Danish Red Cross in June 1944, after the camp had been "beautified" to impress the Commission and disguise the real nature of Theresienstadt.

all hiding her child. And the child actually lived with us. And it couldn't cry or anything. Somebody always had to be there with the baby. And, of course, at the end, they took her and they took the child.

JF: How long was the baby able to live?

SL: Well, the baby was maybe a year.

JF: And someone would always stay with it, in the barracks?

SL: Somebody would always be sick. And whoever--people got very, very ill, and people which did get ill would stay in with the baby. I know it was a woman from Holland.

JF: And both the baby and the mother were killed?

SL: Yeah.

JF: What else do you recall?

SL: The funniest part about the visit was, whenever you went any place, you would always see the hearse, black, creeping hearses all over the streets. There were quite a few of them, and they were always loaded with people who were going to the crematorium. And the girls which pushed the hearse wouldn't go there for nothing, so next to the crematorium was the bakery that was loaded with bread. And they unloaded the bodies and they loaded it with bread, which was fine. We were so used to it, it didn't bother anybody at all. But, what really did strike me so funny, on the day of the visit, the hearses were really done so beautifully, and there were no hearses any more. And the girls were wearing long white gloves, and they were just loading bread on it. There was no crematorium, just bakery, the white gloves and the fresh baked bread.

JF: How was the crematorium camouflaged, if it was right next to the bakery?

SL: I don't know. They just wouldn't go there. They were exactly told where to go. And none of us could believe that they would do that.

JF: Did you have any other contacts with the Jewish Council?

SL: The Jewish Council?

JF: The leaders, the Elders.

SL: Only when we arrived that day and when we were told [unclear] that is the only--and I know I spoke to a man whose name was Zucker but that is all.

JF: Did you know anything about the Little Fortress?

SL: Oh, yeah. We worked with them at all times with the prisoners.

JF: With the prisoners?

SL: I mean, not with them, but the fields next to each other.

JF: And what did you hear from them?

SL: We didn't have to hear anything, we saw what terrible conditions there were. And the very last day the transport was sent to Auschwitz, I was caught by a German from the small fortress, and ordered to go immediately to Auschwitz. But, it was the last transport, so I didn't.

JF: Were you aware of any other kinds of groups within the barracks? Any educational groups or religious study groups, or prayer groups?

SL: They had prayers, and I went to Catholic prayers, once in a while.

JF: Catholic prayer groups?

SL: Yeah, that is all I would be interested in.

JF: You were interested in them?

SL: Yeah. But, we just went once or twice, a couple of the girls, apparently, not much interest. I also know that there was a group of Communists, at the end of the war. I don't know if they were Zionists, but they called themselves Communists. And they wanted me to join the movement, but I was not interested. Even so, it appealed to me, because it was so idealistic. If I survived the war, everything will be equal, it will be gorgeous, beautiful. But, I [unclear].

JF: The Catholic prayer groups were led by whom?

SL: Well, somebody said he was a priest. If he was or wasn't, I do not know. It was up in the attic someplace.

JF: Did you know anything about any Jewish prayer groups, or any kind of Jewish education of the children who were there, or any education at all?

SL: Everybody was trying to educate the children. There were classes going on for young children. But, here, again, I was not interested. I knew that was a fact, but that's all.

JF: You were also working until quite late, in the fields?

SL: Yeah.

[End of tape one, side two.]

Tape two, side one:

JF: This is tape number two, side number one, of an interview with Suzanne Langer Leibowitz, April 8, 1981, interviewed by Josey Fisher. Did you hear anything about a family camp in Auschwitz, that all the trains from Theresienstadt were headed for a specific one for people from Theresienstadt?

SL: I am sorry, would you ask that question again? I couldn't comprehend.

JF: Okay. To your knowledge, the people from Theresienstadt who were deported to Auschwitz, were they kept together there? Did you hear anything about that?

SL: I didn't hear during the war, while I was in Theresienstadt. I would not hear about it. Some of them would send a card saying how nice it is. We all knew that the cards were alike, and they were told to write those cards.

JF: You knew they were being told to write them?

SL: Yeah. We could tell, because they all sounded alike.

