

*Kindertransport Association Oral History Project*  
*Interview with*  
HUGO MAROM  
June 15, 1994

KEY:

- [brackets] describe action in the interview
- *Italics* indicates a word in a foreign language, spelled correctly
- {italics in bracket} indicates a word in a foreign language that may be incorrect
- {brackets} indicate indecipherable words

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Interviewer: I wanted to start by asking you what your impression was, how things were, meeting with Bill Barazetti when you met him the other day.

Hugo: I met him this time? I met him already the time before, because I organized together with {Marduk Segal} from the PEN organization, who actually met him at one of the congresses of PEN, he met Bill Barazetti. They were sitting next to each other. I don't remember the details. And somehow they started discussing, and it came to light that he had some connection with Jews and helping Jewish children and Jews generally, because it's also a question of helping a much larger number of Jews from the Sudeten areas and other German-Austrian areas come out of Europe. And they were discussing this, and {Marduk Segal}, being originally German, felt they had to discuss this more in detail. And then he heard the whole story. According to Bill Barazetti, it was the first time that anybody had ever discussed this issue with him, at this PEN meeting. You may have more details. You've spoken to Bill Barazetti so you may have more—

Interviewer: I didn't have a chance to ask him when he first discussed it, or if he had discussed it over the years.

Hugo: So {Marduk Segal} from Jerusalem, they had discussed it for the first time. He returned to Israel. I don't know where the meeting was. I've forgotten where the meeting was. Somewhere in Europe. And {Marduk} came back to Israel, and he had heard through someone at the ministry or someone that I'd been connected with bringing Nicholas Winton to Israel and attempting to get him approved as a Righteous Gentile, on which I worked for two or three years, unsuccessfully. I believe it could have been actually someone at Yad Vashem and so forth, that he got my name—{Marduk Segal} got my name from him—and that's how Marduk Segal contacted me, phoned me here in the office and said, "I met a fellow called Bill Barazetti. Does this mean anything to you? Because he claims that he was responsible for the organization, once the Germans came to Czechoslovakia, of the transport and of the children's transport."

And I said no, I'd never heard of Bill Barazetti, but I did remember that Nicholas Winton had left with me and sent me all the documentation, prior to his visit to Israel, so that I

could make the application to Yad Vashem for his recognition. And I said that in his documents Nicholas Winton does mention people that were involved in that operation from 1938, even before the Germans came. So I shall look into those documents. A copy of them exists in Yad Vashem. You go to Yad Vashem, check them. Maybe you can find Bill Barazetti's name. Because somebody with a name like Bill Barazetti sits next to you and says, "This is what I did," and it all sounded so genuine to {Marduk Segal}, but it was contrary to what Nicholas Winton— Nicholas Winton never mentioned anybody but a friend of his, but a friend of his being another student that was involved in the operation. And we were left with the impression that Nicholas Winton had been actually involved until the very last transport that he was in Prague; it was the very last transport, and then went to England, left England already under the Germans.

When I read the documents again, I found in his documents that he left just before the Germans came into Prague in March '38, and he had handed over the operation to Bill Barazetti. He mentions Bill Barazetti in his diary. In his notes to England, to the organization in England, Nicholas Winton (and I have the original document), his handwriting, which he writes to England and reports on his operations that he's leaving and that he will be handing over to Bill Barazetti. And Bill Barazetti's name comes up twice in these documents, in these diaries of his, which are letters to his mother or to this lady (when I say lady, I mean like "lord and lady") who was responsible. I think {Cheswick, Chadwick or Cheswick}, I don't know.

Interviewer: I think it was {Cheswick}.

Hugo: {Cheswick}, okay. In his reports to her, he mentions Bill Barazetti. When we found this, we told— Yad Vashem couldn't find the document, because among all the thousands of documents, they couldn't find Bill Barazetti, this Nicholas Winton's report. So I took my copy of it, which I'd got from Lady Maxwell, who was a historian, she was a professor of history, Robert Maxwell's wife, who was responsible for organizing Nicholas Winton's visit to Israel at the time.

Interviewer: Robert Maxwell was?

Hugo: Robert Maxwell's wife. Robert Maxwell's wife is originally French. She's a professor of history, or was a professor of history. And she was involved in organizing— [telephone interruption] //

Interviewer: You were giving me some of the background on how you had actually got in touch with Barazetti. This is quite interesting because I was always wondering who had initiated the Winton notoriety or the trip to Yad Vashem.

Hugo: It was a result of a television program by a woman called Vera Gissing, who wrote a book about her childhood. And there was a television program, and through this television program somehow a connection occurred between Vera Gissing, who is also

Czech, she was also on a transport, she was also in the Czech State Secondary School in England during the war with us till 1945. And she ran away to England and married this fellow Gissing. And she wrote a book about her experiences mainly with the English family, with her foster parents and so forth. And as a result of that television program, she found out who Nicholas Winton was. Nicholas Winton saw it, he reported to her, they met and so forth. That was the beginning of Nicholas Winton. Vera Gissing somehow got in touch and organized, through Lady Maxwell (or Mrs. Maxwell, Professor Maxwell), the visit to Israel. Prior to the visit, I worked attempting to get Righteous Gentile recognition for Nicholas Winton.

Interviewer: And how were you contacted?

Hugo: Well, Vera Gissing is in contact with us. The group of the Czech State Secondary School in England children had a reunion after 40 years in 1985, in the {Abonent} Hotel, which was the site of the Czech State Secondary School in World War II. And she is a schoolmate. And we all met there. We were always in contact, especially those of the children, shall we say, of that school who were not in Czechoslovakia, who were in England and America and Australia. And a friend of ours in London, who worked for many years for the BBC, for the Czech broadcasting section of the BBC during the Communist occupation, he was the organizer of this 1985 reunion of the children of the Czech State Secondary School. I think it was the only coeducational school in England at all during the war, or even before that—coeducational boarding school. And out of these 120, I think 70 met in 1985. So certain contacts which did not exist improved. And so we were in contact. {Hanush Schnabel} was a very good friend of mine, originally from Prague. And through these contacts, they contacted me if I could check the possibility of Nicholas Winton receiving this award. And I was in correspondence with the Yad Vashem to try and get this organized.

It never worked out for two reasons. Number one, the first reason was that it was discovered that his grandfather or grandmother was Jewish, and that the parents (or his grandparents) converted to Christianity in Germany, and that Nicholas Winton was Weinstein or something like that before, and his parents or his grandparents— The details of this I do not remember, but Vera Gissing knows that part of the story far better. She lives in London. You could always get full details from her. Anyhow, it didn't work out because one of the conditions of Yad Vashem is that you do not have Jewish blood in you, which I objected to violently.

