United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Alice Eberstarkova Masters
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Alice Eberstarkova Masters, conducted by Randy Goldman on November 8, 1995 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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ALICE EBERSTARKOVA MASTERS
November 8, 1995

Q: Alice, I would like you to begin by telling me your name, your date of birth, where you were born.

A: I was born in Bratislava (ph), Czechoslovakia. It is a small village in the mountains, _____ Mountains in Slovakia.

Q: I need you to state your name.

A: My name is Alice Masters. I was born Alice Eberstarkova.

Q: And your date of birth?

A: And my date of birth, I was born on May 10th, 1925.

Q: Now, tell me about _____.

A: We lived in a small village in _____, Slovakia, and it was a very close-knit family. My grandfather lived in a great big house, and he had three children. My mother was the oldest of the three children, and when she was married he built an addition to his house and we lived right behind his house. And my father came from _____, Poland to Czechoslovakia, and they were married. They had three children. My oldest sister was Josephine and I, Alice, and then my younger sister was Ellie. My father was very rich. My mother was not quite as rich as my father, but she followed his desires. And it was a very lovely, sheltered life that we led. We had a very happy childhood. My parents -- my mother was naturally totally devoted to her children and to her husband and to doing her housework. And my father was working in the building industry. Actually, he probably started out as assistant in some kind of a locksmith area, but developed into roofing and building materials. And he was -- we had a car, which was very unusual in the village. It was a convertible, scooter (ph), and we were very protected. My -- we loved going in the summertime. We loved doing things like going into the woods and picking wild strawberries, wild flowers, and in the winter we were on our skis and our skates and sledding from morning to night. My mother did all the sewing for us. We had beautiful homemade, handmade clothes, which my mother made. And -- which we didn't appreciate, by the way, too much because we did want to have store-bought things. But in the village, I can't remember, but there was a shop where they had ready-made things. My mother embroidered our underwear very carefully. Well, everything was handmade, hand knitted, and it was a very interesting, very different sort of existence. My father on Friday, my mother was -- had to get the house ready for sabbath, and in the evening one the children, the three of us, went to the synagogue with my father. Then we came home to a wonderful home-cooked meal, which was delicious. I always talked

about oh, the wonderful things my mother made because I tried to do the same. I learned, in fact, from memory to do almost all the things that my mother made. There were two or three things I couldn't remember how to do, but I -- in the tape that I did for children, I described in detail all the different menus that we had for our dinners. On Saturday, we were not allowed -- after sundown, we were not allowed to put the lights on in the house. So everything was -- you know, had to, the sabbath had be observed very carefully. On Saturday morning we went to synagogue again. We had to be dressed very carefully with special clothes for Saturday. We went to the synagogue with my father, and then after the synagogue we came home and ate whatever my mother had to prepare the day before. Because, as I said, we couldn't cook or put the lights on on Saturday. And then after our meal, we went for a walk with our father. We went to visit the different families, Jewish families, in the village. And we walked up and down the village, visiting everybody and in the evening we came home. Oh, by the way, when -- the first house in which we lived behind my grandfather's house, we had no electricity. We lived in a very, very tiny little house, actually. It had a one-room living room and one bedroom, and a very small kitchen. And we had a maid, and I'll tell you how our maid lived. She lived in the kitchen. We had a kitchen table which was like a box, and in the evening, the kitchen table -- the top was removed and the box was pulled apart and that was a bed in which our maid slept. And as my father worked himself up and became better well-to-do, better to do, he built a bigger house, which was completed in 1938, I think. We just lived there about a year before we had to leave. And, of course, that house was large, consisted of three different units and then we had a bathroom and electricity. But in the house before that, we did not. The reason I mentioned that is because I said that Saturday after our walks when we walked with our father, when we came home in the afternoon, we would sit in the living room and tell stories and talk and really enjoy each other's company. And I love those evenings because it was getting dark, and I loved it when it was getting dark. And we couldn't put the light on until after the sabbath was over, and then the gas lamp was lit. But it was a very, very cozy lovely life as far as the children were concerned. Because my mother worked very hard. She had to get up every morning at 6 o'clock in the morning to light the stove so that she could put on the kettle for the coffee and tea, whatever. We had a baker next door, and every morning they would deliver fresh rolls. Otherwise, my mother did all the -- everything that was done. Nothing was bought from a store. That means noodles were made at home, and bread was baked, actually, not at home, but made and carried over to the baker to be baked. And then we had these huge loaves of bread that were brought home and they lasted a week. And then my mother made the _____ Friday or Saturday, and everything, in fact, she had to do herself. And we, as children, did not really participate too much in the household chores, but we played. You know, we played from morning to night. We had a great life. I loved it, I always adored the village. And I loved all the things that it gave us. I mean, I, as a child, I was aware of all beauties of the village. I loved the woods, and I loved the mountains. And I couldn't wait for the snow to melt for to be -- oh, I loved the feeling of the snow melting in the village because then we could go into the

forest and it was big snow drops, which I adored. Because the snow drops came out even while the snow was still on the ground. Then we looked forward to the spring because we could pick, as I said earlier, wild flowers and wild strawberries, and then -- well, we had a cow. We had chickens. And I loved all these things, everything was so great, you know. My job was to catch the chickens to make -- to see whether they are going to have an egg to lay. And I did by inserting my little finger into the rear to see whether the egg was there, because I had to lock up the chickens if they were about to lay an egg so that they wouldn't lay them just anywhere, but in a coop. And so I -- and then we would ride with my father in his car to the other villages because he went there on business, and it was a convertible and we would sit in the car. And all the children would gather around us and try to toot the horn because they hadn't seen a car like that. And we would be so thrilled to be going out with him to do these things. Well, such a very lovely life, and we traveled in the summertime. We would travel to visit my uncle, my mother's younger brother, who lived in the Trnava (ph), which was a spa in Slovakia, a very well-known spa. And he was director of the spa. He was actually the one who saved us in the end because he was -- shall I go back . . .

Q: Well, tell us about your uncle.

A: Because -- now, I'm just going to give you the life in Czechoslovakia, right? So in summertime, we would visit our uncle in _____, and in the wintertime, of course, we couldn't wait for winter either because we had enormous amounts of snow. And the lakes froze, our river froze; we had very deep ice so we could immediately get on the ice skates and skate on the river. We would be up and down the hills with our sleds from morning to night, and we would also sled across the lake. We adored it. And so every season had its special things for us, which we loved. We were very protected. We didn't really know about politics or what was going on, but our parents spoke several languages, by the way. My mother, because Czechoslovakia once belongs to the Austria-Hungarian Empire, when my mother went to school, the language was Hungarian, okay? Also, Slovak, so she spoke fluent Hungarian, fluent Slovak, and she also spoke German. My -- the Jewish community in Bratislava, where I lived was quite intellectual. I mean, my uncle went to Prague University. He was sent to -- he was very well educated. That was my mother's youngest brother. My mother's sister, younger sister, was also educated and worked with my uncle in Trnava (ph) in the spa. I'm not sure what kind of position she had, but she probably had some administrative position. She was always very elegant when she came to visit. She had always lovely dresses and her lovely silk stockings were very impressive. Of course, neither of them were married at that time. My mother was the one who was married and had the three children and worked very -- was a dressmaker and everything was just absolutely beautiful. My mother had excellent taste. We used to go with her to the store where they sold fabrics, fabric store, and she would pick things very carefully. And she would dress us very well. Everything was beautifully made, and we had also lovely ski outfits with beautifully knitted

sweaters and my mother, everything was so -- it seemed so beautiful to me when I look back at it, you know. I mean, nobody does things like we had at home. And we had my mother's linen was put away -- I mean the way they wash laundry, there was no hot water. I mean, I remember that they had to take the laundry to the river to rinse it. And the way we had to take a bath when we were little, you know. I'll tell you about that. There was a bathtub which was outside the house. It was made of metal and it was brought in on the Thursday, I think, every Thursday. So that we could all take a bath. And hot water had to be boiled and filled and then the three of us had a bath in that thing. And then when we had our hair washed, we were very well protected because in those days there was no insulin and so lots of people lost children if they were not well looked after, because they had colds or all kinds of other illnesses. So my mother was very protective of us and when our hair was washed, she would put a scarf around it, we couldn't go out anywhere, you know. So, in any case, when I did this -- I did a tape for my children when I told this story about the bathtub, my sister was very upset with me because she said I shouldn't be telling things like that. But I thought it was quiet interesting because it was all done very -- you know, it was fun. We enjoyed having our bath inside the house, and then my father got into that water. Of course, naturally, you couldn't boil enough water for everybody to have fresh bath, so you all managed to get a bath in that tub. It was a very, very beautiful life. That's all I can say about it. We loved it.

Q: What about school? Were you in school?

A: Oh, yes. We were in school. There was a problem about the school, though. I had a problem about it. We in the minority, of course. There was -- I think there was one, only one, maybe two Jewish children in the class. And talking about school prayer, that really had an impact on me. I really minded very much not to have to -- you know, it was a Catholic country, Slovakia, right? So the prayers were said every morning in class, and I could not -- of course not, I could not participate in that, and I wouldn't, of course. My father -- well, I couldn't; I was Jewish, so I couldn't do it. But I minded being different, I really -- I mean, if there's a discussion about prayer in school, this really has said something to me because I definitely felt very left out. And I wanted to very much like everybody else, and since there were so few Jewish children, I felt that I was different from everybody else. The school, I looked forward very much to going to school, but once I started going, I soon realized that it was not so much fun after all, because we were really punished quite severely in school. We were punished by being beaten on our hands, you know, with a stick. Or we had to kneel in front of the class if we did something that was unacceptable in some way or we talked, whatever we did. And I was punished quite often, and I had to kneel in front of the class because I clowned around. And then I got punished some more, and I got hit on my hands quite often, but I did quite well. We had elementary school and high school in the village. The Gymnasium, which was like a junior college, was in a town which was two hours away from our village. My parents decided that my older sister who was very much like my mother, she was very interested in being a

housewife -- when she was asked what she wants to be when she grows up, she wanted to be a mother. And so it was decided that she was going to go to a local high school, and when I finished elementary school, it was decided that I would be going to this junior college two hours away from the village. So I traveled every single day by train two hours to school. I got up at 6 -- 5 o'clock in the morning or whatever; 5:30, 6:00. My father walked me through the snow with a lantern to the station. I was put on the train, which was about two carriages, and we traveled to _____, which was a Gymnasium, which had a Gymnasium. And I went to Gymnasium to the -- I didn't have to go to the first year because I took a test, I was very lucky always, which was maybe not luck, but I did a test and they decided that I should go to the second year, started the second year of Gymnasium. There were eight years of Gymnasium. I started in the second. Of course, I didn't last long because that was 1938, and 1939 I left. And I came home every evening from -- every day from the school, I think at about 3 o'clock. I took the train at 3 o'clock, and I got back to the village at 5 o'clock. And I was walking back from the station, I could -- my father was building this new house into which we were going to move. And I would see him on the roof of that house; he was doing it himself. I mean, he had help, but he was working very hard to build that house. And we -- so schooling was good. I mean, you know, I did all right in the school.

