

IMPORTANT

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AJR

Winston House, 2 Dollis Park

London N3 1HF

ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Surname:	Clarke
Forename:	Eva
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	29 April 1945
Interviewee POB:	Mauthausen concentration camp, Austria

Date of Interview:	29 June 2016
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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV181
NAME: Eva Clarke
DATE: 29th June 2016
LOCATION: London, UK
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

Today is the 29th of June 2016. We are conducting an interview with Mrs. Eva Clarke. My name is Bea Lewkowicz, and we are in Cambridge.

Can you please tell me your name?

My name is Eva Clarke.

And what was your maiden name?

My maiden name when I was born was Eva Nathan, and then my stepfather adopted me so I was Eva Bergman.

Thank you. And when were you born?

I was born on the 29th of April 1945.

And where were you born?

I was born in Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria.

Thank you very much. Thank you, Eva for agreeing to be interviewed for the Refugee Voices archive. Can you please tell me a little bit about your family background?

Where do I begin?

I leave it up to you.

[0:01:01]

Right, well my natural father was German, German but Jewish. He came from Hamburg and he was an architect and interior designer. And in 1933 he... realised it was advisable to get out of Germany. And he came to live in Prague, because he thought that was far enough to be safe. It wasn't. But if he hadn't have come to Prague, he wouldn't have met my mother and I wouldn't be talking to you now. So, he managed to get a job in Prague, and they - they got married on the 15th of May 1940 which was already under Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia. My mother was Czech, and she came from a small village. And at the time that she met my father she had been – although she no longer was – she had been a law student at the Charles University. But when the- when the Nazis closed the universities, she then became apprenticed to a milliner, because women always wore hats in the 1940s.

And where did she live in Prague? Do you know where?

...She lived, well she lived with that- I think she lived with that aunt who... for whom she was working. And then she lived in - in various places with my father after they were married. And she said they had a very beautiful first home which was at the top of a synagogue in Prague. And it had a lovely sort of curved window, multi-paned window. But she said it was impossible for the blackouts. So, she said, "It was very romantic; we just had candles."

And what sort of family did she – did she come from? You said that she grew up in a village.

Yes, she grew up in a village, a sort of, you know, middle class family. Her father had a small leather factory, and employed a lot of the people from that village, which was called Trebechovice pod Orebem. She was the youngest child. She had two much older sisters and a brother who was ten years older than her. There had been another little boy whom she never

knew, but he died I think of meningitis before she was born. She was the first person of her family to go to university. It was a very big, large, extended family. Usual...Very normal, happy family environment.

And languages, what languages did she speak?

She spoke- Czech was her mother tongue. She spoke fluent German. She spoke French... English. She also began to learn Russian, Italian, Spanish, but she said she never got very far with those last three. But the other ones she spoke fluently.

Yeah. And what do you know about- how did they meet, your parents? What do you know?

[0:03:45]

Right. My parents. My mother- well my father was first pointed out to my mother at the Brandhof Swimming Club in Prague. But then she actually met him in a nightclub in Prague, when Jews were still allowed to go out in the evening. And... And I think it was one of the nightclubs that he had designed, ironically, for German officers.

Because he was- his job, he was a designer-architect.

He was a designer-architect, and... you know, he- well up to '33 he thought he was a perfectly, totally, assimilated German. And – you know - even in Prague, in - metaphorically speaking, 'He spoke the same language'. He got on very well with them... you know, to- At the beginning.

Yeah. And then they met in this club...

They met in the club, and it was sort of a whirlwind romance, from what I gather. And... they decided to get married.

And did your – your mother's family stay in the- was anyone - apart from her aunt - were there any other relatives in Prague, or...?

Yes, she did have a... a pair of sisters who were first cousins, and they also lived in Prague. And they also were amongst the only people to have survived the war as well.

And your father. Did he have any other family in Prague, or was he by himself?

He- at that stage he was by himself. He had been married before. And he'd married... an American. And... she and her mother were in Prague. And they, when, you know when things were getting bad- I don't know the actual date of their divorce, but they - she went back to the States and he said he wasn't going to go. I don't have any more details.

Yeah. And so, what happened to your parents? So, they- they settled down. It was a difficult time.

[0:05:42]

Well, it was a difficult time and you know, life wasn't normal. But they lived it as normal- in as normal a way as they could, with all the restrictions, the Nuremberg Laws, et cetera. But my mother said that you know, people tended to think that was the worst it was going to get. You know, they could cope with all those rules and regulations. And certainly, she said that for young people, you know, it wasn't that bad in the beginning. And if you like I can give you an example. As you know, it was forbidden to go to cinemas. Well, my mother was a very keen cinema goer. And at one stage... she decided she was going to go to the cinema. So, she was sitting in the cinema- She didn't have the yellow star or anything. And she was sitting in the cinema when the Gestapo came in, the secret police. They came in, they stopped the film, and they started to go through the audience row by row looking at the ID papers. My mother was terrified...because she had no idea how they'd react when they got to her. Anyway, they - they got to about half way through the auditorium and they stopped, and they left the cinema. And they had stopped just one row in front of where she'd been sitting. Boy did she breathe a sigh of relief. And ever since she told me about this, I was always trying to get her to remember what the hell the film was...

Yes.

... that made her take such a risk. But it was such a frightening experience and it was a first.

She obviously blanks out that memory, and she never remembered. But what I can tell you is that when we first came to this country, when I was safely in school trying to learn English as quickly as possible, my mother used to go to the cinema [whispers for emphasis] *every day*.

Aha. She liked the cinema.

She loved it. Yes. And after the war it was wonderful. Light relief for her, you know, she just wanted to catch up with the frivolous things of life.

Yeah...yeah. What other things wasn't she- I mean all this is obviously what your mother told you - not your own memory - but what other things were they not allowed to do in Prague?

Oh, right, well...well they were only allowed to go shopping at certain times of the day, invariable the late afternoon when there would have been as little fresh produce available as possible. The- Their trams in Prague, they were only allowed to go on the outside bit, not inside, under cover. What else... particularly... Oh, yes. Well, they didn't have any animals, but you weren't allowed to keep animals any more. You had to hand over your cars and bicycles. They didn't have a car but I think my mother might have had a bicycle. They also had to hand in their radios. There were no televisions. Also, I think their telephone. They weren't allowed to have any of those things. But as I say, you know, certainly to begin with, they coped.

They managed. And do you know at all were there, I mean at that point it was probably impossible, but before, was there- Did they ever try to emigrate or leave?

[0:08:33]

Yes...sort of half-heartedly. They did apparently get... a visa or something, to enable them to go to Shanghai, as lots of refugees did. And they put it off, and they put it off, and they put it off because they didn't really want to go. And then it was too late. And my mother said they were so relieved. They were so relieved they couldn't go!

They didn't want to go.

No. But before that I think probably- well, before my mother married my father, I believe she did tell me there was a story of you know how there were some English pilots who were in Prague. And a lot of them married Czech girls just to get them out. And somebody- she didn't realise it because they weren't specific, and there was somebody I think, who did try to get her to marry him, simply for that reason. But she just thought it was such- It was so bizarre, that she didn't think about it.

Mn-hnn. And was the marriage- what did the family think to get married at that time? Was that- did the family approve of it or not?

No. [half-laughs] But... No, they didn't approve but what is somewhat ironic is, they didn't approve because... although my father was Jewish, my grandparents were very, very Czech. Right? And... they just didn't- he was German. But anyway- but also because my mother knew that they didn't approve, she only told her parents... after they got married.

Right. So, at that time they didn't like him because he was German.

He was German and also, well to be honest, also my grandmother could see through him; he was somewhat of a philanderer.

Right, but your mother was undeterred.

My mother was totally besotted. [half-laughs]

Yeah. Yeah, and where did they- would have got married in a...?

In a registry office. Yeah.

In a registry office. And when did their lives change? What happened?

[0:10:35]

Sort of the end of November, beginning of December of 1941. That's when they were sent to Terezin or Theresienstadt. And, my father- you know, when I was growing up, I asked my

mother how she was taken prisoner because I had these various images in my mind. I'd read the Diary of Anne Frank and I'd seen films and, you know, I just imagined soldiers banging on the doors, dragging people out of their beds. And she said, "No, we had a card in the post. And the card said that on a certain date, a certain time, we would have to report to a warehouse in Prague near one of the mainline railway stations." And that's what happened. My father received his first. He left. You were told you could take a small suitcase. You were advised to take warm clothing. You were also advised to take a few pots and pans, which indicated to them that they were going somewhere where they would be able to cook, they would be able to look after themselves. And they assumed that they were being sent to some sort of labour camp. And a few days later my mother received her card, and she left. And not only was she carrying her handbag and her suitcase, she was also carrying a large box, like that [indicates] cardboard box, about that deep, and it was tied together with string. And I said to her, "What on earth did you have in the box? You had enough to worry about and to carry." And she said, "Well I think I had between two or three dozen doughnuts in the box." And I said, "Why doughnuts?" And she said, "Well, your father liked doughnuts." And it was a very sensible thing to do. And she had no idea where the next meal was coming from, so she's bringing food! It just happened to be doughnuts. And I said to her, "Did they get to him?" She said, "Yes, they weren't terribly fresh anymore, but they were perfectly edible and he was pleased."

So that's how she went to Terezin, with a big box of doughnuts.

Yeah, but what I have to tell you also, sorry to interrupt, is the fact that... when she had to go to this warehouse, she had to spend three days and three nights there with hundreds of other people. And after those three days they were marched to the railway station. The route was lined with young German officers - eighteen, twenty-year-olds. And there was one young German officer who saw that she was having great problems carrying the box. And he said to her "*Es ist scheißegal, ob die Schachtel mitkommt!*" which as you know means "I couldn't give a ---- if that box goes with you or not." Implying that it wasn't going to do her much good where she was going. But she ignored him; she got on the train.

And when she arrived in Terezin was she reunited with your father or what - what happened?

[0:13:00]

Well, when, when families were first sent to Terezin, that's when they were split up. So, men from women... old people were sent to one part, young- yes, young people to another part. They were able to meet up during the day, but they weren't together. They weren't in - in the barracks together.

Yeah. And what were your mum's- how did she talk about her experiences? What were the main things she...?

Her main worry every day was trying to find food for fifteen members of her close family. That was her main worry every single day: how was she going to find enough food? And that was quite apart from the greater worries: what on earth is going to happen to them all in the future? And her job, she was fortunate enough to get a job when she arrived there. Jobs weren't paid or anything, but life was a bit easier if you had a job.

Yeah.

And her job was working for the man who had the responsibility for sharing out the food. There wasn't much food there, but what there was, they tried to share out in a fair fashion. So that was her job.

And who were the fifteen family members?

Right, they were her parents, Ida and Stanislaw Kauder, my grandparents. Her parents-in-law, Selma and Louis Nathan - Nathan. Her two older sisters, Zdena and Ruza. Ruza's little boy Peter, was eight. And various other members of the extended family. And there were at least – at least fifteen members of the family there, at more or less the same time.

Yeah... So, the question - it was hunger?

Hunger. Yeah.

And did she stay with that job throughout her time with that person?

To be honest I don't know.... I – I don't know.

What other things did she talk about?

She just said it was very difficult, it was very hard. ...Do you know, I can't remember other specific things that she told me about.

No... Did she talk about, for example, any of the cultural- because obviously the cultural....?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes absolutely. Yes, and she always says that she – she attended a dress rehearsal of Verdi's 'Requiem'. And she said that was the most moving thing she had ever heard in her life. She was very fond of classical music. She did try to learn to play the piano when she was younger. And she said that was just so moving. And also, as with the - the various plays and operas that were put on, it was, you know it was tragic. It was heart rending, because the cast or the orchestra players kept changing. Cause they kept being sent to Auschwitz.

[0:15:42]

Yeah...

So yes, that was heart rending.

Yeah... Was there anything else she remembered? Theatre, you said? Any other productions?

Yes... Oh, what is the children's opera called?

'The Kaiser of Atlantis'?

Yes – No... it's called...oh, the name has just gone; it begins with a B...

'Brundibar'?

‘Brundibar’, yes. Yes - ‘Brundibar’. Yeah, and I don’t know if it’s appropriate to say now, but after the war, one of my aunts, one of these two sisters, her name was Hana Volavkova. And she became a curator of the Jewish Museum in Prague after the war. And I’m not sure if it’s apocryphal story, or if it’s actual fact, but they said that one day in her office a suitcase arrived, and it contained the drawings and poems done by the children. And she then edited a book. We have it. I’m sure you know it: ‘Butterflies Don’t Fly Here’. [‘I Never Saw Another Butterfly’]

Yes – yes. And that was your...?

