Interview with Inge Auerbacher

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Q: So, we'll just begin with your name.

A: Okay. My name is Inge Auerbacher. I was born in a little village in Southern Germany called Kippenheim It's a little town at that time about 2,000 people, very close to the borders of France and Switzerland and we had about 60 Jewish families living there. We were all quite Orthodox in a modern way. We went to the Synagogue on Friday nights and Sabbath, and we were really a very nice community. Most of the Jewish people had little stores there or were cattle dealers and that is a profession that a great many Jews in Southern Germany were involved in. In fact, my grandparents, the grandfathers actually on both sides, my mother's side, my mother's father and mother. On that side, my grandfather was cattle dealer there and my grandfather from my father's side was also a cattle dealer and skin and hide business. I did not know my grandparents on my father's side; his parents, they had died before my parents got married and my father was one out of six children; my mother one out of two. And I did know my grandparents from my mother's side with whom I had a very close relationship. They live about four or five hours away in an even smaller village than the one I was born in. That village was called Jebenhausen, when mine was Kippenheim. In fact, my grandmother's, the village where my grandparents lived had famous person roots there too, by the name of Albert Einstein. Albert Einstein had spent quite a few summers in that little village, I believe his grandmother or aunt and uncle, somebody in that family had a little bakery there, and he visited quite often. I don't recall ever seeing him there. Of course he was quite grown at that time already and somehow it was not even known that he was such a famous man. I mean he was a little boy at that time and nobody ever spoke about that again. I only found out about this much later. I did not play with any non-Jewish children in my village. I mainly spent my time with Jewish children and anyway I only spent about four or five years in my village. It was, we had a good relationship with the people in, the Christian people in Kippenheim, but we lived separate lives and a good co-existence. But there was always some undercurrents of anti-Semitism. That's what my parents told me too. We had a very large house, about 17 rooms. We had servants. Some of, I don't remember that much of my little village, just mainly some things about going to the Temple, the holidays; I was the last Jewish child born in that little village and one of the main events that I will never forget is Kristallnacht. Actually I don't remember November 9. Nothing much happened really on that day. I remember November 10 and our Synagogue was demolished. It was not set aflame because the neighboring houses, there were a lot of Christian neighboring houses and they were afraid that they would burn too. But it was completely ransacked. My mother saw how the

Ten Commandments were thrown from the top, they were set on top of the building and how they were thrown down. I remember the day of the 10th. My grandparents had come to visit us and my grandfather got up early in the morning to go to Temple to morning services; he was a very Orthodox man. My father and my, we actually still in bed and the bell rang and the police came in and they said that all Jewish men are now under arrest and that my father should dress immediately and report to City Hall. Then I remember when my father left, our house was stone. All the windows were broken in the entire house and my mother and I and my grandmother had to find shelter in a nearby shed. We had like a courtyard and there was like a little area in the courtyard that was used as a storage area and we hid in there.

Q: Who were throwing the stone?

A: Some of, some boys. Who, I mean I really didn't even see them. We just heard the noise, you know, when the, in fact when the stone were being thrown I remember we were standing, I believe it was the living room, and they were looking at the chandelier in our living room and they said, oh look at this! The chandelier is still standing, it's still hanging and they threw a big brick inside the house and it nearly hit me and my mother just pulled me away. That's when we went for the neighboring shed and the servant girl was with us at that time, but she was afraid and she ran away. Then they were knocking at the door, there was a big, we had this courtyard and a big door in front of it and we heard them knocking and rattling the doors and but luckily they did not come in. The boys, we were told later, some of them were some young boys from neighboring towns and perhaps some from the town. I did not see them do this. But as I said, my mother looked through the broken window and she saw how the Ten Commandments were thrown down. And here in the shed we stayed for many, many hours until it was quiet. In the meantime, all the men who had reported to the City Hall and the ones who were in the Synagogue were arrested. So my grandfather never came home that day. They took all these men to Dachau, the first concentration camp in Germany. Then we went to a neighboring house, a Jewish house, where also all of the windows were broken and to find some shelter and we came. I think we stayed, my mothers that. I do not remember it that we stayed overnight with friends. And then we went back to the house and of course everything was filled up with broken glass, the whole house and the windows had to be boarded up because it was winter of course and it was quite cold already. November is already cold in Germany. And my father had been a disabled war veteran of World War I. He was wounded on his right shoulder quite badly and he could not raise his right arm and he was quite a good patriot, I mean he loved Germany, so my grandfather he said he was born in this country, he would never leave it. He loved his little village of Jebenhausen and he was very happy there. And my father always said why should we leave here? I mean I fought for this country; I was wounded for this country; I mean nothing is going to happen to us. We were very good citizens like, I mean Americans here, if you are, if you were born in this country or even if you become a citizen, you pledge allegiance to that

country and we pledged our allegiance to Germany. We had hundreds of years, my family had lived in Germany. I fact, one of Germany's most famous poets and writers was Berthal Auerbach, who made the Black Forest famous. He name was Moses Baruch Auerbacher. He live about a hundred years ago and he become world famous. His books were published in many languages including English. He wrote a lot about the Black Forest. Well, after a few weeks that my grandfather and my father were in Dachau, they came back. My mother had bought a bogus ticket to Trinidad, and she went to some SS headquarters. I don't remember exactly the neighboring town, and she begged for his release and that she had tickets for us to leave and she did get my father out at that time and soon afterwards my grandfather came out too and then we heard of all of the terrible things that happened to them in Dachau and one of them my father related that he had to…they had to stand for hours on end in the courtyard in the exercise area in Dachau with their striped uniforms. Of course all of their clothes were take away and in fact to transgress a little bit my…and one of the SS people…police people from the village in Kippenheim came to my mother's…our house and he brought a basketful of ties and belts and he said oh, here are the remnants of your men, so my mother thought for sure everybody had been killed by now. I mean these are the clothes, the ties, the belts and I believe some shirts and things and, but anyway when they were there of course they had to give up all their clothing and wore the striped uniform. And they had to stand at attention for 10-12 hours at a time and if somebody tried to blow their nose…it was quite cold in…I mean the suits were a flimsy kind of pajama type of suits, they were hosed down with cold, ice cold water and this happened one to my father. Now my grandfather had a very bad heart condition and of course this made it even worse. He was not an old man, he was in his early sixties at that time and when he came out of the camp he died very soon afterwards of…actually it was a combination of a broken heart physically and mentally. He was just so disappointed in the country that he loved and that this could happen to him and he saw the writing on the wall, but he would never leave it. He said I was born here, and I will die here no matter what happens.

