

NATIONAL

Life stories

**LIVING MEMORY OF THE JEWISH
COMMUNITY**

LILY FISCHL

Interviewed by Michael Daniels

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Track 1 (Tape F892, Side A)

Right, Mrs. Fischl, or Lily...

That's right.

As you have asked me to call you. Perhaps we could start at the beginning, for me to ask you, what was your date of birth, when were you born?

On the 13th of January, 1898.

Which makes you ninety-two. My goodness me!

Yes. The earlier hundred, I'm in 1800, that's always the difficulty.

My goodness! Where were you born?

I was born in Vienna, and my parents...my mother was Viennese and my father came from Bohemia, from a little town in Bohemia, which at the time of course was the Austrian Empire.

Perhaps we can talk about your father first.

Yes, that's right.

Your father came from Bohemia.

He came from Bohemia, and he had a lot of sisters, and his father was a corn merchant, and they lived in a little township called, at the time, Raudnitz, it's...

Can you spell that?

Raudnitz, R-A-U-D-N-I-T-Z, but now it is of course Czechoslovak, Czech it would be Rodnice [i.e. Roudnice]. It's difficult.

Is that R-O-D-N-I-C-E?

That's right, yes, yes.

Right. And your father, or his father was a corn merchant?

His father, and his mother were there, and they had five children. And he then was sent, as my grandfather was quite obviously quite wealthy, he bought a house in Prague and sent his son to school in Prague, and they then lived in Prague, and all the girls were married from Prague. They left Raudnitz, and I was there visiting it, and quite disappointed, because I didn't realise that such a little Czech town wasn't very interesting for somebody coming from Vienna, years ago, when I married to Prague. You see, I married to Prague, I married a Czechoslovak former Austrian citizen, and I lived in Prague all my married life.

Ah, but that's much later of course.

That is much later, yes.

I see. So your father came to Vienna?

My father came to Vienna.

After Prague? After he had been...

After he had finished school in Prague, he was sent to Hamburg to do some commercial training, and then he went to Vienna. And his father bought him a factory to make coffins, because my father was not interested in commerce, but more in music and mountaineering, and I think my grandfather was very wise and thought that people will die, and so his beloved son Richard will be able to continue even if he does not look after his business.

But what was his mother tongue?

What was...?

His mother tongue?

His mother tongue was German, as it was Austria. He spoke a bit of Czech, but I think that Jews who sent their children to school in Prague preferred to have them taught in German, because Austria, they had more scope in Austria, as it was more liberalized, and they had more chance to succeed in Austria with the German language than with the Czech language.

What did they speak at home, do you know?

I wouldn't know, I think they must have spoken a mixture of Czech, German, perhaps Yiddish, but I don't know. When I was born, my father only spoke German, and later on English at home, because we had English nursery governesses, that was the fashion in Austria. And besides, my mother had a sister married in England, and to be able to speak to my future cousins we had to learn English, as the English cousins would not have learnt German.

Now your father's family were quite well-to-do were they?

My father's family were quite well-to-do, yes, they had a house in Raudnitz and they had a horse, and oxen, my father used to tell us how they got the corn in... [Oh, I must take that off, yes.] And, I think they were quite well-to-do, because I was then shown a very beautiful house in Prague which my grandfather had bought, so they must have been quite well-to-do.

What about their religion, how religious were they?

Well, I think my grandparents were not religious at all, but my father in his teens was very religious, and was highly interested in the Jewish history, and all the history, he was very...he was very historically and art interested all his life. And that I think was, he learnt it himself, he had no background to it. But I think it was his own wish, and as he went to Gymnasium in Prague, and learnt Greek and Latin, and could quote Homer and Latin all his life, this was his main interest, to the Classics, Goethe, this background. And whereas my mother did not have that background.

Did he go to university, your father?

No, he never went to university. I have the sneak feeling that he never passed his Matriculation, but I don't know, I haven't been told. But I don't think...no, he never went to university.

Now in the meantime, the grandparents were in the corn business?

Well, I think my grandfather Heller must have died before his widow moved to Prague. She then lived in Prague, and as far as I know all my father's sisters married from Prague. How long they lived...he lived in Raudnitz I wouldn't know; that I don't know. I know that my grandmother and my grandfather Heller are buried in Prague, that's all I know about that.

You mentioned your father became religious in his teens.

Yes.

How religious?

That's very difficult for me to know, because one didn't talk much about it. I know he...Hebrew, he knew all about the Old Testament, and nothing I think about the New Testament. But he went to synagogue, whereas my mother's family did not. And that...I know that. I don't know how religious he was.

And what sort of dress did he wear? Was it just the ordinary dress of the wealthy?

Ordinary dress, when I was born; after all, he wore what everybody in Vienna would wear. And on Saturdays or Sundays one went to the country, and he had more of a country suit. There was nothing special in his attire.

When would he have been born?

I don't quite know. In 18... I haven't got his papers, all that has got lost of course. Well, he was...when we were born, my brother and I, he must have been nearly thirty, or twenty-eight or twenty-nine.

OK, that's just an idea, roughly.

I should think so, yes.

And, apart from his interests in the Greek Classics, did he have any other interests?

Mountaineering, nature, history of art, painting - but he didn't paint himself; and Wagner, perhaps that is interesting, Wagner, at the time.

And did he have any leanings towards politics, or was he interested in the politics?

Yes, he was more...pink. He was very much socialist, that's right, he thought that would be... Oh, he thought...he wasn't very much of a monarchist, he was more socialist. How far that really went, how deep that went I can't tell you, I don't know.

And, did he have any experience himself of anti-Semitism?

I don't think so. It was never mentioned. I don't think so, he was very broad-minded, he never forbade me to go to my Catholic friends, or to...he was astonished that I was invited to all the more or less anti-Semitic circles in Vienna, but he did not...he said, "If you think you are comfortable there, go." So he was very broad-minded.

And his friends were mainly Jewish, or not?

He had...he didn't have very many friends; he was very much at home. I can't remember, he had one Catholic officer friend, that's all I really can tell you about him; there were not many friends, and besides, as a child you don't take much notice of your parents' friends I think.

Did he serve in the army?

He did not, no.

He didn't. Let's perhaps now come to your mother, and perhaps go through the same background.

Well my mother's father also came from Bohemia, and my mother's mother came from Hungary. That was usually the background of all the Viennese Jews.

Which part of Hungary, do you know?

Temeswar [Timisoara], or part of the family came from there. Now that is very fashionable. Yes, so it must have...but I don't know very much about that. She had beautiful sisters, some of them, and she was a most lovable woman. I made a portrait of her, you can see it outside. Yes. I loved her dearly.

She was born...?

She was born...I don't know. I might look it up. I don't know whether she was born in Vienna already or still in Hungary, that I wouldn't know. I wouldn't know by heart, I would have to look it up. I might find those papers, but I don't know.

What happened to her? She went to school in, wherever it was?

She went to school, as far as I know, in Vienna already, and she married in Vienna. My grandfather, Siegfried Friedrich - that was the fashion at the time - Fleischer, who was in Vienna staying with his adoptive mother - there's a picture of her there. And he was a very handsome man, very musical, very charming. She was my great love. And, also children, they had four girls, my mother was the eldest. And I think it was a very cheerful and nice household, with lots of friends, and they had a carriage, a 'fiacre', and they had a box in the opera, so they must have been quite well-to-do. And I know all my aunts, I knew my aunts, and their families. And it was a very comfortable background.

And a Jewish life?

Was non existing. They were Jews; whether they...the girls never went to school as far as I know, they had private tuition at home - at least my mother had, what the other aunts did I don't know. And religion wasn't important in their lives; as far as I know, my mother's parents never went to a synagogue. I know my aunts were married in a synagogue, the two younger ones certainly; the eldest I don't...the second one I don't know. My mother was married in a synagogue.

Was married in a synagogue?

Yes. But I know nothing about it. That is a very astonishing thing perhaps, but one didn't talk very much about religion. I remember I went to elementary school when I was six, first to a private school and then to the public school. And living in a nice house in a good district of Vienna, these schools had Catholic religion lessons, and for the Protestants and the Jews you had private lessons. So I had private religion lessons at home, by I suppose a rabbi, but I can't tell you whether he was a rabbi or not. I remember him very well, and I learnt the Old Testament stories and I learnt my Shema, without knowing what I was talking about, and to my mind that is one of the great mistakes one did, that the Hebrew was not taken as a language but just for the prayers, and there was a seven-year-old little girl, couldn't understand anything at all about it.

Was there any Yiddish spoken at home?

No.

None at all.

Not in our household, no. And not amongst my friends, nowhere. I did not hear real Yiddish before the end of the First World War.

Now your mother's mother tongue presumably was Hungarian rather than German wasn't it?

No no, all German. Don't forget it all belonged to the Austrian Empire, and Jews of a certain...what they thought higher standards, they spoke German. This is the difficulty to make people understand that nowadays. They went to the German schools and not to the Czech or Hungarian schools. All that only started after that first world war. And that is a very great difference in the upbringing and the background of a household: if your parents, one comes from Bohemia and the other one comes from Hungarian parents, they speak German together. It was German.

What were your grandparents, what was their occupation, on your mother's side?

My grandfather had a leather...I think the leather was tanned, a tannery or something like that. But when he moved to Vienna, he then became...I think he only went to the Exchange, to the 'Bourse'. What he really did I can't tell you, I think he just had a lot of money, inherited money from his adopted

mother and father, who was an aunt of his, and he just played on the Stock Exchange. This is all I know.

I imagine he was...he was adopted?

He was adopted by his mother's sister, who had no children. And she had been married to a rich man in Vienna, and she adopted the child of her sister, as far as I know, because she had no children.

This is your father of course?

That was my grandfather.

Your grandfather.

My grandfather, my mother's father.

Your mother's father.

My mother's father. Who was a very delightful and charming man.

And, you say again, in their family they had no indication of the fact that they were Jews?

Well they knew they were Jews, but they didn't go to synagogue as far as I know.

But didn't mix with Jews?

Mixed with Jews, well, like we were, who didn't go to synagogues, and whose children then married either gentiles or already baptized Jews. The Jewish leaked away, the Jewishness, if one can say so. It was...it disappeared slowly.

Now your mother's family never went through the...

Holocaust?

No no no, the...in the same way as your father went through a period of religion, your mother's family, none of them did?

I don't think so, not that I know of, no, no, no. I think that was because they lived in Vienna.

And, what...did they have any leisure interests, your mother's family? Your mother?

My mother, no, not really; she was young and very pretty, and very young when she married, and she had three children, and she ran a big household, and I don't really know that she had any spare...she played the piano very nicely, but that's about all; whereas my father had so many interests which he then implanted into me, and I am thankful for all that he gave me, by opening my eyes to art, mountains, air, walking, music, whatever you want, that all came from my father's side.

Although you've mentioned that they, neither your mother nor your father were religious, nor were they associated in a specific sense with the Jewish community...

No.

But were they associated in a specific sense with non Jewish organisations?

No, neither.

Political or any other associations?

No, neither. My father didn't want to go to any association, and my mother neither.

And your mother had presumably no political views?

No, no. Not really.

In your parents' households...sorry, in your household, where...what was the role of your mother? She was a housewife...

My mother looked after the household, my mother looked after her mother, that's to say went to visit her. We nowadays, we always think, what did our mothers do, because they had servants, and didn't do anything in the house, nor did I till I...until Hitler came. So I cannot...say anything nasty about that. But I now know that, how much more one could have done, which is remarkable really, but they didn't do very much. But then one mustn't forget, one tried to keep a lovely house, and visitors, and...I don't know what. But, this is the difficulty, that nowadays we can't really know what our mothers and grandmothers did with their time.

But who would you say was the power, the force in your family?

My mother, because she was the realist; my father was the...yes, he was high up, and in his dreams or in his hobbies, and she had to keep him to his work, and to earn a living. So it was my mother who did that, and she took us to a dentist, and she took us to school, went to the teachers to discuss our future with the teachers. My father didn't do anything of that, he left that all to Mother.

Your father was preoccupied either with his interests, or in his...

Other interests, or he went to his factory, and where all the children of the neighbourhood loved him, because he sat in the window there and handed out sweets, and pennies. He was a very loving and lovable man, and all the children of the surroundings loved him. But I don't think he was a very good businessman, nor was he a very efficient businessman.

How old was your mother when she was married?

She was I think eighteen or nineteen.

And your father was...?

And he was thirteen...eleven or thirteen years older.

And had they been introduced officially?

Well, they were somehow, through relations, yes. There was a connection, a family connection between my father's sister and my mother's family; there was some family relationship or friendship.

So it wasn't a formal introduction, but an incidental introduction.

Oh no no no. They met in...they must have met in a house party or something like that.

Yes, yes. And this was of course in Vienna?

That was in Vienna, yes.

Do you know the year? It doesn't matter.

Must I? I can't...don't make me do mathematics.

I'll leave you alone on that one! Now, when they were first married, your parents, they lived in the same house that you were born in to, and lived in until you left?

Oh no no no no no, one moved around; after all, you don't...at the time in Austria you didn't buy a house except if you were very wealthy, you rented a flat. Now, I know that I was born...I had a brother who was two years older, and I am the second child, and I know I was born already in their second flat. I can't remember now where the first flat was, but I know exactly where I was born, because I have seen that house, and one moved from one flat to another.

But is that the home that has the greatest part of your memory, that particular home?

No, no, because...no, when I was seven my second brother was born, and then we moved to another district in Vienna, and there, from there then to the flat from where I married. No, so the last flat is the one I lived in longest, that was a very nice flat in a beautiful old house, a Burger house, which I still think very beautiful, very plain and very simple, very old fashioned, and with large rooms. Quite near the famous 'Eislaufverein' where you went skating, and in summer...it's now near the concert hall, the main concert hall in Vienna. And that was a very happy time I lived there, that's when I went to school, and from there to the Lyzeum, the secondary school, and that is where I really remember; the other things were...I was a small child, so I don't remember the other places. I only know that we had been there.

Yes. So you lived in this...but the home that you remember, this Burger house...

Until I married.

Until you married. So you moved there when you were what, about seven or eight?

Yes, I must have been seven...no, perhaps...oh no, wait a second. Yes, I must have been eight, because I still went to the elementary school from there. Yes, eight, round about eight.

And you married...?

And I married when I was twenty-four.

So you were there a very long time. Can you describe the house? Was it a house or an apartment, sorry?

It was a flat, you didn't have houses, except if you were...

Can you describe it?

Well, it was what I call...it was an eighteenth century house, that means low, it only had three stories, it wasn't a high built house. It had a large inside courtyard, with a pump, where you had your own water for a while. It had a coffee house in one part of the...not basement, the first...it was on the floor, on the level of the 'trottoir', of the footpath. You had a little garden there, a tiny garden for the coffee house, and there were very few people in it, large flats. Very shallow, wide steps, with a lovely round staircase overlooking the courtyard. And a very pleasant and quiet house, except for the coffee house which in the evening was sometimes quite noisy; if you had your windows open the people sat outside and had a jolly time, but otherwise it was a quiet house, and...

How many bedrooms? How many rooms?

Oh well we each had...the parents had a bedroom, and each brother, we had three other bedrooms, and then there was a dining room and a drawing room, and a library or living room, and two maids' rooms, and a kitchen and a bathroom, and two ante-rooms, and loos - it was a large flat. After all we were quite a lot of people.

On...?

On the first floor of that building, yes.

On the first floor.

Yes.

And presumably you don't remember the landlord for example, or do you?

No, I don't remember the landlord; I remember it was sold to some other people later on when I think I was married already, or wasn't taking any notice. And, no, I can't, but I remember some of the people who lived there, but I can't remember a landlord, no.

And, do you remember how the house was furnished, what sort of coverings you had on the walls and this sort of thing?

Oh yes, I can remember that, but is that of any interest?

Yes, tell me, it's all very interesting.

I think it was furnished by my mother's parents. I don't think my father...my father was...I think he chose the library, and his desk, but otherwise it was all done by my mother's side as far as I know. It was, what we would call in Austria, 'gutbürgerlich': very solid and very well done, and lovely curtains which never...you could never throw them away because they were so well made. I found them horrible and boring (LAUGHS) but that's got nothing to do with it. It was a very well adjusted flat. And there was everything one wanted in it, and the drawing room had two big windows overlooking the garden of a palace of the Crown Princes. It was a lovely...it was a very lovely flat, and mainly what interested us children was, that it was near the skating rink and tennis courts, and near the big park. And what was more interesting for my father, it was quite near one of the famous stations of the so-called underground, which wasn't really underground, the 'Stadtbahn', because his factory was in a suburb called Meidling, quite near Schönbrunn where the castle was, and he took the.....

End of F892, Side A

Track 2 (Tape F892, Side B)

Yes well my father went to that factory where they made very elaborate...plain and elaborate coffins, for not only the Jewish, but also for the town...the town council's funeral services. So he had both, he did the Christian and the Jewish departments. And very often, which interested us children, he also had to make the 'over coffins' for people's bodies which were sent back from abroad. And we found that fascinating; my mother didn't want to hear anything at all about it, father didn't talk about it either, but we asked lots of questions, my brother Fritz and I, because we found that was very interesting.

Now, you were talking about this beautiful home which you remember from the age of seven, and the staff you had, you had two maids I think you said.

We had three maids. We had a cook, a housemaid, and a parlourmaid. And that was the normal way Jewish - also Christian, it had nothing to do with Jewishness - the normal way these bourgeois people lived. My mother couldn't cook, my mother didn't go into the kitchen except to see what there was, and she did not do any washing up or any housework at all.

Or shopping?

She did some shopping, but the main shopping, cook did; the same was in my own household in Prague, which I think rather awful now, but that was the normal thing to do.

Did you have a governess or a nanny, as well?

Yes, we had governesses, yes, and I remember having two very nice governesses, one after the other. And I felt really closer to my governesses than to my mother, because she...especially when I was bigger, it was the governess who shared my interests and who supervised what I did for school. I was a very good student, I had no difficulties at school at all, and had plenty of time for other things because of that perhaps, and it was the governess who had more influence on me than my mother. It was my father and my governess really. But it was Mother who decided dentists, doctors, clothes, and all the relevant things, whereas let's say the soul was looked after by Father (LAUGHS) and the governess.

And did the governess live in the...

Yes, she lived in. We had a governess's... And then don't forget I was only seven when my youngest brother was born, and there was a governess and a nurse. And when the nurse left, then the governess took over the nursery, and to my horror at the time my elder brother, who was two years older than I and already went to Gymnasium, was put...I was to share the nursery, and he was the big one. And up to then we had been chums, and from then onwards I had to be reduced to the baby. And I still resent that now, because, that's how...unfortunately my brother and I stopped being good friends then; he was taken out of my life, and he was a bad scholar, and had difficulties with learning, and this wasn't very happy at home then.

This was your younger brother?

My elder brother. My younger brother was highly intelligent and made no difficulties at all. But my elder brother, who was my...you see my father, who was so academically influenced, and wanted that...he wanted his eldest son to be the same, and his eldest son was anything but. He would have preferred football, and sports, and wouldn't learn. And so that poor boy had tutors in the house the whole afternoon when he came home from school. He had a very bad life in this respect; I pitied him. And my father was upset that Fritz, the beautiful big boy, wouldn't learn and wouldn't share his interests, whereas the little girl did. And that's the difficulty.

Again back to the Jewish bit, was there a Mezzuzot on the door?

There was...I had the rabbi at home; my elder brother who went to the very difficult Gymnasium, one of the strictest Gymnasiums in Vienna, which was wrong to send him to that, and he had difficulties not only with Greek and Latin, but also with Hebrew, so I remember there was a tutor for Greek and Latin, a tutor for mathematics, and a tutor for Hebrew. Nowadays you would think my father was mad,

but that is what one did. So I remember there was a man called Mr. Lemberger who came and taught Fritz Hebrew. I don't know what that was, because I learnt my Shema and two or three other prayers easily, and didn't know what I was doing, and that was that. And whereas in my Lyzeum later on, we had a delightful young rabbi called Mr. Kupfer, and as we were only three Jewish girls in a class of eighteen, we had extra lessons with him, which were very good, because he found out it is no good telling us to say the Shema, but he read the Bible with us. And that is when my interests in the Bible started, and I will always be grateful for that. He stopped being a teacher of religion, but gave us the Bible, which to my mind is much more important than learning the Shema or what other thing by heart, and not knowing what you are talking about.

Now did you have Mezzuzots on the door at home?

Nothing.

Were the boys Bar Mitzvah?

Nothing.

Nothing like that.

Nothing at all.

No Confirmation?

Nothing at all. And if you want to hear another peculiar thing, this nurse for my younger brother, she was...she then became a nun, and was a great friend of ours, she tried to make me Catholic, and as I was six I was...and she told me all the stories of the New Testament, I then had these Hebrew lessons by Mr. Fischer, sitting under a little altar with the Madonna of Lourdes, and the...what do you call the...and a rosary, which Millie the nurse had given me as a birthday present. And my father...my mother wasn't interested, or perhaps she was and I don't know about it, but my father saw that and didn't say a word. And later on, when I understood what was going on, I was amazed, and I still am amazed. This is the background. There I was sitting in my own nursery, under this Madonna of Lourdes, and Mr. Fischer teaching me the Hebrew Shema. This is one of the pictures of my youth.

What sort of discipline was there in your house?

There was strict discipline. You mean in getting up and eating, or washing, or what...

Behaving yourselves...

Behaving ourselves. Oh, I had a very strict mother, and the governesses were strict, and washing, and, oh, and neatly dressed, and the right blouse on the right day. Oh yes, and the boys.

And your father?

My father was not quite as strict; he didn't take that very seriously. But there was Mother to play out everything for him: I don't think my father thought very much about that. It was Mother who was the realist, and who ran a marvellous household, with excellent cooking and all that. Although she couldn't cook herself, she could run a marvellous household.

Did you ever go to synagogue as young children?

Yes, we went to weddings, to two weddings of my aunts, and that was all the synagogue I ever had in my childhood, never anything else.

But they taught you Hebrew, they made certain that you learnt some Hebrew?

That was for what...I don't know whether you know that, but in Austrian schools you did not say the Jewish...you called it 'Mosaisch' faith, and in my certificates, school certificates, it said born on so-and-

so, and then Faith: 'Mosaisch'. And later on, when I tried to go into the academy for art in Vienna, and I produced my certificate of Matriculation, there was, at the top, Faith: 'Mosaisch', and when the director of the academy saw that, he looked at me and he said, "I've seen your drawings, I would like to take you on, but it would be better if you would be Catholic by the autumn, then you would have a chance to be taken on in the first year". Now that was the first and only time I personally had anything to do with anti-Semitism to my face.

And how old were you at this time?

Twenty-one.

Changing the subject for a moment, where would you go, presumably with the family, on holidays?

Now, or when?

When you were young?

When we were...into the Austrian Alps. We would go either to Altaussee or we would go to the Tyrols [sic], or anywhere like that. Oh, Altaussee, A-L-T A-U-S-S-E-E. And, the Tyrols or anywhere like that. And my grandparents, the one, my grandfathers and my mother's parents, they had a lovely villa in Baden, near Vienna, in a spa near Vienna, and when we were small we always went, we rented a house there, near my grandparents, and so we could be in their garden and be together with the grandparents. And there I have memories, I still know exactly where it was, and what it looks like; I remembered the house, I was there a few years ago, and found it. So, I have good memories of that.

So all the staff used to go with you, your governess and the maids and the cook?

Not all of them, no. Well, when we rented a flat of a house...well, in Aussee we lived in a hotel, or in a pension, where only one maid came and the governess; the governess and one maid came to help my mother. And now you would laugh about all these things, but when you rented a flat with a kitchen, you had a cook as well, yes, yes.

How did you used to travel in those days Lily?

Well to Baden we had a train from Vienna, that was quite easy, it took you half an hour by train. And always by train, you went by train to the Tyrols or to the Salzkammergut, you went by train of course. But you had big trunks full of things, because there were porters. And of course we children had nothing much to do with that, because that was organised by my mother, and worked by the slaves! (LAUGHS)

Did you have a carriage of your own?

Not we; my grandparents had a carriage, yes, but not we, we had no carriage, no, no.

Do you remember much of your grandparents? Would you talk to them?

Yes, I remember very much of the grandparents, especially when they were in Baden, in their villa.

This is your mother's parents?

That's my mother's. I didn't know my father's parents, I never met them, they were dead before I was born. My grandparents are always only my mother's side. Oh yes, I remember them well. I loved my grandmother dearly, my grandfather was charming and played the piano beautifully, but he was...he tickled us, but he wasn't...I didn't love him as much as my grandmother. He made fun I think - I don't know, I have no real... I know he was strict, and when I learnt the piano I had to play piano to him at Christmas, and he usually walked out because he hated my piano, and that offended me and hurt me.

You mention Christmas.

Yes. Christmas.

Now, that was a holiday that you would keep in your household?

Yes, my father said, "Either you have Christmas, or you have Chanukah. We are not a family where we have both." Now that will show you what it was like in Vienna. And my father had his principles, and he said, "No, either you have Christmas like all your school friends have, or you have Chanukah. But if you have Christmas you go to school on the Jewish holidays." And this is what we did.

And the same goes for any of the other festivals? You would keep the Easter, but you wouldn't keep Passover?

That's right. I never had any Passover, nothing, ever, at home. Never. It was Christmas, with a Christmas tree, and my own little Christmas tree.

And carols?

No, that didn't exist in our...yes, you had, but that wasn't...no. It's not like here that you have carols coming to the house, that did not exist. But I know these beloved grandparents of mine - especially my grandmother, she took me to the Christmas market, which was lovely, it's one of the best memories I have of Vienna, where I was allowed to buy my own little Christmas tree and the decorations, for my own dolls and my own room, which I adored, whereas the Christmas tree in the drawing room my mother did. So I had my own. But Christmas was Christmas. But of course...which was rather foolish, because you didn't do anything about Christ's birth, which is, either/or to my mind. But that's...mind only came later. This did not...at the time we were delighted, and then we were invited to our school friends, where there was Christmas, as my school friends, especially as long as I was in the lower, in the elementary school, they were all Christian, there was not a Jewish child in my background.

Until you went to the Lyzeum?

Until I went to the secondary school, then there were Jews too, but very few. My friends were not Jewish. This is perhaps also an astonishing thing, which my father remarked on with astonishment. Because that I remember, because I was amazed that he would be astonished. That is a peculiar thing perhaps; he was astonished with a smile. And my friends in elementary school were the daughters of generals. Perhaps it was because we lived in that district, and the girls were on my school...we went together to and from school; I don't know, but that is what it was. And later on then, when I went to the secondary school, which was much further away, it was again, two non Jewish girls who remained my friends till they...one is perhaps still alive in Mexico, and the other one died during the Hitler time in Vienna, but died of consumption, of a lung disease. And we remained friends all our lives.

How old were you when you first went to school Lily?

When I first went to school I think I must have been six-and-a-half or sevenish. Because the first class I had at home; I had a teacher at home but I can't remember that at all.

Do you remember the attitude of the teachers to you?

Yes. I always had very nice teachers, and very delightful. And, I had with two other girls a crush of the mathematic teacher; she was a fat woman with reddish hair. There was no anti-Semitism in the schools at all. On the other hand, the secondary school was a sort of half private...we called it Lyzeum, it was...you did not have...you had very good teachers, but no Latin and no Greek. Instead you had German of course, English and French, and Mathematics, Chemistry, Geography, History, all that. But you did not have Latin and Greek, like in a Gymnasium, whereas in a Lyzeum for girls only, you did not have that; which, afterwards I resented, or was sorry about, because I would have wanted to study medicine, and couldn't because I had no Greek and Latin. I would have had to, as a grown-up girl already who was seventeen, I would have had to learn that to be able to pass the entrance examination for university, and that I didn't do.

So, you went to the first school you were at...

Until I was nine.

And then went to the secondary...

Then I went to the secondary school, which was called 'Lyzeum', a lycée.

And you were there...

There I was six years. And then I took the lycée Matriculation for English and French and German, History, Geography, Chemistry and Mathematics of course, yes, Geometry.

And what happened then, in your school...

Then the school was over. The school was over, and then you had to either...then I wanted to go, as I tell you, to university, which was not possible, because my father did not want me to sit at home and study. My father, with all these delightful qualities, had the old-fashioned idea, a girl must be able to sew and cook. Consequently my time had to be divided into sewing and cooking at schools. And besides he wanted that girl to have read Faust and Shakespeare and all that, and so I had to go to a private teacher - mind you, he was Jewish - and there I went three years to become a higher educated girl. And that's what happened. And during that time I was with Mr. Samek. I went twice...

Samek was who?

Samek. Well that was the Jewish elderly gentleman who had the private classes of eight or ten girls, to teach them German History, and Literature, and...higher knowledge, whatever you want; Art, History of Art.

This was what period?

That was a sort of a finishing school, that's the word.

This is after you had matriculated?

That's after I had taken Matriculation. That is what my father insisted on, instead of allowing me to learn Greek and Latin and go to university. But as Father was the one who said what I am to do, I had to go privately, behind his back, to take my examination for the art school, because he said he does not want a daughter who does nothing but paint. And as this daughter wanted to paint, and draw, I had to do that behind his back. But as I was by then over twenty, I did it. And then he was very proud of me, that I got into the academy. But before that he wouldn't.

We'll come back to that one later, but in the meantime, can I also talk about the schooling that your brothers went through at the time. First of all, the school you went to were all for girls were they? Only young ladies.

That was only girls, only girls, yes.

And the boys went to...

Only boys Gymnasium, yes; they went to the same school, one after the other.

And the schooling there was very similar to the schooling you had?

Oh much more difficult, and they had Greek and Latin on top of everything else, yes. And they had to then either...you see, when you went to...at the Gymnasium, you had either Real-gymnasium, that means you had more mathematics and chemistry, and no Greek, or, like my father, because of my father's infatuation with Homer and so on, had to go to a full Gymnasium where you had Greek and Latin instead of Real, real things. And you could for instance, if you had the Gymnasium like my brother's, you could not go and take architecture in a technical school, because you didn't have the

mathematical background. It was quite difficult, and I don't think...I don't know, but I don't think my brothers had much say, or choice. It was Father. I think so, I can't tell you that.

But they went into the...

They went to the Akademische Gymnasium, that is Greek and Latin. And my elder brother did not succeed; he did take the Matriculation because of the First World War, because he was just taking the eighth form, the top form, for Matriculation when the world war broke, started, and to be able to become an officer, you had to have Matriculation. And they managed that...they managed his Matriculation easily so that those boys of those good schools could become officers. 'Einjährig Freiwilliger'; yes, 'einjährig', that means one year's volunteer...you had to have a Matriculation so that you could be taught in one year to become an officer. Is that the right explanation?

Yes.

And that is what happened to my elder brother.

The younger one of course was too young.

He was too young, he was too young.

Did the boys, to your knowledge, ever talk about anti-Semitism that they'd met at school?

Yes. My elder brother not, he did not have any anti-Semitism at the time, although he had these (or at least I don't know about it) although he had this funny Mr. Lemberger who came to teach him the Shema; what else he taught him I don't know. And I don't think...at least it was never mentioned, I don't know. But my younger brother, which was after the First World War of course, he had a lot of it, and he then, unfortunately, after his Matriculation he wanted to go to the Bodenkultur, that is the college for...agrarians, would you say that? For the highest...to become a farmer.

An agricultural school.

Agriculture. And there he was kicked down the stairs, out. He looked...now there's again something which is remarkable: my elder brother and I, as you see, I don't look Jewish. This is...has a lot...that helps a lot, or whatever you would call it, help, or the other way round, whereas my younger brother looked very Jewish. You looked at him and you knew he was a dark-eyed, dark, rather fattish little Jew, whereas my elder brother and I did not. So when we went to our parties, nobody knew we were Jews. We were called Heller, which was an Austrian name for Jews and non Jews; there was no difference, if you were called Heller, nobody would think you were Jewish. So that also...not that I ever hid it, because I went...I had my Jewish...I didn't go to the Catholic...see my friends in the elementary school, those two girls of the generals, they knew I was Jewish, so did their parents. I didn't go the Catholic religion lesson, I didn't go to church with the school. So there was no hiding. But it wasn't mentioned. It wasn't interesting.

But your younger brother experienced it?

My younger brother...and besides, there was already very much more anti-Semitism at that time.

This is after the First World War?

After the First...that is when I went to try and get into the academy of arts, and the director, Professor Jetmar, a wonderful man, looked at me and said, "I wish you would go and become Catholic before you have your entrance examination, because your drawings are good enough for you to enter."

What happened then?

I didn't. There was a...they had a branch of the academy for girls only, which didn't have the top thing, it was in a small...it wasn't in the big building of the royal academy, it was in a private house, and I went there, where nobody asked whether you were Jewish or not. So I went for two years there, three

years there, and had...I had...this is just the idiotic thing about it, I had my lectures, the lectures on history of art, of style, of anatomy for the arts, at the academy, with the others, but the drawing and painting, I had to go to the other school. Now, I ask you, where's the sense in that?

Now you had to go to the other school because you were Jewish?

Because I was Jewish, because the director, Jetmar, said, "I don't think you have a chance, we are only allowed three Jewish people in our first class of twenty...the first class of the academy (there are four classes). The first takes twenty pupils, and we are only allowed a 'numerus clausus' of three - like here in Rugby, or wherever it was, we have that here too. And, "I am afraid you have more chance if you are Catholic, then you needn't be one of the three." And he was very nice about it, to tell me that. And he gave me...he told me about that branch in that private house; I didn't know about it, that was new. It was he who said you might go there. But all the.....

End of F892, Side B

Track 3 (Tape F893, Side A)

...to the lesson.

The lessons. All the theoretical lessons were in the big building of the Royal Academy, and the painting and the drawing was at that little branch in the private house. And I thought that quite ridiculous, but that's how it was done.

It's amazing.

Amazing. And anatomy even we had at the big hospital, together with the others, they were not contaminated by the three Jewish girls who were there. (LAUGHING)

So it was only the drawing class?

Only the drawing class and painting were in that branch.

Coming back to your home life, how did you used to spend your evenings?

Well, don't forget there was the First World War. They were forced to have acetylene lamps; you had no electricity, it was cut off in Vienna. So you had one lamp, which my mother looked after because she was...had cleverer fingers than my father, and we all sat in the dining room, and read books, or talked a bit. One went to bed pretty early, because you had no light.

Because you were what, fourteen when the War broke out? No, sixteen.

I was sixteen. In the year 1915 I took my Matriculation, so I was sixteen and seventeen, and so, although, during those war years we young girls had quite a lot of fun as well, it wasn't all misery, not at all. But of course it was...our brothers and friends were in the forces, and one was worried, and my mother worried because my elder brother was in the army, he was in the artillery, and was then taken prisoner of war and came back very late. And it was partly miserable, but partly, because you were young, you also had quite some fun in one's life. And I had the...this school, and teaching, and lots interests in life, so I can't really complain about that. But we were badly fed.

I was going to say, was food short? Food was short?

Yes, very difficult, yes. Food was short, yes.

But it was your elder brother who was in the army?

That was my elder brother, yes.

The younger one was still at school.

My younger brother was going to school, yes.

But, were you affected by the war, apart from the lighting and the shortage of food? Do you remember the War to any extent?

Yes, I remember it of course, because one waited for news from one's brothers and friends, and you followed the war like one did afterwards with little flags, and one was of course...I don't know 'one', I was certainly very patriotic, and I had my English cousin was younger so we were glad he wasn't in the British Army against my brother Fritz, and on the other hand I had another cousin in Belgium, and he was, thank goodness, also younger. But we would have had cousins against us. And my mother was very much aware of that, that they were the children of her family, and we knew all about all that. I of course was very monarchistic, and Hapsburg and all that. And of course we children, or youngsters, we wished for the Austrians to win. But there you are, I mean, we couldn't really do very much about that. And then of course, when it got worse and worse, and my brother Fritz was then...came from the

Russian front, he came to the Dolomites, and then at the end, on the day of the Armistice, he was taken prisoner of war...

By the Russians?

By the Italians.

Oh.

Although they had been friends of Austria, they jumped over to the allies, and so there you are. They took then all these people, these youngsters, and the army of the Dolomites; they got hold of them. And later on, when I went and walked to the Dolomites, I found all these places of course. And so Fritz was taken prisoner of war, and was in Caserta near Naples, and only came back in, I think in January of the next year. I mean I think the end...the War stopped at the end of '18.

November '18.

And he came back in, I think February '19, or something like that.

So how long was he a prisoner of war?

Many months.

Was your father in the army?

No. No, my father wasn't.

Was there any reason why he wasn't in the army?

I think because...I'm not sure, but I think because coffins had to be made. And I think because that was a supply which had to go on running properly, that was the reason. But I don't really know, whether his age group would have still been called up, I don't know that; that I can't remember.

We talked about your parents, and your grandparents. What about your aunts and uncles, did you have much to do with them?

Oh yes, it was a family...yes.

Was it a close family?

Close family. My mother's side. And also my father's side, but they lived in Prague, and so I didn't see them very often. In the summer holidays, in Altaussee, I met my father's sisters, there we were together with my father's sisters and their families. But in Vienna of course I only had my mother's side, and there I was...my parents went every Sunday, one met at my grandparents, and later on after the death of my grandfather it was at my mother's, and that was...every Sunday belonged to the family. But we children didn't always take part; when we were grown up or big we had our own circles and we didn't really mix so much with aunts. There were cousins.

Did you have any close cousins?

I had cousins, yes.

Were they close?

But we were always the eldest; my brother Fritz and I were so much older. Because my...the next cousins were in England, and...because my mother's younger sister, a year younger than my mother, she married to England, and had the three children here, and we met them in summer holidays, when they were smaller, and also later on when they were teenagers still. I remember learning to play cricket

on the Semmering; my cousin Francis insisted on my learning to play cricket. So that is quite a funny thing too.

Where did you learn to play cricket? On the...

On the Semmering. That is in the mountains near Vienna, Semmering, S-E-M-M-E-R-I-N-G, Semmering. We had a summer holiday there and he bought his cricket things along and I had to learn cricket; I never did understand it at all, and don't yet either.

Did you ever visit England?

With my husband, in the year 1927.

Ah, that's a bit later.

Yes.

But not as a child?

Not as a child.

And your parents...

Neither, no.

They didn't either?

My English family came to Austria. Because my auntie Lily said that's the only place where she gets the good food, and lovely air. So there you are. And I never could understand it, I always wanted to go to Scotland for my summer holidays, but I never did.

In fact you never, as a child and a teenager, you never moved outside Austria?

Austria, no. Yes, in the year 1913, we were for a month on the island of Binz [Rügen] in the Baltic; that was near Stettin, what is it called now? It is called quite...

I know what you mean, anyway, yes.

Yes. I don't know what it's called now, Stettin. That was a Baltic island...

This is part of Poland, Stettin, now, isn't it?

That's right, yes. And, that's where we spent a month, with the parents and my two brothers, and a governess of course.

So, to revert to the First World War, your cousins and your aunts and uncles, were they involved in the War?

Let me try and remember. I don't think they were, to tell you the truth, I don't think they were. There were other cousins from my mother's side, but they were not...I was never on very...didn't know them really, they were in the army, they were older. You see, my brother was the youngest at the time, he was just eighteen when he joined the army, the artillery, the cavalry.

Did he become an officer?

He became an officer, yes, yes. Yes, he was then...what did they call them, Oberleutnant, he was Oberleutnant when he demobbed then, yes; after he had been taken prisoner, yes, he became an officer.

So, but you'd stayed in the same building, the same apartment, throughout the War?

Throughout the War.

And you still had the staff during that period?

Yes, but reduced I believe, I think so; there were only two maids at the time, yes. A cook and one house maid I think, and somebody to help perhaps, but to tell you the truth I really don't remember that.

Did you still have holidays during the War?

Yes, well, during the War I was at the academy, and before that I had these private lessons. And so you had holidays, yes, you went...

You used to go away, to the mountains?

We went to the Altaussee, yes, we did, we went away.

So it didn't really affect you, apart from the privations you've mentioned.

The privations, and the anxiety about the boys, yes. And knowing what was happening on the front, and that, in Galicia...after all the Austrian Empire was completely demolished at the end, which was rather awful, for somebody who was very Austrian at heart. I mean, the idea that the Czechs broke away, and the Hungarians broke away, and Galicia and Poland was taken away, and Bukovina, all that now, I hear about that, and from my schooldays and memories I know that it was all Hapsburg. Which is quite a thing, because I am so old.

It was a big empire.

It was a big empire. Which people here perhaps don't quite realise. Dalmatia, if I see what's going on in Yugoslavia...yes.

Now, when you were at school, or at the academy, did your parents come to school and discuss your progress with the teachers?

No.

Never?

Never, no. There I was...after all I was quite grown-up, and there, no parent was called...it wasn't like at school where you had talks with the teachers, you didn't have that at the academy. You had artists who taught you to paint or draw, and then you went to these lectures; you weren't really...it wasn't a school, it was after all...you had a workshop, a studio, where you had models, and then you had examinations, and anatomy, and whatever. I remember I only had one, and then I got engaged, and that stopped, alas: I must say, in this respect alas. Because on the day of my examination for anatomy, my husband had bought a house in Prague, and I had to go and sign the document, what do you call that, the...

Lease?

Not lease, he bought it, and I had to sign...

The deeds...the title deeds?

The deeds. And I said I couldn't come because that is the day of the examination. He said, "You don't need that any more. And we must have that house, otherwise it is going to be snapped up by somebody else."

Now when would this have been?

That was in the year 1922. That was in spring 1922.

When you got engaged in fact?

Yes.

Was there ever any contact with, discussion about, Zionism? Either in your school days, or at home, or anywhere?

Only when I was married. Why? Because, my father-in-law had...he inherited from his father and his grandfather, some alcohol factory in Czechoslovakia, which grew; they made spirit, pure spirit for industry and for hospitals, and yeast. And my father-in-law was one of those entrepreneurs who, when the Jews in Austria got liberated, started to enlarge the business, and bought up factory bits, and a house in Carinthia in Austria, and in Yugoslavia, in Bosnia, and made branches there, which grew. And in the Yugoslav branch, the son of a former director of the Austrian office was put in charge as a sort of Prince of Wales, as a...because the father was so good, Robert was trained to be the director of the Yugoslav department. And this chap, who later on became my son-in-law, was a Zionist.

This was your first contact with Zionism?

Well I knew about Herzl; my father told us about Herzl. But that was about all. I couldn't understand the reason why Herzl should want to...that was quite beyond my conception, I couldn't understand it. And Robert, whom I met when...the year my daughter was born in Prague, Robert came to us to Prague, already as a very young man, in charge of that branch in Yugoslavia, to look at the balance sheets and discuss things with my husband. And that was the first time that I had the chance to speak to a young man, intelligent young man, about Zionism. That was the first time. And I argued madly against it. I was horrified at the idea.

Now when would this have been?

That was in the year...'24.

1924. Now you say he became your son-in-law?

Yes. But only much later. He was married then, and then he divorced, and then after the War he came to us to...that is a long story, but is a very involved story, and my daughter and he fell in love in Klagenfurt while I broke my leg, and they got married there.

We'll follow that some other time.

That's a long story. That's quite another time. Can't be interesting for the archives. (BREAK IN RECORDING)

Do you have any memories, interesting memories, of your neighbours, at home?

Of my neighbours? I have astonishing memories of before we lived in that house where I lived such a long time, but when my younger brother was born, we lived in a very pretty flat in another district. And on top of us there was the famous singer of the Austrian opera, very...Kurz was her name, Mrs. Kurz, K-U-R-Z. She was very famous; she was a soprano.

What was her name?

Kurz.

What was her first name?

Her first name?

Doesn't matter.

At the moment I can't remember. It'll come perhaps. Perhaps another time. And my father adored her, because she sang beautifully. And my...it's quite uninteresting really, my brother...my father sent her flowers for Christmas, and my brother had to carry them up, as a Christmas gift, and so she sang then. And we heard her voice down from one floor above us. That's one memory. And then, I have another memory, here is a house called 'Schiff'.

Otto Schiff?

Otto Schiff. They had relatives in Vienna; they lived opposite us in a lovely little house, their own house, not in a flat but in their own house. And the children, one of the ladies I met here a few years ago, they had an English governess, and they always were taken for a walk with white gloves on, and I can still see them walking along with that English governess, and I was always told off because I didn't walk as straight as the Schiff girls, with their white gloves. And I met this Mrs. Schiff...I don't know her name now, some years ago at the seventieth birthday party here in Richmond. Also one of the miracles. I don't know, I can't tell you more about them. I knew them later on also from parties, but that's all I know about them.

Do you remember any instances of relationships with your friends, with your...any little instances that come to your mind, of very close friendships, or...hostilities, or anything of that sort?

Yes, well, when I was in the lycée from my eleventh year onwards, those friends as I told you remained my friends till their death; that's to say I don't even know whether one died yet. They were...the one was the great-niece of the famous Director of the Vienna 'Burg Theater', the Burg Theatre, Schreyvogel; that is for Austria a very interesting name, Schreyvogel, he was...that was a great uncle of hers. He was Director of that famous theatre at the time of Grillparzer, of the poet Grillparzer of Austria. [Can you spell that? Oh, I suppose so.] And with her I was great friends, and I think I told you that she died of consumption during the War.

Oh yes.

And the other one was the daughter of an Austrian Navy officer. He was in the administration of the Austrian Navy in Pola, now it is Pula, which is perhaps quite interesting. And, there were two daughters and two sons; both sons were Navy officers, and during the world war, when all the Austrian Navy officers, when they came on holiday, they used to have to come to Mr. Garbe to...they had to report to him, when they came and when they left, and leave their papers with him or something. And all these young men were then introduced to his daughters and to me, and that was great fun of course. And so I had, during the War, a lot of connections with the Austrian Navy (LAUGHS) which is perhaps quite an astonishing thing. I know of the centre, all of the Navy battles of the First World War, which were quite interesting, and I knew about that too. Not only did I have friends and a brother in the army, but I had friends in the Austrian Navy, which is, after all, a rare thing, because there wasn't very much navy in the Adriatic. But this is my peculiar mixture of friends.

Your parents died before...

My father died when Hitler was in Vienna already. That was a very tragic affair. My father, because of his ideals, could never grasp the atrocity of the Hitler regime. He would not move. He was one of those people who said, "I am an old man, nothing will happen to me." He had a sister in Prague who was three years older than he, she was exactly the same. She died, I must say nearly under my hands, in Theresienstadt. She was one of those people who just would not believe what happened. And, although I saw everything very clearly, already before it really happened, I could not do anything about changing their character and their mind. Now my father was in Vienna, and I was in Prague. And I couldn't even go to his funeral, because it was impossible to leave Prague and my husband, and try to go to Vienna at the time, which I now am very sad about, because I had to leave my mother to do everything. At the time I was so upset with my husband's illness, and my children going away, that it did not worry me so much. But now, in hindsight, my poor mother must have had a dreadful time. And my mother was also one of the miracles of the life, somehow saved. When she came back from the funeral she was kidnapped, and we do not know by whom, and taken to the Jewish Hospital, and

hidden there for two or three days. In the meanwhile, her flat in that house which we talked about had been reconstructed, or changed, and she had lodgers there, Jewish lodgers. And then, she had to leave that flat and go into one room in the 2nd Arrondissement in Vienna where all the Jews were concentrated. All that happened, and I only heard about it through letters, or through a friend, and later on; it must have been a dreadful time for her. But, there was nothing I could do, and I didn't even think of doing anything at the time. She was...she thinks, we think that it was her gentile solicitor who organised that kidnap, otherwise she would have been taken straight to the meeting, where they collected all the Jews to send them to Theresienstadt.

Umschlagplatz.

Yes. She would have been taken there. She was kidnapped and taken to that hospital, and told that she had a very bad heart disease. She never really knew, but we suspect it was her solicitor, who was a good friend.

I think, perhaps we can come back to this later on. We've jumped again. Because I was really...we were talking about funerals and things. We talked about your father, but even your grandparents, they did not live to see the Anschluss, they had died earlier?

No. They had died earlier, yes, they had died.

And do you remember their deaths, and how you felt about them?

Yes, I remember...yes, I remember my grandfather's death, because my grandmother then had to leave that big flat and moved into a smaller flat. I remember that, but...it's just the outside I remember, because poor Grandmother had to then go into a smaller flat; I thought that was dreadful, but it wasn't really. And my grandfather - that's when he died, and she died in that little flat, a very normal death, of a heart disease...

This would have been when you were still at school, or later, when you were at the academy?

When I was...the first...yes, Grandfather died when I was twelve or thirteen, and Grandmother died when I was married already, when I was in Prague. And I came to her funeral, and a few months later my mother--in-law died, in the same year that was, in the year...must I tell you? I don't know now.

Doesn't matter.

It doesn't matter. They were both seventy, so they were youngsters compared to me now.

Right.

Yes, they were both seventy, and we thought they were very old women! Yes.

We talked about your marriage, yet we haven't even discussed how you met your husband, who he was, what his background was and so on. Can we talk about that?