But the second condition was that they had to have proof that any activity that took place in saving Jews or helping Jews and so forth was personal danger to that person under German occupation or during the war. In other words, danger to himself from the Germans. Okay? And it came to light, when a closer examination was made of the dates and so forth, that Nicholas Winton left Czechoslovakia before the Germans entered. They had been in the Sudetenland, but not in Prague till March 1939. (I made a mistake in the date previously when talking about 1938. It was not till March, early 1939, when the Germans took over the whole of Czechoslovakia.)

Interviewer: It was the fifteenth or something.

Hugo: Fifteenth of March, yes. Correct. 1939. So Nicholas Winton was most probably active during the winter of '38 to '39, and left before the Germans came to Prague, and left Bill Barazetti as the man to continue— (this is the way he put it in his diary) to continue his work whilst he continued operating from London, trying to arrange the homes for the children who were to arrive. In fact, I think he must have left— If your father left on the first transport—

Interviewer: Second, I believe.

Hugo: Second. You said the first left in February.

Interviewer: No, it was March. {unintelligible} was in March, and he left in {unintelligible}.

Hugo: Then Nicholas Winton must have left before the first transport. And Bill Barazetti stayed on, and you've got his whole story, I'm sure, which is very unique. So going back to {Marduk Segal}, which met Bill Barazetti at this PEN congress (or PEN meeting or whatever they call it), contacted me, and he said, "We shall try and first of all check on Bill Barazetti's story." And as I said to you before, we found these diary or reports of his to London, which were adequate to arrange for Bill Barazetti to be invited to Israel. And it was organized again by Marduk Segal, who is a first class organizer. And he organized it through the PEN association. So I think that the PEN association financed his trip to Israel. Just like in the first case of Nicholas Winton, it was Mrs. Maxwell who organized the trip, as far as I know.

So Bill Barazetti— The only commitment that Yad Vashem was to make prior to his arrival was that it appears that the documents that I provided to Yad Vashem seemed to clarify the dates vis-à-vis Nicholas Winton and the missing link between the time that Nicholas Winton left and the final transport, in which my brother and I and three more boys from Brno (the {Tomašev} boys) left. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of July, we left Prague, I think, for England, which was the last transport of those 660-odd children. Yad Vashem again, I say, made the condition that in order to get the approval, they would have to personally interview him. Documents were insufficient. They wanted to hear the person's story. So that was the idea that was put forward.

Now, he came to Israel. I was away on a trip, on that first trip of his with his daughter Annie. And Marduk Segal took care of them, took them to Jerusalem. They went through all the interviews in Yad Vashem. And the day I arrived from abroad—I was away working, and I returned, and we had arranged to meet. I'd arranged to organize all the Kindertransport children that I knew of from Czechoslovakia, in my home. And it was a Wednesday evening, and we had about (I don't know) 18 or 20 people. Some of them were with wives. In fact, one of the boys that were in school with us married another Kindertransport child. So it was quite an interesting evening. And Bill Barazetti came to

tell us (no one ever knew of the children because there are no records) who had done all this work, who was responsible for saving our lives. It was a combination between our parents, who were willing to send their children away, which was in my opinion something very, very unique and very hard to do, which any parent can appreciate; and Bill Barazetti, who was an unknown.

So here we were, we had something to eat and to drink and so forth, and we sat around in our house, and we listened to Bill Barazetti telling us this story. It was something we'd never heard. We never knew any of the details. In fact, Professor Tommy— I think you've—

Interviewer: We're going to meet him in New York, Thursday.

Hugo: Okay, from Kibbutz Amiad, he was the youngest in the list of children in Winton's. He was five years old. And I believe he wrote a dedication on this occasion.

So we're sitting at this meeting. There was a newspaper lady, a reporter at this meeting, maybe two or three of them, and the photographer. We're sitting, and at that point a phone call comes in from Jerusalem—it's in the evening—from someone from Yad Vashem, that the committee which said that afternoon had approved his— I don't know what we can call it.

Interviewer: Admission to the Righteous—

Hugo: Yes, his recognition as a Righteous Gentile. So we were of course very, very happy. It was then organized, because his visit was limited to a week or so, that the day after, there would be this ceremony in Yad Vashem. And I represented the children. The children asked me to represent them during the ceremony, and I prepared a statement for this occasion. And Bill Barazetti participated. Of course he was awarded the recognition. And from Yad Vashem, I took him and his daughter, we drove them down to the airport and put them on the aircraft. So it was so touch-and-go, this whole visit.

And we kept in touch from this last visit, directly with Bill Barazetti. And it was Marduk Segal who again— We decided that if there was going to be a Kindertransport meeting, that it was only right to invite him and his daughter, and he brought his grandchildren, to Israel. And unfortunately, I was away, again abroad.

Actually I was in Brno and Prague whilst he was here, on a sentimental journey with my brother, who hadn't been to Brno since 1946, and my cousin, who left in 1948. So we went to visit, visited our home, and we visited some of the people, very good friends, non-Jewish friends, who also helped a lot, helped my parents. One of them, {Tonda Sekal}, was a very good friend and a co— I would say, they used to teach skiing, take groups skiing (my mother was a skiing teacher) in winter. He actually, when my mother was taken away to concentration camp, to Poland, he used to travel to Poland, which was

also endangering his life, to bring letters which came through the International Red Cross in the beginning, '40-'41, to this camp. And she would write notes on very light paper, which he would then somehow get to the Red Cross and send them to us in England. And I have all these letters. So from these letters one can learn how (I would say even) inconsiderate children are, and don't realize the pain that the parents are going through, not knowing who, with, or where the children are, and what's going on, and so forth, and in the meantime they're locked up or whatever.

Interviewer: What is your brother's name?

Hugo: Rudi. Rudi Meisl. The name was originally Meisl, not Marom. It was changed to Marom by accident more than by intention, because Meisl is one of the oldest Jewish families in Czechoslovakia. In 1968, during the Dubček period, most probably a friend from school or one of the by that time professor who was a very good friend of mine, sent me a book which was published in 1968. It was called *A Thousand Years of Jewry in Bohemia*. And in this book it mentions the origins of the Meisls, which I already knew from my father, who always claimed that the reason why he objected for us to go abroad, for us to leave, was a fight between my mother and father. My mother believed Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and said he would do what he said. And my father, knowing or having gone through his family's roots who go back to Prague, originally having come (according to some of the information that was available) in 968 from Holland, long before the expulsion of Jews from Spain, because very few of those ever came to Czechoslovakia. So it was one of the first waves, although Jews came to Bohemia already with Caesar, as writers and readers and so forth in the Roman period. But the first period in which Jews were brought as professional people came from Holland in 968. So in 1968, it was 1,000 years. So this book was printed, and the Maisel family is mentioned there because one of them was a mayor of Prague. Mordechai Maisel became the mayor of Prague. It's quite a well known thing. The street is still named after the family. And it was here in Israel, when I went out on one of my trips in the air force, when I went abroad, that I was ferrying aircraft or something to Israel in the fifties, when somebody one day decided to change my name in my passport because Meisl sounded German. And Ben-Gurion decided that he didn't want representatives of the state going out with German names. So a lot of them, they changed. But Meisl, they had no business in changing because Meisel means a "chisel" in German. And in Hebrew it is *ismil*, which are the same letters, just switched around. So my father always believed that they gave names according to professions. So because he was an engraver and a jeweler and so forth, the original Meisel, that they made the Meisl out of *Ismil*, and that it is not a German name, although there are many Meisls of various— In 1,000 years you get a lot of families out of one family.