That was my aunt.

What was her name again?

Hana Volavkova. And she had been married to a... a, a well-known Czech art historian called Vojta Volavka.

Mn-hnn. But you also said, your mother, so she remembered going to - to ‘Brundibar’. She talked about that?

I’m not absolutely sure if she saw it, or if she - she knew about it. I think she knew about it, because when I asked her about it, you know, when... in recent times when people have asked me the same question. ...What she- I now remember, what she actually said, “No, I was much too busy trying to find food.”

Yeah.

And also, she said it was very, very hard to get tickets. [laughs] Very hard. And when she saw the Verdi’s ‘Requiem’ they...they actually invited some Nazi officers, because they felt they should. And at the end of the performance, they didn’t know whether they should clap or not. And when the officers started to clap, so then they clapped.

[0:17:51]

Mn-hnn. Because they watched the performance as well.

Yeah.

And did she talk at all, because obviously Terezin became this... model camp, about being filmed or being...?

Yeah, she was there. She was there during the Red Cross visit. She used to talk about, you know, being made to sit in a so-called café with a cup and saucer that had water in it. So yes, and she was always so angry, that none of the Red Cross asked anybody any questions. Didn't try to speak to any of them. Just took it all on face value. She would- She was very angry about that.

Mnn. Tell us your... your mother became pregnant in Terezin. How...?

Yes, which is a whole other story.

Yes.

Yeah, my... Yeah, mother became pregnant twice in Terezin, which was basically forbidden. Because the sexes were segregated, because to become pregnant in a concentration camp was considered by the Nazis to be a crime punishable by death. They couldn't prevent women coming into the camps pregnant, but the reason for the segregation was so that they could not become pregnant while there. But in 1943 my mother discovered that she was actually pregnant. And when I was about – I don't know - twelve or thirteen, no doubt when it would have been at its most embarrassing, well it's embarrassing at any age, I said to her, "So how come you got pregnant? You weren't [with] my father." And she replied in a very clever way, she said, "Well," she said, "under such circumstances," and it was very, very dangerous, "your father and I got together secretly as, and when, we could. And to hell with the consequences. End of story." But it was not the end of the story and it had very, very serious consequences. Because as I said, to become pregnant was considered a crime. And when the Nazis discovered that my mother and four other women were also pregnant, they made these five couples sign a document that said that when the babies were born, they would have to handed over to - be - killed. Except they didn't use the word 'killed' they used the word

euthanasia. My mother had never heard the word ‘euthanasia’; she had to go and ask somebody what it meant. In the event, the other four babies, we don’t actually know what happened to those families. We think they all perished in Auschwitz. When my brother Jiri – Jiri means George - he was born in February of 1944. He was not taken away from my parents, but he actually died of pneumonia two months later. And his death meant my life. Because had my mother arrived in Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp holding my brother in her arms, she would have been sent straight to the gas chamber. But because she arrived in Auschwitz not holding my brother, and although she was pregnant again, this time with me, nobody knew. She knew, but nobody else knew, and it didn’t show. So again, she lived to see another day.

[0:20:43]

It seems extraordinary under the circumstances just in terms of her own nutrition and her own...

Oh, yeah.

...that she managed to...

Yeah...yeah. Yeah.

... have two pregnancies. But so, do you think in - in Terezin in her first pregnancy, that- did she try to hide it and then it was discovered, or was it... was that...impossible at the time?

Well, the point is the fact that the Nazis discovered that she was pregnant, it must- It must have shown.

Yeah.

And they probably worked it out I assume, and the other four...

And how did she manage to care for - for the baby for two months?

For two months...

Yeah.

I don't know. She just did. I mean she said... she said the birth- She had all these Jewish doctors. No medication, no... nothing else, but they all had the knowledge. She never actually described the birth, but I got the impression that it wasn't that bad. Because she had the care and presumably, she was able to feed my brother. So, she didn't go into any more details about that.

Yeah. Yeah. But your father knew. As they met each other in the evening, so they...

Well, I don't know when it was but- no, at one time I – I assumed that must have been when my brother was conceived. They did actually have a sole... I think it was called a 'Mansarde', which was one of the attic rooms.

Mansarde, yes.

Mansarde, yeah. And I think they had a – a corner or a, you know, a small section to themselves at one time, but how long that lasted I don't know. And I don't know. I'm guessing; I imagine that's where my brother was conceived. I wasn't conceived there, but...

[0:22:39]

Yeah. It was a sort of protest to...the situation. But it's amazing that...

Well, I don't even know if it was a protest. It was just... young people!

Yeah...yeah.

It was, you know, escapism – the purest form of escapism, if you like.

And... so then your- Did she talk about the situation with your brother or was that something she- Was she open about it?

Oh, yes. That's one of the things why I know my mother's story so well, is she was always able to talk about it. Which I think is relatively rare, among survivors. And no, she always was and because when we came to this country, because I didn't have any uncles and aunts and cousins around the place - and grandparents. And I was always asking her about her life growing up, her - you know, her schooldays, her hobbies... and about members of the family. So... interspersed with those very ordinary family stories, she would tell me quite instinctively, in tiny snippets, of her wartime experiences, as she felt that I was able to cope with the details. And I can tell you the very first thing she did tell me.

Yes. What was that?

[0:23:47]

I came home from school one day, and... I noticed on the back of the kitchen door there was a brown suede shopping bag and it had the letters 'A N' on it. My mother's name was Anka Nathan, Nathanova at that stage, so her first married name. And so - so I said to her, "What do the letters mean?" And she sort of took a deep breath and thought, "Here we go." And she said, "Well you've heard about the war." And I indicated I had sort of because it was talked a lot about you know between my parents with their friends, in the background. And... I think I was about six or seven at the time. And she said, she said, "Well..." she took a deep breath and she said, "Well, you had two daddies. And one daddy was killed in the war, and now you have another daddy." That's all she said. And because I was always asking her questions, she said I was like a sponge. So, as I grew older, so the responses became more and more detailed. So, I'm actually very grateful, that I didn't learn all of a sudden when I was a teenager, because I think it could have come as a hell of a shock. You know, obviously I - I well appreciated, as I got older, the tragedy that had happened to our family. But it wasn't all at once.

But she managed to talk about it...

Yeah.

And you - you felt you could ask her.

Oh, yes. Yeah.

So that...

All the time...

...was extraordinary that she - she could do that.

Yeah.

And what did she, so she said you had two dads and... And then slowly, slowly she told you...?

Yeah. As I got...yes. As I asked her. And so as I said, the replies became more detailed.

You didn't feel burdened by this information?

[0:25:32]

Not at all.

No...

Not at all. I didn't feel burdened. I felt- I suppose well I do- I felt – I feel - very proud of my mother.

Yeah.

So no, I didn't. And in fact, you know, that leads me on to say that my mother had no idea at all why anybody should feel survivor guilt. She used to feel very cross about people who did. She said, "They should just be grateful they're alive."

That was her attitude.

That was her attitude.

Yeah – yeah.

She was very optimistic. She was very matter-of-fact. She was very practical. She always thought she'd survive. ...Contrary to seeing all the death around her, she always thought she'd survive.

So... when she found herself pregnant again, with you, were there - of her family – were they still in Terezin, or had people started to be deported east?

They were also- they were started to be- they had started being – being deported east. But another a nice thing that she told me, and it's only in the last few years, she said to me that when she told her mother that she was pregnant with my brother, my grandmother's reaction was, "How and where?" "And when?" [Laughs] So it shows my grandmother's sense of humour too.

Yes.

Yeah. But I'm sorry, I've forgotten what you asked.

[0:27:00]

No, no. I said, what happened to the fifteen people. Were they gradually...?

They- yes, everybody was sent to Auschwitz a long time before my parents were. Except for my one grandfather. Oh, I must tell you about him. My... My paternal grandfather, Louis Nathan. He was... German. He was- In the First World War he was in the German Army. In the First World War he was given the Iron Cross First Class, which is the highest military honour the Germans bestow upon their soldiers. And then what happens to him in the Second World War? He's thrown into a concentration camp and most of his family is killed. My grandfather was not sent east; to be 'sent east' was- meant Auschwitz. He remained in Terezin throughout the war. And we don't know why. You know some people say it was

because he got the Iron Cross. But on the other hand, you know, other people got the Iron Cross and they were sent to Auschwitz, like Otto Frank, for example. Also, he was absolutely of no use whatsoever to the Nazis, because he couldn't work, because he'd been blinded by the gas in the First World War. So, we just don't know why. But he remained in Terezin throughout the war. And at the end of the war, he was found to be alive, just about. And contact was made between him and his youngest son and his daughter-in-law, who had escaped from Holland to Switzerland...at the beginning of the war. And they came back to Holland, and my grandfather lived with them for the rest of his life. ...And now I've lost my thread again. What did you ask me?

Did you know him when you grew up?

Oh, yes. Yeah— yeah, we went to visit them quite often when I was young. And it was very sad, because I would come into the room and he couldn't see me, because he had been blinded... by the gas. And he couldn't speak to me, because he spoke German and Dutch and I only spoke Czech and English. But I'd come into the room and give him a kiss and say, "Hello grandfather." And he knew that I was the only surviving child...in the family.

Mnn. So, you were talking about deportation east, and you said he... was not.

[0:28:54]

So, he was not, yeah.

And so...

All the rest of them were. My three other grandparents, my two aunts, my cousin... Peter and you know, all the other members of the extended family who were in Terezin. They were all sent a long time before.

And according to your mother, did they realise what it meant to be deported east? Did they have any knowledge?

They had heard rumours, but the rumours were so bizarre, that they never believed them. They knew it probably wasn't going to be good news. And in- well also in that context, I have to tell you, you know, about my parents. My father was sent to Auschwitz- well my mother always used to say that, you know, they remained in Terezin for three years which was a remarkably long period of time. Very unusually long period of time.

Yeah.

And my mother said luck had an awful lot to do with it. But at the end of September of 1944 their luck ran out, because it was on that day that my father was sent to Auschwitz. And incredibly, my mother actually volunteered to follow him the very next day. And the reason she volunteered to follow him, was because she had no idea where he'd been sent. And being the eternal optimist, she thought well as they had survived three years up to that point, she thought well, nothing could get any worse. Little did she know. But she thought nothing could get any worse; they would survive. But in fact, she never, ever, saw my father again. And she heard from an eye witness – a friend – quite soon after the end of the war, that my father had actually been shot dead, on a death march, near Auschwitz on the 18th of January 1945. And as you know, Auschwitz was liberated by the Russian Army on the 27th of January.

She had hoped that he would be alive.

Well, yeah, I mean she didn't know any of that. That's the next part of the story, because she wasn't there anymore. Because she was sent out.

Yeah... yeah...

But all my- all the rest of the family who perished in Auschwitz... there is something else that I need to tell you about, and that is the postcard.

Yeah...

[0:30:56]

Yeah? When all the rest of the family were sent there, they- you know, none of those initial procedures that happened to most people when they arrived after those dreadful journeys in the cattle trucks. You know, they were stripped, they were shaved, all of that. Well, that didn't happen to this particular transport. And they...so... This particular transport, those people on it, they could keep their luggage. They weren't shaved, they weren't tattooed. They could keep their clothing. And they were sent to what was called a *Familienlager* which meant a 'family camp'. And all it meant was that one or two of those huts in Auschwitz-Birkenau, had families together. And there was just one very cynical reason why, and that was so that they could be forced to write postcards home. And my aunt, my mother's older sister Zdena, she wrote a postcard to her cousin Olga in Prague, who still happened to be in Prague. And... I have that postcard, and you may want to take a photograph of it.

Yes, we absolutely will.

Because the postcard- the postcards had to be written in German so the Germans could censor them. And it was basically propaganda, because the text of it, it says basically... well, you can see that as well. It basically says, you know, 'Having a wonderful time. Wish you were here', sort of. And my aunt was desperate to get a message out in code. And she got the message out, and it was understood, and it was acted upon. In the address, my- the lady to whom it was sent, she was called Olga Sronkova - Pani Olga Sronkova. And my aunt Zdena, instead of the word 'Olga' she replaced with the word '*Lechem*', which is Hebrew for 'bread'. And my aunt was telling her cousin that they were starving. Her cousin understood. Her cousin sent a parcel. But the contents of it would have been stolen long before it got anywhere near them. And I'm afraid I have to tell you, that even before the postcard was sent from Auschwitz to Prague, they were all dead. All of them.

