

Interview with Alice (Lisl) Bogart
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Emphasis on Brother's Story -- Peter Winternitz

- A: Bogart but my maiden name was Winternitz, W-i-n-t-e-r-n-i-t-z. I was growing up in Prague. My immediate family were my parents and a brother, Peter, who was four years older than I. We had a wonderful life and childhood until March 15, 1939 when Hitler occupied our country
- Q: Can I ask you a few questions?
- A: Go ahead.
- Q: Lisl, L-e-i-s-l?
- A: L-i-s-l.
- Q: The date you were born, your birth date?
- A: May 7, 1926 which happens to be the day of my liberation too.
- Q: Nice symmetry there. Can I ask you a little bit about Prague when you were growing up, where you lived, if you remember the street, what your house was like?
- A: Right. We lived in Prague 10 which was Karlin, K-a-r-l-i-n. The street was called, Karlova, K-a-r-l-o-v-a which later under the Germans was changed to Nymburska. My identification is – N-y-m-b-u-r-s-k-a.
- Q: What did your parents do for a living? Your father and your mother?
- A: My father was a businessman. He had a store of wholesale/retail place of floor coverings which was, as soon as we were occupied, taken away by his own employees, Czech. Later on, by the Germans.
- Q: So the Czechs took the shop over and then the Germans --?
- A: Took it away from them
- Q: From the Czechs?
- A: On their own. Was not the law yet.
- Q: Did you and your brother go to public school?

- A: We went to public schools, to German schools and in '37 when things became ---. The andr_____started, we transferred to Czech schools.
- Q: Did you speak German at the time, at home and things or did you speak --?
- A: Both languages, we were bilingual.
- Q: Both German and Czech. How about Yiddish, did you speak Yiddish?
- A: Not at all.
- Q: No?
- A: Never, never heard a word of Yiddish.
- Q: You and your brother also, did either of you, were you involved in youth organizations?
- A: My brother was involved in the Zionist youth organization, M_____ Hatzair.
- Q: What kind of things did he do there, do you know?
- A: He got me to join against our parents' wishes.
- Q: They disapproved?
- A: They disapproved. In the end as I'm putting it together, after the war, much later, due to the Zionist youth organization, I was saved.
- Q: Why don't you tell me a little bit about that since we've already started to talk about it? Go ahead.
- A: Well, it's a long story in itself but the leadership of the Zionist youth organization, first we set up a whole "Helping Hand" group when the transports started. Later on, the same leadership in Terezin and other camps tried to get us into positions where we either could be of help, teaching, helping or, as later on proved, got me out of a transport and into the Blima Mica which was a war production, which in the end saved my life. Many instances during my stay in Terezin happened because the underground movement of this leadership ---.
- Q: Were able to do things for you?
- A: Were able to, indirectly. Even so, the leadership was all killed, all put into the gas and so on. Some of us were able to get to certain jobs in certain positions, where in the end we were saved.

- Q: Did either of you or your brother and since your brother was older he probably did, I'm not sure if you did, finished school, finish high school before --?
- A: Neither one of us.
- Q: Neither one of you did before the war?
- A: No, no. We were both thrown out. He was in his sixth year of _____ and I was in my second year. Neither one of us finished.
- Q: Do you remember any instances of overt anti-Semitism before the war started -- like in the early thirties when you were a child?
- A: Not directly remember on me. I was really too young. But there were incidents, unrest in the streets and against the Jews. In schools some of the _____ in our class and _____ which was _____ were against us. But personally on myself, the first day of our occupation when a teacher yelled at me, you dirty filthy Jew and spit in my face and wouldn't let me come in the class.
- Q: That was the first day of occupation?
- A: First day of occupation, March 15, 1939. That was my first contact with personal hatred against me on my body, on myself. Until then, I was only 13 years old so I didn't really identify.
- Q: When Hitler came to power and I know this is probably hard for you to remember but you may remember through your parents' reactions or your brother's reactions, was there a feeling of fear about what was going on in Germany? Or was -- did people really know what was going on?
- A: We knew and I knew because we had family in Austria, in Vienna. They were occupied a year before. They tried illegally to cross the border at night and to come to Czechoslovakia. That's another whole story. They paid to be taken across the border illegally and whoever they paid to, took the money and never guided them across. There were many stories like that. They finally did make it on their own, illegally across. Now when I came home from school that day I was told to be very quiet because somebody was sleeping in our house that came. I was not told then illegally because it was too dangerous for me to know. Later on I was told; I was 12 at that time. We learned and we knew what was happening. We also had many friends from Germany come to Prague and relatives who were already, before that, persecuted and escaped to Prague. Of course, they were caught, later on in Prague.
- Q: Was there, I remember, I'm in fact reading a book about Franz Kafka and Prague at the turn of the century. Was there a great rivalry between the Czechs and

Germans going on at the time? Do you remember a whole lot of unrest in that kind of area?

