

Interview with Tati
By Mami & Vivian

Tati: I want to give you on tape story of my family and of the roots of my ancestors as good as I can remember. I was born in Prague. At that time Austria on June 26, 1913 to Otto Glaser and Marie Glaser born Glaser. My grandparents had in total, 4 children, Otto who was married to my mother, Ida, Emma and Berta. Ida was married to Simon Lang, a cousin of Berta's husband who was a good for nothing and an alcoholic. Emma was married in Vienna to a small time bookkeeper named Adolf Knufelmaher and Berta was married to Alfred Lang who was a wholesaler and surveyor of the Czech army of livestock. Simon and Berta had two children, Mitzi who was about 6 years older than I am and Walter who was about 2 years older than I am. Ida had 2 daughters, Valy and Erna, both older than I am and we will refer to this later. Emma in Vienna didn't have any children.

I do not know much about my grandfather. I think he was a merchant of produce and made quite a good living. My grandmother I practically did not know. She died during WWI.

Now, for the second generation. My father who was married to Marie Glaser had 2 children, myself and my sister, Annie, who was born on April 27, 1923. About the earlier years of my father, I do not know much but there was an uncle, not quite an uncle. I think a cousin of my grandfather with the name of Morris Glaser who had a very well established representative business of textiles. He was married to Regina and I don't remember neither of them. They had a son who had the misfortune to be born a cripple, with a shorter leg which was bent at the knee and later on after puberty he was operated and the leg was straightened but it always remained short and he had to have special shoes on this foot which at this time was very uncomfortable because the high soles, about 20 cm I would say, were all made of leather and therefore very heavy.

Uncle Morris took a liking to my father and took him under his protection and he was the ...helped with everything having to do with Willy (in Czech)

Mami: He helped with everything having to do with Willy; who was Willy?

Tati: ...his son

Mami: His son, wasn't it like a clubfoot what he had?

Tati: I don't know if it was a clubfoot, maybe it was a clubfoot. And while they were both unmarried they took trips in a carriage with two horses and went often to Austria and to Ischle.

Mami: What do you mean both unmarried? your uncle was widowed at that time or what?

Tati: My father was not yet married.

Mami: Oh you were not speaking about Willy?

Tati: Willy was my uncle.

Mami: Oh I see.

Tati: So my father helped Willy inHe was taken into the firm of my uncle, of his uncle, Morris and was the chief salesman.

Mami: In other words, it was this uncle Morris was to your father like Uncle Charles is to Danny, right?

Tati: Not quite, my father was made a silent partner in the firm which means that he was not a shareholder but that he lent money at a fixed rate and got his interest paid every 3 or 6 months. Both my father and my uncle married before the war. My father in 1911 and my uncle about the same time.

Mami: You are talking about your uncle Willy, the one with the foot. Okay.

Tati: And at the same time, and the textile business prospered and my father made a very good income. After the end of WWI the territory of the business was sharply reduced and they couldn't sell to the former territories of the Austrian monarchy but only to the Czechoslovakian Republic. Business was not too good but my father made a good living and we had a good life. Suddenly and unexpectedly in 1934 Uncle Willy committed suicide and it turned out that there were debts in the amount of more than 1 million and a half crowns which at that time was an enormous....

Mami: Well, it was equivalent to \$1,500,000.00, let's put it that way, as far as buying power was concerned which was a huge amount.

Tati: My father lost all the money he had in the firm which was a quarter of a million crowns and he continued working but the financial situation was getting worse

Mami: Did he have to pay off all of his debts of his uncle, he didn't have to pay it off...no.

Tati: Before I start to continue with my life and my sister's life I would like to tell you something about my mother's family. My mom was a born Glaser and had 3 brothers and sisters, that means 2 brothers and 1 sister. She was the oldest, then came Hugo who first was in the grain business of my grandfather. Then came Max who studied law in Vienna and the youngest was Mila who married Mr. Friedlander in Sadtz. In order that you children can related to all these people, ...I want to tell you that Hugo was the father of Peter Glaser actually in Boston and Max is the father of Frank Glaser married to DeDe who both you know and the daughter Liza Teyerived who lives actually in Philadelphia. Mila immigrated first to England and then to Canada and she and her husband lived to a ripe age. Her daughter Lilli was married to Mr. Gold, who died very young and she remarried Mr. Schwartz.

Mami: And together, I believe, they had 7 children, mine and yours, none of theirs, and they still live in Canada, don't they? Yes. Could you describe a little bit now your and Annie's life, I mean after the war Annie was born after the war I believe in 1923. I think it would be interesting if you could, a little bit, describe your life and Annie's life because it so happened I knew Annie and I

remember how we always envied her because she got to know, got to go to parties where of course we normal mortals never went because we didn't have the fortune to have a 10 year old brother who would have dragged us all over the place which you did and I think it would be very nice if you would describe a little bit of your life.

Tati: Yes. Annie was born in 23 and 10 years younger then I am had a very good life until '34. In '34 my father lost his fortune and besides was very ill was operated on I suspect cancer of the colon but there was no cancer and in '34 she was only 11 years. She went to high school until fourth grade and after that as my parents couldn't afford to send her to a college, she went to home economics school which taught her about how to

Mami: How to conduct your household and sewing and all this but if she went 4 years to high school she still would have had 4 more years to go because in Prague the high school was 8 years and your parents didn't have to afford anything because it was a public high school, you didn't pay practically anything.

Tati: That's true but it was decided not...

Mami: She probably preferred to go to her home...it was like today in a high school, in an American high school you take high school subjects which they had in that school...I know because it was the school next to us in Vodichkova, (Tati says no) but anyhow, so it was the German part of it. But they still had high school subjects and they had more, it was geared more towards home economics. Okay.

Tati: As she had an older brother she had the opportunity which other girls her age didn't have because I could take her along to parties which otherwise she wouldn't have been able to attend.

Mami: Well it was not so much of course because other brothers wouldn't have taken their sister, you did.

Tati: Yes I did because our relationship was exceptionally well and we loved each other very much.