Yes. Well, my husband, as I told you, his great grandfather had a little alcohol press, or factory, in a place in north of Bohemia, I can't remember the name now. And then, his son, Miskowitz [Myslkovice] - the word Miskowitz [near Sobieslau (Sobeslav)], there was the first factory, but I can't tell you where Miskowitz was, I never was there. And there they opened a factory here, and a partner called Braun, in Tabor in Czechoslovakia, and in Prague. And from there they then enlarged and bought a small factory in Carinthia, where that lovely chest comes from, and one in Yugoslavia, where I have never been, alas, I always wanted to but I never got there. And, so that was a wealthy family, who settled and put down their roots in the countryside of Austria. Let's say that.

And how did you come to meet your husband?

How did I meet him? His elder brother married a cousin of mine in Prague many years earlier, and his mother lived in Vienna, had a very nice house in Vienna, and I was invited as the little cousin of the

other one, to my mother-in-law; and he was great friends with that cousin of Vienna, with her sister in Prague, and when I went to visit my family in Prague, and to make portraits of the children in this sanguine crayon, I met him there quite often, and that is when he thought I would be the right wife for him.

Now, you were how old at this time?

I was twenty-four nearly.

And he was.....

End of F893, Side A

Track 4 (Tape F893, Side B)

Well he lived in Prague. You see, when my father-in-law arranged for these branches to be opened in Austria, the main office was in Prague, and then they moved to Vienna, because that was the middle, between Bohemia, Yugoslavia and Austria, so they had their offices in Vienna, and the elder brother was moved to Vienna, and the younger brother, who wasn't married, stayed in Prague. So my husband was nine years younger than his brother, and he learnt Czech, whereas my brother-in-law did not speak Czech, only German. And my husband, who was not married, and was better at learning, he learnt Czech, and so he ran the office in Prague. And that's when I met him, when I stayed with my cousin there, to make the drawings of her children. And that's how we met.

And he decided you would be...

He decided I'm the right person, and...

Did you decide? Or didn't you have a say?

Well I thought it was a good idea! (LAUGHING) So he came then to Vienna every Saturday, and we went for walks, and then in June or whenever it was we got engaged.

So, you were engaged quite quickly?

Yes.

But how long were you engaged for? A long time?

No no, we married then in July.

In the July?

Yes.

Of 19...?

1922.

And you mentioned you actually married in a synagogue.

We married...(LAUGHS)...no, we married in my parents' drawing room, but with a rabbi.

And a Chupah?

And a Chupah. And we had to put up the Chupah ourselves, because it was a Saturday, and we wanted to be...my husband wanted to be married on Sunday, because of his holidays. So he came from Prague to Vienna on Saturday night, to stay with his mother. And my brother Fritz and I put up the Chupah, because the Jewish chap who was to put it up couldn't do it on a Saturday evening. And when the rabbi came in the morning, the Hebrew on the Chupah wasn't the right side, it was wrong, so we had to re-do it in the morning. This is also a funny thing perhaps. But it was a very nice and pleasant little ceremony. We had visited the rabbi a few weeks before, his name was Abeles, and he was of our Arrondissement, where we lived, and he was exceptionally pleasant and nice, and didn't mind this way of how it was in our house. And so we had this ceremony in the morning, and then we had a set lunch, and afterwards people came and looked at the presents and so on. The rabbi had lunch with us I think, as far as I remember. Extremely pleasant and nice, and that's all I can tell you. And as I had very few Jewish friends, and more gentile friends, it was quite a funny thing really. And then we went...

But was there any family that came to this...

It was family and my friends.

Your non Jewish friends, most of them?

My non Jewish friends, yes. Of course we were all very much friends.

And this was in your flat?

That was in that flat we were talking about, in the beautiful drawing room, and it was really very nice, and my mother had that all beautifully prepared and with nice lunch, and...snacks, or whatever it was, I don't know. I had to prepare the flowers and all that. That I remember all.

Do you remember going on your honeymoon?

Yes. We went first to the Semmering, which I have already...you have written it down already, where I was... And then we went to the Dolomites. So that I remember, yes, yes.

And then you came back to Vienna?

Then I came back to Prague.

But you were married in Vienna of course?

I was married in Vienna, but the flat...the house was bought and the first storey of that house was my flat, because the former landlord was still in the lower part of the house, till he moved out, we then re-built the whole house to make it a one-family house. But I had a whole year, or even longer, two years really, in that first-floor flat, and the little garden.

And in the meantime your husband was running this Prague business?

My husband was in Prague and worked in Prague, yes.

Running these branches for the alcoholic...

Yes, in Czechoslovakia, yes, the whole Czechoslovakian...

You did say he was actually born in Vienna, didn't you?

I was born in Vienna.

No, he.

And he was born in Prague.

Ah, he was actually born in Prague?

Yes.

But German speaking.

But German speaking, going to German schools; that was the thing. And that was why, in the year 1933, there was in Prague, what do you call if they count...the...

Numerus Clausus?

Say it again.

(BREAK IN RECORDING) A census. In 1933 there was a census in Prague, in Czechoslovakia, in Prague, and you had to fill in a form and vote, according to your mother tongue. Now my husband wrote German because his mother tongue was German. And mine was of course German. And because of that, I could not get a Czechoslovak passport after Theresienstadt and the... Yes, yes, the Czechs

would not give me a Czech passport, because in the year 1933 I voted German. You wouldn't believe it.

When you say voted, you actually put down that your mother tongue was German?

I put my mother tongue was German.

Yes. It wasn't a vote, as such.

No, it wasn't a vote, yes. And because of my being German in '33, I would not get a Czech passport in '47.

But to come back now to...you returned from your honeymoon, you're back in Prague, in your new home, your new marital home. What sort of life did you lead there? Similar to the one you had in Vienna?

No, quite different. Quite different. Quite different, and rather...in the beginning rather depressing, because, as you have found out by now, I had a very busy and very stimulating life in Vienna. And there I was, in a new flat, not speaking the language, surrounded by old aunts, my father's sisters, who insisted on my being a good housewife, and living up to the new fortune, and having to be society. Which I was not used to, I had had a very cheerful and interesting youth in Vienna, meeting lots of highly interesting artists and people. And there I was, stuck up in that little flat. And I was used to walking a lot, so I walked a lot in the surroundings. And then I tried to enter...to be taken on in the art academy of Prague, and took my things there. And the Director of that Czech academy there said yes, he could take me on in the first year, or in the second year, but I would have to work all day long there and pass the examinations. It isn't an easy thing. So when I came home, and my husband came back from the office, I told him that, and he said, "Look, you're going to have a baby, I have married you not that you go to school, I want you at home." So I couldn't go. And then Dorothy was born very soon, and, so that fell through, the idea of going there. But I did take...I went to studios and learnt a bit of oil painting. But it never really filled my life, which it would have done if I had finished my training in Vienna.

Which of course was cut off when you first met your husband?

It was cut off...

When you were taking you exams.

...when I married, it was cut off when I married. And I only went then to private things, and that wasn't the right thing either. I never really got painting properly ever again. Till Theresienstadt, which sounds very peculiar, but that's where I found my gift. That is another thing.

That is, as you say...

That is a very...another thing.

In the meantime, did you develop...back in Prague now, as a newly married young lady, did you develop a crowd of friends?

I had friends.

Other young mums?

Yes. I met a lot of people, and I chose some people which were not the right...not the people my aunts wanted. It was...it was a bit schizophrenic, because the business friends of my husband's, or the people my husband met in the Monopoly Department, because he was a sort...on top of being his private manager of his own business, he was a vice president of the Alcohol Monopoly in Czechoslovakia, and that was a sort of civil servant, rather high position. There he met...had people...and the alcohol industry was a very Jewish industry, so the people of...they were not these...not these in the Monopoly,

but the people in the...of the various firms, they were Jewish. So that was another clique of people. And then the private people were very rich and had parties and evening dresses and jewellery. And it wasn't what I liked very much, but it was my life.

What was your husband's attitude towards being Jewish?

He used to say, "I am Jewish, I am proud of it, and if I were not proud I would also be Jewish." That was very cynical really, but that was the attitude. He would never have had himself baptized, I know that. But he went to synagogue once a year.

Yom Kippur?

Yes. My mother-in-law had a seat in the synagogue in Prague, so the first year Ernst said, "You go and be on our seat there." And I went to the synagogue, the first time in my life really, and when I saw all the other women talking about their cooks, and the dinner, and the thing, I said, "Ernst, although I love you, I'm never going to synagogue again."

Do you remember which synagogue? Was this the Altneuschul?

No, the new one, the Altneuschul...

Jerusalemska?

It was in...no, it was in the...near the Nicklas...on the right side...wait a second, there was...

Maisel? Pinkus?

Was it the Maisel? It might have been the Maisel Synagogue. Now there you are. I've been once and I don't know. I have of course the Altneuschul, that old lovely thing, there I have been quite often, but that...you didn't go there.

There was one named after...

There's another one.

Ferdinand...the Emperor Ferdinand.

Ferdinand Deum, no, no no.

Franz Josef, sorry, Franz Josef.

That I don't know about.

Ah. I thought maybe...

No, that I don't know. I think it must have been the Maisel Synagogue. But as I tell you, I never went.

And his interest...

And he went once a year, which I didn't think very exciting. And he went there only because his mother had gone. He was...he adored his mother, he was very much his mother's son. And, he did that only to think of her.

Was he an only child?

No, he had a nine-year-old elder brother, with whom he never was on very good terms; they were very much apart. His elder brother was a very strong-minded, and energetic man, selfish, and...what he said was right, and my husband was a very quiet and gentle and...

And their names were what? Your...

Fischl. Joseph and Ernst Fischl.

And your husband was...

Ernst.

Was Ernst.

Joseph was the elder one; Joseph was after his father Joseph, who organised the bigger firm. And there was another...no, that was the grandfather was Joseph, and my father-in-law's father was called Sigmund. It was a time when Jewish children were called Siegfried and Sigmund. Like my lovely grandfather, the husband of that lady there, he was called Friedrich...Siegfried Friedrich. Yes.

Absolutely, yes, yes. So, your daughter was born a short...well, a year or so after you were married?

Yes, yes. She was born, and then three years later my boy was born.

And, up to this point, how much anti-Semitism had you...

I personally...

Apart from the one occasion in the academy...

That was the only occasion...and that I had sometimes the invitations to the big official balls in Vienna, the big balls and the big things, where it said, at the bottom, 'We would prefer non Jews' or something like that, on two invitations. And I got those from cousins or young men of my friends. And when I got them I used to say (they were coffee house people, they had big coffee houses in Vienna, and vineyards in Vienna, very interesting and amusing people) and I used to say to that Zobelman boy, I said, "You send me this invitation, you know I am Jewish. Why do you send me this invitation?" And he says, "But you aren't...no, we invite you because we want you there." Now, when my father saw that, he said, "Are you going?" And I said, "Yes, they are such fun, they are so lovely, they collect me, and Schreyvogel's mother is the..." what do you call that lady who takes the girls who...

Chaperone.

"She's chaperoning me, Mrs. Schreyvogel, they are the nephews and nieces; of course I'll go." Whether it was right, or...

And, now, when you were...

When I married that changed completely. Because in Prague, to the set of people my husband belonged, you were either Jewish and German or you were Jewish and Czech, or you were German and gentile, or you were Czech and gentile. We were German Jews. And when I had the audacity to invite my German gentile friends, the husband of my cousin said, "How can you invite them to your housewarming party?" And that's when I put down my foot the first time. I said, "That doesn't go into my way of life. They are my friends for the last five years, and we've been having all our summer holidays together." And he, and that Professor Elschnig, that was the people, he was an eye specialist, and he saved my husband's life years later. No no no, I don't accept such things, I can't accept them.

Sorry, what...

The divisions between, that a Jew cannot be friends with a gentile, and vice versa. I don't accept it. I cannot accept it, after all I went through. In Oederan, in the third camp I was, the German gentile foreman of the factory where we had to make cannonballs or things for the Germans, sent me the...he knew I was ill, he knew I was a Jewess, he sent me through one of the girls who worked there, the New Testament, although he knew it was forbidden that I read, that I have a book. He sent me the New

Testament, and I managed to get it back to him before we were evacuated, otherwise something would have happened to him. No, I'm not the right person.

The right person for what?

To be so anti German, and anti gentile.

I'm not anti German or anti gentile.

That I...I have noticed that.

I can be. I can be anti a German or anti a gentile, but I don't generalize.

That is the word. But this is what I suffer sometimes. Look, when I came back from all these things, back to Theresienstadt, I was in quarantine because of typhoid. And one of my artist friends from Theresienstadt came to see me - she was such a marvellous artist, she died in America - and I said, "Where's your daughter Marianne?" And she said, "Oh, Marianne is out now with others, Jewish girls, to cut the hair of the Czech gentiles, to shave them like they did us." And from that moment onward I got desperate. I was so astonished that I was alive and back in the first camp, and that was the first experience which upset me completely, because I thought, 'Now, what was all the business about now the Jews are going to do the same to the gentiles?' No, I couldn't take it. I never saw Marianne again. She came then and I didn't want to see her. But that was wrong of me, I mean, she was a girl of seventeen. But this is...I couldn't take that, that the whole thing would turn round now the other way around. And that is what then happened when I came back to Prague.

After the War?

Yes.

After the second war?

Yes, when I came back, yes.

Coming back to your early married life, did you have a carriage or a car in those days?

Well in the beginning not, then we had a car. When George was born we had a car.

Do you remember what car?

The fourth year when we were married. Yes, a Tatra, a Czech car of course. I mean, you had to be...have a Czech car, if you were an alcohol man of Czechoslovakia.

And this was chauffeur driven?

That was chauffeur driven.

Your husband never drove?

He could drive, he had learnt to drive when he was in France, when he was working there as a volunteer in a factory as a young man. And there he learned to drive, but he never drove, he drove occasionally but he didn't really take it up again. No, we had a chauffeur.

Which is the chauffeur that you...

That...no, that is another one, one where my husband then had a very terrible accident, which wasn't really his fault - perhaps it was his fault, I don't know, but we couldn't go on having him, although we kept friends with him. He went away from Czechoslovakia afterwards, and then we had Mr. Tolar, yes. And he came as a very young man, and stayed with us till the end, and now his daughter and granddaughter.

Wonderful.

That is wonderful, yes, and his wife was delightful, a lovely woman.

Did your husband serve in the First World War? Was he in the army?

No, he had a lung defect in his youth. He had TB in his youth, and never was called up, in the First World War, no, and the second, then...he wasn't. He died in concentration camp, so...

Your...?

He died in Theresienstadt.

Your husband?

My husband, yes. And he was cremated there, and the ashes were strewn into the river Eger. So there's nothing left. No. That's when I came back, I heard that the ashes were taken away. All sorts of things happened while I was gone these few months, in Theresienstadt. But my mother was there still. I came back to my mother.

I think today is probably enough, because I think you're a little tired, and I think we should leave it for now. (BREAK IN RECORDING)

Now today is Friday the 20th of July 1990, and Lily, we're going to carry on where we left off if we may, the other day.

Right Lily, there are a few points that I would like to come back to, regarding our chat the other day. When your brothers were born, as far as you know, did they go through any circumcision ceremony?

No, no circumcision, nothing at all, no.

Not even a medical circumcision, let alone a ritual one?

Not even a medical one. No, nothing. Nothing, no.

OK. Perhaps we could spend a little time talking about how you spent your time as a teenager and a young adult in Vienna.

Yes. Well, I went to...as I told you, I went to a Lyzeum, that was the secondary school, without Greek and Latin, but with a lot of history, history of art, and all the other subjects. And I believe I had a very good schooling there, because that's where my interest started for art, and for...for the world.

Plus what your father had given you.

Plus what my father gave me. And besides, I went...I had sports; I went to dancing classes; I went skating, because the skating rink was quite near my home; I went to many parties. But the great delight was where the excursions into the Wiener Wald, into the surroundings of Vienna, on Saturdays and Sundays, or only on Sundays. And I had for many years the same friends we met at eight o'clock in the morning at the railway station, and went off and came back at night. And my parents allowed all that, because they trusted...they knew I had very nice friends. And we had a lovely time.

Did you play tennis? Did you go horse riding?

I played tennis during the summer months; on the skating rinks they had tennis courts, I played tennis there. And in winter we had skating there. And I went swimming in Vienna, in a very famous swimming bath, the Diana Bad. And during the summer holidays there was swimming, boating, rowing, climbing, mountaineering. Summers were in Austrian summer resorts, and every...we used every opportunity to use the opportunities we had there.

And did you go to art exhibitions, concerts, opera?

Not to concerts and very rarely to opera, because my father was...only allowed Wagner, and never let me...never gave me the money to go to any other opera. But I went to the Classics, not music, the classical...like Shakespeare or Schiller, or Goethe, that was allowed, and I used to go to the afternoon performances, matinées here, with my schoolfriends. And that was a great joy. But in the evening I didn't go out to theatres, and no concerts, till I was married, then I went to concerts, but not before.

Isn't it somewhat strange, that your father, who was a very broad-minded man, did not approve of your going to Beethoven concerts, or Chopin recitals, or...

He would have approved perhaps if I had had the opportunity to go, but my friends did not...they...either some of the friends went with their parents to such...these regular concerts, and the others did not go. Now, my father did not earn very much money; he wasn't a rich man. So there were no...there was no money for going to the theatre very often. He took my mother occasionally to the theatre, but that, not very often either. And we children were not indulged in, we didn't get the money for it. So we were at home, and besides my poor brother had to learn, and I read, and had my own books. So there wasn't...and then one went to bed early, because one had to get up early. Schools and lectures and afterwards my training at the art academy, that all started at eight o'clock in the morning, so you got up at 6.30, so you went to bed at ten. You didn't go out very much.

You said your father was only interested in Wagner, and therefore...

That wasn't very often.

But didn't encourage other...listening to other music?

Well, he did not give me the money to go to other operas, and when he went to Wagner he took me along. So that was another thing. But that I went off alone without any person with me...well girls didn't go out alone to concerts or operas, they went either with friends or with the mother...there's always a chaperone there at night time, you didn't go off alone. And I had no friends who would have invited me to go to the opera with them.....

End of F893, Side B

Track 5 (F894, Side A)

OK.

Now, you thought that my life is out of doors, no, it was not, because after all, I went to school, and had house work to do at home.

You did the housework at home?

No, I mean my school...homework. No no, no, didn't do any work...alas! I had to learn that later on! No. But school work. And of course, one went...I had other private lessons with friends; I learned to do book-keeping, and I had special English lessons by a marvellous English lady called Levison. She was Jewish, a beautiful woman, she was...do you know the...there was a magazine in England, the 'Studio', an art magazine, very famous, world famous art magazine, and she was the representative of 'Studio' in Vienna. And she gave English lessons to people who spoke English, who didn't have to have grammar lessons. And we had a lot of lectures on art, and I heard about the Pre-Raphaelites from her, and she introduced me to the English art. And I read the Shakespeare with her, and had the English history with her, with the Shakespeare dramas. So this was a great delight. On the other hand of course I had to read a lot. So this is what I did in the evening.

Was this lady at home...came to your home?

She came, not to my home, but to a friend's home, and we were three or four girls, and had lessons there, and had tea there then, and usually stayed a little for chatting, it was very comfortable and very nice. I also had the book-keeping lessons in that home, and all sorts of interesting...I met a lot of interesting people there. That was a Jewish home, but there was, like in our home, one had nothing to do with the Jewish religion, there neither.

These were Jewish friends?

They were Jewish friends of mine. I met them through an English governess, and they were three girls, and the youngest, she was married and lived here, and her husband was the musical...what do you call it? Not director, but the musical worker in Glyndebourne, he started Glyndebourne, together with Rudy Bing. And so I had a lovely connection to Glyndebourne, and was there very often as a guest of the Strassers, and stayed with them in their house, and went to their parties. So, I had that too, one of the astonishing things in my life, that I had this peculiar connection as well. And, she was the youngest daughter of that household, very wealthy Viennese Jews, who had lots of parties. I also met Richard Strauss there once, and early...Alma Mahler, and Werfel, and all these famous people there. It was an astonishing household, with these three girls. But I would have to tell you about all the various Austrian poets and musicians; I don't know whether that belongs into that...those questions, that would last on and on. I don't think we will go into all these various...

The first time I heard you actually mentioned Jewish friends.

Oh yes.

Because you used to say you'd got...your other friends were Catholic friends.

That was in my elementary school, they were all Catholic friends. And later on, through these Jewish...these three sisters, through that Jewish household, I met a lot of other Jewish friends.

This was all through one of your English governesses?

Through the English governess, Frau Hübl.

Who wasn't Jewish?

She was not Jewish, no, but she gave...she went for walks with us, conversation lessons walking. And she did that with my brother, my elder brother, and me, and she did it with the two elder sisters of that

household. And she thought we might become friends, and we did. And so this is...I got into the household. His name was Oskar Berl, and he was a son of a big coal merchant, and I think they also had mines, he also was the proprietor of mines. And they lived in a beautiful house in Vienna, and gave parties, which my parents did not, we did not belong to that set of people. And at these parties, and through having dancing lessons with those girls, I met a lot of Jewish people.

Really the first time in your life?

Yes, more or less. Well, I...yes, I suppose so, yes, because my school friends were not Jewish.

So this was already...how old would you have been?

There I was...eleven, twelve.

When you started meeting the Jewish friends, from about eleven onwards?

Yes, yes.

Oh, I see.

Yes. I knew Jewish...through my mother, some boys, but I can't say they were friends, but were little children's parties, and I have very little recollection of that.

Did you live in an area in which a lot of Jews resided?

No, not really.

It wasn't an area...

No, not really, no. As long as we lived in the 4th Arrondissement in Vienna, in Wieden, W-I-E-D-E-N, there were a few Jewish elegant households. And then we moved, when my little brother was born, we moved to the 3rd, that was Landstrasse Hauptstrasse, and there were hardly any Jews at all - or at least we didn't know any there, let's say that.

And, were your brothers living the same sort of life as you were?

Well my elder brother had to work so much for school, because he was a bad student, as I told you, and he had very little private life, because of having tutors the whole afternoon. He shared our dancing lessons, he came with me. But there was very little connection between his life and my life at the time. And my younger brother was after all more than seven years younger, so he was a nursery child. He went to school of course, but I didn't know much about him at the time, and we just (LAUGHING) met at home, let's say that.

Did you used to go to sort of grand balls, and had a little list?

Only when I was grown up.

...a little list of people who you were going to dance with?

That stopped just at my time.

Oh did it?

Yes. You had that in very elegant balls, which...student balls, the famous student balls in Vienna, you had that, but you made fun of it really; it wasn't any...it stopped, that habit, that elegant habit stopped at the time. But I knew about it of course, but that wasn't any more.

Did you...I mean, like any other child, presumably both you and your brothers went through the usual childhood illnesses.

Yes.

Was there anything special that stands out?

Yes. It stands out, scarlet fever. My baby brother was one year old, and Fritz and I were seven and nine. Now we used to...my parents used to rent a house, and you took your household with you, cooks and so on...

For the holiday?

For the holiday. And we stayed two-and-a-half, at least two-and-a-half months, or perhaps even three months there, and it was near Vienna, in Payerbach, near the mountains, near the...I think we mentioned the Semmering last time, where the mountains, the Rax and the Schneeberg were, high mountains, nearly two thousand metres high, in that range there. And there were little summer resorts. And we rented a house there with my grandparents, and we had...my elder brother and I had scarlet fever there. And my little brother and his nurse had to go to a hotel, because of the contagious illness. So I remember that, because it was partly very uncomfortable, and partly quite amusing, because Fritz and I shared a room, and shared all the...fuss were made about us. So that I can remember. And unfortunately, this scarlet fever left my left side, and my left leg, and left side weaker than the right side. There must have been, which one didn't know, a sort of...streptococcus...some sort of paralysis in that left side, because I had a flat foot, and then was sent to physiotherapy quite a lot. And from that moment onwards I had to wear supports. And I now, all my various disablements, all start on the left side. So obviously - my doctor knows about that - the left side is weaker and liable to be defective. And all my future illnesses are always on the left side.

And do you have any other recollections of a similar nature, to do with illness?

Not...nothing really special, no, not really.

You had your measles, chickenpox...

I had measles, we had measles, chickenpox. I didn't have mumps, my brother had mumps.

Did you ever go into hospital for anything, in those days?

No, no I didn't go to hospital, no.

Nor your brothers?

Neither, as far as I remember, no. No hospitals.

Do you remember your doctor?

Yes, he came every...he was a cousin of my mother's, and he came every Sunday to have a look at us: that I remember. We loved him very dearly, and the connection to that doctor goes on to here. I will tell you about that if you feel interested, that went on. And we liked him very much, Dr. Fürth. And he died, I don't know when, before the War, before the second war. That's all I know about him now, he was a handsome man, who came every Sunday and looked at us. What he did there I don't know.

He came every Sunday, whether you were ill or otherwise?

Yes.

Oh really? Oh I see.

Yes. That was obviously a sort of habit Jewish families had, that their doctors came once a week to check. I don't know why, but that's what one did. And I remember Karl Fürth and his children and all that, oh yes, yes.

Now, you mentioned the question of baptism, and your aunts.

Yes.

Can you perhaps talk about this a little? Did they become Baptists because they were encouraged to do so, or because they thought it was easier for them? Why did they baptize, the aunts of your...sisters of your mother?

Because after the First World War, when the Polish Jews came flooding...when Galicia became Poland, or Hungarian, and the Austrian Galicia, or...the Austria, Poland and Silesia, all these Jews who lived in the Stettl, they tried to get out and come to Austria, because Franz Josef liberated the Jews, and they thought they would have a good life in Austria. So they came in, and the Austrian Jewish families who thought they belonged to an upper class of Jews, did not want to be thrown into the same pail as the Jews of the Stettl, of the Polish Pale. And so very many of these families, who were not really religious, and did not go to synagogue, and had a lot of gentile friends, they became either Catholic or Protestant, because they did not want to have anything to do with the remainder of the Jews. As they didn't go to synagogue, and did not pretend to have any religion, they took the religion which would be good for their children's future.

They wanted to disassociate themselves with these...

That's right, with the Eastern Jews.

Uneducated Jews coming from the East.

With the Eastern Jews who spoke Yiddish, which you didn't do in Vienna, and who came from a culture which was not the Austrian culture, it was strange, it was quite foreign to us. And so they became baptized.

Did this mean they became religious Catholics?

No. Some did, mind you, I had a friend who's...a very interesting story about her, she then came here and she was a highly religious Catholic.

Came to London?

Came to London, and spent...died here, some years ago, and I spent a lot of time with her and looked after her in her old age. And her grandfather was a famous actor at the Vienna Burg Theater, that is our national theatre here, top theatre. Kaiserlich-Koeniglich...I mean, quite a top thing; his name was Sonnenthal, he was the greatest actor of his time, he was made Catholic, he was...got a Knighthood, Von. And so his family then became Catholic as well.

But they became religious Catholics?

She became a religious Catholic. How far her parents were religious I wouldn't know, but she was a religious Catholic; she went to church, she felt happy in church, she tried to make me become Catholic afterwards here, which I didn't think very interesting for me. And we talked a lot about faith, because we loved one another and trusted one another, and could talk about such things.

But your aunts on the other hand became baptized for different reasons.

They had nothing...they...yes, they had nothing to do with religion really.

Now, again you mentioned your brother, your elder brother Fritz, who went into the army in 1917 or thereabouts.

No no. Yes, must have been '15...1915 already, the beginning of the War.

He...

He became Roman Catholic from faith, because he was in a Roman...I think he might have been the only Jew in a Roman Catholic regiment, in Salzburg, which was after all the town of churches and all the art and music, and the Catholic worshipping was very beautiful. And if a boy of seventeen or eighteen gets thrown suddenly into a completely different atmosphere, and with not a Jewish person near him, I should imagine it is quite easy for him to become religious in this atmosphere. And as the religion was Catholic, and he went to church with his regiment every Sunday, he became in his mind, and in his outlook, Catholic, but at the time he was not baptized; he got baptized when he came back to Vienna after being a prisoner of war, after being at the Russian and then Italian front, knowing all the horror of war at the time. That, I must admit is something quite different. But that he then married a Jewish girl, he fell in love with her, and it was a great love affair, but she would not become Catholic, except then when they had to leave when Hitler came. And that is again quite a different story, and their background.

How did you feel when your brother decided to become a Catholic?

I could understand it.

And how did your parents feel?

I think, knowing my father, he could understand it too. And my mother, who always really wanted to follow her sisters in being baptized, because she belonged to the Jewish anti-Semites, she approved of it.

Why do you suppose your mother never got baptized?

Because Father wouldn't allow it.

Her father?

No, my father, her husband.

Oh, I see.

He had to say that, and she would...

Were they baptized before they married, or after they married?

My parents never were baptized.

No no no. Your mother's sisters. When they were baptized, were they baptized before they were married?

No no no. After they married. Only after the First World War.

And after they'd already married?

Yes.

To Jewish people?

To Jewish people.

Oh I see. I thought they were baptized and then married.

No no no no no. They married Jewish, and then were baptized after the First World War because it was the done thing, and they thought it would be easier for their children. Don't forget that was the Austrian outlook on the future of their children. It wasn't just fun that you did it.

But your father wasn't happy...

My father did not think that was very appropriate; he thought he, having a factory where they made coffins for Jews and Catholics and Protestants, and for the Vienna councils, he thought it was...as his elder son was going to inherit that, and work at that factory, didn't think it very interesting for him to become Catholic. But when Fritz came back and said he will be Catholic, because he is Catholic in his mind and soul, my father said all right. My father would not object to that.

But what about your younger brother?

My younger brother was very Jewish in all his outlook, and he was never baptized, but his children were.

Ernst's children were?

No no, my younger brother's.

Oh, your younger brother, yes.

Franz. His name was Franz. He was married to the daughter of that painter and artist of Salzburg, she was Catholic.

This is Harta.

Harta. She was Catholic because her father had become Catholic to become painting teacher at the Salzburg Gymnasium, so she was Catholic and her brother was Catholic. And they married in...where did they marry? They married in, I think in the town hall. I've forgotten.

A civil...

A civil wedding, yes. Yes, I think, yes.

Was Fritz married?

Fritz was married to that beautiful Kate Wetzler, and he married in a civil wedding at the town hall, because she did not want to become Catholic.

But your father presumably must have been a bit disappointed that his children had...

I don't think my father was disappointed; I don't have the feeling he was disappointed.

And yet when you came to be married...

I married in...I married Jewish, at home.

Exactly.

Yes.

But you married under a Chupah, but his sons didn't.

No. But I don't think he was disappointed; he took that as...he was a realist in this respect: everybody should choose the religion he thinks he ought to have.

Now again, to revert back to your marriage, did you actually have to approach your parents for consent to marry?

Well I did...

Or did you tell them?

I did of course, because there was no reason why not. And my future husband was very well brought up, of a Jewish family, and he was...kept to the rules, and when we got engaged, he even went to visit immediately my grandmother. Yes, that was all done very neatly. (LAUGHS) We knew...my parents knew that we were going to be engaged, because after all, he lived in Prague and worked in Prague, and came every Saturday to visit, to stay with his mother in Vienna, and every Saturday for months on end we went off on an excursion into the surroundings of Vienna. So my mother and father obviously knew what was happening, so there was no reason. Yes, he came and asked my parents' permission to marry me, after we had found it was right that we should marry. Yes.

How long did you actually know one another before he proposed to you?

Well, let's say, I didn't really know him; I knew about him and I had met him two or three years before. I knew he existed, and that he was nice, and that's all I knew. I met him...

How long did you go out together?

Six months.

Before you became engaged.

Yes.

And then about three months before you were married.

Yes.

Oh right.

That was quick work!

Yes. Now we jumped to your move, as we did the other day, to Prague, and your first home, which I think you indicated you had very little choice in furnishing.

Yes. No, I couldn't...we bought the furniture and everything, but then the aunts took over while we were on honeymoon. But afterwards I did what I wanted, yes.

What did the aunts do then when you were on honeymoon?

Well they had got the ladies who made the curtains, and made curtains which I would never have had made like that, and they thought I must have velvet and brocade, and I did not like velvet and brocade, I was interested in what...you wouldn't know about that...(HICCUP IN TAPE) It is 'Wiener Werkstätte', that means the Viennese workshop; that was an art and craft department, very modern, very...Art Nouveau type, and they made lovely textiles, ceramics, furniture, glasswork, with great artists, but...and it's very famous now, and you have exhibitions in New York and everywhere. Here too you had exhibitions in the Victoria & Albert Museum, and was very famous.

You wanted to furnish your house with this?

I did furnish my house very much like that, yes. Because I didn't like heavy velvet curtains and didn't like old fashioned things, I wanted light and interesting, amusing, modern things.

How big was your home, your married home?

Well, it was what one used to call 'eine Villa'; it had a cellar, a cellar for vegetables and wine, and then a little flat in it for sort of housekeeper/porter, he lived there with his wife and two children; and then it had a laundry room: that was all in the basement. And then you have a high ground floor, where we

had kitchen and kitchen offices, and two loos and the dining room and a large library/sitting room, and a small...I called it the garden room which was a little drawing room with a terrace out into the garden. And then, up we had a hall with an inside staircase, and there you had then four bedrooms, or let's say three bedrooms and the guest-room and two bathrooms, and the room for the housemaid and another little room for wardrobe, a sort of wardrobe. And then there was an outside staircase to the rooms in the roof. First of all there was the open space under the roof for hanging up to dry the laundry, and then there were two rooms, and a sort of little wash-room for the cook and housemaid. And so that was the house, it was a very comfortable, large rooms, and pleasant house. But not very...not especially elegant: it wasn't one of those little palaces which very many Jewish families had built in that part of Bubeneč, of Prague. We all had gardens, and there were pretty roads with trees. It was very green, it was a very pleasant place. But our house had been built by a Czech builder, and it was two flats which we then, after the birth of my son, put into one, and we made an inside staircase, so that we could...that it was as one family house then. But it used to be...it was built as a two-flat house. It was very comfortable and bright and cheerful.

What sort of staff did you have then?

Well we had a cook, then...I think one would call it a parlourmaid, and a housemaid. And then there was a living in concierge with his family, but he...in day time he was sort of factotum, servant, at one of the big German banks, and he only came back after his working hour. But he used to serve dinners in various...when there were parties everywhere; they were very nice people, and they stayed with us to the end. Then there was every fortnight a washer woman came to wash the big laundry, as you had no washing machines or anything like that.

End of F894, Side A

Track 6 (F894, Side B)

Well there was the beloved chauffeur, Mr. Tolar. He was officially the driver for my husband's firm, but as my husband was the head of the firm it was really our private car; he didn't do very much for the office, but worked for us really. And the children loved him and he loved the children, and he very soon became a sort of member of the family.

Did he live in?

No, he lived...my husband got a flat for him very near us, and when he married then they lived in that flat, and when I came back from concentration camp I had my happiest hours there, with them.
(BREAK IN RECORDING)

Now this was your second chauffeur wasn't it?

That was the second chauffeur, yes. The first chauffeur was a very nice man too, but my husband had a terrible accident, car accident with him, and because of that he had to leave us because, although my husband...he then became a taxi driver and we used to use that taxi quite often, just to show that there was no ill feeling. But the firm and my brother-in-law insisted that we don't take him back as the driver of the family car. He left Czechoslovakia and went to South America with his wife, I don't know anything about him any more.

Tell me about the second chauffeur, because I remember...

That is the one who kept up the friendship and helped me in Theresienstadt, and helped me when I came back. He was really one of the greatest and most efficient friends I had during the time.

He was Catholic?

He was...yes, I think he was Catholic, but to tell you the truth I'm not sure whether he was not Hussite, he might have been Czech Catholic. But I really don't know; his wife was Catholic, and they were both from what we would call Sudeten Germany, they were German really, from Brüx or Saaz [Žatec], in the Egergraben - again in Cheb, Eger, the river that went through Terezín, which was all quite German up there. And his family...her family was quite German; his family were mixed, I think he and his brothers spoke Czech at home, where she spoke German at home. And they married, and were a very happy couple, and they married through knowing one another through our car. And they remained to their death my best friends really, my most helpful friends, loyal. And this summer I spent four days with his wife and his granddaughter, in the Tyrols.

This summer, 1990?

In the Tyrols. It's the first time she could leave the country like that because of Havel. And the first thing she did, she phoned me, and we got together. I paid the hotel and she paid the trip, and she came to bring her little daughter. And she now phones me at least once a month, just to know how I get on, which is deeply moving, and quite wonderful for me, to know that such people existed, and there was no reason why they - except love, that they should behave...like he should behave as he did.

And his wife?

And his wife, yes. But he was the efficient one, because he was clever, and courageous, and enjoyed a little adventurous life. He liked...he knew where to bribe, he knew where to get things; he was perhaps not quite the right...a good character, but he was efficient, and all his efficiency and cleverness, he gave me, which was wonderful to have. But I knew that he got into risks with what he was doing, and he didn't mind the risks. Whether it was only love, or enjoyment of adventure, I don't know and I don't mind, but it was his personality.

Well I think it says quite something for the fact that his children and grandchildren still wanted to have a relationship.

That's right, that's right, quite marvellous, yes, yes. And he had enormous resources in brains, how he could manage to get parcels to Theresienstadt, that was quite a feat, because he was not Jewish, and he could not go to the Jewish Community to get the permission and the stamps for these parcels, so he had to find somebody whom he could bribe to get such a stamp, and he did, which is...funny, but marvellous really. Really, I wanted to...years later I wanted to put...have a tree for him in Jerusalem.

Oh, the Avenue of Righteous Gentiles.

That's right, I thought Tolar ought to have a tree there. And my daughter and I tried to find out about that, but somehow he was not...Dorothy said when she asked about him, they did not think he was the right person to have a real tree. I don't know why, I would have liked to do that.

What was his name?

Tolar, T-O-L-A-R.

That was his surname, or his...

That was his surname. Rudolph Tolar. Yes.

And his wife's name?

And his wife's was Elisabeth Tolar. What her maiden name was I have forgotten.

And you say his daughter still lives where?

His daughter lives in a flat of the same house where her father lived in Prague, in the same, number 5 Arrondissement. She lives there still, and she now is (I'm slightly worried about her future) the accountant for the salary of the hotel staff, and she has a good job, but it is going to be privatized now, and she was not sure what her future would be.

Lily, one of the things I never did ask you, is when you got married, and for that matter when your parents got married, was a dowry very much the order of the day?

Yes. Yes, well, when my mother got married I think quite a lot of money was put into my father's little factory. How much and what I wouldn't know, and I was never interested, but I know there was money put in, because after the War, when my mother had got back some of that factory, some of the money went straight to her because of those deeds or whatever it was. And I, when I married, being my father as he...he put money for my...what do you call it, dowry, for my dowry, into the railway line, the Arabian railway line of...what's his name...Ross...what's the famous Arabian...

Lawrence of Arabia.

Lawrence of Arabia, that big line, and my father who was, as you now have found out by now...

A romantic?

A romantic, he thought that would be lovely, and for his daughter he will invest in that railway line. So this is where my dowry went, and I had...the dowry I got was just my underwear and my bedding and such things, a few of such things. But no real Jewish dowry, because that dowry was in the railway lines! (LAUGHS)

And that was the end of that!

That was the end of that. To my mother's disgust and my father's grin, that was the end of that, and as my husband did not want or need any money for me, he just grinned when he heard that. So this is what happened to my dowry.

Now, you seem then to have spent some ten years in a fairly mediocre sort of life in Prague.

Twenty years.

Twenty years, yes, twenty years. I'm really thinking of the ten years or so up to Hitler's coming to power in Germany, until 1933.

Yes.

A fairly mediocre sort of life, you weren't entirely happy in Prague, from what you've said.

No. I was happy at home; I was very happy with my husband and I was very happy with my children, but I had no way of doing anything. I had to have a governess for the nursery, I had to have that lovely parlourmaid, who had been working for my mother before and I had no say in that either. And I was sort of...nothing. I had no positive work to do, I had no positive position in this household, as alas my children were in a nursery and with a governess, my housemaid ran the household, I had a cook and couldn't...I myself couldn't cook properly; I never did anything myself except the garden, and there I had a very good Czech gardener who had been taught in England, and so we spoke English as I couldn't speak Czech at the time. And I loved my garden, and that was the only place I could do anything creative. But that is not quite enough. Obviously I know that now, it wasn't enough for me. And so there were loose moments, and...just waiting; there was a lot of waiting in my life.

Were you a card player? Did you play bridge?

No, I did not play bridge, neither did my husband. I had played bridge in my...what I called my youth, in Vienna, but I didn't play bridge in Prague because I found that the people with whom I was put together in the beginning for bridge, they took it too seriously; for me bridge was a game, which was of course quite wrong.

You didn't like the inquests afterwards?

I didn't...no, I could never remember what was a two and I was a rotten player, and I just played bridge for being together with young people. But that was not the case in Prague. And I was transferred from a very artistic and cheerful and intellectual set of friends, very many types of friends, various sets of friends, into a very small-minded, Jewish rich set of people, through my marriage. Which, I did make very good friends by and by, but not at the beginning. But I...I felt perhaps bored, it's not the right word, but I was useless, that's all I can...

Did you used to have holidays in that period?

Yes, and I lived for those holidays; they went straight to Austria, and the moment I crossed the frontier to Austria I woke up. And that of course was not right, and I still have that now, that is obviously 'blut und boden', as Hitler said, 'Blood and Soil'. That can't be denied.

Did you paint in those years?

Yes, I tried to paint. But I think I mentioned once that I wanted to go and paint in the German academy and then in the Czech academy...

In Prague?

In Prague, but I would have had to be a full day student, which was impossible because my husband thought that was silly, that I would never be there when he comes back in the evening from office, and then besides Dorothy was born very soon after...I mean, just right! (LAUGHS) And I was very sick afterwards, I was very...for many years, nerves, and...body didn't quite react well in the climate, and obviously also the way of life I had to live. All that is only hindsight now. But at the time I did not know why I had stomach upsets and nervous upsets, probably because I was just...doing nothing.

You were frustrated.

I was obviously frustrated, yes. But nobody knew that.

But did you in fact do...although you didn't go to the academy, did you paint?

Yes, I went to private studios, and learned to paint in oil, and...to various studios. But it was never anything that really filled my life, as it had been doing before. Not at all.

Was opera or music a part of your life?

Yes, oh yes, my husband loved opera and music and theatre, and we went to the theatre at least once a week, and we enjoyed that very much. And he took me to all the Beethoven concerts, and he really educated me in music, which my father had neglected except for Wagner. So I knew then that my husband's favourites were the Mozart operas, so I knew those by heart by and by. And we had a lot of very good classical music records, and played a lot at home too, and trained the children like that. That was different, that wasn't Wagner only. No. And then of course the children went to...by and by they went to school, but there were always and always governesses. And then of course, very soon...then I had to learn Czech: my husband insisted that I learn Czech properly, so I had at least twice, if not three times a week, first a Czech woman teacher, who had been a teacher of my husband's when he was a young man, or a young boy, and then by and by I found out that she spoke very good French, and as she was in love with my husband more or less, she wanted to tell me about his youth, and that was all French. But when my husband found out about that, he found another teacher for me, where I had to speak Czech. (LAUGHS)

Did you ever visit the spas in Czechoslovakia?

Yes. We went to Marienbad, but only...not as a spa. I did go and have...later on, when I had sciatica, I did have a short treatment there. But we did go there on holidays occasionally. But the real holidays were in the Austrian Alps, always, or the Dolomites. But, I did know Karlsbad, Karlovy Vary, and one summer we went to, what was in Germany Johannesbad, Jansky Lazne, that was not for gallbladder and...that was a spa more for female illnesses; I don't quite know what it was, I didn't like it, we lived in the house of the aunt of friends of mine and...I went swimming there, so did my children, and it didn't agree with us, that wasn't a happy holiday. But that was already after, when we had a car, that was when George was five and Dorothy was seven.

That's when you first had a car?

That's when we first had a car, yes, yes.

Now when you went to the spas, was this your first experience of seeing orthodox Jews, with payot?

Yes, well that I saw in the year 1915, when my brother Fritz joined the Austrian army, before going to Salzburg, he had a few months training in a Czech place called Pardubice, and there his Austrian corps was trained for riding I think, but I can't tell you the details of that. And my mother thought that if we are in a Czechoslovak spa, which was Austrian of course, that he would be allowed to come to see us on Saturday or Sunday, and it never occurred; we saw him once in that, but I can't remember it at all, in that place where he was, and he never came there. And we spent our summer holidays in Marienbad at the time.

And this is where you first saw...

That's where I first saw women with wigs, and sitting there in rows in front of their houses; wigs, and the men with their little curls, I saw those in Vienna, but one didn't take any notice of it, whereas in Marienbad you had lots of streets, just only orthodox Jews, which was quite new to me, I didn't know that at all.

What were your feelings when you first saw them?

Oh, they were foreign, interesting foreign people, who had nothing to do with me; not at all.

It's another world.

Another world. I can't even remember where we lived there, that is all out...I only remember the woods, the beautiful woods, and that my younger brother and I went for long walks. But I can't remember anything else.

And then, presumably every time you went back to these spas...

I didn't go very often, only for a few days, or for the day only. We didn't ever spend any holidays there. No, it was just a weekend, or something like that. My husband...we didn't go there, except in the year...there, that might be interesting, in the year 1938, when Hitler was in Austria already. Our last summer holidays were in Marienbad, with my children, with Tolar the driver, and I think - but I'm not sure - I think there was even a governess, but I'm not quite sure of that, and that wouldn't make any difference. And there, that was the time of Runciman, when the Germans and the Czechs in these German spas - we mustn't forget that Marienbad, Mariansky Lazne, was in the German side of Czechoslovakia. That was a very very difficult situation, the police was German, the Czechs were top, and there were fights already in between Czechs and Germans at the time; and that was the time of Runciman - I needn't go into that I suppose - and it was a very unpleasant time. On the other hand, I had made friends, since the year 1915, with a professor's family who lived in Prague; they were Austrians, he came from Graz in Styria, and Mrs. Elschnig, I don't know, I think she was born in Vienna but I wouldn't know, and he was head of the medical department, for the eye department at the German university in Prague - I think I mentioned him. And he lived in...then he retired to Marienbad, and in the year 1938 we lived in a pension very near them, and I met them on the way back one day, and he immediately invited us to supper. And I said I don't know whether that is wise, and he poo-pooed it, and said, "This is ridiculous, I'm going to invite you and you are coming to see us." And I met the whole family there again, all of them great friends of mine, and it was a sort of...I had sometime the feeling it was a sort of bravura on his side. Although I know, and I'm quite positive about that, that he was a great great friend of mine, and the whole family was. But it was difficult, and a different situation between them, and my husband and myself on the other side. So I remember that holiday with a lot of dark clouds over it. And besides my parents, there was Hitler in Vienna already, and my brother was gone already, I suppose so, I can't quite remember the dates. And I remember that Professor Elschnig did not once ask about my parents, and that was certainly on purpose, because he didn't want to stir up any more difficulties.

Just before we come on to the Hitler era, did your children have the same sort of education as you'd had, and your brothers had had?

No, it was different, because as I say, in Prague, this being Jewish, German Jewish, set you into a set of people, you could not hop out, you know, out. George - Jiri at the time - he went to the German Protestant elementary school, where there were mainly gentile children, but also a lot of Jewish boys and girls. And that is the first time he really got into...knew about it, let's say that. Dorothy on the other hand, she went to a school where there were many more Jewish girls than gentile girls, and there she knew about Jewishness much sooner because of that. So, they both went to German speaking schools, and only after Hitler came, George then had a Czech governess, we had a Czech governess at home then, so that George could take his school examinations in German at school, and in Czech at home. So he was brought up in the last years before he left - after all he left when he was not yet thirteen - but he had the two last years, which would be Gymnasium, in both languages, and not only in German.

Incidentally, were the boys circumcised?

No.

They weren't?

No.

So, in your family, again, your own family...

My husband was circumcised, but my son not.

And there was no desire on his part, or anybody's part, to do it?

No.

And the same presumably with bar mitzvah, they didn't have bar mitzvah. No bar mitzvah, no. Whether my husband had a bar mitzvah I wouldn't even be able to tell you, I don't know. I suppose he had, but I don't know.

It's interesting that you assimilated...

Completely.

Yet identified.

Yes.

Partly because you had no choice.

It was the normal thing, in the set of people I lived, to which I belonged. That's what I always say, it is, to my mind, your personality only grows in the set of people, the background, you have. Except if you get thrown out, through some upheaval like Hitler.

Now, presumably the children again developed much the same way as your brothers did: little or no Jewish life, little or no Jewish friends?

None at all. Here, well George, when he joined the Air Force, he then had a very good friend who was of Jewish origin.

This is already in England?

That was in England. But there, no, his friends were non Jewish. German gentiles and Czech gentiles, not a Jewish child in the house. And Dorothy, she had Jewish children in the house, yes.

Jewish friends?

Jewish girlfriends or their brothers, yes, yes. Whereas his not, he never had that.

So you have very happy memories of your childhood in Vienna, somewhat different memories of Prague, but today, do your children have happy memories of Prague? Because they didn't know Vienna to any extent did they?

Oh no, they knew...their happy memories, that is the astonishing thing, their happy memories are the Austrian holidays.

Oh right, that's interesting.

Dorothy I'm not quite sure. Dorothy might have quite happy memories of Prague. George very little, [bb] typo I feel sure: their families. But he never had the wish to go back, whereas Dorothy did go back, and she talks more of Czechoslovakia; whereas he not, he remembers everything in Austria and the mountains and this that and the other, whereas she remembers more of Prague. And that is also an astonishing thing, but then he was younger.