A: Well the address really came with the Sudetenland which was the mobilization which was in the fall of '38. That's really the time we became aware of all that and were taken out of the German schools. There were riots in the streets and all that where we were caught once trying to get home from where we were. As Jews, we didn't even dare to cross or go near it. It took us like three hours, four hours to get home.

Q: To go around?

A: To go around and I remember we were separated at a point and I got scared. That stayed with me but this was before we were occupied. That was when the Andres _____ started. From little thing like that, I remember the various tensions and feelings. My parents always, when they talked, it was always in whispers so we wouldn't -- the children should not know. We were at that time being protected. Later on the table turned and we had to protect our parents but that came later on.

Q: Why don't you tell me a little bit about when the city was occupied by the Germans in 1939? You told me the one incident with the teacher.

A: That was the first day.

Q: Yeah. What happened when the Germans came in? Did they immediately put restrictions on Jews or ..?

A: Slowly, day by day the laws kept coming in day by day. From all the things we had to give up, valuables, art collections, anything of value. Later on the radios, the telephones, the phonographs and restrictions. Later, no public places allowed for Jews from amusement halls, movies, theatres, restaurants, any public place, playgrounds, parks and so on. Public transportation which was restricted. Of course the identification with the Jewish star, you are well aware of that, I'm sure. Food stamps where we had the red "J" printed into it.

Q: Were you made to shop at certain stores or at certain times?

A: Certain stores and certain times and only certain items of food. The lines were usually very long which was always very degrading for the older people. Again the Zionist youth organization, this Helping Hand, we would take the carts and go to the stores and stay in line. Run back and forth and get the food whatever was needed for the others.

- Q: So you and your brother helped out with this organization during the occupation days? Did the organization work to try to aid Prague's Jews, that's what it was set up for?
- A: That's what it was set up for including to go on Hachshara. Hachshara meant the preparation to go to Israel to learn to farm and work the land. But again you couldn't officially call it Hachshara so we were assigned to help the farmers in the country as unpaid labor.
- Q: So you went out in the countryside?
- A: My brother went to farm, it was about maybe eight or ten from the -- again the Zionist youth organization. They worked various farms. We younger could not go, we only went daytime to the farms. Again this was at the time when we could no longer take public transportation. If there was a two-car train, we were permitted to take the last car and the platform of the last car to go to this work. We had a separate permission slip. If the train had only one car, we were not permitted at all. We had to be home before the curfew. This was before the transports started.
- Q: Right.
- A: Once the transports started, we had to stop on all that?
- Q: When did the transports start from Prague?
- A: First transport went out in October, '41. Five transports at 1,000 each to Lodz. After that, two transports followed November and December called --. First one was 250 men, _____ which was arbeit _____ working group one which were only men, to Terezin to build up the camp. Terezin was a garrison town. The second transport, my brother was in that, were 1,000 young men, 18, 17, 18 years old and older, to _____ colony two, to build up Theresienstadt. The bunks and the barracks and all that. After that, transport after transport always left, 1,000 people each.
- Q: Every day or every few weeks or something?
- A: No, sometimes two, three in a row. Then there were a few days of nothing and then maybe a week again followed by every day.
- Q: Do you remember how people were notified for these transports? Like your brother, did a letter come, or did someone just show up.
- A: From the Jewish council, Jewish office, they had to put together the list which they had to go to the SS to the Gestapo. From the Jewish elders, you send out, at that time we still had young people working there with the notification, the name

of the transport and with that we had to go to the holding place which was an old exhibition hall emptied out called the Messacalanda. Sometimes we had a couple of hours, sometimes even more. We were permitted to take one small suitcase or backpack, something we could carry.

Q: Was there a limit on how many pounds that could be? Do you remember?

A: There was and I don't remember it any more. It was something like 20 kilo but I'm not sure. I really am not sure but I know there was a way we could pack and again the youth organization we called that formed Helping Hand would send us out to the older people that couldn't carry and couldn't pack. We would pack for them. Like we had a way of packing the shoes to the side and the blankets. Since in Europe you had this old-style, heavy down-feather_____, it was called blankets, we established a sewing room where people could bring ahead of time in preparation for transports, their blankets. We would empty out the feathers, we would stitch it small and flat and restuff it with their feathers. That was called – we sort of established a room this size, a sewing room. Everybody was prepared and had sort of a blanket you could roll up and put on top of your --.

Q: It's interesting.