JF: So, they didn't fool anybody then?

SL: No, not at all. We just knew once they are gone, they are gone. We would get one card, and they are signed alike. Most people were optimistic, I was not.

JF: Did you ever try to escape, actually try to escape?

SL: Well, I almost escaped at one time, on the 11th of November, 1942 or '43, I am not sure. It must have been '43.[8] They decided to count everybody in the concentration camp. So, we all had to leave. I think they gave us orders to leave at seven o'clock in the morning. And we were counted for hours and hours. A lot of people died while they were standing. And at that point, I persuaded, I tried--it was getting dark--I tried to persuade my girlfriend that we were going to escape. And she didn't want to go because she knew that it was shortly after Heydrich[9] was killed. The Czech people were not going to hide us and jeopardize their lives, so she didn't want to go. But, it was getting dark, and the SS men, the Czech people, were doing something with their bayonets. And I said, I don't want to be killed. I am going to escape. And I was already away. I could have escaped because it was dark--and she was trailing me--when the order came in to go back. So, I am sure if we would have escaped, because we were in ghetto clothes, with the star, I wouldn't be alive. I am positive. Nobody would have helped us because I had no money, I had nothing. But, that was the only time I wanted to escape.

JF: Did you know of anyone else who tried to escape?

SL: No. We could escape, I am sure. But, nobody would hide us.

JF: You all wore ghetto clothes?

---

[8]This was November 11, 1943, after Edelstein was arrested for allegedly aiding in the escape of some Jews from the ghetto. The SS ordered the counting of prisoners and 40,000 Jews were forced to stand in a cold rain all day.

[9]Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Nazi police and security forces and Acting Protector of Bohemia-Moravia, died on June 4, 1942 from an infection related to injuries sustained during an attempted assassination (http://www.ushmm.org, USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia, "Reinhard Heydrich").

SL: I can't remember. I just don't remember. I know we had a star, but I think we could wear our own clothes. I am not sure.

JF: And were you able to keep what you had brought with you? Was any of it confiscated?

SL: Oh, I don't think that we had anything that we brought with us. I don't know what you mean.

JF: They confiscated the suitcases that you talked about bringing.

SL: If we had anything, it would have been destroyed by the work conditions. And I think we would get the clothes from the people, which we had so-called stores, I think we would get some clothes from the stores for our Jewish money. I don't know if you saw the Jewish money, but we had money. I have some here with me, somebody just sent me. I forgot all about it.

JF: The money that was manufactured in Theresienstadt?

SL: Yeah, which I think was worthless.

JF: How did you get that money? Did you have to exchange something for it?

SL: I don't know. I don't remember. All of a sudden we got the money, but it was just for a short period that we could buy. It must have been a connection with the Red Cross visit.

JF: Do you have any recollection of the propaganda film that was shown, was shot, in Theresienstadt?

SL: No. I know it was done because I was there when the cameras were going. What happened to it, I do not know.

JF: You remember the cameras being there?

SL: I remember just one incident, very vividly. After we scrubbed the pavements, they decided to have a coffee house on center square, next to where the German block commander lived. There will be a coffee house. And we were ordered into the coffee house, while the Red Cross was there. Now, each of us knew exactly when to go there, what time to go there, and exactly how long to sit there, because there was a clock on the wall. We would get so-called coffee in a cup, and then a very nice German woman would come with a tray of pastry, and she would offer us a pastry. And as we reached for the pastry, I can remember the camera going, and then they took the tray someplace else. So, we reached for the pastry, but we never took it, and I could hear the camera going and I could see it. But, what happened to the film I don't know. I have no idea.

JF: Did they give you special clothes to wear?

SL: Yeah. We had better clothes, sure. And we were called ladies and gentlemen, instead of filthy Jews.

JF: And you never saw any parts of the film?

SL: No. But, I know they also made a film while we were walking out and singing, going to work on the fields, because we were not allowed to sing, but that day we were. I know the cameras were going.

JF: And the film was made before the Red Cross visit, or was this at a different time?

SL: It must have been before,[10] or at that time. There was no reason to make it. But, I know some vague recollection that they tried to look for some very ugly Jewish type of man for the film. I can remember that.