Did you manage to find out when the- when they died or...?

Well, I think we only have- because on the whole, we only have the...the transport dates.

Right.

I think those the- again, I must check some dates for you, but I think we only have the transport dates.

But the postcard survived?

Yeah! I've got it...

Yeah...

I've got it. And my mother actually- when my aunt Olga after the war, gave it to my mother, my mother couldn't believe that my- that her sister even knew the word '*Lechem*' because we don't come from a religious family, and they didn't know Hebrew. But I suppose it's amazing what you can dredge up from the subconscious, if you have to.

Yeah... So, what happened to your mother once she... had to leave Terezin?

[0:33:50]

Right. So, she volunteers to go to Auschwitz. She survives those horrendous train journeys in the cattle wagons. She arrived in Auschwitz. She had to go- as everybody, she had to go through a selection. She got through the selection despite the fact - you know, because she was considered to be strong enough for work- because, despite the fact that she'd been somewhat malnourished during the previous three years. And... one of the reasons that she got through the selection was because... And was shown to be strong enough for work, was because... physically she was very strong. Because when she was about fourteen, she was schools Junior Backstroke Swimming Champion of Czechoslovakia. That shows you her physical strength. And she always maintained that if this whole experience had to happen to her, she was at the right age, not only physically, but psychologically and emotionally. She was in her mid-twenties; she was tough, she was strong. So, she gets through a selection. And you know that's- that's when they first go into a – a shower, but they had no idea that anything other than a real shower existed, i. e. gas chamber. They had their hair shaved, and they were given that sort of striped uniform and a pair of shoes. They were lucky. And then they were sent to- into the- the huts. And... when my mother and the group of women that she was with, when they arrived in one of those huts, they – they were so bewildered, and they just- and were so frightened. They just couldn't work out what this place was. And they said to the women there, "What happens here? What goes on here? When will we see our families

again?” The women actually laughed at them. Because... they just couldn't understand that anybody arriving in Auschwitz would have no idea what went on there. In fact, my mother and her friends thought that the women were hysterical, that that's why they were laughing. But the real reason was they just couldn't work it out... that nobody would know. And anyway, the women said, you know, “Well, we'll all go up in smoke and you'll never see your families again.” And in that instant, they realised what went on there. ...My mother was in Auschwitz for ten days, which she said, although it was a short space of time, she said it was sheer hell on earth. It was like Dante's 'Inferno'. And she said during the 'Appels' that happened at least twice daily... 'Appels' means registration and that's when people had to stand outside their huts to be counted. And if the numbers didn't tally... you know, they would just have to stand there until they did, or until there was some sort of explanation. And my mother said it was very, very hard to stand stock still for hours and hours on end, regardless of weather. And she - she fainted several times during these *Appels*. And that could have been very bad news for her. But she was always so relieved to find that when she came round, to find that she was actually being held up, by her friends on either side. Which meant that she hadn't slipped to the ground, she hadn't drawn attention to herself. And again, she lived to see another day.

So, when she arrived...

Yeah.

She was pregnant. How many weeks pregnant?

[0:36:46]

Two months.

Right, so again, that was lucky.

Yeah, it didn't show. It didn't show. And... you know, in the, in the book 'Born Survivors' which we'll talk about later, all three mothers were asked the same question by Mengele. And that was... Oh, I have just forgotten the words now in German- what's to be pregnant?

Sind Sie mit Kind?

No... no...

Schwanger?

Schwanger. Mengele said to all three of them, “*Sind Sie- sind Sie...?*” No, “*Bist du schwanger, fescche Frau?*” And he said that to all three women. And all three of them, including my mother, denied it. And they didn’t know what was going to be the right answer, ‘cause they had no idea... what he was going to do... one way or the other. But they fortunately chose the right response, and so they were sent out of Auschwitz.

But... do you think every woman was asked that? Or why did they... Was there any indication that your mother was pregnant?

No, I don’t think so. I don’t think so. And... I don’t know why he asked the question of these three. And I actually- that is one thing I never knew, that my mother had been asked. But Wendy Holden the author, she found it in the Shoah Foundation testimony of my mother. I was stunned because, you know, I thought my mother had told me everything. But yeah, but that’s what he said to those three. But what my mother does remember, at one of the selections what happened, when he was presiding, was that ...she heard him say, “*Dieses Mal sehr gutes Material.*” Which means, “This time we have very good material”. Not people - units of slave labour. And it was after that, that she was sent out of Auschwitz.

And tell us a little bit, what you know- when did she actually find out that she was pregnant with you? Because I assume many women didn’t have their periods, you know, so how would you find out?

Yeah, but she must have regained her periods. Because lots of women lost their periods when they were first sent into... Terezin, so lots of women at that stage, thought that they were pregnant... I just don’t know. She never talked about that.

That’s what I mean: did she know? Did she know when she arrived...?

Oh, she knew she was pregnant. She knew she was pregnant. Yeah. She knew...

Which again, is extraordinary in itself. Because you would think that that wouldn't have been that clear either...At that point.

[0:39:14]

Yeah...Yeah. No, she knew. ...But she said, luck...luck. She always said "Luck".

Luck was the...

Luck was the main thing.

Everyone needed luck.

Everyone needed luck and... Almost all the incidents that happened were as a result of luck, she said.

So her ten days in Auschwitz...

Was hell. And then at the end of the ten days, when she was, you know, chosen to go out of Auschwitz with this – with this whole group of young women who were, you know, all strong enough for work- but they really didn't know what was happening, and she said that was terrifying because at some point they were – they were sent to another... building. And... And it had all barbed wire on the- and it just looked terrifying. And they thought, "This is it... This is our end." But then, what they couldn't understand... they were given some new rags to wear. And they were given a piece of bread. And they really couldn't understand that at all. And then the next thing they knew, after having being in that building, they were then put on a train... and they left Auschwitz. And they just couldn't believe it. And they were sent to... Freiberg in Saxony, which is relatively close to Dresden, in Germany, where they were sent to work in an armaments factory. And... And they were there- my mother was there for six months. She didn't know that she was going to be there for six months, but she was, from October of 1944 to the end of March- the beginning of April, 1945. And the end of war in Europe was the 8th of May.

Yeah...

And when the women arrived in this factory, the very first impression they had was one of bedbugs. It was crawling: on the floor, on the walls, on the ceiling. And they were delighted, because it indicated that there was warmth there, and there was food there. They didn't actually have to eat the bugs, but almost. And they very quickly ascertained that there were no gas chambers there. And while they were there, this factory- my mother always thought that she was working on the V1, the unmanned flying bomb. Here it was named the 'the doodlebug'. She wasn't. She was actually working on...what was called the- I think it was called the 'Arado' plane, which ...has since been thought - Wendy actually found the information - that had that plane been developed, the Allies might not have won the war. So, she was in Freiberg for six months, and... that was hell, because she was becoming more and more starved, and more and more obviously pregnant. And every day they had to walk through the streets of Freiberg... with... you know, people reacting dreadfully to them. And they were almost on starvation rations. And they were getting thinner and thinner... She said it was awful; it really was awful.

[0:42:20]

But the conditions must have still been better than Auschwitz.

It was- yeah, ev- everything being relative, it was still better than Auschwitz, but it was dreadful. And... And during the six months that she was in Freiberg, that is when the Allied bombing raid to Dresden happened. And I- in the talks I do in schools I always talk about the Dresden raids. Particularly because- well, for two reasons. The first is that when the raids started, all the prisoners were delighted, because even though they knew the next bomb could fall on them and kill a lot of them, nevertheless they knew it was the Allies. And they hoped and prayed it wouldn't be too much longer before they were rescued.

Yeah...

And this factory which still stands, it's a four-storey factory, it was on a hill... and it was under the flight-path to Dresden. And the – the second reason why I always talk about it, is

because my father-in-law, Kenneth Clark, he was - came from Wales. And he was in the RAF, and he was in Bomber Command, and he was on the Dresden Raids. He was a navigator. And after the war, when he first met my mother – well a long time after the war. When my husband and I became engaged, and the two families got together. And when he heard my mother tell what had happened to her, he was absolutely devastated. He was in tears, because he realised full well, he could have killed her, which he could have done. And I show his log book, and I show a page from his log book that reads, “On the 13th of the 2nd ’45,” 13th of February ‘45. “17:40 hours.” Twenty to six in the evening. “Lancaster.” That was the airplane, and on the right-hand side it says, “Dresden.” So, he really could have done. But he didn’t. As she said to him, “But Kenneth, you didn’t!”

Yes, and your mother probably, as many survivors, didn’t see it as a bad thing, that...

No! That’s right! That’s right! Absolutely! They thought, “It doesn’t matter if they kill us...” You know. It stops the whole thing happening.

Eva, just to take you back a little bit...

Yes, sorry.

When your mother arrived in Auschwitz, did she meet other... Who were the other prisoners? Did she meet the Hung- because at that time Hungarians came. Or did she meet any... Greek survivors, or any other- who were the other inmates? Or did she talk about other inmates at all?

No, she didn’t. I think she was mainly with Czechs.

Was she with people she knew from Terezin or...?

Well, she was- she was with a very small group of about six women who were all in Terezin together. And they- and because they were all of a similar age, that’s why they were all sent out of Auschwitz, because they were capable of work.

[0:44:54]

Also, together?

Together. And... So, she was part of that - of the much larger group. And... And all six of them survived as well.

What were their names? Do you remember?

Oh. I've got them written down. I know- wait a minute. Mitzka was one... Oh, I can see the other ones in front of me.

Don't worry...

I have them written down, but I can't remember. And they, they – you know, they were spread out all over the world afterwards.

And did they keep in touch?

They kept in very close touch; they were almost closer than members of the family. Especially as most of their families had been killed.

Yeah... So, she...

Lisa – Lisa was one of the other ones. She went to live in Caracas.

Mn-hnn. So, they were together there and then were...were sent out. But of course, they didn't know where they were going.

No, no. They had no idea. They had no idea.

So, she became a forced- She was a forced labourer?

Yes. Yes.

And where- so where did they actually- did they stay in a camp? You said they had to march to the factory, so where...?

Yes, well, when they first arrived in Freiberg, they actually were in the factory all the time. But then some... barracks were made – either built, or made available. I think they were built and my mother said it was- it was awful, because it was un- they were built of unseasoned wood, and so they were just dripping all the time. And, and it was from there they had to walk, you know... five in the morning. And somebody – my mother never said it but somebody else - said, I think it might have been Hana's mother who said, and the- the townspeople objected, because they made so much noise walking through the streets because they had wooden shoes. ...Clogs.

So, speaking of townspeople, was there any contact to the local population...?

Only as they walked to and fro... And it was invariably bad. I mean, perhaps it wasn't bad for everybody...

In the factory, or...? No help of any sort?

[0:46:55]

Not as far as my mother experienced. I'm not saying it never happened, but not as far as my mother... Yeah... I mean the only- the only thing that did sort of help her was... when it was discovered that she was pregnant, and that was very dangerous in Freiberg, because they might have just killed her, or they - more likely they would have sent her back to Auschwitz. But, by the time they discovered she was pregnant, Auschwitz had been liberated. Because we do know of other cases where pregnant women were sent back to Auschwitz. And- especially one woman, had the most horrendous treatment from Mengele because... he realised she'd got away with it. So... The details are appalling. ...But anyway, as I say, they only discovered my mother was pregnant after the liberation of Auschwitz so they couldn't send her back.

When was that?

Well, the liberation of Auschwitz...

No, when- When did they discover that...?

Oh. I don't know. I don't know. But it has to be after the 27th of January.

Yeah.

And then they sort of put her on – on the lighter duties. Because up until that time, she'd been riveting. She was no engineer, and it was very hard work... and very heavy labour. And they put her on so-called lighter duties. And she was made to sweep all the floors in the factory, every day. Up and down the stairs, every day. And she always said to me afterwards, or when I was pregnant, she said, "It's the best exercise, if you're pregnant. Best exercise." You know, she would start at the top and work down and... every day.

So, she managed to conceal it for quite a long time that she was pregnant...? Or did she? Did she try to conceal it?

I don't know because they were wearing just loose stuff.

That's right, so...?

So, I don't actually know when and how they did discover it. All I know is that her duties were changed.