A: Which was all done by the Zionist youth organizations, all volunteers. We helped to do these things.

Q: Did you have any contact with your brother after -- between the time that he left and you left, did letters come back from him?

A: No letters, nothing. He was able to send out through somebody on a little -- I remember that so clearly -- a little torn piece of paper with one word on it, Terezin. So we knew where he was at the time.

Q: But that's it?

A: That was it. That was pretty dangerous to do at any rate for who smuggled. The way he smuggled it out, if he would have been caught including whoever helped him smuggle it and brought it back to us. Later on we followed him and we saw him in the camp. We were in the same Terezin.

Q: Let me backtrack just a little bit. When you -- you said the transports began October of 1941? So you were basically in occupied Prague for over two years?

A: Right.

Q: Was there any ghetto ever set up in Prague? Or were you forced to move to a certain area?

- A: No, we stayed in our apartment. We were very lucky at that. My aunt lived in the same building and another aunt had to move out of her apartment. I don't remember why and she moved in with us. We could stay until we were transported in our apartment. We had to give up all our belongings from there and everything but we did stay in our apartment.
- Q: Because I remember, I'm trying to remember. I've been to Prague once and I remember the Karlin area. I also remember that there was a Jewish ghetto just where Jews lived.
- A: Which was in the auch_____, the old part where the eldest were set up. We had, it was called madon, the Zionist organization had their own people live there, the young people that came from other towns and cities as they were being all brought into Prague for transports.
- Q: So when people were brought into Prague they were housed there?
- A: They were put into the center, right.
- Q: But the rest of -- any other Jews --?
- A: More or less stayed. If there was a need, they were put into apartments with other Jews but in that sense we were very lucky. Just my aunt was put in with us.
- Q: I see. Now at this point, after your brother left, it is you and your aunt and your parents are living in the apartment?
- A: Right.
- Q: When were you forced to leave?
- A: My aunt left before we did. My parents and I left July 13, '42. The transport was, I just gave the name here for the office.
- Q: You have it? It's upstairs?
- A: Upstairs in the --.
- Q: I can find it there.
- A: It's AAR 395 was the number. The name of the transport was RRL. It started with A to Z. Then came AA to AZ and we were in AAR.
- Q: So you're almost at the end of the second --?
- A: No, third. Third time alphabet around. They were almost daily.

- Q: Did they come to your apartment and just ask you to leave or were you notified ahead of time like given a week or something like that?
- A: No, no, never a week. A few hours or the most was a day, but hours at a time.
- (Another interviewer's voice: Let us interrupt you.)
- A: I really would like to tell you a little bit more about my brother.
- Q: Susie has your story?
- A: Right.
- Q: I'll talk to her then. Okay, go ahead, tell me anything you like.
- A: Not Susie, what was the lady's name?
- Q: (The lady that was just here to see us. Susan Cohen). Okay Susan Cohen, one of her volunteers.
- A: One of her volunteers called me and she has my whole story over the phone.
- Q: (Then we can fill in areas if you need to). That's fine, that's great.
- A: We started in and out with my brother, right?
- Q: Right. I think the last time we talked about him, he had just been sent on the transport?
- A: Right and then we followed later, my parents and I.
- Q: You can tell me about when he was in Terezin?
- A: In Terezin, he was assigned to work for the SS, to take care of their horses, one of the jobs, as a stable boy. For that he also had lumps of sugar which the horses get at night. At one point my mother was very sick and he tried to smuggle out some of the sugar to her barrack. He was caught by one of the SS and was taken to the ma_____ which is the _____ in Terezin which was the punishing center about a mile, two miles out of Terezin where the artists of Terezin were taken and so on. From there, nobody ever returned. Usually you were tortured to death, they all send out to the gas chamber but after about three days, he came back. They still needed him as the stable boy but in these three days, he was so tortured or beaten that we didn't recognize his face almost. For just a few lousy lumps of sugar. That was one story about him.