Interviewer: What is your cousin's name?

Hugo: My cousin's name? She is also from the Meisl family, originally. She was born as Renee Meisl. Her father was a cantor by the name of Walter Meisl in Brno, a very famous cantor. And today her name is Goldberg, Renee Goldberg, and she lives in Florida. And she was the one who did not leave on the transport, and she went to the Terezin ghetto

with her parents, very early among the first transports had left Brno for the ghetto, and she spent three years in the Terezin ghetto before she went to Auschwitz and finally ended up in Bergen-Belsen, where she was liberated. Both her father and mother died on the day or day after liberation, because of food and sickness and so forth. And she was in quarantine with paratyphus after the war in Bergen-Belsen, and then she returned to Brno. And I found out through the Red Cross in England, because I was still in England when the war finished, I found out from the lists of the International Red Cross that Renee Meisl had returned to Prague.

So when we went back with the Czech air force— I was then a cadet in the training corps, in a Czech unit, so we were allowed to fly back with the Czech air force to Prague. And we met (she had no hair at the time) at the house of this Tonda Sekal, who was a friend of the family, and we lived in the same building outside of Brno. That was 1945. And then in 1948, she left for Australia, because she found a relative, another Meisl in Australia. So she went to Australia, and this was her first trip back to Prague. And we also went to Terezin, and we actually visited the building in which she, as a child, was in for a period of three years. So it was a very, very sentimental and in fact I would say even traumatic experience, going into this building where she spent three years of her childhood from the age of 11½ or 12 to 15.

We also participated in a Friday night service at the *Altneuschul* at the *Altneu* synagogue in Prague. And we said Kaddish for our parents and her parents, for all our parents and so forth. It was a very interesting evening, because normally there's only a minyan of about ten people, for normal services, because there's only about 1,000 Jews in Prague left. But there were about 200 people in the synagogue that evening, because there was a group of Americans and English and Israelis and so forth in Prague at the time. And so it was a coincidence, according to the rabbi, that there were so many people in the synagogue for that service on Friday night. So it was very nice.

Interviewer: And then you went down to Brno?

Hugo: We went down to Brno, and we looked at the house in which all three of us were born.

Interviewer: Where was that?

Hugo: It used to be called *Legionarska*. *Legionarska* is a very nice street out of the main part of Brno, which is called *Luzanky*. And we were born in number 15 *Legionarska*, right opposite the classical gymnasium, which is a secondary school, which today is no longer a secondary school; it's another type of school. And from there, we went to the house where we lived later on, my brother and I. And to think that my [brother], who left in 1946— We're standing outside the house, looking at the apartment on the third floor, and all of a sudden he says, "Hugo, they've taken off the railings." We had a very special type of railing on the windows, to enable the children to sit inside the window. Now, they were no longer there in 1946, and he was only eight years old when we left. So he remembered these railings from sitting out in the window. And he's 64 years old, and this

was when he was eight years old. He says, "Look at those windows. They haven't got the railings they had on, we used to sit in." Then we went into the park, which hasn't changed. The trees are there for 100-odd years or more. And he said, "Look, the path used to have gravel on it." Every day they used to rake it. Now it's asphalt. Things like that. And the tennis courts where my mother used to teach tennis, and so, and the ice skating rink. They're all there. So it all brought back vividly these memories: ice cream parlor, sour milk (or what you call buttermilk) stand, which now is concrete, used to be from wood, and so forth. All these little things. Or especially, Czechoslovakia separates between butchers and delicatessens, smoked meat places, which they call {uzenastri}. So we would remember where we used to love going for Czech sausages, all kinds of smoked meat, which we enjoyed very much. Every Czech tends to like that type of food because it's very good. And of course the {konditorai}, sweet cake, pastry shops, which were also very well known.

So we spent three days. We spent a day with the family just outside of Brno, where the Sekals are still alive. You know, the old man Sekal I told you, who used to travel to Poland to bring the letters. He's there. He's married and with his family there. He lives there with his son and with his grandchildren. He's known us since we were born.

Interviewer: You said you had family still there?

Hugo: No. No family. Only this friend. Nobody in Czechoslovakia whatsoever. There may be some Meisls in the telephone book, but not that I know there, because as I said before, it's a name which was written in at least five or six different ways: M-e-i-s-l, M-e-i-s-e-l, M-a-i-s-l. I have an uncle who went to France, who's not alive anymore, who ran away to France as we did to England. And on the border they changed his name from M-e-i-s-l to M-a-i-s-l. So it was like people arriving in the United States, and if they couldn't—

Interviewer: However they could hear it.

Hugo: That's right. That's how they wrote it down, and that became your name.

Interviewer: Did you go to the Jewish cemetery while you were there?

Hugo: We went to the Jewish cemetery in Prague, and of course we went to the Jewish cemetery in Brno. We did the first time. And a very interesting thing that you should mention it, but my grandfather and my grandmother's grave, there are graves of the family there from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, from 1720 or something like that, of the Meisl family.

Interviewer: That must be where I've seen the name, because I went walking through in Brno.

Hugo: Well, three years ago, when we were there the first time in 1990 or '91, we found that the gravestones were behind trees and so forth. We had all the trees cleaned up, and we paid the man there to clean it all up. And on both my grandmother's and grandfather's grave,

there was a picture, a photograph, which is very unusual in Jewish cemeteries. But there were a few in the Brno cemetery who had their photographs. They were brown, very clear photographs. And they were behind what seemed a glass with a brass frame inlaid inside the stone of the gravestone. We came there this time, and we found that somebody had pried open these photographs. One of them was broken in little pieces on the floor. So somebody had either wanted to realize that this was a photograph over 100 years old, wanted to check it, how is it possible that a photograph like this— I took pictures of it the first time, and this time of course the pictures were no longer there. I collected the pieces, I've still got them at home, and see if I can put them together like a jigsaw puzzle.