Q: Do you remember what your father looked like when he came back from Dachau? Do you remember anything particular about that?

A: I remember just one thing. It was quite kind of cold in the house and I don't know, I think we had enough coal or something to heat one or two rooms and I remember, I was a tiny little girl at that time, I was not even four years old, I remember sitting on my potty, I remember that I my prayer book in my hand, I'm praying for my daddy to come home again. I could not read or write at that time. I remember when he came, he threw a stone at the boarded up window. He didn't ring the bell and he came. I don't remember what he looked like, no I did not, but I know my parents talked in hushed voices, I mean that I should not hear what happened and he told my mother, now it's really time. We must leave Germany. There is no way that we can stay here. And my mother started to write some letters to relatives in America. There were a few who had done quite well,

especially an uncle of his who became quite well-to-do in America, and the letter, the answer we received from the family was well, we have a bad recession and depression here and you would only add to the number of people unemployed and you better stay where you are, and that was the answer. And we just could not get the affidavits, the papers to come here because my father needed to have a higher affidavit. He had to have a sponsor who was willing to have enough money that in case he could not work, there would be no welfare for us; we had to have our own money and my father needed more because he was a disabled war veteran so they figured that he may not get a job here and we would become a burden to the country. So that made it even harder. And in the meantime some of my relatives, my father's sisters, two of them, had gotten papers to go to Brazil and they did leave. They managed to get out and a brother of my mother, her only brother, received papers from an uncle of my aunts to come to America, so they managed to get here. And my uncle fought in the American Army in World War II while he was here. We did not get out. So after 1938, after Kristallnacht, the night of broken glass, after that program we decided we have to find some way to get out. so we sold the house at a very cheap price and moved in with my grandparents. And then my grandfather died. And it was around…that was in 1939. I remember the best time for me of my childhood was in this little village of Jebenhausen where we had moved in with my grandparents and I had many Christian friends, and my grandparents were the last Jewish family living in this tiny little village where more Jews had lived before. They had moved away and become big industrialists in the neighboring town of Girpingen. I had a very nice time with Christian children and I remember many times I would be the cheerleader walking up and down the hill singing the songs of the day which were Nazi songs and I would be the one who would be the cheerleader leading them on. I did know what the real meaning behind these songs were, but I was so caught up with the charisma and the chemistry of this day, of this tremendous upheaval and I didn't know that these people, one of their primary ideas was to hate the Jews! We must get rid of the Jews! The children there did not make me feel bad. They did not call me any bad names and they were really my friends and some of them are still my friends today.

Q: Did you know that you were a Jew?

A: I knew that I was Jew, yes. But it…somehow it did not occur to me to think that I was really any different. I mean nobody talked to me from these children you know, why do you do this and that. I knew that they celebrated Christmas and in fact I was a little envious of them because it was a very beautiful holiday. Always they received many toys and the Christmas tree and so many of those decorations and all and we didn't have that and that was kind of an enviable time for me because everybody was celebrating and of course my grandparents tried very hard to make me feel good about Hanukkah and sort of to make me feel proud that I was a Jew. I was brought up in a very good Jewish home; an observant Jewish home in a modern kind of way. I mean during Sabbath, it was really Sabbath. We did not do any work, we were not allowed to write or do any manual labor,

etc. It was…all of the things of the Sabbath, I mean the way we celebrated was the regular observant way. There was no Synagogue in Jebenhausen, so we walked to the neighboring town of Girpingen to go to a prayer service and we were not allowed to take the bus. So we walked the three kilometers back and forth through the woods…there was a road through the woods, and the Synagogue in Girpingen in the neighboring town, had been completely burnt to the ground. So there was like an apartment in converted into a prayer area. In fact at that time they didn't have a rabbi any more and my father made the service. He was very good in Hebrew and he led the service for the people. In 1940 I began my school career. And Jewish children were not allowed to go to the school in their town. There was one school for the State of Wuerttemburg. That was in Stuttgart. So I had to travel, in fact I had to get travel permission papers to take the train. First I had to walk the three kilometers to the train station and then take the train to Stuttgart, which was another hour, and then walk by myself to the school. In the beginning, my father took me with a bicycle and he took me to the train station and then he had…and then the law came out that all Jewish people had to do some work…kind of a slave labor and my mother had to sew in a corset factory, a women's undergarment factory and my father became the cutter. Although he never did this kind of work before, he had at that time, I mean before all of this happened, he had his own textile business selling dry goods. Mainly wholesale and retail to different hotels and also private people. He sold different things. Linen and dry goods. And after they had to do this slave labor, I had to travel all by myself to the school and it became quite difficult when we had to start to wear the star, the yellow star and that became a huge problem. And my father said to me…in fact the star…I was such a little girl still. I was six years old and from the age of six in Germany all the people had to wear the yellow star with the word Jew on it. My star covered most of my left side, I mean I was still a little girl and he said when you sit down on the train, sit in such a way that you can normally cover up the star. In other words, like bent over on your left side. It had to be worn on the left side over my breast, you know on the left side. And so I did this and I was always nervous because there were these rowdy school children who would go from one town to the next by train and they would be very fresh and they would stare and people always tried to have conversation with me in the train. Why are you going all alone to…traveling by yourself and by the age if six to go all by yourself to a school so far away. I mean why don't you go in your own town? And it was very hard to answer them. They made me very nervous and scared. I remember in the morning when I took the train there was always a very mean policeman who would be sometimes at the station and that really gave me a scare in the morning. I had to get up very, very early in the morning to make the train and I remember once a woman, a Christian woman, she realized that I was Jewish. She left…when she left, she left a bag of rolls in a paper bag right next to my seat. She didn't say a word, but she left that for me. And to me she…I mean she was resisting what was going on but in a silent way, but nevertheless she had the heart to think of that Jewish child who might wanted to eat those rolls; she wanted to do some kindness to that Jewish child, but very afraid to talk to me, but she realized she was Jewish. I remember also at that time