Q: And you also, then, before you left Czechoslovakia, had gone on a train, had left your town my yourself, which is sort of interesting.

A: To where?

Q: You were on a train every day to school . . .

A: To school, yes.

Q: . . so you had been away from home on a train by yourself?

A: Going to school, yes, for the five days a week.

Q: Question about being Jewish in this community. I assume that there were Jewish families, but that it was not a predominately Jewish . . .

A: Oh, no. It was mainly Catholic.

Q: Other than the school prayer . . .

A: Yes.

Q: . . . did you feel ostracized there?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: How? Why?

A: I did -- well, I did and I didn't, let's put it that way. We had a lot of -- I had a lot of non-Jewish friends, of course. But the people who were worse off than I were the Gypsies. We had a little Gypsy girl, her name was Suzie, Suzka (ph), and she was not allowed to -- she had to sit by herself in the class in the back row. I mean, I was part of the whole -- I mean, just like everybody else. The only thing that was different was the school prayer. But she was completely ostracized. She was sitting in the back row, and she was not allowed to -- nobody sat next to her. I was sort of -- felt very sorry for her, and I used to -- I had made sort of a friendship with her, but she was worse off. I minded taking the Jewish holidays, not going to school during the Jewish holidays. I minded that, because everybody else was in class and I was not. And then I minded very much not participating in the Christmas and other holidays because we had a maid and she would take us -- I mean, we had lots of churches in the village. It is a very -- it was mainly Catholic, very religious sort of community. In the wrong sense, they were not religious in the sense of being good. But they were in the religious going to church, that's about it. Because they had came to it, you know. Most of them, I mean, many of them -- I don't know how many. I don't want to go into it, but there were no Germans that entered our village as far as I know. So whatever was done to the community, Jewish community, was done by the local people. You know how this turned out. I mean, I didn't really investigate it too deeply, but I know there were no Germans in the village at all. And I think that most of the things that happened to us, to our people, were greed. Because everybody expected or thought that we were all rich, that all the Jewish people were rich, which they weren't. Everybody was working very hard. It's true that most of the stores were owned by the Jewish people, but they were little stores eking out a small living. And I think that -- I don't know, my parents protected us a great deal from the outside, so I don't know that I felt -- I did feel different in having to take the days off for the Jewish holidays. And the synagogue was right across the street from the school, my elementary school that was. After I went to Gymnasium, I was out of it. I didn't go to the local schools. But then all the kids went to school, and I was outside the synagogue, and I felt so different. I didn't like that. I felt that I was -- I wanted to be like the others, that was the main thing. And I think that was the main thing about it.

Q: But people weren't calling you names or . . .

A: Oh, they were. They were, yes. And there were very many things like that, but, I don't know, one sort of learned to live with it, I suppose. I minded. I mean, yes, people were always calling us names. But I seemed to get over it the best I could. I mean, I didn't seem to -- yes, I guess I must have. I did mind it, basically. And I never particularly remembered that so much.

Q: But these were your friends?

A: Oh, my friend, my best friend, was the daughter of the mayor. My father -- going back to my father, okay. My father was extremely popular in the village because he was very handy. He could do things that other people couldn't do. When a cross fell from one church in a storm, my father was the one who climbed the steeple to put the cross back up. And everybody stood in the whole village watching him do it, and I thought always that my parents would survive. All through the war, I thought my parents would survive because of the sort of things he did in the village. He was very popular, and once when there was a fire and the mayor was drunk, my father broke down the door to the fire engine and got it out and drove to the fire. He was very liked in the community. He was a hard working man who worked from morning to night, and he did all sorts of things. We had a little bit of a -- we didn't have a farm, but we had a plot of land, and he did all things like everybody else. He worked just as much as that, and he was liked. And I thought people would look after him, but they didn't. I don't really know all the details of what went on. When I read my mother's letters, which I haven't read, maybe I'll find out more. But the problem is that my parents would not have written anything that was going on, because they would have been trying to protect us from that kind of information. So they -- so, unfortunately, I wish my mother would have been more open about what was happening to them. But, you know -- you were asking me about . . .

Q: Well, we were talking a little bit being Jewish in this community, but I think you've talked about that.

A: I'm sure there was a lot -- there was quite a lot of name calling in the community, yes. They called, not me particularly, but they would call all people who were selling eggs or people who were poor and old, they were calling them names and throwing stones and doing things, I'm sure. There was a lot of that. But, and I told you, we were very protected and we were very close close-knit community in the Jewish community. And our parents were -- looked after us and didn't let us see much of this. And -- but I did mind, for instance, of course, there were so many churches that I told you, and there was Christmas everywhere, you know, and we didn't participate. And I didn't like that, I love Christmas. I thought Christmas was very appealing, and the snow was beautiful, and people were selling all these lovely decorations for the Christmas trees and we couldn't have any.

Q: You said you were protected, you really didn't have too much sense of what was going on outside of your village.

A: Yes.

Q: You were somewhat isolated. I'm just wondering if you had heard or read anything about Hitler or the Nazi Party in Germany or if you think your family had any

information about what was going on.

A: Oh, yes, they did. Of course, my parents, obviously did have something. There was a lot of whispering going on, and there were people coming to the house and they talked about it. We knew something that it was going on, but they didn't tell us too much about it. But we knew something awful was happening, but we didn't know -- I mean, who would have thought anything like this? I mean, we didn't -- we knew, we knew something, but not enough. Our parents did not discuss with us the details about what was going on, but we had a radio and my mother turned the radio on, and I could hear somebody screaming, Hitler. And then there was fear of this awful occupation. I mean, when Austria fell, we knew. And, of course, we knew very much because lots of refugees came to our village. The reason they came at night mostly after Austria fell, my father walked them across the border of Carpathian (ph) Mountains to Poland because many of the refugees came from Germany and from Austria. And my father and some other men knew the way to Poland through the mountains. I mean, there were borders everywhere, so it wasn't -- so it was an illegal entry into Poland. So my father -- we knew that he was doing that. Lots of people, we were right on the northern part of Slovakia, which is not very far from Poland. But I knew that my father was doing that.

Q: So rather than staying in your village, they were all headed toward Poland?

A: Oh, no, they didn't come to stay to our village. They came to cross the border. They came to maybe various points in Slovakia, but the ones that came to our village came only to cross. They didn't come to stay; there were no refugees to stay in the village. They just came to do that.

Q: At what point did the effect of the German effort start impacting your life?

A: After the occupation in Czechoslovakia, which was March 1939. We were occupied in March '39. At that point, just before the occupation, everybody was very patriotic, and they felt against -- of course, don't forget we were surrounded by lots of "enemies," in quotes, because at that -- well, Czechoslovakia was very patriotic. We were all big patriots, and we were very much against Germany, against Austrian -- against Austria, because it was an Austria-Hungary empire at one time which was -- and then we were liberated in 1918, of course. Everybody was -- Austria was not particularly -- it was an enemy. We were, Czechoslovakia, surrounded by all these outside countries which were once our occupiers, okay? So at first when there was a noise about being occupied by Germany, everybody was very patriotic, having a Czech flag in the lapel, and my friend, my best friend, _____, who was the daughter of this mayor, took this flag away from me and said, "You are not entitled to wear it. You are a Jew." And then afterwards, after we left, she felt very bad about it, because she went to see my mother -- I know that she went back from one of her letters, that she did go and see my mother after we left. So she obviously felt some

sorrow about it, so when Czechoslovakia fell, that's when we, of course, immediately knew that this was a disaster of the greatest order. That morning I used to have to get up at 6 o'clock in the morning to get a train. That morning I woke up and it was daylight, and I was very upset. And I said, "How come I'm not up to take the train to the school?" And I heard the radio and the noise -- and the shrieking of Hitler, and my mother and father stood by the radio in terror. And they said, "You're not going to school anymore," because they were too afraid to send me by train to _____, and so they would send _____, and so I stayed in the village and I went to the school, local school, and I was not enrolled in that school. But I went as -- I just sat there on the classes, and one day when I was sitting in the class -- I was not participating, I was just listening to what was going on -- I looked out of the window and I saw a couple of buses in the square. And I looked and watched what was going on, and I saw some Jewish families being put on those buses. It was not my family, and not my grandparents, not my parents, but some poor families from out in the village. And I was shocked, of course, and I didn't know what was happening, and I found out later they put them on the buses and drove them to the Hungarian border because they were just going to drop them off. I mean, they were told to pack up and they were going to be deported. And they dropped them off on the Hungarian border, and left them there. And, of course, it was a great shock to me, and I didn't know. I was grateful it was none of my family, but, you know, I was scared. I mean, it was very shocking. It was the beginning when I realized things were -- I mean, it was so frightening that one didn't dare to think too much about it. I mean, at least I didn't. My parents did not discuss these things with us, which was too bad. But I guess they wanted to protect us. So the next thing that happened was that men were put on horses -- were asked to ride horses. The Jewish men were asked to -- these were not horses for riding. These were cart horses, you know, and they were to ride them to the next town, which was sort of a torture thing. They got some men to do this, and, of course, it was terribly difficult for them to do that, and how can you ride these horses? It was very hard. It was a form of torturing these men. My father was also not -- I think he was not asked to do that. But some men were gathered to send to this town, and the other things that happened had to do hard labor in the street work. They gathered the Jewish men, and they had to that. And then my grandfather was very outspoken, and something happened there. He stood out on his front steps and started screaming at somebody who painted something on his house. And it was all very scary; very, very frightening. So how did we know we were leaving?

Q: Well, who is giving these orders?

A: Who was giving -- well, there was still two priests that became head of the Fascist Party in Slovakia, okay? The one main priest was -- it was Hlinka, H-l-i-n-k-a, Hlinka was a priest and the Slovaks who joined his political party were called the Hlinka Guard, and they were men with arm bands, Slovaks. And the other priest was called Tiso, T-i-s-o, and he also became a Fascist and he was -- both these men wanted to separate from Bohemia, which is the Czech Republic now, and have an

independent Slovakia. Well, Hitler allowed them to do that because Hitler -- then Slovakia became, you know -- well, I'm not quite sure now, you see, how that worked. Bohemia, which was the Czech Republic, was occupied, but Slovakia became sort of a protectorate of Germany. So it was participating in this with Germany, it was not occupied as such.

Q: Did government troops come into your village, or did the local people you had grown up with enforce this?

A: I think it's the local people that enforced it. I didn't see any government troops. I mean, as far as I know, there were no government troops, but the local people who joined the Hlinka Guard must have participated in this. I never saw a German soldier come into the village. But, of course, you know, we left in '39, so I don't know what happened afterwards, but as far as I know, it was local people. And there could have been some other officials of some, who were sent from other villages or towns, but I think it was the local people.