But otherwise, the Brno cemetery is well preserved compared to other cemeteries we saw in different places. And the book, the original book dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, of handwritten grave positions and locations, still exists. And the man, if you go there, when we went there the first time, he just asked for a name and approximate year when people died, and so forth.

Interviewer: Did you meet with the cantor of Brno, Arno {unintelligible}?

Hugo: No, I didn't. We didn't meet anybody. The only person I met—not this time but the previous time—is a Mr. {Polgar}, who is over 90, I think must be 94. His daughter studied medicine in Brno, and she's younger than myself. She lives in the United States. And her father lives in Brno. He's over 90. He still goes up the stairs when the elevator doesn't work. And we went to visit him the last time we were there, a year ago. And he looks after the *Chevra Kadisha* and goes to shul to make sure that everything's okay. But he wasn't well this time. I phoned him at home, and the lady that looks after him said he wasn't too well, but he is still running and so forth and very active. But he wasn't available to speak on the phone at the time. That's the only Jewish person that I knew.

But we went to Brno, and through a school friend of mine, who we matriculated after the war, when I came from England—

Interviewer: Who was this?

Hugo: Professor {Sklensky}. They're non-Jewish. We graduated from high school together, before going to university. And so I said to him, "I'm ready to— Whoever you can find, let's have a meeting." We hadn't met since 1946. "Can you organize any of our friends from the same class? And I'll invite them for dinner at this-and-this hotel tomorrow night." We met that evening at his home. He runs a hospital. He's a professor of medicine. And he said, "I'll try. And we'll meet at six o'clock." He rang me next morning. The meeting is laid on at this hotel (the Continental Hotel in Brno) at six o'clock in the evening. And my wife and Renee's husband and Rudi (who was alone; his wife didn't come), plus another 14 out of 30-odd, arrived at this hotel for dinner. So it was a very, very interesting meeting, because I recognized everybody.

I think the most interesting part was, when we had finished dinner, a little stubby fellow comes in. Must have weighed 240 pounds. Comes in. I recognized his face. For a moment I couldn't place him. I got up, because I realized that he belonged to the same class. And being lower than me, he sort of hung on me with all this weight, and started kissing me. And in my ear he says, "Hugo, I shall never forgive you. I worked for 15 years in the coal mines because of you." I say, "What are you talking about?" So he says, "You know when you were in the Czech pilots' flying course in {Olimotz} in 1948, you landed in our school." He was in the officers' school, and I was in the sergeant pilots' school. "And you landed at our school, we recognized each other, and I came over to you." (I was an officer already.) "I came over to you and I said, 'Hugo, you've got to organize my getting to Israel and fly for Israel. I want to get out of here.'" And I just had problems with the security because the Communists found out that I had a brother in America, and because I'd written him a letter that I was in this course, I'd spent a whole month in jail, in the air force jail. So this may be an exercise to find out whether I'm now cured of telling people what I'm doing, giving away military secrets. I said, "What are you talking about? I'm not going to Israel. I'm in the flight sergeants' course and I'm here on a navigation flight, and here we met each other and so forth." He says, "Don't give me all that bullshit." He said, "You're going to Israel. I know you are going." I said, "I'm not!"

Anyhow, he reminded me of this story, and I remembered it. He said, "But I didn't go to jail because I spoke to you or because I didn't— You would have saved me, because my big mouth, I got myself into trouble with the Communists." So they really locked me up because I talked too much. And he was always a joker. He made fun. He was like a Shvejk, you know, in *Good Soldier Shvejk*.

Interviewer: What is his name?

Hugo: His name is Nesnal (N-e-s-n-a-l). And he finally, when this turnover came, they reinstated him in the air force and gave him the rank of a brigadier or a full colonel, parallel to what he would have made. And so he pulled out of his pocket a gold pilot's wings from the Czech air force and he said, "This is for you. I brought it especially." So it was a very evening we had.

Interviewer: Do you remember some of the other people's names that were at this meeting?

Hugo: Of the school? Yes, oh yes, I remember. I remember Eva {Klimešova}, whose father was our dentist after the war. He was also a professor at the university. And {Sklensky}, Professor {Sklensky}, and— I've got a whole list and pictures of the whole group. I have a picture of them when we matriculated. So it was very easy for me— And I have the histories. This Professor Sklensky wrote to me and sent me a list of what happened to everybody. The interesting part of it is, in his first letter to me after we met in '91, was he writes, "You were among those—" It's not exactly traitor, but "You left us behind here. You abandoned us." Some sort of a word in Czech which I can't remember now. We correspond in Czech because I speak Czech. We speak Czech at home with my wife; my

wife is Czech as well. So writes in this letter names who left for Australia, and who left for America, and Hugo left for Israel, in this letter. And of course really, this time, he came up with a much better story. He said, "I went through all my documentation and found a picture where, in 1939, when we went to this secondary school, to the high school (or gymnasium, as it's called in Czech), we went through the acceptance examination, you and me together, and we met and we have a picture together as children from 1939. Then we met again in 1946. So not only did you leave," he said, when the Communists came, but you'd also left when the Germans came. And you left us behind here." Here was another one who was telling me, "You left me to get locked up," like Nesnal, and this fellow was telling me, "We suffered through the Germans and we suffered through the Communists." And I said, "Most probably, I wouldn't be here had I stayed here, after all, being Jewish. You had the benefit of the doubt of not being, as far as the Germans were concerned, so you survived the Germans. And I'm not sure whether I would have survived the Communists, with my attitude towards them."

Interviewer: You've had some really interesting reunions in the last few years.

Hugo: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: What year were you born?

Hugo: I was born in October 1928.

Interviewer: In Brno?

Hugo: In Brno, yes.

Interviewer: And what are your parents' names?

Hugo: My father's name was Paul, Pavel Meisl, and my mother was Erna Meisl. My mother's family originally come from a very old Czech family as well, that we went to see in Sušice, which is southwest of Prague. And the name is Kubie (K-u-b-i-e). The only remnants of her family are in the United States, in Albuquerque, who left in 1938. Her father and mother, during the Hapsburgs (we're talking about the pre-Czechoslovak period), left to work in Vienna. Her father was a bank manager. And so my mother was born to this old Czech family in Vienna. And all her brothers and sisters, there were five of them, and they lived in Vienna. My grandmother lived in Vienna too. And my father, during one of the visits from Brno to Vienna (it's only about an hour and a half by car), met my mother in Vienna and brought her back to Brno, where the family lived. So my mother both spoke Czech and German.

Interviewer: What was the language in your home at the time?