Mami: Yeah, that's true and I think your love was not only like a brother but at certain times also like a father because you were very protective towards her. True? You graduated from a law school in 1937 right?

Tati: Correct. That's right.

Mami: Okay, what did you do after your graduation?

Tati: After my graduation I went for 3 months to France, first to the University of Tours, in Poitiers..which at that and at that time had a summer course in La Rochelle.

Mami: Well don't tell me that you only studied while you were in France. You were definitely not the type who only studied in France.

Tati: No I didn't only study. I had a very good time. I met a very nice and good looking Swedish girl and we fell in love with each other and promised to meet in Paris after a few weeks.

Mami: Whom else did you meet when you came to La Rochelle?

Tati: This, when I came to La Rochelle was a big coincidence because the Swedish girl and her girl friend, another Swede, took me the very first day to the beach and there we met a young Frenchman which presented himself with the name of Pierre Huguenot whose father had one of the biggest sardine exporting business in France. Mr. Huguenot asked me are you from Prague? and I said yes and he said I know a sole person from Prague, her name is Dolly Ziv..., I said that is a very, very close friend of mine. This is a coincidence but I will tell you something I don't know anybody in Paris but I was recommended to visit Annique Wool and I phoned her, the butler told me that they are not in Paris, that they are on trip to the North and they will come back and be at their villa at the Cote d'Azur.

Mami: So what did Mr. Huguenot say when you told him about Annique?

Tati: Mr. Huguenot was perplexed because he told me that this is an incredible coincidence because Annique Wool is my fiancée and later on about 3-4 weeks later

Mami: Did you already finish your course?

Tati: After I finished the course I went to the Cote d'Azur and Pierre recommended the hotel where I stayed for just one night and took me to the villa of the Wools in Cap Serat. I stayed there for 10 days and I had the good fortune to win a lot of money in the casino of Monte Carlo and I spent all the money, giving a party to all the young people who were in the Wools house, about 12 people. I can assure you it cost me exactly what I won.

Mami: What happened after you came back from France in 1937 could you start practicing your law or what happened?

Tati: When I came back in '37 in September, I had to start my military service on October 1st.

Mami: Was it obligatory in Czechoslovakia?

Tati: This was obligatory...

Mami: How long did it last?

Tati: 24 months. And in the meantime Hitler came, the army was dissolved end of April

Mami: 1939.

Tati: 1939 on the 30th of April, I was back to civil life and at that time I couldn't get an official permit to leave Czechoslovakia and although my uncle Friedlander tried to persuade me to go with

him illegally to Poland I remained in Prague because I believed ,of course wrongly, that I could be of help to my parents and my sister.

Mami: Did anybody from your family leave then? So uncle Hugo with Aunt Hella and Peter left illegally through Poland right?

Tati: No, they left legally & to England in 1939.

Mami: It must have been before the war broke out then, before September 1st, right?

Tati: It was before September 1st.

Mami: ...1939...Now what happened to Max and Annie who already had their 2 children, Frank and Lizel and where in Vienna in 1938 did they leave immediately after the Anschluss of Hitler?

Tati: They left in '38 and made a short stopover at the airport in Prague and went to England and stayed in England for a short time and from there they went to New Zealand and made a very poor living because the worse profession to have for immigration is to be a lawyer.

Mami: That's true. Now what happened to when did the Friedlander's leave and where to?

Tati: The Friedlander's left in 3 parts. The first part was Lilly who went with a youth transport to England. Then in '39 Milla left officially to England.

Mami: Also before the war started.

Tati: Also before the war started and ...

Mami: ...her husband?

Tati: Her husband left to England over Poland...

Mami: Illegally.

Tati: In June '39

Mami:I see. From your father's part, there were lot of people who also left.

Tati: There were not so many people.

Mami: But there were some people from your father's part of the family who left. So my question is why didn't the 4 of you try to leave also?

Tati: Look. My father didn't have any money outside and he believed like many others that the war will be short.

Mami: Yeah. And over in half a year. Like my father, exactly.

Tati: I didn't leave for stupid, sentimental reasons.

Mami: No. That I understand. I don't think you that you would have felt right if you would have left and your whole family would have perished. I really don't believe that. Now, wasn't there ever a consideration that you and Annie could have gone to England with the youth transport? I mean, Annie could have gone, because she was young enough and you could have either gone illegally through Poland or get in legally. You never gave it any consideration.

Tati: No. I didn't give it any consideration and Annie did not get into a youth transport.

Mami: When did you get married to Lisa, your first wife?

Tati: I got married to Lisa when the transports started to Terezin which was in September '41.

Mami: And then both of you left together when you were put into the transport in 1942, in December?

Tati: No, not at all.

Mami: So, how was it?

Tati: Not at all. We left together for Teresienstadt. But in Teresienstadt we separated and lived apart and after we had the good fortune to return after the war, we divorced. After the war, I lived the life of a, I would say, the nearest thing is playboy. In Prague, they called it "slata mladsh" (silver youth). I worked. I had three very good and high-salaried jobs

Mami: Not at the same time

Tati: Not at the same time. One after the other. And whatever money I made, I spent because after the concentration camp nobody was to the point of saving money, but just living up for the lost years in the KZ.

Mami: Which I strongly object to. It was definitely your group. But that group didn't need the war for it, they lived like that before the war also.

Tati: Not quite

Mami: Oh, come on Bully. My group wasn't anywhere near to free. From my group everybody married, then they divorced.

Tati: Ti si miela pomier.

Vivian: Interview Guide and Questionnaire. Pre-War Conditions. Please tell us your name, and the city and country in which you were born.

Tati: Herbert Glaser. Born in Prague, Bohemia. 26/6/1913, at that time still Austria.

Vivian: Could you describe those who comprised your household before the war?

Tati: Before the war. Yes. My parents and my sister.

Vivian: Well, could you tell us a little bit more about them, their names

Tati: My father Otto, my mother Marie, and my sister Annie

Vivian: Could you tell me about your family's social status and educational background?