- Q: Did he say anything about what they had done to him?
- A: No, no. We didn't ask, we didn't talk. We didn't have the opportunity or the --.
- Q: Or the inclination?
- A: Inclination. We really couldn't --. We knew what happened. Another story that I'm putting together now. As a matter of fact, just a week ago or two weeks ago. He worked for the SS, he was very handy. He was given materials to do for the -- either the wives of the SS or the German soldiers I don't know -- like pins or book markers or little things like that out of metal and leather strips. He made some for me and I saved them. I have those various things.
- Q: You still have them?
- A: I have them but I found in a book in the Precious Legacy book which is now in Prague, the exhibition but it traveled through the United States, a picture of one item that was made for the purpose when the Red Cross came to Terezin, there was a sports event staged.
- Q: Oh there were?
- A: Right, a football game was staged in one of the barracks. For that event, a trophy, was a leather strip and I saw the picture in this book which is identical to what he made. It was found after liberation in camp, this item. I would say 99% sure that he must have made that. I have no proof but --.
- Q: But that's what he did?
- A: He did and I have an item almost identical to that. It's in the same shape and all so I got it. That was one thing he did, was forced to do, for the SS. The other story I like to tell about him that my parent and I received notification for what is now called the Mass_____ which was the transport of 5,000 Czechoslovak Jews sent from Terezin to Auschwitz. At the time he was not in that transport because he was covered, protected, working for the SS. They needed him so he was not in that transport. He volunteered.
- Q: To go on the transport?
- A: To go on that transport. As we boarded the cattle cars for that transport, I was taken out of this transport already on the ramp to the car. Later on I put together as I was telling you about the Zionist youth organization, due to them I think. (Male voice: Also the Germans wanted 5,000 and not 5,000 and one). That I put together later. There were four, (It was their choice whom they would take off). Right. Anyhow, 5,000 left. This is the transport, I don't know if you're familiar with it, when they arrived in Auschwitz, they were kept together as famililager

Birkenau which is where I have the cards that I received which are upstairs too. He perished in that transport. He volunteered, he took my number, I found out later on, my transport number. Later on I also found out that there were 5,004 on this transport. They had said only 5,000 can be. So four were taken out. Since there were obviously four volunteers, one of which is my brother. (He went to be of help to your parents, thought he might be able to help them). I, in turn, was taken out due maybe to the influence of the Zionist youth organization. (Was their choice, their choice). Their choice to decide the four. (It was their choice to decide whom to send). I think also because from the last numbers and we were in the 4,500 category so that also was part of it.

Q: Why don't we stop here and we can --.

A: Okay.

END OF FIRST TAPE. FOLLOWING IS TAPED PHONE INTERVIEW
COMPLETED AT A LATER DATE.

Q: Go ahead.

A: My brother's name is Peter Winternitz. He was born in Prague on April 28, 1922.

Q: Now when we talked before, you said that you lived in Karlin?

A: Karlin which was Prague Ten at that time, yes.

Q: And that your father was a wholesale rug -- he was selling rugs?

A: Wholesale/retail floor coverings. Not just rugs. He had the floor coverings.

Q: Did he have his own shop?

A: He had his own store.

Q: Let's see. It was just you and your brother, yes? Those are the only two children?

A: That's the only children.

Q: He was born in 1922 so he was older than you were?

A: He was four years older than I.

Q: You said that you went, when you went to school, you started in Czech schools?

- A: No, we started German schools. Then we had to transfer from German schools to Czech schools.
- Q: When did you transfer?
- A: In '36 or '37, I don't remember. As things were starting up, we had to leave German schools.
- Q: Because of anti-Semitism?
- A: Yes, anti-Semitism.
- Q: You said that -- you did mention in the earlier interview that your brother was involved with some Zionist organizations. Do you remember what they were?
- A: Yeah, he belonged to the youth group, the Zionist youth organization, the _____ Hatzair. Due to him, I also joined.
- Q: What kind of things did -- what kind of get-togethers or functions did the organization have?
- A: Well, Maccabi _____ Hatzair was Israeli-oriented, preparation for life in Israel at the kibbutz. So we all went on Hachshara which was a preparation working for farmers, living with the farmers in the countryside. Which, later on, helped us as far as work was concerned in the concentration camp, including Terezin. It helped him, he was assigned as having so-called experience. He was assigned as a stable boy to work for the horses that belonged to the SS and he even lived in the stables.
- Q: Were there lectures and things about Israel and that kind of stories about Palestine?
- A: Yes. We had meetings, we were reading. As a matter of fact, we were already teaching the younger children. Later on when we were not permitted to go to school, we arranged Hillsteens which was sort of a group "Helping Hand" when the transport started. Taking the people to the assembly place, packing for them because we each were permitted originally to take one package, one backpack or one little suitcase. The Zionist youth organization was sort of the Helping Hand everywhere including in the camps trying to help the smaller children, teaching, keeping up the morale in Terezin, even trying to arrange for singing, poetry, writing, any kind of education.
- Q: Right. Speaking of education, you said that you didn't finish high school before the war. Did your brother?
- A: No. He also didn't finish.

Q: No, he didn't either?

A: He had one year left.

Q: He was almost done. Can you tell me a little bit about the occupation and what your brother was doing when the Germans came in?