Hugo: Czech. We went to Czech schools. The Jews of Brno were divided into basically three groups. Jews that were Czech sent their children to Czech schools and mixed with Czech-speaking Jews, playing bridge or whatever they did. There was a German group who were Czechs but they spoke German, and sent their children to German-speaking schools. One of the big things of Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia, was to allow the minorities to continue speaking their languages and so forth. So in Slovakia, people spoke German and Hungarian and so on. And the third group was a group of Jews— Well, there were actually four groups. They call themselves Czechs without any religion. In fact, there was no religion mentioned. They call themselves *bez vyznání*, “nonbelievers” if you like. What was the reason behind it, and whether they stayed *bez vyznání* after Hitler, I’m not sure. I think a lot of them came back to Judaism.

One of the very interesting parts was that in this school of 120, we thought the majority were non-Jewish in England, during the war. At this reunion, having come from Israel, and they came from all over the world, all of a sudden we found out that a lot of them, who had been baptized and so forth, came originally from Jewish families. And now they came to this reunion and said, “My father and mother were Jewish,” and so forth and so on, “although I was brought up as a Catholic or as a Protestant or whatever.”

Interviewer: Because of their placements?

Hugo: Because of their placements, because of their parents trying to protect these children. They came from Sudetenland, and in order to protect them they converted. People started worrying about Hitler and Nazism from 1933 or perhaps even '32.

Interviewer: What is your first recollection of Nazism?

Hugo: Oh, it’s very vivid for two reasons. Number one, the arguments between my mother and father, which I heard. In the meantime, my mother’s family had gone to the United States from Vienna, because Hitler was already in Vienna. So there was the argument between my father, who said, “If they are going to destroy us, the Czech Jews— We’re here as long as they are. The Nazis, if they come, would have to destroy all the Czechs as well. So I’ve got nothing to worry about. I fought against the Germans with the Czech armies in Russia in World War I.”

Interviewer: So he felt immune.

Hugo: And my believed everything that Hitler said he would do. And she saw what happened to her family. They had to leave for the United States. So “Let’s all go to the United States.” My father said, “I’m not leaving here.” He says, “I have nothing to worry about. I’m a good Czech Jew, and I’m a good Czech, first of all.” So that was one.

And then when Hitler marched into Czechoslovakia, the most interesting part was, our school, the elementary school (we were in the top class in the elementary school when

Hitler came in, 1939, as you say, March), Hitler drove through Brno in an open car with the army marching and whatever vehicles there were. And we were forced by the school to stand alongside, opposite the school, and supposedly cheer Hitler as he drove through town. So I was no further than what it takes from the middle of a road (which in that part of Brno is no more than 10 meters from the middle), 10 meters from him when he passed by, saluting. And I remember very, very vividly. We must have been standing for an hour or two. You know, you don't know exactly when he will be arriving. And during this period, among the schoolchildren there were schoolchildren who arrived in short leather trousers, white socks with green petals, with green bands, which was the German youth who later on became the Hitler Youth, among the Czechs. And I remember the kids from my class taking mud and rubbing—as kids; we were 10-11 years old—rubbing mud and throwing mud onto these— For us, they were traitors. So these are two very vivid memories.

And then from the Kindertransport, I remember getting on the train and being locked into the train. I don't know whether anybody remembers, but the last transport (I don't know what happened to the previous ones), this train had only children. There were no grownups. There were no supervisors. So the oldest one in each cabin took care of the children that were in the compartment. And I remember them putting lead seals on the doors before the train left, and we were told we're not to open the windows either. And this train was the train that went through Germany to Holland, where we were to get on a boat. And the train did not stop many times, because it was a train most probably of enormous schedule. But finally it stopped. We had sandwiches and I think maybe— That, I don't remember. But I do remember very clearly the train stopping in Leipzig, and they opened the train for the first time. They opened the sealed train for the first time. And on the platform were standing wooden tables with ladies and people behind the tables. And on the tables were sandwiches and hot drinks or soup, and I don't remember if it was soup, but there were hot drinks and the sandwiches. And nobody seemed to want to get out, although we were all very hungry. We'd been two days at least in the train, or something like that. And then somebody came and said that this is a Jewish organization in Leipzig (in 1939, the Jews were still—) that had organized this food for us. And so we then went out and we had sandwiches. And we were put back into the train, very short time. The stop was very short. Put back into the train, the train was sealed, and it wasn't opened until we crossed the— And I remember crossing the German border into Holland. The Dutch police came and opened everything, and you could open the windows, and so on and so forth, and “You will be arriving at such-and-such a time at Ostend or whatever we were intended to—

[change tape]

Hugo: —vis-à-vis my brother, a sort of patriarch position. And I took it very seriously. So maybe because of that, instead of somebody taking care of me, I was taking care of somebody else. So I remembered more of these things than my brother did. So I was very surprised on this trip when my brother remembered the railings and the park and so forth, and certain other things he remembered. So this was a very interesting trip for him, and very, very traumatic in the sense that it was the first time that some connection between

his parents and his past came together, because he had absolutely no memory of anything that had gone on whilst we were in Brno, although he went back in 1946, which was only 46 years, 48 years.

Interviewer: How did it impact on him, not having this connection with his past and his parents?

Hugo: I think it's always been a difficult psychological problem for not only him but anybody. I think for Tommy, Professor Tommy Bergman, I think for him it was also a very, very traumatic experience, because he didn't remember anything about his past. He didn't remember the family who he was sent to in England. And only as a result of Nicholas Winton's lists did he find out the address where he was, and he went there and found, I think, the children of these people, still alive. So I think that not remembering is sometimes more frustrating than remembering. I think it affects your life greatly, especially when you meet people that remember, and you seem to have a complete—

It sometimes worries me when somebody says to me, "I met you when you were four years old," or something like that. I remember arriving in Israel as a pilot, with a friend of mine whose family also lived in Brno. And we went to look for an uncle of mine, who had gone to Israel. He was a very unique case. He was sent to Dachau as a socialist or whatever, from Vienna, and he was locked up in Dachau. And somehow his papers arrived to go to Israel, to Palestine at that time. And he was released from Dachau in 1938-39, which very few people were. And he came to Israel, and I went looking for him. And I had the address that he lived at 133 Ben-Yehuda Street in Tel-Aviv. So I came to 133—I was in uniform, my friend was in uniform. And we didn't know what apartment. There were six or eight apartments in the building. We knocked on the first door downstairs. I knocked on the door and I said, "Excuse me, but does {Bertolt} Kubie live here?" And the lady looks at me and says, "Hugo Meisl!" Like this. And I didn't know what it was all about. And of course "Come in, come in! Leave Bertolt alone. Come in, come in. How is Rudi?" and so on and so forth. It comes to light, the last time she saw me was when I was six years old. She was my mother's first cousin from Vienna, from Sušice originally, who went to Bamberg, which is Germany, and came to Israel with her husband in 1933. I was five years old. 1928, 1933. The last time she saw me and my brother was in 1933, before they left for Israel. Now, you tell me, how does a person recognize somebody who's 20 years old—that's 15 years later—from a child of five to a man in uniform who's 20 years old? Okay, she had a cue from the fact that I said Bertolt Kubie. But not really. She had no idea where I was. She thought I was in England. They didn't know I went back to Czechoslovakia, certainly didn't know I was coming as a pilot to Israel. So there are coincidences like that.

