

Interviewee:	<u>TAUS</u> , Lillian	Date:	November 23, 1981
Interviewer:	Hannah Silver		
Audio tapes:	1 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
Restrictions:	None		

## SUMMARY

Lillian Taus, nee Mermelstein, the eldest of 13 children, was born October 10, 1923 in Klascanovo<sup>1</sup>, Czechoslovakia, near Munkács. Her father was a kosher butcher. She describes her family's evacuation to Munkács and the horrible conditions of their transport to Auschwitz, in cattle cars. She witnessed many selections where men, women and children and those unable to work were separated. Her parents and all but two of her siblings perished in the gas chambers. She explains how she was able to save her sister from the gas chamber and later keep her alive until liberation.

In August 1944 she and her sister were taken to Stutthof concentration camp. They worked as slave laborers both in Stutthof and also in Praust, near Danzig to build an airport. She describes the daily routine and living and working conditions in Stutthof.

Lillian describes being almost beaten to death because she jumped on a truck taking Jews to the crematorium, to be with her sister. They survived due to luck, Lillian's resourcefulness and help from a nurse (possibly German though not clearly identified). She relates several incidents of verbal and physical brutality, callousness by German guards and the beating of her father in Klascanovo, as well as two or three acts of kindness.

In March 1945, about 1500 Jews, including Lillian and her sister, were evacuated to Lübeck by boat, via Danzig and left on the boat for nine days with no food or water. The Germans rigged the boats so they would explode, but some of the Jews managed to save themselves, the rest perished. The Germans returned, took the survivors to a forest near Kiel to perish. The survivors were brought to Neustadt Holstein. She met her future husband, who was on the boat, "Capricorn", that the British had mistakenly shot at thinking they were Germans. She was liberated by British soldiers May 5, 1945. Lillian and her sister got medical care in Schleswig Holstein and were re-united with their one surviving brother, who went to the U.S. with their cousin, an American soldier. Lillian got married and lived in an UNRRA camp in Heidenheim on the Brent, a town west of Stuttgart, until she came to Philadelphia February 19, 1949 with her two-year old daughter.

Lillian explains how she managed to pull herself together, get over survivor's guilt and go on with her life. No one in her family ever wanted to go back to Germany. See interviews with her siblings Louie Mermelstein and Shirley Don.

<sup>1</sup>Possibly the town Kliachanovo, also called Chervenovo, part of the Subcarpathian region. Alternate spellings Klyachanovo [Ukr], Kličanovo [Slov] and Klacsonó [Hung].

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### SUBJECT HEADINGS

World War 1939 – 1945 – Personal narratives, Jewish  
World War 1939 – 1945 – Deportation from Czechoslovakia  
Klascanovo, Czechoslovakia  
Munkács, Czechoslovakia  
Auschwitz (Concentration camp)  
Stutthof (Concentration camp)  
Atrocities  
UNRRA -United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration  
Psychological aspects of the Holocaust  
Aid by non-Jews