A: Well we were in school when the Germans occupied us in 1939. Then when we were immediately thrown out of school, even before it was turned into law, he started working for the Zionist youth organization, of which actually the leading man was written up in many books, Freyda Hirsch. You might have heard that name. With him and with other younger people, he was instrumental to work on a place called H_____ in Prague which was the only place left for us to go. It was a huge sports field where we continued not only sports activity, but educational activity, lectures, study groups, schooling and so on. He was part of that leadership.

Q: You said it was like a sporting field. Was it open?

A: Yeah, it was a big open field and that was the only place left for Jewish to go after we were no longer permitted to go to any public places, playgrounds, movies, theatres, schools, etc. Since we couldn't take any public transport any more, for most of us it was almost over an hour walk to get there. But it was one place where we could talk, be together; otherwise it was never permitted to be more than two or three people together. So this gave us a perfect place.

Q: To gather and --?

A: To gather and continue sort of our work.

Q: You mentioned a few restrictions that were placed on Jews. What other kinds of things were placed -- did you have to wear a Jewish star at this time?

A: We had to wear the Jewish star, yes. The laws were coming out day by day. We had to give up all our radios, our telephones, our record players, our records. We had to give up all our valuables, any kind of art collection or later on or so naturally, jewelry. My father was a big stamp collector, well-known stamp collector. He had to give up his stamp collection. We were no longer permitted public transportation or own bicycles or cars -- bus, taxis, trains, trolley-cars, no public place, movie theatres. Certain stores were not permitted for Jews to enter. We had a curfew, seven o'clock we had to be off the streets.

Q: How long after the Germans came into the city was the curfew in place? Pretty quickly or --?

- A: Pretty quickly, almost day by day laws were coming out. I don't exactly remember the succession which started first, I think giving up all valuables was one of the very first ones.
- Q: You mentioned earlier you and your brother being involved in the Helping Hand organization. Once the Germans came in, the restrictions started, did the Helping Hand organization become more active in trying to help people?
- A: Yes, it became sort of, almost legalized. It was under the umbrella of the Jewish Elder.
- Q: Like the Jewish Council or something?
- A: Yeah, Jewish Council. We established two or three rooms in a building there and it was sort of the communications center to send out the transport notices. We followed up with the notices immediately, helping the people pack, getting them to the assembly place. Prior to that, we had another room, we were not permitted to take those big European blankets, you know_____. Everybody was hoping we could take blankets. We took the big_____opened them up, took out all the feathers and stitched them into very thin little blankets. We stuffed them and rolled them up so people could take it on their backpack. Of course we had, got permission to be after seven o'clock on the street. It was a special au_____special papers stating for that day we had permission to be on the street after 7 o'clock to help with the packing and getting people to the assembly.
- Q: You and your brother, both of you did this?
- A: Yeah. Well, no, not the sewing, only the girls did the sewing and working. But he did more the packing the office had. But he left in one of the very first transports.
- Q: Your brother did? Do you remember when that was?
- A: Yes. He let n the very special transport in December '41. Second transport to Terezin which was called AK 2, the first transport was AK 1, consisting of 280, I believe, young men to build up Terezin into a camp. AK stands for Arbeit Kolona and he was in the second transport a week later, Arbeit Kolona 2 which was a thousand young men.
- Q: That was in December of '41.
- A: December of '41, I don't remember the exact date. They were one week apart, those two transports. They went directly to one of the barracks called Sudeten Barrack to build it up.
- Q: At this point, Theresienstadt was just being opened?

- A: Right, it was a small garrison town at the time housing about 6,000, five to six thousand people. They were moved out.
- Q: Oh, the people who were there, were moved out?
- A: Right. It was turned into concentration camp. The two transports were sort of the forerunners to build a bunk center, to build it up into a concentration camp.
- Q: Let me go back just a little bit. When your brother was deported, and since you helped with some of the -- getting people ready to go on the deportation, can you describe for me a little bit of the deportation. What would happen, like people would get a notice and then they would be told?
- A: There was no telephone so people got the notice.
- Q: Through the mail?
- A: No, no. We took it or the Germans would give the list to the Jewish Elder and we in turn would take the notification. Or sometimes people were just, by the Germans, taken off the street. A whole street was closed up. But most of the time, we went to the houses. As a matter of fact, we rang the doorbell. If the doorbell rang, it meant bad news. Either it was SS or a transportation notice. If you went yourself someplace, you would never dare to ring a doorbell. You'd only knock on the door. Doorbell ringing meant a disaster. The notices were handed out that way or if we worked in the office and we knew who was on the transport, we could send out quickly because sometimes you didn't have much time to get to the assembly place. Sometimes you had four or five hours, sometimes if you were lucky, half a day.
- Q: Now is that what happened with your brother since they knew him at the --?
- A: We knew that this transport of young men will be assembled within probably a few hours. So pretty much we anticipated he would be in it and before we turned around, we learned yes, he was on that list. When he came home and I was home at that time, I knew when he came home that this is what had happened by his face. We told our parents and I remember my mother and father standing by the door when he left, just holding hands. Then of course when we got our notice, I kept sort of the front up and kept telling my mother that maybe we be soon together with Peter. We had a few hours to get to the holding place. Since I was familiar, having worked on it knowing the holding place and all, I got help from some of our friends. They walked with us to the holding place.
- Q: Did you leave shortly after your brother or a few months later?
- A: We left a few months later, we were in June.

