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Ella Schlanger oral history interview by Tori Chambers Lockler, August 5, 2010

Ella Schlanger (Interviewee)

Tori Chambers Lockler (Interviewer)

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Tori Chambers Lockler: Okay. So, today is August 5, 2010. We are here with Ella Feuerstein Schlanger. My name is Tori Lockler. We are in Pasadena, Florida, in the United States. The language of our interview will be English, and our videographer is Jane Duncan.

Okay. So, Ms. Schlanger, if I can start by asking you to spell your last name for us?

Ella Schlanger: S-c-h-l-a-n-g-e-r.

TL: Thank you. And can you tell us your date of birth?

ES: December 24, 1930.

TL: And can you tell us where you were born?

ES: Benedike.

TL: Would you be willing to spell that for us?

ES: Yeah. B-e-n-e-d-i-k-e.

TL: And where is that?

ES: Well, it was Czechoslovakia, then it turned into Hungary. It was Czechoslovakia when I was born, then it turned into Hungary, and now it is Ukrainian.

TL: And can you tell us your mother's name, first and last?

ES: Gizella Solomon.

TL: Okay. And can you spell her first name?

ES: G-i-z-e-l-l-a.

TL: And then, your father's first name and last name?

ES: Immanuel Feuerstein.

TL: Okay. And can you tell us what your mother did and what your father did for a living, before the war?

ES: Yeah. My father—we had a large farm, and we had a lot of land. My father—and we had an overseer—were overseeing that everything is done the proper way.

TL: Okay.

ES: And my mother, she just was a housewife, and she managed the children and she had a garden. She helped people. But other than that, she was home. But she was busy all the time.

TL: Okay. And can you tell us about your siblings?

ES: I had a brother. His name was Tibor, T-i-b-o-r, Feuerstein.

TL: And can you tell us his age?

ES: He was born in June 1927.

TL: Okay. So, a little older than you.

ES: Three and a half years.

TL: Okay. Thank you.

ES: Old enough to know better. (laughs) Old enough to know he had a sister.

TL: Would you start by telling us some of your early memories before the war?

ES: Yeah. How early do you want it?

TL: Well, early memories of your community or of your school.

ES: Okay. It was a village; what they called it is a village. We were the very first place there, because we had huge lands and stuff like that, and then after that there were people living, and there was a river going through, in the middle. And there was a bridge, and right by the bridge, after you went over the bridge, there was the school. It was a schoolhouse, and the principal lived right across from the school, which was like a hillock. It was flat where we were, and after you went over the bridge it was like raising up. It was a hillock.

The lady was a teacher and her husband was a teacher—he was the principal—and the two of them were teaching. They had three classes together—no, four classes together in the morning, like from eight to one, and then—actually, I don't remember now—were the others. They must have gone in the afternoon, because I went in the morning—the other ones. It was a large, large, one-room, huge place. They were teaching us, and later on they hired—when I was in the fourth grade, they hired another teacher, so they split up. They also rented another room. They split up the children that wouldn't be so many

together. And they were teaching us, going over the material; however, the majority of it was homework. You had to go home and do the homework, and then they were quizzing you about it, see if you know it, or they made you write about it. We had recess, and when we had recess we would be playing some games.

TL: And the village that you were in, was it primarily Jewish or was it a mixed village between Jewish and—?

ES: They had about fifty Jewish families. There was about, I would say, 350 families, and the rest were Greek Orthodox. You could call them—they really was not Russian, but a mixture of Russian and Ukrainian, and they were all Greek Orthodox. There was a big church and there was a synagogue. They had two cemeteries, the Jewish and the public. We had also a wooded area; when we were going from school we went for a picnic once a year. And we would be going—it would be like twenty minutes or twenty-five minutes' walk. We would go there and have a picnic once a year, and it was right after the snow melted.

