HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

LILI ALTSCHULER

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Josey G. Fisher
Date: March 10, 1981

Holocaust Oral History Archive
Gratz College
Melrose Park, 19027

This page left intentionally blank.

LA - Lili Altschuler [interviewee]
JF - Josey G. Fisher [interviewer]
Date: March 10, 1981

Tape one, side one:

JF: This is an interview with Dr. Lili Altschuler on March 10, 1981. This is Josey Fisher. This is tape one, side one. Could you please tell me where you were born and when and a little bit about your family background.

LA: I was born September 30, 1928, in Lodz. I was an only child. My parents were relatively well-to-do, [unclear] income [unclear] Jews in Lodz. My father was a manufacturer of clothes lines and my mother did not work.

JF: What kind of religious background did you have?

LA: I knew, of course, that we were Jewish, and my parents were Jews by tradition, but they were not observant Jews. And I did go to a private Jewish school, and this part of Jewish education involved Jewish history, and some Hebrew, that was taught as a second language, and really was not all that much attention paid to it.

JF: What was your life like before the war? Do you have any memories?

LA: Yes, yes, I do. As I said, my parents were relatively well-to-do, so we were comfortable, and we would be going away on vacation two months during the summer.

JF: Where would you go?

LA: Well, to Polish resorts and Carpathian Mountains, and sometimes in the winter. I don't remember that much going away in the winter, except to visit my mother's family on the ports of Poland. My grandparents were, you know, still lived in Lodz, and they was a rather large extended family. My mother came from Lodz and some of her brothers and sisters also lived in the city so I had cousins approximately the same age.

JF: Do you remember your family experiencing any antisemitism before the war?

LA: I remember--well, Lodz was a very Jewish city, probably as much as 50% of the population was Jewish. And as far as my parents' friends and people around me, everybody was Jewish. And going to a Jewish school, I didn't experience that much. I heard about people going to public school and being uncomfortable there. That was really one of the reasons for--the Jews who were relatively well-to-do did not send their children to non-Jewish school--just to prevent this sort of things. Now, personally, I don't remember experiencing any kind of antisemitism because I just was not in touch with any place where that would happen [unclear]. But what I remember then, in '37 and '38 when some of the antisemitic laws started taking place, like the prohibition of the kosher slaughter. Even so, my parents were not affected, because they didn't adhere to those. But I did know about them. And also, in 1938, the thing that I remember very vividly is, were, the Polish Jews who lived in Germany, but who were Polish citizens, were expelled from

Germany. If you remember that happening in 1938. And at that time, the different Jewish schools would admit those children, and of course, those people came after leaving a lot of their belongings, and I remember at that time that there were a collection of clothes taken up and so on. Those were Jews who lived in Germany, but who were Polish citizens, and they were expelled. And I suppose by that time, I really started understanding more of what goes on and it was in 1938.

JF: Was this your first awareness of Hitler's . . .?

LA: Yes.

JF: . . . power?

LA: Well, I remember reading and hearing things that were going on before. And then the things that I remember, also vividly in 1938, because of the Polish fascism, actually in Poland, started to develop in that time.

JF: This is your first memory of the fascism?

LA: Yes, I do remember that. I do remember the Polish occupation of the Czech territories. You know, they took advantage of it when the Sudetenland was, and then they did their part, and I do remember some of the anti-Jewish propaganda that was started in Poland itself at that time. But, actually, you know, it was as a child. It was just something that I was not directly affected. The thing that really affected me directly is knowing the girls who had to leave Germany--who came to Poland, who couldn't speak Polish, who were refugees, really, actually at that time. That was my first contact with them.

JF: How were they treated by the native population of Lodz, these Polish refugees?

LA: Well, I don't know that they were--I'm sure Poland was not very happy in accepting them, but they really didn't have much choice. They were Polish citizens at that time. But there was a very active Jewish community in Lodz, and they did, they did help. You know, Jewish really do usually extend their hands when the need arises, and I do remember that. And I particularly well remember one girl, with whom I was friendly. And I remember that she didn't know the language and it was at this point . . .

JF: You were able to befriend her?

LA: Yes. And a lot of other girls. It was a, it was a girls' school that I went to. The way this kind of things happens, this kind of girl becomes a celebrity of some sort. You know, she's different and people befriend her and I do remember that.

JF: Was there any fear about what had happened in Germany would spread to Poland that you knew about?

LA: Yes, there was. I remember my father talking about it. But the way he talked, he had a family in the United States, and I remember him discussing, you know, things with my mother. You know, maybe we should leave. And I don't remember whether it was in '37 or '38. And then the general conclusion was, you know, my mother would say, well, you know, my whole family's here. I don't want to leave [unclear] and go to a strange country. And then also was that feat that they were doing very well there

and just burning the bridges. And then, in a way, my father, and I remember him saying that too. He was kind of impressed with the German culture and German character. As a matter of fact, he always felt that culturally and intellectually they were much superior to Poles. And I don't really think that he believed that anything like that would happen. Not before '38. I guess in '38, the [unclear] people, already saw what was going on, very vividly like this expelling of people.

JF: Had any member of your family served in the National Army in Poland?

LA: My father served, in the, now again I don't remember, it was the Polish War against Russia, you know, in 19--when would that be--in 1920s during the Pilsudski's time. My father was in the army.

JF: And what was his feeling about serving in Poland?

LA: Oh, he probably didn't--at that time? I'm not quite sure. At that time, again, to have the memory from reading and from talking to people, there was hope that Poland would be a democratic country, you know. The constitution that came out was--certainly sounded all right. And when Pilsudski first took over, he was sort of leaning towards Socialism, and then he turned around and was of a Nationalist and Fascist. But, as a Jew, and not being--I don't think he would have gone if he had a choice not to go, but he was drafted and he went. I don't think he would have volunteered, let's put it that way.

JF: Did your family belong to any Jewish organizations or a synagogue?

LA: Not my immediate family. Some of the members of my extended family did. We didn't belong to a synagogue. The way, again, the way I remember it now, like a city of Lodz with this very large Jewish population--there might have been two synagogues that you would call synagogues in terms of what we know as a synagogue here. But there were places where people would pray during the High Holidays. And I think that my parents did go during, like, Yom Kippur. I never did. I was not taken to those.

JF: Do you have any memory of a *kehillah* in your town, a Jewish governing body?

LA: Yes, it was called *Gmina*.

JF: *Gmina*.

LA: Polish. Yes, they were there and they were active, and I know that my parents paid their taxes to them. You would be taxed by them, according to--yes.

JF: How were they viewed? How was this organization viewed by your parents?

LA: You mean before the war?