Tati: My father had only something which was called "burgershule" which was the lower part of high school. My mother had a baccalaureat. My sister only 4 class of high school and then went to a school for household science

Vivian: Home Economics. And what did your father do?

Tati: My father was a silent partner of the firm of Morris Glaser who was an uncle of his and he was the main salesman in the firm.

Vivian: What kind of a company was it?

Tati: This was a company which sold textiles and were representatives of textile mills in Bohemia and before the war in Austria and Germany.

Vivian: And can you tell us a little bit about your family's social status?

Tati: My parents were strictly middle class and were not rich people. My father was very generous and he didn't look for economies. When something was good for his wife and his kids he got it.

Vivian: Was your family religious?

Tati: No. My family was not religious. My father went to synagogue once a year upon insistence of my mother and mother went only on the High Holidays. The last time I went to the synagogue on my own was on by Bar Mitzvah.

Vivian. But you were Bar Mitzvaed! What were the means of support for your family?

Tati: The job of my father, as salesman, for Morris Glaser.

Vivian: Did you grow up in a city or a rural area?

Tati: The city, in Prague.

Vivian: Could you describe your contacts with non-Jews before the war?

Tati: My contact with non-Jews before the war was only in school. The boys and girls with whom I went to school were mostly non-Jews.

Vivian: Did you have any anti-Semitic experiences?

Tati: Only in the years after Hitler took over in Germany.

Vivian: Could you describe some of them? Was it mostly in the school situation?

Tati: In the school, some of my schoolmates started to sympathize with Nazism – that's all

Vivian: As the prospect of the war became closer, what options were open to you and your family?

Tati: The prospects were that we in theory could have emigrated, but as we did not have any capital my father did not want to emigrate in his old age. That Annie did not emigrate was a basic mistake because she was at the time 16 years and was of no help in this respect to my parents. I did not emigrate out of stupidity because I thought that when I stay I will help my parents survive.

Vivian: Well, that wasn't stupidity because you really didn't really realize what was happening. How did you decide what actions to take? In terms of whether to leave or not to leave

Tati: I did not take any action. Once I had the opportunity to go legally, via Poland, with my Uncle. And I declined since then I didn't ever consider to emigrate during the war.

Vivian: Which Uncle was this?

Tati: Friedlander. Willy

Vivian: What's that your father's

Tati: He was the brother-in-law of my mother. Her sister and her daughter, Lilli, were already in England.

Vivian: Wartime Experiences. How old were you when the war broke out?

Tati: 26

Vivian: How did you first learn about the war?

Tati: I learned about the war in Prague and after Germany occupied Bohemia and Moravia and I was in the army at the time doing my military service and the Czech army was dissolved and at that time it was clear to me that the Germans were preparing for war and that they probably will start the war in Poland.

Vivian: What year was this?

Tati: '39

Vivian: What are your first memories of the war?

Tati: The first memories of the war were restrictions. The restrictions lets say for the first 6-7 months were not so bad for me personally. They were bad for Jewish businessmen who had to close their business and for lawyers who couldn't practice. I wasn't doing a thing and there were some places where Jews could reunite like cafes, bars, nightclubs but this was all over during 6-7 months and then real restrictions started and we had to start to wear the Yellow Star and there was a curfew for Jews at 8 o'clock.

Vivian: But how come you didn't, what happened ... When did you finish law school?

Tati: I finished law school in May, end of May '37

Vivian: And you never practiced? You went right into the army

Tati: I went to France at the University of Tours in Poitiers after I graduated and when I came back from France I went right into the army.

Vivian: How did your life begin to change because of the war?

Tati: In beginning of July, I start to work in the Jewish Community Center ('39) and I worked there the whole time with a short interruption until I was sent to Theresienstadt in '42, wait a minute, in '42

Vivian: Could you describe the effects on your family life? Where you still living at home?

Tati: Family life was disrupted. Because the first to go to Theresienstadt were my sister. Shortly, very shortly after that went my parents and I went in the summer of '42. And we saw each other, of course in Theresienstadt, in the ghetto and I helped my parents with nourishments.

Vivian: But for three years then, they were in Theresienstadt and you were outside?

Tati: We were all in Theresienstadt. Annie left in March '44 for

Vivian. But they were in Theresienstadt for three years without you?

Tati: No

Vivian: Isn't that what you said? That they, the three of them. Annie was taken first

Tati: Yes, but months first

Vivian: And then your parents

Tati: 44. But months first

Vivian: All in '44, '42?

Tati: yes, '42.

Vivian: So the four of you ended up in Theresienstadt in '42, but different months one from the other. First Annie, then your parents and then you.

Tati: Yeah

Vivian: And then Annie was the first one to be

Tati: Transported from Teresienstadt to Auschwitz and she had the bad luck to come into the only transport which went straight from the train station to the gas chambers. Only 8 persons survived. Among them a good friend of mine who, a girl, a girl who now lives in Hamburg, married to a German non-Jew who was her love already when she was twelve years old.

Vivian: Ghetto experiences. Where you in a Ghetto?

Tati: Yes. In Theresienstadt.

Vivian: Could you describe how the ghetto was formed?

Tati: The ghetto was an old garrison and the how do you call it in English, kasarny? The barracks were used for housing and of course, the city, there was a little village in Theresienstadt, was evacuated before and the houses, the small houses were used for housing as well and prominent people got better housing conditions.

Vivian: Could you tell me about the daily routines in the Ghetto? How was business carried out? Education? Things like that

Tati: In reality everybody had a job, except old people, my parents for example. Annie had a job at a what do you call it, arbeitsante?...the office where they distributed the work within the ghetto. And I was first in a bank, which was a sham bank, not a real bank and afterwards, after about 5-6 months I was in a production called "k" production, "K" like kilo which made wooden boxes for contraptions to warm up the motors of cars in the cold of Russia and Poland.

Vivian: How was business carried out, and education? Did you know anybody who was religious? How were they able to conduct their business?