Q: Were there restrictions placed on the Jewish family? Was property stolen? Did any of that sort of thing take place?

A: No, not while we were still there. But shortly afterwards. Now, we -- my uncle, as I told you, lived in -- was the director of the Trnava (ph) spa in Slovakia. And, as such, he was sent to Germany into Berlin in the '30s. By the way, my uncle was excellent -- an excellent uncle to us. You see, the only person who was married of the three children of my grandfather was my mother. Her younger sister was not married, and my uncle wasn't married at that time. So he was extremely good. I mean, he adored the three of us, and he was very, very good uncle, model uncle. But he was sent to Germany to represent the spa, and he lived in Berlin. And so he saw, from 19 -- I'm not sure what year he went to Berlin -- but let's say it was 1934, '35, '36. I'm sure that was the year that he was there. He saw what was going on, so he was very aware of what was going on. My parents just never left the village, so they didn't know. Nobody could imagine what would happen. But my uncle lived in Berlin; he married a woman from Berlin. And then he was transferred to London, and he became a representative of the _____ Spa in London. He's the one who wrote my parents that it would be wise to send us away. Now, he ever -- and I can't begin to grasp that, because why would this man take on the responsibility? I mean, who would have thought something would happen to us? I mean, we were so remote from the main towns, but he said, "I think it's wise to send the children away." And he said he can make arrangements for us to go to England. When my parents -- that is again, a tremendous mystery -- how they ever agreed to do this is beyond me. I will never understand it, and I think it's amazing if you would know, if you were to know the kind of life we had and how we lived, that my parents agreed to put the three of us -- I mean, to put us on a train. Now, I don't know much about -- unfortunately, my uncle died so I can't ask him anymore. I wish I could have asked him. All these

things came up later because I really didn't deal with all these things until a few years ago when I started to think that I better put it all down somewhere. And I should have asked him. But, of course, his wife is still alive, and I could ask her, but she won't remember why he initiated the whole process. Or she might, she's very intelligent, bright woman. She might. So maybe if she's still alive when I get to London, I'll ask her. But my uncle wrote -- I didn't see the letters, but there was a lot of talk, you know, between my parents discussed it all. Lots of people came to our house during those times when we were occupied in March. They said they think that people were very religious. My father was extremely religious, I told you. And they would come to the house and say "Where is God?" And to me, that's sin, such a, you know, question of people who are religious to ask that. And then we thought this must be really a very, very serious business, if people -- I mean, people were really talking about it, but they did not include the children with talk so that I wasn't part of this. I could only hear these fringe sayings things like "Where is God?" I remember that. And the fact that my parents agreed to send us will be a mystery for as long as I live, but that wasn't everything. So my uncle's letters went back and forth between London and my parents. My parents must have agreed, I don't know why, how. We were the only ones, and everybody said to them "How can you do that? How can you send your children away? Nothing is going to happen here." But my parents started to work very hard towards getting us out. That meant that my father had to spend an awful lot of money to get us passports. He started to get the passports for the three of us. Then my mother started to sew and to accumulate clothes for three years ahead, all sizes up to the ages of each of us for three years. And they started getting us ready for it. My father got the passports. My mother packed. We all had our suitcases. And one day they said, "You're going to visit Uncle Hine (ph) in London."

Q: Let me ask you a couple of questions, and I'll let you continue. In all this back and forth about whether or not you would go, did they ever discuss it with you, say, "Do you want to go?"

A: I don't know. I don't think so. Maybe they did, maybe they -- I don't know. I can't remember that part whether they discussed it or not. I don't remember.

Q: Did you have a lot of time to prepare for this transfer?

A: Oh, yes. We prepared quite a long time because my mother was sewing for a long time, and there's a play called "_____ Transport," I don't know whether you have seen it. It was here recently, a few months ago. And the mother was preparing us in every sort of way, you know. Teaching -- my older sister already knew how to sew, but she was teaching us how to do things to look after ourselves. Then my older sister was the one who was made to take care of us. I mean, you know, my mother, she was instructed very carefully to take care over. That she would be the acting mother, she was 15. She was one month -- had she been one month older, she wouldn't have been able to get on the transport. Because the transport only took -- as

far as I remember, there were children from six months to 16, and my sister was just 15. She would have been 16 in August, and I think they started preparing -- we were occupied in March, so I think immediately after that, my uncle must have started the correspondence and so from March until the transport, which left sometime at the end of June.

Q: What other things were your parents trying to teach you or guide you?

A: About going . . .

Q: About leaving home.

A: Well, the main thing they were interested in is that we should be very close together. In other words, we shouldn't argue, that we should love each other. That we should be very close together, and, of course, be very careful. I mean, everything a parent would teach a child and they instructed, we were told how to behave, how to be -- how to be religious, which we didn't -- I did not stay religious at all. In fact, I could not face religion after that at all because I thought I couldn't go to the synagogue because it was to painful. And they taught us how to behave properly. All the things a parent would teach a child. They told us, my mother tried to teach us how to take care of ourselves. She taught my sister how to do sewing. She gave her -- I mean, she told as much as she could with everything. She taught us it's better to learn, to be good, to take care of ourselves, to be careful of strangers, men, you know. What else?

Q: Did they know or could they tell you where you were going and what that life would be like?

A: No, they didn't know. In fact, that was one of the big disappointments. They didn't know -- maybe they knew from my uncle, but we didn't know because we were absolutely shocked when we got to England and found that we were going to a children's home.

Q: We'll get to that.

A: Yes.

Q: Now, do you remember in these several months when you were preparing to leave home what you were thinking, what you and your sisters were feeling about this?

A: No, I don't remember too much about it. I don't remember every -- no, I don't, actually. The only thing I remember is that we looked for -- well, we consoled ourselves with the thought that we were going to visit our uncle. You see, that was a great pull because we loved him and he lived in England. It was exciting, we were

going to England, okay? So there was some element of excitement in it, and we didn't -- we thought we were going like on vacation somewhere. I mean, we didn't really fully grasp that this was the end, you know. I mean, how could you? How much of it do you want to know now, about our leaving?

Q: I want to check the tape. How much time do we have left?

Videographer: Eight minutes.

Q: Yeah, I'm trying to get a sense of . . .

A: It all passed very fast.

Q: I'm trying to get a sense of what your disposition was like as you were preparing to leave, and then we can continue on, you know.

A: If I could only remember all these things now.

Q: Oh, you're doing pretty well.

A: But I can't remember how I felt. I mean, obviously, we were excited, frightened, and we didn't -- I don't know. I don't know. Those last days are very, very mixed up because I can't really understand -- well, I don't exactly how we felt. All I know is that it was -- there was an element of all these feelings of fear, of excitement, and curiosity, and not feeling that one was escaping something. You know, because it wasn't there yet. I mean, I didn't think that anything would happen. I mean, how would I have known? It's very hard. Well, I can tell you the day that we left, but you want to start on it now?

Q: Sure.

A: The morning that we were leaving we heard -- we heard my father cry for the first time. I've never heard my father cry. The tears -- now, it's going to difficult. Because it's one of the most difficult things that happened. See, I've never heard -- we were all packed to go, and suddenly we heard this noise coming from another room. And we looked at each other in horror because my father was weeping loud. And that was everybody that was sleeping. That's when we realized how awful it's going to be. This is difficult now. So what do I hear?

Q: Take your time.

A: So he pulled that we got on the train and traveled with my mother and my father and the three of us with all our suitcases to Bratislava, which is the capitol of Slovakia. That's where the train started. And now, again, I don't remember whether we spent

the night there or whether we just went to the station. I know we went shopping still. That much, I mean, I have to go back about this shopping business. We went shopping because my father had decided to buy us each a blanket which I still have, and he bought me a ring. And then we went to the station. And we got to the station, there was a terrific commotion. There was a train on the platform, and there were hundreds of children, but I don't remember exactly -- now, Mr. Winton (ph) will be able to say that now. In fact, when I see him next week, I will ask him how many were there on the train. I thought there were 500. But, and I always thought we were the last train that left because we left at the end of June. But apparently there was another train later. In any case, we got to the station. There were hundreds of people, parents and children, little babies. And we were put on a train. My mother couldn't decide whether to keep the little one, my younger sister, so she put her on the train; she took her off. She put her on the train; she took her off again. And then she put her on the train at the last moment. We all waved goodbye and that was it.

Q: You were describing the train station. There were a lot of people there.

A: Yes.

Q: A lot of people. Was the mood one of -- was it normal?

A: No. That's how it was, it was very sad. Everyone was crying. The kids were crying. The parents were crying. The train pulled away, and we all waved goodbye. And this other -- well, another thing happened. My mother, we each had a gold chain and a gold bracelet and my mother said, "It's not a good idea to have this." My father may have said it. "Why don't you let us keep it for you?" And they took it off, and they said, "Don't travel with that. It's not a good idea to do it." So they took our little jewelry that we had which is very minor, possibly, I know that we each had a chain and maybe something else. I can't remember, but they decided to keep it for us and took it off. The moment the train pulled away, the people who were organizing the train asked whether we have any jewelry, and if we didn't, could we carry some for other children. And so my -- each of us was given a couple of bracelets to put under our sweater to carry for somebody else who had too much maybe.

Q: I think I need to stop.

A: Okay.

Q: Are we okay?
Videographer: We have one minute left.

Q: Okay. Why don't we change the tape, so we don't . . .

End of Tape #1

Tape #2

Q: One question about when you left the village . . .

A: Yes.

Q: . . . at Bratislava on the train. Was there a party? Did you say goodbye to your friends?