Q: In June of '42?

A: June of '42. Was 50 years ago.

Q: When people left from Prague, they left on trains?

A: Yes.

Q: Being sent to Theresienstadt?

A: Yes, first we went to the assembly place which was an old exhibition hall which was cleared out. There we were held for about two, two and a half days. A thousand people always sitting on a concrete floor, men, women, children, babies. In our transport we were there 2 ½ days and then we were taken to the train which was about -- in back of the building, came to the back of the building. Some trains were regular passenger cars, most of them were cattle cars. Some were a mixture of everything. I remember being with my parents in the same car which was a cattle car.

Q: When you got to Theresienstadt, how long was it after that you found your brother?

A: Actually, to Theresienstadt, the trains at that time did not lead all the way into Terezin. We had about, if they stopped in a little village before which was B_____. Then we had like half an hour walk into Terezin.

Q: So you didn't actually go into Terezin, you walked into Terezin?

A: You had to walk at that time. Later on, the railroad went all the way in. The tracks were laid all the way into Terezin, was a faster procedure for loading and unloading the people, for getting them in and out. We were earlier so we had to walk in a column of three with SS all alongside of us. We had about a 20-minute, half an hour walk. We walked through the gate. The gate said like all camps, Arbeit Macht Frei which means work makes free. In the camp, I kept asking as we walked through the slau_____---. You were taken to a place where you were searched and stripped which was called slau_____, means like a sluice. There were people working who were already in Terezin and I kept asking them if they knew my brother. He was still there and then maybe a day or two later, I really don't remember, it took a day or two to locate him and see him. Then I told him which barrack my mother was and he was able to go there.

Q: There was no segregation of males and females?

A: Yes, there were different barracks. But we were able in the beginning at least to go after work, if we were still able to or something, to go to that barrack.

Q: You could actually see each other?

A: Yes.

Q: Before when I talked to you, you had told me that -- and actually you said it earlier today, that your brother took care of the horses for the SS.

A: Right. He also did something else. He was very handy, artistically handy. The SS provided him with materials where he made different pins and chokers, necklaces for their wives and girlfriends. He managed always to out of little remnants and pieces, make things for me or for my mother. I have a couple of those things.

Q: Oh you do.

A: I happened to find, just recently, in the book of the Precious Legacy, a picture of one item that after liberation was found in Terezin.

Q: Do you think he might have made it?

A: There is no doubt in my mind that he must have made that. It was found in the -- where the SS lived in the _____. It's so identical, the picture to the item I have. I wish I could find out where that item is. I'm still working on that.

Q: That sounds like quite a job, that will be, to look for that. Let me see -- you said that since your brother took care of the SS's horses and now he also made things for the wives of the SS. Do you know how he became involved and was able to get jobs like that, involved with the SS?

A: Well, when you came in, you were always asked and filled out what work or what you do? Or what were you? He, of course, that was part of all the Zionist youth organizations, the Hachshara helped us. Because the girls or the boys were on Hachshara, again in Terezin were assigned to _____ which was a -- working outside the camp for the farmers, working on the farmland. Hachshara was a training for Israel, to work on the land. So they used that and again the youth Zionist organization helped and the Jewish Elders brought younger people, some of my friends in my barrack. So due to that, they are now in Israel, a number of them.

Q: Because they had the training?

A: Because they had the training, because the Zionist youth organization helped, including at that time Edda Schtein (who later on himself was killed at Auschwitz with his family. There is a book written about him now for the Elders The Jewish Elder I think it is called by Ruth Bondy who was also a member of that youth

organization which is now in Israel. By just saying that he worked in the fields and he worked with horses, on that Hachshara, he was assigned to the stables, the SS stables.