Tati: They could. There were reunions for the services and education I don't think there was education, but there was a lot of cultural activity. There were operas and , and concertos –

piano and violin, and it was very active. There also was a coffee house where you could go after work and where a band played live music.

Vivian: But how about children? There must have been very young children in Theresienstadt.

Tati: The young children had to be taken care of by their parents, their mothers.

Vivian: And there was no organized kind of school?

Tati: There was of course the children's home, where children which were not any more babies were placed. Arno, you know who Arno is, was one of the supervisors in the children's home.

Vivian: Was your family able to stay together during this time?

Tati: Yes. Together in the sense that we saw each other practically daily. But everybody, except my parents who lived together, everybody else lived separately.

Vivian: When were you separated? From Theresienstadt. Well, you mentioned Annie already was in 1944.

Tati: Annie went in March '44 and I went in September '44. My parents went with the last transport, with the very last transport end of, on the 28th of October '44 and went straight to the gas chamber.

Vivian: How did you find out about that? How do you know something like that?

Tati: Look, old people were sent to the gas chamber.

Vivian: But how do you know the dates, that it was the last transport and all that.

Tati: The Jewish community knew, had a list of the transports.

Vivian: Was there resistance in Theresienstadt?

Tati: Unfortunately very little, practically nil.

Vivian: Was there any groups that tried to organize something?

Tati: There were individuals who didn't try to organize something, but who tried to escape. And very few were successful.

Vivian: But there was nothing organized where they tried.

Tati: No. The Germans were very strict and many of the Jews who did something which was forbidden were executed, mostly hanged or shot.

Vivian: Was that done publicly? The executions?

Tati: Publicly, publicly.

Vivian: Concentration Camp Experiences. Where you in a concentration camp?

Tati: Yes, I was in a concentration camp, I was sent in end of September, the 28th, of September, I think, to Auschwitz, Oswecim. I knew what is going on in Oswecim because Annie was able, before she went to the gas chamber, to smuggle out a letter. And in the letter she described everything about the gas chambers and all that.

Vivian: Smokestacks.

Tati: Smokestacks and everything. And further more when you came from the station, you had to pass Dr. Mengele who made the selection. The selection consisted that people, old people and sick people went straight to the gas chamber, and younger people went to the camp in order to work. On my way, I met an old friend, girlfriend of mine who told me, who showed me what I already knew, the gas chambers and stacks and told me if I have a chance to get in the transport which goes outside Oswecim, I should go under all circumstances. So after about four days, they were looking for carpenters and I volunteered as a carpenter and went out of Auschwitz. We went to a place near Katovice which was called Bismarquite only 50 prisoners and the idea was, what we had to do and what we did, to build a new concentration camp for 20,000 prisoners.

Vivian: And where was it again?

Tati: Near Katovice,

Vivian: Which is also in Poland?

Tati: Which is also in Poland. Which is closer, little bit closer to the former Czechoslovakian border. After about five weeks, there arrived 30 more prisoners to help us with the building of the camp.

Vivian: Could you describe how, what the situation was that led you to be sent to Auschwitz. Your first transport. What happened.

Tati: The Germans ordered that a certain number of transport, I don't know, has to go weekly or so and so many transports, one thousand people each and it was a matter of connections if you were able to postpone it, but you only could postpone it. It was very seldom that you could arrange to stay. Even the top men, who were in charge of the Jews in Theresienstadt, elder... was the name, were sent to Auschwitz with the remark RU, which meant in German the abbreviation for Rucker Unovim, which means return undesirable which meant to send them directly to the gas chamber, ok? None of them are living today, all of them (unclear VB)

Vivian: Really? Even though they had in quotes important positions in the ghetto? But so what happened; it finally came your turn to be sent and you were sent?

Tati: Yeah. I was before in the transport and I got out with the help of my ex-wife, who was crazy enough, I must say this, to say to the man who helped me to get out, which was Mandler, that she would go voluntarily if I would get out, although at the time she lived already with Mr. Schorr.

Vivian: You were already separated?

Tati: Separated. We were separated...

Vivian: Why would she do something like that?

Tati: Because she is "meshugene", even today.

Vivian: So you were part of the transport. How were you selected for the transport? Just, it was

Tati: Look, it was no secret that the selection were made by the Jews. The Jews selected and I was in the transport.

Vivian: Could you describe the conditions?

Tati: Look, the conditions were very simple. You were sent to some barracks, a thousand people, where you stayed a day or two. And then you were sent by cars, by railways cars for who do you call it for animals?

Vivian: Cattle

Tati: Cattle cars, were normally 6 or 7 horses were placed in one car, there were placed about 80 or 100 of us, so there was no room. There was no facility, nothing, there was just one bucket to for your necessities.

Vivian: So the whole trip was standing up. I mean you couldn't sit down even.

Tati: Practically you couldn't sit down. You would sit down if it was possible somehow....

Vivian: And how long were you in this train?

Tati: I think it was about 12 or 14 hours, 12 hours. I don't really remember

Vivian: And I assume they gave you no food or anything like that.

Tati: No, absolutely. They gave us, I believe, they gave us water; I'm not sure.

Vivian: What happened when you arrived at the camp? At Auschwitz?

Tati: When I arrived, they took away all our belongings, and we marched to the point where Dr. Mengele stood and made the selections I told you before.

Vivian: And were you given some special clothing that everybody wore?
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Tati: We were, we were after the selection our clothes were taken away, we were given the stripped pajamas which you know probably from television and we were our hair was cut off and we got numbers tattooed on the left forearm.

Vivian: Can you tell us, what is your number?

Tati: 11426 – B, Bundt

Vivian: Did that have any significance, the number?

Tati: It came one after the other.

Vivian: Right. Did you arrive with any members of your family?

Tati: No.

Vivian: What happened to them? Well, Annie you know was transported, you already knew she had died by the time by the time you got to Auschwitz, you knew Annie had died there?