A: Of course. We went to see all the families and said goodbye. There may have been a party or two and all my girlfriends, because I left my very close friends behind. Hilda Lazera (ph) was one of them. Maria Berteria (ph) was another one. She was not Jewish. And we went to say goodbye to everybody, yes. And that was -- I don't have too clear a memory of that, though. Of course, my grandparents, and teachers, and synagogue, everywhere. We were the only ones leaving the village. In all that, people -- many people thought my parents were completely mad to send us away, and I'm sure that they had great doubts and they worried about it, whether they were doing the right thing. I'm sure. But I have a consolation about that because my father in one of the letters which I have has written at one point "I'm so glad you're not here." So I know that they felt -- I mean, that it was -- especially when the young girls were being taken away, I think that he suddenly realized -- not suddenly, I think that he wrote to us saying, "I'm so glad you're not here," although they must have been absolutely petrified about what was going on in London, because there was the propaganda about the air raids. We lived through the Blitz, London Blitz in London, okay? So they must have been very fearful what was happening, but it was better to be in England with the bombs than to be in Czechoslovakia with all the disasters that were going on, okay? Did you want me to tell you about our leaving? Okay. So we got on the train. Of course, it was very, very emotional about all those children were in the same boat. And there was another little girl that joined us. Her name was Eva Rothberger (ph). She was also 10 years old. My sister -- by the way, my older sister was 15. I was just then 14, and my younger sister was 10. Another little girl joined us, the daughter of a friend of my uncle's. Her name was Eva Rothberger (ph), and she came with us, so there were four of us. And there were lots of children in the compartment, and they were frightened, excited. And so other kids in the same boat, so I suppose we didn't know what to expect, but what our father told us that we were going to go through Holland and that because it was Friday night, we would get off the train and spend the summer in Amsterdam or The Hague, I'm not sure where we went through, but I think it's in Holland. And so we were quite excited about that, but when we arrived in Holland on Friday evening, we were told that the Dutch authorities didn't want us to get off the train. I think they were afraid of too many refugees being dropped off on the border in Holland. So they decided that they were not to get off the train. So instead, lots of people came to the railway station with hot chocolate and bars of chocolate and cookies and they handed these things over to us through windows in the train. And I was very, very grateful about that. I thought it

was very kind, although I was very disappointed and felt terrible that they didn't want us. That the Dutch authorities didn't want us to get off, I couldn't -- I mean, that was very painful for me to think that these people didn't want us. And I couldn't understand it, but then I was very happy that these people came and I was grateful to see these people at the train doing something for us. So I guess I consoled myself with that. Now, we crossed the -- we were very frightened when we came to Germany, because there was an inspection. The German uniformed soldiers came on the train, all of the -- and they inspected our luggage. And we were frightened, and, of course, once we left Germany, we were all thrilled and cheered like crazy. We were thrilled to be out of Germany and said, "Now, we are -- okay, we are safe." And then we got on a boat.

Q: I want you to tell me more about the train ride. What you were doing, were you playing games? Did you get to know -- who were all of these other kids? Did you make any stops along the way? Were there guards on the train?

A: The people who accompanied us were young people, mostly. As far as I remember, they were young volunteers like probably people in their 20s. And they were from Jewish organizations. I'm not sure who they were, but they just accompanied the transport. They were to come back.

Q: They were Czech?

A: They were Czech, yes. As far as I know, but Mr. Winter, again, I will ask him that, because he will know. And I don't know, but I know there were people who were specially, you know, assigned to accompany this train. And as far as I know, they were to come back. They did not have the permits to stay in England. So whatever did we do on the train? I don't -- we didn't do very much, I think. We were just -- we may have played a game or two. I don't have a clear recollection of the ride itself. I only remember of the train, I remember the fact that somebody asked us to carry jewels, jewelry. And I think mostly my younger sister, my little sister was 10 years old, was given some jewelry to put on her arms. And there were three of us, so we were together. Whereas, there were many children who were by themselves. So we felt fortunate in that, that at least we have each other. It was very important, because little Eva came by herself. She was 10 years old. And there were lots of other children, some of them were crying, obviously. And we tried to be brave, that's all I can tell you.

Q: Did you -- was it crowded? Did you sleep? Did you look out the window?

A: Oh, yes. No, that's right. I looked out of the window, I remember that. I was going to mention that. I did look out of the window, and I tried to do the best I could. I mean, we -- I don't know what my sister felt, and I don't know what my little sister -- my little sister was absolutely petrified, obviously. She was very, very attached to her

mother, and her mother was very attached to her. She was attached to all three of us, but the baby was a baby, after all. And don't forget that although we were 15 and 14 and 10, I could never find an equivalent age. I mean, we were much younger than that compared to the children -- my children at that age, okay? When my children were about -- when I had children, I could never find -- I was always looking to see their equivalent age that my children and I was at the age of 13. And I felt that my children at the age of eight were more grown up and more sophisticated than I was at the age of 14, because it was a different world. It was all completely different, and they were brought up quite differently. So I don't know why, I tried to make the best of it. I thought of the things that we were going to do, and so, and see my uncle. And I never for one moment imagined that we would not come back to home, so I don't know. And, of course, I was afraid. I must have been terribly afraid, but I just didn't let myself feel it.

Q: Did you see anything special when you were looking out the window?

A: Just the country going by. Being -- being glad to be out of Germany.

Q: Maybe getting further away from home?

A: No, I didn't think about it.

Q: Were there any rules? Did the people who were in charge of this train tell you anything?

A: I don't remember anything about the train except Holland, and I remember the boat.

Q: Tell me about the boat.

A: When we boarded the boat, it was dark -- it was night. And there was -- people were sick, and they were given tea which was the worst thing I ever tasted in my life. It was English tea with milk in it. It was very dark, and it was the worst possible thing I could have ever tasted. I thought that was very, very -- there were matrons on the boat. Some matrons, I don't know who they were. Nurses. And we arrived, I don't remember much about the boat either. It was night. I think we tried to sleep. I wish I could remember more about it. My younger sister, who died last year, unfortunately, might have better memory of it. My older sister doesn't remember anything. I tried to ask her, which she was here not long ago.

Q: Had you ever been on a boat like that before?

A: Never. I've never been that far away from home. I've never been on a boat like that. And I think people were sick because it was a channel crossing, and it must have been -- I remember, maybe I was sick, too, and I can't recall it. It must have been

awful. But when we arrived in England, which was very, very exciting -- again, it was just the -- all I remember is this hundreds of children with tags with the numbers in front. And a loud speaker, people were picking up the kids that were being assigned to them. It was enormous commotion and I was -- and our name was not called for the longest time. And we waited and waited for a long time, and finally our name was called. And there was our uncle picking us up. And he came with my guardian because we each, in order to get us to England, he had to get a guardian for each of us. And that meant that he needed a signature for each of us, I think that's the way it worked. But each child had to have a guarantor, and my uncle got guardians for all three of us. My older sister, Josie, and my younger sister, Ellie's, guardian was Marin Marais (ph), who was a pianist, a famous pianist. And my guardian was Ms. Fannie Bandit (ph), who was a violinist. My uncle came to the station to pick us up with Fannie Bandit, my guardian, who was a spinster, very well-to-do. And she came to actually to meet us at the station, and my uncle said, "Now, we are going to drive to where you are going to live in Burgess Hill. It's a children's home." And we were absolutely shocked about that because we thought we were going to stay with my uncle. I didn't know we were going to a children's home. And I'm not sure, I don't know. Well, of course, my uncle -- it was bad. I understood why it happened, but my older sister was very, very upset with my uncle because she thought that he should take my little sister, who was 10 years old. But my uncle was in a very precarious position because he was just newly married, and he had a baby, and they had a small flat in London. And I think his wife was not inclined to take a child, although she says -- and she's very close to us -- I mean, wherever it was. She says that she participated, that she was the one who did most of the work to get us out of Czechoslovakia. But she was not the sort of person who wanted to take a child. I mean, she just -- I don't know how that happened. But anyway, the three of us went to this home in Sussex. It was called Wyberley, W-y-b-e-r-l-e-y. It used to be a convalescent home for Jewish people. It was in Burgess Hill, Sussex. It was in beautiful grounds, a lovely place, lovely home. And they built sort of an addition in the back of this huge home where we were being housed, the children were being housed. When we arrived, I can't tell you how it was very painful that my uncle took us there. You know, very painful. And it was such a trauma that I don't remember whether we even went to see his home in London first. Whether we went to visit our aunt, but we may have gone to visit the aunt and the baby. Because that's another thing why we looked forward to going to England; he had a baby and we had a new cousin only about a year old. His name was Steven, and we wanted to see him very much because my mother was always talking to us about this new baby that we have. So we were very anxious to see him. Whether or not we went to see him before we went to this home, I don't know anymore. But what I think is we drove -- the reason my guardian came to the station, because she had a car and my uncle did not have a car. And so she was able to drive us to Sussex. When we arrived in this home, we were absolutely stunned again. So absolutely shocked because everybody in the home was from Germany and Austria. There were no Czech children there at all except us. And we were extremely Czech -- we were so patriotic, and we wanted to

be with Czech children. We didn't want to be with -- even though we were Jewish refugees, also. There were about 50 children in the home, and they were all from Germany, from Berlin, from all over German, and from Vienna.

Q: All Jewish?

A: Yes. They were all Jewish children there. It was a home which had a matron and lots of nurses. It's very elegant as far as I was concerned, I couldn't get over all the beautiful elegance of the home. It had a tennis court, and it had beautiful green lawns, and huge living room. Beautifully, everything -- the floors were shiny as can be, and all the staff that looked after us, dining room which was beautiful. Places were set for breakfast just in the best style you can imagine, and next to each setting there was a banana or piece of fruit for breakfast and cereal. I mean, I had never seen things like that in my village. We never had things like that. So there were very exciting things, but it was a terrific letdown. I have a diary which I wrote my, what a shock it was for us to come into a home where everybody spoke German and English. And we didn't speak a word of English, and we didn't speak much German either. We didn't speak any German, in fact. And suddenly we were placed in this thing, and they thought we were little hicks because they were all from big cities. So that was a big shock to us, but we adjusted quickly. We adjusted very quickly to the home, and my uncle came the first holiday to come and get us. And we spent a week with him at Christmastime and a week one other holiday, so we did travel to London to spend time with him. But my older sister has never forgiven his wife for not taking my younger sister because my younger sister later had lots of difficulties because we had to, you know, we only stayed in the home for a short period of time. About a year and a half. Because when war broke out, that area became restricted and we had to leave.

Q: Did they teach you in this home, a school?

A: Oh, yes, there was a school. We learned English. We had all kinds of nice things in the home. I mean, the home was good. We had a matron and everything was done very well.

Q: Did you observe Jewish holidays?