JF: Yes. Was it seen as representing the Jews in a positive way, or as a…

LA: I think there was a lot of the feeling that, you know, we supposed to help and this was, this old Jewish tradition, and my parents did adhere to that. And they helped through that. There were great discrepancies the standard of living and the ability of Jews to support themselves in a city like Lodz. It was an industrial city, and a lot of the larger industry was in Jewish hands. But there also a lot of Jews who were struggling.

JF: Did your family have any contacts with non-Jews before the war? Any social contacts? Did you?

LA: Very little. There were some neighbors in the same apartment house that, they would exchange. I believe the one neighbor was a shoemaker. He had sort of custom made shoes and we were in contact with it. Then the maid was non-Jewish usually. That was my contact, most contact. And, also in this very large apartment house, there was always the caretaker who was not Jewish. But other than that, in this specific city, it was an extremely Jewish city. We see it for a Jewish holiday. About 50% population was Jewish, and I know that my father had some business dealings with these non-Jews. He would sometimes take trips and mention some people, but I don't recall any kind of social contacts before the war. I do remember them later, but not before the war.

JF: Can you tell me about what happened in Lodz in the early part of 1939? You started mentioning 1938 and the changes then.

LA: Well, yes, yes, I remember that. That summer we were away from the city.

JF: The summer of 1939?

LA: The summer of 1939. And this particular place that we went to was closer to the city than some of the other places that we had gone in the past. And one of the reasons for not going this far away was that the situation was, that the political situation was getting worse and more cloudy. And I remember, usually we would come back just before the school start, which was in the beginning of September, and of course, the war broke out September 3rd, and we have come back earlier, in August.

JF: Until that time, what all had changed socially for you? You had mentioned the ritual slaughtering, which had not affected you that much.

LA: No, really nothing. I had a very, very happy childhood. Nice schools, good friends, nice clothes. There was really nothing that affected me. I remember, even at that age, more talk and I was aware of the--some Zionist organizations. One of my mother's cousins was Bundist and was very active in this. But a--and I was aware that we did have family in the States. But other than that, really nothing that, that one could predict any kind of seizure. There was--I'm sure that there were warnings, and I'm sure that people saw it. But as a child, except for those things that I was aware, I haven't really seen it, except for the sudden going from one type of a life into a different one--without any kind of a gradual change.

JF: You were aware of your parents' tension during that vacation that summer.

LA: It wasn't really that much tension that I remember. I guess she pretended to be optimistic and saying, "Well, you know they would maybe get the corridor around Danzig. And they got the Sudetenland and maybe that would be the end of . . ."

JF: And then what happened when you returned?

LA: Well, we returned and of course the war had started and . . .

JF: You returned to Lodz.

LA: We returned to Lodz.

JF: In September.

LA: Toward the end of August. Probably a few days, maybe a week or a few days, before the war had started. And I think I even went for a few days to school after the war had started, even the school had opened. But then, I think, it took only about a week or ten days till the Germans entered. Now even, one thing that happened even before--we had my father's widowed sister's family a distance from us, and they lived in a part of city that had some electric companies and gas companies and they were kind of afraid of more bombing in case that would be and they moved in with us. And I remember that very clearly. More people in the apartment. And I remember a few times going down to the basement because of the bombing. But that was, that was very quick, because, within a week or so, everything was gone. Then just before the Germans were entering, I remember again part of our family, my mother's brother and her brother-in-law decided to go east to get away from the Germans. Well, we didn't. My father did not think that was a good idea. Again, I think maybe deep down he thought well, maybe the Germans come, and there will be war, we'll be uncomfortable, but we should be able to deal with them. And he didn't, he didn't see any kind of advantage of running, you know, leaving everything, and there were, there was no transportation. People would go by horses or whatever walking.

JF: Where were they going in the east?

LA: They were going east. They were going away. The Germans were coming from west. They were going towards Russia. And some members of our family did go there, and some portions of them did survive in Russia.

JF: What happened then, after that first week that you mentioned?

LA: After the Germans entered?

JF: After the Germans entered.

LA: Well, again, the first thing that I remembered were, and that happened very quickly, they started putting limitations on our freedom of movement. And it happen in Lodz much faster than in some of the other cities. I think one of the reasons that it had a very large German population, and just as well had a large Jewish population. They declared it a German city. You know, they changed the name. People already know about it--they called it *Litzmannstadt*. And of the first thing is Jews were not allowed after five o'clock out. So we were on sort of a house arrest after five o'clock each afternoon, and then the yellow stars came. In other part it came much later, and people used to wear the bands, the white band with a blue Star of David that you could take off and put on. But in Lodz, you had to have the stars right away, you know, the yellow star, in the front and in the back. And I, and I remember that. Then, it was September. Now, a few months later, the situation in Lodz was, was getting bad. My father's business was taken away. A German was put in to his business.

JF: It was confiscated.

LA: It was confiscated.

JF: How then were you able to support yourselves during that time?

LA: During that time? I don't remember exactly. Probably from savings, and what my parents had.

JF: Was he able to find any other kind of work?

LA: No, no, there was, there was no work, and I don't know that he would even look for it. The question was to, you know, use what we have. They had savings. There was no trouble. We were not hungry at that time. I don't remember being hungry. There was, there was food. Now, my father came originally from a small town near Kielce, it's called Opatow. It's in a different part of Poland. And his sister lived in that town. And the idea was that it probably would be easier to get out from Lodz and to the town, that small town. As I said the Germans didn't start coming down quite as fast in those places outside Lodz as they did there. There were no, there was not that much limitation on the time that you could go out, there were no yellow bands, and actually what happened--my aunt with her children went before, and this was the time also that I came in contact with non-Jews. Our family from Opatow had non-Jewish friends who were there. And they came to Lodz and the idea was to be able to move and take out as many things as they could. You couldn't move furniture. Those were heavy things, but jewelry and belongings. And that person helped transporting some of those things.

JF: These non-Jewish friends of your family?

LA: Yes. It was just particularly one person. Actually, it's sort of interesting because this person was also a refugee from Posen [German], Poznan [Polish]. Do you remember a few years ago it was in the news there were riots? Well, that was also become like a German city, and some of the Poles had to leave too. And this family ended up in the small city, and I guess my aunt was helpful to them, and then they reciprocated. And I guess it was also in a way a business proposition, because he was a relatively smart fellow. And he could see that both my aunt and my father were relatively affluent and it was kind of helpful for him to be, to be around. And we have, we have-- this is--and I remember also that my parents left some things with this Polish family that I mentioned to you--the shoemaker, who lived there, some Oriental rugs that were left, some china, you know, things that you just couldn't take anywhere. And we just left it with him rather. And we went to this small town, Opatow.

JF: This was when?

LA: That was in 1939.

JF: Had your school been closed before you left?