Which is interesting as well.

[0:48:48]

Yeah! It is! Yeah, it is... So perhaps that was... some sort of help.

And then they stayed, you said, for six months?

For six months. And at the end of March beginning of April, '45, this is when the Germans realising they were losing the war. This is when they began to evacuate the camps, because they were trying to...you know... They were trying conceal what had actually been going on in the camps. So, they were trying to... march further east, all those people who were still alive. And that's when the death marches happened. My mother wasn't on a death march, but she was put on yet another train. And this time it wasn't a – a cattle truck; this time it was a coal truck. It was open to the skies, and it was filthy! And she was on the train – I show a photograph of a similar train – she was on the train like this for seventeen days, without any food... and hardly any water. And after the war when similar trains were discovered and opened up, they were discovered to just have piles of corpses in them. And during this seventeen-day nightmare of a journey, the train was indeed stopped. My mother thought, in the middle of the countryside - where she was it the middle of the countryside – but by this stage there were 2,000 women on this train... from various camps. And the middle part of the train actually stopped in this very small village in Czechoslovakia which is called Horni Briza. And this I've only found out since I've met Hana [Berger Moran] and Wendy [Holden] who's written the book.

Yeah...

Because as I say, my mother thought it had stopped in the middle of the countryside. And the doors opened, and dead bodies thrown out. And a farmer walked by. And he saw my mother. And he had such a shock. She always said she could never forget the expression on his face. She described herself as looking like a scarcely living pregnant skeleton. She weighed five stone, thirty-five kilograms. And she was nine months pregnant. And this farmer brought her a glass of milk. But there was a Nazi officer standing near her. And he had a whip, and he raised his whip to shoulder height. He raised it as if to beat her if she accepted the glass of milk. But he didn't; he lowered his arm and he let her have the glass of milk. She maintained that saved her life. Who knows, perhaps it did. And the train went on. ...The part of the train that stopped... in the actual village, that's a whole other story. And some people were helped and some people were... given food by the local townspeople, which was a great risk to the local people. The - the stationmaster – a Mr. Antonin Pavlicek – we're trying to get him nominated to be a Righteous Gentile. But as I say, that's all in the book. That's a whole other story.

Yes, because they tried to help.

[0:51:33]

They helped. They, they managed to have bread baked overnight. They brought it to the train. And the... the Germans said, "Give it to us; we'll give it to them." And they didn't believe it. They said, "No, we will give it to the prisoners." They baked a thousand bread rolls or something and they even put notes inside the rolls saying, "Hang on! Hang on! It's almost at the end." And because Hana had already been born by that stage - Hana was born in Freiberg... on the floor – she was two days old when they had to get on the train. And... because somebody heard a baby crying. So, the local doctor's wife was also pregnant, and she gave her whole baby layette, to be given to Hana, so Hana had some baby clothes.

This is one of your fellow-...

Babies, yes.

... babies, who were born.

Can I just quickly put that- insert that in?

Yes, go on.

This book called '*Born Survivors*' by Wendy Holden tells the story of three young mothers, all of whom arrived in Auschwitz pregnant. All of whom were in the Freiberg slave labour camp for six months. All of whom were on that horrendous train journey for seventeen days. All of whom gave birth in the most dire of circumstances in April of 1945. And all six of us survived.

And so, all the babies are more or less the same age.

Yeah, well Hana was born on the 12th of April. Mark was born on the train, on the 20th. At least they think it was the 20th. That's another story because it was Hitler's birthday. And I was born at the gates of Mauthausen on the 29th.

Which is extraordinary. And this is where your story really ...starts.

Yeah, well it begins, yes.

That's where you...

Yes. Well, I always maintain that apart from the other two babies, I had the easiest ride because I was in my mother for the longest period.

Yes.

Anyway...

You were the youngest of the three.

[0:53:33]

Yes. And anyway, so the train, after seventeen days arrives in Mauthausen which is a beautiful village on the banks of the Danube in Austria, near Linz. The concentration camp was up a very steep hill behind the village. And when my mother arrived in...in Mauthausen she had such a shock, because- as opposed to when she'd arrived in Auschwitz, not knowing what that was. This time she knew. Because she had heard about this appalling place very early on in the war. And she said that the shock of seeing the name, she always thought probably provoked the onset of her labour. And she started to give birth to me on that coal wagon. She had to climb off the coal wagon unaided. She had to climb on to a cart, because the prisoners who were not strong enough to walk up the hill to the camp, they had to get on to a cart and it was pulled up by others. She had people lying all over her. People with typhus and typhoid fever. And she proceeded to give birth to me. And there was another Nazi officer who saw that she was in the throes of child labour. And he said to her, "*Du kannst weiter schreien.*" Which as you know, means, "You can carry on screaming", cause presumably she had been. And she always said that she was screaming not only because she was giving birth, but because she thought this was her very last minute on this earth. She thought she was about to die. ...But we both survived the experience. I was born. I didn't move. I didn't

breathe. Incredibly the Germans allowed a doctor to come to my mother. A doctor who was also a prisoner. And after a few days my mother actually found out that this doctor was the Head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Belgrade. So, he didn't have any medication, he didn't have any equipment, but he had the knowledge; he knew what to do. And so, he cut the umbilical cord, and he slapped me to make me cry, to make me breathe. And there are two reasons why we survived, and the first is a very chilling reason. On the 28th of April 1945, the Germans had run out of gas for the gas chambers. My birthday was the 29th. So presumably, had my mother arrived on the 26th or the 27th again, I wouldn't be talking to you now. And the second reason why we survived was because about four or five days after my birth, the American Army liberated the camp. My mother reckoned she wouldn't have lasted much longer. The Americans came. They had food and they had medicine but, as I'm sure you know, it's very dangerous to give starving people food. But because my mother spoke fluent English she tried to tell as many people as possible, who didn't, what the Americans were saying. And they were saying to eat very, very slowly and very small amounts. But you can imagine can't you, if you've been starved for months or years, and suddenly you're handed an American chocolate Hershey bar, well, you know, you scoffed the lot. And an awful lot of people at that stage collapsed and died. But one hopes that perhaps they realised that they were actually free. They think I weighed three pounds at birth. A three-pound baby nowadays is put into an incubator. There were no incubators. Or perhaps I had the best incubator; my mother just held me all the time. Incredibly, my mother was also able to feed me. It was very thin, but there was some liquid there. And she was able to feed me. But what is even more surprising, and, you know, she weighed five stone- what is even more surprising is that three weeks later when we came back to Prague, and when she was safe, the milk just dried up. She couldn't feed me anymore.

[0:57:02]

But in those circumstances, she could.

Mnn.

So, it's extraordinary. So, you were really- You were born not even in Mauthausen. Just at that, before your mother got...

At the gate.

At the gate.

At the gates, yeah. Yeah, because the cart had gone up the hill. Yeah, at the gate.

And then- did she know about those five days before the Americans came...what happened in that time?

Well, we- We don't know much about those five days. I mean the others, or Hana certainly knows more what happened. No, and that was with the Americans. No, we don't know. All - what my mother said that when the cart got up to the gates of Mauthausen, they actually had to get off that cart and they had to get on to another one. Because they never, or this particular cart load, never actually went through the gates of Mauthausen. They then were taken down a steep hill... to what was called the 'revere'. Well, in normal language, the revere means a hospital doesn't it? ...It was some sort of place, a wooden hut, where people... I don't- They weren't- You can't say they were actually looked after, but that's where she was sent. And then she thought it was the height of luxury. She was actually allowed to be on a bunk, that had clean straw... and on her own. And also, then... before the Germans sort of ran away from Mauthausen, somebody... after a couple of days or so, yes it must have been after a couple of days, somebody offered to wash me, because I hadn't been washed. And so, they took me away... and washed me. Oh, yes, that's what I hadn't mentioned. My mother thought I was a boy. I was born at six in the evening – six in the evening or eight in the evening? - perhaps eight in the evening. It was dark, and there wasn't much light. And she was told I was a boy. And she had- You know, then in later life she discovered from the medics that, you know, apparently in such circumstances when- with very undernourished babies, the genitals can appear very pronounced. And they thought I was a boy. Anyway... Or that doctor did. Anyway, this woman, this German who washed me, she brought me back. And my name originally was Martin. And she brought me back, and she said to my mother, "Here's your baby girl." And my mother almost had hysterics, or did have hysterics 'cause she thought she'd got the wrong baby or something. But it was. And then she called me Eva. And the reasons she called me Eva were, were twofold. It was an international name, and she had no idea where we were going to end up. But more immediately she thought ...it was a name that you cannot shorten. But what she had forgotten, was the fact that certainly in

Czech, to make a diminutive you lengthen the name. So, my Czech family called me 'Evička'. So anyway, that's the origin of my name.

[1:00:03]

So, your first name was Martin?

Martin, yes. Martin. ...I can assure you I'm quite normal. I have two children. Quite normal.

[both laugh]

Of course, and they- so they took you away, and brought you -

And I was wrapped in paper! I mean to begin with, I was just wrapped in paper!

Yeah, what were the clothes?

There weren't any. There weren't any; I was wrapped in paper.

It's extraordinary that... both you survived, and that your mother survived.

Yeah, absolutely!

She must have been very strong.

Yeah, despite her...the lack of weight. But she must have been basically very strong. And they do always say that a... a foetus, a baby, will take everything from the mother. Because also what is remarkable, is that I'm in all senses normal, mentally and - I'm not mentally disabled, and I'm not physically disabled, which you might have expected.

Yeah... yeah. But once the Americans came, they then... took care of both of you...

Oh yes, well, the other thing that I wanted to say...

Yeah...

Before the Germans left, the also- either they were getting frightened, or they were being kind. Two points of view. They could have almost killed my mother then, because they brought her... a bowl of the greasiest noodles. And that gave her instant diarrhoea. And that could have killed her. So that's just another aspect.

Yeah... But by the time you got to Mauthausen, as you said, there were gas chambers.

Oh, yeah, there was a gas chamber.

And many people had died.

Oh, yeah. Thousands and thousands.

And this was, as far as I know, the only concentration camp in the west - not in the east –

Yeah...

In Austria, which had...

A gas chamber.

...gas chambers.

[1:01:45]

Just one, I think.

Yeah...

And one was enough.

And she must have- but probably she didn't see it at that point. Probably the first people started leaving - I don't know... the Germans.

Well, after the- Well, after I was born and after, you know, I was washed – ‘cause that was by a German. And after she was given the noodles, because that was also by a German, at some point during those... four or five days, they ran away.

And did she, did your mother remember the liberation? Did she remember the soldiers coming in?

Oh, yes! Oh, yes...

So, tell us about that. Who liberated...who liberated...?

Well, the Americans liberated... Mauthausen. And, you know, my mother mainly talked about the fact, yes, they brought food, and they brought medicines. And the fact that hundreds of photographs were taken of us, but... I’ve never found one. And it’s only Wendy Holden who found the one now. But... that’s what she mainly talked about, and having that bunk to herself with the clean straw.

And how long did she stay then, in...?

In Mauthausen, three weeks.

Three weeks.

And at the end of three weeks, the Americans asked her if she wanted to be- ‘cause presumably she was strong enough to travel. And the Americans asked whether she wanted to be repatriated to Prague, and she did. And so, we were put on yet another train. By this time, I had masses of baby clothes, because they got them from the villagers. ...Or they took them from the villagers. And we were put on yet another train, an ordinary train this time. We arrived back at Prague and it was at night, and it was dark. And my mother said that was the worst moment of her three-and-a-half years’ incarceration. Because up to that moment she never allowed herself to think as to what had happened to all the rest of the family. But arriving at your home station, you know, you wonder if there will be anyone there to meet you. And of course, there wasn’t.

[1:03:39]

Where did she go?

Oh, well there were- the people who came on this train, they were put up in a hotel overnight. And then the next day my mother asked the hall porter to give us some money to go on the tram. And lots of people wanted to give her money. She said, “No I just wanted money to go on the tram.” And... because she had... She thought her cousin might have survived. If there was any other member of the family who might have survived, she thought it might be her cousin, the lady who received the postcard, my aunt Olga. And indeed, she had, and her sister Hana, because... they... They were in Terezin, in quotes, “only for the last six months of the war”. And the reason for that was just because German bureaucracy had not got to them, because they were both married to non-Jews.

So, they were protected in some...