A: Yes. Uh-huh, we did. That's one thing, when we went to visit my uncle for a holiday in my diary, which I decided to read recently, I have a notation that we went to see my uncle and it was during a Jewish holiday. And we were so shocked to find that we went to a movie, and it was a Jewish holiday and we were really glad to get back to the home because we were able to observe the second night of Shabbat. Because my uncle, we did nothing at my uncle's house, and we were glad to get home to Wyberley, to our home, because at least there we celebrated the holiday. So, you see, my -- so we did. Played tennis. We learned to play tennis. We went to school. We

learned all kinds of things there, yes. Very good. But, of course, it was still a very lonely place for many of us. We shared -- we lived in a room, I think there were nine of us in one room. I have a drawing of the room where we stayed because we didn't stay in the main house. We -- as I said earlier, there was an addition built to the house, a temporary addition, to house the children. So we all lived in the back of the house, which was a temporary thing, and we shared -- I mean, there were nine in our room. There were nine children. And we had all kinds of things that were being done for us, all kinds of tutoring. And my older sister had to help in the kitchen. And eventually, I -- there were big girls and little girls. The little girls were like my little sister, and the big girls were like my older sister, 15 and 16. And the big girls had to look after -- each big girl had a little girl to look after like combing hair and doing things for her. And going to school, where all the big girl had to take care of the little girl, going to school and coming back from school. So we were taken care of quite well. And my uncle, we were in touch with him a lot, and we had pocket money, six pence a week for which had to buy stamps. We had mail from our parents because my parents found a way to communicate with us via Hungary, before Hungary -- because Hungary was not in the war. And through the United States, my father had a brother in St. Louis, America, and a sister -- I think it was stepbrother and stepsister in Vermont. And my mother got in touch with those families and wrote them and asked would -- if they would take us. So my uncle in St. Louis whom I've never met immediately started to proceed to try to get us over to the States. And I have letters and affidavits which they immediately started to do, but it was too late because, first of all, we didn't even want to go. The three of us didn't want to go. We wanted to stay in England because we didn't want to go that far away from home. But my other uncle would -- did everything he could to try to get us over, and he would send us letters and in the letter, he would sometimes send us a dollar or two dollars. And it was thrilling because we had so little money that we were always thrilled when we got a dollar, which was then five shillings, I think. I think so. In any case, we didn't really want to go away from England. We wanted to stay together and go home. That was our thought, but we were so relieved when we didn't have to go to the States. But my uncle wrote in this letter saying that they have enough resources to take care of all three of us. Well, we stayed . . .

Q: What were your parents saying in their letters? It must have been great to get their mail.

A: Oh, in the letters, my parents. Well, we wrote a lot. They sent us packages, too. And we wrote a lot of letters, also. And they were very, very grateful because -- and they were always in -- well, I haven't read my parents' letters. I have about, maybe, 30, 40 letters; I haven't read them because it's too painful to read my mother's letters. But I am going to read them, and I'm going to translate them because -- not only for myself, but for my children and for whoever might want to see them.

Q: But at the time, do you have sort of a vague recollection of what they wrote about?

A: Oh, yes. They wrote -- unfortunately, I wish they would have written exactly what was going on, but they wouldn't, of course. Why would they tell the children painful things? But it must have been very, very difficult for them already in the village. And it must have been -- and they wrote a little bit about my grandfather who obviously was having a terrible time because he had to leave his house. His house was taken over by somebody. And they put him into some kind of a room somewhere where he had no window. Because my mother wrote saying that it must be very hard for her father to be living without a window, so I don't know where they had put him. And they wrote us things like sent us recipes because we said be sure to send us a recipe about this and that. And then we would write them to say what we were doing, what we're learning, and what we were sewing, and what we were crocheting, and what we were knitting. And we would describe in great detail what we got for our birthdays and what -- we just gave them the most enthusiastic reports about our life in the home. And they were just thrilled about getting the letters, of course, and they would say how grateful they were that we were such good children and that we were telling them, that we were writing to them so regularly. Because that's the only thing, of course, that they had that was joyful. And they sent us -- I remember my mother sent us packages of knitted things, sweaters, and cookies probably. Whatever she could do.

Q: Were you homesick?

A: Oh, terribly homesick. Many of the children in the home were very fortunate because they were just there temporarily until their parents got out. Those were the worst times in our lives when other children's parents came to get them. Because we felt terribly envious, I should say, but at the same time, we were too ashamed not to be happy for the child, okay? Because you had to be happy for the child. But, on the other hand, you knew that you never, your parents are never going to come out because the war had started and it was -- and it was just completely -- well, completely hopeless. We could have done -- I always wonder whether we could have done something to get them out, but we didn't do anything. Because, first of all, it was July and August, two months, and the war broke out in September. So after that, it was over; you couldn't do anything. So we only would have had two months to do something in. Then my mother wrote to say that my grandmother came to stay with them from Poland, and so that they couldn't leave anymore. And I feel my parents were -- my father was very enterprising. My mother was a very bright, intelligent woman, and they would have certainly tried to escape. My father always wanted to leave long before we left. He wanted to go to Palestine, but my mother wouldn't go. He wanted to, he would have gone long ago. He was a great Zionist, he would definitely left long ago if my mother -- but my mother would not leave. Because my mother's family has been in the village for many generations, and my mother was very, very assimilated into the community. So she would not, she didn't want to leave to go to Palestine. But my father may have tried. Well, he would have gone. Where

would he have gone? If he had escaped, he would have probably gone into Poland, which was going to be the end, the worst end. Or maybe they might have continued on to Hungary, I don't know where they would have gone. But my uncle -- I know that my husband's aunt, who came to England, got everybody out from Vienna. Certain people, because she went around -- but she was much older. She was in her 30s late, and she went around and she got signatures for all her family. Now, we were too little to do this. Now, if I reproach myself about anything at all, it is because I felt if we had been a little older we might have been able to get my parents out. But who know? I don't know. In any case, so they wrote us these -- my mother wrote these long letters. I said to her in my letter "We're off the road." And I have a couple of those letters because when I went back to Czechoslovakia and I was given that book, a book with some photographs, among those things were two of our letters, which I was just amazed how well we wrote. And, well, when . . .

Q: You mentioned that you kept a diary.

A: Yes, I did. I kept a diary while I was at this home.

Q: What kind . . .

A: Which is very good. I'm sorry now that I didn't keep it more carefully, but I kept it for about until about 1941, when I stopped. Because in 1941, we had to leave the home. Suddenly -- you see, this area was near the coast, and besides the money -- whoever supported this home, whichever organization supported which could have been American. I think American and British, I don't know who did. I don't know where the money came from actually. That stopped and also that area was restricted and everybody had to leave. So we had to be -- this is where the problems started. We had to be sent somewhere, and that became a great, big problem because where to send the children. What to, you know -- oh, I have to go back to when I told you about parents coming to get the children, it was very, very painful. The other thing which was extremely for me, but I'm a great -- I'm able to sort of push it aside and look at the more positive things and to survive. I'm a survivor, I suppose. When I went to the village and I saw parents walking with their children hand in hand, that broke my heart. I used to be terribly upset about that because I felt -- that's when I felt the worst. You know, but, otherwise, you look forward in the letters. I mean, that's about it, and the home. Then we had to worry about what to do because everybody had to leave. And my little sister -- the older children had to leave first. And that's it began to dawn on us. Of course, there were air raids. While we lived already in the home still, air raids started. But we were -- well, we had to be sort of split up because my older sister was sent to London, and she went to work. There was a young women's home run by a Jewish refugee woman. She had an ordinary house in which she had housed, maybe she had 10 or 12, 20 girls who lived there. It was a house that was a hostel. And she provided breakfast and dinner, and she also ran something called the British Restaurant, where she cooked where you could buy

cheap meals. But I think she just ran the hostel; it was in Hampstead somewhere. So my sister was sent to London, and she went to that home. And she -- but she had to be self-supporting, so she went to work in a dressmaker shop. And she was -- then whatever she earned, she paid in that home to live there. My younger sister was sent to some families not far from the home where we were at. And she lived with some Quaker families, and she was very, very unhappy about having to be split up from us. She was very heartbroken about that because she just didn't want to leave us, but there was no choice. This is where my older sister blamed my uncle, that he should have taken her. But by this time, my uncle has lost his -- there was no job because the representation from Czechoslovakia when the war broke out, that was over. There was no more income, and he was not qualified to do -- he was an engineer, chemical engineer, but he had no job. The war started, and he didn't have anything. At that point, he couldn't have taken her. Or maybe he could have, and they could have done the best they could with the little they had, but they just didn't take her. And that, at this point, it is that my sister blames them because she felt they should have taken my little sister. Now, my little sister, even though my older sister and my little sister had this guardian, Myra Hess (ph), who I think paid the money that was only a cash transaction, I think she guaranteed for 70 children, you see. She didn't have anything personally, she drove a -- so my little sister had a hard time because I don't know what kind of family she stayed with, but she was moved around a great deal from family to family. And she told me that on Friday afternoons in school, they would say, "Who is going to take Ellie? Who can take Ellie for maybe next week or next holiday?" or whatever. And she just remembers that mainly that people would ask who will take her. But then she had some positive things about staying with those families because she did have it regular. She went to school through the entire system. She matriculated and she did everything that any English child does. She did have that privilege. She went through the entire system of school. Now, with me it was a different story. When I came to London and there was guardian, Fannie Bandit, who was just -- she was wonderful in one respect. She just loved having this child, me. But she didn't want me to live with -- I mean, there was no question of my living with her. Although she lived in a very elegant apartment on Penchley (ph) Road, and she had a housekeeper and I used to go to -- I was invited for lunches and whatever, and it was splendidly elegant. I can't tell you how beautiful and elegant it was because she was a grand lady. And she -- I mean, when I was invited for lunch, everything was set up just as if it was an important visitor had come, you know. I mean, the crystal and the silver and the dishes, and we would go to the dining room and then the housekeeper would come and serve the meal from the left. And we had to help our -- I mean, I learned all my good manners at my guardian's and she had this beautiful bathroom with a toilet that flushed. And she had all these lovely things and I just loved being with her, but there was no question of her taking me, you know. But when this home broke up in England, in Wyberley, Burgess Hill, my uncle went, this guardian with me and said, "Look, she can no longer stay in the home. You could do something." And I sat in the next room, and they argued and she said, "But you promised me that you only needed a signature from me. You told me

that I wouldn't have to do anything." And he said, "Yes, but I didn't know there was going to be a war, and this thing fell apart. The home is no longer there. Somebody's got to take care of her." And she said, "But you promised." And, you know, she just didn't want to do it. And so I sat there absolutely stricken with fear, and I hated that they argued about me like this. And so I said to myself will they be able to come and ask me what I'm going to do, what I want to do. And so I will have to tell them quickly, and what can I do that I could earn my living? Because my sister was already earning her own living, and I didn't have any skills. So I said to myself I will say that I can wash hair because that doesn't require any skills. So when they came out and she said to me "Well, what do you want to do? What do you want to do?" And I said, "I can be a hairdresser; I can wash hair." And she said no, or my uncle said no. In any case, they came to some arrangement where he begged her to send me to school. And she said, okay, she would do that. She finally agreed to it after a long argument, and she said, okay. they agreed that he would go to Bexley (ph) College to talk to them to see whether they would take me. Because I didn't speak English really. And she said, "Okay, I will pay for the school." And my uncle said, "She can stay with me. I'll put her up until she learns to short and type." And so my uncle whose wife had been evacuated with the baby to the country, lived in an apartment by himself. And he said he would be able to take me until I'm out of -- as long as I'm in school. So my guardian said, okay, she will pay for the school, and as far as I remember, she said she would pay him maintenance for me. And she would give me five shillings pocket money a week. And so my uncle went to the headmaster of Bexley (ph) College, and begged him to take me because the headmaster said, "I can't take her to _____, she doesn't speak English." And he begged him, he said, "You must give her a try because this is her only chance, because this lady is willing to pay for her education." So the headmaster said, "Okay, I'll try it." And, of course, I felt absolutely obligated to try to get out of there as fast as possible. It was a two- or three-year college. I was out of there in 10 months, and I got a job. And then I had to move from my uncle's to the same home that my older sister lived in that girl's home. And I went -- the headmaster complained to my uncle that I was not socializing with other children. When I -- during recess, I was always sitting at my desk working. I had to because I could learn children only phonetically because I don't understand the words they were saying, you see. But he kept me, and I graduated in 10 months with -- I would have preferred to stay there longer because my skills would have been better, but I was able to type and I was able to take shorthand, even though I didn't understand what I was taking. And when I got my first job at the book shop in England, near St. Paul's, I earned I think one pound five shillings a week and -- two pounds, five shillings. And with that money, I immediately got into the hostel where my sister was, and I paid all my money there, to live there. And that was the extent of my education. From there -- my guardian was always looked after me. I mean, she was good to me. She always invited me out. Oh, when she finally argued and decided to send me to school to show him that she is not ungenerous, she took me out and bought me a coat and a few things. And she gave me this pocket money every week, and she would invite me very often. I believe she loved me and I loved her, but that's

all she could do. You know, she just didn't know how to do anything else. And she would invite me to spend weekends with her sometimes, and she had a huge family in London. And none of them every thought of including me in anything. They had children my age or younger, but this was a Jewish family in London and they did not want me in this.