LA: I think it was closed, yes. They closed all the, they closed all the Jewish schools. And people were afraid to go anyway. And before we left, one of the reasons we left, this I remember too, that you began hearing about people being shot on the street. And this man was arrested and you don't know what happened and that's when my parents decided to leave. I do remember the trip. By that time it must have been already December. I guess it must have taken a long time before we left, because it was a very cold winter in

1939. It was a very cold winter and it was a very difficult trip. Part of it was by train, and also I remember walking through snow and carrying things, and we were frozen, toes and this. But when we, you know--we were fortunate because we came to Opatow--we had a family waiting for us. And then again, the thing that I remember, I stayed there with my mother, and my father decided to go back. He decided to go back to Lodz to see whether he could get anything out. Some of the Germans that took over the businesses were friendlier than other, based on previous relationships, and whether there was a possibility of selling them something for it. And I guess he was really trying to see if he could take something more with him, because he realized that he probably wouldn't have any kind of additional income and we had to leave. And he left, and he was gone for two or three months, and then there was no mail. And we didn't know what was happening. And at that time, my mother went back, because--and I stayed with this family--to try and find out what had happened. And also her parents were in Lodz and her other family. And, she came back with my father together, and that was shortly before the Lodz Ghetto was formed and closed. Rumkowski[1] took over the ghetto and closed and that's where my grandparents were, and one of my little sister, and maybe her brother, I'm not sure. But my parents came back. But I remember this, this a very frightening period when I was there as a child. I was well taken care of. I was with my aunt and the family. But I didn't know what happened to my parents, but they did come back. They came back separate. My mother came back first and my father still stayed. Then he came right just before they closed the ghetto.

JF: Was there any difficulty in them travelling like that: You had mentioned the restrictions on freedom of movement.

LA: The primary restrictions were in Lodz.

JF: I see.

LA: Once you got out from Lodz, you were all right, because at that time you probably have that information more accurate than I had. I don't believe that it happened before maybe 1941 or so that they started doing it in--there were two names that were used. Lodz was actually annex and called a German city. And then the other part of Poland we under the Protectorate. And they had different kind of Jewish laws in those different places.

JF: And where was the town located where that you went to?

LA: It was called Opatow and it was a country city, and it was equivalent to our state, which would be Wajewodstwo. [Also known as Vlodivotsva] The city was called Kielce.

JF: What was your experience then, after your parents returned?

LA: Well, it was a very different life. All of a sudden we were refugees, at that time. But, we had a family there and my parents got a--I remember we had rented a room with another family, so of course that was a change. We came from a relatively large

---

[1]Rumkowski - Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, Chairman of the *Judenrat* in the Lodz Ghetto. www.yadvashem.org

apartment, but we lived in that room. But you know--remember that particular time--it was bad but it wasn't that terrible. We were hoping--well, you know the war would be finished pretty soon and we were not hungry. There was food there. I was there with my parents, again. I had cousins and family there. And, being a Jewish child and with Jewish parents, they were very conscious of education. And even then, there were some teachers in the city. They were also refugees and very quickly sort of a school.

Tape one, side two:

JF: This is tape one, side two, of an interview with Dr. Lili Altschuler.

LA: Alright, then I remember things getting worse. The first thing that the Germans do is, again in this small town, where we had to start wearing the bands.

JF: The armbands?

LA: The armbands. Then they created the ghetto in that little city. So the people had to move, and things became much more congested again.

JF: When was the ghetto created there?

LA: I believe it was either towards the end of 1940, either in 1940 or in 1941. I really don't remember. Probably in 1940, already. But there was some movement in between. It was like the situation in Lodz. People were moving. And our family--my father's sister--she and her husband had a candy factory, and they were doing rather well financially--just supplying the city and things with that. So there was, there was plenty of food during that time.

JF: They were not limited in their business?

LA: No, I think occasionally they would have Germans come in and help themselves to things and not pay for it, and this sort of thing. No, but they were working there. And there was also some movement. By special permission Jews could travel. I remember my father going to Warsaw once from there. And I don't remember exactly why he went or what it was. But then things were becoming--and things that I remember is the order--of giving up your furs--fur coats that had to be given up, and that sort of thing. Also, being in this little ghetto town, there really wasn't--there weren't any places like parts that you could go in or anything like that. And I remember going to the Jewish cemetery--that is the kind of thing sticks in your mind. And the reason that we--that I went really there with, with a girlfriend is that there were some trees and some breeze. It was peaceful and we sat there. And there were what we call *Volksdeutsche*. Are you familiar with there term, *Volksdeutsche*--Polish citizens of German descent. And we were being kicked and beaten up there by these people in the Jewish cemetery. And I had a weak ankle that was left from--there was a chipped bone, which we didn't realize at the time. So you know, when you think about horrors of Holocaust, it's, it's not anything, but it just kind of illustrates the situation, and it sticks in my mind. Then I think that in the beginning of 19--must have been '42--that we began hearing about Treblinka and Majdanek and about people being sent around. And I think that even during that time my father--and there were some other people there--did have some contacts with Germans who were willing to talk more, or whatever. I think he knew what was going on. And then, they started coming to the small town and getting Jews from there into a working camp. There was an ammunition factory, and again you might have heard the name from some other people. The place was called Skarzysko.

JF: Can you spell that?

LA: Yes. S-K-A-R- now there is a Z with a top on it, which makes a sound of jeh-Y-S-K-O. Before the war, it was a Polish ammunition factory and it was run by a German outfit whose central location was in Leipzig. And the name of that was Hasag, H-A-S-A-G, a German firm that was running it.[2] And they would come in periodically and round up younger people to that place. And again, somehow we knew where they went and what they were doing. And then in 1942, again, my father was pretty certain in his mind that it wasn't a lie, that Treblinka did exist. And Majdanek did exist, and he was pretty certain what was going on. And he knew that sooner or later this little ghetto that we were in would come to this same kind of an end. And I think he took a gamble at that time. He said that it was better to get yourself into one of those ammunition factories, where there was a chance to be put to some kind of work--that we had a better chance of surviving there. And he had actually bribed his way in and my mother, my father and I, and some of my cousins and my aunt, went by bus. And we went into their camp, after paying off to go there.

JF: So you lived in the camp then, or near it?

LA: No, we lived in a camp. There was a camp and it was a pretty terrible camp. It wasn't, it wasn't Auschwitz. There were no crematorium there and people did work there. And again, we were kind of fortunate, or maybe because he paid his way in. That's why we ended up near the better place. This particular camp was divided into three portions and in one of those portions people worked with, I don't know whether it was gas or dyes, or whatever, but you didn't last very long. But the place that we did work actually made ammunition and we did work there. It was a work camp. And that's where we stayed till the summer of 1944. And I was there with my parents, which was pretty unusual.