JF: You remember them looking for a person like this.

SL: Men which are very typically Jewish looking, with a big nose. I don't know if they wanted to show how well we lived, while the Germans are fighting the war. I really don't know.

JF: Were you sick at any time, during the time that you were in the camp?

SL: I was sick many times. And I remember I was exhausted, and after I saw the doctors now, they said I must have had diphtheria or I don't know what I had, because I have no reflexes in one of my knees and my legs.

JF: The doctors now say that you must have had diphtheria?

SL: Yeah. A strep throat is something like it which was the cause and a couple of them agreed upon that. I never said anything.

JF: Did you have any medical treatment in the camps?

SL: No.

JF: Did anyone that you know have any kind of experience with medical treatment there?

SL: I know that there was one house converted into a so-called hospital. But, I don't know what they could have done there, because the people were dying in hundreds and thousands, in the barracks. So, I don't know what it was there for. I really don't. Unless there were some very prominent people there, but I don't know.

JF: How did your parents hold up during this time?

SL: I really don't know what to answer. They hoped they would survive the war. They were very optimistic. And we knew that my parents were with me until the fall of 1944, and we knew that the war was drawing to a close. The war is going to end soon. And all of a sudden there was talk about the overcrowded conditions, and that a new ghetto will be built, and it is going to be very close to Theresienstadt. Nobody is going to go to Poland anymore. It is going to be about a hundred miles away. And all of us were wondering, how can they build a new ghetto, in the Fall of '44, why a new ghetto? We were always over-crowded, why now? So, one of the top SS men wanted to make sure that we are not worried about going to Poland. So, he called everybody who wanted to listen to him, to the town square, and I know it was jammed, and he said, "There is only one precious possession I have and that is my German uniform. It is my pride. It is everything that I have. And on that uniform, I swear to you that you are not going to Poland, that you are just going to build a new ghetto." We all believed him, because if somebody swears,

[10]The film was actually made after the Red Cross visit, to "prove" that Theresienstadt was a "model camp."

we have no doubts. We were very calm. And we said, "Okay." So, three transports were going. It is going to be men from the age of eighteen to forty-five or fifty, I am not sure if it was forty-five, fifty or fifty-five, but it was my father who went. And I thought, well, it is going to be a new ghetto. It might be great. Of course, my father cried, and he said he will never see me again, he knows that.

JF: You believed this man though?-- This time.

SL: Yeah. If a German swears by his uniform, how could I ever think any different? I didn't like it. I tried to do anything I could to keep my father, but I couldn't. It was only going to be three transports, nobody else would go. They were gone. And now, all the wives are going. So, at this point, we knew we were tricked. There was nothing we could do. There was not one single man in the whole of Theresienstadt, that was exactly what they wanted. They were afraid that we were going to do something like they did in the Warsaw ghetto, so they got rid of all the men. Then all the women went. And I tried to go with my mother but I was beaten up and I couldn't go with her. And that was the end of my parents. Unfortunately, all that was October, 1944 that they went. I hope, I never heard, but I just hope they went straight to the gas chamber.

JF: You never found out definitely?

SL: No. I don't know, that would be the fastest way.

JF: Did you think that you were going to survive?

SL: I was sure I will not.

JF: Did anything…

SL: I had no fear, because I was so sure I will not survive.

JF: What kept you going?

SL: The feeling I was sure, I am going to see my parents. I wanted to continue a normal life with my parents.

JF: This was when they were still in the camp? This was after…

SL: Even when they left.

JF: You still thought that somehow you would be reunited?

SL: Yes. And I had no doubts that they will not come back,[11] even though I saw everything written in the train, but that doesn't happen to me. I am special. And the only thing when Auschwitz was liquidated and the Russians came in, and the people were coming back, the people which were sent away in October of '44 were coming back in January of '45, to Theresienstadt, because they had no place to bring them. They were skeletons, and they all had typhoid. At that moment, I prayed that my father is not alive, because I didn't want to see him like that. I had a lot of feeling about my thought, but, and of course, the people which came were animals. They were not people. They screamed at us. They had to lock them all up. They had to be guarded because they would want to eat us, because we were not the same as they were.

