

Interviewee:	TAUS, Lillian	Date:	January 14, 2009 ¹
Interviewer:	Patricia Rich		
Audio tapes:	1 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
Restrictions:	None		

SUMMARY

Lillian Taus, nee Mermelstein, was born on October 10, 1923², in Klascanovo³, Czechoslovakia. She was the eldest in a large family of 13. Her father was a butcher. She details her family's experiences during the German occupation. She describes her father butchering meat in secret because it was forbidden and describes a time when she was jailed by the Germans for delivering the kosher meat. She describes how the family was ordered to leave their home during their Pesah seder in 1944. All the Jews in the town were forced to a brick factory⁴ and then taken directly to Auschwitz a few weeks later. Lillian describes the horrible circumstances in the cattle cars, lack of food and water and no toilet facilities.

In a poignant telling of when the family arrived in Auschwitz, Lillian says that her mother went directly to the gas chamber with her youngest child in her arms because she refused to give him up. She also relates that the day they were put on the train was the day of her brother's bar mitzvah and he put his *tefillin* on in the train and went to the gas chambers with it in an act of defiance. Several of Lillian's siblings had died a year or two before during a typhoid outbreak. Of the remaining children, only Lillian and her 12 year old sister and one brother survived.⁵

Lillian describes the actions she had to take to keep her little sister alive. They remained at Auschwitz for about half the year during which time she would hide her sister in the bathroom during *Appells* and was assisted by the *Stubenältester*. From Auschwitz they were deported to Stuthoff, where Lillian was assigned to remove dead bodies from the barracks in the mornings and place them outside on the ground and number them. She used this terrible circumstance to save others. She would give the food-- that was rationed for the dead-- to her friend in another barracks to help others survive. She and her sister were then deported to Praust where they had to build an airport and she describes doing her work and her sister's work so they wouldn't get beaten. She details an instance when her sister was put onto a transport bound for death and she jumped into the truck and was beaten severely. They both managed to survive due to Lillian's

¹This is the second interview Mrs. Lillian Taus gave to the Holocaust Oral History Archive. Please also see her first interview given on November 23, 1981, #GC00523a.

²Mrs. Taus seemed to have some memory lapses during this interview as noted by the interviewer on her personal history form. We are therefore using her birthdate (Oct. 10 1923) as given in her first 1981 testimony, even though in this testimony she states that she was born on October 3, 1922.

³Possibly the town Kliachanovo, also called Chervenovo, part of the Subcarpathian region. Alternate spellings Klyachanovo [Ukr], Kličanovo [Slov] and Klacsonó [Hung].

⁴It is possible that this brick factory was in the Munkacs Ghetto. She stated her family was taken there in her 1981 interview.

⁵She doesn't mention her brother surviving in this interview. Please see her earlier 1981 interview. From this earlier interview we know that she and her sister were re-united with their one surviving brother, who went to the United States with their cousin, an American soldier.

resourcefulness and luck. She mentions that rape was common in the camp and relates an instance when she was almost raped.

Lillian describes their evacuation to Lübeck by boat⁶, via Danzig when inmates were left on a boat-- which the Germans had rigged to explode-- for nine days with no food or water.⁷ After liberation, Lillian stayed in Schleswig Holstein for about six months and she and her sister got medical care. She met her husband and married July 4, 1945.⁸

Lillian had recently done an interview with the Spielberg Project and explains that she wanted to do another interview for the Holocaust Oral History Archive to preserve her family's experiences for the future. See also interviews with her siblings Louie Mermelstein and Shirley Don.

⁶From her earlier interview we know that this took place in March 1945 and that she was liberated by British soldiers May 5, 1945.

⁷See her earlier interview for a more detailed and chronological account of this story.

⁸From her earlier interview we know that Lillian came to Philadelphia February 19, 1949 with her husband, her sister and her two-year old daughter.