I had to take the train…the car I think it was third class. In Germany you had second and first class trains. I remember a group of prisoners…they may have been Russian prisoners or Polish, I don't remember. But they were also herded to somewhere and how they would sit in the compartment and sharing a cup of something or other, some food, they shared one cup will contain a drinking out of it all at the same time, going from one to the other and they were with a watchman. That was in the same compartment. It kind of struck something in me. I mean I had never…I had come from a very, very tiny town and I had never been really anywhere, not many miles away from my home, and seeing things like that, it just made me extremely nervous and afraid that people were mistreated so badly you know, that people could do this to other people and these were not Jewish people. In 1941 the transports to the so-called East began. And my school was almost, I mean all of the children of the school, almost all of them, were in those first few transports. My grandmother and also my parents and myself, we received our papers for transport to a place called Riga, Latvia. Of course, really did not know where these transports were going. We found out later. And my father did not trust this whole thing and he said you know, I will try to see if we can get out of the transports. So he wrote a letter…he made my mother actually write a letter to the Nazi headquarters in Stuttgart to the Gestapo headquarters. And he had a picture taken, I remember that very well, of his wounds, and somehow the letter worked. We got out of this transport. And I remember going with my father because I had travel papers and he also had because he was supposed to accompany me in the beginning of going to school; he had the papers to go…the permission to go from one town to another. It was not permitted anymore to travel by train, bus or anything without papers. It was very hard to get the papers. And I only had them because I had to go to school. And I remember going with him to the Gestapo headquarters for my grandmother and they wouldn't even see us. Not at all. We could not get her out of the transport and she was sent in the …it was about December…on one of the first transports to what was called the East. And of course those people, almost all of them from that transport were shot in the forest near Riga, the ghetto there. And most of the people from my school also were in that transport. As far as I know, I am the only child who survived from the State of Wuerttemberg in Southern Germany. Now we had to leave…

Q: Can I ask just one question? Your father was able to write this letter; he had a picture of his wounds…

A: We still have this letter by the way. We have the letter of request to be out of this transport and somehow they let us go because of my father's disability.

Q: But not your grandmother.

A: Not my grandmother.

Q: You then made the trip to try to convince them to…

A: Yes. We went to the Gestapo headquarters in Stuttgart, but we were not even allowed to see anybody at all. We were forced out of my grandmother's house. The house was confiscated, and we were told that you had to move into Jewish houses into Jewish houses in the neighborhood town of Girpingen, which was a bigger town and there we were in a Jewish house, owned by Jewish people, and had a small apartment there. And we stayed there until the August of 1942, when again we received the orders for transport and then we were sent to Theresienstadt. Now my whole school career was about six months. I never finished my first grade because the school was closed in Stuttgart when all the children were taken away anyway and the teachers were taken away, it was closed. And then we were sent to Theresienstadt (Terezin) in Czechoslovakia. I remember how such a transport went. The police came to our…actually the transport papers had an order of maybe six pages with all the things we could and should not take. And the statement said we should not take any sharp utensils. They did not want us probably to kill ourselves, I mean they were going to do the job themselves. Good shoes, some provisions for a journey of two or three days and even we took along I think a sewing machine and all different kinds of things and I made sure that I took along my doll's clothing. That was packed away. My doll was the most important thing to me.

Q: What was the name of your doll?

A: My doll's name is Marlene . She was named after Marlene Dietrich, whom I idolized. I loved movie stars and so did my mother and she showed me once an album with a picture of her in it and that…I said that's going to be my doll's name. She was given to me on my second birthday from my grandmother and I still have her today and I donated this doll to the Holocaust museum in Washington recently, with great trepidation, because I really dragged her through everything. Now the transport notice said all of these things we could take along. We had to assemble in a school gymnasium in Girpingen, the people who were in the transport, and mainly the people who were in my transport were disabled war veterans and old people. And we were searched in the gymnasium. And I remember I had my doll in my arm. I would not relinquish her at all. And I remember one of the people, the SS people who searched us, took a look at my doll and lifted her head. She was like…her head had been once broken and they put a new head on and therefore she was put together with rubber bands and you could lift the head up. So he looked inside her hollow body. It was a celluloid doll. That's the kind of dolls you had at those times and he saw that I didn't have any…I wasn't hiding anything inside so I made a really big noise there and I wasn't going to give my doll up. And I was the youngest child in this transport and then he let me have my doll. Then he saw a wooden pin pinned to me. And he tore that from me and he said in German ["du brochest net fur du ingege"] in real [swabian] dialect. In other words, you don't need this where you are going. So he tore it from me. That was the last childish thing I had besides my doll.

Q: What was the pin?

A: It was a little Dutch Boy pin. A wooden pin that my mother had given me. And I remember my mother said we have to two or three different layers of clothing although it was summer. Because you never know what's going to happen. So she put on me a few dresses and forth. It was really hot. But you know you have to have some more clothing on you because you never knew what was going to happen. At least you would have that.