Yes, they were what, two years apart?

Two-and-a-half years, nearly three years apart, yes. It does make a difference, yes, yes.

Well I wonder if we can now come forward to the slump period of 1929, then leading on to the rise of Hitler in Germany, and leading through there. How were you affected by all this?

How was I personally affected? I don't think it affected me very much. I knew about it, but...

The slump you mean?

Slump, is that the right word? The scare, the fear of Hitler?

No, even before that, when there were Reichmarks by the millions.

Oh, that is something else. There I was still in Vienna, and then I married in that time. And my husband having Czech money and Austrian money, we got for the equivalent of three hundred Czech kronas, the furniture of a whole Biedermeier room. So that had...I was not brought up to, and I have no sense of money, alas. And, I've been carried on hands, people look after me in this respect, because they know I'm no good, and I've been lucky that I have a good pension from the Germans. So I try not to think of money. And at the time I didn't have anything to do with it.....

End of F894, Side B

Track 7 (F895, Side A)

Were you aware of the unemployment for example that was taking place in Germany at that time?

No. No, well, I read the paper, one knew something, but one could not - or at least I could not - visualize it or take part in anything like that.

As far as you know, it had no effect on your husband's business, for example, in that period?

No no. Czechoslovak...the business was all right. And my husband, being very Czecho-patriotic in this respect, he did everything for the Czechs; and perhaps it would have been wiser if I had had more say, or would have been more interested, I might have organised coming here sooner or something like that, and the tragedy would not have happened as it did happen then. Because there was...we had the main centre, I think I told you, in Austria, but it was originated in Czechoslovakia, in Prague, the firm, and there was my father-in-law, who was very enterprising, he started that one in the Austrian Alps, in Carinthia, and he started a branch in Yugoslavia in Croatia. And we could have...there was a lot of money in Croatia, and I remember they bought up a plastic factory there, and against my wish because I...(although I had nothing to say, I had no say in this), but I remember saying it, "Instead of spending money in a plastic...(I didn't know what plastic was) in a factory that makes plates - I've still got one of those plates - why not put money into England? I don't want my son, when he grows up, to have to go to a Czech university or a German one; I hate that fight between Czechs and Germans, I want him to have one country. And why not?" And my brother-in-law had two boys too, a little older, why don't those boys all go to England to English boarding schools and be brought up, instead of not knowing are they this, are they Jews, are they Czechs, are they Austrians, what are they? I remember this big fight, and I was pooh-poohed and laughed at by my family.

Now this was what, in the early Thirties?

That must have been in the end...'29 or something like that.

By which time your children were...five and seven...

Well they were little children still at the time, yes.

Quite young children, yes. So you weren't really aware of what was happening in the big world?

I was aware that the Mark was down, that the Austrian Schilling was no good at all, that when we were in Alt Aussee and took our dirty laundry to the laundrette...not laundrette, to the laundry, to a lady who did the laundry, that I had to take a whole bag with paper money and pay out sheets of paper money.

Reichmarks?

In Austrian Schillings.

Oh, Austrian Schillings.

Kronen at the time. And that I knew. But I was aware that it had nothing to do with me and my life, which is very sad really, to think of it.

What was your first conscious memory of the coming to power of Hitler and the Nazis, and...had you been aware of 'Mein Kampf' for example, a few years earlier when he was imprisoned?

Oh yes, yes.

You were aware of all this?

Yes, and I wanted to read it, and I'm not even sure whether I didn't read it. Because at the time in Czechoslovakia you had these great worries already, the Sudeten Deutsche, and Runciman don't forget,

that was already in the year '38, and it had started already in '36, '35. Oh we were fully aware of that, yes.

Ah, but we're going back even earlier, because 'Mein Kampf' was written in the middle Twenties.

Yes, well at that time I didn't really read it or was...no, no, not...I personally not, perhaps others did.

What was your first feeling, your first recollection of Nazi Germany and Nazism and Hitler, and your fears, if any, at that time?

I had no fears at that time at all. Germany was Germany, and I must confess now, I don't think I thought very much about it. Whether my husband did or not, I don't know. He thought much more than I did - perhaps he did, but he would not worry me. I don't think we...look, the summer holidays were in Austria or in the Dolomites; what happened in Germany didn't...I don't know, I don't...

Would you say that this carried on even until...even after Hitler came to power in Germany?

Yes.

So it really only came to a head in your life, and your mind at the time of the Anschluss?

Well I knew about it, but I didn't...look, my husband said in the year '39, he said, "They won't come to Czechoslovakia. What should he do with those Czechs?" And I said, "This he will do with the Czechs."

To come back, a year earlier, 1938 wasn't it, the Anschluss.

There he was in Vienna, yes. And there was in full of fear already, and there... I mean, that fortnight in Marienbad was horrible, because of Runciman, and because of the fights between the Czechs and the Germans, the Nazi Germans. And that was already, oh there we knew long before that, one was in fear already.

Now were you in fear as a Czech, or in fear as a Jew?

As a Jew.

So when were you first aware of Hitler's insane hatred of the Jews?

Oh immediately. When Hitler came...oh, we knew that in...we knew that in...when he was in...after all, in Germany it was also against...we knew about the Kristalnacht and all these things. Of course one knew that. But somehow, one led a normal...one continued to live a normal outward life.

Something of an ostrich?

Yes.

Burying your heads in the sand?

Yes.

Even with Kristalnacht, even as late as that?

Yes. In Czechoslovakia they were like that...not everybody, not everybody: very many prepared. My husband did not prepare, and wouldn't hear of it. But then as I think I told you, he had a cancer growing and we didn't know. He was a sick man without really outwardly knowing it. Whether this cancer of the thyroid affected...it certainly affected his outlook on life, and his capability to make decisions. He suddenly became much more quiet and let me do things, and I didn't know why.

Now, this was, when was this?

That was in the year '37 it had already started.

So he was in his late forties?

Yes. Yes. Very young.

And he was undergoing treatment in Prague?

He was operated on in Prague, and he then came back home, after an awful operation, and three weeks later we had to leave our house, because the Nazis took the house. We had a jolly bad time at the time.

Can you tell us about this, and when it was?

Well you know, when Hitler came to Prague, in March '39, we tried to get out. And we joined, after all sorts of difficulties, we joined a train to leave Czechoslovakia for England. My brother-in-law and the boys were...his boys were here already. And we joined that train with my children and my nephew and another little girl, to come out.

And your husband?

And my husband. And we were...Tolar took us in our car to the station. And we were turned back at the Czech-German frontier. That was the first time we really got into close contact with Nazi and Czech officials, German and Czech. And were kept back, the train moved on without us, some Jews could get through by all sorts of swindles, and I always envied them that they could do it, but my husband wasn't anybody who dared or would swindle, so we didn't. And we were turned back...

You mean bribery?

Bribery, or false papers, or such things. You had to do such things if you wanted to save, and he didn't. So, we were turned back, and we had a terrible time in that little station there. The first time that my poor children were scared. We were not allowed to leave the room, we were...for hours we sat in this stinking room till the Germans then sent us back, in a train back home, back to Prague.

Where was this?

That was...what was...I'm trying to remember the...was it Münch...it was the frontier between Austria...between Czechoslovakia and Germany. I can't tell you what it was called.

Doesn't matter.

It was where the Sudeten Germans had put their new frontier, a small station, and they stopped the trains there and one showed all one's papers and one's tickets and everything and you opened up luggage and so on, and then you were turned out of your carriage and were taken in to that restaurant of that station. And then hours and hours later, we were put into a train back to Prague.

Now in the meantime you had moved out of your lovely house, you had told the staff...

No, no no no no, no. No, that was still the time when we were in the lovely house before Ernst had his operation.

Yes, but what I mean is, you had closed the door, hoping to get the train to England...

That's right, but in the house you had the staff; the furniture, the staff, everything.

They didn't know you were going, the staff?

They knew, my staff, we were such friends. They knew we were going. And my little nephew from Vienna who was with me, he couldn't come with us because they had other papers, he had stayed at

home with my Czech governess, with the children's Czech governess. So he and the staff stayed at home. Now, Tolar the driver took us to the station, and being Tolar the driver, a phenomenon that man really, he got in touch with the Jewish Community, and with the stations, again and again, and found out that we were turned back. He was at the station when we were herded out of that carriage; there was Tolar, taking our suitcases, and said, "We're going home now." And there was my son, hopping his arms round Tolar, "Good, good, we can go home again."

So, you went home?

So we went home. And that was in March...

1939?

Yes. And the children went to England with the Quaker children's transport in the end of June or beginning of July '39.

They had no trouble?

Well, it was trouble enough, but they were taken out, and here in England my brother-in-law took hold of them and my aunts, and they were then looked after and went to schools here. I can tell you about that if you want to know that.

Who arranged it in Prague?

These Quakers. I and the Quakers.

You and the Quakers?

Yes.

You went to see these Quakers?

Well, I heard about that, the Jewish Community gave you such notices that such things are happening; I heard about it from other parents that there were these transports. So I went to the places where these ladies, or these gentlemen worked, and I got in touch and I found out. And I had put them in already in May to a transport, but my son had mumps and they couldn't go, but they took them on then in June, in the last transport out. And that was done by a Quaker lady and a Quaker gentleman. And a big train full of children between one year and sixteen, and Dorothy was just beyond that, because she wanted...they wanted to go in May, then she would have still been accepted, but it was June or July, but they did accept her, because she was on the other list, so they took her; she was the eldest.

Had the children ever experienced anti-Semitism, in Czechoslovakia?

In Czechoslovakia, Dorothy did not, because everybody knew in any case, and George, George's friends, none of them. That I don't know, whether he personally had any unpleasant experiences; not that I know of, I think he would have told me. Because, he had very good Czech friends at the end, very good friends, who were, as I always say, a bit naïve, and didn't quite know. And the German friends, they were Protestant German friends, and that stopped then. But there were never any...there was no animosity, it just fell apart, because he then went to a Czech school and they remained in their German Protestant school.

Now you refer from time to time to Catholics, obviously, and you refer to Protestants. In your mind, and in your recollection, was there much difference between the two, in terms of the way you were treated and how you got on with them and so on?

Not towards me ever, never. Whether there was any difference...in Prague there certainly was a difference, but that also was because German and Czech...and belonging to the people who paid more in income tax or less income tax, in Prague you had these horrible statuses. And if you belonged...in Vienna I didn't belong to any; my father...there was nothing. But in Prague, through my husband's

wealth or position in the alcohol manufacturing and so on, he was in a position, and that...you belonged to that. Whether you liked it or not, that was beside the point. I did not, I had other friends as well. But you belonged to that department.

So most of your colleagues and people you knew, and friends, were Catholic rather than Protestant?

Not in Prague.

But in Vienna yes?

In Vienna yes.

So anyway, you got your children on safely...

They got off safely, and were taken over here and they went to school here, first to Frensham Heights - I don't whether you know about Frensham Heights school, they took a lot of refugee children. And then when the bombing started my brother-in-law went up north, and George went to Dauntsey's public school in Wiltshire, and Dorothy went to a school in the Lake District, to Ambleside. And my brother-in-law moved up to a little hotel there and stayed during the war, he was up there near Kendal somewhere, near Ambleside.

Now this is your husband's family?

My husband's elder brother.

When had he left?

He left Vienna, because he lived in Vienna; he left Vienna.

And when did he leave?

He left Vienna and came to Prague, and took a lovely flat in Prague, and was fully aware that he will never leave Prague because the Nazis will never come to Prague.

But he did leave.

I made him kick out; the boys had difficulties in the German Gymnasium, and I said, "How long are you going to let Otto and Tony be kicked about in that German school here? What on earth are you doing here? Get out!" And I organised...at the time my husband was indecisive, as I said, he was...frail. And I took over, I took over. That's the first time in my life that I took over.

So when did he leave Vienna?

He left Vienna in...when the Nazis were there already; we had a funny thing, if you really want to know these things. It's all so grotesque. His eldest son was on a skiing holiday...

This is your nephew, through marriage?

Yes, lovely chap, ugly and lovely!

Otto?

Otto. He lives in Canada, is married to a Swiss gentile, and has three daughters and various grandchildren. And the younger one lives here in Chislehurst, and is married to an English girl, and has grandchildren, lots of children. They are all my lovely relatives here. He was there. I got him out, and I said, "And here you live in a glorious, completely uncomfortable flat, which costs a fortune; all your own property is in lift-vans in Rotterdam, what's the good of being here?" "Oh, I am the firm." So I said, "The firm will be gone, get out and let your children go to an English school and give them..." (his wife had died). And so they got out from Prague then.

And how did they get out? Did they get a permit to go to England?

Yes. Through...first of all they had to put down money, which was possible, was sent out from Yugoslavia at the time. He had to show that he would not be...

A drain on the...

A drain on England. And Otto had spent summer holidays to learn English - they both spoke English the boys - with Beecham, with the conductor.

Thomas Beecham?

Thomas Beecham. And he got an invitation from that family. So Otto and Tony also got some invitation of somebody, don't ask me...

Was he a musician, your brother-in-law?

No. No, but they took in Austrian children; I don't know how that...that was done through Vienna, I have no idea how he got there. And so...

But the Beecham family sponsored...

Sponsored Otto. And because Otto was sponsored, and his father had the amount of money so that he could come in, or even more I think, and the younger boy was sponsored by I don't know who, Tony. So they got out, and went to school at Dauntsey's.

And how did the father get out?

With the boys. That was quite easy at the time.

Oh, was it.

Hitler wasn't in Prague yet. They went out like normal human beings. So that was not difficult.

It was easy to leave Prague perhaps, but it wasn't necessarily that easy to get into England.

But they had the permits, they had their permits, yes yes yes. So they could come here, and he stayed in a boarding house in Harrington Gardens somewhere in South Kensington, and the boys went to school, they went to Dauntsey's first and then to university. And my son then went first with Dorothy to Frensham Heights, and then to Dauntsey's as well, with his cousin.

You had your brother-in-law over here, without a wife because his wife had died in Vienna, and his two boys. You had also your aunt...

I had my English aunt, with her family, and I was constantly in touch with them, we were friends. And her elder daughter had been staying with us in Prague, years, always a long time, and in Vienna she really belonged to the family, Evelyn, and my children loved her. And so Evelyn and my brother-in-law met them at Victoria Station when they arrived, and she took over to help, Evelyn. So the children immediately had their beloved cousin Evelyn, English cousin, speaking English, who organised their life here in London in the beginning.

Now you were back in...by this time you had gone back to Prague?

I was back in Prague, yes.

But having taken over, because your husband by this time was ill...

Yes, he then had the operation...you see, they left in June or July...

'39?

'39. And I remember then, on our way back, when we came back to Prague, my husband was very hoarse, and his voice died down. And first, one did see the doctor...we went back to our home and life went on with my little nephew, and the governess and all...quite a normal life. And then Ernst began to have difficulties in producing voice, and so one went to the doctor, the doctor sent one to a voice specialist, to a throat and nose man; and one said that, and the other said that, and he had this treatment and that treatment. And, it didn't get better, and it didn't get worse, and he got very tired. And then we were invited by one of those friends where I said I had all these funny connections with the art world; we had supper there, and my brother-in-law had telephoned from London, home to us, where that parlourmaid rang me then at our friends, and said, "Your brother-in-law has just phoned from London, would you ring him back at number so-and-so." And we did, and I don't know what he wanted to tell us at the time, and my husband went to the telephone. And two days later, or one day later, a doctor friend of ours telephoned me and said, "Pepe...(Joseph is Pepe in Austria) Pepe phoned me from London, he wants me to see Ernst, because of that voice." So I said, well - he was a surgeon, that doctor - and I said, "Look, it's got nothing to do with you, doctor, because it is in the throat, and we have been to see Dr. Silberer and we had to see Dozent Bumba, and this and that." So he said, "Look, I'll come round to you." And he came round. His girls went to school with my daughter, we were very good friends.

Non Jewish?

He was Jewish, and the wife not. He was Jewish, he ran the Jewish Hospital all through the War in Prague. He operated on me when I came back with a hernia. And, he came and he looked at the chest and everything. And then he saw a little knob under the skin, here. And he said, "Ernst, have you had that a long...how long have you got that?" And Ernst said, "Really, I don't know, I never took any notice of it, I didn't know I had anything here." So Dr. Ruzicka said, "You're coming tomorrow to the operating theatre there and there. I will have a look at that."

Now this was already...

That was already in Hitler's time.

This is when, '38 or '39?

That was '39.

'39. After the children had gone to England.

Yes. And so we went to that Jewish nursing home, where the Jewish doctor could come and make a biopsy. And he came out and he said, "I'm terribly sorry, but I shall arrange for it, we will have to make a cancer operation." I said, "But this..." He said, "Yes." Inside as well, not only outside. And this is what we did.

Now Hitler was already in Czechoslovakia.

Hitler was already there, yes.

Was there any effect initially on the Jewish life?

Oh very much so.

But the Jewish Hospital could continue?

The Jewish Hospital was there, and the Jewish nursing homes, the private nursing homes, were still under Jewish control. And the Jewish doctors were allowed to work with Jewish patients, but the gentiles were not allowed to work on Jewish patients. Nevertheless, I always...you see, you can't...nevertheless, George went to school with a delightful little German Protestant girl called Bumba.

He was a German 'docent', you know what a 'docent' is? That is not the professor...between professor...the consultant. The consultant for...surgical consultant at a German hospital in Prague. And he was a friend of our Jewish surgeon - they were all friends, it didn't matter really, up to then. And when we arrived at that hospital, for this operation, my doctor, my surgeon, Ruzizka, said Bumba is coming to help. Now that was something quite outstanding, that the Protestant German consultant surgeon of the German University Hospital, comes to the Jewish nursing home, to help a Jewish... Look, these are things people don't know...

Against Hitler's law?

That meant that he took the risk. Hat off! And then you want me...everybody wants me always to say horrible things about them, I can't, I can't.

So what happened then?

So he had this operation, and he was...I stayed there - no, I didn't stay there, Tolar took me to and fro. And, he came home, and three weeks later we had to leave the house where we had been staying since we were married, and go into a flat, because the German officers wanted that house. And there again, I always had to laugh at everything, a bitter laugh, but I do, I have that black humour or something. There was a lady came to see the house; her husband was a top man in, I don't know what; she came to look at the house, whether she.....

End of F895, Side A

Track 8 (F895, Side B)

Yes, so the lady came...

She came to look at the house, and she did take it then. And then we were informed, I had two weeks time, to get another home for us. And in two weeks' time the house must be cleared of everything, so that this family from Westphalia could move in with their furniture and their children. I had a fortnight's time.

Did you know the name of this lady?

I've forgotten. I was just thinking of it now. I just have forgotten. They were quite top people I am told. I don't know them. I don't think I will be able to remember it, even though I squeeze my memory, I don't think I will.

But I mean, you were obviously amongst many who were being told to get out of their homes?

The whole district, all the houses in that pretty suburb had to leave; because there were more or less very many Jewish houses, only the gentiles were allowed to stay in there, and all the Jewish people who had their nice villas and their gardens there had to leave. But most of these people had gone already, they had gone away, to wherever; they had left the houses either empty, or with their staffs there, and so that wasn't like with us, who were still living in it.

In the meantime, did you have the family business still?

Yes, we had the family business, but that is again another story, which, if I... It went on, but then, we then had something called 'Treuhänder', T-R-E-U-H-A (with knobs on it)-N-D-E-R; that was somebody in charge, what will you call that in...

Manager?

No, it was more than a manager. [In effect, trustee/administrator.]

Director?

No, he was in charge, he was...you had to give him all the...all the authorities. Also, with the monopoly of...you know, that was a State monopoly, the alcohol, and the chemist. So that was...with the government thing. All that had to be put into the Germans' hands. So we had...not we, our firm already had a Czech director, because my husband had to sign, with his signature, all the papers had to be signed: that was a sort of go-between the normal life and the German life already. So we had the Czech one. And my husband was sitting at his desk, and the Czech gentleman had just left his private office, my husband's private office, when the door opened and in walked - I wasn't there, but I was told, and I met him afterwards - a tall man in an SS uniform, the black uniform with the SS on his things, and high black boots. And he came in and said, "From now on I am your 'Treuhänder'." And my husband said, "We have a Czech, Mr. so-and-so is our..." He said, "I know, but now I am the 'Treuhänder', I am above all that." And to make a very long and very amusing and interesting story short, he became one of our best friends. There again, a peculiar miracle in my life, but he was really very kind to us. And, after talking to my husband, and looking at what the whole business was, he said, "Look, I need your help, I can't do that alone, I have been up to now a travelling agent for Maizena", that is like the flour, the rice flour, or some sort like that, Maizena it was called, you have that here to in England, if you make a pudding you mix it in. And he was a German, a Sudeten German, and he was a traveller for such things. And because he had something to do with food, they thought that he would be the right man for taking over a large factory for alcohol. Well, in any case, he did take over, and my husband worked for many months with him, together. And he then, when we had to leave the house...that, we had left the house already, he then helped us to get a telephone, to get all sorts of...easing our life.

And yet he was in the SS?

Yes. And yet...and he, with me, was extremely kind and amusing, and his wife asked me for addresses of...hairdressers and so on. I was on astonishingly friendly terms with this rather primitive couple, and got on very well with them.

Who?

I.

Which couple?

He and his wife. They then came, and he then...he came from Reichenberg, from Liberec, and he needed a flat, and the flat was to be given to him in one of my husband's firm's houses. And he got a flat, and then he wanted furniture, and why not have some of our furniture? Our furniture had been taken away from the house when we had to leave it, and that was stored in the factory, and Mr. Grünzner was his name, G-R-U(with dots on)-N-Z-N-E-R.

He was the SS man?

He was the SS man. Mr. Grünzner said, "Now will you help me with curtains, and furnishing?" And I said, "Mr. Grünzner, this is not the right attitude; I am...you know how Jewish I am, I cannot give you..." "Of course you can, and don't be ridiculous. If you go with me, nothing will happen to you, and I shall look at your furniture in the factory; I need a cot for the child, little girl, and I've seen during...you have children's beds there, little cots. I'll take one of them if you allow it." And I said, "Mr. Grünzner, a Jewish child has been sleeping in that bed." So he said, "Stop making such horrible jokes." This is the way I got on with him. And that is...I don't know. I don't know how I should...switch that off. (BREAK IN RECORDING)

OK.

Now, about Mr. Grünzner, well he was...he organised his life then according to what was his job in that office. And he needed my husband's help, and he was extremely polite and helpful with my husband, who was after all having X-ray treatments at the time; he organised that we had a telephone in the house, by telling his authorities, the German Nazi authorities - I don't know who they were - that he needs the telephone because he must be informed by my husband. So he had it put, it was paid for by the office, it was under the office's...in Fischl's Sons name, nothing to do with us privately, but there was a telephone. And he said all the Jews in the house here are allowed to use it. Yes. Then he came into...we lived in one room then, and shared the bathroom and the kitchen with four other people. We had then to leave our lovely flat, not only the house but the flat afterwards, and were then sent into a house where there were Jewish flats. And every Jewish family had one room, and this room we shared with my little nephew, who at the time could not leave, and the two of us. And Mr. Grünzner came to look at that place, and then he said, "What is it you really want here? We'll put the telephone here." he helped us to get the right...my own right furniture into there; he organised the transport of all that to help me. And it worked beautifully. Then he said, "What is it you need?" And I said, "Well, I really think, it's summer now, and the bit of butter and milk we are allowed gets very bad in the kitchen, and my landlady, the other Jewish lady in that flat, won't allow an ice thing in the kitchen, because she's not used to it." So he said, "Good, I know exactly what I'm going to give you as a housewarming present here." And he brought a little electric...gas...electric freezing thing on four feet, it looked like a little bedside table.

A little fridge?

Just...a little fridge, just big enough for the bit of fruit, or butter, or sausage or whatever we had, in our room. And there wasn't a thing he did not try, to make life easier for us.

His wife as well?

His wife was a silly, pretty little housewife, who invited me occasionally. And that was quite difficult because they were a bit foolish in all this. He was so proud of his position that he thought nothing could happen, which I thought not very wise. And it was I who very often said...he said, "Let's go and

have coffee in that coffee house" when I did...to help them, or do something with them. I said, "No, I'm not going to any coffee house with you, even if I have no Jewish star on; I'm not going out with you, there are quite a lot of people who know my face and who know you." "Ridiculous. Nothing can happen to you if you go with me." And I said, "Mr. Grünzner, I don't." And it was really I who took care of him, because the moment we were gone, after a very short time, he was imprisoned.

He was imprisoned?

He was imprisoned, yes. Because he had helped too many Jews.

How old a man was he?

He was over forty, between forty and fifty.

And was he...did he have any culture, was he...

He was well spoken; I don't know, I didn't probe into...he was well spoken, he was very polite, he obviously had a nice home life. She was simple but also a nice creature, and their little daughter who slept in that Jewish bed, she was a pretty little thing, and quite innocent. And I remember having coffee with them once and being very foolish and going to the window and the little girl was outside in the yard, playing with other children, and she saw me at the window and put up her little hand, and said, "Heil Hitler Frau Fischl!" And that of course made me never go back again, because I was afraid something would happen to him. Because that little girl pronounced my name, the name is Jewish, and the woman, the concierge of that house knew about us, and I was afraid.

You were afraid...

Of repressions to him and to us. I mean, if he was imprisoned, we would have been sent off, or shot. It was the same danger for him and for us. They would have sent him to the front as a soldier, and we would have been shot.

So he was never rude to you, or...

Never. Never, not once.

Never called you 'Jew woman', or anything.

Never, never, to me, and as kind and helpful to my frail husband as you could wish for. And when I came back to Prague...

When?

After Auschwitz and Oederan, and Theresienstadt again...

After Liberation?

After the Liberation, I had a flat in that house. That was again organised by somebody else. I had help in organising everywhere. He came suddenly one day; the concierge, it was the same Mrs. Wolff, who was always there, she rang the telephone into the flat where I lived, and said, "This horrible Nazi man is here." I said, "Who?" "Grünzner. He wants to talk to you." So I said, "He's not a horrible Nazi man, will you send him up immediately." So he came up. And then he told me about being imprisoned for so-and-so long, and now he wanted a Czech, if possible a Jewish solicitor, to help him to get out of Czechoslovakia.

Absolutely amazing.

Absolutely amazing. And then, in the end when we had long talks, he said, "Look, what I really would want, I have the possibility for a job (I don't know, somewhere near Bonn), but what I really would want is to come and work in your Carinthian office...in your factory in Carinthia. I know all about it

from my work in Prague; I know all about the people there; I know that your brother-in-law got it back. You haven't been there yet but you will go back there. Organise that I can come and work for you there." My brother-in-law wouldn't have it. That, I couldn't deal with that. I would have taken him. Because I remembered my husband saying, "If ever we get alive back, and I get back to my office, he is the first director I would make, whatever happens." He was such a fantastic businessman, so clever, and so...

Decent?

Decent.

Despite his SS uniform?

Yes. And I once said, "Mr. Grünzner, how is it you wear these black boots and that?" And so he looked at me and he said, "There must be such people too...and don't ask stupid questions."

There must be...?

"Such people too. Don't ask stupid questions." And that was the only answer I got. Hat off to that man! And there you see, how can I, how can I be...anti...

Let's go back now then to the time that your...he had become...he'd taken over the factory?

He had taken over, yes.

You had moved into, first one and then a second...

That's right, into one room only. One room only, where we then shared the bathroom and the kitchen with an elderly couple, and...

And your husband was still having treatment?

My husband was having X-ray treatment in a Czech surgery, because there were no Jews there any more who had X-ray apparatuses.

Was he allowed to go into a...

Into a Czech one, yes, but not into a German one.

Oh I see.

Oh, Czechs were third class people of course. They were nearly as bad as Jews or gypsies, for the Germans.

And so what happened?

So we were there, and first he went to the office for quite a long time, had to be back at eight o'clock at night, because there was a curfew for Jews from eight o'clock, and worked with Grünzner. And then we still had a few Jewish employees there who then slowly went off to Theresienstadt and so on. And then, by and by he didn't go there so often any more. And there were other things, the Jewish Community then wanted help, to discuss with people who were sent off to Theresienstadt or to other camps, they needed office helps, so Ernst went and helped there. And I did the baking of bread, and packing for people who were sent off to camps. I got the telephone call, or a letter from the Jewish Community, "Will you be there and there, Mrs. or Mr...is going off to...will you help pack?" And such things. So one did these things, and besides I had my old auntie Camilla still there, and another old aunt Gusti. And my husband helped to organise all the, whatever one had to write for the Community or for the Germans. Then you had to give up your television...not television, one didn't have, but radio, and your electrical iron, and everything, you had to give up these things slowly. And that had to be organised, that they go away in time, with the help of my beloved Mr. Tolar, he would collect the

things from the various old aunts and people, and take them then to the Jewish Community, because he was never afraid of doing such things. And then I had my little nephew there still, who went to class, German-Jewish classes for a while, and then he didn't go. And he made quite a lot of trouble, which I now I'm very sorry that I didn't understand why he made the trouble. That's hindsight. And so one was fully occupied during that time. We had visitors, we had friends coming every Thursday; we had a gramophone, one of the things Mr. Grünzner organised that we could keep, the gramophone with records. And so we were six people every Thursday, we had records, gramophone records, and a cup of tea and something to eat, and then they went home, they had to be at home at eight. And, so life went on, and I must say, those friends one had at the time were much more to my liking than all the society friends one had before that.

But, by this time you were actually having some involvement with the Jewish community, as you've said.

Oh very much, yes, yes, yes. Very much. And at that time, this Mr. Zolka we were talking about who organised that museum, he came, he was one of those every Thursday. And, very delightful people.

When had you first to don the yellow Star?

I don't know the date, but at the time when we lived in that...already when we lived in that elegant flat after our house, we had the Star already, so it must have been...

Early '39, after Hitler came into...

And the children didn't have it yet. They didn't have it yet. So, it must have been late '39 or the beginning of '40, I'm not quite sure.

And what was your feeling, after all these years of being...hardly a Jew, but suddenly you were having to wear a Star?

I thought the others ought to be ashamed of it, why should I be ashamed of it? I was born it, I didn't make myself be Jewish. I was a born Jew, so why shouldn't I be it?

And your husband?

My husband was much more pro Jewish than I was really; he also wore it, didn't have any feeling about it at all. But it was...of course it was most uncomfortable: you were not allowed to be in the first two carriages of a tram, you had to go to the third carriage. Now if a tram only had two you had to wait for one with three, or you had to go...you could only go to that one post office. It had its drawbacks, it wasn't only a medal, an order.

Hardly.

So you had to...and you had to be at home at eight o'clock.

But, did you have enough food in those days, at that time?

Again, it's one of those funny things in my life. We were at the time...when we moved from our house into a lovely flat, which I organised during the fortnight of my...I had free to do it in, I organised a gorgeous flat. And all the transport of the furniture, everything was organised, and the things that were too much they went into the...

Factory.

Factory, where those Jewish children's cots were. And, there we had a lovely flat, and...(what was I talking about?)

About the food.

The food. And, this...I think I told you that I had a kitchen maid, or house maid, who didn't want to leave us, did I tell you that? She was very happy with us, she didn't want to leave us, but when we went into that flat, there was only one room, and I had to have the cook and...the parlourmaid I think she was...no, only the cook. There was only one room and I said, "Look, that doesn't work. I don't know how we'll do it." So she said, "Oh, that's quite all right. I won't stay the night. My sister..." There's a big yard, the house is on four sides, it was what you would call a court...

Courtyard?

No, but the...such a house with...like the modern houses here now, the houses with flats, the mansion...I think you call them a mansion. So, in the back one - we were in the front with a view onto the river - and at the back there is a little delicatessen and shop down there, "And that belongs to my sister and her husband. So I will sleep down there, and work for you up here. And besides (one was Marenka, and the other was Anuska) we will get you all the food you need from down there." So we had plenty.

So you were never short of food in those early days?

At that time, not yet, no.

But did Grünzner help you get food as well?

No. No, that he didn't. He knew that we had it, and he wouldn't say a word about that. That we knew then, we found out that he wouldn't say. We had meat which wasn't allowed, or we had fruit which wasn't allowed. I didn't put it under his nose, but he knew about it.

So when did you have to dismiss your staff?

Well then when we...

When you left the big flat, some of them.

When I left the big flat, then I only had the governess. And the governess did not stay with us, she had one of those little...in that house where Mr. Grünzner was, she had a little what they called 'garconniere', a tiny one-room flat with a balcony at the top, in that house.

And she stayed with you?

She lived there, and she cooked for us.

The governess?

The governess. Which I didn't like at all, but she wanted to...she was another person, I was always afraid of her; she was a Czech Communist, a fervent Czech, and wanted...she was... It's a horrible thing to tell you, when I came back after the War, into her little room (she knew about that from Tolar), she was not there because she had gone to Brno for a day or two, and when she came back there then, she said to my face, and afterwards to Dorothy's face, "It's a pity your father didn't come back. It's not much good that your mother came back." I think, and I believe she would have wanted to marry my husband. For my mind, the position of a governess is something horrible. All that came later on hindsight. But she thought that would be a good life for her, and he was intelligent, so was she; she was very well schooled, she was a very knowledgeable, elegant woman. But I didn't know at the time, when she came to us, or even for quite some time, that she had quite a lot of connections with the underground Czech Communist movement. All that I only found out afterwards.

Now you had staff with you, or her with you?

She did not live with us, she came in the morning and she went home in the afternoon. She cooked our luncheon, and helped a bit. But she really kept an eye on us, for her side. And I was not able to say no, I was afraid. Don't forget, this is a thing nobody can realise who hasn't been through such a peculiar

schizophrenic life, that one was afraid, without being allowed to show being afraid, not even to your husband because you didn't want to make him more nervous than he was in any case. And knowing things from behind, or the back: that you had to be afraid of your former housemaid from Austria because she was German really in her heart, the Czech governess because she was a Czech Communist in her heart. I never knew where I was.

You couldn't trust anyone?

I could not trust anyone.

Tolar you did trust, even in those days?

Tolar I trusted. I don't know why but I did. I did, and I was right...rightly so, I know that now.

And when you moved into the little flat, where you each had a room, then you had no staff presumably?

No, she only came in the morning to do the cooking...

Oh, that was there?

That governess, yes. She stayed to the end, because of my little nephew - not that she did much help there, on the contrary she beat him. That was a nasty thing, and I don't like talking about that. But this is...had nothing really to do with politics or that life. And he then moved into our one-room...first he stayed up there with her, because we thought it would be easier, and then when I found out that she was nasty to him, he came and slept with us in that room.

He was how old?

He was twelve.

Twelve then.

Yes. And he came with us to Theresienstadt, and he left Theresienstadt three days after I left, with the very last transport to Auschwitz, and that's the last I know of him. Yes, that's horrid.

You went from this one room direct to Theresienstadt, did you?

To Theresienstadt, yes, yes.

So when you were in the large...the lovely flat, after you'd moved from the big one, then you had staff?

Yes, there I still had the parlourmaid and the cook, and that nice young girl who lived with her sister in the delicatessen.

And you had a governess?

And the governess, and Tolar for a while.

When you moved into the one-room flat, then you just had the governess?

I only had the governess, and only because I was afraid to tell her not to come any more.

Lily, how long were you actually in Theresienstadt?

From late summer '42; my husband died in March '44, and I went off to Auschwitz.....

End of F895, Side B

Track 9 (F896, Side A)

Yes, you went on to Auschwitz for...

I went just for two nights, three...I don't know how long the days were, because it is...I can't remember all these things; I don't know whether you want to know about the two nights and...do you want to know about that?

I will ask you about them, but for the moment I just want to get the picture...

And then we went off to Oederan, not knowing where we were going of course.

Yes. And you got to Oederan, and you stayed there for how long?

I stayed there till spring, till the spring, it was about six months.

That's what, March, April of 1945.

'45, that's right. And then we went...we didn't know where we were going to, because there were the bombings of the railway lines, and the shooting all around us. And we then went back to Theresienstadt. This is a long story which I would like to tell you later on perhaps.

And you were liberated by the Russians, from Theresienstadt.

Yes, in Theresienstadt, in Theresienstadt.

Lily, before I ask you about life in camps, can I just come back on a few points that arose when we last spoke. First of all, if we go back to the problems in the Sudetenland, and the Nazi interest in this problem. I mean, how did you at home react to what was going on? After all, you were German Czech, so I wonder...(BREAK IN RECORDING)

I am thinking about that now, how did I react? I was always, obviously, all my life, such a very Austrian monarchist. Now, Bohemia, the Austrian Bohemia, had these Germans in Czechoslovakia; the Sudeten Germans were the same old Austrians as I was. So, it's a very difficult question for me. I was horrified that the Nazis should take over a very quiet and delightful part of the old Austrian Bohemia. But there always had been unpleasantnesses and quarrels between the Czech and the German people in the north of Bohemia, but one didn't really talk about it, one was so used to it that it wasn't very important. And it only got important when the Nazis pushed them into being...quarrelsome. And then of course we Jews resented that. This is all I can tell you about my feelings: I was horrified that Bohemia would - at that time was, Czechoslovakia - would of course be taken over by the Germans, whereas the Czechs did not believe that; they always thought they might...they would win the war against the Germans at the time. And it was in Prague, there was a sort of upheaval too, and it was quite difficult at the time. And that's why we German-speaking Jews already had difficulties with the Czechs at the time. And later on my husband had a Czech director who had to take over and sign all the business letters together with my husband, because the Czechs also already at the time did not trust the German-speaking Jews. It was a very difficult time already. Of course not what we expected from the Nazis, the German Nazis who came in and took over by and by. Like I told you last time, about having...that my husband had a German 'Treuhänder', and then the German one came in, Mr. Grünzner took over. And this of course happened in every business, and all around. And, consequently one slowly got used to being...nobody any more, that one could not make up one's own mind, or be oneself, because you had to be first afraid of the Czechs, and then afraid of the Germans. And the Czechs resented that of course, and were not very helpful to the Jews either. So, it was quite difficult.

Now, in fact the problems hit your part of the world really a year earlier, in 1938, didn't they, with the Anschluss in Austria.

Yes, in Austria.

How did this affect you, and your family?

Oh it worried me terribly...

What do you remember of it?

Oh I remember it very well, because when Hitler moved in to Vienna, we...there was a great party invited by the richest Jewish family of Czechoslovakia, Petschek, it's a bank house, and they had coal mines in Bohemia. They were enormously rich, and gave big parties, and we were invited to a party, one member of that family, and I refused to go; I was so upset by what we heard from Vienna, that I refused to go. But they phoned us, knowing about my feelings, and asked us to come to the party; they would have to go on with the party, give the party, because the Austrian ambassador was coming to them. And so, one had to put on a happy face, and one's elegant clothes, and go to a party. But you can imagine what I thought about it, with my parents and my brother and my family in Vienna, and knowing that my father would never budge from Vienna. That I knew. And what was going to happen to them, and to all of the Jews there, I worried terribly about that, it was a dreadful shock. But one went to that party because of the Austrian ambassador there, and the other people of that type.

And what happened in fact after the party?

In Austria?

Well, to your...your recollection of the family.

Of my family. Well there are lots of things in...do you really want to know about what happened to my parents? Well, they first had to take in...they had to take in people into their flat; they had to share their flat which was too big for an elderly couple. And they were very lucky, they got as tenants there, the director Glück, and his wife, who was the director of one of the big museums in Vienna - at the moment I can't quite recollect which museum it was - and they knew one another from before, so that wasn't a very bad time, because there was room enough for those two nice elderly couples. I don't know many details about that; my mother later on never talked about it much. My father died in winter, '30...no, '40 only. So for a while they lived there, I don't know any details, I never went back to Vienna, because my husband was so ill then, and one didn't dare to write very much. And from there then, I can't remember even when the Glücks went off to concentration camp, and I don't know about them at all any more. My father died before my mother had to go of course.

Your father died...

My father died there...

Of natural causes?

Yes. But he had never quite taken in why he had to give up his radio, why they had to have people in the flat, although he was quite pleased with Mr...with the director, Glück. I don't know many details, because of not being able to write open letters. My mother and I did exchange letters, but they were so guarded that one didn't really know what was going on. Of course, my mother knew that there would be some awful end. She being a woman, she felt, like I did, that this cannot have a good end, whereas my father was always an optimist, and as you know from before, his thoughts never were very 'réal',(GERMAN PRONUNCIATION), real, so, he somehow managed to keep quite cheerful as far as I know, till his death.

Was he old?

He was eighty-one when he died.

Oh I see, yes. And, did they have to move out of their home?

No, my mother only moved out of that home when she came back from the funeral of my father's.

Because the Nazis made her?

Yes. Yes, they took over, and she then was put, like all the widows and all the old Jewish ladies and gentlemen, were put into single rooms in Jewish flats, like we at the end. And, she then had one room in this 2nd Arrondissement, Vienna, the Jewish one, and I know very little about them, but I know she was able to keep up her maid, her parlourmaid, who didn't live any more in her...because she only had one room, but she came every day and looked after her, that I know.

She was about ten years younger than your father, wasn't she?

Thirteen years younger, yes. And she was...she had a bad heart, she had a heart condition, but otherwise she was all right, and her brains worked, and she was all right. But it must have been dreadful for her, suddenly to come out of a very lovely comfortable flat into one room in a household with other people whom she didn't know. But as...I ought to be ashamed of myself, but I know very little about that, because Mother never talked about it when we met in Theresienstadt.

You never met her until you met in Theresienstadt?

Until I met her in Theresienstadt. And there our lives had been so far apart already, because hers were Vienna and how she could stay alive there, and mine, first, taken up with the worries and the difficulties of my husband's illness and operation, then looking for a flat, then moving from that flat into one room with my little nephew, and working for the Jewish community as a volunteer, packing woman for people who were sent off to concentration camps. There was really no time to worry in this respect, and to know about anything.

Were you able to phone your mother in Vienna?

No, we never dared to phone, but I had a marvellous experience, which is again one of the miracles in my life, if you want to know about it, a lady who communed between us. I don't know whether that is a highly interesting thing. Should I tell you about that now?

Please.

Well, there was...I told you there was a shop of artificial flowers in Prague, in a very beautiful house on the Vaclavske namesti, very elegant shop. This shop was taken over by the Nazis. Now this shop had belonged to a Jewish firm, or family, who had sold artificial flowers: where they got them from I don't know. In any case, the shop was very well adjusted, and very well...good position, and so this Nazi top...one of the top Manufacturers, or factories, for the Nazi name, that shop was taken over by them.

To sell flowers?

No, as an empty shop. They just wanted the shop, because they wanted to put in the amber jewellery and the pottery with amber in it.

Which came from the Baltic?

The amber came from the Baltic, and the pottery was made by the lady who took over. And this lady was Viennese, she had been married, she was divorced; she had been married to one of the top...they made the...the 'Inszenierungs', the directing of the Vienna Opera, and he was very well known, Mr. Kautsky. She was a tall, good-looking, very vivacious woman, and I met her...I didn't know anything about the whole business, till I met her, she was sent to us by a Jewish couple, friends of ours, because she wanted paper flowers for the window of that shop. The shop was situated with the sun shining into the window, the displaying windows, and as she had vases and pottery pots, and this lovely jewellery in this window, she wanted flowers there. And she had a lot of money available for buying fresh flowers, but she had to change the flowers twice a day to keep it as beautiful as she wanted it. And she had met these Jewish friends of mine because she...one of the Czech salesgirls, she took over from the Jewish proprietors who had had this artificial flower shop there before, she fainted there once, and so she called a doctor who lived in that house and had his consulting rooms in that house, and that doctor was Jewish. And by and by they fell in love - this is a very peculiar and rather idiotic story, but it is

very interesting - later on they fell in love. But he came down to help that Czech girl, and she...through him, she met our friends, and our friends told her about my making paper flowers, which were very beautiful. So she came to us, and saw them, and was delighted with them and said, "That's exactly what I want for my shop."

She was Nazi?

She was a Nazi. And I said...she was sent by Jewish friends, I said, "I don't know whether you can use my Jewish flowers for your shop." And she said, "Of course, I can do what I please, because I am in a position where I can do all that. And of course I shall pay for them, whether I pay for the fresh flowers or...I will know what to pay for your flowers." And this lady, Lena Kautsky, was one of our best helps and friends we had till we went to Theresienstadt. This is also a miracle. She...I don't know whether she really did all that, because she...I have the feeling she did it more or less because it was an adventure; she was an adventurous person, she loved danger, and she got herself into danger for the doctor whom she met and fell in love with, and who was sent off much earlier than we were. And we were even in touch, she and I, when we were in Theresienstadt; she offered to send us money. All these things are long...story, and I can only remember bits of it. But people in Theresienstadt had the possibility, through the Czech police who were also in charge of us there, to smuggle out letters, and got in letters and money through the Czechs. She even offered then...I think the money she sent me then got lost. All that is very...that doesn't really matter, the main thing is that she was very helpful, and a very interesting person. And she got in touch with my mother, who went...

When she was still in Vienna?

My mother was in Vienna, and Lena could go to and fro as often as she wanted, and she used to visit my mother and bring her money and foodstuff, and she brought me lace and a brooch from my mother; my mother thought I could save it, but of course I couldn't. So this is the only way I heard that my mother was alive, and how she lived, and that her maid was helping her, and that she had what she needed for food and so on; and we could send money to my mother like that, because my mother had very little money and we got money from our firm still at the time.

It's astonishing that...so this lady, who acted as courier and who was a friend of yours, was apparently a Nazi, from what you were saying?

Well, she was like Mr. Grünzner, who was an SS Nazi and helped. This is what I always talk about, there were Nazis who helped; whether they helped because they thought of their future, or why, at the time I couldn't think of that, I just caught hold of the help that was offered me.

Did you ever ask her, how it was that she was able, and felt able to deal with Jews? Forget the police, that it was a criminal offence?

No, I did not ask. She told me about that love affair between her and the Jewish doctor, and she told me about pottery: at the time I myself had no idea about pottery, this interested me. She got me in touch with the Princess Schwarzenberg, and I made paper flowers for the Palais Schwarzenberg in Prague. You must have noticed by now, that I...I can't say that I liked adventure, but I didn't have any fear, I was not afraid of doing things when I thought the people were trustworthy, and I have had the good fortune that the people who dealt with me really helped and did not get us into difficulties.

Incredible. That really is incredible.

Now this is a thing you might want to know.

Oh, absolutely.

Now how do I do it? (BREAK IN RECORDING)

How do I do what?

Talk on to this now? (Is it on?) Now, do you want to know about that shop?

Yes.

You want to know about the lady who took over for the amber works, for the Nazi amber works? Well she was the divorced wife...

This is this Lena Kautsky?

This is Lena Kautsky. And she was the divorced wife of a high artist of the Vienna Opera, and she herself was a potter by...

Training.

Training, and she was very artistic, enormously artistic, and she made...at the time when she took over that shop, she not only sold the amber and the amber jewellery, I don't know whether she designed the jewellery, I don't know who made the silver jewellery, but I think she must have designed it. I don't know anything about the jewellery work, but she made the vases, the bowls and the plates, beautiful work, which I can only appreciate now since I work in pottery myself, at the time I did not really understand what it was about. And she inlaid amber into her plates and vases with silver and amber, they were very very beautiful. And she then wanted flowers to put into these vases, and had the opportunity to buy flowers at the market, or in flower shops, but because of the sun shining in all summer, she did not want to replace those flowers two or three times a day, so when she heard that I made artificial flowers, I mean paper flowers, hand painted every petal, she came to me through friends and saw me making peonies, and was delighted with them, and then ordered...every week she came to visit us, and ordered fresh flowers for these vases. And because of that, I had to find out and make drawings of the new flowers for higher...she bought vases to show me the size, what she wanted; we discussed what type I make, and we got on very friendly terms. So after a few weeks, she then offered to go and visit my mother; every time she went to Vienna she would go and visit my mother and bring her money or food, and she brought me things from my mother. So I knew that my mother was in good health and was there, and had her maid to help her and cook for her. And so that...I didn't worry very much about that; I worried about my husband's health.

Of course.

And I worried about my little nephew, who had to go to private classes, and then I found out that he did not go to the classes but walked around in the streets. There were plenty of different worries which were connected by having to live in one room and not knowing what was going on outside. But, I must say I enjoyed making these flowers; I enjoyed having Lena Kautsky visiting us I think every Monday, and it gave me great satisfaction that I earned the money to buy the food for our livelihood there in that one room, because now I was the first time the earner of the family. And my husband of course got thinner and thinner, but was quite cheerful at the time, and did a lot of cooking, because I sat in the other room and made paper flowers, so he helped in the kitchen. And we were - it sounds funny, but in that one room, we felt safe and very close, and we tried to keep the constant worry away, because we were so busy all of us.

What was happening to your brothers meanwhile?

My brother in the meanwhile, he had...well he was gone already, because in the year '38 he had to scrub the floors in Vienna, although he thought, because he had been an Austrian officer and Roman Catholic by the time, that it would not happen to him. But of course it did happen to him as to everybody else in this respect, and he then went, and had the opportunity to go with his family to France. So he and his wife, and their baby daughter (the baby was not a baby any more, she was five or six by the time, or even older, seven, by then) they had the opportunity to go to the Riviera, they went to near Marseilles, at the moment I've forgotten.

Lavandou?