Q: What did you make of this at the time?

A: Felt very -- I felt it was unkind. Unkind. I felt -- they had birthday parties going for little children, for children -- I was never included in anything. They didn't -- but now when I go to London, they try to make a big fuss of us. But in those days, they didn't think of doing anything. But it destroyed many Jewish families that they did not.

Q: Could you accept your guardian's limits?

A: Yes, of course. Because she was truly loving and she -- oh, one thing I must mention in this. For as long as she lived afterwards whenever we saw each other, whenever she was in any company at all, she would tell the story that I wanted -- "she wanted to be a hairdresser, but I saved her from this." Well, I let her go on telling that story until towards the very end of her life when I was with nieces and nephews, all those fancy nieces and nephews, I mean, hew nephew had invited me to dinner one day when I was older and attractive and he was a young officer in the British Army. When he invited me to dinner, it would be at the Savoy Hotel. You know, the fanciest place in London. In any case, I told him when I saw them the last time, I said, "Your aunt always told you that I wanted to be a hairdresser. That was her story." And I told him the story that it wasn't because I wanted to be a hairdresser, but because I didn't want her to feel that she should be having to pay for me, because I needed to earn my own living. So that was the story about that.

Q: They didn't teach you English at the first home?

A: Yes, they did, but it was not sufficient to be able to take -- I mean, it was basic English. I mean, the first words in English that I learned, I needed to learn words that would take care of my sister, my little sister. Because my little sister was not very well. She was -- what do I say? Not sickly, not really sickly, but she was the baby at home, she was spoiled. And she was frail, that's the word. Frail. And I said I must learn to tell people that she is not well, but I didn't know how to say it. So I would learn -- the first thing I learned was to say, "My sister has a headache." Those were my first English words. "My sister has a headache." That's all I needed to know. And when we were dispersed from this home, I had saved 15 shillings. Do you know how much that is? 15 shillings, it was about $3. And when we were dispersed, I gave her my $3 because I said I will be able to take care of myself, but she needed -- I wanted to do everything. You see, when she was born, I was very envious of the fact there was a baby in the family, and so I always had a sort of slight guilt feeling that I

wanted to get her out of her crib, because she displaced me from parents' bedroom when I was a little girl. I used to sleep in the bedroom, but when she was born, I had to get out because the crib had to come in there. So I always resented that part, so I always felt that I had to make up for that. Because I felt if something happened, that was my fault, because of my bad thoughts, you see. So I would give up all the money, all the money I had so that she would -- because I needed to have the peace of mind that I've done everything for her. So I learned to say, "My sister has a headache." And I gave her all my pocket money, so that the result of my parents' teaching, you see. Because my mother always wrote in every letter "The main thing is that you should get along with each other, and you've got to love each other and you have to get along with each other." And so I -- and another thing, whenever I did anything at all, it was always a question in my mind was is that what they would want me to do? Okay. So we all behaved better than we would have done had we lived with our parents, because we always lived by the standard that we want more than -- I mean, we were -- I, particularly, was totally exaggerated. The only area where I didn't follow is in the religion. I did not follow my father's footsteps because I thought I was so -- and to me this whole disaster was incomprehensible, so I did not -- that's one justice -- I feel I'm perfectly justified not to have followed that. So, otherwise, we did everything what my mother -- you know, I did everything for my sisters afterwards because I, no matter what they did -- I mean, they always were good. We were always good. But I took it upon myself to be the -- I mean, I just did not argue about anything with them. I just gave in. I mean, I won't say that I was absolutely like that when I was a young girl. My older sister was the one who took care of us. I did go through her drawers and I borrowed her blouses, and I used -- and I made her do my mending for me and do all kinds of stuff, okay? Oh, we had do our own mending and, you know, we had to darn our socks and darn our -- I mean, that's the kind of -- in the last year my mother taught us all these things, to do all these things before we left.

Q: Well, it must have been tough when you left that home that you had to separate from your sisters.

A: Yeah, we all separated. But my older sister was in London, so she was in that home. And I was not too far from her. I was with my uncle, and my uncle was -- we were very close. I was very close to my uncle. He was particularly attached to me, so . . .

Q: So you visited with your sister?

A: My younger sister suffered greatly because she was away from us and she felt isolated, and also she felt that my older sister and I were very close and she was out of it. But we tried to look after her as best we could, but she felt very -- for the rest of her life, she felt lonely.

Q: Did you -- so you saw your older sister regularly in London?

A: Yeah, I saw her.

Q: And the other sister, did you visit her?

A: Only when -- no, we never visited her. During holidays, she would visit us. And then she stayed there until she finished her school. I think until she got her first job, as far as I -- my older sister and I then moved together to the YWCA, which was like a hostel. It was like run my matron, and the meals were served there, breakfast and dinner. And we stayed there five years until we had to leave because the maximum that you could stay there was five years. So until we had to leave, we stayed there. I worked for about a year for this book shop, where I earned the minimum, okay? Then I got a job with my guardian, had a friend who was some kind of chemical engineer. And he did some effort work, and I transferred to work for him. And then I got a wonderful job with the Czech Armament, as a bilingual secretary, and . . .

Q: This was during the war?

A: Yes. I think I started working with them in 1943 or '44, and I stayed with them until I came here. I came here with my job, actually.

Q: When you worked with the Czech government, did you get a lot of information about what was going on in the world?

A: I mean -- I didn't know what -- we didn't get any information as the result of working with the Czech Armament where I was, no.

Q: Were you still getting letters from home?

A: No, 1942, March 1942 was the last letter from my mother. And they were deported in June 1942 to Auschwitz. And my grandmother -- and I don't know what happened to my grandfather and his wife. My uncle wrote a little note to us, and he said he was deported to Poland, but I think he was killed in the village. Because there is -- when we were visiting Czechoslovakia a few years later after the war, we went to this woods, _____ where we used to go as children to pick wild strawberries and snowdrops, and there's a monument to people who had to dig their own graves. And there's a mass grave in the woods. And I didn't dare to ask the man who took us there who is buried in that mass grave, but I suspect my grandfather is buried in that mass grave. But I just was too frightened to ask him. I didn't want to -- I mean, I did and I didn't want to know, but I should have liked to know. That's one thing I didn't investigate, what happened to my grandfather. I know what happened to my parents and to my grandmother, but I don't know what happened to him.

Q: Did you feel safe in London?

A: In which way? You mean from Germany?

Q: Yeah.

A: Well, there was -- no, well, I didn't feel that there was any danger. Few minutes left? I didn't feel -- no, I didn't feel safe. I mean, you know, we lived through the Blitz and I stayed in my room, always. I never went to shelters. I felt -- I don't know, I just felt whatever happens, happens. So I just didn't want to go to shelters. At the beginning when I stayed with my uncle, I went to shelters. But later on, all through the war, I stayed in my room. And we had gas masks and fire _____, but there were some, many people were afraid that would be an invasion of England. And at the beginning of the war, it looked like there may be an invasion, but I was never -- I didn't, no, I was afraid for my parents, and I thought -- all the time I thought that my parents would be okay. When I heard what was going on, and I didn't know -- I mean, who knew? As soon as the war was over, my older sister went back home to find them. I should have gone with her, but we didn't have the money. And we didn't -- I guess we decided that one of us will go back to find out what happened. When she went to village, it was -- before we left, by the way, I forgot to mention that our father showed us where he would put things, hide things for us in case something happened. Because my sister went to look for it, and nothing was there. And the house was certainly occupied by other people and there was nothing of our things, but my mother wrote to us to say who she gave things to. She left things in different places for us with different families. So my sister went from family to family to try to find something to get it back. Nobody would return one item to her.

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

Q: Before we continue, I think there are, just for the record, a couple of points we need to make about your transport.

A: Yes. Well, I forgot to mention that we stopped in Prague. The train originated in Bratislava, but we stopped in Prague to pick up the majority of the children. That was very thrilling to see all those children at the station, and, of course, then we -- I think went to Harwich. It landed in Harwich, but, as I said before, I have no recollection. It was night, that's all I know.

Q: And when you got off the boat, where did you disembark?

A: I think in Victoria Station. Oh, disembark from the boat?

Q: Where did you land?

A: Harwich, right. And then we took a train to Victoria Station. But that I would have to confirm because I'm not sure. It was a huge station. I always thought it was Victoria, but it may have been another one.

Q: When you were living in England, did you keep up contact with the kids from the transport or the kids from the schools or homes?

A: The only contact we kept -- well, Eva's parents came. Eva, the little girl who came with us, the 10-year-old, her parents came and got her, and they went to South America. So we lost touch, but we did see each other recently. And we kept in touch later, but during the war we lost touch.

Q: There were thousands of refugee children . . .

A: Uh-huh.

Q: . . . in England at this time. Did you run into each other? Did you know who each other . . .