That wooded area was the most gorgeous place. When we got in there, that whole floor was crocuses, purple crocuses, and little white flowers here and there with little bells in it. That whole thing was crocus. I've never seen—like a carpet. It was the most gorgeous thing. And then they had some area which was open; they had blackberry bushes, huge blackberry bushes, and people that were poor would go there and pick them and can them. And also, they used to go—I went several times with our help, because they would be going picking mushrooms. They had a lot of mushrooms in there. But nothing was as beautiful. I used to love flowers, and nothing was as beautiful as that crocus. It just was absolutely—I would just sit there. You had to do things, and I just couldn't move myself because I was watching those flowers, and I will never forget it. The most gorgeous thing—I mean, you have to see it. One after the other, all over the entire wooded area.

TL: Wow.

ES: They were wild. Nobody had them in their gardens or anything.

TL: Right.

ES: I remember we had peonies and we had lilacs, and my mother liked the zinnias and the asters. She liked—I forgot the name of the other one. They would be bulbs; they'd put it in and they would be beautiful, big. And we had roses, and we had a lot of bushes which I don't know the name of; they were flowering. We had lots of flowers, and then

we had lots of tiger lilies. It was really pretty. I used to love to live there. And you had to go and get water from a well. We had a basement in our house, and you stored there something, you took it down there, and that thing kept it cold like a refrigerator. And then we also had another well, which was really deep, and we had cows and stuff like that and they'd put the milk in there to keep it cold.

TL: To keep it cold.

ES: Yeah.

TL: Interesting. And do you have memories of friends?

ES: Yeah. I had some friends. We had a neighbor, and she was actually a year and a half or two years older, and I would be friends with her. I would be having friends in school. And then there were the people who worked for us; they had children, and we used to hang around a lot with them. I would be with different ones at different times. But nobody really that you were close to, because after I finished fifth grade, my mother decided I needed to go to the city to middle school. So, I was travelling for about a month when the Hungarians came out that the Jewish people were not allowed to travel on the bus.

TL: So you were commuting to school and back?

ES: Yeah, on a bus. But then the Jewish people were not able to, because you were not allowed to. You had to wear a yellow star and stuff like that. So, my mother farmed me out in the city, and I would come home every Saturday night. However, I couldn't come home by bus, so my brother was going back and forth on a bicycle. So he—I sat on his back and he brought me home.

TL: Wow. And who were you staying with, in the city?

ES: Well, first I stayed with one of my aunts, for the first year. The second year, my mother decided to hire—there was a lady who—I didn't know her; my mother knew her, somebody knew her. They said that she would like to have someone, so we stayed with her. But after that, they took us.

TL: And it was just you that was staying in the city during that time?

ES: I had a cousin in the neighboring village, and she stayed with me the first year; then she left from that city, which was Mukachevo—Munkács, Mukachevo.

TL: Can you spell that?

ES: Munkács? I'm just going to say like—I'm gonna say it in Hungarian. Munkács, and I'm gonna put down Ungvar. Okay. I stayed there; this is where we were going. And then Minnie, my cousin, she is a year older than me; she was born in thirty [1930], but she was born in January. Okay. Now, she wasn't gonna go. She had an older sister, and her father decided that she was a girl; she should not go to middle school and high school, you know. So, she stayed home. My mother decided that no matter what happens, she's gonna just kidnap that kid and take her in, and she did, and registered her, and then she had it out with her brother-in-law. (both laugh) He said, "What is the matter with you? Didn't you go to school?" Because we had to attend school Saturday—

TL: Oh.

ES: But we didn't have to write, but we had to attend school.

TL: I see.

ES: And he just didn't want to. Now, my grandfather didn't want me to go to school, either. "Oh, you can't go to school—you can't let her go to school, because she has to go to school Saturday." My mother said, "What's the matter? You had eight kids and you sent them to school." So then he didn't say nothing. (TL laughs) He did. They all finished school; my mother did, too. They were not low class; they were middle class.

TL: Right.