A> As a matter of fact, he received lumps of sugar for the horses. Every night they would get like after they were groomed and all that, a lump of sugar. At one point my mother was very sick and he tried to get the sugar, some of the lumps of sugar to her. But he was caught by one of the German policemen, not SS, German police that policed us. He was taken to the punishment center which was MA_____you might have heard that word, which was three miles out of Terezin, but was still part of Terezin. The artists of Terezin were taken there. Usually, everybody taken there was killed or tortured to death there. Nobody survived. But he came back to the camp about three days later but so brutally beaten and tortured that we hardly recognized him. In the three days. But the reason he came back, at that time we understood, he was needed for the horses. He was especially good with the horses. Some of the SS got him out but he looked terrible. For just a few lumps of sugar which were good for horses but not good for his mother, for Jewish life.

Q: You also said that your brother earlier when we talked, made medals for a soccer game. Do you remember something about that?

A: The medals?

Q: Yeah.

A: That was part of the art he did.

Q: Oh, I see, for the SS?

A: For the SS, those were big round circles and when the Red Cross came for the performance, there was also a soccer game. Then they were handed the winner, the winning teams were handed in front of the Red Cross team, the Red Cross that came. those medals.

Q: Your brother had made those medals?

A: He had made those. He designed them. He was told to design them. He was told to design them, he was told what to do. He had just to follow orders.

Q: Can you tell me now when did your brother leave?

A: Leave Terezin?

Q: Terezin. Or was deported there?

A: Actually my parents and I were in the transport that is called the MA_____transport. Five thousand Czechoslovakia Jews were shipped out of Terezin on September 7, 1943 to Auschwitz. My brother, working for the SS as their stable boy were brought back that call, they need him. He was protected from shipped out but when he learned that my parents and I are on that transport, he volunteered. He ran to the Jewish Elder and asked to be put into this transport and got a number and joined. As we were already boarding the cattle cars -- by then the trains came all the way into camp to the Hamburger Barrack, the Hamburger -- my parents were already in one car, my brother in another. I was boarding the cattle car on that ramp, the SS standing at the ramp, called out my number, pushed me aside.

Q: Took you off the transport?

A: Took me off the transport. I didn't know why or what as the train left with my parents and my brother. Later on only towards the end when the death transports and the death marches were coming back to Terezin and on those transports were some people that we knew from Terezin or before, through the Zionist youth organizations and had been in Auschwitz at the time, told us that this particular transport went into the gas on March 7, six months to the day that they arrived. Because that was the birthday of the first president of Czechoslovakia.

Q: Thomas_____?

A: Thomas_____, right. That's why this transport is called the _____transport. Actually, at that time, as far as I researched it and understood, out of the 5,000 that's also in the movie Shoah, I mentioned, only 2,800 were still alive. The others had perished due to starvation, sickness, beating, etc. My father and my brother had perished before.

Q: Oh, they had died before?

A: Of beatings, starvation, malnutrition, things like that. At that time, as far as I researched it, I don't have documents which will be ready now I hope, I have to find out more, as far as I know, only my mother went into the gas on March 7. I was saved by being taken out and I found out much later that the transport was under roster 5,000. There were 5,004 on that list so four were taken off and I was one of the four. Possibly that, which I found out later, my brother might have taken my number.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: But I still had the number and_____they chose his transport number was the one I had. A 90% possibility, what happened as the Jewish Elder, when he volunteered, that he gave him my number.

- Q: He took your number, to save you?
- A: Then know, we didn't know saved. But since they only could have five thousand and they had 5,004 but that is not proved fact. I am putting this together in my mind and in my research. I have no proof of it.
- Q: Now this is a bad question to ask you but you don't know exactly what happened to your brother and father, only that they died before --?
- A: The way I understand that the 5,000 were kept together. They were not separated; they were kept together in familaalager Birkenau. They had to work, the ones that were able and the ones who died, died of either torture, malnutrition, sickness due to the malnutrition like we had dysentery, typhoid, and so on.
- Q: Let me ask you when we talked at the end right before you had to leave, we were talking about your brother and I didn't get to ask you a few questions about your story to the end, if that's okay.
- A: Go ahead.
- Q: They left on that transport, your parents left on September 7, 1943. From that time onward, what happened to you?
- A: I stayed in the camp. I worked there. After that transport, after transports were leaving and again, due to the Zionist youth organization and the Jewish management that always had to put together the transport, they always were trying to keep some of us, the younger people behind. In Terezin, we still had a chance of survival but we knew once we are shipped out east, that there is hardly any chance left. Then they needed work for war production. War production and I was assigned to that war production which was a big barrack in Terezin, built outside the camp. About 6,000 people were assigned to that war production which was splitting that big rock of mica into very thin slivers which were used for filters in the gas masks for the German soldiers. The other work we had to do which also protected us at that time from being shipped out were building the gas chambers in Terezin.
- Q: You helped to do that?
- A: Yeah. Which were going to be operational on May 11 and we were liberated on May 7 by the Russian army, four days before they became operational.
- Q: So you remained in Terezin until the end of the war?
- A: Till the end, right. But then when the death transports were coming back and we were unloading the trains of the dead bodies mostly, either there or someplace else, I don't know, I got typhoid. I ended up in the typhoid barracks. Typhoid

was contagious, the Germans had one barrack where all the typhoid cases were taken. I was in that barrack more or less unconscious when we were liberated.