A: Oh, we kept in touch with the children from the home. As many -- not everybody, of course, because they were dispersed all over the place. Many of them went -- whose parents came and they went, some of them went to America. And some of them went to other parts of England, but we kept in touch with quite a few of them. In fact, we became sort of a little family. I mean, we had each other. And we belonged to different organizations. We belonged to something called the Amateur Czechoslovakia, which was made up of Czech refugees. And we -- there were Hungarian clubs and Czech clubs and Austrian clubs, and all these refugees from the

home, we all got together and we had dances and we had all kinds of activities. And we were very -- we had a great time; we had a good time. Of course, we had fears. We all had the same fears. There were many children who were on their own. I mean, we were so much better off than many of the kids because, first of all, we had each other. There were three of us. Although we were not together, we were as strong together. We had each other in England, and then we had our uncle and then we had -- by this time, I had two little cousins, Steven and Jane, and my Aunt Lottie. I mean, there were -- my aunt was an artist and very much interested in music. They lived in the music and art world, and I was exposed to all that thing. And it was marvelous, and I had my guardian who also was terrific, and I was very much influenced by all those people. I took the best out of all this. I mean, I really learned a great deal from them. But we kept in touch with our friends from the home, children's home, and then we were mostly with our refugee friends, because very few people in England -- I mean, you were a refugee. You were not included -- at least, we were not -- in any of the English life. It was very amazing because it was such a very different land. You know, when I came to America in 1948, I felt at home here immediately, where I had never really felt at home in England while I lived there. I felt much more at home after I lived in America. When I went back to England, I felt -- I had spent my youth, so I felt like it's a place I know very well. But the people themselves, we had very little contact with English people really.

Q: So you didn't make good friends among English kids really?

A: No, no. We were friends -- our main companions were other refugees. We stayed with the refugees mostly, and we went to all the clubs that we went to and all the dances with mostly -- almost all of them were refugees.

Q: What's so different about the lifestyle?

A: In England? Totally different from my village, of course. I missed our village enormously. Of course, I always had this picture of it -- well, that's where I thought I would end up, I would want to go back. I missed everything about the village, everything. It's just amazing. I could never -- nothing was the same. I mean, I could compare always to it. Well, there were other things, of course, you know. I mean, other things. But, I mean, to me what happened here is that I felt -- I missed those things I did as a child at home and the woods. This was a big town, and London was a big city. And everything was paved. In my village, everything was, you know, nature. So I thought -- I mean, I always compared, and I just longed to be back in the village. That's all. Although, I liked a lot certain aspects, of course, of being London. I worried a great deal about my parents, and we hoped everything would be okay. As I told you earlier, I thought my parents would survive because of my father being so popular. But we didn't know anything, we didn't really know what was going on in Europe, and it's possible that we could have known more and that we just didn't want to face what was going on. I don' t know.

Q: Did you talk about home with your sisters?

A: Oh, yes. A great deal. Yes. We worried about our parents a lot, and, of course, there was no contact at all from March 1942 until after the war when my sister went back and found out that there was no one left.

Q: Did you have dreams?

A: I'm sure I had dreams, and I kept the diary in my -- in the children's home mainly for the purpose of having it for my parents when I got home. That was the idea of the diary. I really didn't keep it for myself. I wanted them to know everything we did and how we lived. And then when war broke out and everything was -- we stopped correspondence, then I stopped keeping the diary. And as I say it's very hard to accept. I always thought I would go back home because I don't think it would have true in the end having lived in England during the war and all these years. I don't know that I would ever have adjusted to life in the village again, but in my mind it was special.

Q: So you stayed in England. You eventually developed a good career for yourself.

A: Uh-huh. Well, I worked for the Czech government in exile until 1947, '48. In 1947 I was assigned to work for the second annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund, which was being held in London. And I was assigned there to work there by someone who had worked in the Czech government in exile and who went back to Prague immediately after the war. He was a high official at the ministry where I worked, and he was -- they all went back to Czechoslovakia as soon as the war ended. These were big government officials, okay? The lesser people like I stayed behind and the offices continued in London. Now, this friend of mine who was quite a high official in the government who was in the ministry of finance in Prague, and he's the one who insisted that I go to work for the annual meeting for the International Monetary Fund. Because this time I was an accomplished bilingual secretary and the delegation was coming from Washington and from Prague and they needed someone to work with them. There were 15 members of the delegation. I was very young and not very experienced, and I was terrified and I didn't want to do it. But this man insisted. He didn't get in touch with me, but called my supervisors and insisted that I be assigned to cover this conference. And I didn't want to do it, and he insisted and finally I was made to do it. And this is how I ended up in Washington because the people where I worked asked me whether I want to come to Washington with the International Monetary Fund, and this is how I ended up finally getting here. I was offered the job in London, and I came with the fund. It was very -- it worked beautifully because immediately after the annual meeting of the International Management Fund in London, I got a recall letter from Prague, because the Communists have taken over by this time or shortly after the annual meeting. The

Communists took over in March 1948 in Czechoslovakia, and immediately they recalled all of the people who were working for the Czech government. And I was recalled to Prague, and I left my office in the morning to look for another job and that same day, I received a letter of appointment with the International Monetary Fund. So I accepted this job for a year, but I worked with them for 35 years. So I came to Washington.

Q: You know, there is something that we didn't mention.

A: What?

Q: Which was your knowledge when the war was over. What you were feeling at that time, how did you learn the war was over, because that's a pretty important . . .

A: I tried very hard to reconstruct that memory, but, you know, I can't. You know why? Because I think we were so terrified about will we find out, that I just don't remember exactly how I found out or where I was. I don't remember anything about it. I remember that the war was over everywhere, absolutely scared to find out what happened to the family. But, of course, we immediately sent cables to Czechoslovakia to ask about our parents. And we had responses, lots of responses from different -- because we sent cables to different people asking them to find, to see to our parents. And we had responses to say that they were sent to Poland, Auschwitz in June 1942. So the last letter that we have from my parents is dated March 1942, and three months later, they were sent to Auschwitz. So at that point, we decided that my sister would go back to Czechoslovakia to go to the village. I was too petrified to go back.

Q: So you knew that the war was kind of a mixed . . .

A: Yes, it was very scary; it was very frightening because, first of all, we didn't know what we'll find. And then by this time, we didn't know where we would go, what we would do. So my sister traveled back by herself, found nothing, nobody. She came back and then this was this decision what to do. We decided, well, what to do, we stayed in England for a while. We certainly weren't going to go back to nothing. And so we stayed in England, and that's when I decided to accept that appointment when I was recalled to Prague, because I didn't want to go to Prague by myself. Besides, the country had fallen to Communism, and I didn't want to go. And I decided I must get out of London because I must accept the appointment for Washington, because if I didn't get out of London, we would probably still be living together, my sister and I. And my older sister would not get married until all of us were sort of taken care of, so I left. And as soon as I left, my sister got married. And . . .

Q: Your younger sister?

A: My younger sister got married shortly afterwards. Came to London and married. And I stayed in America, but I must tell you I did go back to Czechoslovakia in 1970 for the first time to my village. It was shortly after the Communists -- the Communists were still there, but it was shortly after Deutsch-Czech (ph) government started making -- the Prague -- you know, there was this revolt against the government. I did go back; I wanted to go back, I wanted to go back to the village because all my life there was something that was bothering me. I did not really settle down, neither in England nor America, even when I was married and had three children. Something bothered me very much, and I couldn't quite put my finger on it but I never felt really at home anywhere. So finally we decided we would go back to the village. We were going to go during the Deutsch-Czech (ph), before the Communists took -- but then I got cold feet. But my husband insisted that we do go back, and so we went to Vienna. We rented a car, we drove to my village. We got to my village at 6 o'clock in the evening, and it was totally changed. Totally changed. There were huge buildings. I mean, it was under the Communist regime, they built these huge concrete buildings and the village was so transformed, I could not find my way. In any case, I said to my husband if we go -- the first thing I did when we got to the village -- it was 6 o'clock in the evening -- I asked the people about my friend, Eva _____. I didn't ask for any of the Jewish children, because there was no one left. But I asked for my friend; they said, "Oh, she just died about a year ago." So I was very disappointed because she the only person I could think of to ask. And then I said to my husband, "The only way I can find my house if I go to the station where I used to go to school, and then walk that street down that street, I'll know where my house is." And when we got there, there was this house that looked so dilapidated and all the children were playing outside, and I said to them, "Do you live in this house?" And they said yes. I said, "Could you ask your mother whether I could come in, I used to live here?" And she said, "Well, there are three families living in this house now, " but she said, "you can go on." I said, "No, go in and ask her whether I could come in." And so she went in and I followed her, and she called up to her mother that somebody wants to come in and see the house. The mother came to the top of the stairs, she looked down. She then knocked on the door where her husband was taking a cap, and she said, "Come out, Mrs. Ebostarkova is here." And I was shocked, absolutely, that she should say that after 40 years. And I said, "How did you know who I was?" And she said, "Well, who else could it be?" So they knew that they were living in the house that belonged to my parents. And I looked, I couldn't recognize one stick of anything that belonged to us. And they immediately assembled their -- some of the other people in the village to come and see us. That's when I got this book with the photographs. And they all wanted to buy the house from me, and I said, "Well, I don't -- this is not my house. I mean, I don't want to deal with it." And so the next morning -- one of them invited us to spend the night and we did. He was the son of a woman who used to clean the house for us. And he said to me, "I remember your grandfather. He used to wear this gold chain," and he pointed out and he made out as if the chain were several inches wide. And he said, "We used to play together," but I couldn't remember him anymore. And then he insisted on taking me the next morning to the

district building to see whether we could transfer the house to him, whether they could buy the house. And when we got -- I didn't want to do it, but I went with him. And when we got there, this woman who was keeping the books looked up to see whether any taxes are owed on the house, and then she said to me, "If you decide to sell the house, will you sell it to me?" I said, "I'm not selling anything. I'm not staying." In any case, at 10 o'clock, I said to my husband, "I've got to get out of this village. I've got to get out of here." So we took a little walk. We went to the woods where I used to go. That's when I saw that big grave and the monument to the people, and then we got into the car. I said, "We've got to get out of here, and don't stop." We got there at 6 o'clock in the evening. At 10 o'clock in the morning, we were on our way out. And we drove fast to Vienna, as fast as we could. And we almost got shot by the border guards because my husband didn't realize that somebody was trying to stop us, because somebody was flashing a lantern. He thought it was a bicyclist, and it was the border guard. But I was so ill in the back seat, I was sick all the way to Vienna. I was so ill on my journey home, and I said to him -- I just lay there being sick all the time. I said, "Don't. Just get to Vienna and get the best hotel you can. I need to get into the best hotel. You just get there as fast as you can." So we arrived in Vienna at whatever time it was, 11 o'clock at night. We went to the hotel, the best hotel he could find. I went upstairs and I lay down and slept, and they went out -- my son and Peter went out to dinner. And I just slept and slept. Woke up the next morning and just relaxed, and then I realized that this was the best thing that ever happened to me, that I went back. I made my final journey home, my return journey. That's what I was waiting for all these years, to make the return journey. Because I lived out of my suitcases, and I didn't realize that. For all those years, even when I had -- until 1970, I lived into my suitcases. And then we -- I came home, and it was the best thing that could have happened. When I drove to work through Rock Creek Park, I used to work -- before that, I used to drive to work through Rock Creek Park, and I used to say to myself almost every day, "This is very pretty, but it is not home. There are no snowdrops here and no wild flowers." And I missed it so much. And then I came back from that trip; I drove through Rock Creek Park and I said, "Well, strawberries and snowdrops are not everything." And I was just -- suddenly, I realized that this is what was bothering me. I just had to make the trip back home. And even though I stayed there from 6:00 in the evening until 10:00 in the morning, it did it for me. And I said, "I don't want to sell the house. Just take it, do whatever you like, you know. I don't want to deal with the house." Which I felt a little ashamed because my father put everything -- you know, he wanted us to have this, but I had to leave it behind. I can't deal with it. And that's when they told me about all the -- I mean, you know, nobody returned anything when my sister went back. And when you think about what actually happened was that people were just greedy, and they wanted -- that was about the material things. They wanted to take the things away from the people, from the Jewish people. That gave them the license to take things away and to even kill, okay? I mean, they put people in the trains, and they didn't care what happened to them. But they were able to get into their houses and take the property away, okay? That's it. That's all.