Yeah - in that way. And... anyway. So, for the last six months of the war, they were in Terezin. And they had come back from Terezin a few days before my mother and I had come back from Mauthausen. And my aunt Olga, certainly, had even heard on the grapevine that my mother had survived and that she had a baby. So, my mother gets on the tram... and we arrived at my aunt’s flat. And it was only few years ago I said to my mother, “What if she hadn’t been there?” And my mother said, “I never entertained that idea.” She was going to be there. So, we arrived at my aunt’s flat. And... as I’m sure you know, it’s a very traditional sign of welcome to put salt and bread. That was the... [becomes emotional]

We’re waiting for you... the salt and bread... the prepared...

I get emotional...[pause] [Whispers] It’s always the happy things...

Yeah... After all this... it’s a normal thing... a symbol.

And... my mother said to my aunt, the first words she said to my aunt- She was very practical and she said, "We haven't got any lice." Well, we were riddled with lice, and we had scabies, but she didn't think we had.

Yeah...

And the second thing she said was, "Please could we stay for a few days with her?" [becomes emotional]

And we stayed for three years. [pause]

And that was fantastic, because we had our own family support group. It was a tiny family because we were almost the only survivors... from what had been a very large family.

[1:06:13]

So, who was- who was there?

My aunt.

Yeah...

Her non-Jewish husband. Cause the reason- did I say that? The reason why they were only in Terezin for the last six months, was that they were both married to non-Jews. Both these sisters. But- and this is a very little-known fact. Both of these husbands...

Yeah...

... were sent to a specific camp in Czechoslovakia for the non-Jewish spouses.

What was it called, do you know?

...Bystrica...Very few people know about it.

Bystrica?

Yeah.

In Slovakia? Banska-Bystrice...?

I don't know. I don't know. So... what was I saying? Oh yes, we stayed for three years, and that was fantastic. And because my mother had been given closure quite soon after the end of the war, when she was told of the death of my father. So, three years later... [upset] can we stop?

We're continuing our interview, and... let's go back to your- your and your mother's arrival back in Prague.

In Prague... Right.

[1:07:27]

And the two of you were greeted...

So, you want me to go back to the hotel, or after that, when we get to my aunt's flat?

Yes.

Yep, OK. ...So, my mother asked for some money to get on to the tram. We arrived at my aunt's flat. And... my aunt had heard that my mother survived, and that she had a baby, incredibly. And my mother was a very practical woman. And she said the first words she said to my aunt were, "We haven't got any lice." Well, we were riddled with lice and we had scabies, which I think we had. And also, she was very moved by the fact that outside the front door were the traditional signs of welcome: bread and salt. And the second words she said, my mother, were, "Please could we stay for a few days to recover." And we actually stayed for three years. And that was fantastic, because we had our own family support group. Because we were almost the only survivors from what had been a very large... family. And because my mother was given closure quite soon after the end of the war, when she was told

of the death of my father, so three years later she was able to consider a new life and a new marriage. And that's when my stepfather came into the story. My stepfather, Karel Bergman, he was also Czech and also Jewish. But like my uncle Tom he had left; he'd escaped in '39. He got to the UK. He joined the RAF. He was too old to be trained as a pilot, but because he spoke languages, he was made an official interpreter. And after the war he came back to Prague to pick up the pieces of his family most of whom had also been killed in Auschwitz. And he met my mother, whom he had known as a family friend before the war. And they decided to get married, and they also decided to leave because this was now 1948, and that was when the Communists took over. And they did not want to live under a communist regime. They did actually get married on the 20th of February, which I think was the day of the Communist putsch.

In 1948?

Yeah. And so, in I think it was September, October of that year, we left Czechoslovakia and we were headed for Canada where a lot of refugees - Czech refugees – went after the war. But because my father heard about the possibility of a job in south Wales, so and as we were coming through London, so we stayed. And as a result, I grew up in Cardiff, not in Montreal.

Before we come to Cardiff, and the UK, let's go back just a little bit. How... I don't know whether your- What are your first memories, and whether you have memories of Prague? But how, before that, how was your mother? What was her feeling coming back and...?

Well, she...

[1:10:13]

Re-establishing her life?

Yeah. Well, she always said that it was- it was fantastic that she had me. Because I gave her a reason for living, especially when she had found out what had happened to all the rest of the family. And she said, "You know, I just had to get on with life. You had to be clothed, you had to be fed." And she- but she did appreciate having... my aunt, and being able to live with her and her family. ...And... She just got on with things.

And she was quite resourceful. How- how did she financially manage, for example?

Well, I think... there was... Some sort of government help was given. I can't- I can't remember... precisely. Also, she did go back to Trebechovice, where her family came from. And, you know, the factory had been taken over by the Germans. Then the factory was taken over by the Communists. And she was allocated, grudgingly, a room in her own house – in what had been her sister's house. One room, without a bathroom. And she was treated very badly, actually. Not by everybody, but by a lot of people. And it was, you know, you never know who was going to react in which way. And at some point... my aunt in Prague sent my stepfather to... go and visit her in Prague- in Trebechovice. And he said, you know, "You can't stay here. You're coming back to Prague." So, she did.

So, she did stay in Prague and then went to Trebechovice?

Yeah, but not for very long. And then she came back.

So, she thought she could settle there?

Yeah, but... it wasn't viable.

What about her own possessions? What happened to her- did she manage to retrieve anything?

Yes, ...she- well, first of all... what was interesting was that when she was in Trebechovice... people started to bring her things. She had no idea, that her mother or her sisters had given anything to anybody. But people started to bring her things, and so we have got, which I still have, we've got two rings... and... some china... that were given back. But, you know, to counteract that, when my mother apparently was pushing me in a pram around Trebechovice, somebody said to her, "That baby - German's isn't it?" You know, so- people can be nice and they can be horrible.

Mnn.

So, we came back to Prague and... As far as my mother's possessions that she had had in Prague, which weren't actually that many, 'cause it was wartime that she was living with my father. But- The one thing she had thought she'd given for safekeeping to her cleaning lady... were her family photographs. And after the war, this same lady found my mother quite quickly. And my mother thought it was because she basically had a guilty conscience about having taken the... green silk curtains. My mother said, "I couldn't care less about the curtains, but where are my photographs?" And it was at that point that my mother almost committed murder, because the woman said to her, "I destroyed them; they could have incriminated me." They couldn't have incriminated her in any way, shape or form. They were ordinary family photographs. But my mother was very resourceful, and she went back to the photographic studio... where the wedding photographs had been taken. And although that man had also been sent to a camp, it was still a photographic studio. And she managed to find ...her wedding photographs... which is quite stunning, not least, when you see the photograph!

[1:14:04]

So, the negative – that was the negative - survived in the shop?

Yeah.

And what was the- what- did she talk about the atmosphere among the other survivors?

Because, I guess, in those years after the war...

Well, she, you know, she did meet up with people. But she didn't actually talk that much about- she was mainly talking about looking after me, and...and being with the few members of the family who had survived. You ask about my- I do have one memory of Prague - only one. And I know it is a memory as opposed to a story told about me, because it's very difficult to differentiate...childhood memories 'cause you don't know if they're just stories that have been told about you. Anyway. I used to, when we lived in Prague, at one time I had a nightmare. And the nightmare was of a whale... gobbling me up. Well, like... a lot of continental Jews, on Christmas Eve, my aunt would go and buy fish for Christmas Eve. Carp. From the fish market. And she would bring it home, live. Where do you put a live fish?

In the bathtub.

How big is a three-year-old child? The height of the bathtub, hence the nightmare. That is my only actual memory.

From Prague.

Yeah.

Yeah... And you were... well, you were very little you were.

I was three.

Yeah. And... did your aunt stay in - in Prague? Did she stay?

Yes, both my aunt and her sister, who had been married to non-Jews. And those men were sent away as well, to a camp for non-Jewish spouses. But they all came back and they all remained in Prague.

And in the post-war situation, regarding communism. What were- were they political in – not involved – but what were their...political leanings, let's say?

[1:16:20]

Well, very anti. But they couldn't do anything about it you know, they just had to live with it. I did- had one cousin who did become quite a strong Communist, and remained so until 1968, when he changed his mind. ...My mother used to go back regularly... once people were allowed to go back, which was 1960. She went. And because we left legally, so- but that's one of the things I stress in schools. Yes, we left legally, but we might have left, or we might have arrived here, as refugees, or as asylum-seekers. And now I say, 'or as migrants'. So, she would go back twice a year, at least. My stepfather never went- Well he did start to go back right towards the end of his life. Because... Because he'd been in the RAF, he was considered by the Communists to be a traitor. So, in the early years, he couldn't risk going back 'cause he could have been imprisoned.

And was his intention when he came back to Prague to... to go back? Or, was it intention...?

What- when he originally went back?

Yes. In '45, yes.

In forty[five]- I think possibly it would have been to stay...you know, before the communist...

Yeah...

'Cause he didn't know that was going to happen. I imagine it was to stay! But I don't know 'cause I don't actually ever think I asked him that.

Yeah. Yeah... And then, so your parents made the decision to leave. ...Yes, and take...do you have any memories at all from that journey coming to Britain?

Mine? No.

Yes.

No. My mother – my, my father was quite worried that... my mother would be very upset when they crossed the border... from Czechoslovakia into Germany, because they thought that that was it forever. But he said - you mustn't take this the wrong way - but she, she was so buoyed up, by... seeing all the destruction in Germany, that got her through the – on the train – covered whole way. And then we actually stayed with relatives of my... father in Holland. We stayed there for about three weeks. And then we came from... the Hoek of Holland to Harwich. My father was already here. And, obviously I don't remember it, but my mum said the journey was dreadful because I had a raging temperature. [laughs]

So, at that point you knew already that you were not going to Canada. They-

Yeah, because Daddy got a job in... South Wales so, it was sensible to stay where the job was.

And what- what are your earliest memories? What can you remember?

[1:19:00]

Well, I can remember going to school, to my- my very first school memory was... my parents sent me to school quite young to learn English as quickly as possible. And I remember being taken around this school in Cardiff. Being taken around by the Headmistress, who I thought was about 100; she was probably about forty. And I thought she was enormous. She was probably... plump. Anyway, I remember being taken round, that she was holding my hand and she was talking to me, and I didn't understand a word of what she was saying. But it didn't bother me. And you know it was- it wasn't sort of a gentle introduction into school, like nowadays. It was all day, every day, you stay for lunch. No questions. So obviously I learnt English very quickly. And the first day I went to school apparently, I said, when my mother came to meet me and she said, you know, "How was your day?" And apparently, I said, "Two boys in my class. Richard and Nigel." That was my first impression! I was very happy.

In English or in Czech?

English, I imagine.

Mn-hnn. So before did you speak Czech? You spoke Czech with...?

Czech, yeah. I... I don't know what I... perhaps I said it in Czech. I really don't know. I really don't know.

Yeah. So, they sent you to a regular primary school?

It actually was a- it was a private school, because I think it was the only one that they could get me into at that stage. ...Yeah, and then- so that was a private school and I stayed there for about... five years or so. And then we moved to a different part of Cardiff and then I went to a State secondary- or primary - school. And then I went to... a private school when I was... eleven, to a Roman Catholic Convent school... where I stayed till Sixth Form.

Mn-hnn. And what – what job? You said your stepfather had a job. What did he do in...?

He was first employed in a small textile factory on the Treforest Trading Estate in South Wales, near Pontypridd. And then eventually he actually bought the factory from the owner... and... that was- that was his job for the rest of his life.

And what was his- did he work pre- before the war?

Before the war he worked... for his own father in his small factory that actually made... hair nets. And that was again, in a small, very small place in Czechoslovakia called Dehovar Kamnica.

A hair net factory?

Sorry?

A hair net factory?

Yes. Yeah...

And what was- do you know the name of it?

I think it was called 'Bergman and Bergman' or something...something like that. I do actually have a... a visitor's card somewhere which has the name. I know it had the name 'Bergman' in it, but I can't remember anything else.

And what was it like for your...your parents to settle in Cardiff? Were there other refugees, other survivors? How did they mix?

[1:22:06]

They...they settled down very quickly, very easily. And they- yes, a lot of refugees had come to Cardiff before the war and after the war. So- and although they were not... observant Jews

in any way, but they had friends, you know, who were in either reform or orthodox. It didn't really matter. And... And- yes, people were very welcoming. Also, Welsh people were very welcoming. ...Some of my oldest parents' friends were a Welsh family there. Well, it was actually the parents of the boy called Richard in the class.

The one you mentioned?