JF: The name of that camp was the same as the factory, of the munitions factory, or did it have another name?

LA: No, that was the name. Actually it was called Skarzysko Kamienna. It was a Polish ammunition factory before the war. As, the Germans run it, under the name I gave you. It's a German firm, Hasag. It might even exist now.

JF: What was the camp itself like? What was your living situation like and the daily routine?

LA: People lived in, in barracks, and there were, depending on where you were--it was, it was, pretty horrible.

JF: Were the men and women divided?

LA: They were, they were divided. But, then again, if you, if you were able to, either by knowing somebody, you know, in other Jewish camps, or if you had something that you could bribe. For a while we lived separately. Then they formed what they called a

---

[2]HASAG – a privately owned German company that used concentration camp prisoners as forced laborers to manufacture armaments. It ran forced labor camps and/or factories in Czestochowa, Stradom, Rakow, Warta and Czestochowianka. It also ran the ammunitions factory in Skarzysko-Kamienna, the grenade factory in Kielce, and the foundry in Czestochowa from 1940. (www.yadvashem.org, articles entitled "Hasag" and "Czestochowa".)

family kind of barrack. And we lived together. They would get so--we were together, I was together with my father and my mother. See, because of the way we went in, they were able to take certain things with them. They had--my parents had some jewelry with them, and they, they had some American currency with them too. And they were able to, to buy some extra food, because you couldn't really live on, on what was given. But, there was contact with the Polish population there, because they would come and work as daily workers, and then be paid and leave back. And they would bring extra food for money. There was an opportunity of buying extra food.

JF: What were the rations that were given?

LA: Okay. I think I remember that they were like two slices of bread a day. Once in a while they had some jam that went with it, and I don't remember whether it was one soup a day or two soups a day, that you had. It was probably not quite possible to survive on that. And, the things that, that helped is that some people had some stuff with them and were able to buy some extra food. Then, another thing that was happening in that camp that helped, that some of the clothing and belongings of the Jews that were exterminated was coming to that camp, and again, some of the things people were able to exchange for food later with the amount of clothes. See, it would come to the camp and some of the people worked with it--like the better things would to the Germans and they looked for the jewelry and so. But as long as this, and some of the people who worked in the camp worked on that. So that small amount of it would filter down towards the people in the camp. Now, let me tell you two things that, that I remember from this particular camp. There was a typhus epidemic. And, and the procedure was because there was no hospital, there was nothing else, and the Germans thought that the best way of stopping epidemics was to, to just shoot. Whoever got sick, couldn't work, they would just shoot them. And I had, I contracted this typhus there. And again my mother decided that she had no choice,--that she couldn't leave me in the--they would assign one of the barracks as a, as a hospital. But then people usually would not come out from there.

JF: Was there any medical help at all?

LA: Well, there, there were some Jewish physicians who were in the camp, and there were some nurses, and some of them tried to do whatever they could. But one of the things that they tried to do was not to report when someone had it, because they knew what was going on. So that, I--my mother would dress me in the morning and I would go to work. Actually, being sick with this very high fever, well, it got to the point that I really couldn't walk very much anymore and I don't know how long that would take. But what happened then is that because people were going to work with that--they were coming in contact with the Polish population and also with the Germans. There were a couple of Germans who died from the typhus. And then they said, well, you know, that didn't work. And they changed the procedure and actually established a small hospital there. And I ended up in that hospital and survived.

JF: Did you get medication then, after the hospital was set up?

LA: I don't even know that there was any kind of medication that you use for typhus. It seemed it's carried out by lice and [unclear]. I do remember some pretty horrible things carried out, even by Jews at the camp, as much as I'm ashamed to admit that. But it did go on. The Germans used this old kind of a horrible thing, you know, you just put Jews in charge of Jews, and they think that they'll survive by doing things to other people. They will do it. And in this camp, just like in Auschwitz, they had Jewish police there and they had a Jewish commandant. And it's hard to put oneself into this kind of a position, because I don't know that anybody can predict how you would act if you think that you could save yourself and your immediate family by doing that. So there were these kinds of things. I remember seeing people beaten by Jews and how much it hurt and all that. It was . . .

JF: Were all the Jews in that, that position?

LA: No, no they weren't all, they weren't all. But usually what happened that the one that went there didn't last very long. So that towards the end, by the process of elimination that the Germans did, most of them that had any kind of a power were--did not really behave properly.

JF: What do you mean?

LA: Well, you know, I mentioned to you that there was a certain amount of clothes, for example, that came in. I do know of incidences that some of those people would sell those things, and live rather well, with plenty of good food and other things. When actually they could have stretched it a little bit more so that everybody could have had a part with it. But, you know, of course, it's--you always admired the people who don't do that, but then I don't know how one can criticize under those circumstances.

JF: Were there Polish people involved in the running of the camp, as well as Germans.

LA: No. There were no Polish people involved in that particular camp. There were some guards who were Ukrainians, and I think there were some Latvian and some of them were pretty horrible.

JF: What do you mean horrible?

LA: What? They would be doing any kind of the beating that they could. You could always--there were some Germans that were kinder than others. I don't remember anybody who was that outstanding. No, I, I really, I really don't. And among the Poles, there were, again, there were some that were decent and some that weren't. But the contact with Poles was mostly during the, to work, at the workplace.

JF: What kind of reaction did you have from the Poles that you were working with?

LA: The place that, that I worked in, and the thing that I had done, you know, again, by some kind of process of luck--actually I was pretty young there--but in that kind of thing--I was working with sort of a scientific instrument at that time. It was a place that were measuring hardness of the tools that were being made for the factory. And I guess

that the particular Pole who was in charge of it was a well-educated, kind person, and he himself was helpful. Other than that, I, I don't remember any kind of atrocity from the Poles there. They really didn't all that much power either. They were, they were pretty glad that they could work in that place rather than be sent to the forced labor in Germany.

JF: Did you have any contact with the family that was left in Lodz or any other ghettos?

LA: Well, we had, we had some letters and things while we, while we were in [unclear]. There was great hunger in Lodz and we were sending--till we went to that camp--we were sending packages, food packages, and they would be getting them until a certain time. One of my mother's sister was in Warsaw, and we were in touch with her again till we were in that camp. After that, we did not have any contact with anybody. Towards I think it would be 1944 again, there was a group of Jews in that camp that developed some contact with underground. And there were Jewish underground, and there was contact with it. And there was money coming in to help. And again, my father was involved in, in some of that, and they were in contact. And there were--you know I was, I was still a child, and I wasn't being told many of those things. But again, they knew exactly what was going on in Auschwitz and Treblinka and I think there were some plans for possibly some uprising. But the time came to it that we didn't have much choice. That place was never bombed and you know we always wondered, you know, why, why don't they bomb it? Why don't they do something? It never was. It probably wasn't all that kind of a significant camp as the others.