[11]Mrs. Leibowitz may have meant to say "I had no doubts that they will come back."

JF: Who brought them back?

SL: The Germans. What were they supposed to do with them?

JF: This was after...

SL: That was during, we were still there.

JF: Still during the war.

SL: In '44, all[12] the people from Theresienstadt left. A couple young girls stayed to do the men's work, because the girls will not have any weapons, of course. But, they will not stage an uprising or anything, so leave the girls to do the real hard work for the men. And everybody went, but, four months later, all these people came back. And we don't even know if they were our Czech people. We think that all Czech people were destroyed. The people which came back were Polish[13] people, which were in camps for years.

JF: From different camps?

SL: Yeah. I don't know where they came from, but they were like animals.

JF: How many people were brought in like that?

SL: I don't know. There were a lot of trains coming in.

JF: And they were eventually liberated, if they did not die before?

SL: I believe so.

JF: You remained at the camp?

SL: I remained at the camp.

JF: And did your job change, after these last transports?

SL: I don't remember at all. I have a complete blank after my parents left. I have a blank, I can't remember, because I had nothing to work for. I had nothing to supply food for. But, most probably, I continued working. I don't know. I will have to ask my friends because maybe two of them survived, and they remember everything. And I believe the reason I don't remember is because I came to a new country, and all the impressions of new life I picked up here. I can't remember everything, some of it is suppressed sometimes.

JF: Is there anything else about the camp that you might want to say, before we get to the time of liberation?

SL: I can't remember.

JF: When were you liberated?

SL: I escaped in the beginning of May [1945].

JF: You escaped before the liberation?

SL: The Russian tanks came by. Well, we were liberated by the Russians,[14] but they really didn't come in to the concentration camp, yet. They just drove by. So, of course, I feel a sense of freedom, so I jumped at the tank, Russian tank. And I just went

[12]There were many transports in 1944, but the camp was not emptied.
[13]Polish Jews.
[14]Soviet troops entered Theresienstadt on May 9-10, 1945 (http://www.ushmm.org, USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia, "Theresienstadt – Timeline").

with them to Prague, which was the worst thing, because they were shooting all over the Germans, still.

JF: Did you do this by yourself, or with someone else?

SL: I think, well, I always was the leader. I think I had a couple of girls going with me.

JF: So, this was actually before the camp was liberated?

SL: Yeah. I never went back to get whatever we were looking for there was a lot of stuff left over there in the camps.

JF: What do you mean?

SL: What I mean, when we made the movie, we tried to find homes, which were totally camouflaged where we lived. They are all changed. You can't find anything, not just me, nobody else. And I went to one house. My girlfriend said, "This is where we lived." And, there were Czech people now which bought the house. Something to be desired for people which can live and buy homes. They were sold very cheaply in Theresienstadt. And we are at one of the houses. And I said, "Yes, this is where I was. I said that. And I said, "And this is where we left our big suitcases. Do you remember?" We just took a wild shot. And the woman said, "Yeah, I found the suitcases, but I think the Czech people, the Communists took it from me." I was just trying out and she--everything was left there. Probably whatever we had was jewelry. Nothing else we could keep.

JF: Did anyone try to stop you when you climbed on the back of the tank?

SL: No. The Russians were very happy to have a female, I am sure.

JF: And what happened to you?

SL: I was free. I was free. Nothing happened to me. I just went to Prague.

JF: And what happened when you got to Prague?

SL: When I went to Prague, we didn't know where we were going. They just put us someplace where there were all youngsters which survived the war without parents. And they said, we need people which would go to Sudetenland and work with the Germans, from the cities, and send them back to Germany. So, me and my girlfriend were picked to a very, very large city. And I said, well, what are we going to do? What instructions? What are we going to do exactly?

JF: Who gave you these orders?

SL: I imagine it was the Czech Communists at that time. The said, do what the Germans did to you. And that is exactly what we did.

JF: What did you do?

SL: First of all, we asked the Czech people which of them were Nazi and which were not. The ones I knew were Nazis were the ones which caused other people to lose their lives, and here again, not Jews. The Jews were gone a long time. Here, again, I am not interested in the Jews any longer. It is the Czech people which were arrested or killed because they collaborated. I would stand, and I would take a belt and I would hit them

until they would bleed. And I would say, that is for my father, and that is for my mother. I didn't do it long, so.