No, near Fréjus somewhere, near Saint-Raphael. It'll come back, it was near Marseilles...Toulon.

Toulon?

Yes. And they lived there in a pension, and my sister-in-law helped with the cooking for the people there, and my brother did the book-keeping. So I don't think they had to pay much.

Now this is your elder brother Fritz?

My elder brother Fritz, that's right.

Now his wife of course wasn't Jewish anyway?

Of course she was, she was the one who would not become baptized, but the children...

What was her name?

Kate Wetzler, the beautiful Kate Wetzler. And her mother joined them there. And by and by, when the Nazis came to the...took over the Côte d'Azur, and got nearer, my brother was taken to a concentration camp; the French took them to concentration camp, and I don't know the name of the camp, it was somewhere near the Pyrenees. And my sister-in-law, Kate, and the little girl, and their mother, were taken in by a Catholic convent, because they were Catholic. And my sister-in-law did the shopping in Toulon for that convent, and the old lady (she wasn't really very old) what she did there I don't know; and the little girl was sent to a school run by a Frenchman, with whom I got in touch lately now here, who ran...who had a lovely house there, and he took in refugee children to teach. There are things people don't know about. The child lived in the convent, but she went to that school; and the gentleman's name, I could find that out for you but I don't know where I've got it now, he was a great friend then of my sister-in-law.

End of F896, Side A

Track 10 (F896, Side B)

He helped her; whether he gave her money, that I don't know, but they were very friendly, in touch also with his wife, and the friendship lasted and went on. I don't know what happened now about it, as my sister-in-law is dead so I don't know anything about that any more.

But they survived there until...

They survived, and my brother came back from concentration camp to Hyères, the place was called Hyeres, near Toulon, to Hyères, and was in a terribly bad state, he had a heart condition and he died there after a few months. And my poor sister-in-law had a terrible time, trying to look after him and nurse him. I don't know how long he lived, that disappeared from my memory, I don't know; I only know that afterwards, she (he is buried there) that she then went with her daughter to Tasmania. She had friends from Prague, and one of the young men who had courted her before she married my brother lived there and sent her an invitation to become his house-keeper. And so she went there, and we all thought she would marry him, but they did not marry and she really was his house-keeper for a while, and then she joined the firm, a printing firm.

In Tasmania?

In Tasmania, yes.

She died there eventually?

She died there, yes, I saw her after the War, and she died there.

But she had survived in this convent, throughout the whole of the War?

She survived, and her mother survived there; her mother went back to Vienna, where the elder son came, he was...at the time he was a wild communist in Berlin. I don't know the background to all that story; I know I met him in Vienna when he looked after his mother, after the War, and I have lost touch. But the mother died, and I don't know anything about Hanz. (BREAK IN RECORDING)

We've talked about your elder brother Fritz. Your younger brother, whose name I can't remember...

Franz.

Franz. What happened to him? He was also in Vienna at this time?

He was in Vienna when the Nazis came, and they came to Prague...no, his wife came to Prague first, the daughter of the painter who had become Roman Catholic to be a teacher in Salzburg. Now she was Roman Catholic, she came to Prague and stayed a few days with us, and then she went through to Yugoslavia, where my future son-in-law, who was our director in my husband's firm in Zagreb, Yugoslavia...

The Zionist?

The Zionist, who looked after her there and helped her financially, and she then waited there and got an affidavit to go to America. And my brother had gone to Switzerland...

Franz?

Franz, from us, he had to leave Czechoslovakia, and gone to Switzerland and got an affidavit from one of the freemasons with whom he had worked. So they went...she joined him in Switzerland and they went out to America, and they were in New York, and she made quite a good living by being an artist, commercial artist, making picture postcards and drawing pretty little pictures for wrapping papers for Macey and all the big shops. She is enormously clever and with excellent techniques; she had gone to the graphic school in Vienna, and she had inherited her father's gift of drawing, and she is alive still, I am in touch with her in America. My brother died some years ago and she married her former...one of

the people who help to sell her products, her paintings or her designs, and she lives in Flushing in New York, and we are constantly in touch.

Oh that's nice. Lily...

And my brother died a few years ago there.

Right. Lily, one of the memories you mentioned I remember was your going to Marienbad...

In the year 1915.

No no, much later, 1938 or '39.

Oh, '38, that's right, yes.

And you had some terrible experiences.

Yes.

Can you describe some of those?

The experience was the animosity, the hatred between the German Czechoslovaks and the Czech Czechoslovaks there, and it was the time of Runciman and the giving over of the Sudeten country to the Germans with the help of the British and the French. It was most distressing to be there. But my other experience there was my friendship with the German professor for...at the German university of Prague, the eye specialist, who lived there and with whose family I was friends since 1915, we were together for summer holidays. And he and his wife lived there, and they invited my husband and me, but he never asked about my parents, knowing that they were Jewish, knowing that they were in Vienna, and where Hitler had already taken over. And so, having parties there, or going there for a meal was difficult for them and for us. It was...I was quite astonished that they...that they invited us, that they were not afraid at the time already. But this friendship went on to his death, although later on, in Prague, he said goodbye to me, and said, "I can't see you any more now, it is too dangerous for us, that I am seen with you, with your Jewish Star on, and I can't go to your house. But we will meet after the war." But he died before that, so I never met him again. I still have a photo, his daughter sent me a photo of his. Now this friendship was really a very...very deep and loving friendship, and that is also one of the reasons why I can't throw all the German gentiles into the Nazi pot.

Which leads me really to another point, and that is, presumably you had retained some sort of a relationship with your many Austrian friends when you went to live in Prague.

Yes, I did.

And you also...but whereas they were non Jewish in Vienna...

Some of them...

In Vienna most of them were...

Well, yes, both, yes.

But mainly I think Catholic friends in Vienna.

Yes.

In Prague, the friends you did have were in the main Jewish.

They were in the main Jewish.

German Czech, similar to yourself.

Yes, yes, yes.

Now, having said that...

Except for that one family of the professor, they were German gentiles.

What I was going to ask you is, do you have any recollection of friends, or people you thought were friends, suddenly not wishing to know you after the Nazis came into the country, because you were Jewish?

Well, I know about one lady, but I didn't take that very seriously because I wasn't very fond of her. Her husband took his hat off to me and didn't mind talking to me in the street, although I had the Star, whereas she would not come together with me; not that it...it didn't really worry me at all. But on the whole I had no nasty experiences in Prague. One just...I myself didn't want to be together with gentiles, because it was no good to me and no good to them, so why get into danger if you really don't need that. The only person who was not afraid was Mr. Grünzner, I think we have that on the tape already. And so there was...I did not provoke it. I told you that I made these paper flowers, and that I had a friend who bought those flowers for the Princess Schwarzenberg. Now she was a gentile.

Who, the Princess?

No, that friend of mine. She was the aunt of the wife of a Jewish childhood friend of mine. He came to Prague and married a very German gentile girl, and her aunt was very friendly with the family; besides I think she was one of the lady friends of Werfel, of the poet Werfel and author Werfel. So she was an interesting woman, and she had a shop, or let us say a studio for art and crafts, and she saw my paper flowers with another friend, with one of her friends and my friends, and so she came to me and ordered flowers for antique glasses, Bohemian glass which she sold as presents, and for every glass we chose another flower. And that was a marvellous thing for her and for me, she paid me and she had these beautifully painted flowers - I must say that, even if I made them myself! - and she then got the order of the Princess Schwarzenberg, who lived in a castle in Bohemia, in the Bohemian woods, but had a lovely little palace in Prague proper, and had to give parties there. And because she could not always buy fresh flowers for her big vases and famous drawing rooms she was told by my friend, Miss Spirk, to get these paper flowers. And so I was smuggled into that palace, that little palace in the city of Prague, to look at the vases and the rooms by the Princess, she took me round, and then we discussed what she wanted, and I then for weeks sat and made...filled her vases. I never went back to that palace, I only saw it once, and the plants and the flowers were taken there by our mutual friend, Miss Spirk. So this was another peculiar way that the Princess had Jewish flowers in her drawing rooms. These are amazing things; now we can laugh about it, but at the time I was very happy that I could earn money like that. And they did not mind paying the Jewess. All these things are so weird really now.

Did you ever have any so-called friends who one day were your friends and the next day weren't?

No. Not really, no.

Either in Prague or in Vienna?

No.

That's really quite amazing. Lily, what do you remember of Hitler's entry into Prague?

I didn't see anything because we lived in a suburb. But I know one of our dearest friends committed suicide, and we wanted to leave. I had prepared for getting into England, and we wanted to leave on that day, not knowing that he was...that Hitler would just come on that day. And we left, I think I told you...

When you went to the train and...

When I went to the train and we were sent back. That was the day. And then we heard...

Was that the actual day he...

That was the actual day, yes.

That he came to Prague?

Yes, as far as I remember. Either that day or the next day, it was quite at that time. Because we had organised that trip, and then there he was. So I have a mixed memory; I know my husband lost his voice then, and we thought that it was only excitement or nerves, and it took a long while before we had then the doctor's biopsy and we knew that it was a cancer.

How long did it take before your life changed?

Well the life changed immediately really, because the orders came from the Jewish Community, you must give up your radio, you must give up your electric iron, you must give up this, that and the other, and so one slowly had to give up one's comforts. Also, after all he then had this operation, and we had to leave the house. And before that I was...I organised the transport of my children to England. There was constantly something one had to look after. So life stopped, the normal life stopped immediately, even before, because I knew something was coming, I had the intuition that one couldn't stay there, and I had prepared furniture and everything for moving to England or to Palestine. And so life was changed completely.

Did you ever actually try to get to Palestine?

Yes.

Did you?

Yes. Because my husband...I did not really want to go to Palestine; my husband said that is the only possibility for us to get out, and if we don't really want to live there we can go on from there. But before he was able to do anything about it he had to get rid of the factory and the property, because we would never get the permit to leave the country otherwise. So the bank, the big Czech bank, I don't know the name now, the Zivnostenska Banka, the director wanted to take over our firm (that was before Mr. Grünzner came of course), he would buy the firm and get us the permit to get out of the country. But he was not in there, he was somewhere in France when we wanted to sell. The date of the sale had been fixed, but he wasn't there on that day, so there was no signature, and because of that we could never leave the country.

But you had actually made enquiries...

We had made up our mind because we had...because my husband had paid a lump sum for the...I can't remember the name of the association, what was his name, the people who bought from the Arabs the soil and the...

The Zionists?

No no no. There was the...

The JNF?

What was the whole name?

The Jewish National Fund?

I suppose so, yes, but it also had another name.

Keren Kayemet?

That's right, yes. Well I had a friend who got some money for them, and she came to us and my husband I think, I don't know how many...what he gave, I think it was the equivalent of about three thousand pounds, I cannot remember that. And because this money was in Czechoslovakia, we were able to get a 'Kapitalisten Visum', a visa to move into Palestine at the time, because we had money there. And it was...they bought then a vineyard or something, I don't know, avocado pears, or grapefruit, I don't know what it was. And this is the reason why we had the possibility to go there, and with the children. But it all got to nothing, and the children then went to England instead, and we stayed, it all evaporated. The money was there, that I know, and I think some of it...my daughter, when she married...to Israel I think, I was able, but I don't remember these things properly, to get some of it for her. One got in touch through...

So the only reason you didn't leave was because you hadn't sold the factory.

Yes.

But, you in theory could have gone without selling the factory, could you?

No, we wouldn't get an exit visa. You had to have a permit to leave the country.

This is after Hitler came?

That is after Hitler came, after my husband had the operation, and we were in the... Yes, we even were offered through all sorts of back...there were lots of solicitors who worked for both sides, it was a very unpleasant and unhappy way of dealing with things, which my husband was not quite capable to do these things, and I neither, we were offered exit visas to get out of Czechoslovakia, but we did not dare to do it. Some people were caught, some people did get out; you did have to bribe all sorts of people through banks, and I never could do such a thing, and my husband was really too sick and too weak at the time ever to attempt to do anything like that. So we remained.

Do you remember the first time you were asked, or told, to wear a yellow Star?

Well we...it didn't worry me, we had to go to the Jewish Community centre there, as far as I remember, and collect them. And we got two or three each, to wear on the coat and suit or whatever it was.

And you were told you had to wear them at all times?

I didn't mind that, but my old aunt Camilla, who I have mentioned once, she had said, "Why must I wear that, I am so ashamed?" And I said, "Why must you be ashamed, they ought to be ashamed." It never worried me to wear that. I've still got one here somewhere.

Have you?

Yes. I think so, if I didn't give it to Dorothy, I don't know.

Now, one last point on this period. You were going on the train, you hoped, to England, and you said you had a little girl with you.

No, no no no. Both my children and my nephew and a young friend of ours, yes, the girl, yes. But they then, my nephew and that girl went off later on on their own, and got to England.

With the Quakers again?

No, they had...they got on to another train later on, and they were not taken... That I can't remember, how it is that Otto and Miss Minkus could get out, that I can't remember any more.

Miss Minkus was the daughter of a friend of yours was she?

She was the daughter of one of our directors of the firm; she came over here and I was for many years in touch with her, I have lost touch with her at the moment.

And your nephew, which nephew was this, by your brother's...

No no, they are my brother-in-law's boys.

Your husband's brother's boys?

That's right, yes.

The two that came over to England?

They came over to England, and one now lives in Canada and the other one lives here in Chislehurst.

Yes. Well now, I wonder if we can now come forward to the day in 1942, it was '42 I think...

Yes.

Where, after living in two separate homes since you'd left your main home, the day came for you to leave, or to go to Theresienstadt.

That's right.

Do you remember this day? What happened?

Well we got the announcement or the order from the Jewish Community centre, you got the letters two days before I think, and you had to then get your things together and some food together and do the packing, and be ready to go to the place of assembly from where we were then sent off in a train. And now, we were taken...

This was the two of you, and others.

And my little nephew, from our flat.

Now your nephew being...

He was my brother Fritz' son, who could not join them in France because he had sent them [sic] to me, he had sent the boy to me, and he was a Catholic Austrian and not a Czech Jew. So that's why I could never get him a permit to leave the country without his father's permission, and which I never got.

So the four of you, yourself, your husband...

And the little boy.

The three of you, was it three?

The three of us, were taken to that assembly place, which was where the fair was, the great industrial fair, by my friend Mr. Tolar the driver, with our luggage. And, there we were put into sort of a tent-like building, always the group together who were together, and we got our numbers. And it was an amazing thing, for us, for everybody very amazing. You lay on the floor and waited, and you got your food from a big counter, that was provided for you; you stayed I think...did we stay the night? No, I can't remember whether we stayed the night or not, I can't remember; I don't think so, I think we left in the afternoon and we were then taken by what? How did we get to the station? Probably in big buses or something, I can't remember. You had to carry that bit of luggage...no, that was taken with you. And we came and were put into those such cattle trucks, but there were benches put in: you didn't have to sit on the ground, on the floor like in the others, there were benches in there, and it was very stuffy and hot. And I remember it was the first time that I experienced people being angry, yelling, crying, getting mad, wanting food, being afraid. It's the first time that I ever experienced such...where you didn't know what was going to happen. But that...we were then taken to Bauschowitz [Bohusovice], where we all...Bauschowitz, where we all had to get out, and I think...

How long was the journey?

How long was the journey, I don't know, two hours or three hours, I can't remember. And, there I think I told you about the policeman with that funny cap...no, didn't I tell you that? No. We were met at the station in Bauschowitz...

This was not the station of Theresienstadt?

There was no station, that was built by the Jews, later on, it had no station.

So this was the nearest station?

That was the nearest station, you had to walk from there to the little town, the little fortress town of Theresienstadt. And it was a lovely day, summer day or autumn day, and we were met at the station by one of our former employees, director employees of a factory in Czechoslovakia, with whom we were very friendly, a Mr. Freund; he was a youngish man, very nice, very Jewish looking, and he met us at the station in a wild police uniform, with gold braids and funny little buttons and things on his head. And I began to laugh, and he quickly put his finger to his lips, so I stopped laughing. And he shook his head when I wanted to ask him why he wears such a uniform. And then I kept my mouth shut. And then, there were two other...after all, we were many people, other people were met too by other people, and then there were two young men who were the sons of the director of our Yugoslav factory. And because this firm of my husband's were on such a friendly footing with all the employees, I knew most of them, and it was like a family the whole affair. Now these young boys, I think they were seventeen and eighteen, they came from Yugoslavia, I recognised them and they knew us; and they came...they belonged to the transport department of Theresienstadt, and they took the luggage in to Theresienstadt, so we didn't have to carry it. It's not only for us, it was for everybody.

How many people were there on that train, roughly, hundreds, thousands, or just...

A few hundred, I don't know how many, perhaps...

You didn't have to march together, or you did?

Yes, we went in a crocodile, we walked together, and we were not allowed to step on to the footpath, because that was for the Germans. We had to walk on the road. And again, I was amazed, and again, Mr. Freund, with that funny uniform, put his finger to his lips, so I was quiet. And I, on that walk, which took about twenty minutes perhaps, I recognised that life was going to be different. I knew from now on, because this man looked at me, I knew him for years and we had talked together like friends.

These were the Jewish police?

That was the Jewish police.

Were there any German police at this point?

At this point, not. Czech gendarmerie, and the Jewish police.

End of F896, Side B

Track 11 (F897, Side A)

Now, we came to the fortress, and first...what did they do first? One was then separated; the men extra and the women extra, and one was not allowed to walk on the street without the leader of a group. And because of...I just mention this family firm of my husband's, whose director of the Czech department was one of the founders of the Jewish Theresienstadt, he belonged to the government, the Jewish government of Theresienstadt. He organised that we were being met, as I tell you by the policeman who was one of the employees; the sons of another employee took care of the luggage; the wife took us in a group, and taking over me, to take me to my room where I was going to live. And that was in the centre of Theresienstadt, the biggest, or let's say the best house of the place, which had been just taken over, and the Czechs moved out, and it was completely clean and whitewashed, and looked as clean as you could wish for. And I was put, together with the group of women in that transport, into the clean rooms in that private house, not into a big building, but in this one private house, where I afterwards had my workshop. And this was a room, we were...how many women were we put in there? About eight or ten women, I can't remember, and my...no, did my little...he did not come with me, my little nephew, but another woman came with a smaller child. And we were put in there, the room was completely empty, there was a parquet flooring, a corner room, and that was that: you had no furniture, nothing. Now we were told this is where we are going to live for the time being at least. So everybody...and Mrs. Minkus, the wife of one of the employee who led my group, she took me always to work then later on I was in her group for walking into the street: we were not allowed otherwise, because there were still Czech gentiles living there. As soon as all the Czechs were moved out, we did not have to walk in groups any more.

You mean they were still living in their own homes?

They were still living in their own homes, and during the next few weeks they were all evacuated out and we got those houses then. And at the time there were not as many Jews there as later on of course, far less. And so I had this lovely room, and I stayed there, I can't remember how long, perhaps a week or longer, and then by and by we were then settled in barracks.

Did you sleep on the floor in this house?

On the floor, yes, on the floor. But by and by we got bits of mattresses. The Austrians and also the Czechs don't have mattresses all over the whole bed, one mattress, but they are in biscuits; I think one called them 'biscuits', they were in three parts; so one usually got one or two parts, and one could organise that, and with one's clothes and so on. You get used to doing various astonishing things, and you can live; as long as it was clean, and you had even running water on a tap, and in one there was even a bathroom in that house, but we never could use that, we personally at that time. And then we were moved into the big barracks. Now Theresienstadt I think I told you was a fortress town built by Emperor Joseph II for the name of his mother, Maria Theresa. Now this was built by Italian builders, and...well there were no architects at the time I suppose, but excellent builders, and these big barracks were in the corners of the moats, and 'glacis', the walls went round them. And the barracks were beautifully built with big courtyards with arcades, and they were usually ground floor, and then three floors, with these inside big courtyards with arcades, so you walked from one room into another along these open corridors. Now I was put under the roof, into the top, that was under the roof; it was pretty hot, but it was light, quite pleasant. I was moved into a room with about...I don't know, we were perhaps fifteen or eighteen women there. And I was very lucky, I had on both sides a friend, good friends, lovely women, and there were a lot of very pleasant women in that room; there was never any quarrel, we all got on splendidly.

You were all Jewish?

All Jewish of course, yes, that was all Jewish at the time. We got on splendidly, we kept the place neat and tidy. This is one of the things, there were rooms which were not as nice as this one; again, luck, because I was put into that through the help of our director. This, I made...I was very friendly with two people right and left, we could choose how we put up our so-called beds. Now, I had at the time very bad sciatica, and pains in my back, and so we managed to get two of these mattresses, so it wasn't so bad; and those boys who carried our luggage they made a sort of...over my head, for my clothes, I could hang up my clothes, and there was a shelf for some of my things, and we all had low

wooden...on floor legs, wooden planks, and the mattress was put on to that. And underneath this bed we put our suitcase and our knapsacks. So we made this room look as neat and nice as possible, and we managed to get bedspreads, or people had nice scarves or shawls, and by and by you made it look quite comfortable.

What did you do for so-called bed linen?

Well we'd got our luggage.

Oh, you brought pillows and that sort of thing with you?

We brought something with us, yes; we were allowed our blankets and eiderdowns, or whatever we had, and pillows, so we had all that. And that was in a bed roll, and I had all that, so it was personally clean, and that bed was quite comfortable.

Did you know you were going to Theresienstadt when you left Prague?

Yes.

You were told that?

We were told, but we didn't know really what Theresienstadt was. We personally knew a little because of the underground knowledge of...the director was there, as I told you, was in the government of Theresienstadt, our director, and his wife was still in Prague. And there were constantly underground letters to and fro which were brought in and out by the Czech police.

Through the Jewish Community?

Through the Jewish Community, and as she worked for the Jewish Community, she was a splendid typist and excellent, clever woman, she knew about that. For instance, she knew that there was going to be an art department for making lampshades and things, so I was told to have a big box with my paper flowers, all my...(I've got them still), all the tools I had bought or used for making the paper flowers; my paints, and whatever I thought I could need to do arty-crafty things. I was informed to take that, and that it should be in a box, and with a label on to the government. Now, I had this box, I didn't know it came into the thing with my things, and those two boys of the transport got them for me, and I got them. Now these are all lucky coincidence, or clever manipulation of the people who were friendly with us. So I had that. And then when, after we were then told the next day that we have to write...a circular, what we have studied, what we are able to do and so on. Curriculum Vitae. So I wrote that I had the training of the Academy in Vienna for painting, and so consequently after a hundred...what is a hundred days, no, a hundred...I don't know, they called it 'Hundertschaft', but I don't know why. First one had to do manual work before you got a job. During the time your papers were organised by the Jewish government, you had to do manual work. Now I was put into...they made coffins, I was put into the timber yard to cut the planks to make the coffins. And that was out of doors, and it was a lovely summer, late summer, and I was so happy that I didn't have to go to a kitchen or a laundry or anything indoors; I could walk with that group, led by my friend, to that...at eight o'clock, or seven o'clock in the morning, to that carpentry, and then she would collect us again and take us back in the late afternoon.

It's somewhat strange, isn't it, that you were involved in coffin making when your grandfather...

My father.

Sorry, your father, it was his main business, yes.

Well that's it, yes. But I only had to push the planks through the circular saw.

Was this something you were doing virtually from the day you arrived in Theresienstadt then?

The next day, yes. Yes, next day, yes.

And where was your husband meanwhile?

He was at another barracks; I was in the Hamburger Barracks, where all the women were, he was in the Hanover Barracks where men were. And again he was, through the help of our friend there, put together with the husband of one of my friends who was in my room. And as my husband was not well at all, he was all the time rather a sick man after X-rays of that thyroid cancer, he was very frail. So, he got...this friend of ours looked after him and another friend too; that's to say they didn't have to look after him but they helped him when he had to carry something heavy, or bring in the basin with water. So I knew he was looked after.

You were able to see him?

Yes, he came every day; we had lunch together. We queued...we had an aluminium bowl on a handle, which I had got in a sports shop, you know, with a little lid on it, and we had a knife, fork and spoon in a little thing that...I had prepared that for...I thought...it doesn't matter, and you had that; I didn't know what was going on, but it was...it was like going on an excursion.

Camping holiday, yes.

I bought these things in a camping place. And, so we had that, and we queued then for our soup or whatever we got, and then on fine days we sat outside in the street or in a little park or whatever there was and had our lunch together, and if it rained we stood in a courtyard under a balcony or so on. And he went then back to his work and I went back to my studio work. And in the evening, he was allowed to come to my room up there under the roof, so was my mother and my little nephew: all the families were allowed to meet there, and we had our evening meal together. And at eight o'clock everybody had to be back in their rooms. And my husband, who was a social worker, he got the permission to stay out a little longer; he had to carry that with him, so that if a guard or a policeman or a German who went through there met him, he could show that he was allowed to be out of doors. So he could stay till nine or a quarter to nine with me, whereas my mother and my little nephew had to go away at a quarter to eight or whenever, so that they could be in their rooms at eight o'clock sharp.

Was your mother already in Theresienstadt when you arrived?

She was there, yes.

How long had she been there?

She had been there about a month or six weeks. She had gone from Vienna not really knowing anything, with the stupidest luggage you could think of of course. And of course she wasn't informed like I was through those Fischl friends, with the firm's. I was more...I was better equipped because I knew about Theresienstadt, whereas of course my poor mother did not, and I could not let her know what to take. I knew that she had gone off, but that's all I knew.

Ah, you knew...

I knew that she had gone off from Vienna, yes. I think through that lady, through Mrs. Kautsky. That's all I knew, and I knew it was Theresienstadt. So when I arrived in Theresienstadt, one of the employees of that firm of my husband's, he was in what you called...what do you call a list of people, where you make the lists...

Inventory...no...

Yes, the inventory of the people when they came and when they left and so on, he was there; and when he was told I had come he had already...he was informed by these other people that we had arrived, and that I was then informed where my mother was, and so I could visit her immediately. So that was all right. But she was in a bad state, but...my mother did never get used to being in Theresienstadt, and she made life quite difficult for herself and for us, because she didn't get used to the fact that she was an old, very elderly Jewess in a concentration camp. She would not bend down to clean the floor, or to do anything like that, or to cook a little, pudding or something, because she wasn't used to it.

But she must have been well over seventy by then?

No, she had her seventieth birthday there.

Oh, did she?

Yes. So, but she just couldn't, and probably that...some people can't, she couldn't, even afterwards.

Now your husband, was he given hard labour?

No, he was a social worker; he sat all day in an office, and had to discuss whether people get a shower, bath, or whether they get a room, or whether they are ill enough to get more bread, or more margarine, and distribute these things. And people went up to his...he was sat in an office where they had like a teller, you...

Was this part of the Jewish government in the area?

Yes. And so he got that job, so that he didn't have to work in a kitchen or carry heavy things, so he sat there.

Was he still undergoing treatment when he left Prague?

No, the X-ray treatment was over by then. But of course, as we were restricted with our food, and he didn't get any proteins because we were not allowed to buy meat or eggs or anything like that...

In Prague?

In Prague. We got some on the black market, but that wasn't sufficient. He had become terribly thin and weak, and the food in Theresienstadt was, according...even worse of course, and he got thinner and thinner. And then he just got a knotting of his bowel, ileus, or whatever you call that, and he had an operation, and died after that operation.

Ah but that was two years later?

That was two years later, yes. Yes, but for two years he had that job as a social worker in an office, and...

And throughout the whole of that two year period you were able to meet each other in the evenings and lunchtime?

And at lunchtime.

Were you?

Yes.

And your nephew as well?

And my little nephew as well, yes. But he was very ill there most of the time, he had scarlet fever, he had impetigo, he had...liver, that yellow...

Yellow fever?

No...

Jaundice?

Jaundice. He couldn't take the food, he couldn't take the thing; he was a very very poor boy. He grew rapidly, he was tall and thin, and...

How old was he?

He was twelve when he got there, he was fourteen when he left.

And was he made to work?

Well he lived in a boys' place, and...was he twelve already, yes, I think so. And he didn't work, no, schools were forbidden but they did have a sort of school, and he was...yes, his work was carrying messages from one working place to another.

Sort of 'Laufer'?

That's right. Yes, yes. But as he was in between in hospital or so sick that he could stay at home, he didn't do very much work. But he did...that was his sort of job, yes.

Now had the art centre already been established when you arrived?

Yes, it was already in establishment; it was beginning now, as I had...I don't know how many, I think two months of that coffin making affair; I don't quite know how long. When I then got my...got back the papers for...they had sorted out what work I could do, I was sent to that art department, to the 'Lautscharna' [ph], which had just really began. And there we made...one made paper...what do you call it?

Lampshades?

Lampshades, and boxes, and...all sorts of articles like that. And they printed horrible book signs, and we had to paint them with little pictures. Now I was chosen to make the designs, flower designs or whatever designs I wanted, for lampshades and glove boxes and those sorts of things.

Because your interest in art really was presumably still life, always had been?

No, my interest in art was portraits.

Well I know you did your grandmother.

Well I did portraits. But I also painted flowers and landscapes a bit for myself before that. But then, when I made those paper flowers, I made...(have I got it still, no, I don't think I have, no), a whole copy-book full of drawings of each flower, where every petal or every insides were painted and written out the size, because of making these paper flowers. And because I had this book, I could produce a bunch of daffodils, or a bunch of mixed flowers, like anything.

You made this book in Theresienstadt?

No, that book I made before in Prague, when I made...when I learnt to make those paper flowers.

I see, and you took it with you?

And I took it with the paper and all these things with me, because I had been informed that I would be used like that.

How many people were there in the arts section? Were there many?

Well there were so many arts sections, not only ours.

Oh, there wasn't one?

Oh no, there were lots, yes. There were various types; I was first in the arty-craft department, then there was an art department, and then there was a...yes, art, and even technical department, graphic, technical department. And I was in the arty-craft department with marvellous people.

Now were all these people Jews?

They were all Jews, there was not a soul who was not a Jew.

I see.

That was all Jewish, Theresienstadt was all Jewish except for the German...

Guards, administration.

Administration, top administration. And they were on top of the Jewish administration. And then there were - and they had a lovely house and gardens there - and then there were the Czech police as well, who were the sort of go-between. But the Germans had these lovely...that lovely building, that one, and then they lived there, and had lovely apartments there, and gardens. And, that was...there weren't very many mind you in Theresienstadt; it was run first by somebody who I have forgotten the name, he then went off to Eichmann I think, (Eichmann came once to Theresienstadt), and then it was run by an Austrian called Rahm. He had been a stable boy, and his manners were the stable boy. And he was quite happy to be then the head of such a camp, because he learnt so many new things in his life. And the art department was a special favourite of his, because he enjoyed all that. And he used to stand...when I made these little miniatures, later on, in the real art department...

Miniature paintings?

The paintings, then he would stand there and watch me paint. He had his hand on the trigger of his revolver, and the dog beside him, and asked the stupidest questions. But there was Mr. Rahm, and you couldn't do anything about it, you had to go on painting miniatures while he stood there and asked his stupid questions.

Did you ever meet Eichmann?

No, no I did not meet him, no.

So, was Rahm the commandant when you arrived?

No, another one, and I've forgotten the name.

But he was much the same?

I have no memory of the other one, I don't think he came...mixed so much. Rahm came quite often, and Rahm had this horrible idea that, during the shower time of the women he used to lead German friends into that big shower room, to watch the poor naked women under their showers. That was Rahm. And Rahm went with his dog into the operating theatre and watched operations. So that was his peculiarity, he was peculiar to say the least of it. I can't remember the one who was there when I came; I've completely forgotten his influence on the camp.

What were your feelings and memories of the so-called Jewish government in Theresienstadt?

Well, I didn't meet them really, except our friends. I could only think when I did hear about it, or from our friends, what was the question of what was going to happen; I thought, it must be an absolutely terrible job to do, much worse than what I did, or what my husband did, because of the enormous responsibility, and the load that was laid onto them. To do it in a fair way...you can't really. I must say, I...there was a Mr. Marmorstein, I think he was one of the elders, I think he came from Austria; one talked nastily about him. I didn't know them, and I thought, I'm glad that we have nothing to do with that. But our friend, our director, he kept up his courage, and he wasn't quite on top. I don't really...I never tried to speak to him about that. Somehow I was...I didn't want to load myself with a thing I

couldn't carry, or couldn't do anything about it. I did my work, I was happy it was art work, and I was happy that I had such wonderful colleagues in that work place.

Of course there were more and more people arriving all the time.

All the time, yes.

Many of whom you knew from the old days?

Not really. From Austria, yes; from Prague, yes, I knew people who were there already, and I knew people who came. But because of the work, eight hours a day, and then walking, and to getting food, and having to be back, and having to do this, that and the other, you had no possibility to meet people out of your day's work, except if there was something special on, or people like my husband who could go out for an hour on their own, because they had the ticket for that. So I didn't meet very many of my friends; I did meet friends from Vienna, which was an amazing thing, and I managed to go for a walk with an old gentleman, before he was sent on; I did meet a few people like that. And also from Prague, but as I tell you, the two good friends were right and left in my room, so I met them of course. But I didn't meet...you had no chance to meet, there were no parties or, you couldn't meet anywhere. So you just...

Couldn't you meet over dinner, or lunch rather?

End of F897. Side A

Track 12 (F897, Side B)

You see you had to go to one place to get your food, you were allocated your kitchen. So if the others were allocated another kitchen you didn't see them. So my husband organised that we could have the same kitchen, so we could meet at the kitchen, and then we could sit somewhere, or stand somewhere, and eat our soup or whatever we had, and he went back to his office and I went back to my work, my studio place. And so there was no possibility really to meet people. I could visit our doctor, who was there, our children's doctor who was a great friend, and who died there, and I was with him when he died. I could in the beginning visit my auntie Camilla, the very old sister of my father's, and there again, I was asked whether the doctor was allowed to give her an injection and make her stop...stop her life, and I did. There were things...I can't say one got used to, you just had to decide on the spur of the moment. And so one had to. It is...now, by hindsight, I was such a spoilt and cared-for woman all my...as long as...before Hitler came, and then suddenly, I had to decide...

Thrown in the middle of it.

Not only into the...the bottom of it. And had to decide. And I did decide. And somehow, it never worried me afterwards. It's now, with having to do these interviews, that I begin to think of all these things; I never did before.

Did you used to...were you able to see your mother?

Yes. My mother also came and had supper with us every evening. And later on, when I was moved from that room with the eighteen or twenty younger women, my aged women, I was then moved to the little room where my mother lived, and there we only were six, and that was, for my mother, very happy, that I was with her, and my husband then came, and my nephew came, and we had supper then in that little room. That was not a barracks, but that was a little private house with a very nice garden yard, with trees, and I had friends there from my studio work, and it was quite pleasant to be there. The only very horrible thing was that we were pestered with bed bugs, which was dreadful. But that too had its funny sides, and its horrible sides, and you had to put up with it as far as you could. And that was in that old-fashioned house with benches round and old trees; that was quite nice to be there, and my mother was there with other people, and so...

How long was it before you were moved into this room with your mother?

I can't remember, but quite a long time, I think over a year, yes, I think so.

Did you have any information from the outside world as to what was happening in the world?

Well there were hidden radios, and in my working place, because it was an art department, and because the people had possibilities to talk with the Czech police, and somehow get in touch with Prague and the outside world, we did know a bit. But we did not know for instance about the gas in Auschwitz, or at least my part did not. How many people knew about it I don't know. I think that that Jewish government, they must have known, or at least some did. Then again, there were perhaps women or men who had open ears and listened to such things. I was wrapped up in most enjoyable art work, I must admit it was enjoyable, and with friends who had nothing to do with the outer world. And, I did not know of what was really going on, neither did my husband; whether he did it on purpose, or didn't talk about it, I don't know. We both tried to save the other from more worries.

And your mother certainly didn't.

My mother certainly didn't, no, no.

Presumably not your nephew either?

No, the little boy not, the little boy was...

He was just a little boy, but he was growing up, wasn't he?

Well, yes, he was 13 then, and...

But growing up fast mentally I think.

I don't know, he was so ill, and he was with those other children. And again, I didn't know anything about that poor boy, although I met him every day, and when he was in hospital I visited him every day. But I didn't know anything about him really, because he wouldn't talk to me, and I tried to keep it away, knowing that I couldn't help, that I was completely useless to help anybody. So there you were, so I just went on doing my painting, surrounded by wonderful people who, to keep our spirits up would whistle the Beethoven symphonies, or sing, or have lectures of artists, they themselves, while we painted; they were all artists, some top artists, some professors of Gymnasium, art professors: they all had a great knowledge. I learnt the real watercolour painting there, I learnt about the techniques of oil painting or wall painting, and all the materials; I learnt through listening, because my colleagues in that room would, to keep up our morale and because it was so boring what we had to paint, lectured like that, while they painted. And I was together with two Dutch men who had to restore the old Dutch famous paintings which the Nazis stole in Holland from the Jewish flats, and all these paintings came to Theresienstadt because the two men, Mr. Morpurgo and Miss Morpurgo, yes, and Mr. Cohen, were famous restorers of paintings from Amsterdam, and they had a room next to my work room, and they came over, and they even offered to show me how to paint...restore paintings. But I was too tired, after...that would have been after my eight hours paintings, so I did not do it. I was very sorry I didn't do it, because that would have been a job I could have taken in London afterwards. But I just couldn't, I was too tired and had too many family worries to go and have another hour in that workshop with Mr. Cohen and Mr. Morpurgo.

Because you presumably were from time to time actually, from what you were telling me, getting parcels from your chauffeur?

I got a few parcels from our chauffeur, yes. Now in these parcels, they were of course small parcels, but they had...

They were smuggled in?

No, they were officially brought in. He had to get the permit sort of stamped from the Jewish Community in Prague, and he could deliver them to the Jewish Community and the Community sent them out to Theresienstadt, that was quite official. And some of them were delivered and some were not; they were stolen by somebody else. And so I got...

Was it food...

There was food in it, and to find out who sent them, because he did not dare to write his name as he was a gentile, he put in some paper napkin or something from my former home, so I knew it came from him. And, his tricks were wonderful. He could tell me, for instance, by such tricks that he had a little boy in the meanwhile who died...(BREAK IN RECORDING) Well there were...I can't quite remember what there was, there were soups, powdered soups and powdered puddings and...I can't really remember, but not very much.

Did you ever manage to get messages to the outside?

Only like that. His messages in there which were only about his family... No, well one knew because of these Czech police who smuggled all sorts of things, and there were very many people in Theresienstadt who had wine, everything, you could get anything. And the things were hidden in the walls of the fortress, and they were found after the War. But I remember that you could get whatever you wanted. And I was offered - it's a funny story - my husband then had, as you know he had the operation of the bowels, and he was so weak, and one of my studio friends, she had a friend, a Jewish woman, who was very beautiful and blonde, who had liaisons with the Czech police, and that was done, that was a good way of earning things. And she let me know that she could get morphine for my husband who was in pain. And then one day she could get an egg for me. It is horrible to think of what was going on, but it was. Her name was Steffi, I know no more, I've never seen her... Steffi would be able to get me an egg, would get me a few drops of cognac for my husband. I got toilet paper regularly

through another way like that: one of my pottery, young pottery...not pottery, painting friends, I made the designs and I had two girls, younger girls, who then had to copy the things on to the lampshades, and paint them. I only had to make the designs, because I was the top person there. And one of those girls who painted or copied the things, she produced toilet paper for my husband and for my mother and for me, through one of those Czech policemen. That was another way of life.

Did you ever do anything illegal in Theresienstadt?

In the camp? I once tried it and it didn't work. I tried to get in touch with that Mrs. Kautsky, because I wanted some money to get some better food for my husband. And through these Czech policemen who got the painting materials for us in that workshop, and took the ready-made lampshades out to Prague to sell them, one could get in touch with people in Prague. And I knew...she got in touch with me, and so I could get in touch with her, and sent her a note that I wanted money. It never came, and I don't know anything about it. So what really happened I don't know. All these things were so dangerous that you dared not ask why or what.

You mentioned earlier that you could only go out if you were in the company of your guard, or the leader of your group.

Yes, but only as long as the Czech population was living in Theresienstadt.

Ah, I see.

The moment they were all gone we were free, we could go out whenever we wanted. But of course, as we had fixed work hours there was not time to go for a walk. Yes, you had a Saturday free occasionally, and then I went and sat on the walls of Theresienstadt, where you had...it was planted, and there were briar roses and...first we were not allowed to go up there, but later on we got the permission, could sit up there and look out into the countryside, which was very beautiful.

Now you were saying the Germans really were the administration, obviously, and the camp itself was arranged, organised, by the Czech police and the Jewish police.

Yes.

To what extent did you see Germans in your everyday life?

Only Mr. Rahm, or some of these people who were allowed to watch us Jews, by Mr. Rahm. I was not in touch with any Germans - any German Nazi people, none.

There were no SS guards that you...

No, I did not see any there at all, never. The moment we left, yes, but on the...the moment we were transported away from Theresienstadt you saw them, but in Theresienstadt I personally never saw any. There might be people who had work near the fortresses or near...outside in the vineyards, that I really don't know. But I personally had never anything to do with any German there, except Mr. Rahm, if he stood next to me and asked stupid questions, how much money I earned for my miniatures before I came to Theresienstadt, which of course I never did, but I gave him an enormous sum, and he was very proud of me then, that he was being able to talk.

Did you ever see any actual brutality, or were you the victim of any brutality?

I was never a victim of any brutality; I heard about them, I knew...

Within Theresienstadt?

Yes. I knew about the people...no, in the Jewish Theresienstadt, there, one did not have brutalities except that you were...the Jews amongst one another fought very often for food or whatever, but that wasn't brutalities. But, the moment the Germans wanted...for instance, some of the artists' things were found, and they were then either shot or hung, because you had found paintings or drawings which

were against the wish and will of the Nazis. And they were then taken out to what was called 'Die Kleine Festung', the small...what do you call Festung? Fortress, where the Germans were in charge, and where they tortured or killed the people they wanted to. Not only Jews, but also Czechs. But I know, I can't give you any, and have no knowledge of what was really going on there. I know that the husband of one of the ladies who was in the dormitory with me, he was...he was beaten to death. Why I don't know. He was beaten on his kidneys and died. That is all I know, she told me that.

What was the behaviour like of the Czech police to you?

I never had anything to do with them really, it was always through other people that I got these lovely things like toilet rolls. I personally had nothing to do with the Czechs, except when we came in they took away our things, and we only got half of the luggage we had taken; the good things were taken out...

Right when you first arrived?

First, when we arrived. We only got some of our things, not the whole. But that one box with all the art things, arty-crafty things, they were all in order, nobody took those. But some of our clothes and shoes and so on were stolen, but as we had plenty we didn't need any more, it didn't worry us very much.

Often you see film of Theresienstadt, often sometimes of the orchestras that you used to have. Were you allowed to listen to these orchestras?

Yes.

Did you?

I went to...

Concerts?

...to one big lovely concert of Haydn's 'Creation', and then I saw one Czech opera, I can't tell you which. I didn't go out very often, didn't do that often. I went to lectures after my husband's death, I went to lectures about Greek mythology, which was through a friend of mine, a wonderful man; if you want I can tell you about him, Professor Max Adler, had nothing to do with my friends Adler here, except that he knew them. And he gave lectures himself, and he looked after the education of the children. And he organised lectures in the evening from six onwards, often until 8 o'clock, and then for people who had these permits to stay longer. And there, after my husband's death, he organised that I could join a group of these lectures, and astonishingly they were given by a Mr. Kempinski, the proprietor of the best Jewish elegant restaurant of Berlin, a very famous man. I never knew that he had anything to do with Greek mythology, but he was, and those lectures were very lovely and very interesting. So one had all sorts of opportunities to get one's mind away from what was going on.

But they were usually illegal, were they?

No, that wasn't illegal. One had to...the Germans knew about that, yes.

In your artist section, or centre, did you have to paint, draw, what you were told to draw?

Yes, of course.

You couldn't do something out of your mind?

No, no no no. We had to...we had to tell them what...tell our Jewish heads of the departments what we think one could do, because the more good ideas one had, the longer these studios were kept alive. Because the Germans were very greedy to have new things to sell to Switzerland, on the outside markets, and we made icons, and all sorts, and the miniatures, and...

That's in the pottery side?

No, that was the real art department.

Only painting?

Afterwards. The pottery did pottery, they did vases, masks, and pots, and plates: I don't know really, I only worked there once when I had to make that mask. But, our department first made arts and crafts, and when that was closed down, because they found out that the Czech transport people who brought the material and took away the ready ware, they smuggled in whatever you wanted from Prague. And when that was found out by the Germans, they shut it down from one moment to another, and I was then put into a place where they made leather wallets and leather...little things for the soldiers, I don't know what else. I was put onto making straight lines onto leather wallets for the soldiers, for their identity cards.

You weren't painting any more at this time?

No, I only had to pull one...with a hot iron, to put one stroke into a leather wallet, which was put...that was like working on a conveyor belt. I didn't like it, I hated it. And then I was...then I got the information that I should try for pottery, and went and took...I don't know whether I told you about that, making a mask for the pottery. I found out through somebody that the pottery department wanted workers who could make masks. Now, although I had never done pottery myself, I had watched a friend of mine make a portrait of my daughter's in clay, and I knew how to wedge a clay, and do such...I had seen that; I'd never done it myself. So I went there, and for a whole day, I was alone in a little shed with a clay under the bench, and there was a piece of paper lying there, "Will you make a female mask". Now I had never made anything like it, but I made a female mask. And went away, after the time was over, and that mask was drying there, and the next day I went back to my leather work, and the next day a chap, one of those boys, like my nephew...

Runners.

Runners, came, that I was called back to the art department, because the German top people in that lovely house had a party, and they needed menu cards with flowers, and I am the only one who could make sweet little menu cards with flowers, would I immediately cross over to the art department. So I grinned and took my things and went over to the art department, back to my Dutch Mr. Spier, and he said, "Now, Fischl, go on and make eighteen nice cards with flowers, little...whatever you want". So that I did, and the next day I went on working there, and a runner came up again and said would I come to the pottery department, they want me to make the masks. And my Dutch friend, Mr. Spier, had had new orders for menu cards, or whatever it was, I can't remember what it was at the time, and he said, "No, you cannot have Fischl for your masks, I need her here, that is more important". So I stayed in the art class, and never went to the pottery class till the end, but the professor, the Czech Jewish professor who ran the pottery came over and I didn't know him, I knew about him but I didn't know him, and to my face, he said, "I'm sorry about that, you are very gifted for pottery". I was amazed, and now I am making figures here in pottery. But that is my start of pottery here in London afterwards, because I was told I was gifted for pottery in Theresienstadt.

But in fact you never went back to the pottery in Theresienstadt?

No, never. I never started, I only did that one thing, he wanted to know whether I could make a mask.

And did you ever go back into the leather again?

No, I stayed in the art department to the end. And that's when I then went and made all these miniatures; we grew then up from making icons into miniatures, because the Germans preferred that, so we made those. It didn't matter what we made; we made little lockets, the metal frames were made in another department, from metal taken off suitcases they made little metal frames, and I made stamp-sized miniatures of flowers, boats, butterflies, what have you. And that the Germans liked to sell. It went off very well. You had to invent something new all the time.

Because they...

For the Germans.

For the Germans to sell.

For the Germans to sell. And our boss there, Mr. Spier from Holland, he was very happy if we had new ideas, because he had to provide new things to keep that thing going. And then, he then tried to keep me back when I got the order to go off to Auschwitz, we didn't really know, to that transport, he tried to keep me there, but he couldn't, I was not essential for the Germans so I had to leave. Whereas three or four people remained there.

But those concerned were restoring old masters?

They remained, and two or three people who made the portraits of Rahm and consorts there, they were allowed to go to that place where the Germans lived and make portraits of them and their families. They weren't paid for it, and the things were very good; some of our artists were very good.

Considering you were a portrait artist, I'm surprised that you didn't...

I was never...never had the opportunity there; I was in the arts and crafts department where you did not have portraits, and in the other department we had a very good Czech Jewish portrait painter woman, who did the...and because, apart of that she was a very pretty young person, and the Germans preferred her. I never had the chance, I was never asked to make a portrait. I was asked to make menu cards and little flower paintings which sold well, and later on the miniatures.

What about postcards, was that ever on...

The postcards and bookmarks we made in the art and craft department. They were printed, and we only had to colour them with water-colours, whereas in the art department things were not printed except that catalogue, or that...on Theresienstadt, which was sold, or given to the Germans and the Red Cross, where I painted the skies, I told you about that.

This was when the Red Cross came to visit.

When the Red Cross came, yes.

The special visit.

Yes, that special thing, yes.

And you made paper...

I only painted...and the paper flowers, yes, yes.

And painted the...

And painted the skies of that thing, yes, only the sky.

So you were never given one complete task, it was always bits of something.

Yes. Because that had to be quick work on conveyor belts. I mean, you see, you didn't have to mix various colours; I had blue and grey and so on, I did that, and the next one did the trees, they were all green and brown and yellow, and the third did this and that and the other. So that went from one to another. And as we had to work very quickly, and we all were such good friends, it worked very well.

But these miniatures here...

No, they were different, everyone did...no, there I did the whole thing.

Exactly.

Yes. And I had the time enough to work as long as I wanted. They were not for the....

End of F897, Side B

Track 13 (F898, Side A)

.....Wednesday, the first of August...

That's right.