JF: In what way was your father involved in this underground?

LA: I think that most of his involvement was in just knowing that there was somebody there. I think that there was some escapes, where they helped and I also know that there was a small amount of money that was coming in just to help to keep buying food and so on. And unfortunate that that could not have been distributed maybe as well as one would because of the great need for [unclear].

JF: Were the escapes successful?

LA: I don't remember that many, but there were some, and possible through this contact with the, with the Poles. But then there also were some of the things that people were sent out, and we don't--I don't really know whether they, they probably ended up in Auschwitz. [unclear]

JF: Now, were any of the Poles involved in helping to bring in food or helping . . .?

LA: I'm sure they were, but I'm not sure. As far as I am aware, most of it was done for money, not for, not to just help.

JF: The people who were working in the factory.

LA: Yes. But again, you know, there were some friendships that developed. Now, for example, the people that I worked with, they were Poles. I don't remember being treated badly by them.

JF: Were you aware of any kind of religious services or prayers, groups of people praying, or any kind of thing in the camp?

LA: No, not in that camp. There were things that really kind of helped to lift up the spirit a little bit and it's kind of amazing. There were groups that formed and there were small singing groups, and maybe poetry reading even under those circumstances. But I don't remember any kind of religious thing. Now, maybe my parents did not seek this kind of thing. But I don't really think that there was really, that there was really that too much.

JF: Was there anything in particular that kept you going during that time?

LA: Well, the thing that kept me going was that I, that I was with my parents, and you know that was really a very, very unusual--another thing that kept me going was that my father at that time was a very optimistic person. You know, especially as the time was going on, and you were coming and it was during the time of Stalingrad already. And the things were changing and we did have this contact with the underground, and the general feeling as the time was progressing--we--'cause there were terrible moments. But also after we survived all of this time and we did know that this being a munition factory, they were trying to keep it going as long as they could. And [long pause] I remember they, they, periods of being beaten and . . .

JF: Of you being beaten?

LA: Yes.

JF: By whom?

LA: I think this, this one that I remember, I'm not sure, I think it was a Jewish capo actually. And, and it was, and it was one of the things, one of those horrible, filthy common bathrooms. They were pushing people into it and kind of trying to give a few minutes to get in and out. And again, I don't remember details, but I remember being beaten there. And, some of the things that I, that I remember that, that happened was a particular Jewish policeman whom everybody was afraid of, who was actually telling the Germans what was going on, and these kind of things that --and . . .

JF: Telling the Germans what kind of things?

LA: Well, you know, if somebody had some money hidden, or, or this contact with underground. I don't think that ever came out, because if that every came out there would be a lot of people that would get shot and I don't remember a thing happening like that. But it got to that, to the point that some of the Germans were afraid of this guy, because he would--had such a way with the SS anyway. He was actually killed by the Germans later on in one of those places.

JF: You mean in a death camp.

LA: No, just just shot or beaten to death, or something like that. Because he got to the point that he was spying on the Germans and telling other Germans, so that he really saw that he was a powerful person there. So, so there were people like that. But there was also an awful lot of kindness and, and things that you could see, you could see people

helping each other and, and sharing bread and people being very helpful. I also had typhoid there later as a child, and there was a, a Jewish physician who actually survived the war, and I have been in touch with him. He lives in Canada now. And, you know, I remember all the kind of kindnesses that he would--whatever he could do, he really did. He tried to give explanation why people couldn't go to work, [unclear]. I would say that the thing, you know, you remember the horrible things that, that stand out, but there were probably many cases of small human kindnesses were expressed. Okay, now that brings us into 1944. Now what started happening there--the Russian Army was pushing from the, from the east. This was the summer offensive there. And that's when we started getting a little panicky, because--am I going too slowly for you?

JF: No, no you're fine.

LA: Because it was pretty obvious that the Germans weren't going to leave us there, leave us there. There was the possibility that they would have to move on west. And actually they did. They transported us on trains to a different ammunition factory, which was in Czestochowa.

JF: Can you spell that?

LA: Yes. C-Z-E-S-T-O-C-H-O-W-A. And we came there during the summer--July. And for some reason that particular camp, again, it was run the same way. There were different portions of it, and some were worse than others. And again, by a matter of statistical luck, we were in a part that had a lot of work to do and they generally treated the people there a little bit better. And I ended up doing the same thing that I did in this other place, because I developed the skill. There's also one thing that I remember--the kind of a instrument that they used for it uses a piece of industrial diamond which was like a pickle. It actually doesn't have all that much value, but I guess there was some shortage of it, or they were just being very mean about it. What would happen was used that thing would wear out and you couldn't use it anymore. You'd have to substitute. And that thing wore out on me once, and for punishment they were going to deport me without my parents, you know, just because it, it broke. And again, I don't know what happened there--whether it was persuasion or whether my father still had something that he could buy his way out--they didn't do that. And well, that bring us towards this fall. And the thing that I remember distinctly too is my father was--he say, "Well, I'm just about to the last of our money." But again, he was optimistic about it. He says the war is coming to the end. And I don't remember what it was, whether it was $10 American bill or $20 American bill, but he was ready to sell it. And it turned out that it was a counterfeited American bill, and he couldn't get anything for that. And that's the time that I remember that he really went into despair, because he said, "Well, now we cannot buy any extra food. We just have to live on whatever is available and, you know, who knows?" So that was how it ends. And that brings me to January 17.

Tape two, side one:

JF: This is tape two, side one, of an interview with Dr. Lili Altschuler. Before you go on, can you tell me about the living conditions at the second camp? Was there also a family barrack?

LA: No. There wasn't any family barrack at that time. But the living conditions there might have been a little bit better than the one before. I think that whatever Jewish administration they had there, somehow they were able to do, to do a better job.

JF: In what way was it better?

LA: I think it was cleaner. And, and the reason it was cleaner because it probably wasn't as overcrowded. It, it just goes back to whatever German administration they had and whatever work they had to get out. I think by that time they really depended on that work going out. And there wasn't that many--if I know correctly--by that time a lot of the Jews were already exterminated. We were probably one of the few left by then. I said before January 17. It's actually January 16, at night.

JF: This is January 16, 1945.

LA: 16, 1945.

JF: Okay.

LA: Alright. And then the Germans rounded up the whole camp and took us to a railroad station, in that night, in that city of Czestochowa. And we were waiting for the trains. And at that time my mother and I were separated from my father. My father was on train and we were behind.

JF: Did you know where you were going?