Interviewer: What was the profession of your father?

Hugo: My grandfather had two stores in Brno. One was with toys, a toy shop, and the other was a boutique for very special items for men and for ladies.

Interviewer: What was your grandfather's name?

Hugo: Meisl. Rudolf Meisl. Yes, Rudolf Meisl. My brother Rudi is named after him, and I'm named Hugo after my grandfather from my mother's side, after Hugo Kubie. I had abolition but he died before I was born. Actually he died at the age of three or four, with a chicken bone stuck in his throat. So anyhow— And stores. One was on *Kobřižná*; Renee's father ran that store, Walter Meisl, who was the cantor. And our store was at number one *Masarykova Ulice*, which is the main street which runs from the station up to the square, *Náměstí Svobody*. Okay? And it's in the first building on the left-hand side. Today, number one *Masarykova*, which was the Meisl store (my father and my mother sometimes worked, helped out in the store), is today a big sort of coffee shop/restaurant in that building. Okay? And my uncle's store, which was a radio store afterwards when we were there three years ago, the whole building, because these are all protected buildings, the façade of the building is kept, maintained, and inside they're modernizing the building. So Renee couldn't see the old portal of her store, which I saw in '91. It was exactly the way it was when we left.

Interviewer: How did your parents come to learn about the Kindertransport? Do you know?

Hugo: Yes, not only do I know, but I have all the documentation. My father had a friend in London who he had corresponded with. And through him, they made contact with a rabbi. I think his name was Rabinowitz. Anyhow, I have the documents at home. And he found a family who was willing— In this Winton scheme, Winton had to look for families, foster parents who were willing to put, I think, 50 pounds down for the visa, and a guarantee until the age of 16. You must have heard this from Barazetti and Nicholas Winton. And through this Rabbi Rabinowitz from the Cricklewood Synagogue, they found a family for us. And I have a card in my files from this rabbi, who writes to my father in a very arrogant type of a short postcard in which he says, "I have arranged this for your children," to come to England and so forth. "I don't want you to be telling anybody about what I've done, because I don't want all the Jews of Brno turning to me for help." More or less, these are the words. It's obviously in English, so it's easy to— I don't remember the exact wording, but that's the message. Okay?

Anyhow, three {Tomašev} boys from Brno—their mother is still alive; she's the one that I mentioned in my speech at Bill Barazetti's— You've read that document?

Interviewer: No, I hadn't seen that.

Hugo: I think I have a copy here. I'll let you. Remind me. She is 94 years old and she's in an old age home in Jerusalem. And out of the three boys, one fell during the fighting in Jerusalem. They were with us in England during the war. But they went back immediately after the war because their parents, after they left with us in the Kindertransport, their parents got out to Palestine. So they were very lucky. And Felix, the older one, died in the fighting in Jerusalem in 1948. Second brother became a very famous lawyer in Chicago. He was also an economist.

Interviewer: What was his name?

Hugo: Tomašev. Irving Tomašev. He worked for a very large legal firm in Chicago. There were about 400 partners there, and he was one of the senior partners. He died a few years ago. And his third brother was a judge until a few months ago at the court in Beersheba. A lawyer, of course, and then he became a judge. His name is {Willi Tomaševo, Aron Tomašov}. And he's now retired. He lives here in Tel Aviv. And I think I gave you—

Interviewer: Yes, I tried to reach him. He never answered.

Hugo: I think he's abroad. I spoke to his mother last night, who's 94 years old, and found out that he's abroad with his wife.

Getting back to the question, your question was: What do we remember? So we arrived in London at Liverpool Street Station, very early in the morning. And all the children but ourselves were picked up by the foster parents who came to meet the train. And we were still there at 10:30 in the evening, sitting on four suitcases, two suitcases each, standard size that were given. (I think somewhere I still have the old suitcase. I've kept it as a memento.) And at Liverpool Street Station in those days, the cabs drew up to the platform. On one side was the train, there was the platform, and the cabs could drive in and pull up right opposite the carriages. And about 10:30 in the evening, a taxi driver gets out of his cab (we're watching these cabs), comes up and says, "I've seen you here all day." He said, "What are you waiting for?" We said, "We don't know. We're supposed to be picked up."

Interviewer: Could you speak English?

Hugo: I spoke a few words because I took a year's English before. I had a private teacher my parents arranged, so I spoke a few—I was the only one that spoke a few words of English. Anyhow he said, "You must be very hungry," and I said we are. So he put the four suitcases in his cab, and I must say this. He took us to a fish and chips shop, and I don't think I've ever enjoyed a meal more than the fish and chips. Chips, we were not used to in Czechoslovakia, and of course we didn't fry fish like that. If they did fry it as a schnitzel, it would be served cold. Here it was hot with vinegar, and I shall never forget that. And this man, this taxi driver, takes us to his home in a very high—It must have been ten stories or more, to his apartment, to maybe a two-room apartment, in other words a bedroom plus a living room. He had a small baby. And for three days, three nights, we spent in this taxi driver's (who's not Jewish) home.

Now, what did he do? We can check from the dates back what the third of August 1939 was, which is a month before the war, we arrived. But he started taking us in the morning to Jewish hostels, to see if they would take us in. At this time I still did not know why nobody came to pick us up.

Interviewer: And you didn't have a name or address or anything?

Hugo: No. We didn't have a name because I think that one of the things was not to give away— I don't know what the reason was. We did not have a name. Later on, I found that I had in my notebook my father prepared, this Rabinowitz' address. But I didn't find that out till— A lot of things my father wrote. I still have the notebook, where he says how much money is, what are shillings, and this and so forth, pennies.

Anyhow, to cut a long story short, this man goes from hostel to hostel in London—and he knew quite a number, as a taxi driver—mainly religious ones. And none of the hostels would take us in because it was a Friday or Saturday. We had money in our pockets. We weren't dressed as religious children, and these were religious homes. Finally on the third day he got us into a German hostel which were Kindertransport children in Cricklewood, in Shoot Up Hill in north of London, where all the children were from Germany except the five of us. By the way, what I'm telling you happened to five of us. So all {five of us} went and slept on the floor and the beds and so with this man. And the five of us arrived at this hostel in Cricklewood, which accepted us. And we were there until the war started, of course, and we were very quickly, during the first month (maybe October) evacuated out of London because of the bombing to Bedford. And then we again separated.