ES: They were middle class people, and like I said, we had lots of properties. We not only had lots of land, and most people worked for us, but we also had a wooded area—not that area, but someplace else. But when it came to Saturday, as people get older, they become very religious. Of course, his grandchildren, which he doesn't know about it, that my father had three brothers, and all three of them lived in the city where I went to school. And their kids, they went to movies, they did different—it was just getting too modern, and I said to my father, "What's with this thing here?" You know, I wasn't for it either,

but I didn't go to the movies because nobody wanted me. I was too young. (laughs) But I'm sure they all did, and I knew about it.

You know, I used to tease my brother. I said, "If you're gonna tell Mother what I did, I'll tell them you went to the movies." (both laugh) So, there you go. But they all knew it. They all knew it. We were getting modern; a couple of them were going out with non-Jewish people, dating and stuff like that. Of course, that was a no-no, but hey, it was changing—for the better. For the better, because I think people should change and they should intermix, and they should marry each other if they love each other. But that's my opinion.

TL: And where was your brother? Was he in school in the town that you were in, with your family?

ES: No. He was taking the bicycle every day to school.

TL: Every day, back and forth.

ES: Yeah. He finished high school. Actually, I don't know; they took us two months earlier. He needed two months to finish high school.

TL: And what was your relationship like with your brother?

ES: Very good. He was very protective—after he wanted to throw me out, that is. (laughs)

TL: Will you tell us about that?

ES: Oh, when I was born, he didn't want to—he looked at me, looked at the baby, and he said, "I don't want here! Take her down and throw her out the window!" (laughs) And then I said to my mother, "Was I crying or what?" She says, "No, we didn't even know there was a baby. We fed you, you went to sleep. You slept all the time." I always slept. I used to sleep sixteen hours, if you let me. I couldn't wake up. I just slept all the time. He just didn't want competition. I mean, a three year old little boy; what does he know? No, he was very protective, and like I said, he waited for me and he took me home, and we had a very good relationship. We were very close.

TL: And can you tell us—it sounds like you were raised in an Orthodox household. Is that right?

ES: Yeah, Orthodox, but not Orthodox Orthodox. It was kosher. And my mother was also rebellious, I think. It was Orthodox—my grandfather was Orthodox, and my father, he was in World War One. He was an officer and the Russians took him prisoner. He was seven years in Russia. They didn't even know that he lived. And then one day he just walked home.

TL: Oh.

ES: So, he wasn't what you would say very religious.

TL: Okay. And do you remember—what do you remember at the start of the war?

ES: I remember that I was in school and my brother—I was still in school in the village, and my brother came for me, and it was in 1939. He came and he said, “You have to come home.” So I came home, and I asked, “What's going on?” And there was—at Munkács, there were a fight. The Ukrainians were chasing the Czechs out; that was Czechoslovakia. They were chasing the Czechs out. But that lasted only about three, four months that they occupied us. Of course, they right away wanted us to turn Ukrainian in schools and everything else.

And then after that, or maybe half a year after that, the Hungarians started fighting and they came in and they got rid of the Ukrainians and they occupied the place. When they took us to camp, it was under Hungarian rule. So it was, I would say, either late thirty-nine [1939] or early forty [1940] the Hungarians were there. And then the Hungarians, when they came in, if they found any Czechs they just got a hold of them and shot them, wherever they were. I mean, they were barbarians. They were just about as bad as the Germans.

TL: So, it was mostly focused on the Czechs. So did you experience anti-Semitism?

ES: I was too young when the Czechs were there, and no, they were not anti-Semitic.

TL: Okay. Okay. So when the Hungarians came in and you were taken to camp, what do you remember about that early part of being taken from the village?

ES: Well, we had Passover dinner, and they were in our yard because we had the biggest yard, the biggest area and stuff like that. They behaved very nice and everything and we didn't have much contact. Just as soon as Passover was over, all of a sudden the Hungarians came and they—"You got ten minutes to get out of this house!" And they took us to the schoolyard, and they took us to a brick factory in Munkács. And we were there about four or five weeks; then they took us straight to Auschwitz.

TL: Okay. So, they took you to a brick factory in—Munkács?