Q: Do you remember which -- were they Russian soldiers?

A: Yes, the Russian army, we went to pass the Russian army. We were liberated in the night of May 7 to May 8 which I don't really remember. But a friend of mine came to the typhoid barracks two days later, when I became conscious and she brought me a piece of, sort of a slice of white bread which the Russian army had brought in for us. Then I realized I must be free; then it all sank in.

Q: Do you remember how long before you were liberated that you went into the typhoid barrack?

A: No, not really, must have been just a couple of days. I remember just sort of floating in and out of consciousness, semi-conscious state or whatever. I don't really remember. Then I remembered being carried by two sort of -- two guys, two inmates and this friend of mine who helped, carrying me to the typhoid barrack but I didn't realize where to. I just knew I'm being carried but I don't know where. The next thing I knew when I regained consciousness, sort of, that she was there, this friend of mine who is now in Israel. We are still the closest of friends. We went through the whole camp together, we helped each other and we remained the closest of friends until now.

Q: What happened after liberation, what did you do?

A: After liberation I tried to get back to Prague. By then I knew that my parents and brother are not alive but I hoped that someone else, some other people of my family. But again I couldn't leave Terezin because I had to be first -- we needed a repatriation card on which it stated that we were deloused and no longer a carrier of anything and so on which was set up by the Russians. Since Czechoslovakia, Prague, at that time was also under the Russians. I couldn't get that since I was still a typhoid carrier and I was too weak and too sick. But this friend of mine already was in Prague and on one of the trucks coming back to Terezin, it would take us about wherever we wanted to go, and she had sent a -- like an empty beer keg on that truck. Before we came into Prague to the border like the "Checkpoint Charlie" type, like a gate where you had to show that you are clear, you can enter the city.

Q: Oh, with papers and documentation and everything?

A: Right. I didn't have that one slip so they shoved me. I crawled into that empty beer keg.

Q: You got into that barrel?

- A: They covered it up with some old blankets, rags that were on the truck. That's how I was actually smuggled into Prague. Once there, she already had assigned an apartment. What happened, the Repatriation Office, as we were coming back, the Germans had fled. Their apartments were empty so the Red Cross and the Repatriation Center tried to assign us to various empty apartments.
- Q: They let you settle in those apartments?
- A: So there was one apartment where about six or seven of us, in the beginning, stayed together. That was on the fourth floor and I couldn't walk the stairs up yet and I remember being carried up. Then I recuperated, I got a little better and stronger. Then later I started to work and later on I got my own apartment assigned. I started getting documents, everything together. A year later, I had an uncle here, and a year later, I came here.
- Q: Oh, I see. So you had relatives in the United States?
- A: I had an uncle here. At first there was no communication. I couldn't notify him, he couldn't notify me. About three months afterwards, he found my name in the paper in New York from the Red Cross list of survivors. I, in turn, knew his address and through a British soldier that came back to the Czech army, a friend of my brother's, through him, through the British army, through London, through his mother, I was able to send a wire to New York, to let him know that I survived. Actually out of my entire family, when I came back to Prague, out of my entire family, aunts, uncles, cousins, everybody, I was the only one that survived. Everybody else perished. Then I came here a year later and started a brand new life.
- Q: Do you remember when you arrived in Prague, after getting out of Theresienstadt?
- A: Yes.
- Q: What year was that?
- A: What year? That was in -- well we were liberated in May of '45. May 7, and about five weeks later ---.
- Q: You were released from -- ? No, you smuggled yourself out?
- A: I smuggled myself out of Terezin and into Prague.
- Q: Then you lived in Prague for how long before you went to the United States?
- A: A year, till '46. I came here in July of '46.

Q: Okay, I think that's all the questions I have.

A: That about covers it all.

Q: Yeah, I think we've gone back and fixed everything here.

A: Thank you for your time.

Q: Thank you for your time. I really appreciate your talking to me.

A: I don't know if you're going to use the material on my brother for the -- for this project.

Q: We'd like to, that's one of the things -- in fact, that's why I wanted to get the story because_____

A: You have his picture?

Q: Actually I'm going to turn off the tape here. Hang on for a second.