Yes.

And did they join a synagogue at all?

No, because they weren't religious. They were like- they were sort of 'extraordinary' members of both communities.

They never wanted to join?

No. So the only time we ever went to the synagogue was for either Bar Mitzvahs or weddings or funerals.

Yeah...yeah...So they had a circle.

Mnn.

And your mother, did she- How did she adapt?

She adapted very well. She was just so grateful to be leading an ordinary life. You know, to be a, a - a wife, a mother, have a home. Her biggest luxury she always said, was having clean sheets.

And you said she talked about her experiences?

Oh, yes. Yes, she- she always was able to talk about her experiences. I imagine it was pretty cathartic that she was able to do so. And because I was always asking questions. So... she was always happy- I'm glad she was always happy to talk.

Mnn. So, would she make comments like the sheets, or if you... about food or...?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yes. And you know, I certainly- I was never allowed to leave anything on my plate. And certainly, one of the things my mother told me about when we came back to my aunt in Prague, was that there – there wasn't much food after the war. But my mother used to get up, she couldn't stop herself getting up in the middle of the night to eat all the bread in the flat. Because she thought it wouldn't be there in the morning.

And in England would that ...not that bad, but...?

No. No, but- she always loved her food and she was a very good cook. But yes, we couldn't possibly leave anything.

And... you said she stayed in touch with the other... women survivors, that group of six.

Yeah, yeah. She did.

[1:24:40]

And did anyone come to Britain of that group, or...?

Well certainly some of them, if not all of them, came to visit.

Yeah...

There might have been one or two others who actually lived here as well. Yes, there was somebody called Traute; she lived in London. There was another lady, this lady called Mizka. She went to Tasmania I think, but then she came to London. Another lady called Lisa she lived in Caracas, and she'd married also a survivor. And there was somebody else who went to live in Montreal – yeah - because my parents knew a lot of people in Montreal, as that's where we were headed.

Yeah. And what sort of identity did your parents want to give to you? What do you think it's...?

I mean they didn't consciously give me... any sort of iden-...I mean...it just. I don't know how you develop your identity. It just happens, you know. So...I mean I- well, first of all I would say, we're all mongrels. And we're all... migrants. Everybody's come from somewhere else. And sometimes when I'm asked that question in schools and I say, "Well, when I was twenty-one, which is that time that's when you got the vote. And I was- I could have chosen to be Austrian, 'cause I was born in Austria, to be German, cause my father was German, to be Czech, cause my mother was Czech... or to be British." Well obviously, having lived here since I was three, and my parents having become naturalised very early, about – only about two or three years after we arrived, and English is my mother tongue, I chose British.

When you were twenty-one?

Yes, I mean that- Well no, that's when I - had to sort of legally make the choice.

Yeah... What were you before?

Well, I was British...

Yes.

But that's when I actually had to make the choice.

So, your parents became naturalised...

Very quickly.

...quite soon.

And I think, probably the fact that my father had been in the RAF speeded that process up.

No, what I mean with the identity, for example, did they speak Czech to you, or did they...?

[1:27:00]

Well, we spoke a... general mixture, what's it called – ‘*Emigranto*’? - at home. But apparently when I started to learn English... I always maintain that I forgot all the Czech. My mother said that I -she thought I understood, but I thought I'd forgotten it. And I didn't actually speak it again... until I was about seven or eight when my paternal grandfather – my German grandfather – he died... in Holland. And my mother went to the funeral. And at that time- that was the first time my aunt Olga had been allowed out of Czechoslovakia to come and visit us. And they were very- you know, they only let out elderly people because they couldn't care less whether they came back or not. And she came and she was living with us for six weeks. And she spoke Czech and German. And I certainly didn't speak German. And my mother said, “Well you're just going to have to talk Czech.” And I suppose it was all dormant within me. And because I had to I just... did. So ever since then I've been able to speak Czech, but it's a very peculiar brand of Czech. It's a child's Czech. I speak incorrectly, ungrammatically and I have the vocabulary of a... seven-year-old or something like that. Mainly because my parents never corrected me. ‘Cause they never ever, foresaw the end of Communism. They never thought it would be of any use to me whatsoever. And because the way I spoke, they found very entertaining, so they didn't bother to correct me. So, my Czech relatives find it hilarious the way I speak. Because like Latin, in Czech, everything has to agree with everything. Well, the way I speak, nothing agrees with anything. But people understand me! You know, and also- Like in French, German, you have a polite form and a familiar form. Well, I only talk in the familiar form, because that's what you speak in the family.

Yeah... And in school, did you feel different at all from the other children? Did you feel- did you...?

Well, I knew... I don't know if I did or not. I knew I was Jewish. I knew I had this very interesting background. Yes, my friends didn't have the same background, but... it didn't sort of bother me. It didn't, you know, it didn't have any ill effect.

Yeah...

And also, because my friends- Because, because my mother always was able to talk about it, so I've always talked about it... if people asked me. And because, it was funny- because when I was...Well, growing up, or all my life, till I got married, my name was Eva Bergman. Well, this was the era of Ingrid [Bergman, actress] and Ingmar [Bergman, film director]. So, everybody – even though I had brown hair – everybody thought I was Swedish. You know, and it was fine! I enjoyed having that sort of...you know, association. Young people don't know the names now, which is a bit sad, but...

Yeah. That's what they thought; you come from Sweden.

Yeah, Sweden. People were saying, you know, "So... are you Swedish?" And then...it would come out. The story would come out.

And you would talk about it openly?

Mnn. And also- one thing I do remember. When I was in a primary school, and I remember you know, playing with children. And we were saying, "Where were you born?" and, "Where were you born?" And they would usually say 'hospital'. I remember saying the words, 'concentration camp'. And I had absolutely no idea...what it meant, but I knew the words. And I compare it to children who are adopted. If you've always known you were adopted, even though you might not understand the word or the concept, it doesn't come as such a shock as if you're only told when you're a teenager.

Yeah...

And that's what I felt about my story.

That you always had some knowledge...

It was very gradual... Some knowledge. And so, it was a gradual process. And I'm very grateful that I didn't learn it all when I was a teenager. It would have- It would – could – have come as an enormous shock.

[1:31:00]

But it also sounds as if you were very close to your mother?

Yes - yes, we were. And people have said, you know, "Do you think her experiences have made you closer?" I said, "I've no idea. I hope we would be just as close even without." And she was certainly very close to her mother, so I imagine the chances are that we would have been.

And how do you think, or do you feel how she dealt with- I mean she lost a lot of family. Did that- was that expressed at all or...?

Well yes, she was very sad about it. But... she just accepted it. She said, "Life goes on."

That was the main message.

And, you know, I have to repeat, I think the fact that she had me... 'cause you have to live for your child.

Yeah... So that... She was busy...

Mnn.

And so, what happened to you? So, after you- you finished school. And what were your ambitions, or what did you think you wanted to do?

Right, well... I- because I failed one of my A-Levels I couldn't go to university, and so I went to a secretarial college in London. And I did a bilingual French-English course. And then I worked in London for two years. Shared a flat with friends. ...And then I met my husband, again. 'Cause we'd met one another when we were teenagers. 'Cause he also came from Cardiff. And then... in 1968 we got married. And I moved to Cambridge, which is where he's been ever since he was an undergraduate. He's now a retired law professor.

And when did you move to Cambridge exactly?

Sixty-eight.

1968...so.

Yeah. And we've lived here ever since, except for eighteen months in Singapore.

And in the meantime, where was your mother? Where were your parents?

Oh, she lived- my parents stayed in Cardiff. And my mother- my father died a long time ago. He was fifteen years older than my mother, and he died... at London Airport, would you believe? They were going on holiday. He died over thirty years ago – it's thirty-two years ago now. And... so yes, my mother lived there. She lived in Cardiff for sixty years, and then the last three years of her life she came to live with us.

And how did she adapt after your... stepfather died? Did she manage to...?

Oh, she managed, yes, she managed, and... Yes, she did. I mean it was a terrible shock at the time. She always said, "Why does everything have to be so dramatic in my life?" ...But you know, it was good for him, he was going on the holiday. And... anyway, no, she managed and she, you know, she coped and she lived, you know, quite a happy life. ...And then she became unwell, but I mean, to the age of ninety-three she was you know, she was perfectly independent. And she cooked and she drove her car. And it was only when she became quite ill that she realised that she couldn't drive any more. And - and because we - Malcolm and I – offered to have her come and live with us when she was ninety. And she said, "No, I'm not ready." And then when she was ninety-three, she said, "Now I'm ready."

[1:34:16]

Yeah... And... Did she, did you and her- did she or was she interested to go... You said she went back to Prague to visit the family, but to go to places, like to go to Mauthausen... or to go...?

Mn-hnn. She certainly... I went with her to both Terezin and Mauthausen. And as you can imagine it was pretty emotional. But...we were glad to go. And in Mauthausen there's a very

large visitor centre. And she's sort of on permanent DVD there as being the British survivor. ...She could never go back to Auschwitz because everybody had been killed there. I've been to Auschwitz several times, because when I was working in the office of the Holocaust Education Trust in London, I used to accompany groups of students on their visit there. And my mother had a nice sense of humour. Every time I went, she'd say to me, "Why are you going again?" And I said, "Well, look, it's- it's part of my job. I like to think it's perhaps a way of giving something back." And then she'd say, "Once was enough for me."

So, she never- she didn't go to Auschwitz.

No.

And tell us a little bit about how you started to become interested in - in your own history.

Well, as I said, I've always been interested in it... 'cause I was always asking my mother questions. And then I think- I think as with an awful lot of people... people who had no experience or no connections with the Holocaust became interested in it after '*Schindler's List*' came out. And at that time, I was working in a further education college here in Cambridge, and I- I wrote to the Holocaust Education Trust for some materials. Because people had started to ask me about... it. And so- and because my mother was very, very impressed with both '*Schindler's List*' and '*The Pianist*'. And anyway, so I started to speak in a very informal way, to a few classes in this college. And then... it happened quite by chance that I was asked to speak... I don't know if you know the - the film '*Life is Beautiful*'? Well, when that came out there was a lot of controversy about it amongst survivors. Well, it wasn't a film made for survivors; it was made for other people. I thought it was a brilliant film. And there was an organisation that- I don't know if it still exists... something called like, National Film Schools Week or something like that - in October. Where they would put on films for free, all around the country, for students. And it was on here in Cambridge, and one of my colleagues in the college rang up to get tickets for her students. And the person said- they always tried to provide a speaker with each of the films, whether it was Shakespeare or Dickens or Austen, or...you know. Anyway, on this occasion they said, "We're awfully sorry, we can't provide a speaker." But they didn't give any explanation. I knew why, but... my colleague didn't, and that was because it wasn't a film made for survivors. A lot of survivors were very, very anti the film. And anyway, and apparently my colleague said, "Oh, don't

worry. We've got a home-grown speaker." And she came back to college and she rang me up and she said, "Eva I've just volunteered you for something." And I said, "Oh, yes, what's that?" I'd never before spoken in public. She said, "Would you go and speak after a showing of this film?" So, I said, "OK." So, I went and I watched the film which I'd seen before. And then when everybody got up to go, I said, "Please can you sit down for about five minutes?" And I spoke for about ten minutes, that's all. And I just said, you know basically nothing could have happened in the film. Nothing at all. Because it's based on a false premise. Cause that little Jewish boy would never have remained with his father. But: there are a various parallels with my story. And I gave them a few incidences. You know ...minimal things like food. To do with food- that sort of thing. And then afterwards... some of the teachers said to me, "We assume you do this in the local schools." And I said, "No." And they said, "Why not?" And I thought, "Why not?" So, I rang up the Holocaust Educational Trust and I asked if they could use me as a survivor speaker. And they said, "We think you should look in the Times Educational Supplement" from the next day. Because they had a little advert and it was only about that big, asking for people who might like to become trained as educators in teaching the Holocaust. So, I filled out a CV for the first time in eighteen-odd years. I went for an interview. They asked me if I wanted to be trained as an educator or to be a survivor-speaker. And I said, "Well I'm not a teacher. What is unique to me is my story." And the rest is history as they say. And I've been doing it more and more, and it's now like a full-time job.

[1:39:17]

So, they trained you on...?

No, they didn't train me because I wasn't going to be an educator.

Right...

But they helped me enormously. And also, I worked in the office for three and a half years. And that was very helpful from lots of different perspectives. And so, I did, you know, it a few times a month. And then I did it more and more and yeah, it's almost like a full-time job now.