Q: Did you dress your doll in more than layer?

A: That I don't remember. I don't remember. But later on, incidentally, when the transport left, which I will talk about later from Terezin, my doll was sewn a ruksack, a duffel back which she wore and stuffed it with her clothing to prepare her for transport. Unfortunately that was lost. And from there we were transported to the gathering place in Stuttgart, to a place called Kiletzburg, where the people from the other towns were assembled. Everybody from Stuttgart from the Wuertemberg always, the transport left from one area that was called Kiletzburg, it was two large halls which were used at one time for flower shows and here we were about 1,200 people approximately, all assembled. And we stayed there a few days. There were not beds; they had some folding chairs and we were just lying on the floor and people were making a lot of noise at night. In fact, there is a movie out of one of the transports still available today, actual footage out of Kiletzburg. And I was the youngest of those approximately 1,200 people of the whole transport. There were mainly old people, as I said some disabled war veterans and veterans who were awarded the Iron Cross that my father had also. He was awarded the Iron Cross. And from here we were shipped out by train, it was actually a regular train, it was not a freight train to Terezin. We were sealed off, I mean there were guards guarding every door and we were very, very crowded. The trip took about a day and a half; something like that. And I remember one thing, whenever I got nervous as a child I would get sick to my stomach. And I remember I was throwing up in the train and there was no water and it was really a terrible thing. Very crowded.

Q: You were in a seat or were you standing?

A: We were in a seat, but very crowded. We arrived in a place Boschewitz. At that time there were no trains; the tracks did not go inside the camp. And the doors opened and…but one thing I remember coming into this Czech countryside. I saw all these signs, I mean the windows were opened. I mean you could see through the window, let's put it this way. All these strange looking letters, the countryside became so strange and it was a different language and I could barely read German, I had only six months of schooling and it was such a nightmare kind of thing. I'm going into a fairyland. I mean all different languages and a different way of writing; it was no longer German. And the names of the towns that we were approaching. Anyway we arrived in Bauschewitz and we were told to get

out of the car…out of the train…the SS was screaming 'drop everything". So we had to drop everything. And at that time already, whatever we brought along had been confiscated. I mean we never…none of these things ever arrived in the camp except my father had invented a little pushcart and one day he saw somebody pushing this little pushcart through the camp and my father said tht's mine, and somehow he got this little thing back. It was like four wheels and you could collapse it. Anyhow my father got it back later. Many times people would see clothes on some other people wearing it. We were allowed to wear our own clothes. Anyway, we arrived in Bauschewitz and we had to march for about maybe two miles or something in the camp.

Q: Is this during the day?

A: It was during the day. I remember that my parents put me in the middle; they were on either side of me. I had my doll in my arms; that's all that was left and a bedroll something. They let us keep the blankets or something that we had rolled up. That, they let us keep. And our tin cups and some containers that we were told to buy ahead of time. So like the Army, Army dishes, we had some of that. And I remember the SS was standing there and screaming at us to march and they had whips in their hands and I remember how people were beaten and they were already…they couldn't march. Some of them were very old people. They fell to the ground and we never saw them again. I don't know what happened to them. We all marched to an underground area where we were searched again. And my mother had taken along a thermos bottle and she put it outside one of the doors and said when we come back there I'm going to get it. Of course we never got back there. We were sent to some underground cell. Terezin was an old fortress town surrounded by huge red walls and underground cells and so forth. Big barracks, brick barracks and houses, actual houses because it became, it was an army garrison and people actually had lived there. Civilians had lived there too and they were thrown out before we came. I mean those houses, the old houses were completely empty. There was room actually for about 6,000 civilians and at any one time 60,000 people would be crammed in there. And from there we were sent to a huge fortress called Drasnacasenk, to the attic. It was a huge attic and it was airless, it was hot, it was dark. In fact, I was there recently and it looked exactly the same way. Some people started to jump out of those little windows. My father saw one day a man from my transport hanging out of the window. He said how can you do that? And then he promised him he wouldn't do it again and the next day he was dead in the courtyard. I remember stumbling over dead bodies. There were some white sheets covering some things…I mean there were bodies underneath.

Q: This was in the attic?

A: In the attic. It was really very…I mean we had nothing. We were sleeping on the stone floor. I remember one good soul who came to us, a Czech woman, who had never seen us before and she asked some people if there is a child in the transport.

So the fingers pointed towards me. Look, I know a room in this fortress where they have the children and maybe it would be better for you to be there. Of course I didn't want to go because I…there were so many thousands of people walking around in this attic and also in the whole fortress was a huge area and all speaking all different languages, mostly Czech, some German and I was really afraid to be left alone. I just wanted to be together with my parents. Everything was so strange. I mean there was very little area, just a small area where you could wash yourself. It was like a public room and everybody was rushing around and screaming and nervous and standing waiting for the food and always orders being given and everybody was just hopeless and walking aimlessly around. I mean you were just in like Dante's Inferno. That's what it looked like. And I went into that little room and she gave me, this Mrs. Rinder, who incidentally died in Auschwitz with her entire family. She had a little son by the name of Tommy who was about a year or two younger than I. She gave me part of her son's mattress. There was like different parts of the mattress. Either she cut it or whatever, she gave me a piece a part of a mattress that I could have something to sleep on in that little children's, in the children's room. In there they had double deck beds. Many of the children were sick with scarlet fever and of course I caught it too very shortly afterwards. I remember we used to go in the morning, before I was sick, we used to line up in the courtyard and they marched us around. I mean they tried a little bit to keep us busy. I remember how I learned to count in Czech because each of us had to count [1-10 in Czech she is saying] that's how I learned to count to 10.

Q: Who is watching over you?