LA: Well, we knew we were going into Germany, but we didn't know whether we were going to Auschwitz, or where, but at that time our primary objective was to try to stay together. That's always the case and, of course, they separated the men from women. As a matter of fact, a cousin of mine, the same age, but a male, was also separated. He was standing with my mother and with me while his brother and my father were already on the train. And he was trying to ask my mother what to do. And she kind of said, "Well, you better go with them because you won't be able to stay with us anyway, because they are separating men from women. And he went and they went and we stood here and the train were away and the Germans disappeared. They didn't have time to do anything further and I was liberated with my mother that night. The Russians came.

JF: Where were you liberated?

LA: Czestochowa.

JF: And where did you go at that point?

LA: Well, we were on this railroad station. We didn't know where to go. We just went with a group of other people from the same camp and we walked in, into a deserted apartment that the Germans left when they run out in a hurry. It was left open and there was some food there and we were there. And we stayed there. There was some

shooting around and we stayed there very careful, without going out for a few days because we realized, and we heard about other cases that the Germans could come back in. They'd go in and out. But they didn't. The city was liberated by the Russians.

JF: About how many people had been left in the camps?

LA: 5.000 people were left, and maybe, I'm not sure whether it was another 5,000 or less than 5,000 that were sent out, like about half and half.

JF: And in that camp, were there any children younger than yourself?

LA: Yes, there were maybe a few years younger. I don't remember. No, there weren't any very small children. I didn't want to get into that, but in this other camp, I remember a, a child being born and being killed. A newborn child.

JF: Being killed by the Germans?

LA: No, I don't know whether it was the mother or, or the people, or whoever, you know, the--a woman gave birth to a child, you heard a scream, and then you didn't hear anything. No, I--but in in that camp, there, there might have been, you know--by that time I guess I was about 14 or 15--there might have been children maybe 10 or 12. There wasn't anybody that was very young. No, there wasn't. Not in the other one either, because it was a working camp.

JF: And those children who were able to work in some way . . .

LA: Yes, they would always, you know--my mother would always dress me and put makeup. You always appeared older than you were. But anyway, we were liberated, and there was a certain amount of food in that apartment. But that ran out after a few days and a group of Jews that were left were trying to get organized in a way. And the first thing was to try to go to the Russian authorities. But you know, it's really hard to believe, but that they didn't really have much sympathy for us. Apparently that was the first large, large, maybe 5,000 people that were liberated as a group and they couldn't quite understand why we were left behind. And they were implying cooperation with the Germans and all kinds of thing and there wasn't much help. Again, I don't have very--and you know, of course, there was this tragedy that we were liberated and my father was sent out within a half an hour before and part of our--we were [unclear] of a large family. My aunt and my cousin and four of my other cousins--they were all sent out within that half an hour and I was just left with my mother.

JF: You were the only members of your family that were liberated?

LA: At that, at that place. The others, my father was sent to Buchenwald and so were my four male cousins. My aunt and my cousins were sent to Ravensbrück and one of my cousins also from the same group was for a short time in Buchenwald, and then he was in Theresienstadt. And that was already after Theresienstadt was--most of the people there were deported to Auschwitz.

JF: What happened to your father?

LA: My father survived. He was liberated by the Americans and that, you know, is another story in itself, from what I know. After he ended up in Buchenwald--because

Buchenwald was right outside of Weimar--and he would be working with a detail to clean up the bombed cities and destroyed city. And he was able to find some food there and they were there. Now, again, where the Germans lived, as Americans were coming from the other side, they were taking the inmates from them--the Jews, especially for this famous walks that you probably know about. Well, by that time my father was down to like 40 kilos weight, or whatever, and he was in no position to walk. Well, he met in that camp a cousin of mine, also from Lodz, from a different city--the same age as mine, who was in a children's camp in Buchenwald. He was together with Elie Wiesel in the same place. And toward the very end when they were pushing people for this walk, they, they, left the children's barrack. And this cousin of mine hid my father in the children's barrack and they were liberated by the Americans in May. So he went on from January till May in Buchenwald.

JF: In the meantime, what was happening to you and your mother?

LA: Well, we stayed in that city of Czestochowa for a while and it was sort of a communal kind of living with, with other people. And there was a sort of anarchy, and really the food that we would be getting from the Russians were not much help. You were kind of on your own. And most of the food was coming from whatever was left by the Germans. And from there my mother saw that we should go to this small town of Opatow that we came from. She saw that there was a chance that if anybody else survived from the family that they would be going there. And we went there and this Polish family that I mentioned to you before, that helped us take some of the things from Lodz, was in that, was in that town. You know, this is one thing that happens. They became quite affluent by that time. They took over my aunt's house and apartment. When they first came to the town, she let them have the little apartment--it was in the same house. But by that time they took over that place. Now they were helpful and we did stay with them for a few days. But I think they were very happy to see us go. I, I think they kind of felt that if nobody, if nobody returned they would be the heirs to whatever was left. And I think they realized that there probably were things hidden there and I don't know whether they got those things or, or not. And they were worried that we might want something from them. But I do appreciate--we did stay with them and they did feed us. And them my mother decided that we'll go back to Lodz.

JF: Was there any danger for you at that point?

LA: After the war?

JF: This was still before, in the early part of 1945?

LA: That was in January. That was in January. Poland was --the Polish government was being formed at that time. There was a Polish government already at that time, and of course, the Russians were there, were there. There was some danger to Jews, but we were not aware of it at that time. This Opatow was very close to Kielce, which I mentioned to you before, and that's where there was a pogroms of Jews after that. You're familiar with that too. But we were not aware of any kind of a danger at that time and

there were some trains that were going then. It wasn't a very normal kind of situation, but we did make our way back on a, on a train. And one thing that I remember during that time there too, that it wasn't easy to get yourself a place on those trains because arms were moving and people were pushing. And we were on one of those trains, you know, sitting in a corners and there were Russians there and we were afraid of being pushed out. And then one of the Russians approached us and mentioned a word which you might know, but I didn't know it at that time. And he looked at us and said, "*Amcha*[3]." Do you know what that means?

JF: No.

LA: I think that comes from Hebrew and means one of the tribe. And he was, apparently he was a Russian Jew. And he was trying to find out whether we were Jewish. But I did not know what it meant at the time. But that word, in the time in Poland after the war, became sort of a codeword. You know, if somebody met you--and some people, still even after the war, even so if they were Jews -- they did not, some of them didn't want to admit to it, or they didn't want to admit to anybody--and that became the kind of something, you know, if somebody knew what that was. You were Jew. But we didn't, at that time, we didn't. But anyway he was kind and he, we couldn't communicate. He spoke Russian. We didn't speak Russian. He tried to--I think he did, we did speak a little Jewish, and he did speak in Yiddish to my mother. They finally did communicate and he helped us with food. And we did get to Lodz. And then again at that time, we came back to the apartment house that we lived in and the, the son -in-law of the owner of the apartment house survived and was already there. And he--and unfortunately his second wife and his first family they don't survive the war--took us in and we stayed with them for a few days. At our own apartment were Germans living, still Germans living. They were *Volkdeutsche*. And we were able to get that back. My mother and I were able to get that apartment back.