We left over last week talking about your experiences in Theresienstadt, and I wondered if you would talk a little more about your recollections of Theresienstadt, and in particular, what sort of clothes you wore, what sort of food you ate, what sort of friendships were struck up. That sort of thing. What a day's experience might have been, what particular memories you have, and perhaps just develop that part of your life.

Yes. I don't know whether...yes, I think we talked about the trip from Prague to Theresienstadt.

Yes. And of course you were there two years.

And then when we arrived and walked to the small town, fortress town of Theresienstadt. And there we were first...we were collected and taken to what they called 'Schleuse'; they let you through the Czech gendarmerie, the police were there together with German and Jewish...don't know what they were, and took your luggage. And the hand luggage, the bags you carried yourself, were hanging around you in a knapsack, they were opened up and out of it came chocolate, food, perfume or soaps, and astonishingly, the towels, the sanitary towels of all the women. That was immediately taken away, and the rest you could carry back with you, go on with what you had. And that was rather distressing, because nobody knew why that was taken out. Now, afterwards of course I heard that that was taken...the chocolate was taken either by the Czech police or the German police who were there, and the sanitary towels and soaps were taken to the hospitals. So that...you had nothing any more of your privacy in this respect. And then I was taken to a clean room, I think I mentioned that last time already, and there I stayed for about a week or ten days. And then I was moved to the...to a dormitory in the women's 'Kaserne', in the women's barracks called the 'Hamburger Kaserne', and...

This is where you were with ten or twelve other ladies?

There I was with about...yes, I don't know how many we were; I think fifteen or twelve, I don't know. And that was in as much, more pleasant than in a big dormitory with windows, because we had a light in the roof, we had a window in the roof, which we could open without difficulty also at night, because we had fresher air in there then. And astonishingly, most of the people who were put into that dormitory were either friends of friends of friends, so we made a very nice community of that room, and we all became very friendly by and by. And there were very few quarrels; one mustn't forget that if women are put together in dormitories and are tired and hungry, nerves crack occasionally and then you have the quarrels, but we did not quarrel very much, and there was always somebody who could either tell a story or a joke, or bring something, and then the atmosphere got relaxed again.

Had you known any of the people in that room from before?

Yes, I had very good friends sleeping right and left of me, who had been friends of mine before; whether that was organised by the help of those gentlemen of our firm or not I don't know, but I presume it was organised somehow, and I had two...on each side, a very good friend of mine, and we had quite some fun, or good humoured discussions. And we kept our so-called beds as clean as possible, and we even tried to beautify the place by putting colourful covers over those beds, and making the place as nice and homely as ever.

Apart from the two that you mentioned, all the other ladies were unknown to you?

Oh no, there were some I knew, but who were no friends; I saw, had met them at parties, and I knew about them and they knew about me, so even that was quite easy. But there were about three or four complete strangers.

Were they previously the privileged Jews of Prague, or were they a mixture?

They were a mixture, they were a mixture.

Were any of them religious?

No. At least it wasn't...one didn't know about that. In this particular room there was no religion, no religious feasts or anything, neither...nothing at all, no. On the contrary, the first Christmas we had in Theresienstadt, we all managed to bring in some bit of firs, or holly or whatever there was, and pretended it was Christmas for us too. This is also quite remarkable really. But, no, not in this dormitory. There were some dormitories probably where you had orthodox or religious Jews, but not in my little place up there.

Presumably the Judenrat, or the Jewish government, had sorted people out as far as they could, had they?

I think, through Mr. Frankenstein, whom I mentioned, and Mr. Minkus, the people who knew us so well, because all my husband's directors and employees were friends of ours, and they knew us so well, and they knew our friends. I have the feeling that that was nicely organised.

You mentioned the friends of yours, the people you'd made friends of in your husband's factory, now were these in the main German Czechs, or were they Czech Czechs?

They were both, they were...the younger ones were Czech Czechs, and the older ones, who had either been born or still went to school during the monarchy, they were more German speaking. But the younger people spoke Czech and went to Czech schools, and had become Czech.

And Mr. Freund I think it was, who wore the funny hat...

The one with the funny police hat, he was a Czech Jew, he was a Czech Jew. And, Mr. Frankenstein was married to a Czech Jewess, who was a great help there too. And Mr. Minkus' wife, I think she was a German Jewess but I don't know. But these families spoke Czech to their children, because the children already went to Czech schools, and because I, coming from Vienna, and my Czech was so abominable, that everybody spoke German with me.

Now, you mention that you used to meet at lunch and in the evening with your husband and your mother and your nephew, and again in the evening, what did your meal consist of in those days?

Oh well, supper didn't...it was really hardly anything; either you had again a bit of coffee or a soup, in one of those tins, you queued for it and brought it home, or you had kept some bread or some 'farin' from lunchtime. There wasn't really much. And my husband brought a bit from his...where he lived, from his barracks, and Tommy the boy brought a sandwich from his place. There wasn't very much. Then later on, when the parcels from Tolar came, then we had little wobbly puddings, or a little semolina pudding, or anything that he could send, and I could cook it in a bit of water or milk. So that was our...

When you used to queue for your meals, was this just a bowl of soup of some sort?

No, that was at lunchtime.

And what was that?

That was sometimes a bit of meat with cabbage, and sometimes it was a soup with noodles or rice, and some vegetable in it, and sometimes there was a bit of sort of goulash in that soup, or gravy, and sometimes it was a sort of bun, a roll, with jam or something like that. It wasn't very substantial, but it was a meal. And you could also divide it, sometimes you had vegetable and a piece of meat in one part of the bowl and a bit of soup in the other part of the bowl, so then you had two courses. But you could throw it together then it was again the same brew.

And drinking? Tea?

Well, we got coffee made of the pips of apples, and the cores of apples were roasted, and that made quite a good sort of coffee. It was a brown, warm drink, and you got a bit of sugar occasionally. And that, we got that in the morning and in the evening, but lunchtime you didn't, you got some...you could drink water from the tap; the tap water was all right.

Did the food get worse as the time went on in Theresienstadt?

No, the food didn't get worse. It kept its standards. Sometimes it was nicer and sometimes it was bad, then there were sometimes lentils or dried peas which were soaked and cooked, and...no, it wasn't worse or better. You got used to it, and when you were hungry you just didn't mind so much. My mother minded it, she was a gourmet and she didn't like it at all, but she had to eat it, she had nothing else. So, the food...I got used to it, I'm not very fussy about food, except if my inside revolts, but my mother hated it.

So, you were never starving in that sense?

Well we were all terribly hungry.

You were?

But you couldn't compare it to starving in Oederan, which was much worse; although much cleaner, but it was... There was really nothing in Oederan, we got every day soup made of...what is it called, marrows, cooked in water, and that was our soup. And on Sunday we had potato and a bit of fresh leak, that was the Sunday. So in Oederan, hunger was terrific. And as I was in the sick bay nearly all the time, one made up menus and talked about food in that room. And I learnt a lot about Polish cooking there, because my little friend in that room, she was a Polish young housewife, and we talked about recipes, and cooking. That was the result of terrible hunger, whilst in Theresienstadt, my mind was taken up through my lovely work with the painting, and so I didn't think about food so much. But I'm quite sure that the young people were very hungry. And after all, my husband had his awful illness through malnutrition, and probably his being so undernourished helped him to die; that is what was written on his death certificate, that he died of malnutrition; that it was an infection on top of that, after the operation, that of course they left out: it was malnutrition. So for a normal, younger or middle aged person, the food was not half enough.

So it was the shortage of the food rather than the quality was adequate.

The quality was...the cooking wasn't so bad, but you didn't have anything, you had no raw materials.

What were your toilet facilities like there?

Well in that barracks, where I stayed most of the time in the beginning, those barracks had been built as barracks for the Austrian Army in seventeen hundred and something or other, and later on, taken on...after the First World War, taken on by the Czech Army, and reconstructed a bit. So there were big washrooms where you had troughs, long troughs like in a stable, stone troughs, and over them you had taps. So you stood about ten or fifteen women, one next to the other, and each had a tap and that trough. So you washed beautifully under running water, cold of course, and this was the washroom. But if you had friends, or if you could manage to get warm water, then you could take up a jugful of water to your dormitory, and wash your feet etcetera with warm water. Now, everybody had some routine, connected with the time of the work and what sort of work he or she had to do. I had my routine for having to be alert and ready to go painting miniatures at 7 o'clock in the morning, so I had to wash, cold, in the morning, and in the evening I could relax and carry a pot of hot water, which was heated for me by another old friend in another room, and I could keep that warm till I went to bed, till my family left me at 8 o'clock, then I could wash quietly in warm water.

Which was quite a luxury.

So that was...oh, it was very well organised, and I could manage all that very quickly.

Then you mentioned somewhere you must have had showers.

We had showers. We had showers.

Mr. Rahm came to see the women, yes.

That's right. There were the big shower rooms, big, enormous rooms with about thirty showers in them, built for the Czech soldiers, by the Czech, when they had taken on after 1918, and these shower rooms were for us then. Only I presume that when the Army were there every man had his own shower, now we always had three women under one shower. So we got...we walked there in a crocodile, you had so and so many minutes of undressing, in dressing rooms, and then rushing to a shower, if possible with friends, and not with strange women. There you stood then all three under one big hose shower, and showered, washed your hair and showered. And you had brought your towel along, in the dressing room, so you all rushed back naked and wet into the dressing room, and rubbed off, put on your clothes, you had a wet head of course, and rushed back to your work. This was the routine.

Your hair had been shaved presumably, when you arrived?

No, in Theresienstadt it was not shaved, only in Auschwitz. In Theresienstadt not. There were hairdressers, and you could have your hair done, if you wanted to, and washed, and set, with rollers even I think, I can't remember that. And, no, you looked quite nice in Theresienstadt. And there were little parties, even amongst the Jews, and you had your own clothes and not concentration camp clothes in Theresienstadt. No, you were your private human being there, no.

And you were able to wash your own clothes and so on?

No, no. That was difficult. You had the right to have your clothes washed once, your things washed once a fortnight, so there you sent your bed linen and your towels, because that was boiled, properly washed. And your undies, or your blouses or whatever, you washed yourself in that little basin you had, private basin, with warm water or cold water, and tried to hang it up over your bed while you were out, or near the stove in that dormitory. It was quite a difficult thing. But we managed, and if I couldn't manage I had somebody who would stay at home in the room during that day, so she did it. One helped oneself, and tried to keep clean and neat. And if you were lucky and were in a room with people who had the same standard of cleanliness, then it was quite nice, you could manage.

What was your relationship with the Czech guards, or didn't you have much to do with them?

I personally had nothing to do with them, but...

Neither with the Germans nor with the Czechs in fact?

I had only to do with the Germans when they came to the art department, like Mr. Rahm and his...the chap who was there before him, and occasionally, some commander or some higher chap came over and wanted a portrait painted, or had a look what we did, but otherwise I personally had nothing to do with the Germans at all, no.

Or the Czechs.

The Czech gendarmerie, I neither, no, that went through Czech friends of mine. In my own...in the art department, otherwise I had nothing to do with them, not at all; I only had to do with the Jewish part of the government, and the authorities there.

And what were the Jewish police like, as far as you remember?

Oh, I had then, in Theresienstadt, when you were settled, I had nothing to do with them again. If I met Mr. Freund or some of his colleagues, that was on a...just friendship, and one just talked a few words, but I had never any time for real gossip with him or anything. He worked and I worked, and he went...rushed back to his family, or whatever he had to do privately, and I rushed back to my dormitory, knowing that either my husband or my mother or Tommy would be there already.

Now, it is sometimes said that women, under the trauma of being restricted in these camps, in Theresienstadt or wherever, in fact cease to menstruate.

Yes. That ceased. That's why I...that's why they took away all the towels. That stopped immediately. I was told by my doctor who was a friend of ours that it...the shock, the absolute shock of the first sight of Theresienstadt, and the first night on a floor in somebody's room, and the difference of life, stopped hormones. In youngish women, in people under 20 to 30, it came back. And if they were in distress physically, the Jewish doctor could give them some medication. But I of course was beyond that, I was over 40 already, so I didn't get any, and didn't have anything to do with it. And so for me that was quite comfortable at least, it was better like that. But it was an amazing thing. And of course, if you arrived, then you had no notion, you didn't know that would happen, whereas people who had been there before, and then our doctor told me all about it. So then you knew about it, and you were not worried any more.

How was your health while you were there, in the two years you were in Theresienstadt?

My health was very good. My health was good, I am tough, as you obviously have observed. It was good, I was very much occupied, which was much better for my nervous system than doing nothing. I had very nasty sinus trouble, and had fainted once, had awful pains in my left sinus, which I still have occasionally, but otherwise I was well, I was healthy. And even the sciatica was got better; not quite, it didn't disappear quite, but it...all these nerve based illnesses got better. For instance, also my mother, who had a heart trouble, she got better. All people who had diabetes or, now you would say cholesterol trouble, got better, because the food was so plain, there was no fat, there was nothing. But we all very soon had difficulties because we had no vitamins. And that...people had then eye trouble, they couldn't see at night, they had tooth trouble; vitamin...that came very soon. And then of course after a while, I had then oedema, what do you call that?

Oedema?

Oedema, I had swollen hands, legs, feet and arms, and that was called - and I wasn't the only one - a hunger oedema. That was vitamin. And there I got fresh yeast; they made...they had a bakery of course, and the bakery was again run by friends who had big factories of...we were connected, my husband's factory was connected because we made yeast, and so we knew quite a lot of these people, and I got that fresh yeast every morning on my way to my workshop, and eating a bit of fresh yeast stopped the oedema.

Really?

Yes. So that was vitamin B I think.

You presumably had never, or rarely had any fruit or vegetables?

We had vegetables, but of course, not fresh...yes, we had cabbage, boiled as a soup, so there was no vitamin really left. You had a sort of cabbage soup, or a leek soup or anything like that, because you had to use every bit of it, so you didn't have anything fresh, no, no.

And fruit, not...?

No fruit either. Except if Tolar could send an apple or so, but that was so rare that you couldn't really call it a fruit.

To what extent were you aware of people around you, in the camp generally, dying, being ill?

Oh yes you were aware. But of course you had no time, thank goodness, to be too aware. Because you had your fixed times, and the moment you were late anywhere, or not to the...didn't do your work properly, you were then either sent to the little fortress on punishment or whatever, or you were put on, later on, out to go to Auschwitz. So everybody tried to do the best one can, which was good for the Germans and we did it to keep alive. Now, I don't know whether I mentioned that my old aunt Camilla died there in the beginning. Now, you had...my old aunt, she was eighty-eight when she went there,

and had no idea what was going to happen. And when I came to Theresienstadt, she was in a dreadful state, in a dormitory with men and women, her hair full of lice already. She was so amazed, so upset and shocked by the whole thing that she could not understand what was going on. And the idea that you share a dormitory with old men and old women, that you could undress and wash, that was beyond, you couldn't.

This was a hospital?

No, that was an old age...she had only gone there not very long before I came, I think a month or so. She was still in the...where they caught up the people before they could tell you what they could work. Now Auntie Camilla was eighty-eight and couldn't work anything, so she was kept there with other old men and women, and nobody really did anything for them or kept them occupied. So they all deteriorated immediately. And Auntie Camilla, when I then came and saw in what a terrible mess and distress she was, I got her into a hospital, and there she lived, I can't remember, about a week or a fortnight, and then she was so weak, and had enteritis like all these old people from the food and...not food, that she was in a dreadful state, and the doctor came round, and asked the Jewish - that was a Jewish hospital, ward - and asked me, do I allow an injection, and I said yes.

And they gave her one?

And they gave her one. So if you had a near relative who could take the blame, and I took it, they gave them a little shot, and Auntie Camilla was in peace. And, well, that was the first death I saw there. And afterwards, not really, I mean then of course I saw other people die, and after my husband had died, the doctor of my children died, and I was there, and...

Who was that doctor?

I don't think we have mentioned it, his name was Professor Schleisner, I think he wasn't mentioned yet. He had been my children's doctor, and he was related to my family as well, and a lovely man. And he died of boils, he was an elderly gentleman by then. There were awful infections, and that was a very sad thing to happen, because we were very fond of one another, and...well, that's it.

You mentioned the ladies in your room in your barracks, and how you developed relationships with them and so on and so forth. Did you develop other friendships in Theresienstadt, apart from those ladies?

Oh yes, in my working place, in the studio, which was much more...interesting really, because there were artists, and we tried to keep our.....

End of F898, Side A

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Well they started to whistle, for instance the Beethoven symphonies, or Chopin waltzes or whatever, and then there were little lectures about the various types of painting, schools of paintings, and techniques of paintings, things I had never learned before. And I was greatly interested, because some of my colleagues there had been taught painting or art in Viennese or in Czechoslovak high schools, and there was a lot for me to learn and to hear about the first time in my life. So it...I must say it kept my spirits and my brain working.

But you also developed a friendship with these people...many of them?

Yes, I developed a friendship which of course has now stopped, or years ago already. Yes, I was again as usual the eldest in the place. Some were nearly my age, but on the whole I was the eldest. And then, in the beginning the first workshop was the ones where we made art and crafts, lampshades, boxes, trays, tiles. And later on, when I went over to what they called 'Sonderwerkstatt', the special painting department, where you made miniatures, menu cards, and worked specially for the German Kommandatur. That's why we were called the 'Sonderwerkschutz', the special workshop, because we there only worked for the Theresienstadt German Kommandatur, commander department. There it was much smaller, we were only seven people there, and the Dutch restorer painters in the next room. So there the friendship got...I can't say closer, but more intimate, because you sat every day for eight or nine hours with the same people, and had to work approximately the same things. Whereas in the first workshop, the big one, where we made these arty crafty things, there were some who made the designs, I belonged to those, and some, much younger ones, who copied them. I made the design for the four, six sides of a lampshade, they were then copied for a few dozens of lampshades. I had nothing to do with that any more, I made the first design and painted it, and that was then transferred on to a sort of parchment paper, it wasn't real parchment but it was a sort of parchment paper, by one of the young girls there, and then they then painted it and I finished off the details of the painting. I was on top of the...(LAUGHS)...I had a lower staff under me, and these girls were very nice; some came from Vienna, some were Czechoslovak girls, and some were very smart, and cheeky, and some were less so. In between you had quite a lot of fun; you couldn't all day long be unhappy. And we four designers of that place, we knew one another and we got friendly with one another, and I had a great admiration for one lady called Zadikov, she made the designs for the famous Moser glasses in Prague, and her husband was a Polish sculptor, very interesting people. And she taught me how to place...if I'd made a design, how to place the burrs, or flowers or whatever I had to do, properly into the surrounding. She was...because I had never learned decorative painting or designing, she taught me that, and I learned a lot, and we stayed friends after the War and for many many years we wrote one another letters; she went to America with her family, and I still have got the letters, but I think I shall have to dispose of them by and by. She was a very interesting, real great artist. So, there was quite a lot of...but it took one's thoughts off the misery completely all day long.

Yes, you mentioned that you'd done everything you could to make your room pleasant and keep it clean and so on, and yet...on the one hand, and then on the other hand you talk about the dirt and the filth and the bed bugs and so on.

Yes, even though you were trying to keep everything clean, the bed bugs you could not...they were in the wooden floors and in the beds of the soldiers already. Czechoslovakia always had a lot of bed bugs; even in Prague in the best hotels, you had bed bugs in the old ones. That was in the walls and in the skirting boards. And if you kept the place very clean and disinfected it or fumed it, then you could live without the bugs. But the moment...after all, we were so many, and we could not scrub the floors constantly, these bed bugs augmented the...I mean, I don't know many babies every bed bug has every morning, I don't know, but when I moved to my mother's little room in a private house, away from the barracks, there I could attack forty bed bugs in one night. And we had quite a routine in that too. It was terrible, yes, because it kept you from sleeping properly.

Did you have any problem of that sort in the workshops and in the studios?

No. In the workshops and studios there were...

No problems with that?

There was no problem of that, no. And that was...these rooms were cleaned by a cleaning unit, I had nothing to do with that. When I came to my studio or workshop it was clean and fairly warm, because of our work, and the lavatories were clean, and...no, that was one of the great things in my job there, that I had a very comfortable life doing that job, without any special disagreeable things. I didn't have to think where I got the water for painting, there were taps and it all functioned. That was something else, after all, we were in the...the first workshop, the arty crafty one was in the big lovely building of Theresienstadt where the former Austrian generals lived, and they had gorgeous rooms with frescoes and water laid on. That was (INAUDIBLE TWO WORDS)

This is where you worked?

That's where the first part of my work was, where we made the lampshades. And then when I was transferred to the Sonderwerkstatt, where I had to paint the miniatures and menu cards, that was in a private house, but also had its taps and electricity and was fairly comfortable. And had a water closet, a water lavatory, which wasn't in all the houses there.

One of the points I was going to ask you is, whether you...you've mentioned Tolar and his parcels that arrived, and presumably a few other people used to get parcels, and even your parcels didn't arrive every time. But, this was a link with the outside. Were you aware of any other links, underground, resistance, anything that was happening around you?

Oh yes. Oh yes. As long as we worked in that art craft department there were the links and very active ones, through the transport people who brought us the raw material, the paper, the paints, the brushes, all the things to make the lampshades and the boxes. They came in big lorries from Prague or wherever, and took away our ready-made ware, which had to be sold then in Prague. And these Czech lorry drivers and Czech people who looked after that, they were a very living link. That was the reason why that department was shut down by the Germans, because they found out that there was an active link, to-ing and fro-ing from one side to the other, and immediately stopped that art workshop. And that's when I was then transferred for a few months to a place where they made leather goods...

You told me, yes.

And from there then I went to the Sonderwerkstatt.

But was there any other knowledge that you had of the resistance within the camp, within Theresienstadt?

There was no resistance in the camp.

Or underground?

Not resistance; you tried to make life as pleasant as possible. Whether there were any people who had underground political links I don't know. First of all it's probably my nature that I don't think of other people's possibilities; I mean was so engrossed in my work, and in the worry mainly about my sick husband, that I didn't try to find out a lot of things; I was glad to be alive, to do that work, to keep my family from being transported away through my special work at the Sonderwerkstatt, and that we were not sent on somewhere else, and I could, because of that, keep my family there. And so I didn't want to know, or it didn't even occur to me that anybody could try to be rebellious.

You mentioned your mother's...the fact that she was unable to come to terms with - understandably - with what was going on...

Yes.

But how did she cope? After all, at the end of the day she survived the whole of Theresienstadt?

Yes, because we are a tough lot, she and I. She survived, she got better, she had a heart disease, she was terribly fat before she came. She lost weight, she could sleep properly then, which she never could

before. And she hated the food but she ate it. She lived...she lived in a little room with six other people, two of them were two Viennese girls who had boyfriends there, and Mother was there, and those girls talked to her, so she kept up lively discussions with those two girls, that helped her too. And then for a while she had a very delightful Viennese lady in the bed next to her who died of a cancer of the womb there, which was a terrible blow to my mother, because she had made great friends with her. But Mother survived, and she was made eldest of that little room, so she had to look after the stove and had to see that there always was some drinking water at hand, and there was that little sort of garden so she could sit in a garden. And, I don't know what...and then I was able to get books for her: we had a library there which was a very interesting thing. The books and postcards and whatever people had in their suitcases when they came, were taken away and put into a library. And that library was run by a professor of Germanic, from the Königsberg, that is Polish now, near Danzig. There was a German university, a Prussian university, and Professor Utitz worked there as a Germanist, and he then came, when that was run over by the Nazis he came to Prague, because he was a born Czechoslovak, and I met him in Prague already, him and his very nice wife, and then he took over the library in Theresienstadt.

What was his name?

Utitz, U-T-I-T-Z. Of the University of Königsberg...I don't know what it's called in Polish. And he ran that library and he was a very gentle and pleasant and knowledgeable man. And because I worked in that art department, I had the permission to take out books, whereas the normal people did not, they would have get a permission from their social department, whereas I could walk straight in and ask Professor Utitz, could I have this, that or the other, or what could you give me for my mother, which was again not really allowed, but one did it. So my mother had books all the time, because Professor Utitz sent her novels or good books.

Did she have to work in the camp?

No, she was already very old; after all she was 70, she was 69 when she came. No, she did not work, she was made in charge of that little room, the eldest of that room. She had to look after it, being clean, and water, and she collected the food, when the bread or the margarine came she collected that and put that in nice little parcels on to the beds of these women who shared the room, that was her work.

Apart from your mother and your nephew, I think it was your...was it your husband's nephew?

No.

Your mother's nephew was it?

No, that little nephew was my nephew, he was the son of my brother.

Oh of course, who had gone to...

Who had gone to France.

Yes yes yes. Apart from your nephew and your mother and your husband, and Camilla in the early days before she died, did you have any other family that you knew of in Theresienstadt?

No. Friends, but I had no other family there. All my family had already moved away before it was too late.

Both on your mother's side and your father's side?

Well, my father's side, yes, because he was the youngest of the family, and only Auntie Camilla was alive still, so she was there. And my cousins in Prague, and their children, they had all gone off already, they were not caught up there, we were the last there, of that family.

Who exercised discipline over you, on a day to day basis? The Jewish police?

No police; the Jewish...you didn't need a police for normal...

Who made sure you were not late at the work, or you got up in time, or...who was responsible?

Well, I would think the Jewish government and the Jewish police looking at the roads. Don't forget it was a very little town, very little, and I walked to the first workshop about five minutes or seven minutes, and to the Sonderwerkstatt it took me two minutes. And, as you knew you had to be there at a fixed hour, and do so and so much a day, you were there in time, because if you were not in time you could...Mr. Rahm might be there, and then the whole workshop would be shut down, or you would be taken to the little fortress and shot, or beaten to death. You did not risk such things if there was no real reason. So you were in time.

But there was nobody there sort of cracking a whip, or making sure you were there, or...

Not in our department, no.

Oh I see.

No, no. I think...I don't know whether it was in the kitchens or in the other places, or the other workshops. I don't know. In my department there was nobody cracking a whip, no. In the first department, where Spier was really very strict to keep discipline, because he wanted to be on the top line for the Germans, he was quite...he knew what he was doing for himself and his family. So he was very strict, and if...he would go round the rooms and would tell you, "We need so-and-so many...nine lampshades till eleven o'clock". You had to. Because if you let down, and your work wasn't good enough for Mr. Jo Spier to deliver on Friday, so-and-so many lampshades and they weren't there, because I had not been quick or good enough, then he would say, "Thank you, you go to the kitchen", or "You go nursing", or "You go cleaning up"...I don't know what. Then my position in that good department, with the knowledge that they wouldn't send my family away to the east, would have been in jeopardy.

What did you know about these...

Nothing.

These sending people away to the east?

We knew that there were these transports, but where one...I didn't know where one was going. We didn't know...normally my workshop didn't know anything about them, except that one was afraid to be sent to the east. That one should try to stay in Theresienstadt, where it was better than anywhere else. That's all I personally knew, and my friends knew, otherwise I would have known about it.

But equally you knew that people, and some of the people you knew, were actually being sent?

Yes. Constantly, yes. And that was very tragic, and very enervating and very scaring, yes. One usually lost touch; occasionally some sort of a card came back in some sort of code and one didn't quite know how, sent from the train through somebody or other, dropped outside and...I don't know how. But there were some people who knew more.

Did you have any contact with the children in Theresienstadt?

Well with my little nephew.

No, other children.

In the place there?

Yes.

Well I saw them in the street, and one heard them sing occasionally or walk past, and then I...one of the ladies who worked with me she had a little granddaughter there, and she made friends with my little Tommy. Yes, they met, that I knew. But as I say, we were so busy that we had no time.

What do you remember of the Red Cross visit?

When the Red Cross came, after the War?

No, during the War, the special visit.

Oh well that was already...oh yes. (BREAK IN RECORDING) But I can't remember exactly the time when it was, it was fairly late already. It must have been in the early summer of the year I then went off to Auschwitz.

'44, 1944.

'44 I think, yes. And you had to make...we in the Sonderwerkstatt we had to paint the sort of brochure of this camp for the old...they called it at the time the 'Retirement Camp of the Jews of Czechoslovakia', and Mr. Jo Spier, who I think I told you was a famous draughtsman, a quite wonderful Dutch draughtsman, he made the designs of I think 18 pictures of Theresienstadt in black and white, and they were then stone printed, I don't know how many books were made, and they had to then be coloured with water-colours. And so our department, I think we were eight or nine, we had to stay over-time to paint these 18 pictures, so that then they could be copied by the other people. And so my work was painting all the blue skies, whereas other painters they made the houses and one painted the green leaves of the trees, and quick-quick-quick, on a conveyor belt type.

You got paid overtime I suppose?

We got paid overtime, we got a nice piece of bread and a nice big piece of sausage, and we just enjoyed that. Whether we had anything to drink or not I don't know.

Do you remember seeing what else was happening in Theresienstadt, in order to...welcome...?

Not really, we were not really officially informed of what was going on. We saw that they put up little swings in the park, and there was a kiosk where the Jews then played...the orchestra played in the park in that kiosk. And everybody enjoyed that, because after all, first of all we didn't know why it was being done, the cleaning-up of the houses outside, and making flower arrangements for the rooms with windows on to the roads, and then later on we were informed that the Red Cross was coming to have a look at that, and a film was being made of it. So all that, as I am a person who likes...who enjoys better things, I didn't think how cynical it all was, I just enjoyed making flowers and getting into the open air very often, more than usual, because I went from one house to another, to put these flowers into little ceramic vases which had been made in the ceramic department here, into the windows, and to chat with those prominent people who lived in these rooms. And I quite enjoyed that, and cheered them up because I showed them how the paper flowers were made. I never really thought how horrible the whole business was, all that only comes back to me now when I talk about it, how cynical...how awful it really was. But at the time the young people enjoyed it, they got better clothes for that film, and they were put onto harvest carts and were taken into the fields outside the Theresienstadt ghetto department, and had to bring in the hay, and had dirndls, and it was all very pleasant and delightful. How cynical it was, that only came later, dreadful really. But I think that these young people, the boys and girls, enjoyed themselves at the time. I don't think they really hated it as much as one in hindsight.

And you didn't participate in the film or anything like that did you?

No, no.

Do you remember the Red Cross coming?

Yes, I remember them coming, but I didn't take part, and it had...it left...I had quite forgotten about it, I only was taken back to it by this Dutch young historian who had seen it and asked me about it. I had

never thought of it again, but I remember only the picture of one of those harvest carts with those boys, I knew them as...they had gone to Gymnasium with a cousin of mine, and I knew some of them by sight, but I'd never met them there again. No, it was...schizophrenic, to say the least of it. Everything was cleaned up, the roads were nicer and neater, and the park was reconstructed, so there was a park and not only wilderness. I looked at it from that side, that after all, we then continued living there, and it was a little better.

Do you remember the...what happened after the Red Cross had been?

This is a blur. There were then...they were gone, and one fell back and went on doing what one did before. And as I say, the park remained very nice and there were concerts there, that continued for a while, and then there were these operas - perhaps I am not the right person to talk about the operas because I only saw one, 'The Bartered Bride'. We had a very famous Czech Jewish conductor there, his name was Ancerl, he worked with the Czech Philharmonie, and after the War he was Director of the Czech National Theatre Opera Department, that I know. And he organised 'The Bartered Bride' and some other...two or three other operas. I only saw 'The Bartered Bride', but I'm told...these operas took place in the roofs of one of the barracks, like our dormitory was in the roof, so they had opened up one of these roofs and made a big theatre up there. There were various performances. But as my family came in the evening and my husband was dying at the time, and after his death, I did not take part in these things at all. But as I say, I did the backdrop to the cabaret, this was one of those Dutch things, why that Dutch gentlemen came to ask me. There was a famous Berlin cabaret director called Geron, Kurt Geron. He was before the War very famous for rather cynical and I think vulgar, beautifully staged cabarets in Berlin. I think, I don't know, he belonged to that set of the homosexuals of Berlin before the War. And he was there, tall, big, heavy man, and he started a cabaret there. And he wanted backdrops, and I was made by Mr. Spier I think, I was sent out to paint meadows and birch trees on to sheets, bedsheets: instead of giving the bedsheets to the hospitals, they took the bedsheets and I had to paint on them. I remember they were lying on the lawn, behind our workshop, and I had big pots of some sort of colour, enormous brushes like taches, I had to splash it on the floor. And I remember that...I loved doing that work, because it was out of doors and it was not.....

End of F898, Side B

Track 15 (F899, Side A)

.....what he's doing, I don't want to know what he is doing.

This cabaret was when? In 1944?

Yes, I believe it was in 1944. It must have been between March and June.

So your husband had died in the March?

In March, yes.

And the Red Cross came in about June?

I think so, because there was hay on those carts, it was summer, and it was a hot summer.

Now some time in the next couple of months you suddenly heard that you were being transported yourself. Was this the first time that you were going to be transported?

Yes. And I only heard two days before I left. You were not informed before. We saw that...we felt and saw and heard through the underground, whoever it was, that the Russians were coming from the east, and were beginning to be victorious. And so we knew that the Russian camps, the Polish camps, something was happening. I personally didn't know more but something was happening, so I wasn't at all surprised that they were cutting down people...I mean cutting down the amount of people in Theresienstadt, because one heard that they were trying to transform that enormous camp of about fifty-five thousand Jews in that little place to a reasonably small camp, and then they were going to call it the Camp for the Old Age Jews, an old age home for the Jews of Czechoslovakia. And to do that they had to get rid of able-bodied, or people which were not essential to run Theresienstadt. And consequently, art classes were not really very essential to keep going. So one did have some sort of a cloud over one's head. I knew that they would have to do something, one could feel that painting miniatures wasn't very important to keep an old age camp going.

So what happened?

So what happened. They sent away by and by, two transports to the east; they sent away first the little girls who copied...all the little girls, or the younger people who had no special work; then they sent away more copyists and other draughtsmen. And from our little Sonderwerkstatt where we were so few, they could not send away one girl called Bures, because she painted the portraits of the German Nazi Kommandatura. So she was out. My friend, Mrs. Zadikov could not be sent away because she was well-known for her designs for the famous Czech glass, so she had...she was well-known and one would not send her away. So there were not very many people, and Mr. Spier you didn't send away, and there were not very many people in this department which were essential for running a camp. So they chose Mr. Karas first, and Mr. Bloch first, but I needn't tell you all the names of these people. And then after a while, it came to me. And I was told...I can't remember what day I was sent off, but two days before I was told that I was going off with the next transport, because they could not keep me any longer. So, there you were, I had to get ready for that. And...I had been told once before already, you're quite right, I forgot about that, I had been told once before already about three weeks before that, that I would be in the next transport. And a friend, a wonderful friend of mine, who was a friend of Leo Baeck, told him, and Leo Baeck, I don't know how and through what, managed to...me to be taken out of that transport. But then the one which followed three weeks later he could not do it for a second time, so I went off. And my little nephew Tommy went three days later. So my mother stayed alone.

And how did you get there?

How did I get there? Well...

What happened? You marched to the station or something?

Not really, because we were so near the station. One knew when one would have to be there; yes, one was collected more or less by such policemen with those funny things on their head. But this, I must tell you the truth, I can't remember that; I know I had a heavy knapsack on my back, and a little bag with my bed things in it, with a blanket in it in my hand, and that I went off, and that I hated to look...didn't look at my mother and I went off. Whether I went with other people I don't know. Of course it was so near, it was a tiny place, and as I told you the railway lines came up into the fortress town. And so you just got into that railway and you were put into a wagon. And I was there with very nice friends of mine, he was a doctor, and his wife was a doctor, and that daughter, that niece, of one of the Dutch famous restorers. I don't know whether we've got that already, he had come to me and said, "My little niece is on the transport, and they won't have me, we want to go with her but we are not allowed to leave because we haven't restored all the Dutch paintings for the Germans." So they had to stay, auntie and uncle, and the little girl, I'll remember her name by and by, she was fourteen and a beautiful Dutch girl, she was put under my guardianship by her uncle Mr. Cohen, and I had to promise that I would look after her, if I can.

Now you left from the real, the new Theresienstadt station?

Yes.

Not the old station.

No, the new station, so there was no long carrying of baggage and so on, you could get in and...Lisbeth was her name, Lisbeth, she came with me and had her things, and then we met the doctor and his wife there, and other people we knew perhaps, I can't remember. But in any case we were pushed into that thing, and we stood up in there before we could really find out how we would sit or stand. That was rather awful I must admit. There were forty men, women, in that, standing up, because there was no room to sit down.

It was a cattle truck?

In a cattle truck. And by and by, one then managed that, at a time two or three could sit down and then they got up and the next sat down. And you had a pail with fresh water, and a pail for whatever you produced yourself, and that was that. And there were slits at the top of the cattle trucks, and you took it in turn to stand under that to get the fresh air. And this friend, Walter, Dr. Walter Feuereisen - but you don't need the names I suppose - he had heard about these trucks and had seen them before from other people going off, so he had tablets of disinfectant with him. So every time that second pail was used, or slopped over or so, he distributed these tablets; that I'll never forget, because of the smell it produced, a sort of carbol smell, which was better than the real smell. And that's what we had. And I can't quite remember, I don't know how long we were in there, I only remember that when we got...when I stood at that window once and looked out and we were stopping in a station at the time, I saw the word 'Kattowitz', [Katowice] so I knew that we were in Poland, and on our way to a Polish camp, which wasn't nice to know, but at least I knew we were not going to Mauthausen. We were...I didn't know very much about all that. And then we arrived in Auschwitz, I think during daytime, morning, I don't quite know, it was dark and grey and cold: after all it was I think the 24th of October or something like that. And we all got out quickly-quickly, and there were the German guards standing there yelling at you, "Quick quick quick, out." And there you were then divided into two crocodiles, with a German doctor in between. One went to the right and one went to the left, and more we didn't know. And the doctor who was in front of me with his wife, he looked and turned round and said, "You go to the right, there the older people go there, and we'll have less work". And I said, "No doctor, I'm not, I'm staying with Lisbeth, I promised to look after her". And got myself straight and looking young, and Lisbeth and I went to the left.

You couldn't choose anyway, could you, you were told?

I was told, but if I looked...he said, "Bend down and look old". If I had been like that, they went to the right, they were younger than I, they went to the right, they pretended to be old. Straight to the gas, which I didn't know.

Men and women were in the same crocodile?

Yes. And Lisbeth and I and this other lovely girl Edith Kaufler and other people I knew, we were on the left. And so we...this saved my life. Otherwise I would have gone straight to the... So there was Lisbeth and I. But of course there were other people who were then still...then we were taken to Birkenau, marched to Birkenau, where, naïve woman as I was, there were the birch trees...Birkenau means the...'birke' is a birch tree and 'au' is a glen - 'birch glen' - and being of an idealistic background, I thought oh well, lovely birch trees, and really there were birch trees, and round these columns of stables where we were then housed, there were flower beds. So I thought that can be quite nice, not knowing what was really going on behind it! And so we were driven into these places, and then hell started. Then that you will have on various other tapes already, people telling you about that. These two-and-a-half days were hell. Hell because it was so scaring, it was so perverted, you didn't know why on earth like this, if not like that. Senseless. Latrines, washing; you had to...you got coffee, such sort of coffee like we had, in the morning, but you were not allowed to drink that coffee, you had to wash the pipes which were in bricks...these used to be stables for horses, 'ein Gestüt', there was the breeding of horses there, and you had to keep that clean. So as you had no other means you had to find a rag and wash this long line of bricks before you could drink your coffee. Now...now I laugh, but it wasn't laughable. And the idea that you could not go to a loo whenever you needed to, was also something quite astonishing, that you had to go to the latrine when the woman who was in charge of you in that big thing felt like it, and then had to produce whatever she wanted you to produce, was also not quite easy.

And in ten seconds or something?

Not seconds, but a very short time; you just had to get up and go back. This is...look, it's 50 years since I've had that, and I still can't see the reason, and I still can only think that it was sheer sadism. Because it did not make any reason for running Auschwitz; it couldn't make the Germans' life, who were in charge of that, easier for running Auschwitz.

When were you separated at this point, between men and women? On the way to...

On the way to Birkenau. The men were taken out then and they went...to Monowitz [Monowice] I think, but I'm not...that I wouldn't know. And we women were sent to Birkenau, to the women's department of Birkenau. I don't know anything about that, but you can now find it in all these books, you have maps of Birkenau, I've learnt all that afterwards of course. And you had parts for men and parts for women; I didn't know all that, we were only women in that place.

One thing, had you had food since you'd left Theresienstadt? Did you take food with you or...?

Yes. Yes, when we left Theresienstadt, we got some food. And we had some with us in our knapsacks. There...that has...I have lost my memory. Whether we, in this ghastly, stinking place, whether one really ate or not: we must have probably, I suppose we did, I don't know. And in Auschwitz you got this coffee and a chunk of bread in the morning, and then you were driven out and stood for hours in a thing they called 'Zahlappel'...[wait a second]. (BREAK IN RECORDING) It was done twice a day, in the morning and in the evening.

Roll-call.

It is a roll-call, yes, but it had a special name; it was a roll-call. And you stood there for hours, in the rain, it was a horrible November, and the rain icy cold, before those Germans came to check it. And there the women dropped, when they dropped they were taken away, and probably shot or gassed, that I don't know. They were just swept away. And we then went to sleep, we were five to one of those...

Bunks.

Bunks. And you had to wait, wake up your neighbours, if you wanted to turn around, because you could either...the five of us turn at the same time; you could never lie on the back, there wasn't room enough, you had to lie on your side. But, I only had that twice, two nights.

What did you do during the day in Auschwitz?

Wait.

In the...in your barracks?

Yes. For hours outside waiting for the Zahlappel - Zahlappel, it has come now - that call, or waiting to go to the latrine, or waiting to get...to be taken outside and to get a big bowl of mixed vegetable soup where you all, always five together with one bowl and one pushed the other away to get more food, which was nasty, very nasty. And the day passed like that. And in between one chatted, one talked. And there were people who had been there before who had some sort of a job, so they had been there a long time already, and they came up. And for instance when we came, one of these women there - they looked all dreadful, hair off, our hair had been taken off, and everything too, and our clothes were taken off too - so she came and said, "How old are you?" And I told her, and she said, "No, you're not, you're 38. Don't forget, you are 38. Not older and not younger". I didn't know why. And there with that lovely little Lisbeth next to me, who was 14 or 15, and she said, "How old are you?" "14". And she said, "No, you are 17. You are 17, and not a day older and not a day younger". And afterwards we knew that that would have been gas, if we had been older or younger. You see, you found helpful people; and the Polish Kapos were worse than the Germans, who were in charge, and they were Jews. They were horrible. But they did that because they wanted to remain in that higher position: they had more food, they were in charge of the new-coming Jews. So to be able to remain in that job they must be worse than their German partners. It is all understandable, and if people think they were specially bad, they were not, they were just not courageous, or they just couldn't live up or down to what was expected of them.

Was this the first time you had heard of gas chambers, when you were there?

Yes.

And somebody told you presumably?

Yes, that woman came round and told us.

This was the first intimation you had ever had?

That I personally had. Whether other people from other work knew about it, that I don't know. Lisbeth and Edith Kaufler and I, that was the first time we heard about it. And I had that 14-year-old here, and the 17-year-old one there, and they were my companions, and we went back together.

And after two days, what happened?

We were so in between, we were sorted out, who could work and who could not. We were stripped naked, and there was one so-called doctor of the Germans - I don't know whether he was a doctor or just...he and two other men, they stood on that...this...

Platform?

No, where...which we had to wash every morning, chimney thing. He stood up there, so he was above us, and we naked women were driven around him in quick-step, and when your body was good enough for work you went to the left, and when your body was not good enough for work you went to the right. And Edith, that girl next to me, Edith's mother was sent to the right, and the little girl and I, and Edith, we were sent to the left. That's why we are alive, and we're all alive still, Edith is in London.

So what happened at this point?

Well then we went back to our department, to that funny dormitory...no, we were still in it, we were in it, the block, and what went then? Then one waited, one waited constantly. And then there was another Zahlappel, and then you were marched to the...in the evening, it must have been late afternoon, to the railway station again, and there we were again bundled up into one of those trucks, those...

Cattle trucks.

Cattle trucks. But we were not so many. And the cattle truck was wet, the floor had been washed, was wet, so I didn't dare to sit down, and stood against the metal doors, which, when it went then wobbled, and I lost my sciatica. I had...don't laugh, but I had a sort of vibration massage for many hours; I stood on the axle of the wheels, so I hopped, and at the back the metal rings went up and down, to and fro, and this vibration massage, I lost my very nasty sciatica. I had not sat down - there was room for me to sit down - because I didn't want to sit in that puddle, because of the sciatica. So I stood up, and, I have it gently now, but I've never had real horrible sciatica pains ever.

That's amazing.

Yes. Again, one of the miracles in my life. And there happened another miracle in my life. We were...I don't quite know how many people were there, but you see we were all young, I was by far the oldest, and far less then in that smelly place. And in charge of us...we left, we didn't know when or what, we just went off, the doors were closed, there was, as we had seen before, a pail with clean water and an empty pail. And there were two boys of 17 or 18, with guns...with rifles, in charge of us, and that was all. And we stood there and chatted a bit, and waited. We had all got a piece of sausage and a piece of bread when we left. We ate that quickly because we didn't know what to do with it. And so we stood or sat and chatted. And then, I was quite near these two boys with the rifles, and I heard them talk. And they talked the Styrian dialect of Austria to one another. So I looked at them, they were youngsters, they had normal peasant faces of a place where I had spent up to then 16 summers of my life. I could understand their dialect, I could understand from which valley they came, more or less. So after listening to their little talk, which wasn't very interesting or nothing, I saw how scared they were really. I moved up to them, and said, in German of course, "Are you from Altaussee, or Grundlsee?" And that saved all our lives. That was the second lake there; one was the Altaussee and the other was the Grundlsee, and they all had the same little dialects, which I...

Why do you say it saved your life Lily?

That I shall tell you. Because, they looked at me and said, "How do you know?" And so I said, "Because I was a friend with..." and said the names of these boys there whom I knew. So we got on the same level and footing. And so the boys said, "Oh, that is lovely". We talked about Altaussee and Grundlsee; they were as homesick as I was.

Were they in the...

They were in the so-called army, but because they were under age they were not soldiers. I can't tell you how they were moved into that particular thing, that they had to take charge of Jews going from one camp to another. They didn't really know what they were doing. Then they asked me, "What is it, where, what?" So I told them who we were. So he said, Franzl said, "Look, if you can keep those women quiet, and not fighting..." they must have had very bad experience, "then we will open the doors and have fresh air; we will take out the slop pail whenever we stand, and we will bring you fresh water". They knew what they were doing, they had been before in such transports. So having me to keep the women quiet, not only did they do that, but we went through the woods, it was a lovely...really very beautiful to go to Oederan, from Poland down. We had fresh air, we had fresh water, they allowed us to sing, they sang to us. There were...my little Lisbeth, who was a fat girl really, but there were two other little girls there too, they shared their milk. I'm telling you that not on purpose, I'm telling you the truth. Two gentile boys of a village in Austria, who were as homesick as you want, you can think of. And then, I said, "Where are you taking us?" So he said, "To Oederan". "Where is that?" He tried to explain, I didn't know anything really, and he didn't really know either. He said, "I know the people there, you needn't be afraid; there is Dorle, Lange, (the one who sat on my bed afterwards). I will [sic?] her to be nice". And that's what happened.

How many were you on that train?

I can't tell you really.

Only...

We must have been about 300 people.

Ah. It's the same three hundred that finished up in Oederan?

We stayed in Oederan, we all stayed in Oederan. Only women and young girls.

So only women had left Auschwitz the day you left Auschwitz?

Well I don't know how many other transports there were. My transport went to Oederan, the whole train, and we were about I think 300 working women, young people, and I was the oldest.

How long did that particular train journey take roughly? Hours or days?

Well certainly a night, and the next day, and I think we arrived in the late afternoon. But these are things...you had no watches, you had nothing, you saw the moon go up and on. I know we went through lovely forests, and lovely high air in the hills, was clear air, and...I worried that I had no paintbrush with me and no painting things, I thought that would be lovely, and if we are in a place like that I could paint again. But that was out.

All that had been left behind in Theresienstadt.

That was all in Theresienstadt....in Auschwitz, I took things away from Theresienstadt, for painting, and that was all gone, in Auschwitz you took nothing with you any more, you had nothing; you had the bread and the sausage in one hand and the towel in the other, that's what we took...

The towel?

The towel, well...

So your knapsack had long since...

All gone, everything gone, nothing was left.

Do you remember, I mean, just roughly again in hours, or days, how long was the train journey from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz? Also a day and a night?

The train from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz must have been longer. We left...I can't know when we left, I think we left in the morning. Yes, we left in the morning and we arrived...we stayed the whole night, which was then dreadful that night, standing up in that stinking place, and we must have arrived in the late morning again, or something like that, but I don't know.

Twenty-four hours, something like that?

At least, yes. That was horrible, because there was no Walter and no Franzl, those Austrian boys who opened the doors and brought fresh water, and shared their milk with those girls. Now you wonder that I'm so pro Austrian.

Well, we always did say, there are good exceptions to every bad...people.

And I had the luck of the...

Astonishing.

To find them again and again wherever I went.

So, eventually you arrived in Oederan.

In Oederan.

Which is in Germany? Was it in Germany?