And because you were born when you were born...

Yes.

I mean you must be one of the youngest...

Yes...indeed.

...camp survivors in the world.

Yes. That's right.

Did you see yourself as a survivor or did you see yourself as a sort of second generation? Do you see what I mean? How did you see yourself?

Well, I'm- I'm both! I'm both. There's absolutely no getting away from that fact. You know, I am both. I am a survivor through accident of birth, but because I don't have any memories, I am a second generation.

And you have two children?

Yes.

How- how do you think did it affect your- did it affect your parenting or your...your idea of family or what you wanted to...?

I don't think so really because again like I said, I would hope that I would have been as close to my mother regardless. Or I would have hoped and thought that I brought up the children the same way. ...What I thought you were going to say is how my children have reacted.
[both speak with mirth]

And that's another question I have! Exactly. How did your children...? And did you talk to your children about your own experiences before, and how do they react to your talking about your experiences?

Well, that's something that I've always said, well it's not been my fault, but I've always felt guilty about. Because my children never wanted to know anything. And that also did quite upset my mother, that my boys never asked any questions. And because we didn't want to ram it down their throats, so we didn't talk about it with them. And to be fair to them, when they became older, they did say, "Well, we knew there was this... you know, this- some sort of story." And I suppose like most teenagers they sort of thought, well, you know, why is our grandmother different from everybody else's? But also, to fair to them, they have said to me since, that they didn't want to upset my mother or me. But if they even said that, I would have said, "But you wouldn't. She'd be more than glad. She's more upset by the fact that you're not asking the questions." But you know, as adults they know and they appreciate, you know, they did appreciate her. And... And I think they also appreciate the fact that I do speak about this.

But it's not something they are particularly interested in, or they are seeking out, or...?

They're not- I think they might be interested but they're not particularly seeking it out. But also, to be fair to them, you know, they're- they're young; they've got young children.

Yeah...

You have different... you know, perspectives.

[1:42:28]

And you don't know what will happen to their children, and how that will...

Yeah.

But from your mother's point of view, she wanted more interest. She wanted people to ask.

She would have wanted. Yes, she did.

Did she ever go into schools, or did she ever talk?

She did talk. I don't think she ever went into a school, but she did talk in small groups in Cardiff. Or some people would ask if their children or grandchildren could come and interview her. And she did talk on a couple of public occasions as well. Around the time of Holocaust Memorial Day – that sort of thing. She would talk. But she was always known for her, her brevity. And what I do in a school in an hour, she used to do in about ten minutes.
[laughs]

And what was the main message she would give? I don't know, you know the Shoah Foundation they ask you- we will ask you also for a message. What was her main message?

I don't actually know what she had- she said. I imagine what I say now, is you know, about respect and tolerance and acceptance of others. Race, creed, sex, you know, all those things.

Mnn...so she, yeah, she talked and maybe because she talked as you said, you could also talk about it. And now you published, last year the book was published about you and your other two- the other two babies.

Yes.

Do you find that changed the way- suddenly now, there's a big book with your story in a way. Did it change... your relationship to the history somehow that it's in print I guess and...? Very public.

It's- yeah, but it always has been public, you know, because it's always been talked about. My mother was interviewed lots and lots of times. I've been interviewed quite a few times as well. You know, there was this BBC documentary that was made on her in 2012, which is called 'The Baby Born in a Concentration Camp'. So yes, I mean, it's so sad that she actually only missed meeting Wendy Holden by three months. Because my mother died in July 2013, or more than three months. And Wendy found me in October. And she really would have liked her. And she would be so pleased with this book. I mean my mother- lots of people asked her if she was going to write her own story or if they could write her story. But she never wanted it. She never wanted it because- actually she would say, I don't know if I

should say this, but I'm going to. She would say, "There are too many already. Who's going to read them all?"

[1:45:10]

Yeah...

She was very happy the first time our story appeared in a book, the only other time, is in a book that was produced by Beth Shalom, the National Holocaust Centre in Nottinghamshire. They produced a book which is called '*Survival*', which tells the story of forty-six survivors all of whom have spoken at the centre over the years, many of whom have since died. And... It's a book first of all produced for the students who go there. And I always maintain that it's very sort of put-down-able, because no story was longer than ten pages, and every story is different. They may have common elements, but every story is different. So, she was very happy to be part of that book. Also, it was wonderful when that was launched, it was launched in the Cabinet War Rooms, in London. And everybody felt it was so appropriate... to be there. But no, but... I am very pleased about this book. And my mother did meet the other two babies. She- and that was wonderful because both their mothers had died of old age in the previous ten years or so. But when I first met the other two, Hana and Mark, in Mauthausen on the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Mauthausen - that was 2010. And here in Cambridge I'm sort of on the committee for Holocaust Memorial Day. And I sort of tentatively asked them if they might consider coming for the following January in 2011. Cause I also said, you know, my mother would like to meet them. And so, they came. So, they flew in, one from California, the other from Wisconsin, for about forty-eight hours. And it was wonderful. They came into this room and... And because we're all only children, we feel we have siblings. And my mother said to them, "You're like my children." And so, they came and it was wonderful. And- and we went to the event in the Guildhall here. And I actually said what I've said now. I gave the very brief story of how we met. And- and then my sort of *coup de grace* was, "And they are here, in the audience." And there was a real gasp around the whole Guildhall.

I'm sure! I'm sure...

And they got up on stage and you know, they said a few words. And so, we've felt very close ever since. And also, you know, obviously since the book has been produced. We had the launch in Mauthausen in May of 2015, the day before the seventieth commemoration of the liberation. And we've been travelling an awful lot with it since. It's been translated into sixteen languages. Published in twenty-one countries. ...From Mauthausen we were interviewed here in London. Then we went to the Illinois Holocaust Museum in Chicago for the American launch last year. We've also been in the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. And I've been to I don't know how many... book festivals with Wendy.

[1:48:17]

And does it surprise you, this interest, at this point, or...?

Yes... yeah it does... it does surprise and gratify us. But, as Wendy says, "Yes, but your story's very different." And although you know... although thousands of babies must have been born during the Holocaust... but how many have survived?

Yeah.

And - or not more and more – but quite a few have sort of, in quotes, "come out of the woodwork". I don't know if since this book, or just gradually, in any case. But relatively speaking there are very few.

Did your mother know the other mothers at all, at that point?

No, never heard of them. I think Mark's mother had heard... that there was another mother who was pregnant at the same time in the same... place. But her reaction was, "But she would never have survived."

And how- what is your relationship today to Germany and Austria? And especially your book is now translated and... you know, there are all these... memorials, museums, and... You know, how...?

Yeah... Well... if I go back slightly one stage. If my mother had ever met a German of the age or generation who might have been involved during the war, well she - she certainly wouldn't have spoken to them. She wouldn't have done them any harm but she wouldn't have spoken to them. If, however they might have been suspected of being guilty of war crimes, she would have wanted them brought to justice to confront their crimes, to be confronted by their crimes. Because just because they are now in their eighties and nineties doesn't lessen the crime. But if found guilty... I think... she really wouldn't have seen much point in their being punished. And I certainly feel, you know, like with that man Hanning [Reinhold Hanning, SS guard in Auschwitz] now who's been sentenced to five years' imprisonment. I think it would be far more useful... if you were not imprisoned, but if you began to talk about it. To talk about the experiences, to try to counteract the Holocaust denial. So that's my attitude to people of that generation. But... But you know, you can't blame any Germans of younger generation because they're not guilty; they're not responsible. And you know, as I say in schools on a lighter note, I really put my parents to the test, because when I was a late teenager... I actually went out with three German boys. Not all at the same time, but I did go out with three German boys. And my parents didn't like it one little bit. But they were very clever, and they never said a word. Because if they'd said, "You are forbidden", well, no doubt I would have run away with one of them. Because they never said a word so I went out for a drink, to a party, you know, normal stuff. And my mother said, in an odd way she sort of found it understandable, because she said to me, "Your father was German." My father considered himself first and foremost as an assimilated Jewish German. Yes, he was Jewish, but he thought of himself first as a German. At least until 1933.

So, she explained that your affinity... But apart from that, did you have any affinity with Germany as such? No.

[1:51:36]

Well, I... I mean, you know, like a lot of... refugees or survivors, you know, my father always said, "No German cameras, no German cars, no German anything." ...We didn't go to Germany on holiday. They did go once fairly soon after the war, but they had to for some... property reasons or something. I think my father had some property in East Germany; it was something legal... which they didn't enjoy. But no ...No... I mean I have been there. And I

have been to, you know, Berlin. And I have been to Vienna and Salzburg, you know, as tourists.

Yeah. And how do you see, as somebody who's quite involved in Holocaust education, how do you see the future of Holocaust education yourself, you know, being a young survivor? They need you.

They need me. Yes... Well, I hope I will continue to speak in schools... for a long time. Because I hope, that through telling one family story it makes the history of the Holocaust come alive. Because everybody can identify with one family. Nobody can identify with six million. It's meaningless. So, I would hope, you know, that I can carry on for a long time. And... And you know, I think hopefully this is a way of carrying the story on as well, as so many of the survivors have done. Have given their testimony. My mother did the Shoah Foundation testimony. She did the documentary... all that sort of thing. So... And I think lots of other organisations are trying to record people.

Yeah. And in your work with schools, what was the most moving comment you got? Or for you personally, what is the- is there anything in particular which stands out, of the comments from the children?

There was one- there was one young boy... who asked me the question... "What would you say if you met Hitler?" And I replied by saying, "Why?" And this boy thought I was asking him the question - why. I said, "No, I would just say: Why?"

Mnn... Yeah... And is there anything else you'd like to add which you think we haven't discussed, which is important?

I'm sure I'll think of things after you've gone.

What I'd like to ask you also is, how would you... define yourself today in terms of your own identity?

Well... I'm British. I'm also Czech... I'm Jewish, but a... culturally, perhaps. I don't know what else to say. I'm a wife, I'm a mother, I'm very fortunate.

Yeah. And what would be your message for somebody who might watch this interview?

[1:55:20]

Only to try to think of other people as individuals, and not to think of people en masse. Not stereotype. Because there is such a thing as mob mentality. And - and it can lead to dreadful things. And my message is that- you know, I, at the end of my talk I give the reasons why I give the talk. Which I might as well- shall I repeat that?

Yes, please – what are they?

I start off by saying, first of all, the first reason I give for telling the story is for commemoration, to remember. To remember all those millions and millions of people who died, who were killed in the Holocaust. And especially all those who, and we don't know the numbers, of people who've never, ever had one single person remember them. Because all their families were killed, and all their communities were destroyed. And the only way that people live on is through our remembering of them. The second reason is just to tell one family story because many of the survivors now, they are a dwindling group now, there are that many different stories, and they are all unique. They may have common elements but they're all unique. The third reason is to try to enable us all to learn the lessons of the Holocaust. But just think about all the genocide since: Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Darfur, and so it goes on... And the last reason, which I think is the most important, is to try to counteract racism and prejudice. Any form of racism and prejudice. Because the logical, but horrendous, conclusion to prejudice and racism - is genocide.

Yes. Quite topical. And so recent.

Absolutely. Which is why I stress the migrants ...now. Because nobody becomes a migrant or an asylum-seeker or a refugee lightly.

Yeah... And how different do you think, would your life have been without Hitler?... If your parents had...?

Well, it would have been totally different. I probably wouldn't exist! Because my father would never have left... Berlin. So...

He would have stayed in Berlin.

He would have stayed in Berlin. He had no reason to go away. So, I wouldn't exist in my present form. [half-laughs]

[1:57:40]

Yes...yes. Yes... And the last thing I was going to ask you is, about- your mother had the baby who died.

Yes.

Was- is that something she talked about a lot or was that something...?

Well, she always- she talked... She didn't tend to talk about it in isolation; she always talked about it when she was talking about Terezin. And I was- and she would be so gratified and surprised, to find when she died, three years ago, we actually took her ashes back to Czechoslovakia.

Did you?