JF: But, the other Czechs were able to help you with names, and tell you who these people were?

SL: Yeah.

JF: And then what happened after that with the people?

SL: They were sent to Germany. They were evacuated. And like the Jews, had to leave their homes. Their homes were just standing there empty now. Nobody takes care of them. Was a total waste, but that was done. And the only thing that we let them do is keep their wedding ring, wedding band, which the Jews were not allowed to keep.

JF: How long did you do that?

SL: From 1945, my girlfriend and me took care of it until '47, when I got married. And in '48, I came to this country.

JF: Whom did you marry?

SL: I married a man in Czechoslovakia, because I wanted to have children to perpetuate my family, my father's name.

JF: And you met him in the town where you were working?

SL: Yes, where I was trying to, like they called it *Judenfrei* we had to make it *Germanfrei*. It was in the town about a hundred, maybe an hour by train from Prague. A typical German city.

JF: What was the name of the city?

SL: Teplitz Schönau.

JF: And then how did you get to the United States?

SL: After I got married, and I was pregnant, we knew that the Russians were going to occupy Czechoslovakia. I didn't really mind so much. And I really didn't want to go to America. I was here an immigrant, a Czech patriot. If the Russians are supposed to come, so what? I still am home, and I want to stay home. My husband came from the eastern part of Czechoslovakia, and he was totally paranoid and scared of the Russians. And he had an uncle here. And his uncle sent him papers. And he left when I was in my seventh month. I know he didn't have to leave, but because he was so afraid, he left me there all by myself, being pregnant. And, apparently I was so in love or infatuated that the same day he left for the United States, I ended up in the hospital. And from the seventh till the ninth month it was on and off in the hospital, until my son was born by Caesarean section. He was stillborn. And I remember all the nuns praying about me. And they said, well, we don't want to do. The doctor gave me a choice to perform a Caesarean section, which they didn't want to do, because it is too dangerous, and you can have so many other children. You are here by yourself. It will be easier to go to America without a child. I insisted on having the "C" section. And I left five months later by myself, for the States. My cousin, my uncle sent me the papers.

JF: This was in 1947?

SL: '48.

JF: 1948. You child was then born in 1947?

SL: Right. No, I am sorry. He was born in May of '48. And I came in October of '48.

JF: So, the three children that you have now, were all born here in the United States?

SL: My son was born in Czechoslovakia. My first son. The two other ones were born here. I am sorry. He was born in May of '48. I came with him, myself, in October '48.

JF: You have mentioned a film that you were involved with.

SL: Yes.

JF: Can you tell us about it?

SL: I don't know what you would like to know about it.

JF: Who organized it and the purpose of the film?

SL: It was organized by the nephew of Hershel Bernardi. And the purpose of the film was that nothing about Theresienstadt has been ever shown on American, to the American public. So far, I called and they said it might be completed in May, 1981, and shown on the educational television.

JF: This is a documentary?

SL: Yeah.

JF: And in what way were you able to help?

SL: I didn't want to do it, and I know it was a terrible thing for me to do it, because I got too many flashbacks. I still have them now. I helped them with the research about Theresienstadt. They asked me many, many specific questions many times. Then I flew over and met them there. And I am very skeptical about the film because the people were very young, and in my opinion, they really didn't know much what they were doing. And I resented it because they told me what to say, instead of what I wanted to say.

JF: Some of your observations were taped?

SL: Yes. They were taped. And what really shocked me, I was together with four other people which were also in the concentration camp with me, and they were totally disinterested. They were very annoyed. They complained all the time. And I just couldn't understand it, why? But, they just didn't want to be associated with Judaism at all. And they were very angry that they agreed to do it, because they were afraid of repercussions. And none of them are anymore Jews. They all are totally assimilated Czech people.

JF: Is there anything else about that time that you want to tell us?

SL: I can't thing of anything right now.

JF: Thank you very much.

SL: You are welcome.

[End of tape two, side one. End of interview]