Yes, Oederan itself belonged to Saxony and Germany, but it was quite on the border with the Czechs; at the top of the mountain on which we were on the Saxon side, was the frontier between German Saxony and Czechoslovak Sudetenland, the German side of...

But you were more in Germany than...

We were in Germany, we belonged to Germany, as far as I know, but I'm not sure.

And what happened when you arrived there?

That was quite interesting and quite good. They had changed that little factory for impregnating tent material, they made tents of a material, and it was waterproofed there. That was a little factory in the woods there, I don't know what they had made...yes, they had made these waterproofing of the material, and then it was altered and changed to making munitions for small guns. And these munitions machinery hadn't arrived yet. So we came into a completely clean and new and empty place, and had nothing to do for three weeks, before they had finished installing our work. So we had three days of doing nothing...

Three days or three weeks?

Three weeks of doing...I'm sorry...three weeks of doing absolutely nothing, which was good for our bodies, because we rested up after that journey, but bad for the morale, because lying about and doing nothing, and not being out of doors, and getting bad food, and if you are young you can imagine that that isn't very healthy. But, one managed, one organised the sleeping and...as I said, you had this girl where my boyfriend (LAUGHS) of Altaussee talked to her, her name was Dorle Lange, and she was not at all efficient; she was a kind, bewildered woman who was in charge of these women there, had no idea really what to do; she spoke only German of course, no Russian, no Polish, no Czech. It was very badly organised. There was a cook, Czech...I don't know, a Polish cook, who stole the things and the food disappeared before we got it, and then she re-organised...and the other one re-organised all that. It was very badly run, and it didn't work, and we didn't work. So you sat around and quarrelled. And I started then to tell stories, instead of being constantly surrounded by Jewish women who called one another, "You Jewish sow", or were quarrelsome and vulgar, and bored, and even fought with one another, and hungry. That didn't work. And there was this lovely Edith Kaufler, the daughter of a former engineer of our firm, who was a highly intelligent 17-year-old, beautiful red-haired girl, she and I, and a few others, started to think what can one do. And then I started telling stories, stories I had read and which I made up or changed, how it just came to me. And these women, these young women sat around me, and got used to that, and listened, and didn't fight, and came to me when they got their chunk of bread in the morning, "Should I eat the whole thing now, or should I slice it into eight bits?" And it was I who had to, out of the blue, say to that girl, "Do eight bits", and to that, "Do five bits", and to that girl, "Eat it all". I didn't know, how should I know? But they came to me, so I gave them an answer.

Amazing. Were any of the girls...

Don't forget, I was so much older.

Yes, yes. Were any of the people on that transport that finished up in Oederan, apart from your niece - it wasn't a niece, no, the little girl...

That little girl, no, she was the niece of that Dutch chap, she was not related to me, but we were great friends, she was a very loving child.

Ah yes. Apart from the two of you, were there any other people you knew on the train...

And this Edith Kaufler, who belonged to the Fischl family more or less; she wasn't related, but she belonged to the firm. I had these two young...

So you had come together from Theresienstadt?

Yes. And her mother had been taken away in Theresienstadt to the gas.

In Auschwitz.

In Auschwitz, to the gas. So I had this child.

There were three?

We were three, and I was the grown-up mother, or the...

None of the others did you know?

No. None of the others did I know.

Right. Now when you actually arrived in Oederan, did you have to march somewhere, did you...

No, we were...the railway station was...yes, we marched up...yes, you're quite right, we marched from the little village of Oederan, up into the woods, up a hill, into very good mountain air, it must have been 800 metres high by then, and there we got into that nice German well organised - that's to say the camp wasn't organised, but the buildings were well organised, and the buildings were nice, much nicer after Auschwitz, it was really like a summer resort, like a holiday. And, so we rather enjoyed seeing that, and Dorle Lange wasn't one with a stick, who said, "You live there, you live there". She would say, "Now, you lie down, you find your own..." We had three layers of bunks, and the bunks were badly built, obviously very quickly, and the boards of the top bunks either broke or fell off, and then the woman fell down onto you. You got used to knowing how to lie, during the months we were there, but it was very unpleasant when in the night somebody suddenly fell down and all the others yelled. But you got used to funny things.

So you were in a barracks.

I was in the lower bed. No, it was...it used to be a machine place where they dried those tents.

Oh, you were actually living in the factory?

We lived in the factory, there was no...no. And there were two buildings, I never went in them, where they...they had been dormitories, or sleeping accommodations for the workers there, and there they had the French and English prisoners of war, while we were there, but they only came later. When we arrived it was empty, as far as I know.

You soon met the commandant did you?

No, there was...no, my commandant at the time I arrived there was Dorle Lange (LAUGHING), and she was no good. There was...as an efficient person to take care of...these Jewish women, she was bewildered.

So the lady commandant that you mentioned earlier...

She came later on, when everybody saw that it wouldn't work. I don't know how that worked, I don't know the strings, who told whom. Now we didn't work yet as you know, we had three weeks of sitting around, and during that time then, and when they all found out that the food was being stolen in the kitchen before we got it, probably Dorle Lange had some possibility to inform her authorities that it didn't work. So they sent another girl who was even younger than Dorle, but she was a very German, very perverted, very blonde, hard, lesbian woman - not lesbian, but whatever you wanted. And that was quite an eye-opening affair, and it was much harder, but it was beautifully organised, the food was good, everything was clean, everything went on the (INAUDIBLE WORD); she knew, she wasn't...she could organise.

Was she brutal?

Yes. And she didn't mind whipping, if she didn't get what she wanted. She was rude, she was cynical, she was lovely to look at. But, as I say, everything was clean, the sick bays were properly organised, you had the Jewish doctor. She knew how to run a place so that it works.

A female doctor, or a male doctor?

A female doctor, yes, she also...

Who had come with you?

She came with us, yes. She came from Hungary, she was from the Hungarian-Austrian border. And she also had spent various summers in Altaussee, so we got on a good friendly term. And she looked after me as far as she could. And she ran the sick bays. And you see would inform us when Marion and her other Germans would come to visit the sick bay, so quickly we hid everything we had which was forbidden in our mattresses, and so she didn't come near us. And that was all beautifully organised by and by. And as I say, the food was...we were terribly hungry, because there was hardly any food, but what we got was clean and edible.

So what happened after three weeks?

After three weeks all the machinery for making the...what do you call it?

Bullets?

The bullets for machine-guns and for small cannons, or whatever it is. We had been installed in the machine-rooms of that factory. I can't tell you anything much about it because I only was there three or four times before I fell ill. And it was all quite new, and the German workers and foremen, they came from a little town called Chemnitz, and they were Saxons, German Saxons, and had no idea that we were Jews. Before we were allowed to go into Oederan...place, into the factory, or get out of that train, we took off our Jewish Stars. By then we were criminals, we were criminals who were in a camp instead of a prison; we were robbers or murderers, or I don't know what, but certainly we were not Jews, because it would have been bad for the German workmen who had to work with us, to be contaminated by a Jewess instead of a criminal. So this work was in nice, light, big rooms, and you were put in front of a big wheel with...do you want to know what it looked like? I don't know, it was an electric wheel which turned, and you put the case of the...

Shell.

The shell on...you had to put a ring over it, to fix the bottom of the gunpowder to the top, which was pointed. And this ring had to be pushed down by a very heavy load which was put down from the top, and that was worked by treading onto electric...somehow or other...

Foot pedals?

So that went down. Now, if you put two rings the whole thing broke up, because it was crooked. This happened because we were nervous, and because we were not trained. This happened occasionally. So you had to call for a German foreman who was in charge of these, I don't know, 10 or 12 machines or, I don't know how many there were in that room. And, I noticed that, and when I had been there the third day, I thought, well, during the time he repaired that whole thing, there was no work being done. So if you put two rings on one, you don't work full time, which is quite good for you, and quite a good sabotage for making bullets. So, we discussed that in our dormitory, and it happened quite often. And it was a very good sabotage. And on top of that, apart from not doing very much work, these workmen began to chat with those nice girls and young women, and they then found out that they did not rob or murder, but they were Jewish, and these Saxon workers from Chemnitz didn't really know.....

End of F899. Side A

Track 16 (F899, Side B)

Yes, they brought a bit of food or a scarf or anything, to these young women and girls who worked with this ammunition. And they made friends and talked and found out that we were no criminals. And, either they were naïve and didn't really know what Jews were - probably, that happens quite often - so they were very friendly. And one of the girls who slept in the bed underneath me, or just on top of me, she came back one day and said, "My foreman has got a birthday tomorrow, and I have found a piece of pencil and a piece of paper, draw...make a bunch of flowers for a birthday card". And so I did. I drew a little bunch of daffodils or something, and she took it there, and told him who had drawn that. And so the next day, he gave her half an apple and a strip of a jumper, half a jumper, so that I could put it on my chest, because I had pneumonia. That was the first present I got in Oederan. And I got this man, he went on sending me little presents every few days, and then he sent me the New Testament, knowing that I was not allowed to have a book. I knew what danger that was for him. If our...this nasty Marion, that beautiful blonde girl, found the book in my bed, or bunk, that would have gone back to the factory, and something would have happened to him. So I had to be very careful, to hide the book in my mattress, in my paper mattress, which was in a terrible mess because I sweated every morning for hours, and hide it when I knew she was in the building. But I managed, when we were evacuated at the end of the War, I managed to get it back to him, through that young girl who did that, who was the courier between us. So there again I had a great help, because reading the Bible, lying in bed with a high fever wasn't bad, that was quite good.

Because this was the first time you'd actually been ill throughout the War, wasn't it?

Oh well, I had this sinus thing, that kept me ill for about two weeks, yes, but otherwise, there was nothing wrong. But there I was really...and then of course they kept me longer there because I managed to help to keep the hunger madness which came to the young girls, I managed to keep them quiet by holding them and talking to them. We had a little Hungarian Jewish girl who was terribly ill, she died there, and...

In Oederan?

In Oederan. She...I don't quite know what she had, I think it was her lungs, but I don't know, she starved herself to death because on the holy days in October...no, when was it? No, it couldn't have been.

You mean Yom Kippur? Jewish New Year.

Yes, I know, but I was thinking, we only arrived there in November. No, it must have been some other one in spring, it must have been towards the end, what...

Pesach or something...

Pesach, yes, must have been Pesach. She wouldn't eat, and in between she wouldn't eat on a Saturday.

So she was religious?

She was very religious. And she only spoke Yiddish. And it was quite difficult. And she couldn't be kept quiet in her bunk, so I could stand for hours, holding her and talking to her so that she lay quietly. That was the reason why our Jewish doctor kept me there longer than I really...I might have gone to work before, but I never went back to the factory to work ever again. I only worked about three or four days and then after these days this mad Marion thought it was good for the Jewish working girls to go for a walk in the hills and in the forest, because there was fresh snow. And although we had no shoes and no underwear, and no coats, she drove us out into the snow to go for a walk and look at the view. And some of us caught cold, and I not only caught cold, but I had pneumonia the next day.

So this is how you caught it.

That's how I caught it.

What clothes did you wear in Oederan?

Well when we left Auschwitz, everybody got something else. I got a pair of pants and a vest worn by other people, but clean, and a summer dress without sleeves, and a nice warm black coat. And because I was old I got stockings, one grey and one yellow or brown, I don't know, and a pair of shoes, and not wooden clogs: because I was so old they gave me that instead of the clogs. So I was better equipped, most of them did not have any pants, and so I was better equipped. This is what I lived in in Oederan. I sweated in that dress, and then I washed it in the morning and hung it on the heater and put it on when it was dry again. And over that I had that black coat to cover my...as a cover, as a blanket.

How did you communicate with this Hungarian girl who only spoke Yiddish?

Well, I tried to do a bit of Yiddish; there wasn't much communicating, I told her and she listened. What she took of it I don't know. I spoke German, I couldn't speak anything else really; and it didn't really matter what you told her, she wanted somebody who stroked her, and who was there.

Was she the first person you'd ever met who was orthodox?

No, there were quite a lot of orthodox in Oederan. And in Theresienstadt there was no orthodox Jewess in my room, and neither in the room with my mother. They might have gone to a synagogue for the high holidays, but nobody orthodox at all.

So this young girl...

But this was was, and there were...and Mirka Stein also, that was a lovely girl whom I met afterwards again, whose mother was there too; they were orthodox, they came from Lodz, Litzmanstadt it used to be called. And the father had a big factory of noodles, of kosher noodles and 'farinage'. And the girl had gone to a Polish Gymnasium, she learnt Latin and French and English, and Polish, and at home they spoke Yiddish and she had a Yiddish home tutor so that she could learn real high class Yiddish and read Yiddish literature.

Where was she from?

From Litzmanstadt, from Poland. And she was married, and her husband had a degree and he was sent to another camp, and she never saw him again. And she was with me, and we became very great friends there. And she also had...she was ill, she had...I don't know, I can't remember what sort of illness. She was most of the time with me in that sick bay, and helped me a lot, and I helped her a lot. I gave lectures of history of art, of Egyptian history, and she gave me lectures in French. And we got ourselves into quite a good mental state like that.

What was the story of the girl who came to sit on your bed?

What was the story of her? I don't know, she came from...I think Austria, I can't tell you, she was not from Czechoslovakia. She spoke in Austrian...but I don't really know very much from her, she was red-headed and fat and jolly, and...

She was a guard in the...?

No no. Oh, that? Oh no, I thought the Jewish girl.

No no.

Oh that one who sat on my bed, Dorle Lange. She was a Saxon, she came from Saxony in Germany; I don't know what her father was, I've forgotten. Because she didn't want him to go to the Eastern front and be a soldier, she offered to be a warden for the Jewish camps, so her father could stay at home; whether he stayed there all the time, or whether he was sent off after that, I don't know, and she probably neither.

But she knew you were Jewish and she came to talk to you?

Yes. She told me all these stories from home, and...yes, she wanted to know a lot. But she was incapable of running that camp, she was most inefficient. She was kind and friendly and organised that the young girls got a bit of milk, and...she was kind, she was certainly not a Nazi.

And she became second in command to Marion?

Yes, right.

Marion who?

Oh I don't know her name. Her name was Marion, and she only wanted elegant clothes, and peroxide for her hair. She was a clever and efficient beast.

Did you ever come up against her?

Yes, once.

What happened?

She wanted a nice Christmas, and she wanted an Advent wreath. And I had...you know what an Advent wreath is? And she...I had watched our gardener in the Austrian factory to make Advent wreaths, and so I offered to make them...not really knowing much about it except watching. And I said I needed thick wire, and I needed of course the greenery, the fir tree, and the rest, all the wire for rolling up, so on. So I'll make it. And she said, "All right, you'll go into this and this place", I can't remember, some other little room. And really there I had all fresh branches, fir branches of wood outside, lovely fresh air, and wire. And so I tried to make that, and I got clippers or things, and did that, and put the wire on, and didn't have to lie in that stinking bunk all the time. And did that, and then of course she didn't agree with what I did, she wanted them hanging down and being graceful. Oh no, that's what I did, and she wanted them stiff, like you have them in a shop. And because, when she came in and I had nearly finished it, she saw that, she was not only rude, she wanted really to beat me. But she didn't in the end, and she was cruel by kicking me out of that room, and said, "That is not an Advent wreath", and how of course could a Jewess make one, and so on. And so that was the end. And because of that she never talked to me afterwards, and all the advice I gave then for going back to Theresienstadt was through somebody else, because she would never look at me, and I would never come near her, because of this interview, because of the Advent wreath.

What was the story of going back to Theresienstadt?

When she didn't know where to put us after the...when we went back, when we had to leave Oederan because the Russians were coming in in half an hour, and the Americans had bombed Chemnitz, and the cannonballs, or whatever you could call that, came into Oederan already, they sent us away from there, and they put up a train of cattle trucks again, and took us down to the Oederan station. That was the only time I really and truly was terribly afraid, otherwise I didn't really mind what was going to happen, because I was...

Immune.

Immune. But then that was the end. And we had watched for days the Polish people coming back with their trucks and their rucksacks, leaving Poland and going to the west, the Germans coming back. We had watched that on the horizon, from my dormitory, from the sick-bay dormitory. You could watch them coming back. So I knew it was the end of Oederan, because for three days they had passed there. So something would have to happen. And the women from the factory brought bits of newspaper, which the German foremen and workmen had given them, and I read out the newspapers in German and translated it to Czech and Yiddish and bit, and they helped me. And as I knew - I was the only one who knew the geography of these countries, so if you read Bonn, or Salzburg was bombed, I knew where they were already, how far the left side came over. I didn't know there had been the crossing of the Channel, that I only heard here, I knew nothing.

The crossing of the Channel?

Yes.

You didn't know about D-Day or anything?

Nothing. Completely...that I learnt here when I came here.

So how did you think the Americans were...

Well the bombing, and somehow they must have come from somewhere, but how I didn't know.

I see.

And after all, we were bombed too at night from the British and the Americans, in Oederan. So we knew that was coming from that side too. So an end would have have [i.e. had?] to come; whether we were going to bomb in Oederan, or what was happening, we didn't know. But then when that morning came, and Marion came and said we are evacuating, we are all going off on a train somewhere, probably to one of those...Mauthausen or these other places where you made an end of your...or Auschwitz again: Auschwitz was gone already, Auschwitz was Russian already by then. So we didn't know what was happening. And there they had given rifles to the boys, 14-year-old boys who lived in Oederan, they didn't have to go to school, they got rifles, to take care of these 300 women in their clogs, to shoot them when they tried to run away, to escape. There I was afraid. Not that I was running away, I wasn't able to, but that they would be trigger-happy. To give a boy something, and to tell them to shoot it [i.e. if?] you see...Ja?

Absolutely.

Mad, mad. And then we got back into these cattle trucks again, and we got some food into our hand, and were left on our own, Jews in there. And who was in charge of us? Marion, who was in charge of the whole train; Dorle Lange was with us too; and there were old Wehrmacht people, old people with men in uniform, horrible uniforms with rifles. Every few of those had one standing there, so that if anybody tried to jump off the train, or go off, he would shoot. I'm sure he wouldn't have, but that's what he was told. And then we moved back from up the mountain down through the woods, into Czechoslovakia, into Aussig [Ústi nad Labem], and again to Egergraben, to where all these lovely spas were. And we were pushed into sidings. And poor Marion didn't know where she was, she didn't really know what to do with us. Everybody was hungry, the sidings were our loos, she stopped off...she didn't know. And then we met train units, where we couldn't really know what it was. They were German youngsters, men and girls in uniforms, who were there to be in charge of the Czech uprising. The war was over, the Czechs suddenly became courageous, and tried to kill as many Germans as possible, who were in Czechoslovakia. So they organised little train units with train kitchens, the Germans who were there still, to keep the Czechs down from being revolutionaries and taking over. Sometimes they were on the Czech side, sometimes they were on the German side, you didn't really know. Now, Marion was an excellent organiser; she organised by flirting with those little trains, that we got soup from their soup kitchens; she organised that we went into the fields and stole red beetroot, and tried to clean them and eat them: we had no food. She organised sort of loos on the sidings, she organised little orgies for herself and those German boys.

Little what?

Orgies. She disappeared with them, and then she was in a better mood, and helped us a bit more. And then she was told through...I don't know, in stations, that she was to go through Furth-im-Wald, that was the frontier between Bavaria and Czechoslovakia, to Flossenburg, that is one of the famous camps where they had gas chambers, to get rid of us. The frontier was blown up by the American Army, we could not get through, we were pushed back onto another siding, then she got the order to take us down to the south, Bohemia, to go to Mauthausen, where we could also be ended, because they did that there too. And on the way there, our lines, railway lines, were bombed, so we could not get on. Now, I must say we Jewish prisoners stayed in those cattle wagons, which were open, they had no roof, they were open trucks. And whereas Marion and these old men, they dived down and lay down

on the fields, and we stayed in those things. It wasn't very comfortable. It was very scaring, and noisy. And we couldn't get through to Mauthausen either. So there was poor Marion, having three hundred Jewish women in open cattle trucks, and wanting to leave and rush back to Germany so that she wouldn't be killed by the Czechs, and didn't know what to do with us. So this idea came up: Theresienstadt.

Whose idea?

Well, we Jewish women talked, where could we go, and I don't know who had first the idea of Theresienstadt, but we thought that was still going, so why not go there, and we'll go back, and she can take that unit of her train back to Germany and do what she wants. So we went down to Bauschowitz [Bohusovice], the line was open, not to Prague but to Bauschowitz, the line was open, and we stopped in Bauschowitz, and she organised herself and another person to go to Theresienstadt, on motorbikes or something; how she organised it I don't know. And she arrived there, and told them she had these 300 women prisoners there. And the Jews of Theresienstadt, the government of Theresienstadt, would not take us, because they didn't know we were Jews from Theresienstadt, because she didn't mention that. So she came back and said, "No, they don't take you". So I said, "Why?" So she told us what she had done. So I said, "Well that is stupid of course; why should they take prisoners, they take Jewesses, especially Jewesses who have been there before". And then that was my idea, to write a list of our names with our numbers from Theresienstadt, on a list; would she go back and go to the...there was such a...moat...you know, they pulled it up...

Moat?

A moat. And there was always somebody there, in charge of it, she should give that in, and wait till she gets an answer. And that's what she did. And then she came back and said, "Now we'll march there". All with five...she made that the German way, and we marched there, which was very hard work; we were weak, bodily hard work. But we were so elated by then that we would be back in Theresienstadt, that we managed, nobody broke down on that way.

I mean, this was a journey that, four years earlier would have taken you twenty minutes or thereabouts.

Yes, I don't know how long we walked, but we walked...

When you first went there?

Yes. I don't know, probably an hour or something, because we crawled...most of them had clogs, and were weak and tired after this train...

You had guards to escort you?

No, there was Marion and I suppose Dorle Lange, I didn't see her, no guards any more.

Now how long was this between the time you left Oederan and the time you arrived in Theresienstadt?

Well we...we left Oederan I think in the late morning, and we stayed a whole night in these open trucks, and then it must have been late evening of the next day, or...evening of the next day.

So there were two days.

No, one night.

One complete night, yes.

One night in...

But this is during which there's messages going, whether you go to Mauthausen, or whether you go to...

Yes, you always stopped off...

All this was happening in those two days?

All in those two days, yes. I think so, I don't think we were another night in there. I can't remember a second night in there.

So to come back to...in Oederan itself, you were...from about a week after you arrived there you were in hospital in fact, in the hospital.

No, three weeks we didn't do any work, so I was not, and then I worked for about four or five days, and then I was in hospital till the end. I had five months in hospital.

But some of that was to look after those who needed it.

That's right, when I was very weak and I had a fever every day, but this Jewish doctor always waited for me to have a blood...spit blood, but I didn't; she was fully sure that I had TB, which I didn't; and she was terribly careful in these open trucks going to Theresienstadt, when the sun burnt on us, would I put a towel or something over my head, otherwise I will have a blood bath. And I said no, I won't, and I like the sun. But she insisted on that; she was in another truck, but she came to look what I did.

Of the three hundred who arrived, or thereabouts, who arrived in Oederan, how many of them survived back to Theresienstadt?

Well I think we...

How many died roughly, in the...

No, I think died, there were only, from my sick room there were three deaths. And whether anybody else left I don't know. We were nearly all there.

Most of you survived Oederan?

Yes. That's why I say, Oederan is a 'Schindler camp'.

Incredible.

No beating up, no ever the idea of shooting, nothing. The food...well, they had no food, they didn't get any; they couldn't get any salt for weeks. But whenever something did come, we were provided with it. The water was always there and came and was repaired the moment anything was broken; Marion had everything repaired immediately. As I think I mentioned, the broken window panes were replaced in the morning. At night, when the bombing was round us, sometimes the window panes cracked or broke at night in the dormitory; in the morning the workmen came from Chemnitz and put in fresh window panes. Even on the day we left! You wouldn't believe it, but that was German efficiency.

When you were being bombed in Oederan, were you sheltered, were you left to your own devices?

No, we had to leave our bunks, and stand on the staircase down, so that we could run away. Because Marion and the other girl, Lange, and the other Germans who were there, they went and hid in their bunkers. So we were left alone as Jews, and we were told to get up and stand on that staircase, which I did once or twice, and then I thought this is ridiculous, I'd much prefer to die in my bunk than standing on a staircase where I can't stand because I'm so weak. So I stayed in my bunk. Nobody was there to shoo me out. I did it in the beginning because that was the rule and everybody went and stood on the staircase to be able to run out.

In theory, could you have run away from Oederan? Were you locked in? Did you have guards, or what?

The guards would have been hidden away; there were no...in Oederan everything would have been possible.

In theory you could have run away?

In theory, if we had been strong and healthy, and had shoes, we could have run away, yes.

But to your knowledge, nobody ever did.

Nobody did, no. Nobody did, and I am quite sure these Saxon gentile workmen would have helped. But nobody did, because we didn't know how, what was happening, so one didn't. One was too weak, too feeble to do anything like that. One talked about it mind you. There were plans, wonderful, quite silly plans. If you didn't talk about food, you talked about how you would get away. Yes. Now we laugh. I think I even laughed there too. Listening to those young girls, making plans how they would run away. Even when we were in that train going back to Czechoslovakia, how they discussed how they would run away.

One of the questions that occurs to me is, here were you, a pampered, high born Viennese lady, of middle age, or virtually middle age, who had really only met Jews of a similar type all her life, and had seen...obviously the odd black coated people who had come after the First World War, but nothing much more than that, whether it had been in the spas, or wherever...

That's right, yes.

Here you were thrust first into Theresienstadt, then into Auschwitz, albeit for a shortish period, then into Oederan. Seeing quite different Jews for the time.

Yes, it was astonishing.

How did you react?

How did I react?

Yes.

I suppose...you see, I always was, and still am, interested in the person, and interested in what makes him or her think differently, or like I. This little Erzhika, that Yiddish speaking little girl who died there, I couldn't understand her, but I knew...you know, in my youth and in Vienna and also in Prague, when somebody made a Jewish joke, and it was Yiddish, one didn't like hearing it; one either laughed or one said, "Don't." Now there it was the first time in my life that I was together with a lovely little girl, who was dying, who spoke the language which was always looked down on and made fun of in my...wherever I was up to then. And there she was, crying or talking to her parents in this language as her language. If I hear Yiddish now, I cry. These are a few things which I can't get rid of. It is...this was an impact, I suppose it was a shock, that this lovely little girl - I could never really talk to her, I didn't really know her or what she was up to - but she was a lovely little girl, and I loved her just...and pitied her because she was so ill. And there she was talking the language which we had made fun of, and she was dying. And that's the answer.

How old was she?

14, 13, I don't know.

And then there was the other girl, the other religious girl.

Well she was grown up, she had been married, she was grown up, and she spoke fluent French, so we could speak this language. And she was the one who made me aware of Yiddish, Yiddish literature, Yiddish background, and that little girl's Yiddish, she could translate for me, she could talk to that girl. That was because of this Miriam, that for me Yiddish then became a serious language, which was like, if I learned French, why not Yiddish. And it had its own literature - not that I know any of it, but she

told me about it - and she herself was such a nice, well spoken, clever, interested young creature. Her mother was so distinguished, and such a nice woman, that I had...

You knew the mother?

Yes, she was there too. She died then, afterwards. I met this nice Miriam in Tel Aviv.

Really?

In Tel Aviv, where she was sewing dresses in a very chic boutique. And my daughter took me to that boutique, so that I bought a nice jersey suit. And the girl who came in to shorten the skirt, she went down on her knees to shorten my skirt, and then she looked up and I looked down at her. And she shouted, "Teticka" - she called me Auntie in Czech - and I called her, "Miriam", and we fell into one another's arms. Another miracle in my life.

That was...amazing. Neither Dorothy nor you knew...

No, Dorothy took me to a very elegant place, an expensive place in Tel Aviv, where she liked the things, and she said, "You need a nice elegant...in London you never get around to do it, come, let's go there." And I found a navy blue suit, and it fitted beautifully except that the skirt was too long, or too tight...too long, and so the lady who helped me in the front called back and said, "Would you come out, Miriam". And there she went down on her...and I didn't look at her, she she had colourful hair. I had seen her only with a shaved head or with little black hair coming up afterwards. And then she looked up at me, and I looked down at her.

So these two girls between them, really introduced you...

They introduced me to Yiddish.

Well, to the fact that everything you'd ever thought about the religious Jews, the Yiddish speaking Jews, was wrong.

Well I had learnt about it in between there already from other people. But these were the two people who introduced me to...

Yiddish culture?

Yes, Yiddish culture. Well, that little Alenka(ph) not, because she was dying and sick, and only spoke to her mother probably, or to whatever, I don't know, I couldn't understand her, and only through Miriam could I get in touch with her a bit. But it was that girl from Litzmanstadt, Lodz, who got me knowing about Polish Jews, and that they were not all Eastern Polish Jews.

Weren't all uneducated.

Because of them, the Jews of Vienna were baptized. You see that was the difference.

Yes, yes.

And that was Oederan. I don't think I would have had this possibility, certainly not in Auschwitz, because it was too dreadful for words. And in Theresienstadt, through my work and my dormitories, I was not in touch with them.

When you were marched back to Theresienstadt, what was the reaction?

Mine?

Yours and other people's.

Well, we were...first of all we were...when that thing went up, the moat thing went up...

The drawbridge.

The drawbridge went up, yes, there were already friends from Theresienstadt who came towards us, and for me the first memory was a youngish man who made the frames of all those pictures there, whom I knew from Prague, and I was still friends with him: now we've lost touch, he and his wife. And he came up towards us, and when he saw me he caught hold of me and said, "Don't go straight to your mother, I shall tell her that you are there, and I shall tell her what you look like, so that there is not such a shock". You know, they were thinking people: if my mother would have seen me... But we didn't, we were not taken straight, we were put in the quarantine, we were first showered, washed and shaved, and got rid of lice. We didn't really have any lice, but we were horribly dirty. And then we got clothes, and were put into quarantine, because of the typhoid which was beginning to spread. But Franticek, the boy who made the things, he went to my mother and told my mother that I had come back, and that I was all right, and that the next day she could visit me through the window in the...nobody could come in, we were in...there were barracks which they had prepared for that.

Isolation.

Isolation. And Mother could only come to the window. And he took her there. And he was the one who then provided her with the books. So I always had some lovely friends, I always had.

He was the one who provided your mother with books after you left?

Then when the library was...this Professor Utitz who ran the library, we talked about him just before, he was sent away then, I don't think he...I don't know what happened to him. And this young man knew that I could get the books because of my work there, and as he made the frames he also could get into that library, so he got the books for my mother, so she could have something to read while I was gone.

So your mother caught sight of you for the first time through a window.

Through the window, yes. And we were there till the stupid Russians stopped the quarantine before the time was over for that. They didn't understand what was going on, they thought we were imprisoned in there, and opened the doors, and the stupid women of course went out. And if you have an open barracks of an insulation place it's no good staying in there any more. So we all went out, and the spots, typhoid spread, and that was terrible. I had a tooth out in the morning, and the dentist died in the afternoon of typhoid!

Goodness!

That went from one moment to another.

And this was after the liberation of the camp?

Yes.

Goodness!

That was after the liberation, because the Russians were too naïve.

They'd broken up the isolation hospital?

They were naïve. They sent away the Red Cross, and they took over.

How long was it before...between the time you arrived back in Theresienstadt and the arrival of the Russians?

Not long. I was still in quarantine when first the Red Cross came, for one day only, to bring the supplies, medicines and so on, and to look after that. And the Russians came, I think two days later, and sent the Red Cross from Geneva away again. They took over, and wouldn't have them there.

And this was all in what, a two week period, from the time you arrived?

No, in one...well, it must have been the week after we arrived.

Really?

Because the next then...we were the first...the second transport coming in. And then you went on having these transports, one after another.

Into Theresienstadt?

Into Theresienstadt, from the death camps, or from...yes. And that was dreadful, that was dreadful. It was first not well organised: how can it be organised, how can one organise it? And by and by it was better organised, when the Jews really took over after the first difficulties with the Russians it was better organised. It was very disorganised when the Russians came because they thought they would now give us lovely food, but where did they get the food from? They thought they would find the food in Czechoslovakia, but there was none. So the whole thing...they were just as bewildered as we were. And they didn't do anything out of spite or evilness, they were just naïve and very very stupid; they were not capable of doing anything like that. Some came from Circassia, and from Siberia, they were soldiers, with a few officers, they had no idea what to do with these camps, and certainly not with Theresienstadt, which was different than a death camp.

How was your mother when you discovered her?

My mother, well, she was much thinner, and she was more depressed. But she had had...there were other things there too as well. I have never talked about the...you know when the Germans took over Theresienstadt, they built sort of archives for German reports on camps, and we Jewish women had to pick up these books or files in a sort of chain, to get them into those buildings, which was quite interesting as well, if you could read them a bit. And during the time I was away, the Jewish women, and men, had to take them out again, and they were either burned or thrown into the river, so that they could not get into anybody else's hands.

End of F899, Side B

Track 17 (F900, Side A)

Right. Lily, this is Wednesday the 8th of August. We've now talked at some length of your experiences in the camps, in Theresienstadt, briefly in Auschwitz then in Oederan, and then finally returning to Theresienstadt for...more or less in time for the liberation. How you went into quarantine, how the Russians behaved when they arrived. Can you talk more about that period.

Yes, I was there till July; I stayed with my mother till the month of July, and my mother could only leave...she was not allowed to come with me to Prague, because she came from Austria, and she was only allowed to go back to Austria. I was not allowed to go with her to Austria, because I came from Czechoslovakia, and we had to return to our...where we left, and why I don't know, probably...

Who gave you these instructions? The Russians?

No, I suppose the Czechoslovak government, because I had a Czechoslovak passport and Mother had an Austrian passport. So I think we had to go back to where we were official citizens. And my mother could not go back before the end of August I think, or even later, because the bridges over the Danube were blown up and she had to wait for a bridge...what do you call these...

Pontoons?

Pontoon bridge, ready to take a train back to Vienna. Whereas I went back to Prague. I think I mentioned that I got money and my passport sent to me to Theresienstadt by Mr. Tolar.

No.

Did I not mention that?

No.

Now, a lady went...Mrs. Frankenstein, I think I mentioned her, she was the widow of our director of the factory, and she managed...she worked with the Jewish government in Theresienstadt.

The Judenrat?

In the Judenrat, that's right. And she managed to go to and from Prague occasionally. So she got in touch with Tolar, and told him about that my husband was dead, and that I was alive. She organised for me to get a flat in one of the houses of my husband's firm, and she helped wherever she could. Now Tolar sent me through her, money and my Czech passport which he had kept for us. And so with the money I could buy a normal train ticket to Prague, and did not have to wait for help from Theresienstadt, and with my passport and a suitcase and a little knapsack, I walked to Bauschowitz, to the train, got onto a train to Prague. He had been informed of the date of my arrival. And so I sat in a third class compartment, and was terribly excited, worried. I can't quite explain my feelings, because it was quite out of...out of anybody's idea how one could feel, sitting in a train, going back alone to a...knowing where I was going, because Eva Frankenstein had told me where the flat was. So when I arrived at the railway station in Prague, I got hold of my suitcase and my knapsack, and took a tram to near the place where I was to live then. That was in Vinohrady, in a very lovely house, block of flats, belonging to my husband's firm, where our governess had a little...they call it 'Garconniere', a one-room flatlet under the roof with a balcony a kitchen and a bathroom. And I was to go there for one or two nights before the flat which I was going to have later on was ready for me. That was all organised by Eva Frankensteinova and Tolar. So when I got to that house, the concierge, the caretaker there, recognised me, and took me up to that...she had the keys, and the governess was not there, she had left a day or two before for a few days. So I had her little room to myself, which I was very grateful for, because it would have been awful to meet her immediately. And so, that was...it's hard to explain what one felt about that. The main thing was that I had a bath, a real warm bath, and a real bed, after years of not having that. And I think the next morning, was it the next morning or two...yes, I can't quite remember...the next morning, yes, I went to the hairdresser. Don't forget that I had been shorn, close shorn, in Auschwitz, and now I had hair perhaps an inch and a half or two inches long, sticking all over my head. And that was quite an amazing thing, before getting to visit anybody, or telling anybody

that I was there, I thought I just cannot...people would get shocked to see me like that. So I went to the hairdresser I had gone to all the 20 years I lived in Prague, in a little street in the middle of Prague, in the centre of Prague. And when I walked in, the proprietress, Mrs. Worel, she recognised me and threw her hands up, she was absolutely...shattered to see me. And then she and her partner there washed and set my...gave me a perm, so then I didn't look quite as awful as before. And then after that, I walked...it was hard walking for me because I had an open hernia, which had happened on my way to Oederan. I had carried a heavy load, and as I had lost so much weight I had a hernia which worried me all the time in Oederan as well. But there I didn't have to do anything, as I was in that sick bay for all the time, whereas now of course it was awful. So I went to the surgeon who had operated on my husband, and whose children went to school with my daughter, and I knew that he was there, although a Jew, but the widower of a German lady, and he was at the time head of the Jewish Hospital in Prague. So I went to him privately, his flat was not very far from where I lived at the time, and he was at home, and was shattered when he saw me as well.

Who was this?

Dr. Ruzizka. I had mentioned it when he operated on my husband. He immediately looked at me, examined me, and said yes, he's got to operate on that hernia, in that Jewish Hospital.

Which had re-opened?

It was open the whole time for the Jews who had been married to German women or Jewish women married to German men. So they were not allowed to go to a gentile hospital, so Dr. Ruzizka could operate in his little hospital in the Jewish...near the Jewish part of Prague.

And they were not deported? Some of them were never deported?

Some of them went to Theresienstadt, and some of them remained; there wasn't a very long time between...I had a friend then, the friend Sojka, whom I had mentioned before, he was in Theresienstadt, but he was sent back then to Prague when the liberation happened. So they were not there very long. Well I then went into...did I go into hospital? No, then I got in touch with other friends where he was a German gentile, and the head of a great pharmaceutical firm in Prague, and she was a Jewess, and he managed to keep her there, I think she never went to Theresienstadt. And they lived near us in Bubenská, near our house in Bubenská. And I got in touch with them, and from then on they helped me enormously all the time. It wasn't a very long time because they then were put into a concentration camp for the Germans. The Czechs did what the Germans did afterwards: the Czechs then imprisoned in concentration camps in Prague, German survivors, which was rather silly to my mind, but that happened. And so Dr. and Mrs. Ott helped me a lot. So I went into hospital then and had this hernia operation, which was rather agonizing, because Dr. Ruzizka dared not give me full anaesthetic because of my weakness and my bad condition, so I got a lumbar injection. So I managed to talk and feel all the time, although I had no real pain, but it wasn't fun to watch all that going on. (LAUGHING) But I survived. And then I was put into a room, and the next day a lady came to share my room with a broken arm or leg, I can't remember. And hardly had she been put into that bed, we yelled with delight, she was the wife, Sopherl Sojka, with whom...the wife of Walter Sojka, who had run that Jewish Museum, started the Jewish Museum, and with whom we had been together every Thursday during the time we were in that one room. When my husband and I and Tommy lived in that one room, I had told you that every Thursday we had a bit of music on a gramophone, and we had three couples to visit us, sometimes four, sometimes three, and one of the couples were Walter and Sopherl Sojka, Sophie Sojka. And she was brought into that sick room, and we shared that room and had a lovely time for quite a long time, although I was in great pains and she too, but we had a lovely time together. Again a miracle in my life! (LAUGHS) Walter came to visit us, and the Otts came to visit us, and the other couple came to visit us. So, I recovered there much. I wasn't operated on immediately, I was kept there two or three days before...did I mention that already? Before Dr. Ruzizka operated on me, he pretended he had hurt his finger and couldn't operate, because he wanted me to be fed and lie quietly before he operates. He only told me that afterwards. So he could not operate, so I just lay there and was fed and cared for and nursed, so that I was ready for his surgery. And after...when they discharged me there, I was so weak that I could not walk. So I was taken in by my neighbours in...our opposite neighbours in Bubenská. I don't know whether I have spoken about that family, their name was Kann, and she was a German gentile and he was a baptized Jew, and he had

gone off after all sorts of difficulties to, I think, Riga. I don't know in which...he had been in Theresienstadt a short time and then he was sent off to another concentration camp and was never heard of again. She and her children remained in that house opposite our villa, and the children then had...because they were half Jewish they had to join the workforce in...the German workforce. But Poldi herself she stayed in that house, and the house had not been taken away because it was under her name. And so I moved in with Poldi, and she was a wonderful nurse, and kept me there in that house till I was much much better and stronger. During that time her daughter came home from the work, she had been working in the fields for the Germans and then for the Czechs, and she came back and had terrible pains in her legs and joints, and was in bed for a while, and later on they found out...she was then also taken to that Jewish Hospital, and they found out she had polio. And she now - she died in the meanwhile, but she...the daughter, no, she is alive, she came to see me in Seefeld now and still limps badly. This is a long friendship which will remain for the rest of our lives. Her mother Poldi looked after not only me but quite a lot of other people who came back with half...her husband's relatives who came back. And then she...she was a good friend of Mrs. Ott, so I saw a lot of them too of course. This time I spent in that house with Poldi Kann was an eye-opener to know what happened to the people who had remained in Prague, because Poldi was a sort of haven for people, and they came, brought food, or got a bit of food; life was very difficult in Prague at the time, you had rationed eggs, you were rationed to everything. But Poldi managed, she always could manage everything, she was an excellent housewife and a very practical woman, and she also had kept in her garden two big cases with some of my property, and she had kept some of my jewellery for me, which I still have. And she was...she was my backbone at the time. I don't know whether I could have survived, or managed those six months I was in Prague before being allowed to move to London, without Poldi, because she helped wherever she could. She did not really mourn her husband, because that marriage always had been very bad. She must have been quite glad that he was out of her life. With him around she could never have managed to get out of Prague, get out a lot of her belongings through the Austrian embassy. She then moved to Austria, to live in the Salzkammergut, which I'd managed with a gentile Aryan friend of hers, and from there she then joined her children in Australia, where I met her again of course. She then moved with her daughters to Salzburg, and that...I don't think I need to talk about that. But during these six months Poldi was a great help and through her I met a lot of people there. And also through her help I got in touch again with that lady for whom I made all the paper flowers, who then moved away from Prague to Switzerland, and then to America - she died in America.

Is that Lotte?

No, that was Miss Spirk, that was Miss Spirk. Now, what else can I tell you of that time? We lived...after leaving Poldi's villa, house, in Bubenská, I moved into that flat which was given to me by the Jewish Czech community then. This flat was in the same house where the governess had that garconniere; it was on the first floor, it was a five-room flat with bathroom and kitchen, and I shared that flat with two young women who had been in the art department with me in Theresienstadt. One of them came back from Switzerland, where she had gone on the only Swiss train which was not caught by the Germans. The Swiss offered for people in Theresienstadt a sort of refuge, if you made up your mind to join that train. Now the first train had been taken off by the Germans, and the people disappeared. And the second train, Kate Fiala and her children joined, and they really got to Switzerland. I cannot tell you where they were, but in any case they came back to Prague afterwards. The other...Kate's sister Lotte, she came back from Theresienstadt, I can't...no, she had been...she had been in Freiberg, Freiberg or Freiburg, I'm not quite sure. That was between Dresden and Oederan, a camp between Dresden and Oederan, and she came back a few days after I came back from Theresienstadt. And they were in some sort of...I don't know, the Jews opened some sort of recovery camp in Prague, and from there they were told that I was in that Jewish Hospital, and so they came to see me in that hospital, after my operation, and asked me what they should do, where could they go. Now I told them to go to that flat, and to the concierge there, and ask whether they - I had already other people in it because I knew I would not be allowed to stay in a flat with five rooms on my own, the Czechs would never allow that. And if she had not been told of anybody else, would they put down their name for that flat, go to the Jewish Community, and tell them about that. And that's what they did, so when I came back to my flat, there was Lotte and Kate, and Kate's little boy and little girl. So that was very very good. Because I wasn't alone, and didn't have strangers there. I moved into two rooms, because we didn't know about how we would ever pay for the rent, and they were very careful, and they moved into the other two rooms, and the little room we had a sort of a store-room or something.

And we shared the kitchen and the bathroom. Now the central heating and the bathroom were not much good, because that house had run out of heating material, out of coke.

Fuel, yes.

So for quite a while it was very cold and no hot water. But we sat in the kitchen where there was a gas stove, and we had gas, and in that kitchen we painted lampshades and boxes like we had done in Theresienstadt, and those two young women managed to find out where one could sell them. I didn't do anything, I just painted. And later on I gave a lot of English lessons, either in my flat or in the people's flat where I gave these lessons. That enabled us to have cash to buy our daily food; it wasn't very much, but we managed. And after Theresienstadt and Oederan one learns to manage. We were very happy together, because we were not afraid any more. There were very nasty things: I of course was not very strong, and I tried to get more food and could not manage the...neither the doctors nor the Jewish Community people, because I had voted German in the year '33, and so it was quite difficult with the food. And life amongst the Czech communists. Because my husband's firm was taken...the German Treuhänder of course left, and that was then taken over by the communist guards, and monopoly people. So the Czech workers and the Czech employees of the firm would not allow me to go near the office, they would not allow me to go to the factory, because I was German. And they also refused to give me any money. So that was difficult. And even later on they had the audacity to charge rent. It was a flat in my husband's house, and the office people and the communists who had taken over this firm would not let me live in a flat, but charged me rent. To be able to pay this rent I had to sell a carpet, a Persian carpet which a German friend of mine had helped me to keep.

Hidden for you.

Hidden for me. And so I could pay the rent to the flat. I don't like talking about those six months in Prague, I was glad to get out of there.

Even though you were happy with the...

Although we were content with one another, we were not afraid any more for our life. But it wasn't a very pleasant, easy life there. The nicest time, these times when I was with Tolar in his flat, and the little girl and his wife. And then of course I had all these English lessons. I taught the solicitor who was trying to look after my affairs, a Czech solicitor; instead of paying him he got English lessons. The people who lived in my house in Bubenská got English lessons. They didn't pay me, they gave me a meal I think. There I gave lessons to some people who did pay me, but very little. Life didn't cost much, because you didn't get anything. So it was sufficient, and as I paid the rent by letting them sell that carpet, I had no...

So there were five of you living in this flat which had belonged to your husband's factory.

That's right.

But it was taken over by the communists...

From the Germans. The Germans were kicked out by the Czechs, the furniture was in it but we tried to get rid of it because I got some of my furniture back from Czech friends and German friends who had remained, and that's how I got the carpet back, and my dining-room furniture, and the divan I slept on then, and curtains and so on. I managed to have a very very nicely furnished room, and in the second room I could store my other things which I got back by and by, from Poldi and from other friends.

Had Tolar hidden stuff for you?

Tolar had hidden a lot of clothes; he was the only one who gave them back, who gave me a suit of my husband's. And the tailor of my husband's, he made a suit for me from my husband's suit, without taking any pay for that. I got back coats and things from Tolar, only from Tolar. The governess who had a lot of clothes and things of mine, reluctantly gave me only what I needed for my body at the time, but she would never let me take anything with me then. And the concierge, that housekeeper we

had in the house in Bubenská, he never returned anything at all. He just said, "Your husband gave them to me, and they are mine."

And what about the staff you had, the maids. Did you have them again, or...?

Well, the old...the one whom I inherited from my mother, Marianne the tall one, who ran my household till I had to move out of the house, she got in touch with me, or I got in touch with her, I had her address, she had my engagement ring and another ring, and I asked her to come and return them. And she said she could not take a train from Moravia where she had stayed with her sister, but I should come to her and collect them. Now, not only didn't I have the money, and secondly I could not face a train ride. So these rings never got returned. She died shortly afterwards, I still knew...her sister was in touch with me and wrote to me. I knew her sister, the sister wanted to bring the rings back, but I left before she had a chance. So they were gone. I stayed in contact with the sister even from London still, but now of course I know nothing about them any more. The other one, the cook, I don't think I got in touch with anybody of the other staff, because I didn't know where they were. No, it was only Marianne whom I got in touch with.

She was what, the...?

She was...she had been the maid of my mother and father.

The parlour-maid?

The parlour-maid, and then she was given to me as a sort of wedding present (LAUGHS), and ran my household for me. So she of course, she was in touch with me.

Did you rescue any photographs of your early life?

Yes, I have a few which were rescued by Tolar of course; Tolar also had rescued my husband's Leica, and some of the photos. He rescued our cinema films, which he then sent to my son to Sydney. I can't tell you enough about Tolar.

Amazing man.

My son has all the films, the cinema films.

Movies, home movies?

Home movies, yes, home movies which we took when they were small. Whether he still has them I don't know; I saw them when I was in Sydney. And all that was saved and sent over by Tolar in due course. The photos of...my children's photos, I have big albums, I have given them to them now, they have been saved...I can't remember who saved them for me, I think Poldi, and they were here. And George has taken his to Sydney, I don't know...Dorothy's are here I think. They also saved little albums we had there. Whether it was Poldi or Tolar I can't remember. But those I have. There were also little doilies and elegant tablecloths and things which were saved by Poldi and Tolar, and those were sent out in a suitcase later on to here, to London. But of course other things did not come out. Those pictures came out, but those I brought with me already, but otherwise nothing, no, no.

When you had left Theresienstadt to come back to Prague, what sort of clothing did you have? Did you still have the clothing that you'd been given in Auschwitz, that you took to Oederan?