A: Jewish people were watching over us. But I got so homesick that I remember when I got sick, I mean actually sick with scarlet fever, there was an epidemic there at that time and I caught it immediately. And after about 10-12 days, whatever the incubation period was,. I had it. And I was, I had a very high fever, it must have been 102-103 fever and I tried to locate my parents and to find them in this maze of people it was incredible. I just ran away from the room and I went up to the attic and I stumbled over everyone and I did find my parents. But soon afterwards I was taken to the, what was called the so-called "hospital". And it was a building with rooms and they did have some beds there. But there were so many sick children that it was called the [Hoen _____ hospital. Not only for children, but it was also for adults. They had a separate area for children. And there were two children in every bed. Some of them were sleeping in the floor. The walls were covered with flies. There was only one small, either one or two small windows that I remember that you had to climb up to see your parents because the parents were not allowed to come inside because it was an isolation area and we had a certain whistle that my father used to have like [and she demonstrated it]. When I heard that I knew it was my father outside and I'd climb up to that window and some people would help me. They would lift me up that I could see my parents and scream out to them. And the Czech children also they would scream up to their parents. They would say maleno kingle, maleno kingle.

Come to the small window. That was in Czech. I remember these things that I didn't know what they were saying, but now I know what it was.

Q: Was your doll with you in the hospital?

A: The doll was not with me in the hospital, no. I could not take anything. And I stayed in the hospital from the end of August to December and I had a variety of illnesses, double middle ear infection, I had jaundice and measles, one after the other. I mean I was supposed to die. The doctors already told me parents that it was really very hopeless, I had lost my voice already and I was covered with sores all over from the dirt. Nobody washed me. I couldn't take care of myself and whatever little food I had I couldn't eat because I was so full of fever all the time, I didn't know what to do with it and I had trouble washing myself and very little water. There was really very little care. I mean there were some very good nurses there. They had some wonderful doctors, but very little medicine. There were just too many children. I shared my bed with a younger child who wet the bed all the time so the bed was constantly soiled, and I was in this wet bed constantly. So finally I got out. But in the meantime, transports I had heard were leaving for the East. We were shipped out and we were very afraid that we would be separated from our parents.

Q: You were still seeing your parents during this time?

A: Only through the window. They were not allowed in.

Q: Every day you would see them or…

A: Yes, I think most every day they would come. But in the meantime my mother had to start working. She worked at first to work in washing typhus laundry. In the meantime also they were shipped to another area of the camp for disabled war veterans. They were in the room with maybe 30 people, double deck bunk beds of course. No furniture. Nothing. There was one small oven for the winter. I remember when I was released from the hospital, my hair had been cut before because I was covered by lice and almost completely cut off and they dunked me in some kind of infecting solution in a pail like, a little pail whatever it was to clean me up a little bit. And they it was cold. I remember when I was released it was just before my, it was my eighth birthday and that was December 31, 1942 because in August of 1942 were sent out. I was eight by then. And then came a call to this room of disabled war veterans where men and women slept together and the three of us slept on the top bunk bed and we stayed there also some time; a few months more and then we were shipped out again. Moved to another room on the same block. Also where the disabled war veterans lived to a little room with another family from Berlin. They had also a daughter exactly my age who was two months older. Her birthday was on October 21. I remember it very well. Their name was Abraham. And the father was also a disabled war veteran. He walked with a limp. And the father was half Jewish. The mother, the father's

mother was non-Jewish and the father was. That's why the name Abraham. And the mother, Ruth's mother was completely Jewish. But Ruth was brought up as a devout Christian. She was never brought up as a Jew. And I remember how she prayed. She would always fold her hands and she was not…and that was very strange to me because Jewish people do not do that. They had some services, some Christian services there too. We had some people in Terezin of mixed marriages (Misch…) [mischlinge] and she attended some of those services with her father and her father made sure that she was not brought up as a Jew. And he was very proud of that. Although she was basically Jewish, because the mother was completely Jewish. Her name was Ruth Abraham from Berlin. Now we lived with them for more than a year in the small, tiny, tiny little room where six people lived. I mean three of us and three of them until '44. When, I mean there were transports to Auschwitz many, many times during that time and the transports were selected according to the whims of the SS. Always around 1,000 people. And whenever Eichmann came to the camp, you knew very well that another transport would go. Many more transports would go. Ruth and I attended the underground classes. The so-called beshefticum classes which were held in different areas, sometimes in the children's home, sometimes in a barracks. We both attended those and we didn't have official school books and really not official teachers. We were taught by people who remembered anything. I had for instance some English lessons. Some people who remembered English, or Hebrew or whatever they could teach us. Our parents also they drilled us to do the times table, for instance. It was very important to keep our minds a little bit busy and to learn poems. For instance, Ruth's father was a very good poet and he made her recite poems. I mean to memorize these poems. The same with my mother. She was a good poet too and you always for birthdays, that was our birthday gift to our parents to recite a poem.

Q: Do you remember a poem you recited?

A: I don't remember, not really. I don't remember at this point. My birthdays were celebrated in a fashion, for instance, I got a new outfit for my doll sewn from rags or I got a small potato cake the size of a child's palm with a tiny hint of sugar on it, just made from a mashed potato. Potatoes were like diamonds. In fact, I wrote in my book, I am star about diamonds on the snow, how my father had gotten some potatoes. He would go around, my father didn't have an official job. Sometimes he would get some coal dust and he would bring it to the old people. I mean they couldn't get it for themselves for the, you know for the heating of the small ovens and they would give him a piece of bread for it or some potatoes. [End of side 1. Set counter to zero for side 2]. It was really forbidden. You could be sent out either to a small fortress which was a prison for the prison about a mile away or be sent to Auschwitz immediately if you were caught. Because in the camp we had the ghetto police, mainly, actually made up of Jewish people who were policing the area. Also you had surrounding the camp you had the Germans or Czech gendarmes guarding the camp, armed with guns. Then I remember she had gotten some of these potatoes and we had a few pounds of

these and they were really like diamonds because we did not get enough food. I mean the rations were very small. I don't have to, I believe, go into it. I mean we know what concentration camp food was like and so a potato became the mainstay or an extra portion of soup, watery soup that we got. Of course in the morning it was just a murky liquid called coffee. We had to stand three times a day in line in the big fortress courtyards to get our food

Q: You would stand in line?