Tati: Yes, because they were ordered to write a postcard in order to tell the relatives in Theresien that they are OK, and Annie was very intelligent and wrote she is OK, and that they have food and everything and tomorrow she is going to meet her friend, Francis Krauss, whatever her name was. Francis Krauss was a girlfriend of Annie's who was shot in Prague, who was dead already in 1940 or 41 when Heidrich was killed. So she let us know she is going to die.

Vivian: What about your parents? What happened to them?

Tati: They went into the transport, and from the transport to the gas

Vivian: Also to Auschwitz? You all went to Auschwitz first?

Tati: All, yes.

Vivian: Were you aware of a selection process when you arrived?

Tati: Yes. If I was aware? Yes.

Vivian: And could you describe a little bit how the process worked?

Tati: The process was very simple. You passed a man in an SS uniform who was Dr. Mengele and Mengele just waved you to the right or to the left. If you went to the right, you were supposed to continue. If you went to the left, you were destined for the gas chamber.

Vivian: What do you remember about your first days in the camp? You weren't there very long, you were only for four days.

Tati: Yeah. Look, we were in the huts which you probably saw on television or the Holocaust.

Vivian: Yes, but describe it in your own words, because many people say that that's not so, that it is much worse than what one sees on television.

Tati: That it's worse on television?

Vivian: No, that it was worse in reality than the way it is depicted.

Tati: There both what I saw was really as it is. What was worse was the treatment, but the barracks and the little food we got if you see it, it was the same. We got beaten up, which you don't see.

Vivian: So what do you remember about those first four days?

Tati: Nothing special. We slept on the cot this wide two persons if you could sleep and that was all. And after 3-4 days, there came a group of SS men and asked for trained carpenters and so I went...

Vivian: And you didn't have to prove that you had some skills or anything?

Tati: No

Vivian: What were your thoughts and reactions during your first days in the camp?

Tati: My reaction was that the most important thing for me was get out of Auschwitz.

END OF FIRST TAPE

Vivian: So we were talking about your thoughts and reactions and I just wanted to ask you how did you, I mean it must have been pretty hard knowing that that is where Annie went and Annie had died. Did you ever think of that during the four days you were there?

Tati: Sure, sure. Look I must say that the fact that Annie went from Terezin to Auschwitz is on my conscience even today. You can probably imagine that I did all to get her out of the transport, but I was unsuccessful. I probably should have done more and the death of my parents I have taken...they were older people.

Vivian: How old were they?

Tati: My father was 69 when he died in the gas chamber and my mother was 7 years younger.

Vivian: That's not that old.

Tati: They would have come back without money and they wouldn't know what to do. Look I am at peace with the destiny of my parents, but I never will be at peace with the death of my sister, OK? So during the four days in Theresienstadt (he meant Auschwitz) we had to get up very early in the morning and the whole barrack or hut or what you call it had to stand and were counted everyone; it took at least two hours, it was very disagreeable in the cold. This was October and it was cold in Poland.

Vivian: Could you describe the camp and the daily routine?

Tati: I didn't see much of the daily routine. There were commandos who were sent out to do some work outside the camp. I never was sent out. I was sent out after four days but completely out to a different camp. The routine was the morning roll call and you and that's all I can tell you.

Vivian: How about at the other camp? Because after Auschwitz what was the name of the camp that you went after Auschwitz?

Tati: Bismarck Lute

Vivian: And after that?

Tati: After that I went to Buna Monowitz

Vivian: And that is where you were liberated?

Tati: I was liberated by the Russians there.

Vivian: And the camps were they all somewhat similar in their routine?

Tati: Look, no. Auschwitz was an extermination camp with gas chambers and smoke stacks. Bismarckite was a very small camp which was supposed to build a new concentration camp and Buga Morovice really was a labor camp. Buga was the artificial rubber that E G Farben, the German firm of E G Farben made for the German army because they had not enough rubber for their tanks and cars and I think they not only made artificial rubber they made as well artificial fuel but not with much success. But when I came to Morovice, I was sent directly to a, it's difficult to call it a hospital, but it was a special hut for ill, for sick people. Of course, when we were sent from Bismarckite to Morovice, which was on January 2nd, 45, we did not know that the gas chambers did not exist anymore as the Russian front was approaching, the Germans liquidated the gas chambers, the _____, the crematoriums. In the first week of November. We did not know that. So let me tell you something which is not here in the questionnaire. In the last days of December 44, the Germans gave orders to the doctor, who was a Jew, a French Jew, in Bismarckite, to select twenty people who were sick and very weak to be sent away because they were of no use to them. I was within these twenty people because I got dysentery, sort to say, at the "right moment". And with me together were two of my very close friends, Willy Eisler and Napang? And it was possible to convince the French doctor to take us out of the _____ so we had a discussion, we three and the two decided to get out of transport. I must repeat that we did not know we were on _____. Their argument was that we will be sent to the gas chamber. So I said no, I stay. I

wont play destiny, I don't know what will happen. I'll go. So I went, there was no gas chamber, I went to the hospital in Monovice and the two friends of mine had to leave as the whole concentration camp in Western Poland on the 18th of January and then on the so called death march. And this was a march from the concentration camp to the West. No food, no clothing, except the pajamas, and when they couldn't walk anymore, they were shot. And these two guys did not survive, they were shot on their way and died. So, lets go back to the questionnaire.

Vivian: In the three camps that you were at, were there any attempts at resistance or escape?

Tati: There were attempts in Theresienstadt, not very successful. But some resistance. There were no attempts in Bismarkite. It was too small, it was too easy to supervise. And there were of course attempts in Monovice, but all before I arrived.

Vivian: Did you always think that you would survive?

Tati: Always. I always said to everybody that I will survive this _____.

Vivian: And why do you think you survived? What helped you?

Tati: Because, I, what should I say. Because I am an optimist by nature, an optimist. And because I think that evil in the long run, evil which was represented by Hitler, in the long run is bound to loose.

Vivian: Was there any special or unusual experience that you would like to tell me about in either of these three camps?