I had...

This dress that you kept...

This little dress I had with me, the black coat with a 'K' set on the back in white paint, did I have that with me? Yes, I must have had it with me, of course, I had it for...leaving Theresienstadt, I had a dress which a friend gave me there, and some underwear. But I don't think...well, I had a few things which my mother had kept.

Did the Jewish Community provide any clothes?

Yes. They gave us a change of underwear...

In Prague?

No, in Theresienstadt when I came back. But in Prague, well I had things upstairs with the governess, and the few things I wore then were from my own things, and which she allowed me to take out of her wardrobe there. And then I had given to me clothes in Theresienstadt, but not by the Jewish government, but by friends who had remained there. So I had two or three dresses, decent ones, and underwear I had there. And then when I came back to Prague I got things from my governess' wardrobe, two or three things.

Didn't the Jewish Community, once you were in Prague provide you with some minimum food?

No, they didn't even allow me to get the prunes which the Americans had sent, because I was German.

So the Jewish Community, let alone the civilian community, the non Jewish community, both prejudiced...you were prejudiced by...

I was prejudiced because in the year 1933 I was German. And that is the reason why I don't like talking about Prague, and why I would never want to go back to Prague. Because it was so disappointing, that people who had themselves gone through misery through the Nazis, could continue to give misery to people who were not Nazis. I couldn't quite understand the...the reason for being like that, but this is what happened to me. And I don't want to say anything bad about Czechs for the Czechs, I know that Lotte and Kate, the two ladies who lived with me, got things and got help from them, and so it wasn't against everybody, only against the Germans; not against people who had voted Jewish or voted Czech. But because I did not vote Jewish, and my husband neither...

Oh I see. I didn't realize you had the chance to...

You had the chance to vote Jewish.

As well, or as an alternative to being German?

As an alternative. But how could you vote Jewish if you weren't a Zionist, and had a straight thinking at the time?

Oh I see, yes. Yes.

So we were German, there was no doubt about that.

Did you come up against any anti-Semitism in Prague in those six months or so you were living there, after the War?

Only people who wouldn't give back the clothes, or the jewellery or whatever. But not personally towards me, no, no personal attacks or any nastinesses. Certainly not worse than what the Jewish Community did...(LAUGHING)...because I was German. No, no, not really, no. But I had very little to do with them. I didn't go...I went to my friends or they came to me, and of course they were either Jewish coming back from camps or married to Jews who had been our friends before. So I had no chance to come...have anti-Semitic...nothing at all, no, no, no.

When did you first make contact with your children?

Through...that was through the help of my brother-in-law. My brother-in-law had stayed in England during the whole war, first in London then he moved to Cambridge, from Cambridge he moved to the Lake District when my children were evacuated from the south.

This is your husband's...

My husband's elder brother.

Had he baptized...no?

No, no no. And he lived then in Kendal in the Lake District for awhile, and when the War was over he moved back to London, and then moved to Oatlands Park Hotel in Weybridge, Surrey. And there he was at the end of the War. And he got in touch with a Jewish Czech lawyer called Dr. Drucker (I can't remember his first name at the moment) who worked with the Jewish [sic] Consulate and Embassy in London. And through Dr. Drucker we got in touch; Dr. Drucker was able, I believe through Mr. Janner the MP, but I'm not sure, to get mail across in diplomatic...

Bags.

Bags. And he got in touch with our firm in Prague, and they had the...once they did something good to me, they phoned me, and gave me the address of my brother-in-law, which was in that letter sent through Dr. Drucker. And so I had his address. And they gave him my address. So Dr. Drucker could tell my brother-in-law where I stayed, and I could write to him. Now...how did we get letters there? It was not easy either. The Czechs...wait a second. How was that? You had...I think you had only one...you had to go to one Post Office to send letters abroad; it wasn't easy at the time. So I got in touch with Pepe and he with me, and so I knew where he stayed, that George was in the Air Force and in America at the time, and that Dorothy was in Germany with the American Army as a sort of screener, interpreter. So that I knew. And then he and Dr. Drucker would try to get me out. And they then managed this from England, together with my eldest nephew; Pepe's elder son had been shot down from a bomber in Germany and had been put into a prisoner of war camp, one of those Stalags, and he...I don't want to talk about that because I would make mistakes. He managed to get out in the time, and was already then in England. And he was...he was a Captain, or...he was already an officer, and with his help they then managed to get visa for widowed mothers in distress with their children or family in the.....

End of F900, Side A

Track 18 (F900, Side B)

So you came to England in '46.

In '46, in February I think it was.

So you'd had six months or thereabouts in Theresienstadt after the War.

Not quite six months, no.

And then six months in Prague.

And then in Prague, that's right.

And then you came to England.

And then I came to England, yes, yes. And there I had a very interesting experience leaving. Altogether it wasn't easy because I had very little money; I had...a former governess of my children brought back a diamond bracelet I had given her before I left for Theresienstadt, and that was sold on the black market, and with the money, with the proceedings(sic) I could buy a flight ticket on the Dakota from Prague, Rosine [Ruzyně] was the name of the airport, to Croydon. On the other hand the difficulty was that I had no reason really, except to get out of the country, so I had no perks to get onto a military flight. They took soldiers, diplomats, businessmen, but not really private passengers except if they had room on such a little plane. So I could not be told which day they could take me; I had to be ready any day. So the first day was a Monday, and it was snowing madly, and Tolar came to help me carry my luggage. And we took the tram down to the city office of the...the flight office, and I was told there that, because of the bad weather there would be room enough for me to fly. So we got...there was a bus going out to the airport, and Tolar and I went out to the airport. And he carried my luggage, and then he took me to the hall, to the...

Departure lounge.

Yes, well, that was a sort of a shed there at the time. And I had to go through Customs, and we said goodbye to one another, but he said he would wait in any case for me, so if anything happens he could take me back again. He was a thoughtful man, and knew his Czechs. We were never sure whether I would really be able to get out or not: one never knew. So when I got to the Customs desk I had to open my two suitcases and my knapsack, and in the one suitcase he found bed linen, and said that I was not allowed to take bed linen without...and towels, without the permit or X permission to take it out of the country.

This is the Czech...

The Czech Customs. I didn't know that, I had no idea that you were not allowed to take your own bed linen with you. And he said, "After all, you have a visa for six months, you're going on a holiday, you do not need any bed linen". So I explained that we were going to a private summer holiday, and that I did not know whether they had enough sheets there. And then he put his hand into a little pocket of a suitcase, in the lid of the suitcase and pulled out one of the little miniature paintings I had made in Theresienstadt. And he looked at me astonished, and said, "Do you need that too for your holiday?" And I said, truthfully, that I am taking them to show to my children and my family there, because I had painted them in Terezín, in Theresienstadt. And first he wouldn't believe me that I had been there, and when I showed him my legitimation, we had cards from Theresienstadt, signed cards, printed cards. And when he saw that, he put back the sheets and the miniature into that little suitcase, shut it quietly, and with a smile, wished me good luck for my future life. I thought that was wonderful, and very moving. And then I got out to the tarmac, and it was snowing heavily, and there were very few people there, and after a while we were taken out to the plane, it couldn't come anywhere near the building because of snow and ice, and there was a young person, younger than I, much younger, and she offered me a sea-sick tablet which I took, not knowing what it really was. And she flew out, she was a Sudeten German, she came from Karlsbad, from the famous spa, to be reunited with her husband in England. I know no more about her, but we had quite an interesting time. On the other hand, I had no permission,

and no real passport, to land anywhere but in England. Now on the way we were told by our Captain that we could not go straight through because of the bad weather, we would land in Brussels, in Belgium. Now I was scared and called him and said, "Look, I have no visa to touch down in Belgium, what do I do about that?" So he said, "Don't you worry, you are on an English aeroplane, you will stay in the plane, this is no enemy for you, you stay on our plane and nothing will happen." But then suddenly, let's say after two hours' flight, he suddenly called out, "We are moving into Croydon". So we never had to come down in Belgium, but we could fly straight through, all the wind and snow and gales we had passed through. And in Croydon we touched down in Croydon on a green lawn, which for me was absolutely unbelievable. It was quite bright green, a real English lawn.

No snow?

No snow. And lots of people standing around without soldiers around them, watching our plane come down. And amongst them I saw my brother-in-law, with an elegant blue coat and hat on, and...

Now this is your brother...

That was Pepe.

Your husband's...

My husband's elder brother.

Whom you had pushed out of Prague before the War.

That's right, that's right. And he stood there waiting for me, and then we waved, when I got off he saw me and I saw him and we waved. And we were taken into the Croydon Airport building and first we had to pass the Customs where they were not very interested in what we brought, but then we had to pass a medical...not really an examination, there was a doctor or a medical officer in a little booth, and he wanted to see the certificates of...

Vaccination?

Vaccination for all sorts of things, because of Europe and England. Now I had swindled, I did not have any more shots in Prague, because it was so...I had no possibility, it was so short notice that I got the flight ticket, and had to move off on Monday the first day. So I went to the doctor I knew who lived in the house where I had been living with my husband and my nephew at the end in that one room, in that building there was a doctor who was the brother of the lady who shared the flat with us, a Dr. Pirk. And I went to him and I said, "Look Dr. Pirk, I have the possibility to go to London, the English authorities need all these vaccinations and shots. I can't have them because I must pack up. I can't lie down in a fever now. What do we do about that?" And so he gave me a certificate that he had given me all these shots. And I gave him a quarter of a pound of coffee, roast coffee. That was the way you got your...could live a life in Czechoslovakia at the time. So he gave me the certificate, and when I handed that to the doctor in Croydon, I said, "This is not true, I did not have any". So he said, "I don't mind that at all, it's good that you told me, I shall now...where are you going now?" I said, "I'm going to Weybridge, to the Oaklands Park Hotel." And he said, "I will now inform the Weybridge doctor that you are arrived, that he was going to see you tomorrow." And this is what really happened. I went...my brother-in-law took me to Weybridge, to the hotel, and the next morning Dr. Wilson of Weybridge arrived at the hotel...

To give you your jabs.

He did not give me any jabs, he said the moment I feel a bit rotten I should let him know, and I should not do this, and I should rest for a while, and he would come and have a look at me again. And no more shots, nothing at all. After all, I had all these shots in Theresienstadt when I came back from Auschwitz. So that was...

You mean when it was liberated?

Yes. So I got...the Jews in Theresienstadt gave me all the shots, because they were afraid of lots of...spreading illnesses of course. So I had a lot of these poisons in me, but no fresh jabs.

Tell me, was this the first time you'd ever flown?

Yes.

Really?

It was the first time I was on an aeroplane.

And what did you think of it?

Well it wasn't what we are used to now, it was a Dakota; we sat on little seats, removable ones, on one side of the plane, and the luggage was on the other side of the gangway. And you didn't get any...I think, I don't know whether we had any food at all, but probably not. And the cockpit was open, and we saw the pilot and the man who called himself a Captain, probably he was a Captain, he walked through and chatted with us. There was not very much...nothing, you were so quiet, you were so excited; quiet on the one hand, tired and excited; cold, terribly cold because the Dakota of course had no heating, and it was icy outside. And it wasn't a very pleasant trip.

And you think you probably were the only refugee on that plane?

No, that one lady, who sat next to me who came from...I don't know, she went out to stay with her husband in England.

Oh, from the Sudetenland.

She was probably Sudeten German gentile who met her husband afterwards, and there were army people, and...I didn't talk to anybody, I don't know who the other people were. It certainly wasn't full, because of the terrible weather.

Now had you made any contact with your children by this time?

By this time I had made contact with George I think, but it all went via my brother-in-law.

In letters?

Letters, yes. Yes, we wrote, and you had to take them to a special Post Office for England. It wasn't a normal correspondence yet.

And you had a letter back from them?

I had...from my children, not, no. I always only knew about them from my brother-in-law.

So when you arrived in Croydon, your children were not there?

They were not there. George was in King's Lynn and the next morning he got leave, what, compassionate leave I think it was called, to come and see me. And he got off, I think he got three nights in Oaklands Park Hotel, and then he went back again to King's Lynn, to the...

This was the first time you'd seen him for six years?

Yes. And to tell you the truth, and I'm ashamed of it, I would never have recognised him, although he was my own child. No, I would not have recognised him.

He was, what, 12 when you last saw him?

He was 13 when he left; he was a small, blonde, cheerful, pink-cheeked little boy, and now he was a very tall, thin, good-looking corporal in the Air Force. And with a narrow face, and dark curly hair, and with a quite different nose, and a deep voice, which I had not heard before. So he was a completely strange young man. But it didn't last long!

What didn't last long?

This idea that he's a strange young man. (LAUGHING)

I see. Presumably he...I mean he'd been in the country for five or six years, he spoke English. Did he always speak...

He spoke English.

Did he learn...

And now that you remind me, I wrote...yes, I did write to my children, now that you remind me I did write, in English. And they, whether they answered and whether my brother-in-law sent their answers I can't remember that any more.

Where had he learnt his English? In England?

In England. Only in England, and went very fast, because he used to write to us from his school, and the first letters were a mixture of Czech and a few words of English, and after a few weeks he wrote fluent English letters only.

You mean when he first went out?

When he went here to England and was at that school in Hindhead, yes.

So had he never learnt English in Prague?

He had only had these classes with that young man who taught him Russian instead of English. He had a slight idea of a few English words, because I thought that after a few weeks of private lessons at home, he would know a few words. But when I then listened to the door, to find out how they were getting on, these two boys, the little one and the big one, I heard that he taught him Russian instead of English, and that wasn't what I had expected. So I asked that young man, I can't remember his name, he was very nice and very well behaved, to leave us, because he didn't do what he was told to do. And George was very happy that he had not learnt English, that he had learnt Russian, a bit of Russian, instead.

So by the time he came to England in fact he didn't speak any English.

He spoke no English. He understood perhaps a few words, but not very much. Now that school at Hindhead took a few refugee children, and there were...the son of our Viennese dentist was there, and there were a few children there who also spoke hardly any English. So it must have been some nice way of teaching them, and getting them used to the new surroundings. I must say this school must have been not quite a hard lesson for the children, they were very happy there. They didn't stay very long, because my brother-in-law left London when the bombing started I believe and went to Cambridge first, and then to the Lake District, and George joined his cousins at Dauntsey's in Wiltshire, in a not very well known public school. And by then I think his English was quite fluent already. And Dorothy then went to a school in Ambleside for a while.

But she was living with Pepe, your brother-in-law?

She was living in a school, and the holidays they had with Pepe, which were happy for George, because he could wrangle [i.e. wangle?] his uncle to do whatever he wanted, and Dorothy was not very happy there because there were the three boys, her two cousins and her brother, who...

Pepe's sons?

Pepe's sons. And who teased her because she was the only girl, and I think she must have been quite tearful and not very happy during those holidays with my brother-in-law, who was a very kind man but very dependant on other people's help, and liked having nice looking people around them. And Dorothy at the time, a teenager, unhappy, thin, with terribly frozen fingers, chilblains all over her because she was not used to that type of English school with draughts and out-of-door life, and not the food she was accustomed to, she must have been not very easy-going either. So, those children had a bad time as well, it wasn't only we in camp; they had a bad time too.

I'm sure they had some bad times. Did your children - I'm going back now - did your children write to you after they came to England, before you went to Theresienstadt?

Yes, yes.

You used to get letters from them?

We got letters from the school. And yes, we knew that...they wrote to us and we had permission to send them, I think one letter a month or something like that. And our governess wrote to them too, their former governess. And we could send them parcels even, food parcels, which to my mind now that I think of it, I never thought of it again, is quite an amazing thing. I can't remember what they sent them, and they never got them I think. I can't remember, this is...I don't know what really happened.

But after you went to Theresienstadt presumably you didn't have any more...(BOTH TALKING)?

Oh no, of course not, that stopped completely. Yes, stopped completely. I think they knew that we had been taken to a concentration camp through a letter from a former friend of ours who was in Switzerland, and she had been informed by another friend of hers who was still in Prague. And this lady wrote to my brother-in-law, and told him that we had been sent off. But then all the correspondence stopped completely of course, so I never knew what happened to them. But before we went to Theresienstadt, my cousin, who was in London at the time, my Czechoslovak cousin from Prague, she was in touch with them of course.

This is your mother's family?

No, that was from my father's family. That was the sister of my late sister-in-law. She was a niece of my father's. And she and her children had gone to England, and from there they moved via Cuba to America, but at the time she was in England, and she visited my brother-in-law, and saw Dorothy in Ambleside. She wrote to me that they are in the country now, and it is lovely there, like it is in Altaussee. So I know they were at a lake, but that was all I knew.

But presumably the children also had contact with your aunt on your mother's side, who was living in England?

No. I had no contact with her.

No, the children did.

My children, yes. My children, yes, but she was kept away from them, partly I suppose because she was still scared from the First World War where she...as an Austrian she also was a bit restricted during the First World War, she didn't want to have anything to do with a Jewish family from Austria, because she was afraid of floods of family coming in. And she was right, lots of us came in then; after all, my cousin here and her sister and so on and so on. Her sister came over and...but she was scared, why, because she was a very lovable, very sweet, very stupid woman who was afraid that her son, who at the time had just taken his degree as a doctor in Oxford, and was engaged...no, already married to the daughter of an English consultant for nervous diseases, that they would find out that he is of Jewish origin, and that is a thing she would never have wanted. That is a dark spot in my family, and I...I'd rather not talk about that at the moment. I loved her very dearly...

This is your mother's sister, isn't it?

My mother's sister, Lily, that's why my name is Lily. And she was scared because she never thought; she was a spoiled woman, very spoiled, and never...obviously never was...could think of anything more than a comfortable life. Her eldest son became consultant in Bart's Hospital and in St. Stephens, and was a very good doctor and a very good friend of mine. And because he was married and had a little boy and a baby girl, and she did not want to make life difficult for this side of her family, if they had known that he was of Jewish origin. To my mind that is very silly, because there are so many Jewish doctors, consultants, at top hospitals here, that it would not have harmed him at all. But that was what she thought, and I did not, even later on when I met her again here in London and spent every Thursday or Friday with her, I never had the courage to tell her how silly she was, and promised her not to tell Francis and Natine.

Who are they?

That is her son and her daughter-in-law. And I am still keeping to that promise, which is perhaps very foolish.

Promised to tell them...?

That he is of Jewish origin.

But she was Jewish, she baptized...Lily.

Oh the mother?

Lily.

Yes. But Lily didn't want to harm her son; they were all baptized and the children were born Church of England already, and they had never been told of their Jewish parentage, that I know.

And to this day they haven't you're saying?

And how much they think, I don't know.

Isn't that amazing!

I'm sure they know, to tell you the truth, but I don't talk about it when we are together.

Now, when you met up with your aunt after the War, did she tell you this is why she hadn't made contact with your children, or is this surmise on your part?

This is what I could find... Oh, they knew one another, and she sent them Christmas presents, but she did not...it was no real contact. But then I don't know whether it was because of that, or because she was so much...the difficulty...she lost money of course, her husband had died, she lived in a little flat in South Kensington and had a heart complaint, and didn't know how to lead any normal life. When I met her again, I used to take her dirty laundry out of her...she then lived in the Onslow Court Hotel, and I took her laundry every week back to my house in Richmond at the time, and washed her laundry, because she was not able to think or do anything like that. I would not take Auntie Lily's way of thinking and life, she certainly wasn't responsible for the way she behaved. It was what she thought right. She was used to having her ladies' maid, and then she lived in the hotel in a horrible little room. And life was so awful for her that it was...she just couldn't take it, she could not adjust.

Because she had lived in England a long time, hadn't she?

Yes, of course. She had married when she was 19 or 20, and she lived in England all the time.

So how old was she by the time you...

Well she was...she was round about 70; I think she had her seventieth birthday here, yes.

Amazing.

So, no, that is...no, I don't think it's so amazing, if I think of my mother's or grandmother's life. They were not...my grandmother wouldn't have been able to adjust. Don't forget the life we women lived on the Continent and here too, when there was money; and you had maids, you didn't do anything yourself ever. I didn't, I had to learn it, and I am adjustable obviously, and I could do it. But my mother could never get adjusted to Theresienstadt, nor could she get adjusted afterwards to her life, first with a relative in Vienna, and then in our place in Carinthia, in Limmersach; she could never get accustomed to the idea that, even though I had a cook, but the cook was only there for a few hours a day, because she had her household to look after. And the idea that one doesn't stand from eight or seven in the morning till one o'clock to cook lunch, that was something quite astonishing for my mother.

But all the sisters were brought up in that atmosphere, presumably.

The sisters were brought up in that atmosphere, and the only one who adjusted to it was my cousin next door, was the one who went to America, and then had to...she was the youngest, and she had to adjust, and do her cooking, and do all her household alone then. She adjusted, but my mother never did, nor did Auntie Lily, and about the third sister, who was in Budapest, I think she died before, I can't remember at the moment what happened to her.

Anyway, you mentioned you arrived in England, you'd met your son for three days' leave.

Yes.

What about Dorothy?

Oh Dorothy didn't get compassionate leave from the Americans. She only came back on a normal holiday in July. And that was quite an amazing thing. I met her at Victoria Station. Now I had not seen her since she was a silly looking teenaged girl; now she was a slim, elegant young lady, in a marvellously fitting American uniform, with a young GI hanging on to her and her luggage, and coming along like that. Her face hadn't changed much. But there she was, an elegant young lady in a wonderful uniform, and a young man in a uniform carrying her coat, her suitcases, and hopping around her. So that was quite a revelation for me.

What was she, about 21 at the time was she?

Yes, yes yes. So that was quite new. And then she came to...where did we live? We then got a flat...I can't remember where we lived, where she came to; she came to Oaklands Park Hotel probably. And then George was then stationed in London and did translating - or not really translating, writing excerpts out of the war history of Goering, translated...well, he translated from German into English. The British Army had found...I don't know what sort of files and where...about the German air force, and George got those into his office at the War...air office, Air Ministry office, I don't know what it was. And there he had to write, read it, and make up little...compose little things about it, and that was filed then for the air war...of that war. And he then got the permission to look for a flat for us, and through the Air Force Housing Institute, or department, we got a furnished flat in Surbiton, and there we stayed for six months.

Where had you lived when you first came to England?

In Oaklands Park Hotel.

And who had paid for you there?

My brother-in-law paid the rent, and paid for all that at the beginning.

And then you moved to Surbiton?

Then we moved to Surbiton.

How much later? A few months?

Oh longer, longer. Longer, because George only came back...oh no, he was there for...I think a year I lived in Oaklands Park Hotel, I'm not sure but I think so.

The children were still in the forces?

The children were in the forces, yes yes yes. And then Dorothy went to...when we moved to Surbiton she went to a secretarial college there, like a sort of Pitman's, and I don't think it was much good, certainly nothing very much. And then she got a job as a filing clerk at Harrods; I think she earned three pounds a week. And George was still for quite a long time in the Air Ministry, till he was demobbed after quite a long time, and that was quite fun at the time. And we then moved from Surbiton to Kingston, to Kingston Hill, into another furnished flat, where we also only stayed six months, alas: we loved it there, but the lady who had let it to us had to come back from where she had been. And then we moved to Richmond, into a furnished house, and there we stayed longer.

Now were you working during this period?

No. You see I couldn't, I was...I had no British passport yet. And I tried to go...as I was by then a very good flower painter. And my brother-in-law thought that the miniatures I had brought back from Theresienstadt, that I could earn a living, and took me - it's funny to talk about it now - took me to Asprey's in Bond Street to show them whether I could...whether they could use that, or sell it. And they said they could sell it immediately, but that is no reason, they would want me to paint these things in England, they would order five of one and five of the other. Now this was not possible for me. First of all I didn't know anybody who could make the background I was used to, which was china- clay on wood. I had no resources here, I didn't know of anybody who could do anything for me. The painting I could have done, and I would have sat in Oaklands Park Hotel from morning to night, and would have painted flowers and miniatures and what have you, I would have loved to do that. But I didn't know how to get hold of the things, and I was not adjusted to that sort of...knowing my way about in London, I didn't know. So when I told them there I couldn't provide any, I could provide them in a few months perhaps, they said no thank you. So that was out. And then I began to make Christmas cards, and sold them to my friends and friends of my brother-in-law's, which made me happy because it made me paint, but I knew that they bought it because they wanted to help Pepe and me, and that wasn't the way I wanted to live. So then I found through another friend, I was offered a job in Walton Street, at the back of Harrods, in a china repair shop. They were painting or repairing good china for private people, museums and institutions. And there they accepted me as a flower painter on china, which I had never done in my life, but I learnt that there very quickly. That was a sweat shop, it was really shocking. There were two very elegant society girls running the front shop, and at the back, in the former kitchen of that little house, we worked, a few refugees, an invalid man who did...the metal clamping when something was broken, it was a special name. And we did the painting. It was never put back into a kiln of course; I had never done anything like it and I did not know that you had to cook things in a kiln when you painted them. And these two young ladies just put lacquer...had us put lacquer over it, and the paint came off when you had boiling water on it. And I thought this was absolutely disgusting. And there were old ladies coming in with beautiful tea-pots, and we were repairing them, and then... We people in the back-room knew that it would come off in boiling water.

Now was this illegal? You were working for this...

We were working, I got the permit to work there.

Oh you got a permit by this time?

By then I was a British citizen.

So it was a legal job?

That was a legal job. But the way it was done was to my mind not very nice, to say the least of it.

And you worked hard?

And we had a miserable pay. George at the time said, "You take the Underground from Richmond; you have to buy better food because you have no time for cooking properly; all the money you earn goes into that. Give it up." So after a while I gave that up too.

But that was your first working job?

That was my first working job. Then I had in the meanwhile sent some of my drawings and paintings, which I had from...I had sent some out already, to an...here it was a sort of institution, I don't know the name any more, where the industry look for artists for their particular work. That was a sort of official go-between affair, I don't know what it was. I had sent some in, and I got a letter from them, would I come for an interview, would I go to Wembley. (A VOICE INTERRUPTING SAYING 'JOHNSON MATTHEY') Yes, so that letter was from the famous firm of Johnson Matthey, the gold bullion people, and I could work for the transfers for their dinner sets. They would...they want an interview, I should take the Underground to Wembley and I would be met there by their car. So that was a new experience for me as well, that I was met by a wonderful limousine, and was driven to their factory or workshops or whatever it was. And I was met there by a very nice young man, and he asked me whatever I could draw, and what I draw, and how I did it. And then he said, "Well before you do that, you would have to learn to work for printing, that is different than the normal water-coloured painting; you would have to learn the craftsmanship for the drawing, so that it can be printed in two or three...

Layers?

Layers, one on top of the other."

Onto china?

No, for the design. Even a design must be...you made a design let's say in three colours, or in five colours, and every single one would be extra, and they would do that as a silk screen, all that is screened on it then, on the transfer. Now I had no idea of all these techniques; even now it is not quite clear to me. But I had to learn another way of flat painting, not the normal water-colour. And he gave me the address of a studio in Chelsea. He said we will pay six months, you will go there and then you will send up some of your work, and then we'll see whether we could take you on, because this is quite a job.

Now this was by Johnson Matthey.

Yes.

Why did they want these drawings, these transfers?

They made the transfers for the pots. That is...I don't know whether gold, and, you see they had the bullion, there was a lot of gold on these china...top china things, and the transfers were made by them. And that was...why the technique, why they did that I don't know, but their work was making transfers for the whole world. He showed me around there, you wouldn't know what was hand-painted and what was transfer painted, and what was transfer and then hand-painted on it. This nobody knows if he's not...has learnt about it, or has seen it. And that young man showed me round there, their showroom, and said, "Now what is that, what is that?" And he asked me, and it took quite a while before I knew the difference then. It was highly interesting and very...I had a whole day there, and I enjoyed it thoroughly. And then I went back. And then I went to Chelsea.

You went to this studio?

Yes, I went to that studio.

Which they paid for?

They paid for it. And...I don't know, once or twice a week, I don't know. And I then sent up drawings, and they said I should go on still for a while. And what happened then? My brother-in-law went back to Austria.

Pepe?

To Carinthia. Pepe. He got back the factory and the house, and had to re-do the whole thing, that was hard work, it was very difficult work. He needed a woman there to run the household, he needed a hostess for the various people he had to invite; would I stop playing around with paints or trying to live my own life, I belong to the firm, I belong to Limmersach, he needs me, give it up. And that's what happened. I had to write to Johnson Matthey that I couldn't take over, that I had to go to Austria, and that was the end of that.

So you left England then, did you?

Well, for a while always.

When was this?

That was '51 I got my passport.

Your British citizenship. And when did you go to Austria then?

Well I went there on a holiday first and went back to England. Very soon after that.

'51, '52.

'52, yes.

You went with Pepe to...

I stayed in Austria then, but always came back to England because I had Dorothy here, and we then lived in a boarding house in Clanricard Gardens, Bayswater, which was quite interesting as well. I must say, wherever I am I find it very interesting; it's always something quite new, a new experience.

When you used to go to Austria with Pepe, did you come back every month or every week.....

End of F900, Side B

Track 19 (F901, Side A)

So you went back to Austria with Pepe?

Not with him, he was there long before; he had gone there before, and found out that he would want to have somebody to run the household and be the hostess there, because that...it being a large factory for yeast and alcohol, and all the bakers and the grocers and all these people had their associations. And Pepe was on the Board of the Monopoly in Vienna at the Ministry of Trade, or whatever it was. And so he had to have somebody there to give the parties, or a dinner or to...to be there. And for a while I did not do that, and I only stayed there for a few months at a time, and went back. And because I knew that this is no life for my daughter, who worked at the time as a...not only filing cabinet sort of secretary, or office worker in a factory or office, broker's office, chemical broker's office.

So she had left Harrods by then?

She had left Harrods by then. She had taken a real school of...secretarial school by then, paid for by a friend of my husband's. After passing the examination she got a much better job in a firm this friend knew, and she got a much better job there and better pay there. But she wasn't very happy there either, it wasn't entertaining work, or interesting work for her. And she wasn't satisfied with her life; she was getting on, she didn't know anybody, she had no money; she had a mother who was painting these china things and wasn't there, and a mother was after all not a substitute for a home life. And so this wasn't a very happy time in our life, and we knew we couldn't go on like that, something would have to be done.

Did she used to lead...I mean, she was a big girl, she was an adult by then.

Yes, she was very adult.

But she actually stayed in Surbiton when you were in Austria?

No no no. Surbiton we had to give up, we went to Chiswick, to a two-roomed flat, furnished flat in Chiswick, when George went to Australia. We didn't keep up the houses in Richmond, naturally we couldn't do that. George left for Australia.

On one of these packages?

On one of these ten-pound grant tours, and stayed there. And Dorothy had this job at Harrods, and then she went to that school, and then we moved from Richmond to a small furnished flat in Chiswick, and from there I then went to do this work at the china repair place, and Dorothy went to the City, I don't know where, to that office on the Underground, we both used the Underground. And this wasn't a very positive life we led there.

But had you been...was this when you went back to Austria?

No, I had been on a summer holiday in Austria, yes.

But not to work with Pepe?

Oh no no no, I was in Limmersach and I went to...I was seeing for myself, and...no, that was only a holiday, and I went back there then. But I knew that Pepe wanted me constantly to-ing and fro-ing. And so then, what happened then, well then I had to...George was in Australia, I was unhappy about that, till he found his feet and could get on there then, and, when did I then move more...? Well by and by, then my brother-in-law suddenly said he wants me there for longer, not only on a holiday, something must be done about that. And so we gave up the flat in Ormsby Lodge in Turnham Green, Chiswick, and I found two rooms in a very nice boarding house in Clanricarde Gardens in Bayswater, with a very nice couple who ran it, and pleasant people there. It was very dirty, it was not very well kept, the food wasn't very good, but I didn't care. And you had breakfast and dinner, and on Sunday, lunch, and no dinner. And Dorothy had a room...I had a room onto the road, a large, old-fashioned room which had been made from...two rooms were made from one large drawing room obviously, and

it had a plaster ceiling with flowers. And the funny thing was that the division, the wall, was put through the middle of where the chandelier used to be, and so the gentleman who lived next to me, the moment he smoked, the smoke came through that hole up there. I thought it was lovely, what a way to build, but this is what it was. And there was...one shared a bathroom with a few other people, which was most unpleasant, and what did I...I went to work...what did I work there when I was there? That china, and then...I don't know, more postcards, lectures... But I wasn't there very much, because I went there to stay a short time till Dorothy was settled and had made friends there, she made very good friends there and she was quite happy there. And then I went there, and every time I came back from Austria to look after Dorothy and meet my people, I got a room in that boarding house. We were very friendly with them, they were charming people.

But how long were you to-ing and fro-ing from Austria for? For a long time?

Till my brother-in-law's death. I went to and fro, but I always stayed much longer.

Was this a matter of years or months?

Years. Yes, that was...how was that? (BREAK IN RECORDING) Yes, well, I went to and fro from Carinthia to here on trains of course; I didn't fly at the time, I took the trains, two or three times, I can't remember how often. And here we lived in that...and here Dorothy and I lived in that little flat in Ormsby Lodge, and she went to the City, and I did the painting in that china shop, and I can't remember what else I did. Because I couldn't take up any job, because I always had to go back to Austria. So it was nowhere really settled, which I hate.

Over what period were you going to Austria?

A few months always; it was the whole winter, and then I went back here in spring, and then I went in summer again because my brother-in-law invited his sons and his family there, and my family came there to stay with us in that lovely place there, and I had to be there of course to run the household. And then in the autumn I came back again here to Dorothy.

So was it over a period of two or three years you were doing this?

Yes, yes.

How did you like being back in Austria?

Well I never really liked living in Limmersach, in our place, although I loved the place. The climate didn't agree with me, and the idea that I was first the wife of the proprietor, and then the sister-in-law of a returned proprietor, living in a very lovely old house, manor house, surrounded by all the workmen, and in much less comfortable surroundings, and with hard work, I didn't like living like that. This upset me, it also used to upset my husband, that's why he hated going there on a summer holiday. So when I was there with the children before the War, my husband never joined us there, he took us to other places. His holidays were then in the Alps, in the mountains, but never there in that place, because he could not stand being...just there, leisure, doing leisure.

The landowner.

The landowner. It was more than the factory, it was a big estate, the landowner. And this...

And you felt the same so many years later?

I was completely...I thought like my husband. Whereas my brother-in-law was quite used to being the grand seigneur, and was quite used to, and liked having people help him and do things for him, which I have never liked. And so living there, even before the War, was quite a strain on my nervous system, because I didn't like it. I loved the place, it was a beautiful place, it had a beautiful garden and orchard and stables and cattle and what have you. I loved it, I made drawings and paintings there 'they're all gone - I think so at least). And it was a great wrench to give it up, to sell it. But after my...it went down and down, it was very difficult; my brother-in-law was not capable of running the factory. He was a

very elderly man by then, he had a sort of diabetes and was...gall-bladder affair. He was very strong-minded without ever trying to get used to another type of life, as he couldn't manage here either. And astonishingly, all the employees and workmen liked him very much: they had a footing with him, and he could get on with everybody. But he was always the top, the head of the thing, which I didn't agree with at the time.

Were these the same staff, many of them, who had been with your husband before the War?

Yes.

They'd all come back?

No, they were all there, they had been...they were only part of them Jews, the Jews of course not. But in Klagenfurt itself there were very few Jews, and they all remained there. And Klagenfurt had been taken over by a German firm, I think from Westphalia. And that was manipulated by the former secretary of my husband's in the Vienna office. She was highly intelligent, she was very pretty, she was Viennese, the sweet Viennese little girl, a great flirt. And with these capabilities she managed whatever she could manage. And being a loyal employee and top secretary of that firm, being a secretary first to my husband and then to my brother-in-law, she was completely...belonged completely to the firm, like Tolar to us. It was approximately the same background. Now when my sister-in-law died before the War, and my brother-in-law was hopeless alone, this lady, Louise Breyer, who was a widow, took over running his household and helping with the boys. And she was there when the Nazis came to Vienna. She took over whatever she could do; she got in a solicitor whom she knew; she offered herself to be his top secretary. She was marvellous, she was really quite an astonishing woman. And consequently, took all the files, all the books, all the main, most important documents of this firm, and hid them in her new boss...the solicitor's firm.

When the Germans came?

When the Germans came. And through her flirtatious Viennese life, she managed to keep that job, to be put into charge of the factory's work at the Monopoly Ministry. So she had an eye on everything.

Even while the Nazis....

Yes.

While everybody was away in the camps.

Yes, yes. She kept quiet and ran the place, together with the Germans.

With Grünzner?

Oh no, he was in Prague, he was in Czechoslovakia. But the new people, I don't know their name, I've forgotten their name, they came from Westphalia, they took over there. And Mrs. Breyer, Louise Breyer, she ran the place.

So why did Pepe need you, if she ran the place?

Because she then ran the place and wasn't in the household.

Ah, right.

I was to be the lady of the manor house. That's the great difference. She ran the place, and very sadly this...she had a lot of terrible worries in her own life, because the Russians took over her flat in Vienna, and there were dreadful things with her daughter there and her son-in-law, and she then managed to get her whole family into our place in Carinthia. And because she managed all that, and because my brother-in-law...and we had to thank her for everything, she then took over too much, for which she was not the right person; she could not run the...in the Ministry, to present a big firm. She was a woman, a flirting woman, and that didn't always work, and it didn't work in Limmersach then either.

And this factory, when my brother-in-law had died and my son was in Sydney, my elder nephew was in Canada, my younger nephew, had a very good job with Unilever's. All of them were married to gentiles, George not yet. And the third partner was in Kenya. We found that I can't run the place, I couldn't do that. We had George come over for six months to see whether he could take over. He said he would never know whom to bribe and how; he could not be adjusted after living in England, spending his time in the Air Force, and now being a little chap in Sydney, in an X-ray firm; he could not take over running this place.

He actually came over from Australia to try it?

Yes, because my partner, who came from Kenya, and my nephews, who said, now what will we do, either we have to sell, or George will have to take over. So we paid George's trip, he came over to Austria, and was...I had broken my hip already, and he was there for six months, and the result was that we sold the place to our greatest competitor. And that was very nicely done by my future son-in-law, who was an excellent businessman and a very good talker, and managed all that beautifully.

What had happened to him during the War?

He was in Israel the whole time, and had a coffee grinding...I think I mentioned that once.

He had gone to Palestine before the War, hadn't he?

Yes, he was in Tel Aviv, he had his very well going coffee shop and grinding and roasting place. And he came over to our place to have a look at it, and then he came a second time, and sold it, did all the business with the solicitors and what have you, and...I don't know.

Now you got back that particular factory.

Yes.

You didn't get back the other factories. You had many factories all around that part of Europe, didn't you? You only got the one back?

We got the one back. The Czech had been taken over by Czech communists, and I got some compensation for it, but as I think I told you, for our private house, my part of the compensation was the equivalent of fifty pounds. So the equivalent we got for the factories and the place in Tabor, another factory, and so on... Well, it was quite a nice sum, and that was distributed between all the heirs of course. And that's what some of my income is now, of course. And the Austrian factory was given back. The Yugoslav factory, nothing, no compensation, nothing; Yugoslav is gone, completely as if nothing was there, although there had been three factories, that's gone. Whereas the Austrian money was paid out by the people who bought it, and was distributed between all the heirs of the firm.

When Pepe had come to England, and he was in England for seven or eight years before he went back, was he doing a job?

He offered himself as a job here in...in the fermentation department of the ministry for yeast, and chemicals.

Agriculture?

Not...I think it's the industry for fermentation for alcohol and yeast. He offered his...he was really a...he knew all that; he was a chemist, had studied chemistry, and he really was very knowledgeable. And they turned him down, which hurt his feelings forever, because he was not British, and hardly spoke any English. And that hurt him terribly that he did nothing, and because he did nothing and was used to a very full working life, with help around him, but nevertheless, it was a very bad time for him too. So I pitied him after knowing what...how he had to live.

So he probably quite enjoyed himself, having the opportunity to go back to Austria.

Oh, he was glad to go back. And he preferred staying there; he hardly came back here, yes yes yes yes yes.

I mean, while his children, one of them had gone to Canada...

One is in Canada, the other one joined Unilever here, he took...he was tested, and he...I don't know, they had 80 people going in for that training for management, and Tony won it. So he's quite a man. And he's the one who looks after me here now.

When you met up with your children after six, seven, eight years...

Not so long.

Traumatic years, whatever it was, and your children obviously had grown up in that time, they were quite different in many ways, how did you get on with them?

With George I got on very well, because he was...first of all he's an easy-going man. He was terribly lazy, he didn't like learning, that's why he never passed his examinations properly. That was very sad for me, because he didn't get on till he moved to Australia. But he was wonderful in the house, he repaired everything, he could do anything, he was always there, he was always cheerful. He had delightful friends, and they all came and flocked round me, and we had a very nice home in Richmond, and wherever we lived. And Dorothy was...wanted to be first a model, which she didn't, and then she became an office girl, and then she took...she thought she would become a secretary and didn't quite. So that wasn't...she wasn't satisfied with that type of life.

What was your relationship like with your two children? And them with you?

With George it was inasmuch easy, only that I had to quarrel or push him, which was very hard for me because he was such a lovable chap. And I hadn't had my children for such a long time, and so it was hard for me to be strict with him, so obviously I spoilt him. Dorothy was not such a pleasant person around, and she was untidy, and he was tidy. And with him there was no work in the house, he helped, whereas with her it was different. So I didn't get on so well with Dorothy as with him. But then he left, and I then went to Limmersach. And she then, when I fell down in '55, and broke my hip...

In Austria?

In Austria, on the mountains in winter. I had asked...she was in a very bad state of health and very nervous. And Robert, my future son-in-law, was there to sell Limmersach at the time, so we wrote to her and said come to...give up your job, and come and get healthier and stronger here in Limmersach, it would be nice to have you here. And so she came, and she looked ill, and was nervous and unhappy. So we went up into the mountains in the winter, to make her be in good air and have good food. And we were there two days in a little hotel up there, when I fell and broke my hip. So down I came into the hospital in Klagenfurt, the capital of Carinthia. And then she and Robert came to visit me every day, and that's when when they so-called fell in love, and then they married. So that was the end of her work.

And of course he was 25 years older or so that she?

He was 25 years older, was divorced, had this grown-up daughter.

And was a Zionist.

And was a Zionist, and had his factory there.

And what did your daughter think about marrying a Zionist?

Oh, it didn't matter to her at all. He was very loyal, he said, "Come and look at the life there, and if you don't want to, then we don't marry, then you'll go back." And she came, and they married.

And they had a happy marriage?

Yes.

That's nice.

They had a happy marriage. It wasn't easy, neither for the one nor for the other, because he wanted to be a young man, and he was a sick old man.

Was he?

Yes. And she had quite a difficult life. But that is when she became mature, a new... And that's how she can go on there now. Except that she doesn't know what's going on at the moment. Yes.

And George. What happened...he went to Australia, but he hadn't got married presumably?

He wasn't married, no. He went to Australia, first to Melbourne, because we had a relative there who could put him up. And there he got a job with Pye of Cambridge, the gramophone and radio people, because he had been trained here by His Master's Voice people, for electrical musical instruments. And he was a fantastic photographer on top of that. And when he came to Melbourne he got that job with Pye's, and travelled all around, and also went to Sydney, where this friend, I talked about Poldi Kann, had settled with her children in the meanwhile, after the War, and he was invited by them to stay with them for Easter holidays. And he fell in love with Sydney, and he fell in love with being treated as a little boy by Auntie Poldi, and she cooked Czech food for him. So he wrote to me, "I think I'm going to look for a job in Sydney", and moved from Melbourne to Sydney. Why not? And that's what he did. And there he got these interesting jobs with Sciro, S-C-I-R-O, I'll show you what it is, for first, building the X-ray and gamma ray department for the University of Sydney, by getting all the machinery and things from Leitz, Germany, because he could write German letters, and because he knew what he was talking about. And he built up that laboratory, or this workshop for them, and they kept him on then, and trained him for doing examinations of metals, soil, and agricultural testing. And then he was sent to Lucas, there he then was put in charge of the machinery of the testing of the atom rays, or...I don't know what; it was all hush-hush.

All this electronics he had learnt in the Air Force, hadn't he?

He learnt a lot in the Air Force, and he learnt a lot by himself, and he is a born technician, whereas I am the contrary. He can't understand that I don't know why...

Because he never had any education after he left school presumably? He didn't go to university?

Only this training by His Master's Voice people.

Because he never went to university for example?

He went for two terms I think, to that quick course in Cambridge, so that he could join the Air Force.

Oh, right.

He joined the Air Force through that voluntary quick students' course, I don't know what...

This was during the War?

During the War.

Yes yes yes.

Against the wish...permission of his uncle, Pepe, all behind Pepe's back. Pepe had a bad time, in charge of these children of his brother's, and the one goes to Germany with the Americans and the other one goes to the Air Force, without his permission.

And he wasn't treated too well either.

So that was quite difficult. And there George joined the Air Force here, and then was sent to America for pilot training.

Oh he was actually a pilot, was he?

Yes, he was a pilot.

Was he? Was he in Bomber Command?

I don't know...yes, I suppose so, yes.

So his cousin was also in the RAF?

He was in the RAF, but was not a pilot. He was a bomber, I think he dropped these bombs or something.

Yes. But they both flew?

They both flew, yes, they both flew. But George only came down in the Everglades in Florida, because he...it was his own fault, and nearly lost his life then, eaten up by a crocodile. If you listen to him it is quite funny. And he flew afterwards again, but then he didn't...he was a pilot for a few months. His commander there, his...what were they called...

Wing Commander?

Wing Commander, and he said, "You're not stopping, otherwise we'll lose you; if you're nervous now because you came down in the Everglades, you'll never be a pilot, you'll go on being a pilot."

(LAUGHTER) So he had to go on flying. But then when he came here then, there was no flying any more, and here he was first in that prisoner-of-war camp in King's Lynn I think, to look after the prisoners, the German prisoners there. And I said there you will get out, and through a friend of ours he then got the job in the Air Ministry, to do that office work by reading and translating.

Oh Goering's papers?

Goering...the War, yes. So there he stayed until he was de-mobbed.

And he married in Melbourne or in Sydney?

He married in Sydney, he married a New Zealand girl who was in the same boarding house with him.

And they are happily married?

Very happily married, and have three sons, and they now live...when he was 60 he had to retire, and they live in the mountains in Queensland, and grow a forest there, and look after...they're very 'green', they look after all that. And two sons live in Sydney, and one lives with them, but is studying now on the Gold Coast. So what's going to happen to him I don't know.

So these actually are your only three grandchildren.

They are my only three grandchildren. Dorothy never had children.

Just step grandchildren by Dorothy's former husband, step grandchildren I suppose.

No, there is only that...there was that daughter who has two daughters.

But she's a sort of step grandchild to you, isn't she really?

No, I never accepted her...(LAUGHS)...no no no. She would have been, yes, but we never got...she was grown-up and married. She married then...no... She came to me while I was here in hospital; after I broke my leg in Austria it was badly set, and I came over here and it had to be re-set twice. That's why I am limping so badly, and have that leg so much shorter than the other. And I was for very many months here in the Middlesex Hospital. And at that time, Miriam came here to study English, and she came to see me a lot, and we got on very well because she's very intelligent and amusing. But since she's quite grown up, it's different: she likes me, she sends me letters occasionally, but I can't get on with her...well, when we see one another we are polite, but... She made life so difficult for my daughter, that it didn't quite work.

You said that after the War, in the Fifties, when your daughter came over to Austria, and met your son-in-law to be, his name is...?

Robert.

Robert. They decided to get married. And they from there on in went to live in Palestine, or Israel by this time?

Yes, she went to live there.

It was her first that she had been there?

Yes, of course. Yes yes. She stayed there, and they had a little flat in Tel Aviv, and by and by they then bought that house in Zahala, and lived in Zahala all along. A very nice bungalow with a little garden. I loved being with them there, it was lovely.

How long were they married in fact?

23, 25 years.

Were they, because he married at about 50, did he?

Wasn't he old...no, yes, you're right, yes.

He was about 50 when he got married, to her, having divorced the first one?

That's right, yes, yes. Yes, he was an old gentleman when he died.

Yes.

I got on very well with him, he was a very highly intelligent and sensitive man.

He was your introduction I seem to remember to Zionism, many many years earlier?

Yes. And we fought about that. Yes, yes. And we never...I mean he always laughed about that when I was then staying with them four times. He never was an orthodox Jew, and he didn't know very much about religion. And that's what I resent, and still even. People talk as if they knew...they really didn't...nobody has ever read the Bible, nobody knows anything of the history of the Jews, they only talk. And if you've read all that, and now that I am so old I forget it, but I really knew all about it, and couldn't make up my mind.

And you had learnt your history, your Jewish history from where?

From being interested in it. From...or let us say, I think I told you in the last form, before I took my matriculation, we were only three Jewesses in that class, and we had a little rabbi called Kupfer, and because he didn't know what to do with us, we read the Bible.

But that was only the Bible. You said you learnt Jewish history as well.

That was good enough for me. That I learnt afterwards. Here also in the City Lit., and then I read history books. And when I read the Bible I looked it up in history books as well, because I like to know what is going on. That is because it was my hobby. It was my hobby, and now I am too lazy, but I would go on with that hobby; it still interests me enormously, but now I am too tired, I can't do it any more. But it is...the development of religions is so interesting.