And, well... I have to tell you the other bit of that story. When my father – my stepfather- I mean, he was my 'Daddy'. He officially adopted me and I never knew my own father. When he died, at London Airport, and he was cremated near London. And then... his ashes were interned in the cemetery in Cardiff. And after five years my mother said, "No, I'm going to take him home." So, she got the casket and she went to Prague. And my cousin's husband drove her to the little village where Daddy came from, where there has been a Jewish cemetery for hundreds and hundreds of years. Tiny little village. And it's in- beautiful, in the mountains, in the countryside. And they scattered his ashes. And because there were Bergmans, you know, in that place for... generations. So, his father's tombstone was there. And so, she put his name and dates at the bottom of that tombstone. Anyway, when she came

back from doing that, I said to her, “Well, while we’re on the subject, what do you want?” This is thirty years ago. And she said, “Well if you happen to be passing...” like you know, on my way to...Tesco, “I’d like the same.” And then she realised what she’d said, and she said, “No, I couldn’t care less what happens to the ashes.” – you know – “I won’t know. But I would like my name and dates put underneath your father’s, on the same tombstone.” So of course, we did it. And we took the ashes.

To the same place?

To the same place.

Although that’s not where she was from?

No– no, but that’s where she wanted to be.

Yeah...

So anyway, so we did it and it was like having another funeral, because we have a lot of family, still, in Czechoslovakia. And there were about thirty of us. And my eldest son came from here. And some people came from the States. And there were exactly half the number of people there were on my mother’s side, and half from my father’s side. And it was- it was very appropriate, it was a lovely occasion. It was a beautiful autumnal day in this country cemetery, you know. And there were lots of the little children. And because it was a beautiful day we lingered. If it had been pouring with rain I would have just, you know, scattered the ashes and left. And we lingered and – and then I took everybody to lunch in the local pub. So, I don’t know why I started telling you that.

And you feel it was the right thing to do...

Oh, yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Well, because she wanted it.

Yeah... No, I asked you about whether she talked about her...

[2:00:50]

About my brother...?

A bit, yes.

Well... Only when- You're talking about Terezin, really.

Yeah... But you said she made a memorial actually about the people died...

Oh yes. Yes. My- my mother had an older brother, Tonda, who died just before the war, might have been even during, and he- we think of a brain tumour or something like that- when he was thirty-three. And she- his ashes were interned in a Jewish cemetery in Hradec. And my mother had a sort of on the glass that protects the urn, she had all the names engraved of all the members of the family who had been killed in the Holocaust.

When did she do that? When...?

...I can't remember to be honest, but quite a long time ago.

It was important for her that the names were there...

Yes, it was. ...Yes, it was very important. And also, that's what I want to say.

Yes?

She would have been so surprised- because when we- that's what I had started to tell you when we took my mother's ashes. When we went back to Prague, I said... to Malcolm, you know, I wanted to go to Terezin again. So, we did. And Tim came with us. And in one of the buildings, where they have a sort of memorial, sort of similar to what they have in the Pinkas Synagogue in Prague with all of the names. So, in one of the ground-floor rooms, it's quite empty except for the names of all the children who died in Terezin. And much to my amazement, I found my brother. Which... it's amazing. His birth was recorded, his death was recorded.

So, it was a presence, his...that two months.

Yeah... yeah.

[2:02:43]

And... Maybe just one more- since your mother died- do you feel that you have to tell the story? Do you see what I mean? Do you feel that you have to carry on?

Yes, but I've always felt that. I felt that when she was alive. ...And she was very pleased that I did it. I've always felt it so I continue to feel it.

And do you think- is it a coincidence that the other two are also single children? Do you think- did your mother not want to have children after the war?

Oh, no, no, no. That wasn't the case at all. My mother offered to have a child with my stepfather. But he- as I say, he was fifteen years older than her, and he officially adopted me, and because, you know, he had to earn a living and was a very practical person. And... He obviously didn't feel the need to have a biological child. Hana's mother Priska, she didn't have any more children because she never remarried... at all. Rachel, Mark's mother. She did remarry. She originally came from Poland and she - she married another survivor who had lost his wife and his child. I just don't know. Oh, wait, I did think Mark said recently when I saw him... He said that his mother didn't want another child, because she was worried that a stepfather or his stepfather might not love Mark as much if there was his own biological child.

And were the others also very close to their mother's?

Oh... I don't know. I don't think I can honestly say, because... they don't appear to have been. But I can't really say.

No.

Just- I mean I've got to know them quite well. I think they've both had harder lives than I did, although their mothers were certainly more...more demanding. Especially Priska, because, you know, because her whole life was Hana. But it's not my place to talk about that now.

No, no. I just meant I tried to see... because you were so close to your mother.

Mnn.

I think we've covered almost everything. Is there anything else you can think of... to add to... Because then I would like to say thank you very, very much for sharing your story.

Thank you.

And we're going to look at some of your photographs and documents now. Thank you.

Yeah. Ok, fine. Thank you.

[End of interview]

[2:05:21]

[2:05:42]

[Photographs and documents]

Photo 1.

Right. This photograph was taken in a place that was called Scharmützelsee, which is near Berlin, in 1913. That's one year before the start of the First World War. And amongst the people there – it was a family group - amongst the people are my grandparents with their three children in the foreground. My father is the little boy on the right-hand side.

Photo 2.

Right. These are photographs of my maternal grandparents. Ida and Stanislaw Kauder. And they lived in Trebechovice pod Orebem which is near Hradec Kralove in Czechoslovakia.

Photo 3

This is my paternal grandfather Louis Nathan. He was German. He was in the German Army in the First World War. He was given the Iron Cross First Class. And then in the Second World War he was thrown into a concentration camp. He was in Theresienstadt – Terezin – where he remained throughout the war. He was blinded by the gas in the First World War. And he was the only one of my four grandparents to have survived the war.

And when was the picture taken?

It was taken some...about '48 I think, because he's holding my cousin on his lap. And my cousin was born after the war. My cousin – my cousin Robert, in Holland.

[2:07:11]

Photo 4.

This is a photograph of my paternal grandmother, Selma or Seli Nathan, with my father as a young man, Bernd Nathan.

I don't know where, but it looks like a spa judging by the glasses they're holding, so I assume somewhere in Germany.

Photo 5.

This is a photograph of my mother's sister- one of my mother's sisters. Her name was Ruza, which means 'Rose', and my cousin Peter, when he was about five years of age. They both perished in Auschwitz.

Photo 6.

This is a photograph of my mother's older sister, Zdena, and her fiancé whose name was Herbert Isidor. And it shows them wearing the yellow stars, so it was during the war.

And what happened to them?

They both perished in Auschwitz. And my- this is the aunt who wrote the postcard from Auschwitz to her cousin in Prague with the code word 'Lechem', which means 'bread'.

Photo 7.

This is a photograph of my parents on their wedding day. My father Bernd Nathan, he came from Hamburg in Germany. And my mother Anka Kauderova was Czech. They married on the 15th of May, 1940. My mother was twenty-three and I believe my father was about ten years older. And my father was shot dead on a death march near Auschwitz on the 18th of January, 1945.

Photo 8.

This is an amazing photograph of my mother and myself. And it has to have been taken in the first two or three weeks in May of 1945. Because it was taken by an American GI who was one of the liberating soldiers of Mauthausen. And I was born on the 29th of April.

[2:09:37]

Photo 9.

This is a photograph of my mother and myself. And my mother said this was my first photograph aged about four or five months. So, this would have been taken in Prague, in 1945.

Photo 10.

This is also during my first year in December of 1945, so I would have been about eight months.

Photo 11.

This is my aunt Olga Sronkova. We came to live with her when we came back from Mauthausen in May of 1945. My aunt had been in Terezin for the last six months of the war. This picture was taken in December '50.

Photo 12.

This is a photograph of my mother and my stepfather Karel Bergman on their wedding day which was on the 20th of February 1948.

And who else is in the picture?

Well, the young woman on the right-hand side is Olga Herbanova, the daughter of my aunt Olga Sronkova.

And on the left?

The man...I believe, I'm not sure. I think he's somebody called Franta Vilim, who I think emigrated to Montreal, but I'm not sure.

[2:11:13]

Photo 13.

This is a photograph of my father, Karel Bergman. He- in RAF uniform. He escaped occupied Czechoslovakia in '39. Came here, joined the RAF. Was too old to be trained as a pilot, but because he spoke languages, was made an official interpreter.

Photo 14.

This is a photograph of my mother and myself on our way to- I think it's my first school prize-giving in Cardiff...where, unknown to my mother, I was about to receive a prize for reading, and I hadn't spoken any English a few months earlier.

Photo 15.

This is my husband Malcolm and myself. On our wedding day which was on the 6th of January 1968, in Cardiff.

Photo 16.

This is a photograph of myself with the “other two” – in quotes - babies. Mark Olsky was born on the 20th of April 1945, on this horrendous train journey between Freiberg slave labour camp and Mauthausen concentration camp. Hana was born in Freiberg on the 12th of April the same year. And I was born on the 29th April 1945. And this is a photograph of the first time that we met in May of 2010, when we were all in Mauthausen for the 60th Commemoration of the liberation of the camp by the Americans.

Document 1.

This book, *Born Survivors* by Wendy Holden, was published in May of 2015 and launched in the Mauthausen former concentration camp. It tells the story of three young mothers, Rachel, Priska and my mother Anka, all of whom arrived in Auschwitz pregnant. Were then six months in Freiberg slave labour camp, and eventually gave birth in April of 1945. Rachel gave birth to Mark Olsky, and Priska gave birth to Hana Berger-Moran. Prizka came from Bratislava, Rachel came from Poland and my mother came from Czechoslovakia.

Document 2.

In 2015 I was very honoured to be given an Honorary Doctorate of Law by de Montfort University in Leicester.

And what were you given it for? What did it say?

I was given it for the work that I do in telling my mother’s story of the Holocaust.

And your own story.

And my own story.

[2:14:14]

Photo 17.

This is my four-generation photograph. This was taken around the time of my mother's ninety-fifth birthday in April of 2012. I have two sons, Tim and Nick, and they have three children, now four children between them. Nick is the father of Matilda and Imogen. And Tim is the father of Theo. And it was taken here in Cambridge.

Photo 18.

This is a photograph that was taken around the time of my seventieth birthday in April of 2015. And it shows my two sons, Tim and Nick, with their wives and children. Tim's wife is Therese and Nick's wife is Rachel. And the three children. Tim and Theresa's son is Theo. And Nick and Rachel's daughters are Matilda and Imogen.

Document 3.

This is my birth certificate which was only issued in 1948, so three years after my birth. And it says that I was born in the *früheres Konzentrationslager* which means 'former concentration camp'.

Photo 19.

This is a photograph of my christening certificate. After the war my mother was obviously in a highly emotional state, and to try to protect me in the future, she had me baptised thinking that that would take the Jewishness out of me. Of course, it didn't, and she realised that it didn't quite soon afterwards. But nevertheless, I was christened by some Czech protestant Brethren. And they actually wanted to christen my mother as well, but she said no, no, she only wanted it for her baby. And my aunt- my cousin Olga was my godmother which was quite appropriate because she was half Jewish.

Document 4.

This is a postcard that my aunt Zdena sent from - was forced to send - from Auschwitz to her cousin Olga Sronkova in Prague. And the postcards had to be written in German. They were basically propaganda. And my aunt was desperate to get a message out in code, and she got the message out. It was understood. It was acted upon. Where the word 'Olga' should appear on the second line of the address, is the word '*Lechem*' which is the Hebrew word for 'bread'. And my aunt was telling her cousin that they were starving. Her cousin understood. Her cousin sent a parcel, but the contents of it would have been stolen long before it got anywhere near them. And I'm afraid I have to tell you that even before the postcard was sent from Auschwitz to Prague, they were all dead, including my aunt Zdena.

This is the translation of the postcard. It starts off with the words:

"My dear ones, I'm here with my husband, my sister and my nephew. All are well and in good health. My husband received a parcel yesterday from our housekeeper, and I would ask you to confirm this to her. Please also thank Gerty]. Could she greet Boza Smid for us? I hope you're well and happy. Your parents were very well at the time of our departure [and also my parents and Gerty's]. Write soon. Peter looks well (Peter's my eight-year-old cousin)- Peter looks well, and looks forward to receiving news from you. Greetings and kisses, Yours, Zdena."

[2:18:00]

Photo 20.

This is a photograph of a... a glass...cover that appears, that is in a Jewish cemetery in Hradec Kralove. My mother had all the names of all the members of our family who perished in the Holocaust... inscribed on this... stone glass. And behind it is the urn where- that contains the ashes of her brother Tonda who died just before the war.

Eva, thank you again for doing this interview for Refugee Voices and sharing your story and your photographs and documents. Thank you.

Thank you.

[End of photographs and documents]

[2:18:55]