JF: What were you doing for funds during this time?

LA: Well, this family helped us. We didn't have, we didn't have, funds, you know. The question was to get food. We had whatever clothes we had on our back and whatever we were, whatever we had to go on these trains, which was like a change of clothes. And then in just very first days in Czestochowa, people were able to get few things from whatever was left from the Germans. You know, you would get a sweater here and maybe a pair of shoes. And the food we had in this--where we stayed for a few days in this town of Opatow--those Polish people were helping us. And when we got back to Lodz, it was this friend who was in the apartment house. There was a Jewish Community Service that formed in Lodz pretty quickly. That was one of the largest one and the first one that was formed right after the war. And I remember that there was some food there but most of our help came from those friends who were already there. And again, in Lodz there were German things that were being left and they were confiscated. We were, we were not

[3]*Amcha* - Hebrew; the codeword that helped survivors identify fellow Jews in war-ravaged Europe. www.amcha.org.

hungry then. There was enough food. And I guess, whoever--Lodz became a center of the survivors at that time. At the, the Jewish Community Service would give out food and people would help and they pulled the things together.

JF: The Jewish Community Service--was this in any way related to the Council that had been in power during the time of the ghetto?

LA: No.

JF: This was a separate thing.

LA: That thing, that thing was exterminated. You probably familiar with Rumkowski and there were, there might have been a few survivors in the Lodz Ghetto. No, that was not formed with that ghetto. There were, I think there were some Jews who came out who were on false papers during the time, and there were also people coming back from the east. They were liberated. See, my husband was liberated quite a few months before because he was in the eastern part of Poland. That was earlier. And I don't know whether there might have already been contact with UNRRA[4] at that time but there was some sort of a Polish government. And I, I think there was some help at that time. What happened later is something that, that my mother was quite a remarkable person. She never worked before in her life, never had to do anything, and when we were left, she, she started working. And what she did, she got acquainted with someone who had a candy factory. She didn't know very much about it except that her sister-in-law had a store. And this, this person, this candy manufacturer would give her candies and she would be selling them from store to store. And actually, she did, you know, reasonably well, and we lived on that. I guess, you know, this is another thing that's kind of unbelievable, after what you go through. Within three weeks or a month after I was back in Lodz, I was back in school.

JF: The same school that you had been in?

LA: No, no.

JF: A new school.

LA: No, there were no Jewish school. There were that many Jews.

JF: This was . . .

LA: It was a Polish school.

JF: . . .a Polish school.

LA: And it sort of--it was a little bit chaotic, but it was a school. And I was in that school for six months. Then my father, then my father came back. But you know, this is--let me tell you this things--we would go every day to this Jewish Community Center, and as soon as a camp was liberated or somebody would [unclear] those names that you looked at and names like, you know, there about [unclear] --their name, their, their names don't mean anything. So people tried to put their date of births or place of births so that

[4]UNRRA - United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, created November 9, 1943 to provide economic assistance to European nations after WWII and to rehabilitate and assist refugees who came under Allied control. (www.ushmm.org)

they would be identified. And one day we found the name of my father but it didn't check. The date of birth didn't check and the place of birth didn't check. And you know, we didn't whether it was the same person or not. But it was and he made his way back to Lodz. I guess, you know, he had also this choice of going back to Opatow or going back to Lodz and I guess he decided if we survived, we would go there. And then when he came to Lodz he said he also had to make the decision where to go. And he came to our apartment and I opened the door for him . . .

JF: Unbelievable.

LA: So, you know, I'm a survivor, but I guess in a way I wasn't all that typical because I did survive with my family. There are sides to those stories, but you know, some day--. And there was a small cousin of mine who was--I think she was born in 1938 and her parents were--it was my father's--father was my father's business partner--and they ended up in the city of Kielce rather than Opatow and we were in touch with them. And she was placed with a Polish family when the things were getting bad. And her mother, I don't know where she ended up, whether it was in Auschwitz or whatever, but she went that group and didn't survive. Her father did survive. But what happened--when, when we were travelling from the city of Czestochowa to Opatow, we went through that city of Kielce and we knew that they were there. So we thought, while we were there, we tried to find out. And again, there was the Jewish Community that was already formed there. And we stopped there and could they help us with food and we asked about that family. And they told us that the parents didn't survive. But they know that the child was probably placed with such and such family. So my mother and I went there. And she was a little girl at the time, but she has not seen us since 1939, and we were not sure whether she would remember us. But anyway she acted like she didn't. And again she might have been afraid because she was told not to admit to being Jewish. And she was with two Polish women, very uneducated mother and daughter. And there was nothing at that time that my mother and I could have done about it. First of all, she would have turned her back to us, and we didn't have any place for her to go, so she was just left there. Then, in Lodz, after my father--this was before my father came back--we met her father's brother, who also survived. [unclear] And we did tell him about it. And we started to try to get her back and they did not want to return that child to us. And I mentioned to you that Kielce was a very dangerous city for Jews to go to--because there was absolutely no way to go there to get the child back. And that was already up when my father came back. And between her uncle and my father, they decided that they would try to somehow get that woman to come back to Lodz with the child, and if she does, it would be easier to somehow get her back. And that woman knew that the child had family in Palestine at that time and that--anyway, they told her that she had to come to Lodz because there was money for the child and she would be able to do it. And they were ready to go and meet the woman at the train, when the child's father came. He was in Auschwitz and he survived in Auschwitz. And he came

a day before to Lodz before his child was due to arrive. And that woman did turn her back to her father. She lives in Paris now.

JF: What happened to your family after you were reunited?

LA: It's interesting too. We lived in Lodz for a while. We had our apartment. And I was going to school. And you know, within a couple of months my father was in business and we were doing rather well. But at this time he was in contact with his family in the States.

JF: Was much of the family in Europe . . .?

LA: Survived?

JF: . . . survived?

LA: My mother had nine brothers and sisters. One of her sisters survived in Russia. None of the others. None of my father's brothers or sisters survived, but their children survived. You know, this family--we were together in, in that camp, in a way driving us as they were. They did survive. My aunt who went to Ravensbrück died there, in Ravensbrück, also in the last two months.

JF: Your grandparents?

LA: My grandparents died in the Lodz Ghetto--from hunger, we understand. I had a grandmother in the city of Opatow--she went with the transport, as did my father's sister who lived there before the war. What happened there was kind of unfortunate, because they could have been with us. But they had more thing to take of, even at that time, and there was a question of staying a little bit longer or being [unclear] and they didn't make it. It was, it was too late. But we left Lodz in 1946, because at that time we could see both the Russians there and the Polish antisemitism. And with everything else that happened, we didn't want to say--my father didn't want to stay there.