A: I would stand in line, too. Yes. In fact, the children's kitchen was somewhere else from the adults and the food was very much the same. I mean children did not get very much more. I mean there was hardly ever any milk, and if there was, it was for, it was so watered down or children with TB and things like that who got sometimes a little bit more. Almost everybody had it anyway. And there was a rumor going around that we were going to have an inspection in our block and the inspection was by women, ausewiber they called them. An especially very mean SS women who would search the area. We would have to leave the buildings and if even one cigarette or one potato would be found, that would be the end. So we were sleeping on the potatoes and we didn't know what to do with these potatoes. So my father found a plan and he found an old suitcase and put some of these potatoes in and was the death of night and you actually a curfew. You weren't supposed to be out of the houses and the lights were supposed to be out. There was a full moon. So he had a plan to put these potatoes under a pile of rags, that they should not freeze. In the, what was called die soigelings heim where some of the babies were kept in this building and in the courtyard there was this big heap of rags. And he took…in the middle of the night he ran out and he fell and all of the potatoes were on the snow. So he picked them up and he hid them under this pile of rags. Now in the meantime, these women came and we were told to get out of the houses and assemble. And I remember I was so afraid with my doll that one of them would break him, I don't remember if I left the doll there or if I took the doll with me. But it was dangerous take anything with you because they thought you were hiding something and that's how we saved, and then a day later when the coast was clear; they didn't find anything, then they…we got the potatoes back. I remember the worst day for me was a day in 1943. It was November 11. The rumor went around that people were missing; that people had escaped. And perhaps some people did escape. But of course it was very hard to get out because you had to jump from the high walls. And if you did, you broke most of your bones and who would help you then. And even if you did get out in one piece, who would help you when you got out? People didn't know anybody on the outside to give you some food or where to go, etc. and I mean you had the SS guarding the place, so it was very difficult. And we were herded out one cold November morning. Always something happened between 9th, 10, or 11th of November, starting from Kristallnacht on. Every November 9th, 10th, 11th, we were always afraid something terrible would happen to us. We were herded outside of the camp to a place called Bauschewitz Kastle, the Bauschewitz Revine. And everybody in the camp had to go. Sick or half-

dead, everybody was marched out. And we were standing in little groups and I remember Heindel, one of the worst and meanest SS men kept on walking around and counting and beating people when they lost their way and we didn't get food all day. There were no bathrooms there. It was just a horrible, horrible day. It was now I know what was supposed to happen on that day. I think that they really did not only want to count us. Probably what they wanted to do is either shoot down, Babi Yar style or send the whole transport to Auschwitz on that day. Because news had leaked out to the British radio. And that we were all standing there, about 50,000-60,000 people. It was raining. I remember our feet sank into the mud. It was just an awful day. Mice were running around in that field and that news had leaked out and consequently orders came from Berlin to let us go back to the camp. And we went back in the death of night, maybe 11:00-12:00 And they were beating us. We were holding on to each other. They said no. Men and women should be separate. We wouldn't let go of each other. My mother was beaten up very badly that day. One of the butts of a rifle went right into my mother's back because we would not separate. We were holding on to each other and we went back to the camp. And soon afterwards you had this commission from the Red Cross. And I remember it very well. The whole place had to be cleaned up. Certain streets had signs on them…To School…To Playground. A band shell was erected in the park, a park that we were never even allowed to go to and children were given some better food just as the commission went by. I think I saw the commission but we were not allowed to go out of our houses. I just saw them from far away. A film was made at that time to show supposedly the good conditions of the place. Soon afterwards when the commission had left, everything went back to where it was before. And the transports began again. In fact, the worst transports were in 1944, in the fall. It was during the High Holidays in September and October. And I remember how the people even fasted on Yom Kippur and afterwards went on the transport. I remember how they put on their boots, etc. and prayed with their last breathes, so to speak, God Help Us. I remember one of the prayers Alvenu Malkenu, God Help Us. I mean they did not know where they were really going that this was a worse place even than where we were. That this was going to be their death. They did not know it, but you always feared things would be worse somewhere else. We were not told about Auschwitz, although the camp elders did know about it. [Leobeken] the people knew about this place…knew about Auschwitz. And it was that time when Mrs. Rinder and her whole family was shipped out. I mean the camp was almost completely empty. Ruth and her parents were shipped out. Just before they were shipped out, all of the disabled war veterans had to go the SS headquarters and the selection took place. And my father when he came home he said "Well I was told to go the girl with the typewriter, and I saw her…them put a red circle around our name, and I think we don't have to go". And surely enough, that's what it was. And the Abrahams, who had…I mean they were really not even...I mean he was half Jewish, they should have helped him. And my father said "Why didn't you tell him, why didn't you do something?" He said "Well, you are all going to come sooner or later, wherever we're going". And that's it. So the whole family was sent to Auschwitz. I

remember, for instance, disabled war veterans who had very important parts, I don't need to go into certain things, genitals shot off. I remember one who even took his, my father told me, he dropped his pants to show them that he was wounded so badly and he had all these catheters in and out and even he was shipped off to Auschwitz. I mean the selection was very brutal and you really were not safe just because you were a disabled war veteran or even if you were a highly decorated war veteran. I mean there were transports with EK-1 Iron Cross, one transports who were shipped out in mass or sometimes only doctors, sometimes. It depended exactly what they wanted. Old people, young people, whatever it was. And I remember also during the…to transgress a little bit. Some things that come back to me. I mean that was really the saddest time for me because I had really loved my girlfriend. We were like two sisters and before she went, we had identical dolls and she gave me…

Q: She had a Marlene doll?