ES: Munkács.

TL: Munkács, okay.

ES: You could call it Mukachevo, but it was Hungary at that time.

TL: Okay. And the whole family went at that time?

ES: The whole family.

TL: The whole family. So, it was your mother, your father, your brother, yourself, and were your grandparents with you at that time?

ES: No. My grandfather and his new wife took off and went into Munkács. He stayed with one of my uncles.

TL: Okay. So your grandfather and his—

ES: He took off like four weeks before.

TL: Okay.

ES: And moved in with one of my uncles. I guess he figured things are gonna be bad. But you see, after the Hungarians came in and we couldn't take the bus, they also made us wear the yellow star.

TL: And that was in thirty-nine [1939] or earlier.

ES: That was in forty-one [1941], I think.

TL: Okay.

ES: Forty-one [1941] or something like that.

TL: Okay. Okay. So, right around forty-one [1941] is the time that you were taken to the brick house.

ES: No, forty-four [1944].

TL: Forty-four [1944], okay. So in 1944 is when you were taken to the brick house, and then you said you were there for three to four weeks.

ES: Between three and five weeks. I don't remember.

TL: Okay. And what did they have you doing while you were there? Anything, or just as a holding place?

ES: It was a holding place. Some of us were helping out, you know, doing some chores voluntarily or something.

TL: Okay. And then, what do you remember from there?

ES: They put us in a cattle—cattle—what do you call that railroad thing? Wagon, or whatever?

TL: The cattle car.

ES: Cattle car, and they shoved in eighty of us. You only had room to stand: kids, old people. And they gave us a pail to go pee or do whatever you want. There was not even enough room to stand, and they didn't give us [anything] to eat. The thing would stop—oh, and they locked us up and they put wires on the window. When we stopped—you know, years later I saw this engineer from them, the guy who was taking these trains. He was a Polish guy. And when the stopped—and I was looking out the window, I was by the window—he went (makes sound effect). That's what they're gonna do to us. And I didn't understand that. But he said that on TV like twenty years ago. He says, "I had to drive that thing, because I couldn't refuse. But I did this to them." And I says, "Oh, my God!" You know.

So then, when we got there—after three days, I think—we had three dead, or four, I don't know.

TL: In the car?

ES: In the car.

TL: And you still had your whole family with you at that point, your mother, your father and your brother?

ES: Yes, yes. And we got there in the afternoon, late afternoon, I think. Oh, we had a maid; she also came; she was sick. And when we got there, my mother looks out the little window, they opened the doors, and she sees these men with striped outfits. And she says, "Oh, look. Prisoners." She thought they were prisoners. Well, they were prisoners, but she didn't know it's us, you know. So they come in, and they talk German. "*Raus! Raus!*" you know. "*Raus!*" and he got everybody up. My mother is starting to get up, and I'm there, and he gets a hold like that on my hand, like this. He says, "How old is she?" in German; my mother spoke German. We all understood German. She says, "Thirteen," and he says, "No, you tell them she's sixteen."

Sure enough, I go—they separate the men, and our maid, because she was sick, she went straight to the crematorium; we didn't know that. My mother and I were marching up, and then there's Mengele. (makes sound effects) He was a rotten egg. God, was he a rotten egg, and the rest of them, too! So he gets a hold of my hand again, and he says, "How old is she?" My mother says, "Sixteen." He says, "Are you the mother?" She says,

“Yeah.” “You go there.” So I started crying and then decided to run after her. He came after me. He says, “You’re gonna see her tomorrow.” Well, you know she was dead within an hour. I was gonna see her tomorrow. But anyway, so we got separated. Am I to tell you the story I told you about how we were going?

TL: Yes.

ES: Okay. So, we were going on a road, and there was a German on top of a watchtower. And he was singing, “*Aber jetzt gehts du alle kaput.*” We all understand what that is. I don’t know if you do.

TL: No.