Tati: Yes. In the last camp, on the 18th of January, the Germans decided to evacuate the whole camp, I don't know how many, but I would say at least 6 to 8 thousand prisoners, but they left behind about 800, 7 or 8 hundred of the very sick and weak. I was within the 800. This was about two weeks after I arrived. In the hospital, if you can call it that, there was a male nurse, a very good friend of mine from Prague, which was Lexa Strulovic, who was helpful, as little as he could be and got me some opium to stop the diarrhea, which was not very successful. Anyhow, after the Germans left, they left the 800 sick people behind, it took eight days, ten days before the Russians came. In the ten days, we had nothing to eat. My neighbor, on the cot, was a Polish Jew from Holland.

Vivian: A Polish Jew from Holland?

Tati: Exactly. A Polish Jew from Holland. And he was able to walk a little around, and so I ate frozen, raw potatoes. And after that, the doctors said that it probably saved my life because the intestines wouldn't have been able to absorb .

Vivian: So these potatoes, no cooking, nothing.

Tati: With what? And from the 800 or 700, all died except 100 which included me. Of course, the corpses, staid where they are, where they were. So the stench of the dead was there the whole time.

Vivian: Hiding. Could you describe the situation that led you to being in hiding, if you ever where?

Tati: I wasn't

Vivian: Do you know anybody who was in hiding? Anybody from your close family?

Tati: Family, no, but friends – the Bermans.

Vivian: How about false papers. Did you have any false papers?

Tati: No.

Vivian: And the next is about resistance, you were not in the resistance. None of this is applicable. OK. War and Post War experiences. What were the first signs for you that the war might be coming to an end?

Tati: We had news from the approaching Russian front, number one. We knew that the Germans lost at Stalingrad, we knew that an invasion of Europe is planned. And in general we were hopeful and optimistic that the Germans will loose the war relatively shortly. I mean shortly after I was in the concentration camp.

Vivian: Actually, it was. So you were really in concentration camp like 7 months in total aside from Theresienstadt.

Tati: Apart from Terezin, five, eight months. Seven, you are right.

Vivian: Were you able to get any news from the outside world?

Tati: Yes. In Terezin we got news from the Czech gendarmes and in the concentration camps we sometimes got news from other prisoners and seldom from SS guards.

Vivian: So you had some idea of how the war was going for Germany. Could you describe how and where you were liberated?

Tati: Yes. I was liberated in Morovice by the Russian army.

Vivian: And you were not with anybody from your family.

Tati: No.

Vivian: Just some friends? I mean, Le..

Tati: One friend from Nahod with the name of Beck, who survived, by the way.

Vivian: What was your physical condition like at that time? When you were liberated?

Tati: My physical condition was very bad. After four days after the Russians liberated us we were transported to a mixed Polish/Russian half civilian, half military hospital in Birkenau which is a part of Auschwitz and my weight was 37 pounds, no, kilos. God knows...no strength at all, 37 kilos and the Russians, the doctors and the nurses behaved very well, they saved my life. I was very optimistic. I had a short relapse after it really wasn't necessary any more. At the end of March/beginning of April I said I have enough of everything. I won't eat, I won't shave. Let me die in peace. But fortunately after three, four days, it went over.

Vivian: Well, that was going to be my next question. How was your emotional state at the time you were liberated?

Tati: Emotionally, very good. I tell you I was very optimistic, I saw the future very bright, except for four days, it was a short _____.

Vivian: Where did you go when you were liberated? Or lets say, in your case, also, once you got out of the hospital?

Tati: When I got out of the hospital

Vivian: How long were you in the hospital?

Tati: I was in the hospital until May, yes.

Vivian: So that's what, two months, six weeks?

Tati: No four months. February to May, 3-3 and 1/2. And there was only one bus going from Birkenau to Czechoslovakia. The Polish doctors did not want to let me go because they said I am too weak, but I said I go on my own responsibility and I went, I don't know exactly the date. I think on the 23rd of May with the bus to Moravska Ostrava, which is a border town between Czechoslovakia and Poland, in Czechoslovakia. From there, we went by train to Prague, but we had to go, to walk at least 4 or 6 kilometers, because the tracks were interrupted, but then we boarded another train and went straight to Prague. In Prague, I went to the, how do you call it?, the housekeeper, where I had some of my belongings and I went to a non-Jewish friend who had some of my clothes and went to the barber to have myself shaved and cut the few hairs I had, which were very few. And I learned, from the housekeeper that Lisa survived and is back in her own house, in her own apartment.

Vivian: So you never had any question as to where to go? You always knew you were going to go back to Prague?

Tati: To Prague, yes

Vivian: Because you had nobody. You already knew your parents had died.

Tati: I knew my parents had died, I knew my sister had died. I didn't know about Lisa and frankly speaking I had some hope, more out of pride than out of love, that Lisa and myself would reunite again.

Vivian: Alright. How did you find out about your family? Didn't you have any cousins or aunts and uncles?

Tati: Yes

Vivian: And nobody survived?

Tati: Yes. It is an enormous irony that...who survived. I learned about it only from my cousin in Canada in 1953 or 55, I don't know. I had a cousin who was married to a blind man and I don't know by what chance or whatever they remained in Terezin.

Vivian: And you didn't find them when you came back?

Tati: I didn't even think that, a blind man would survive.

Vivian: And you never regained touch with that person again.

Tati: I wrote them once and never got an answer and probably they changed their address. They didn't live in Prague, they lived in a small town in western Bohemia.

Vivian: And after that, you never tried to find them again.

Tati: No

Vivian: Where you in a displaced persons camp ever?

Tati: No

Vivian: Could you briefly describe the years immediately following the war?

Tati: Yes. I started to work on the 5th of July 45. I had a good job. But I stayed only for 6 months because the whole enterprise was managed by communists and I didn't want to stay there. I had another job for a short time in the export business, and then I had a job, the last job before I left with a firm which was a cooperative called Cheto which was a cooperative of the not nationalized industries. You know in Czechoslovakia, after the war, the industry was nationalized. It belonged to the state. It was taken away from the public. But the small industries, like shirt, underwear or whatever was not nationalized and there was a cooperative and I was one of the managers.