Oh, absolutely.

And that is it, I mean, after all...

One of the things that puzzles me slightly is that, with your...I would say brilliance, but your artistic aptitude, particularly in relation to flowers, and your book that you took to Theresienstadt, I don't know whether you brought it to England with you, but the one you took...

No, that's gone.

The book of flowers. How it is that, all the way along, your real interest is in portraiture.

Because I had no possibility. Well you see, if you want to make portraits you would have to have the person who orders the portrait; you must also have a real training, which I didn't have, I only had a few years, two years, with Mr. Cohen, where we only...we never painted, where we did that in sanguine, or in charcoal, he didn't let me get into colour, which I always wanted. He wasn't the man to allow that. He was a great...he wasn't a very good teacher, but he was a wonderful man. He had this greatness that when his pupils got beyond what he could give them, he did not hide it. He would tell them, "Now go to Professor there-and-there, or this-and-that school, or go to Paris, I cannot teach you any more." Now if a student hears that from her master, hat off to the master. And I found he was marvellous. But of course he also only could teach me his own trade of making these little drawings in charcoal or in sepia, or in sanguine crayon, because that was his medium. And I wanted to paint; I am a painter, I want colours. So I left him then.

And even in the years when you went to the Art Academy and so on, you never learnt portraiture there?

No, but the first year only, and I didn't get...yes, we had models there. But you had to draw, and that was the academic way, you didn't get to a real portrait, no.

I seem to remember you telling me, you...

I did make portraits.

You met your husband because you went to somebody's house to produce portraits of the children.

Oh that was my cousin in Prague. That's right. Yes, but also only these little red sanguine things, never painted.

Ah, I see.

And I wanted to paint portraits.

That you've never done?

I never did that. Oh yes, I did it in Prague, with some little artist there who gave private lessons, and I hated these lessons and I didn't learn anything and it was no... I couldn't get...couldn't do it, no. I did

learn how to mix the oil paints, and I learnt what to do about brushes, but that's all; I never got any real thorough training for that. Probably, if I had not gone here to a pottery class, but to a painting class, I might have learnt good painting instead of modelling. I was ready to do anything at the time, and still would have physically been able to do it at the beginning - perhaps not, I don't know. After all, I'd had this break of the hip already before I started the pottery here.

That was the first time you'd ever done pottery?

Yes. Except that once in Theresienstadt, when they made me do that mask. But otherwise never. And probably if I had had the chance here, if somebody would, instead of saying go... 'Why don't you try pottery, it'll cheer you up', my cousin said that, and I did, and so I stayed. If she had said, 'Why don't you go to a painting class in that adult education centre in Hotham in Putney', I might have painted. But I don't think I would have liked it so much.

Did you ever learn landscape painting?

Well I'd never really... I learnt a bit of water-colour landscape in Theresienstadt, from that marvellous landscape painter who painted the Berghorst [i.e. Berghof?] of Hitler in summer, winter, autumn, spring. But otherwise I haven't... well, yes, I have been a few months with a friend of mine, painting water-colours. One does that on one's own without a training. (BREAK IN RECORDING)

Lily, we've spoken... now we've got to the point in your long life where your... George has gone off to Australia, where Dorothy has gone off to Israel and has got married to Robert, where you have returned from hosting the family business in Austria, and you've broken your hip, you've been confined in the Middlesex Hospital in early 1956 for many months, having various additional operations to your hip. And here are you, what, 51 years of age I suppose at that time, something like that.

56, yes.

What happened to your life from there on in? It's still 35 years ago.

I know, and it was very hard, because I was horrified to be a cripple at that fairly young age. And I had been physically and mentally very active all my life, and now here I was, not being able to move around on my own, having to go to physiotherapy and hydrotherapy provided by the Middlesex Hospital for the next five years, not being used to running life for myself all the time. I can't at the moment remember where I... first I lived in, I think in that...

Boarding house?

It wasn't... the boarding house...

In Clanricarde Gardens.

In Clanricarde Gardens, but I was more... my cousin Eva, who is my neighbour now, she heard of the flat I am living in now, that it was going to be empty, and that the people were buying a house and leaving the flat, and were ready to sell their lease to the flat. I was still at the Middlesex Hospital when cousin Eva and cousin Rudy came to discuss that with me. So my solicitor, who knew about my financial situation, they got in touch with him, they looked at the flat, and they thought it would be very suitable, and this is where I am now. Then they bought... my solicitor bought the lease of the flat, and after great difficulties with the proprietor of the house, I then moved in, after staying a few months at Wright's Lane Club, The Kensington Club I think it was called, before my landlord, Mr. Hart, allowed me to move in.

So you moved from hospital to the club in Kensington.

To the club, yes.

And then eventually...

And then eventually I came here, and had no furniture, just a chair, a bed, and a trolley. And with this furniture I moved into this flat; I took over a few old bits of furniture from the former people.....

End of F901, Side A

Track 20 (F901, Side B)

...Woollens

of London, who had lots of furniture departments, were trying to get rid of their Scandinavian plain furniture. And when I saw it, it was just what I wanted, and because I took quite a lot of it I got it for a very cheap price. And so it was very easy for me, I got wardrobes, sofas, chairs, tables, everything from one firm. And it was delivered and put up in my flat, and this is how I live now, nothing has changed. Afterwards I bought a few bits and pieces, later on, to fill up the rooms, or...nothing special. But my real furniture all came from Woollens on one day. So that was easy.

So, your cousin Eva and her late husband...

No, not late, he lives.

Her husband, Rudy?

Yes.

They really cared for you after Dorothy went to Israel?

They cared for me and go on caring for me all their lives, yes.

How are they related to you?

She is the youngest daughter of my mother's youngest sister. She is just 20 years younger than I am.

The one who came here in about 1900 to live?

No no no. No, no, of the Viennese younger sisters; the sister who came here was my mother's second sister. No no, there were four children, my mother was the eldest, then Auntie Lily who came to England, and the youngest, Margaret, she lived in Vienna, and her youngest daughter, so that is why there is such a...20 years between us. (BREAK IN RECORDING)

So, Lily, you came here more or less from your many months in the Middlesex Hospital?

No, I was sent from the Middlesex Hospital to a private, or half private nursing home, orthopaedic and maternity home, from the Seventh Day Adventists. And it was a lovely old-fashioned manor house in large, beautifully kept grounds. It had a little chapel for the Seventh Day Adventists' worshipping, and that was in a little wood which I could see from my window. And the moment I moved into that lovely bedroom, I hoped that I would once be able to walk in that wood, but it took many many weeks before I could walk so far.

Because you had had so many operations?

So many operations. I was so weak, my legs could...they were just sticks both of them, and I was quite thin at the time. And I was taken there, and Mr. Newman, my surgeon, lived in Radlett, which isn't too far, that is why he put me into that convalescent home, because he could visit me on his way back from work.

This was in Stanmore somewhere?

That was between Watford and Stanmore.

Right.

And he came to see me quite often there, to see me walk and to talk to the physiotherapist, and look at the X-rays which were taken regularly, on a wonderful old X-ray machine with the splendid scientists who worked that X-ray machine. My son George came and made friends with that X-ray man, and they had a lot in common. The treatment, every morning...I loved the place, except that the food was

horrible, because we had to eat the old apples from their orchard. In the morning I got a tray with my breakfast, and there always was a little sheet on it with a verse of how to be happy with...Christ looking after me and so on. I loved it, I liked the atmosphere. It was vegetarian, which I liked too. And it was very strict, you didn't even get any coffee. It was enormously strict; it was well run. It had...you could do weaving there, and all sorts of arts and crafts which I enjoyed too; I just did a bit of weaving I think, because I could not sit properly. And there, the beautiful lawns surrounding that house were mown every morning, and it was like velvet. And on these lawns we cripples learnt to walk, first with two crutches, then with one crutch, and then with sticks. Every second day I had a bath with some hay in it, or some salt in it, and every other day I had massage and gymnastics. And for me it was a revelation, I had never had anything like that before in my life, and I enjoyed it.

How long were you there?

I'm not quite sure. I think it must have been nearly half a year, five months or something like that.

And it was from there that you moved into this flat?

From there I moved...no, no from there I moved into a club in Wright's Lane, near Kensington High Street, because the proprietor of this house, the builder, Hart, would not get [i.e. let?] this flat; he wanted to get an extra sum, although I had bought the lease of the former tenants, and he was not entitled to any money, but he wanted to have this flat back in his property so that he could let it for a much higher price. Then I had to pay...because I had this lease which still lasted for 14 years or something, so I paid very little for the flat, because I had the lease, and he lost the... There were lawyers there, we went there; my cousin Rudy took my side, and the famous Mr. Goodman had my...Mr. Rose's side, all against Mr. Hart. So after, I think I was six weeks, I'm not quite sure how long, in that club, I was allowed to move in here. And during the time I was in the club, Dorothy came for a while from Israel, and a friend from Canada came and stayed with me there, but I could stay alone there too. They had a swimming pool in the basement, and when my physiotherapy...I had to go to physiotherapy twice a week for five years after the treatment, which was provided by the Orthopaedic and Middlesex Hospital. I had a hydrotherapist there; that was in Peto Place, near Regent's Park. I think it still works for the Orthopaedic Hospital, I don't know. And there, I had not only massage, but exercises in the water, and swimming in the warm water. Everything wonderfully organised. And I got quite rapidly better there. I went back to that Wright's Lane club on the Underground, I could move around quite well. My eyes of course at that time were good so I didn't mind walking around, and I stayed at Wright's Lane and took the Underground to Peto Place twice a week, and otherwise I lived, walked round Kensington with one stick or two sticks, and was very tired after walking, but it was very good for me. And only then...

So all the treatment had obviously helped you.

That treatment was fantastic, yes.

And you were no longer walking on crutches by this time?

No, no. I got the metal sticks, which I hated, but my physiotherapist insisted, because she said other people would hear me walk and go out of my way. It was all...I must say, the treatment at the Middlesex Hospital was excellent.

When you were in either of these places, in Stanmore or in Wright's Lane, were you able to do any painting of any sort?

No, nothing. Yes, oh yes, I shouldn't say that, I painted a little from my room in Stanmore, with a few water-colours. But in Wright's Lane I did not, I had a dark little room. I don't think I did, but I could look out of my room, over the yard, into the garden of Mary Abbots...at the back, beyond the railway, the Underground. And I quite enjoyed that outlook, over the lines of the Kensington High Street Underground station, I looked out in St. Mary Abbots Gardens, and the church there. So I had quite a pretty view, but I don't think I did any painting there at all.

So how long was it then before you started resuming some sort of normal life?

Only when I was here, in this flat, I started. I had a house help here, a very nice house help who my cousin had got for me; I think she came twice a week and did the house. But I could go out. Besides when I moved in to Roehampton, it really was a village, and we had a grocer who telephoned every morning, what I wanted, and on his way here he brought other things as well, so it was quite easy. Shopping was done in Roehampton by telephone at the time, now there's nothing of the kind of course. And I started living here, in one room first, and by and by I got the furniture, and started living a very comfortable life here.

How did you spend your life? What were you doing?

Look, if you are a cripple, and if you are very thin and very frail, you like sleeping (I still like sleeping a lot), and time passes. I had my cousin next door, I had other cousins, I had my nephew and niece. I constantly had friends in and out. I never, never ever felt lonely: I felt alone, that is something quite different, but I was never lonely or bored, that never existed in all my life. I don't mind being alone. I wanted to do something, I wanted to paint; it was difficult because I couldn't stand, I couldn't lean forward to do any miniature painting; I was frustrated in this respect. But as I was a cripple I had to learn to live with it.

And you were still undergoing physiotherapy, even here?

I had physiotherapy for five years.

Even while you were here?

Even while I was here. That went on, to-ing and fro-ing. I was very angry that our Queen Mary here next door had no physiotherapy at the time, and mainly, no hydrotherapy. And besides, Mr. Newman, who looked after me all the time, was a Middlesex and Orthopaedic Hospital man, he would not give me to another hospital. (LAUGHING) So I had to be his patient in the physiotherapy his hospitals provided!

And all this has stemmed from that breaking of your hip in Austria?

The breaking of the hip in Austria, and having osteoporosis already, probably, because of malnutrition, my age, no hormones, and so on: one didn't know about these things at the time, and my bones were very weak. And consequently, if you try to nail a bone which is weak, it breaks up.

So did you start soon, going to courses, or going to concerts, or anything of this...theatre, or...?

No, I'm only...to theatres I never went on my own; sometimes I went with my cousins, or somebody took me to matinees. I didn't like, and couldn't go out in the evening. I went to lectures. I went for many years to the City Lit. - City Literary Institute, that is...where is it...where...it's near High Holborn; I took the Underground from Hammersmith to High Holborn and walked to...I can't...(BREAK IN RECORDING)

So, you went to these courses at the City Lit.?

At the City Lit.

So what were the courses on?

History, religion, and art.

And were these every day, or...?

Oh no. I tried to get two or three courses on one day, so that I only had to take the Underground and this long trip to and fro twice a week. But I managed to get very good Bible courses on the day I had history, or... I could manage to get two, or even three courses on a day, and had lunch in their canteen, and enjoyed them...some were good, some were less good. A friend of mine, the wife of Professor

Herrnheiser [?or Herrnheuser?], joined me there, she met me there, and we had lectures together there, and I enjoyed that, and I learnt...got books from the library from there and from Roehampton. And filled my time there, and here by reading, and feeling very interested in what I heard. And thinking about it, I don't need much else to keep happy.

Now, you'd now been in the country 10 or 12 years. Had most of your contacts with other people been with your family, or with fellow refugees, or had you started meeting English people? How did you develop your relationships with people?

Well, I made friends, or acquaintances in the hospitals as well, but of course one loses these connections afterwards. No, it was mainly my old friends from Vienna, and my relatives here, which visited me, and I went to them, and my English family invited me and I stayed overnight with them in Great Missenden. And I had a quite lively social life, but I was at the time...there were hardly any English people who were not connected to my family. But then, when I moved...when I didn't like to lose all my capabilities of drawing and painting, and saw that I could not lean forwards because I had pains in my hip, and could not stand at the easel, so I had to give up the idea of painting, and my cousin suggested my going to a pottery class instead. And I went to Hotham, the Adult Education Centre in Putney, and there I started to play around with clay, and wanted to learn to throw pots on a wheel, and that too did not work out because my arms were too weak, I could not use the wheel properly, mainly because of physical difficulties. So I started to model. I got...clay was wedged for me, because I always had very nice tutors, who saw how weak I was, and the clay was wedged for me and then I could play around with the clay. And there I started to make little figures, or heads, and found out that I much enjoyed that. And from then onwards, that was a great happiness in my life. I went to Hotham twice a week for, I think three years, I'm not quite sure how long I was there, and then our bus service in Roehampton got worse and worse, and when I had to wait for my bus to Putney and got drenched twice, I said I could not do that, it was impossible for my leg muscles to get wet and then stand around, so I said that's the end of pottery in Hotham. But my Hotham tutor immediately told me that there is one being opened at the Alton Estate opposite where I live in Roehampton. And she telephoned...this is one of the things I love, people offer help, and then they do it immediately. Miss Lancaster, who was my tutor, telephoned to Alton Estate Education Centre here, asked for the pottery teacher, and said, "Tomorrow I am sending you a pupil, Mrs. Fischl, and will you please take her into your morning course." And this is how I came to have pottery in Roehampton. And there I had a wonderful tutor, and there I made my first very wonderful English friends. Alas, that centre was later on closed, and we then moved to the big Manresa House. But there the friendships went on only...the lady I became very close friends with, she is dead, she died of a cancer some years ago. But there in the Alton Education Centre I made my first English friends, and they remained, as long as they lived, they remained my friends. And now I have other friends here in the Manresa House, and am very happy there, I hope that will go on still, as long as I live!

Did you ever have any contact with the Jewish community, or Jewish people?

Well my friends from Vienna, and my family, apart from...after all, my nephews, although they have gentile wives, they are Jews, and their children are brought up as Christians but nevertheless they are Jews, and my cousin next door they are Jewish of course. And then my friends from Vienna, my solicitor and his wife and their friends, and there are a few Jewish friends here. But I never joined any Jewish association or any synagogue. So I have never known much about the Jewish life in England, as little as I did in my former life. And of course my only really Jewish connection was through my friends, Günther and Bettina Adler, and the Association of Camp Survivors: I was on the committee there for a few years, which was partly Jewish, and there were two or three members non Jews, Kennedy's for instance. I can't remember very much about this associations; there was Sue Ryder on our committee. And I found those club evenings not very inspiring, although I met nice people. But the charity, one wanted...after all, one ought to do something, and I only joined it because I thought I could collect money for them. And we did collect, and I thought we could pay for a bed in the Middlesex Hospital, or in any hospital. But no, they insisted on putting a plaque to the wall of the officers' club, or whatever it was, in Pavilion Road, behind Harrods somewhere. And then I thought, that is not good enough. And I got out, so did Günther and Bettina Adler, who co-opted me into that club, and I lost touch with the people there. Some of them were interesting, but nobody I really cared to go on with as friends. And otherwise, I really...well my Viennese friends of course, they are all Jewish.

But you never had any...as you say, you never had anything actually to do with the Jewish community, or any part of it?

Nothing at all, nothing.

And you never met English Jews, presumably?

Not really. No, not really. Not as friends who come to me, no, never.

You mention the Adlers, Günther Adler. Was he somebody you knew from home, from Czechoslovakia, or from Vienna?

I knew about him from Prague, through my gynaecologist doctor, Dr. Gross in Prague. He was a relative of my grandfather's, and consequently when I married to Prague I was told by my family that when I have a baby I should go to Dr. Gross. And it turned out that Dr. Gross was a charming, highly educated, very artistic man, living in a lovely house in the town. And I met his wife, and we immediately became friends, because I was a sort of cousin three or four times removed. And he helped my babies to be born, and we met, but only as doctor/patient, friendly patient. And only when Hitler came...he died before Hitler came, and only then, when Jewish people came together more than before, I visited his widow, and we got to love one another very dearly, she was an amazing woman. And I knew her three children; he had a son who was for a while in the Czech Army, a daughter who was very gifted, sculptor, painter, and very charming, and a younger daughter. I knew them well enough to invite the elder daughter to Limmersach before the War, and because of her artistic endeavours, she also lived in Vienna for a while, and I introduced her to some of my artist friends there. This friendship with her mother was a great help for me when my children were in England already, and her three children were gone too, they were also in England, they were older. And Bettina lived in Wales and worked there, and her brother too, and the younger daughter became midwife, and nurse and sister, and trained here at the big children's hospital in London.

This was before the War?

No, that was during the War. That was during the War. But, Mrs. Gross and I remained close friends, and also in Theresienstadt: she and her sister were in Theresienstadt, and worked in the potato peeling department. And when my husband was so ill and dying, they gave me freshly cooked potatoes which they had brought home, and that was one of the few things I could bring my husband, which he enjoyed eating. It didn't last very long. And there I met Günther Adler, who at the time was married to somebody else in the camp, but he had met Bettina before the War, and there was a great friendship between them.

She was English? Bettina.

Bettina, no, she was a daughter of Dr. Gross. And she lived in Wales at the time, and worked in a button factory, as an artist designer. That is before I came here; she had heard that Günther was alive...I cannot tell you, and I wouldn't know what to tell you, and I don't need to tell you about the difficulties there, but in any case Günther came over here, his wife had died in Auschwitz, and he married Bettina. And through them I got involved in the stories and histories of Theresienstadt, because he, to get rid of his...he himself was a poet and author, he had always written books, and now this had to come out, and he wrote I think volumes of the society, and all the administration about Theresienstadt. And this book is in various German libraries and universities, and through him I was informed of what went on in the Jewish survivor departments, and met a few people through him. But he died a few years ago, and now my friendship with Bettina continues. And this is the only real contact I have with the Jewish community really, through Bettina.

So, really, the last 35 years, from the time your children, or Dorothy went off to Israel, have been spent by you at classes, courses of various sorts, and in mixing with your family, most of whom were baptized, and a few Jewish friends who were also survivors. Added to which, you had the friends that you met through courses, the English friends you met through courses.

Right, yes, and they...I love them...we love one another very dearly, let's say that.

Did it take you some time to identify as being English?

I cannot say I can identify myself as being English, because I'm not. I can't be, nobody would accept me as English. I still, when I cross the frontier into Austria, I am Austrian. And the older I get, the more I feel that is my personality: not only that I feel I am Austrian, but I think it is...my personality is so Austrian that I can't even pretend I am British. I love living here; not only am I grateful but I really love it, and I love my English friends, and my English relatives, because my nephews, nieces, cousins, they all married English girls or boys, and they have produced families, and I feel I belong to them, and they belong to me. But I can never say I am English.

But you still feel a stranger, even after 40 years here?

Yes.

You feel an alien, a foreigner?

I feel as I'm not quite accepted of course, that one does feel. And that everybody's extremely kind, and I have no difficulties anywhere. But I cannot...I think one cannot give up one's childhood background, and mainly perhaps because of the influence of my father, and the countryside, and the Austrian art, which is deeply enrooted in me, because of my training and my friends in Vienna, who introduced me to all the big artists, not only painters and sculptors but also theatre people. That...this is where I...the foundation of my culture if you would call it, is so Austrian that, if I go to an exhibition where there are various paintings or sculptures or works of art, I would immediately find the Austrians...immediately I would connect with the Austrian art. I just cannot alter that, and I don't see why I should.

That's absolutely right. Have you travelled much in this country?

Well, I did, I have seen quite a few sights in England; I have been to Bath which I enjoyed very much. But because I am so disabled, everything is not only an effort, but some travelling quite impossible, especially if you have no car and nobody to drive you around. I did spend a fortnight in Torquay and once with my cousin, again a week or even longer, in the south of Cornwall, near St. Mawes, and we did make a few taxi excursions from there, so I was at the north side of Cornwall as well and looked at the pottery schools up there. And I have been...where else have I been, to Eastbourne and Bournemouth, and to Brighton of course.

The Lake District?

The Lake District once with my son-in-law's daughter, which I did not enjoy because it was raining or foggy all the time, and every time I wanted to see the mountains they were hidden, and I couldn't go into any woods because they were shut off because of the water in Manchester. And it wasn't what I call being in the country, but it was interesting.

Scotland?

Was I in Scotland? Yes, I was...I spent a fortnight near Kirkcudbright, Gatehouse of Fleet, which I loved very much, that was before I had my broken hip and I could really walk, and there we walked for hours in the hills round Gatehouse, or along the beaches, and also made a few excursions, to Oban if I remember, and there were quite a few places which I thought very beautiful that I would have liked to go back to these places. But of course if you can't walk, and have no car, it's quite impossible to get anywhere, or at least nobody would take me anywhere. If I had had somebody who could have offered to show me places, take me by plane, and then by car, I would have probably fallen in love with this country as well. But in Austria I have these possibilities; I either fly to Salzburg or Innsbruck, and from there a car ride is not so expensive, and I am at a place where I can move around.

And you've done this...you've been back to Austria every year?

Every year.

Have you?

Every year. Either to a spa there too, in Gastein, or just for a bit of walking and mainly mountain air. I like being over a thousand metre altitude, which I cannot have in England. And that is the reason why I always try to go back to my mountains, because that's where I really feel well, and keep going for a whole year. And in England, my English friend refused to go to any place in England with me; she wanted to see and know Austria, so we used to go to Austria, or let's say the Alps, once a year. Once we were in Bolzano, which I called Austrian but of course it is Italy since the First World War, and to the Dolomites another time with her, and enjoyed that very much. But for me they are the old Austrian mountains, and she loved it. But now she doesn't go away any more, and I just remain in my Tyrolese village.

And do you stay at the same places you used to stay at as a young child?

No, not really, because I now go usually to Seefeld and there I was before...just after the First World War, with my parents and my younger brother. And then, with my husband and my children, in the year, either '36...yes, it must have been summer '36. And we walked a lot, and climbed mountains. So I know that place, and because I know it, I just...it doesn't matter, if I can go back there, into the mountains, I just look at them, and feel happy about that. And I have my air, and my forests there, which I can get into, whereas in England I have no opportunity.

And have you travelled much elsewhere in the world? Australia, you...

I was in Australia four times, I was in Israel four times. In Israel we moved around a lot, because Dorothy for a while was guide for the Wizo, and was excellent, and knew all the guides and all the chauffeurs of all the buses, and so we had a marvellous time when she took me round the country. I could give her a history, and art background, and she could know the landscapes and the bus drivers, and so we had a lovely time together always, every time I was there. And in Australia, I moved around a lot too, in the snowy mountains with my family, and I was in Melbourne, stayed with my cousins, and I was in Perth. I did see quite a lot, but of course mainly from the P&O liners when I always had a day or two in harbour in Fremantle or in Melbourne, and were taken around, so I did see...in a group of other people I saw quite a lot of these towns where we landed. Also in Italy like that, in Naples and in Sorrento, all that I only know from trips from the P&O liners.

You've never been to the States; did you ever go to the States?

I was in the States once; my nephew married, and I was invited to their wedding, and stayed partly with a cousin in Boston, and partly with my sister-in-law; my brother was dead already, she had married again and I stayed with them, in Flushing, New York. And I had a lovely friend in New York, the daughter of the lady who was...Edith, who was with me in Theresienstadt, Auschwitz and Oederan, and whose mother was gassed in Auschwitz, she is married and lives in New York, and I stayed with them for a while, and they took me around.

Edith Kaufler?

That's right. And I have lost touch at the moment, but I will find out more about her again. So I have seen part of it. What else did I see? I think I've told you all my trips. I have been here in England...where else, nowhere really.

Well, you haven't done so badly.

I haven't done badly at all. No, I am quite happy, and I have got good memories from nearly everywhere.

Tell me, many years ago you had arguments, discussions, with Robert over the need to have a Jewish state.

That's right, yes.

Do you feel any differently since the war, since your daughter went to live there, since you've actually visited it?

Yes. I feel positive and not negative about it. But I don't think it is the blessing everybody thought it would be. Because one didn't know that the Jews who built it up, like Herzl, with an idea behind him, would be in the minority very soon. And I think the Zionist Israelis in Israel now have nothing at all to do any more with the beginning of Israel. And so...my daughter is very happy there, and feels at home there, that is why I...I cannot understand that feeling, but I myself could never want to live there. My daughter and son-in-law wanted me to live in a home in Herzlia; I had even looked at it, and it is a lovely place, and I even could have done pottery and modelling there. But I then refused, I don't think I would have liked it on the whole.

One of the points you discussed a long time ago when we first started talking, was the circles in which you mixed in Vienna.

Yes.

Where the only Jewish friends you had were not from school. But you I think mentioned that you also met a lot of these Jewish academic or intellectual circle people at that time.

Yes, and artists, and mainly the time of the Wiener Werkstätte, the great blossoming of the Art Nouveau, which really started here, with Mackintosh, and was then transferred, came over slowly to Belgium, Germany and Austria, had its great development, and blossomed into the Wiener Werkstätte in Vienna. And through my friends, Jewish friends, I got to know some of the great artists of that art revolution I can say, and there was great.....

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From the year 1914 onwards I made friends with three brothers, whom I knew when we were small children already. But from then onwards these three brothers influenced me inasmuch as they were connected with artists and authors and this type of Jewish society, and through them I met some of the most famous Austrian artists. I never really knew them properly, I was just on the fringe of that circle of people, but I could observe them, and knew about them. And because of being friends for instance with the Schnitzlers, the nephew and nieces of Arthur Schnitzler, the poet and dramatist and author of Vienna, I met the wives and knew the background of these people. Here there is the famous Lucie Rie, who is one of the greatest potters of England, and who has the most lovely things here in all the museums, and all over the world. I knew her family, I knew her husband, and I met her here again. It is no good just mentioning the names of these people, but having the opportunity to see them at work, or to talk to them, or to listen when they talk to other people, and having the feeling they don't...I belong without really knowing them properly, was a great influence on my attitude to life I think. It's now in my old age that I think like that; at the time it never occurred to me. But it must have influenced me a lot, because it made me be interested and reading the books I wanted to read about the time, about the people. I met Kokoschka for instance, and could think of him as a normal human being and not only as a great painter; I knew about his background. There were a few people, there's no good mentioning them now, here. I loved it, I liked being with them, and I think that was...it's just that it gave me happiness. This is all I can say about it. It is knowing the children of the librettist of Richard Strauss, the Hofmannstahls. That...not that there was much opportunity to talk to them, or to be real friends with them, but I belonged to that set, and that set of people were...quite something! (LAUGHS)

This was when you were in your late teens, or middle teens, from then on.

Late teens and middle teens onwards, that's right, yes.

And these people, many of them were much older than you?

No, no no. The children, I met the children. For instance, yes, Strauss was older, but I knew his daughter-in-law for instance. And when I see the film here, when people say for instance, Strauss was a terrible anti-Semite, I can think back to the soirée his daughter-in-law's parents gave, when the daughter-in-law got engaged to Richard Strauss' son. So the idea of anti-Semite I feel astonishing, because after all the daughter-in-law was a Jewess, the household was a Jewish household in Prague, beautiful house, and absolutely lovely and interesting family. After all I saw a film here on BBC where it showed the life Strauss led in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, and his daughter-in-law was his secretary all during the War. These are things which somehow influenced me, because they must be a sort of basis for my so-called tolerance, for my wider view about anti-Semitism, and I can't just blame and revenge. There are so many...two sides of everything.

Did you ever meet Kafka?

No, I never met Kafka, I never met Kafka, no, no.

Or Brod? Max Brod?

Brod I met at a dinner party once, but I hadn't...he never knew about me, and I know nothing. I knew friends of his, let's say that.

But you never talked to him?

Never talked to him, no no no no, no. That is...altogether my acquaintances with these people is more on the fringe, and I always could observe, and probably it is that which gives me another outlook very often on things, because I observe. And I always did. And perhaps because I was in the set of these friends, these people in their homes, that I knew...had a wider outlook than if I had been just restricted to the small Jewish bourgeoisie, which I knew too, but somehow they did not remain in my memory as the homes of the Schnitzlers, Hofmannstahls, and so on.

You said that your father was always somewhat surprised that you didn't associate with more Jews. When you started mixing in this sort of circle, was he interested?

Oh yes, he was very interested. And he always wanted to know with whom I spoke, and what they...oh yes, my father took part in my social life by my telling him about people. He himself wouldn't have parties at home. He met some of my friends of course who came and visited us regularly, and was very friendly; for instance, with these three brothers, they really belonged to the family by and by. And my father and...

Jewish brothers?

They were Jewish, yes. But of course he was just as friendly with the gentile friends who came.

But he used to comment that, how is it you never seemed to go out with Jews?

Oh that was...yes, but those were the official balls, whereas the little parties and the real friends were more Jewish. The other things were the balls, the official public big balls, which were so beautifully staged in Vienna, and they were the so-called...now we call them the 'Aryan Balls'; there were hardly any Jews there. I enjoyed that, because they were beautiful; they were perhaps less intellectual, or less witty, but they were very beautiful, and I loved dancing, and loved dancing with those gentile good dancers better than with the less good Jewish dancers. (LAUGHS)

One of the points that I would like you to clarify if you will, is, your father died just before the War...just after the War...

No, before the War.

Sorry, just before the War, or just after...yes. But he had this very successful coffin making business.

Yes.

What happened to that?

That was taken over by a gentile, one of the employees I suppose, he had been the book-keeper or something, I don't know. And he ran it all during the War, and when my mother came back he got in touch, she got in touch with him, and he gave her money and looked after her a bit, he was very good, Mr. Fleischmann. And then it was sold. I can't remember to...I suppose the community there, the Viennese community would have taken it over, I don't know. And then my mother got the money.

Compensation.

Yes. And so then she had a little money behind her, and could live off that. And she even left some to her grandchildren then.

But did a Treuhänder take over?

I don't think she had that. I don't really know what happened in Vienna exactly, because as I saw Mother in Theresienstadt, one didn't talk much, she could not fit in in Theresienstadt. And afterwards, when she lived with us in Limmersach and then in that home outside Vienna, in that nursing home, we didn't really talk much about the administration, and what really happened. It distressed her...I didn't want to know really. I couldn't help her any more as it is, so that was all I know about it. But I think Mr. Fleischmann, who took over and ran the business during the War, he behaved very well.

Another point that I'd like you to clarify if you will. You had for some time Tommy living with you, after the occupation of...

Of Vienna.

Of Vienna...of Prague.

Oh that too, yes, of course.

After the Anschluss, but while you were still living in Prague.

Also after my children were in England already.

Yes. How did this come about? Because your brother had...he was married by then, living in Vienna.

Of course he was there.

Hadn't he been made to scrub pavements?

Yes. He was...yes, he was once or twice he had to scrub the pavements in Vienna, and because Tommy was with us he then...and at last understood that he was not a Catholic officer of the Austrian army...

But was a Jew after all.

But was a Jew after all. He then, with his wife and his baby daughter, and the help of...I don't know who, moved through...I think through Yugoslavia, to Hyeres in the south of France.

But why was Tommy with you and not with him?

Because he had been with us before.

But he had been sent to you...

He was sent to me as soon as he was not allowed to go to an Aryan school. He was sent to me before, and the parents stayed in Vienna with the little baby girl. And he was sent to me before, and when my children went to England I wanted him to give me the permission to send him away. And I had organised with one of those three brothers who at the time lived and worked in Paris, that he would help him, pick him up in Paris, and keep him till he could send him to England.

One of the three brothers you were talking about?

Yes, that's right, the eldest brother. And all that was prepared, I had even already got my French teacher from Prague, that she would take him by train, look after him by train, to Paris, and deliver him to my friend Otto there. But my...I needed a letter from my brother that he would be allowed to do...that I would be allowed to do that. And my brother could not understand why I don't want to keep him, and did not send me the letter of permission to send Tommy to Paris. He did not understand that.

He thought you should have kept him?

Yes. He thought...well, he did not know that my children suddenly could go off, and why could not Tommy go with them. Now Tommy had...was on the one hand Catholic, on the other hand he had a Viennese passport where he was called 'Tomas Israel Heller', and that it wasn't the same as a Czech Jewish child. And nobody who didn't know these little difficulties with transports of children, could understand why I cannot send him on the same train with my children. But I could not, because of red tape; it wasn't possible. And as they refused to send me that letter that I am allowed to send him away in time for my French lady, to take him to Paris, and my friend Otto to send him on to London, where he could have joined my children, I could not send him away. He didn't get an exit visa from the Germans. So he had to go with my husband and me.

I see.

And that of course was a terrible thing, a very exciting, very irritating, making us angry and miserable and frustrated. But we were helpless, we couldn't do anything about it. And that poor little boy, now that is a guilt feeling. I now know that I did not treat him as he should have been treated at the time. That I was short-tempered with him, or wouldn't allow him to do this, that or the other. And that was

the reason why he then did not go to classes, and tried to steal a bit because I didn't give him enough chocolate or whatever he wanted. It was very sad for him, and only now do I know that that really was my fault. But, I didn't do it out of spite.

How old was he when he...

He was nine when he came to us, he was twelve when we went to Theresienstadt, and there he was two years.

16 or so...

He was 14, he was two years, and then he was sent with the last train from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz, and never again did we hear anything. Yes.

And did your brother in the meantime know what was happening to Tommy?

No.

Because he had already escaped to France, albeit that he was going to be arrested.

They were in France, they knew nothing; I knew nothing about them either. No, no. I knew that they were in Hyères, and that he worked there as a book-keeper and she did the housework in that pension where they were, and that's all I knew. And I never told my sister-in-law that it really was their fault that he couldn't get out, I never told her that because why should she have that on her mind, as one couldn't help that boy any more.

We spoke at various times about your two...both brothers, Franz and Fritz. What actually did they do? What was their career eventually?

Oh, Fritz took over my father's coffin factory. First he worked together with his father, and that didn't quite work because my father was a very very old-fashioned man, and wouldn't like any new ideas. And Fritz, coming from the army and having been an officer and having been imprisoned, and having had all sorts of ups and downs in his life and was married now, didn't enjoy working with his father either. But that's what he did, and by and by when Father went less to the office it was better for him. But it wasn't a successful career or anything like that. And the younger one, Franz, who was much more intellectual and quicker, he studied...not at the Vienna University, he studied economics and what they called 'Staatswissenschaften', that is...I don't know what you would call 'Staatswissenschaften', and economics. And what he really wanted to become a journalist, that is what he really wanted to do. But he wasn't successful at that too, and it was difficult already with anti-Semitism and... I know very little about all that, because I lived in Prague, and was married, and had my family, and he was after all nearly eight years younger than I and had his own life. And then he married this artist, the daughter of that Harta, of that artist Harta, and she herself was very artistic and still is, works a lot now still. And so that was a completely different set-up.

But what did he do with his career?

Well, in Vienna, what did he do in Vienna? He didn't have very much time in Vienna; he was a journalist, he went...was in Germany for a while. What did he do in Vienna? To tell you the truth I've forgotten. When Hitler came, he was in...at the time I think he worked in Saxony or something. I've forgotten.

It doesn't matter.

I've forgotten.

Tell me, Lily, how do you cope, how did you cope and how do you cope, with what happened to your family? Not to you, but to your family? Particularly say Tommy, or Camilla...those who perished. How do you cope with you own...?

I haven't...that's what I always say, I haven't got what you call a 'guilt feeling'. The only...now that one talks so much about guilt feeling all the time, I have the feeling that this last year with Tommy and my husband in that one room, with all sorts of ins and outs in that room, it must have been misery for the boy, and I did not have the patience or the knowledge, or the wish of doing anything for that little boy. And that is the only guilt I have. But the idea that I should have a guilt feeling that I stay alive and the others are dead, it wasn't....I didn't do anything for or against it; it was just fate, and there's nothing about it. And also that people of my family perished, well they perished like the others as well, I mean...

Oh yes, absolutely.

My real family did not, except for my Tommy, my nearest family, did not...they were all gone, they were out.

And your husband was a bit different?

Well, my husband, that is something else, yes.

He was ill as well.

He was ill as well. But on the other hand of course, if we had gone out in time, he might have survived the cancer operation in better conditions, but that is...

Do you think that...are you in favour of the fact that people should learn from your experiences, or should know of your experiences?

I don't know whether they...what I always want, and wish, is that one should not think of revenge. And that one should try...the word tolerance isn't the right thing, that one should try and think of the terrible situations everybody was in, whether Jew or non Jew, except if you were a top Nazi, and even they were under pressure. If you have to think, if I do this and that, my father, my wife, will be killed or done this, that or the other, I don't know who would have, who could have stood up against it. Children and grandchildren should be aware of it. But if you follow what is going on now all over the world, I can't see any difference between what Hussein is doing at the moment, and what is going on in the Middle East, it is for me again a blueprint of what happened just before Hitler, and during Hitler, except now people seem to be...to unite against. But how far this uniting will carry on I don't know. But I am beginning to be more cynical even than I was before in the respect of...that people will stop having wars, or being less jealous or greedy; it seems to go on and on. Of course one should know about what the Germans did in the world, but I think one should not always think that that was the worst that happened ever in history: you had exactly the same abominations before; whether it was from one Church or the other Church, or from...Genghis Khan, it is always the wish to have more, or to be jealous that somebody is able to do more, do better. And I cannot see that it will ever get better. I am in this respect very pessimistic. So, I mean, yes, one should know about it, because one should take it as history, and not as a personal...gentile against Jew, it was not only that, it was against the gypsies, it was against communists, it was against other nations, and whether it is the Germans against Jews or the Persians against Iraqis, it comes to the same thing really.

Was it not the first time that anybody had ever made war on a group of people because they happened to be a group of people?

I don't think so. I don't think so. If you go back and read the Bible as history, you'll find quite a lot of the same sort going on, only without the technique of what we have now in killing people. The dreadful thing is, the armaments, the new armaments and new death possibilities, poison... Science goes on and on, you can't stop it, that's what we learnt all the time. The bomb...I can't see it will ever stop, because things...if you invent an atomic bomb you have to try and use it, because you wouldn't...if you can't use it for a good purpose, you must try it out somehow. And you have the enormous riches, or the power of the arming industry. I don't see that a Gandhi, not even a Gandhi could do much about it. And I can't see any saint, saint in the word of real saint, getting humanity to stop being greedy, jealous and wish to have power over everything. But of course one should learn it as history, it is a horrible...

Isn't it a lesson for tomorrow as well?

It would be a lesson for tomorrow, but I don't know whether there is anybody who would learn of it. Because the people who would learn are old, they have gone through the misery and the fear, mainly the fear which cannot be transferred from one person to another. The life of pre-concentration camp and camp is really the strain of the nerves in fear. One gets used to it, but it is there. And this is...you never can tell anybody else, as you cannot really tell anybody else of the feelings you have when you give birth to a child: this a personal, absolutely completely personal...

Experience?

Experience. So, the people who have experienced it, they are old, they die off. And the young people who grow up, the middle aged, they know about it but they haven't experienced it, and the young people, the next generation then think well, they didn't do any good, so let's forget about it. I don't think...I don't think by learning about the Holocaust or whatever it is, that one will alter...humanity will alter their wish to power, the wish of having everything better than the other. This is what is, I find so very very depressing. But I can't see any way out of that.

From what you are saying, you could easily see something like it happening again.

Yes. Yes I could. And I think I had it the very...I knew about that the very first time - I don't know whether we talked about it - when I came back to Theresienstadt and was in quarantine, that my art friend, Mrs. Zadikow came...

About the cutting of the hair.

And the cutting of the hair. And that revolted me, gave me such a jerk, that this has...is the basis of my thoughts, that people who haven't experienced it cannot get rid of the idea of revenge. Coming over here, the people who can't accept Germans or whoever, are the people who have not been in the camp; they are much more revengeful or strict or disgusted with the Holocaust I believe than the survivors. This is what I think, I don't know whether it's true. That is my experience, my personal experience, that my family here, or in Vienna or whoever, who survived outside the Holocaust, are much more intolerant, much more horrified about the whole affair of the Holocaust than the people who were in it. I always think of Primo Levi.

But do you ever speak, or have you spoken to friends of yours, colleagues of yours, neighbours of yours, people who.....

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.....people personally, but the efforts of the committee and these squabbles of our little talks here, they were neither inspiring nor giving me any reason to think...to want to... Perhaps at that time I was too shy about talking about it with people, I don't know. The only person I really could speak about it, and who listened to me and had his own ideas was Günther Adler. And he was much more...much less tolerant than I, and much harder, but then he was a philosopher and he had another outlook, and altogether was on another wavelength than I was, I can't compare. I haven't met very many people in my life who have survived; I haven't met any here in London except in that association, and...

You never talked about your respective experiences there?

No. No, not really, not really, no, we did not. And I found these meetings not very positive.

Did you think it was necessary to talk to your children about your experiences?

I didn't really talk to them, but they heard the tapes I did for the War Museum.

That was much later, wasn't it?

That is much later.

Did they ever want you to talk?

I don't think they did. I wasn't ready to talk, because I immediately, when I came to England, felt nobody wants to know, nobody can understand it. And so this open sore one was carrying around had to first get covered with some normal life. And then of course one talked with people who were near the experience. My children were not; Dorothy more because she then went to Prague, and she was perhaps more open to it, whereas George, in Sydney, first Melbourne and then Sydney, with a completely different background there, although he mixed and lived with our former friends and neighbours of Prague. But somehow there was no real Jewish background to anybody, they were all mixed marriages by then, and the Jewish Holocaust background was not in their life. And as they couldn't feel it, or experience any fear or anything, one didn't talk about it. And my nephews neither, they would not talk about it at all.

So your children never asked you to talk about it, nor did you ever feel it necessary to talk to them?

No, as they didn't ask I did not talk. The first time I really talked was on the tapes to the War Museum, the tapes and then the television. And they heard the tapes, and I didn't see Dorothy's...but I saw George who heard it here, and he was shocked, terribly shocked, and terribly distressed, and that was a great...misery for me, when I saw that. But, obviously it had to be done once. And my cousin, who lives in Austria now, who spent the war years in America, Cuba and America, and who is my most closest friend now, she, when she heard these tapes, she was disgusted that I was, as she calls it, tolerant, that I spoke so much about the gentile friends and helps I found. And I can't quite understand that, but probably because I have a different opinion of...I don't know what, we just don't see eye to eye with that.

Did you find it, or do you find it, therapeutic to you to talk about it? Or did you find it, or do you find it?

I didn't need it. What we are doing now, you and I here...

But what you did for the War Museum?

For the War Museum it did not...it wasn't so personal, not half as personal, because I had the fixed job to talk about the art in Theresienstadt, or the return of the trains, or the administration, how things were done: that was something quite different. Whereas in these talks it is much more personal, and as I said before, I lack the feeling that I must have the relief. It's come back much more, because there are so

many things I either didn't think about again, or I didn't analyse it. Whereas now, so many years after what happened, I have...I can look back to it and find out why I thought like that.

Because I think you said at one point that, even when you were in the camps you fed yourself on memories of the past.

Yes.

This is how, in one form or another, you kept together, kept sane?

Yes. I have...that is one of the Lord's gifts; I can completely ignore what is going on around me and think back at...walking up a mountain with my father or with my husband, and re-live the mountain, the air, the beauty, the flowers, and can walk back the whole...up and down that mountain in my memory. And I used to practise that...practise is not the right word, I never knew when I did it. While I painted those stupid bookmarks in Theresienstadt, because I didn't think of what I had to do, because it was such foolish work, that I could think back of those lovely walks in the mountains. This is a great help, and not everybody has it, so I am very grateful to have that. I think this helped me to recover so quickly. I can't be bitter, I am never bitter, even if people tell me to be bitter (LAUGHS), or have reason to be bitter, but I am not. And it's easy for me, I am interested in what goes on around me, and what I see and what I hear, and that's good enough.

If you could look back over your long life and say, what could I do...if I lived through it again, what would I do differently?

What would I do differently? Force my sick husband to get out. I was not courageous enough to organise on my own something against his wish. That is really the only thing I think. And perhaps would have been nicer to little Tommy, but that was beyond my strength at the time. But I think now that, if I had known, I might have been more courageous and got out with my husband. On the other hand, I think he would have been so unhappy, to find out that his Czech employees and his Czech friends would have behaved so badly had he come back to Prague with me, alive; he would have been much more horrified than I was. There I was bitter, there I was angry, and I think he would have been not only bitter and angry he would have suffered under that, whereas I had no feeling for that.

Have your feelings towards God - I won't say religion, God - changed over the years?

I got clearer perhaps, I got clearer about what I think is God. And that's why I went to the City Lit. Institute to learn about the differences of the various religions, 'Comparative Religions' those lectures were called.

That's an intellectual...

Yes, well one has to go at it intellectually as well. That is the reason why I cannot think as a Roman Catholic, or as a Jew, or as a Buddhist, because I cannot grasp intellectually what I would have to accept. But I accept that there must be a higher spirit who, for instance, gave me these, what I call miracles in my life. I didn't do anything on purpose, it just happened to me. And I find coming into nature, going into mountains, looking at the flower, something so wonderful, that...it isn't man-made, so it is made by a higher power, and that is God for me. I cannot accept a religion, a church religion, that means also a synagogue religion.

Organised religion?

An organised religion, yes.

But having said that, can you recall any times when you've - even in your own mind - called upon God to help you?

Oh yes. Oh yes, I prayed, I prayed to my God, and asked for help. Or...oh yes, yes, and I do that here too, but now it's less so. Oh yes, I did.

And in the camps you did that?

Yes.

Did you?

Oh yes, yes yes.

You had your own relationship with your God?

I had my own relationship, yes, but I would not accept this relationship in a synagogue or in a church. Much more so in a Catholic church because you are surrounded by beautiful paintings or figures or the light, or the windows or the shape. There is creation in beauty there, and that I accept, because the people who designed that and built it, did not do it just to earn money - some of them did of course, but some not. And the more beautiful the building is or the works of art are, the more religious these people were. And I find Chagall for me, I find wonderful his things, although they are mad really, with the colours flying about in the sky and so on, but for me they make me cry; emotionally they give me all that. But that's...with Chagall it is only because the emotion of him himself; I only could understand, or...it isn't the word, understand is wrong, be on the same wave with Chagall when he painted that, after being in a Jewish concentration camp. Before that, when I was introduced to Chagall, before the War when I...with one of the brothers which I mentioned, I found it idiotic, I couldn't...I found, how on earth, what is the meaning of that and why is it...what does he do with that? When I saw Chagall in London's Tate Gallery after the War, I broke down. Now this you cannot...I cannot...this is emotion. And to my mind real art must bring in emotion as well, not only the head but also whatever emotion is. And Chagall, and the Chagall windows in...

Jerusalem.

In Jerusalem, or in Zurich, for me they are fantastic, lovely. But this is...you can't explain it.

What do they do for you?

Well I don't know, they just bring up...beauty, love and sadness, terribly sad. I now can only feel the dreadful loneliness - although it wasn't only in a Ghetto, I could not understand Ghetto...I didn't know what a Ghetto was, when I saw Chagall before the War. And now I know what Ghetto is, and I can feel Chagall's emotions when he painted that cow flying in the air, and that beautiful girl he loved; that was Ghetto. And this is what it is. But, that's got nothing to do to...that's only after my experience. And because Chagall was this marvellous, strong artist. This is...that is what I can tell you about that, I don't know what else.

I think that's wonderful. Thank you, thank you very much indeed.

End of F902, Side B

END OF INTERVIEW