ES: Now we were all gonna die. *Kaput*, that means (makes sound effect), finished. You know. And then, when we get a little closer, there is fences, you know, wire fences. They were kind of charged with electricity. However, they were open, and the crematorium was on this side and this side. This side one, the right side one, had a huge pit. All of a sudden, there are two men picking up a body and swinging it back and forth—a lady with hair this long, hanging—and throwing it in. And then, they pick up another one, and then by that time the girls started screaming, because he sang, “*Aber jetzt gehts du alle kaput.*” They said, “We’re not going anyplace,” and they started screaming and they wouldn’t move. He says, “If you want to shoot us, shoot us here. We’re not going anyplace.”

So they started arguing and they started yelling and they started pushing. Finally, they took two girls and they jerked them out and they took them into the showers. They shaved their head, put on a gray dress, and they came back. He said, “This is how you’re gonna look like when you come out.” We still didn’t move, and they said, “Well, we’re bringing the men to you,” so then we started moving. The girls in the front row—I was in the middle—had stones and everything else. They were at least gonna stone a couple of them while they’re shooting them, you know. And then we went in, they gave us a shower, and then they brought in the men, and I saw my father and my brother and I started crying. My father said, “Where is your mother?” and I said, “I don’t know.” And then he said, “We’ll be back for you.” They both died. That was horrible. I don’t like to talk about this. That was the last time I saw them. My brother, seventeen and a half years old, almost eighteen; he was such a nice boy.

And then I went—they took us to one of these barracks, and the barrack I went to was 8A. But we weren’t the only transport who came: there was one coming from Košice. Do you know what Košice is? That’s *Slovensko*. It’s a bigger town, more sophisticated; they had opera and different things. The towns I was talking about were smaller towns. And a

transport came from there, and then what they call the kapo who took care of these barracks. There were two sides to them. So there comes that Košice, and we were from Munkács. And she says, “Oh!” and they gave her an order to take people to have tattooed. And it was the Košice transport that they wanted that she would take. They said, “Bring these girls to be tattooed.” And she started screaming, “I can’t lose my cousin! I can’t lose my cousin! I can’t do that. I can’t do that.” She shipped us to have tattoos instead of her cousin.

And I didn’t understand, and nobody else noticed it, why she said that, because we did not realize that every three months, if you were close to the crematorium, they kill you. And the reason they didn’t have workers there is it was the transports that come in with all these packages—we used to sort them out, sort them out and sent them to Germany to be refinished and redone. They saved everything. So, we didn’t know what she’s talking about, so we were going there and we were going back and forth—you know, the music was playing—back and forth daily. We went the next day, we went to work there, and then we came back and we went to work, and we were doing it for about a month or a month and a— or five weeks. I don’t remember, actually.

And then, all of a sudden, the German guy who stayed there, you know, decided that he didn’t want us to go back and forth. But now I understand—it took me this long to figure that out—that that wasn’t the problem. That’s not why he did it. He didn’t want his girls to go back and forth; it takes too much time, takes too much effort, and they’re too tired by the time they come here—although it was a short distance, okay. He wants these girls to stay in the barracks, and he cleaned out two barracks. And he says—he took half the girls. “You’re gonna find a dress,” he says, “and find a navy blue and white polka dot, and this one is red and white polka dot.” We had to find it in the clothing. So we were the red barrack and the blue barrack—and they were pretty, you know, compared to the gray sacks we had. And we never went back; we stayed there. I guess there was no objection.

We were sorting the bedding, separating the shoes, separating the dresses, separating the—you had some dishes. And if it was some food, forget it. People ate it; there was very little left, ’cause most people were hungry. But here and there you found a little can or something. And then, see, they only kept the people who worked in the crematoriums for three months because they were witnesses and they didn’t want them, and they killed them every three months. That’s why—and they did the same thing over there. They called that *Brezhinka*. We were the ones that we talked to the guys, you know, and we saw everything. They put blankets on, eventually, but we still talked to the men.