Vivian: And when did you emigrate to Venezuela?

Tati: In the beginning November of '47, I went to Holland and stayed there for about three weeks and from there I went by boat to Venezuela.

Vivian: To Venezuela? And what made you and why did you go in '47? Was it because of the communists?

Tati: Yes. In '47, you...in spring of '47 in April/May, the Marshall Plan started and Czechoslovakia was supposed to participate in the Marshall Plan and suddenly the Secretary of State, the Foreign Minister and his deputy, Mr. Masarik, the son of the former President, Jan Masarik, who was defenestrated after the war, were ordered to Russia and Stalin forbade them to participate in the Marshall plan. After this was made public, I decided I had to leave because a country which cannot make its own decisions, where the decisions are dictated from Russia, or from abroad is not a free country. But I was very lazy. I didn't do much about it. I waited that somebody will offer me a ticket, what do I know, to paradise. In the beginning, the first week of June, or end of May, Pavel Klein, who you know from Venezuela came to visit after the war, Prague, and we came together, of course, as old friends and I asked him if he would need somebody in his enterprise. He had a very good representation business in Venezuela. He gave me a very polite no. He said that at the moment his staff is full, but should in the future, something open up, that he will let me know. I forgot about the whole story, but, I had a friend, Czech, who was honorary, not Jewish, honorary consul of Peru in Prague and he told me, if you want to, if you need it, I always can give you a visa for Peru. And my idea was to go to Peru just to wait for the immigration quota for the United States, to go from Peru to the United States after 6 or 8 months And to my surprise, end of August, I got a letter from Pavel Klein whether I am still interested to go to Venezuela, so I wrote him yes. So I got a contract and he informed me that an ambassador will arrive within 10 days or few weeks and I will get a visa based on this contract. I informed myself about the new Ambassador, and I went to pick him up at the airport, and I helped him at the hotel, I found him a better hotel. I got the number one visa without any questioning from the foreign office in Venezuela.

Vivian: Can you tell us a little bit more about, about the years after the war, not only about your work, but what life was like in general.

Tati: Look, it was a wonderful life. Because all the people, especially Jewish people, not old thought that they have to make up for the years that they have lost during the war. Everybody wanted to be entertained, everybody wanted to go to bed with everybody, it was a, how shall I say it?

Vivian: Hedonistic

Tati: It was a free for all.

Vivian: Were you officially divorced already? Or not?

Tati: I was officially divorced in September.

Vivian: Of 45?

Tati: Let me think about it...October – September. Look, it was a very difficult decision. This I have to explain to you. I don't think you should put it on the tape. I don't want you to.

Vivian: You don't want me to?

Tati: No (and tape is indeed turned of and unfortunately I do not remember the story☹)

Vivian: Feelings and reflections after the War. What are your feelings today, about how the war influenced you?

Tati: It's hard to tell. As a matter of fact, the first two years, which I stayed in Prague afterwards, I had it too easy. I earned a lot of money. I spent a lot of money and everything was easy. What you didn't get officially you could get on the black market. The women were easy to get, everything was easy. And I arrived in Theresienstadt, I found out I had a lousy contract with a very low salary for three years, I worked and as you know we started in 49 (going out), we couldn't marry before Eva had an official divorce, which was in '51 and as you know, June '51, Peter, Tomy's twin brother died and we, the divorce got definite in July and we married on the 4th of August and we decided to go on a honeymoon in September to California mainly to Erna. Mara (Babi/Erna's sister) was already here. At that time, I had the first big scene with Pavel. He didn't want to let me go at that particular time because he wanted to go or for some other, and I told point blank: look, Pavel, you have to get used to one thing. For me the family comes first and the business and then comes the family and then again comes the family and the business comes after. It's not so important. I have no intentions to be a rich man as you are. So, I went and he didn't behave very well to me the whole time. The tariffs of the textiles goods went sky high and he didn't give me anything else which would be a where I could make any good living. First of all, I was offered a job in 1950, I think or 49, I don't know by MONTANA and I was so naïve or stupid or whatever you want to call it and told them look it is difficult to accept your offer because I have a contract for three years with Mr. Klein and Mr. Barton, who was alive still, and Lota Neuman told me OK, this can be arranged with Mr. Klein and you could work with us. But, as I found out later, Mr. Klein gave a very bad information about me to the Neuman boys and that was the end of it.

Vivian: How come you were still friendly with them? You were very friendly with them.

Tati: Look. I know Klein 65 years, 66 years. I am friendly but distant.

Vivian: So, what are your feelings about how the war influenced you? What kind on an influence did it have on you?

Tati: Let me think...Really, it is hard to answer this question because I do not know what would have happened without the war. I was more or less forced to study law against my will. I did not want to study law. I studied law and I graduated and through the influence of my Uncle Max from Vienna, I had an interview with the two general managers of one of the biggest Swiss insurance companies. The name is ANCO? And they liked me and they said that I can start whenever I graduate. There was a question whether I should postpone my military service, which was not too difficult, because I would have told the military authorities that I want to study again actuarial (actuary)...but then I decided to make the military service first and during the military service the

Germans came and the whole thing was over. So, if there would not have been a war I would probably be a high executive in a big insurance company. Let's say for Europe relatively as big as Equitable for the States.

Vivian: Did you ever... Are you tired? Do you want to stop or not?

Tati: No. I have a gripe (cold in Spanish). Yeah, Wait a minute.

Vivian: Did you ever talk about your war experiences? Obviously after the war.

Tati: Yes. But only to my family; I mean the wider family. The family which was left over because they went abroad before the war. Yeah?

Vivian: And with us you didn't talk so much about it.

Tati: What?

Vivian: With us you really didn't talk that much about it.

Tati: No. I didn't talk that much about it.

Vivian: I guess if we asked you things, you would answer us..

Tati: Yeah

Vivian: But never on your own, I don't remember you ever talking..

Tati: No

Vivian: What kinds of feelings do you have now and what kinds of feelings did you have during the war about being Jewish?