Q: Do you remember your impressions when you came to the United States?

A: I loved being in the United States. I mean, I felt at home here right away. I told you I felt at home, much more so than I did in England because I felt this was sort of everybody belonged. And, you know, we all belonged here, just very different. In England, it's different now. I think it's better. And I feel very much at home when I go back to England. I feel very comfortable, but in those days, it was very hard for refugees. But although England was, I must say, I must give credit where credit is due, they did take 10,000; whereas, in the United States, they didn't take very many children, if any. Altogether they took very few refugees, whereas England on this small island, did take a lot -- I mean, there were 10,000. And many of the people who took the children, many of the families were not Jewish. Most of the children that were assigned to families were assigned to non-Jewish families. Many of the Jewish families gave money, but did not give homes, okay? So -- except in the transport.

Q: You came here, you got married and had a family?

A: Yes, I got married in 1950, and we have three children. And I am always amazed at what my father would think if he thought that he had a journalist daughter working for the "Russian Post," a granddaughter, okay? And we have three children and three grandchildren.

Q: What do you think got you through all these kind of lonely times? What made you strong? You developed pretty fast.

A: Oh, yes. I think that what made us strong? I think is the loving care and upbringing from home and possibly the religious -- I mean, I think that we had a wonderful childhood. Very loving family. We were very close, and I think it's the upbringing. What else could it be? I was thinking about it the other day, that we were very young. There are so many kids, not us, particularly, but there were children who are younger and they got educated. They did extremely well.

Q: When you were feeling lonely or homesick, was there something you did?

A: Yes, I cried. I cried, but I was also very -- what should I say? I was very -- I had to sort of be strong, that's all, you know? I made a real effort to overcome and deal with it. I cried a lot, I'm sure.

Q: You say that you think your religious upbringing helped you. And yet you say . . .

A: Well, but there is an ethic in the way we were brought up, okay? It's not only going to -- I still maintain that. I live like that, I brought my children up that way. They are Jewish and they know it. And they are decent people; that's all I can say. I mean, one

doesn't have to go -- I find that all the churches in my village in all the things did not help to make these people good, you know. That doesn't make people good. They have to be good from inside. That's what goodness is. Praying, going to church, and then going to confession, and doing evil things is not the fact -- that's the difference.

Q: How do you think growing up in England shaped the person you became?

A: Well, how? It was -- growing up in England, actually, I grew up among refugees. I told you, except for my guardian, I didn't know -- I don't think I knew any English people beside my guardian. But I have to think. Maybe in the YWCA where I lived, I met some, but we did not maintain any kind of relationships. More England gave me a lot of -- did build some character. I mean, they behaved so beautifully during the war. They were so solidly, you know, brave, and they continued to work, even when the bombs were falling. And they were just strong, steady people, and that, I think, helped a great deal. I mean, it taught me a lot, I learned a lot in England. And I think they are so disciplined and truthful in lines for everything and very decent.

Q: How -- have you thought about how these extremes in your unusual childhood impacted you? What sorts of long-term effects this has had on you or the way you lived, the way you raised your family?

A: My childhood, well, it was difficult because, of course, I didn't have parents. During the most crucial time of my life when I was growing up in my teens, I didn't have anyone to show me anything. So I always felt a little doubt whether I never knew exactly what to do when I had a baby, or how to dress the baby. And certain things, I didn't have a mother to show me. I had to learn myself. I just observed and I took the best out of what I saw. That's all. I mean, I missed a lot of that not having the guidance from my parents. But also, I mean, it forced me to make some decisions about myself and how I wanted to do things. And I don't know how it would have been if I had gone back home and my parents would have been there. I don't know how that my life would been, it's a big question.

Q: But you think that affected the way you raised your own children?

A: Oh, if affected -- well, I'm sure that I -- yes, I didn't do that greatly in raising my children because I was a very anxious mother. And I'm sure that my experiences definitely had an impact on my children. I'm sure I damaged my children a great deal through this kind of anxiety because I worried about them a great deal. I was always terrified something would happen. Of course, I see only the -- I'm always fearful about things happening. And I used to feel very sorry for my children when they were babies. I used to stand over the crib and I used to say, "You poor little baby, you don't know you're Jewish, what you have to face in life." And I felt terrible for them. Maybe they saw the feelings that I felt when I didn't allow myself to feel. I transmitted, I felt that they were my kids. I felt very sorry for them when they were

little ones, you know. I said, "You don't what lies ahead, how horrible." Its' so hard, but I still didn't do anything to change that. But I did feel sorry, I mean, definitely my children have -- are the product of my experiences, definitely. My husband's too, probably. Except my husband, of course, came out with his mother and his sister.

Q: Do you have certain fears or anxieties today that are . . .

A: Of course. Always have fears.

Q: . . . from that period?

A: Yes, I do. I live in fear. I live in fear, but I manage -- to have a husband who is an optimist and so we have a balance, but I'm very anxious. He always said that I was afraid of authority. I'm afraid of police when I see a policeman, and I'm afraid of this and that. And he attributes many more fears to me probably than I have, but maybe not quite enough. I think I have a great deal more fears, yes. But I deal with it, I mean, the best I know how. I manage to hide it.

Q: Is there any other thoughts you have or anything else you want to say?

A: Well, I can say -- I didn't say anything about Mr. Winton, but Mr. Winton will speak for himself as the gentleman who arranged for the transports. I do want to say another thing. Yes, I do want to say something which is very, very important. That I'll never -- that I'm very grateful to my uncle because who has an uncle like mine? And I'm very, very grateful to my parents. I mean, who would have thought that parents like mine who lived in a village, who have never been out of it, who would have done this, sent us out? And I do not, like some people feel angry with their parents for having sent them away, I never for one moment had those feelings. Never. And I don't think any of -- maybe my younger sister may have, but I don't think so. Maybe she did feel that way, but I always felt very grateful. And I am amazed, absolutely amazed, that my parents had the courage to do it because they suffered incredibly for having sent the children away. My mother's letters are heartbreaking. That's why I can't read them. As soon as I begin to read the letters, I can't continue because she is so devastated by having sent us away. But there is another good thing about it. My father had a -- when I wrote to my parents in Czechoslovakia, I would say -- I was always afraid that my father would be the one who would be taken away, so I wrote to my parents and I said to them, "I want my father" -- my mother was the one who wrote the letters. My father always added something; not always, but sometimes. And I would say to my mother through the letters, "Be sure that my father signs his name to every letter. I want to know that he's there, and don't tell me he's all right. I want to see his signature on every letter." And he wrote, and one of the last letters that he wrote was "I'm so glad you're not here. I'm so glad that you're there, that we sent you away." And that was the best letter that we ever had because I thought at last, because at the beginning they doubts whether

they did the right thing. And, of course, you know, I mean, how -- I just marvel at them. That's all I can tell you. Because I have my own children, and I don't know that I would ever be able to do this. And that shows you that this was enormous love to do this. What a sacrifice! So that's what I have to add. There are masses of other things that probably I have forgotten, but, you know, I could go on. I did a tape -- my younger sister died a year ago, very suddenly, from cancer of the lung caused by asbestos. Apparently, it had to with my father's business because he was in the asbestos -- in the roofing business. I mean, building and roofing, and he did asbestos tiles for the housing. Now, when my sister died, she may have had other memories that I'm sorry I didn't get to ask her, but her daughter asked me to tell the story of her mother and of our home. Because her daughter wants to do a book, so I finally did, I did that for her. I did a tape which is a four-hour tape. The story, of course, as I went on, I remembered many things. And to this moment, I still keep on remembering other things which I add to the tape, so the tape exists. But I'm sure that I have forgotten or left out things, but there is only so much one can say, right? Now, I'd like to show you my two sisters, if I may.

Q: Sure. Are we going to need to stop?

A: This picture was taken probably in 1940 or '41 and sent to us in London in England. And on the left, from the left to right, my mother; my mother's sister, Marguerite (ph); my grandmother, my step grandmother, actually; my grandfather with a moustache; and my father. And they were all sent to Auschwitz in 1942. This is the three of us. My older sister, Josie, in the right. I'm in the middle, Alice. And my younger sister, Ellie, who was 10 years old, the little one on the left.

Q: When was this taken?

A: This was taken shortly before we came on the transport. Okay? This is my father's mother who came to stay with my parents, I think probably after we left sometime at the end of 1939 after Poland was occupied, I suppose. After war broke out, and she came from _____ to stay with my parents, and this is one reason why my parents could not leave, even if they wanted to. Because they wouldn't desert her, and she went with them to Auschwitz in the summer 1942. This is the house where we lived from 1938 until 1939, or at least we children. My parents stayed down till 1942, I think. This is the village of Bratislava, where I lived until I was 14 years old. None of the people who -- none of my friends, none of the Jewish families survived. Oh, possibly one may have survived, but none of the ones that we were very close to.

Q: How many Jews lived in the village?

A: I'm not sure how many, but quite a few families. Maybe 20 Jewish families. Okay, this is about two weeks prior to our departure from our village. And I'm in the middle with a basket with my school celebrating some occasion. I can't remember what it

was, but this was a national costume that we were wearing, and we had a great time in the village before the war. Okay, this is the synagogue which this is what it looked like in 1970 when I made my first trip back to Czechoslovakia.

Q: Is it being used as a synagogue?

A: It is not now. It was used as grain storage. Okay? Now, these are my parents' grandchildren that they have never an opportunity to see, and some of the great grandchildren. I think there are one or two great grandchildren missing. Now, at the top, this picture there is my daughter, Ann, with her husband and my three grandchildren. Now, on the left is my daughter, Kim, and in the middle, the first gentlemen is my son, Tim. Then there are my older sister's two children, Vera, on the left and Michael. And my younger sister's children, Helen and Cathy. These are Helen's two, her children, and one of them is not here, but my parents' great grandchildren from my younger sister. These are the children of my older sister, grandchildren of my older sister, Samantha and Jarael (ph). And the one on the left is my granddaughter, who was already on the previous picture. Is that it?

End of Tape #3
Conclusion of Interview