A: She had the same doll I had. Exactly the same kind and before she left, she gave me her doll's clothing that her mother had sewn for her. And I think I still have a few things left from that.

Q: What was her doll's name?

A: That I don't remember, but she gave me her doll's clothing. She said, you take care of it for me. And one of the things that I remember was seeing this meanest SS man Heindel. I remember going with my father in the courtyard and there was a tree with some kind of berries on it. But I mean we never had any food. My father said come on, pick something. And as soon as I started to pick something Heindel came into this courtyard and we thought, that's it. We would be shot. I saw Eichmann. He walked into the children's quarters where I had my underground classes and I remember hiding the little notebook that I had. I hid it under a table. And I remember when he walked in, there were about three of them…three or four of them, we were really not supposed to look at their faces. It was forbidden to look into an SS man's face. You had to have your head bowed.

Q: Who told you that?

A: We were told by a teacher. And it was a law. I mean whenever you walked o the street, you were never supposed to look at an SS man. Your head had to be bowed. You would…they should not make any eye contact. But knew it was Eichmann. I mean I looked up a little bit and, you know, I was told later that one of them was. We were told to be completely quiet. But one of the saddest things that I remember was when my grandmother was shipped out on the transport. That is something and today that we're making this tape, is her birthday, and that is a day that we keep as a memorial because we do not know when she was shot. This is April 11. And we light a candle for her every April 11. That is her memorial. I remember when she was in the transport and how we went to

Stuttgart before she was transported in the railway station. As I said I had the travel papers that I could be there with my father. And she slowly, slowly went down the train station. Of course, the night before my mother and her said goodbye and it was just the most tearful thing. Somehow she knew that this was going to be a finality. And how she slowly went down the steps and I would never see her again. She sent a few cards from the trip to Riga and we still have them today and she writes on them "with God's help we'll see each other again. I love you," you know, your Mother and so forth. She probably had to dig her own grave so we heard and she was shot by Einsatzgruppen, these massive killing forces in probably what was called the Rhumbellee Forest near Riga a few weeks after she had arrived in Riga in Latvia. And that was it. My aunt and uncle had lived in Frankfurt and they were shipped out also during that time, around 1941. First to a camp called Gurst cau de Gurst in France. We were…all my whole village where I was born were shipped…I mean the ones who did not make it to America, or somewhere else, went to Cau de Gurst in France. And from there they were shipped out to different places; to Auschwitz and so forth. And my aunt and uncle were shipped to Lodz to the Lodz Ghetto, Litzmanstadt. We still have also a little note that they wrote in script. They said ungroff, meaning in Hebrew gruff means hunger. Uncle hunger has come. You know, to tell us we should send packages and at that time, we could still in 1941 we could send packages to the ghetto in Lodz in Poland. And we even have a little note that they did receive something. And one my aunt scribbled that she became a widow [and in german] in small letters that widow on it in script-like and from there my cousin and her mother…my uncle died in the Lodz Ghetto and they were shipped out…I really don't know where. It could be Chelmno, I believe they were gassed in Chelmno. And of course we lost many more people in the war but those were the closest. Many more. Many, many more. More than 13 people at least. When we came back from the camp, when we finally liberated, May 8, 1945, I remember the transports had just before had come from other camps because Eichmann wanted to exterminate the last Jew living and gas chambers had been built already in Terezin. Only the doors had been missing. It was in the last days of the war and people were shipped in from Auschwitz, from Riga, from all over the place on death marches. And I remember how these poor people came. They were barefoot, they were in rags, they looked like skeletons and then finally it dawned on us what had been going on the other camps. It had been a secret to us that gas chambers and places like that existed. I mean we were starving in the camp, but we were not killed in Terezin.

Q: Did you get any letters from Auschwitz from anybody?

A: Nobody. Nobody. Nobody. Then the last day of the war I remember it was evening and I was kind of a precocious child and I climbed the barricade. And all of a sudden to see what was going on because I saw a lot of movement…I heard a lot of movement…trucks moving outside of the camp. And bits of burnt paper flying through the air. And they were burning the documents because the Nazis were living right outside of the camp; the personnel. And all of a sudden I heard a

tremendous noise and I touched my head to see if my head had blown off. And a hand grenade had been thrown into the camp just a few houses away and I mean it nearly killed me. They were throwing hand grenades a few…as they were leaving the camp. And then my father said we must find a hiding place. I was a soldier in World War 1, and I know how these things are. We must go underground. So we found a cellar, a dark cellar and somebody had a tiny little candle and we were all huddling there and waiting and waiting. And about ten minutes to nine somebody went upstairs to see what was going on. And he said the Russians are here, we are liberated. And that was a tremendous relief, but we could not leave the camp because we had a tremendous typhoid epidemic. Then we waited for a bus to come to pick up from Stuttgart…they picked up out of a transport of about 1,200 people, 13 people had survived. And of course I was the youngest. My parents and myself we had survived out of those 13. We went back to…we were first in a DP camp in Stuttgart and then we went back to my grandmother's house. People of course had lived in it and they prepared a room for us. Then we went to the Mayor and lo and behold my mother looked on the floor and our oriental carpet was in the Mayor's office. She heard a familiar chime and it was our clock that had found its way there. The bedroom set had found its way to an SS man's place. And then in…we lived there about nine months and we came to America in May of 1946 on the Marie Perch the second Displaced Person's boat that came to the United States after the war.

Q: When you weren't in the underground school studying, what else would you be doing?