But my vivid recollection of what happened at this hostel is contrary to the letters which I'm writing to my parents, in which I'm writing that every day we are fighting with the Germans. We don't call them German Jews, you see. They are Germans; they speak German. We are Czech; we speak Czech. We understand German. But Czechoslovakia and Germany and Austria and Hungary didn't have a strife between Jews. We were nationalistically Czech. So to us, these were Germans; and to them, we were Czechs. I mean, any Slav for the Germans was an *Untermensch*. They all were exposed, till a few weeks before that, to the whole— They were most probably our age, so born in 1928, 1927, 1930, and from '33 they'd been under Hitler. So these letters show there was a continuous strife, and I should look after Baby (which was Rudi, my brother, and so forth). And this correspondence is very, very difficult to read now, when you realize how little you write. For every seven letters, maybe I write one. You know, that sort of thing. Every day we would receive a letter which was written practically every day by my mother and father. I maybe send one back and so on, that sort of thing, which is natural for children when you look at them. I can't get my grandchildren to write a letter to anybody. And here I was. You know.

Interviewer: How did you get the letters that your mother had received?

Hugo: This Sekal that I told you about in Brno, when my parents were taken by the Gestapo to the concentration camp—

Interviewer: They were taken to Theresienstadt first?

Hugo: Yes, everybody went. They were a very short time. According to my cousin, they were there only about a week or so. But I have documents showing when they arrived, when they left, and so forth.

Interviewer: Was that in '41, they were taken?

Hugo: Yes. When the ghetto opened, I think. Well, the first Brno transports, they went, because they were without children. And my cousin went maybe a little later, and so on. But I'd have to look up documents to give you exact details.

The question was: How was everything preserved. Let me tell you this. Tonda Sekal, who lived together with us in our summer house outside of Brno, dug a hole in the garden, made a concrete chamber under the grass in the garden, took everything out of the home (because my parents were taken away at night, so everything was left), within the same day he took everything—furniture, clothing, money, jewelry—everything that was there, put them onto a truck, transported it to {Želkovice}, which is about five miles, ten miles out of town, put it into this hole, which he had prepared, because it was happening to a lot of Jews, most probably in coordination with my mother, closed it up, sealed it, and put the grass on top. And he had a slit there in which, when letters arrived from us, he would drop these letters in there. And when we came back in 1945, he opened up everything. And so we took the furniture out and my father's clothing. The money was there from 1939, and all the jewelry—which I left most of it behind, because when I left, the Communists were in power. We weren't allowed to take anything out. So I gave them the furniture. We sold some of the furniture. We had a very expensive bedroom, which was an antique from the palace of Franz Josef in Vienna, which we sold to get enough money for Rudi to go to America in 1946. So he's responsible for the fact. And of course I kept all the letters which I had from my parents, because I was organized. So I had both sides. I had my letters which I'd sent to my parents—

Interviewer: That's very unusual.

Hugo: Yes. So I have the two stories, and I have the file, and—

Interviewer: Both of your parents perished?

Hugo: Yes.

Interviewer: In Auschwitz?

Hugo: No. Both my parents died in Poland. My mother, in the extermination of one of the complete working camps that were near Auschwitz. And my father, in an extermination program in a camp near Lublin. The death certificates issued by the Czech courts after the war were based on hearsay. There are no documents. At least until now, I have no document except the court says that according to the last witness, he was seen, or was left

behind, during the extermination program in such-and-such a place. And my mother was known to have been working in the vicinity, on the grounds of a Polish farmer named so-and-so, and the camp was annihilated, and no further evidence of her being alive is. So that such-and-such a date is considered to be the official date of death.

Interviewer: How did you learn this about your parents?

Hugo: After the war, we came back in 1945. There was a process in which you would apply for a death certificate. So the courts would ask among the people who returned. They would interrogate people who were in these places, and they followed through. The Germans kept a record of everything until a certain point. So you knew where people arrived, according to German documentation. Especially the camps that were destroyed when the Russian armies were advancing, they were afraid. They were destroying camps so there would be no evidence left of what the Germans did. So of course those dates are not recorded. So they know the dates from the records of the Germans, when people arrived at certain camps, when they arrived in Terezin, when they left Terezin, what transport they went to, on what date exactly. Germans were very meticulous about all this information.

Interviewer: Did you first have to check the Red Cross lists of survivors?

Hugo: That, we checked in England already. Yes. And of course every day people were arriving. In '45 till forty— I never gave up, in spite of the death certificate. I see films of war documentaries and I look perhaps that in one of the pictures I will see them. I thought perhaps, during the Communist period, that they were taken to Siberia or Russia by the Russians, and that they're just not able to communicate. It took me, I would say, I don't think till late seventies that I came to realize, when messages were coming that people were coming from Russia, Jews were arriving in Israel, that I realized that had they been alive, any one of them, they would have found ways of communicating with Brno, with the Sekals, because they were alive. That was the focal point.

My mother was a very tough lady. So I could never understand how she didn't find ways, because she was the one for getting out and so forth. So I said, if anybody should survive— My father, being a high-ranking officer in the Czech army in World War I and so forth, and afterwards as well, was a person who listened to what he was told. He would never look for any ways of circumventing any orders or regulations. My mother was practical, and she could fix electricity and everything. She was a very, very— like yourself. You set it up and know exactly which plug to put into the video and so on. My mother was like that. So I was expecting, when people ran away and so forth, and organized something to get away, I would have expected my mother to survive. But—

Interviewer: Have you talked to anybody that knew her in any of these camps?

Hugo: Couldn't find anybody. No. I did find someone who was with my father a certain time. They went through the Warsaw ghetto. The transport went through the Warsaw ghetto, and I met somebody in 1946 who claimed that they were standing next to each other, and he remembered very clearly because the name of Meisl, and he was from Brno, and so he remembered very clearly that it was my father, because it was a very well known family because of the cantor Meisl and because of the stores.

Interviewer: Was your family a religious family at all?

Hugo: My uncle, Walter, I think was the only one who was religious in the sense that he went to shul every day and so forth. But my father wasn't, nor was my mother, although my father, every Friday night, my mother baked bread, challah, and we had a service at home on Friday night, and we went to the shul on high holidays and so forth. And every Friday, my father would check progress in Hebrew, which of course we had a Hebrew teacher to teach us how to read, both of us. And in that sense, yes. But we didn't have a kosher home or anything like that. I would say definitely not on my mother's side, because my mother, from the age of 18 or 19, participated in major swimming contests and so forth. She was a very good swimmer, and my uncle was as football player (the one that's in Albuquerque), played for a very good team in Vienna. And till this day (he must be 78 or something like that) he still skis like a *meshuggeneh*, you know, and plays tennis and so on.