Tati: I was always a conscious Jew. I wouldn't have been baptized or changed my religion for anything. But I was never a religious Jew. I never went to Synagogue since my Bar Mitzvah, I was not a religious person, yeah. What else do you want?

Vivian: Well, but what kind of feelings do you have about being Jewish? But you obviously had some feelings if you would have never thought of changing your religion to save your life, for example.

Tati: No. I don't think so. If I would have taken false papers, yes, I would have taken them only for the purpose of getting out of a bad situation. But once I was out of this situation, I would have destroyed them.

Vivian: So did your degree of religious observance change because of the war?

Tati: No

Vivian: Did you ever apply for, and receive, war reparations?

Tati: Yes.

Vivian: And what are your feelings about getting war reparations?

Tati: I have the feeling they owe it to all of us. Whatever they pay to us is too little. It cannot be paid in money.

Vivian: What did you communicate to your children about the Holocaust?

Tati: Very little in reality. I communicated to the children only after they started to ask questions. The truth.

Vivian: Yes, and one, and Tomy doesn't ask anything. Did Tomy ever ask you anything about the war?

Tati: Tomy doesn't want to... No Tomy is a half Catholic.

Laughter

Vivian: Do you think another Holocaust is possible? And if yes, why?

Tati: Not in the same way as the previous. It could be a Holocaust, if you can call it that, if nuclear conflict breaks out between the super powers, yeah. But I don't believe in a Holocaust in the sense that a certain race of people, Jews, Negroes, Indians, would be exterminated.

Vivian: Does the war still affect you? The war, does it still affect you? And how?

Tati: No. I must say I try to forget about the bad things of the war, it doesn't affect me. The only bad thought I have is that I believe, probably wrongly, that I did not do enough to save my sister from going into the gas. Otherwise, I'm done?

Vivian: But really what could you have done, really? I mean, there really

Tati: Look, there were more persons than lets say three which I approached, so I could have probably have approached two more, or whatever. I don't know. I told you, probably my idea about this is.....

Vivian: And even if she didn't make it on, let's say even if you had been able not to get her on that transport, you really have no guarantee that she would have survived either.

Tati: No, no guarantee. But, she would have had a chance because she was young and able to work.. Your mother, your grandmother which were, your grandmother which was much older than Vivian.

Vivian: Than Annie

Tati: And Erni survived the concentration camp, because they... But there is no sense to talk about it....

Vivian: Is there anything else that you would like to share that we left out of the questionnaire?

Tati: No. I will tell you something about my family which you do not know.

Vivian: You mean when we do the other tapes? Is that what you mean?

Tati: What?

Vivian: Now, or when you do the other tapes? !

Tati: Now...Why don't I... We ended with the crippled son.

Vivian: Yeah, not but that you should do on the other tape.

Tati: On what other tape?

Vivian: On the other ... This is the different, this we should finish first the questionnaire.

Tati: Yeah...OK, is it finished?

Vivian: One more thing. Just about how you felt about answering the questions and about being taped. How did you feel about answering all these questions and about being taped?

Tati: About being what?

Vivian: Taped in the machine

Tati: Nothing, just another core

Vivian: Another?

Tati: Another, chore or how do you call it?

Vivian: But you found this easier than doing it yourself, actually

Tati: Oh! Definitely because I made mistakes and I don't know how to "manejar" this thing correctly. I found it much easier when somebody does it with me.

Vivian: OK, so that's it...

After the concentration camp

Which I strongly object to. It was definitely your group
I was born in Prague

What did your father do?

My father was a silent partner
Bohemia and before

and he was the main salesman was. Textiles in

Social status. My parents were strictly middle class they were not rich people. My father was very
generous.

Something was good for

Family was not religious. Father went to synagogue once a year upon to insistence

Last time I went

Means of support...

Grew up in a city in Prague.

Contacts with non-Jews was only in school. The boys and girls with which I went to school were
mostly non-Jews

Anti-semitic experiences only after Hitler.

In school... some schoolmates

Prospects were that we in theory could have emigrated, but my father did not want to emigrate.

That Annie did not emigrate was a big mistake... I did not emigrate out of stupidity because I
thought that if I stay I could help my parents survive

I did not take any action because I had the opportunity to go leisurely via Poland with my uncle
(brother-in-law) of when

I was 36 when war broke out

I learned about the war in Prague and after Bohemia and Moravia I was in the army at the
time with my military service and the army was dissolved...

The Germans are preparing for war

First memories of the war were restrictions, restriction for the first 6-8 months were not so terrible.

Jewish businesses had to close, lawyers could not practice.

The real restrictions started, we had to wear the star there was a curfew for Jews

I finished law school in May of 37. I went to France after I graduated and then I went straight into the army.

In the beginning of July 39, I started to work in the Jewish and I worked there until I was sent to Theresienstadt. I was sent to Theresienstadt in 42, wait a minute...in 42

The first to go to Theresienstadt was my sister. Very shortly after that they took my parents and I went. In Theresienstadt in the ghetto I helped with nourishment.

We were all in

Annie left in March 44 first one to be transported to Auschwitz...only transport that went straight from train station to the gas chamber

They were in Theresienstadt

Yes I was in Theresienstadt.

The ghetto was an old barracks they used for housing and of course there was a little village of T it was evacuated before and housing

The daily routine, everybody had a job except old people. My parents for example. Annie had a job where they distributed work and I was first in a bank which was a sham bank and afterward I was in a production called K production which made wooden boxes from contraption

Education. I don't think there was a lot of education but there was a lot of cultural activity.

Concertos, there was also a coffee house where you could go after work

The youngest children had to be taken

Arno was one of the supervisors in the children's home

The ghetto we saw each other daily. But except for my parents, everyone

Annie went in March 44 to Ausch

And I went in September 44 and my parents went with the very last transport on 28 October 44 and went straight to the gas chamber.

The Jewish community knew

Unfortunately, very little resistance in T. There were individuals who tried to organize something, but who tried to esca