A: Well, I would find the other children. We had a whole band of kids from the block that I lived on. We would go the garbage dump to find anything that was still edible. We would take potato peelings…rotten potatoes, bring them home, we would pick dandelion leaves to make a salad. I mean we had no vinegar or anything like that. We never saw an egg in three years. I never saw real milk. I never saw a piece of meat in three years. The bread was very poor bread, made, I believe out of chestnuts, part of it. It spoiled very quickly and we ate it actually quite fast. In fact, when we got the bread rations, my mother would make a mark on the bread that we should not go further than that on that day, otherwise we would cut into the next day's bread. We would have nothing left. When a transport would come in…an incoming transport, sometimes these people brought some onions and some garlic with them and was absolutely like diamonds, like potatoes were diamonds. And sometimes we would find these people and they would give us a tiny little onion or a clove of garlic and we would put that on the bread. And believe me, I didn't brush my teeth for a few days just to keep that taste in my mouth. I mean there was no toothpaste anyway, but just to keep clean somehow. I mean we had…we could not really take showers. Maybe once every eight, nine months or something, some community showers. Otherwise you got water from polluted wells and you drank the same water that you washed with, you drank too. That's why so many people got sick. And my father was also in the garbage dump and he would find sometimes some boiled bones…some horse

bones. We never had any real meat. And he would cut the gristle off. We would cook that again. We would take any fat that came out of that and take the gristle and eat it. I remember my best friend…I mean how we had a little bit of gristle and my girlfriend was brought up in a very, very proper good home, how she was so hungry that she stole some of my…some of our gristle. I saw it happening and…I mean she was not the type of person to steal from anybody. But when people are hungry, they will steal to stay alive. Some books had gotten into the camp, but they were not read. They were used as toilet paper. That I remember. As toilet paper…books!

Q: Did you as children like to dream and kind of fantasize. Did you?

A: Always. Always. We dreamt to make up always about food. we dreamt about food from day to night. I mean who would think of the most lavish meal. I mean there were cakes that were miles high with chocolate and whipped cream and in fact, when we got out of the camp, one of the first things somebody brought was a big bowl of whipped cream and we didn't know that our stomachs could not digest such a heavy meal. But my mother and I, we just dug unto that. We ate the whole thing up. It was a big dish of whipped cream.

Q: And then you were sick

A: And then we were sick. Yes. You could not digest such a thing.

Q: Was there a time when you were prepared for a transport to Auschwitz?

A: I think we had some numbers at times…there were a few times that we were and somehow it was called off or something. I mean there was nothing that you could do to get out of it, to stay out of a transport. It was strictly on the whims of the SS who told the Jewish Elders like Epstein or we had different Elders, Adelstein, Epstein and the last one was Murmelstein. This was the only one who survived. The others were killed in Auschwitz. And they were told ro prepare lists of people. And whatever they wanted. And mainly the children. I mean the children were not supposed to live. My life is a miracle. I don't know why I'm here today. It was…people are always asking me, what did you do to survive? I didn't do anything! It was pure luck! Absolutely pure luck. Not because I was more beautiful or more intelligent. I believe my girlfriend was a wonderful artist and was much more gift than I, and she did not make it. And so many of us didn't either. There were very few children at the end of the war in Terezin. They said that there were about a hundred, perhaps there were more. Now they say perhaps a thousand. I did not see a thousand children after the war at liberation time that were under the age of, let's say, 15 or 14, young children I'm talking about. Not teenagers. But young children, let's say between…up to about 13 or so, very, very few were there at that time. Very few. And most of us were sick at the end of the war. When I came here I was also very sick and I…from malnutrition. I was in the hospital many years and it took me 10 years of my life to get myself

together again physically, not mentally. Mentally, I was, thank God, always very strong, but physically it took many, many years and again…

Q: All of those months with infectious diseases.

A: Yes, again loss of schooling. I lost about eight years of schooling in my life. The first time I ever really went to school, was high school, which I finished in three years, and then college. I had to stop college also because I became sick again. That's another story. But I finished college and I am a chemist today. I've done research with many prominent doctors. I worked with Meyer Friedman who was the father of cholesterol work; the father of the Type A personality, he coined that word. I worked on that book when he wrote it.

Q: Did he name it after you?

A: No, not quite, but I am a type A, I suppose. I am very active in Holocaust lecturing and against prejudice; it has become really my life's work besides my work at…my real work, I mean where I make my living. I spend many free…I mean whatever free time I have I spend teaching the Holocaust and my voice against bigotry. It is very important for me to speak out. And I do practice what I preach. I live in a very integrated neighborhood. I live next door to an Indian family from Guyana, who are Hindu, and my next door neighbor on side is this Hindu family and the other a Black family from Haiti. And we live very happily together. We learn from each other and that is exactly perhaps why these things happened in Germany because people don't…they really didn't want to know about other cultures and were persuaded by one ridiculous man, I mean completely insane man, to follow his footsteps. And I think if we learn more about other people, and I did travel a lot in my life already and learned about different cultures. Moslem; I've been into so many Mosques and Hindu temples and that we really are all one. I work in a hospital and I know that all blood…we…blood has one color, and the color is red. Never ask did the blood come from a black person, an oriental person or whatever. It only depends on the blood type. But all blood is red and it has the same components for every people.

Q: One other question. Did you have any impression of the Soviet soldiers when you saw them?

A: Well I remember they were quite rowdy. I remember one of them, he saw me, and handed over the barricade a huge (to me it seemed like huge) it probably was a regular piece of bread, with a mountain of butter. And I'll never forget the taste of that first real piece of black bread, sinking my teeth into this delicious butter. That was a Russian soldier.

Q: Did you contract typhoid?

A: No. I did not.

Q: But you still had to stay

A: Yes, we had to stay. Because there was a quarantine for the whole camp.

Q: You said a bus came from Stuttgart?

A: They sent a bus to pick up the survivors.

Q: Stuttgart sent it?

A: Stuttgart did, yes. Yes. Sent the bus. Some months later in the summer. July or something like that it was. In ’45, after our liberation.