JF: How was the Polish antisemitism shown in Lodz?

LA: It was. It was. At that time I could see it. Let me, let me mention this family who lived there, that we met again after the war. Was this Polish shoemaker that my mother left a lot of things and he was a very decent person. Because even then after the war he did, he did return some of the things to us that my mother left. Not all of them, and you know, he mentioned things that made sense. He said that he sold something because he needed money, or that the Germans took it away. But some sort of other things he did return. And when we first came with nothing--when my mother and I came with nothing--he was also helpful. You know, he would buy us food for supper [unclear]. But then they became very unfriendly, and when they became unfriendly is when my father returned. And when they could see that we were doing well again and that really bothered. And you could hear things like that. They'd say, "Well, you know, we hear that the Germans killed all the Jews, but walk out on the street in Lodz, they're all back here. And they're all doing well again." You know, again, they only see the ones who are doing well from the few that survived. And he was a decent person, but he was only decent as long as he could see that, that we had nothing. Then, this old economic jealousy came, came back

again. You know, it wasn't, you know like, here in this country, if you see a Vietnamese refugee or someone who comes here and can do well within a year or two year - you admire him. But that was the same thing. Look what happens again. You're going to have more than we do in a short time again. Oh, we have left. I left Poland with my parents in 1946. [Long pause] You wanted to take this through 1945, right?

JF: That's alright.

Tape two, side two:

JF: This is tape two, side two, of an interview with Dr. Lili Altschuler.

LA: In 1946, we went to Stuttgart, and that was through Czechoslovakia, with the illegal immigration, organized by the Jewish Groups. The border was kind of open between Poland and Czechoslovakia.

JF: And what were these Jewish groups that were running this?

LA: I think they were Zionists groups that were helping getting Jews out of Poland after the war. And there was no direct way going to Israel, and not everybody was going to Israel. But people were going into Germany, into the displaced persons camp.

JF: And how did you make arrangements? How did you make contact with this group?

LA: The way I remember, actually the Poles didn't object to the Jews leaving. The border was kind of open and the Czechs were helpful. And we kind of crossed our border and then we went on trains and went from Czechoslovakia into, into Germany. And there were, there were temporary camps in Vienna at that time. And Ebensee[5] in Austria and from there, there were--we were being helped. I think at that time it was both by the UNRRA and the Jewish Organization, Brihah.[6] We were able to get into Germany.

JF: And this was in 1946?

LA: 1946. Was the summer of '46. Yes, it was '46. And we ended up living in Stuttgart.

JF: In what kind of place?

LA: Well, actually, we went to this displaced persons camp in Stuttgart, in rather a nice area of Stuttgart. That's one of the places that General Eisenhower emptied for the survivors and displaced the people there. But those who were there earlier were the one who were liberated in the German camps and never went back. And we did not live there. We lived in a private apartment that belonged to the Germans. And at that time the former Nazis, they were kind of under friendly persuasion to sublet some of their apartments. And we paid them for it. And we lived there.

JF: What was the reaction of the German people that you came in contact with at Stuttgart?

LA: Well, the, the reaction was that they didn't know. That was the kind of thing you heard all over. That they did not know what happened, and of course, that's impossible. Because--take Weimar for example--that was right outside of Buchenwald and people were going out from there and working and helping--so of course they knew.

---

[5]Ebensee – a satellite camp of Mauthausen, located in upper Austria; the camp was liberated May 4-5, 1945 by the U.S. Army 80th Infantry Division. It became a DP refugee camp under UNRRA after liberation. (www.ushmm.org "The 80th Infantry Division")

[6]*Brihah* - (also *Beriha* or *Bricha*), post-WWII movement that "organized illegal emigration from eastern Europe into the Allied-occupied zones and Palestine or Israel," lit. "escape" in Hebrew. (www.ushmm.org "Brihah")

And being in a concentration camp, we knew exactly what was going on and we knew about Auschwitz and we knew about Treblinka. And of course they knew that too.

JF: What was their attitude towards you during that time?

LA: There were some young Germans that I had contact at the university that were my age. And some of them were extremely friendly and helpful, and again, I don't know whether, that would be whether they were actually sorry for it. And whether those were the people that didn't take any part in what was going on or whether that was just the kind of thing to do. It's hard to--certainly the people who were my age at that time could have been a part of *Hitlerjugend* or whatever. But the kind of attitude that I had there--I tried to isolate myself from the Germans as much as I could, to the point that-- you know, I would understand German and I could read it--but I only spoke when I had to. And of course I went to the university and I had to listen to the lectures. But I spoke as little as possible. And we didn't have that much contact with the Germans. The particular family that we lived with--I'm sure they resented the fact that they had to give us a part of their apartment, and I don't know that they were particularly--I always had a hard time to really understand my mind whether they knew exactly what was going on.

JF: During the war, you mean?

LA: Yeah. In talking to them--actually they were living in, living in Germany for a short time during the war.

JF: How long did you stay in Stuttgart?

LA: I stayed in Stuttgart until 1948 until our American visa came through.

JF: And you were attending the university there?

LA: I was at *Hochschule* in Stuttgart.

JF: Is there anything else from those years that you think might be important to note?

LA: I think one of the things that, that I would like to mention, and I don't know how other people feel about this, that in my particular case, you know, coming here and being in this wonderful, fortunate position surviving with parents and then [unclear] and trying to build a life for yourself, and trying to bring up and educate the children, I always thought about those years and they were with me. But I didn't dwell on it as much as I do now. And, you know, there is this feelings of the Germans and this whole business and idea of the *Wiedergutmachung* [German - make amends, reparations] and trying to do something for the survivors of the concentration camp. They always approached it on the, you know, health damages that they paid to. There was always the fact, now what happened shortly after, you know, how well you adjusted or were you sick and so on. But the things really come out much later. And I don't know how other people feel about it, like when, when I was younger I don't think I had that many dreams and nightmares as I do now. I think those things, in some ways get, they get worse as time progresses rather than [unclear]. Because in the beginning, you know, you have this business of, of survival and trying to make it and trying to establish your life. And then when you kind of

accomplished some of those things, that's when you look back and you relive some of these things again.

JF: We thank you very much.

LA: Will you know whatever it is? I hope it will be of some use. I guess most of the things that people usually hope for is that those things won't happen again. And I didn't go through any kind of horror stories or anything like that. I just tried to kind of historical and just give you the facts. And out of these feelings, and you know, the kind of situation that as a young child you being put in a position that they're going to separate you from your parents and they telling you that they going to do that.

[End of Interview]