Interviewer: Did you have a lot of family that you associated with while you were in Brno? Was it a close-knit extended family?

Hugo: No, I don't think so. No, because the family came in the 17<sup>th</sup> century or beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup>, came to Brno from Prague. And who came [from] Brno [to] Prague, out of that I know that my father had three brothers: Walter, Bruno (who died in 1936, having been 18 years in hospital as a result of World War I injuries), and Oskar, who was the oldest, was killed during World War I. The rest of the family stayed in Prague. They came to Brno. My mother's family lived in Vienna because the parents were working in Vienna, and my mother came to Brno with my father when he married her. So her part of the family was not in Brno. So we were basically around two families, Renee with her father and mother. There were cousins and aunties and uncles, the Kubies, that were in Brno. They had factories and so forth. But they were cousins, not direct family. One of them got out into Scotland in 1939, and also had three sons. They were my mother's cousins, and they got out. And the older people in the family, the uncles and so forth, they went to the gas chambers. They didn't come back.

So there's nobody left, neither of the Meisls or the Kubies, in Czechoslovakia. And there is no Meisl left for generations to come, as a Jew, which is a very interesting thing. The other Meisl that I told you got out to France— I had daughters and my brother had daughters, so there are no Meisls from this part of the family. Renee had a daughter, and she married, so she's not a Meisl. She married into an Italian Catholic family. Okay? Her name is Susan {Filingeri}. So she's not going to have any Meisls. The only Meisl is my

father's cousin, Oskar Meisl (another Oskar), who got out to Paris. When the Germans started there, looking for Jews, somehow through the Catholic church he married by proxy with a Catholic lady. And when the Germans started checking whether these proxies were real marriages, they had to live together, and a son was born. And Herbert Meisl was the boy that was born. And of course, born under the Germans, he wasn't going to be brought up as Jewish, with a father who was saved by the Catholic church, so he was brought up as a non-Jew. And the marriage broke up after the war. My uncle, until his death, lived alone. And Herbert Meisl became a prominent professor at the Sorbonne University, and visited Israel and us. He looks like ten Jews but he's not Jewish. And he married a Protestant, which is Catholic and Protestant. They divorced since then, but they had three children. And one of them is Fabian Meisl. And he's obviously not Jewish. So the only Meisl that's continuing this thousand-year-old family is going to be in this particular framework of the Meisls (because there may be other Meisls far related), there are going to be no Jewish boys. And my grandsons carry the name of their mother. So that's "the last of the Mohicans."

Interviewer: Were your most of your friends in Brno non-Jewish, or was it a Jewish community?

Hugo: Oh no. Non-Jewish. You mean after the war, or now at this reunion?

Interviewer: I'm talking about in '38, before you left. Were you associated mostly with Jewish or non-Jewish?

Hugo: Both, both. If you're speaking about the family, both Jewish and non-Jewish. As you know, the Sekals were not Jewish, and my father had friends from the army that were non-Jewish. And of course we also knew the entire Jewish community. It wasn't that big in Brno. It was a large community, and my father and my uncle were prominent members of that community, well known and so on. B'nai B'rith and so on.

Interviewer: Weren't there several synagogues there at the time?

Hugo: Oh yes, yes. The synagogue which we attended, where the Meisl cantor was the cantor in, was destroyed by the Communists, destroyed in the sense that another building was put up.

Interviewer: Which synagogue was that?

Hugo: It's opposite the *Koliště*. It was in the yard. It was quite a big synagogue, but it was opposite the *Koliště*, which is the area in which the theater is in, that grass where the new theater was built. The new theater, which they call now the State Theater, where the opera is located and so on.

Interviewer: That's the one behind the old theater?

- Hugo: Yes. So right opposite that, looking not to the north but the south, behind a row of buildings, you went through a large— Most of the buildings— You’ve been to Czechoslovakia. There are many homes which you go through a drive, and you come to a beautiful home inside, whereas the outside street, the main street, is nothing. So it was one of these buildings.
- Interviewer: Where were the other synagogues. I think there were three synagogues?
- Hugo: There was another large one which we sometimes attended at high holidays, which was burned, I think destroyed. I didn’t go to see it even, this time.
- Interviewer: Where was that one located? Do you remember? Is that on the other side of the track?
- Hugo: Of the railway? No. On this side, not far away from— It was on the other side of *Cejl*, I would have to look at a map. I remember every street that I go through. I remember the name when I drive through it. I can drive through Brno without a map, although there are some changes. The street which was called Legionarska is now called {Stabni Kapitan}, named after some soldier who fell during World War II, I would assume.
- Interviewer: Did you say your family had a car at that time? Automobile?
- Hugo: My uncle had a car. Walter Meisl had a car. First of all, my father was against driving, and my mother— We lived above the park, and she taught tennis 50 yards from the home, so she didn’t need one. And the tram ran from behind our block and stopped right outside the store. So my father said, “Where will I park on *Masarykova*?” which is the main street. There’s no parking there, not even today and not in those days. The tram lines ran maybe ten yards from the front of the store. And the same applied to *Koblišné*. So the only reason that my uncle had a car was to go out on trips. But during the week there was no use for it. And we had very good friends in the house who lived below us, the {Wittmans}, who had a very large car. We could get seven people in there. It was a cabriolet, you know, one of those old— So no.
- Interviewer: So how did you go from Brno to Prague when you eventually took the train?
- Hugo: By train. My mother decided she couldn’t take it. We’re not going to be away for very long. So she stayed in Brno. We said goodbye to her. And the five boys and the two fathers and an uncle of mine (who didn’t come back from concentration camp) went to Prague. And we spent two or three days. It was our first trip to Prague. So we spent looking at the castle and so forth, and all the wonderful things about Prague, and had some pictures taken, of which I still have a picture of the five of us with the fathers. And then they took us to the train.
- Interviewer: Did you have all your documents by this time, before you went there?

Hugo: Oh yes. Everything was arranged. In fact, I have the letter, the card, saying what time, what train was departing. I think I have the tickets from the train ride from Brno to Prague. [interruption] I think I have to get back to work.

Interviewer: Oh, I didn't realize it was this late. You have so much information, I could spend hours talking to you. But we'll have to do it another time.

Hugo: Another time. That's right.

Interviewer: But I really appreciate it. It's extraordinary how much information you have. I would like to know if it's possible to get photocopies of some of these documents you have. You have a wealth of documentation.

Hugo: When are you coming back to Israel?

Interviewer: I don't know. If we get our funding, then I'll be back earlier. If I don't, then who knows?

[End of Interview]