There was one man who used to come and talk to my friend that was taking care of me. She was sleeping right next to my mother and father in the brick factory, and I stuck to her and she never told me to leave. Yet, because her name was Mamstein—this uncle of mine was married to her cousin, so she let me hang around her and she kind of accepted

me. Other than that, I had nobody. We were talking, and I was always with her, listening to what they say. He says, "Today I had to tell my father to take off his clothes, because he's getting a shower. But I had to do that, because I didn't have any way to blow up this place. But then again, in another month I'm gonna be dead anyway." In other words, they killed them every three months.

So the three months is up for us. Then comes Mengele, that red-headed awful guy, fat—I forgot his name—and that [Margot] Dreschel, that woman; she was a real mean no-good thing. I understand one of the girls, when they got freed, got a hold of her and hung her. But they couldn't catch the other one, but this one they did. And they came for us. You know, we were kind of blocked off, and there was a little fence so we wouldn't be going away. That was usually locked, except we went for showers every night; somebody took us for showers. We had to take a shower every night, because the Germans said we had to be clean.

So anyway, they were walking between us. That was something, wasn't it? And then they come. There was the red-headed, there was this woman, there was Mengele, and I think another one but I don't know who that was. I don't know the name. And they came for us, to take us to the crematorium because we were there three months and we saw enough, and that was enough, so we gotta go. Well, you know, that German—now I understand why he took us into those barracks: so he could have possession of us. He says, "No, you can't have my girls." And then they started like this, and then they started like that, and then he went for his gun. Okay, okay. He says, "You can have the girls, but you're gonna have to kill me."

They left. We weren't killed, except the majority of them didn't know what was going on. But that Gizzie—her name was Gizella like my mother's, and then there was another girl, I forgot her name; she died of cancer a long time ago. We were asking those guys—we became friends with some of them, you know—those *Sonderkommando*, they were called, you know, the ones who worked in the crematorium. So we knew quite a bit, and we also knew about it when they brought the truckfulls of kids, and it smelled awful. Just their screams, you know, the kids were screaming all over the place. We didn't know what happened. And when we asked, we said, "What the hell are you guys doing? It stinks so badly, and what is this screaming?" He says, "They're bringing truckfulls of kids. They're cleaning out the children's camp, and they're dumping them right into the fire alive." I will never forget this. That's the biggest nightmare I can think about. How could they do that? Even when you kill a cockroach, you do something. You don't do it like that. Anyway, they were animals.

Then I stayed there I don't know, maybe another two months or so, or something. We had a little French girl; she was the cutest little thing. But there were some men working there, too, and she was having an affair and they caught her. So they said, "One for all

and all for one.” They caught her, they kicked us out. So we went into the *B-lager*, and from there they were taking us to different camps. We went to—I think it was Breslau. That thing that I gave you didn’t have it down, because I didn’t—Breslau. We worked in a munitions factory. And then we started to hear the guns; you know, the Russians were coming. It must have been someplace in Poland or something. And by the way, they took us in open wagons, like coal wagons and wood wagons, and it was winter. People died and you’d just throw them out and stuff like that.

And we went there and we worked there for a good while, and then from there they took us—walking; they called it a death march—to Gross-Rosen. It took us three days; we didn’t get anything to eat, and we were frozen. They took us in a barn; we slept there, on the farm. If anybody stayed behind and couldn’t walk, they just shot them. That’s how they shot my brother, I understand. They just shot him, because a lot of people were frozen and cold and didn’t have food. Besides, we didn’t have enough to eat in Auschwitz and the other camps, either; they didn’t feed us, except once a day, and then you were lucky if you got something.

My hands were all frozen. This little finger and this and this, they were kind of brownish looking, but this was rotten like an apple. And accidentally I stuck my finger in there, and there was a scar there; there was a hole, and you could see the bone. I had the same thing on this here. I have arthritis now. But some of them had their toes, and they just pulled out the toe, you know, because it hurt so much. But I just let it there and I just looked at it, and you know, for the life of me, I don’t remember how this healed up, because that wasn’t supposed to heal up, especially I didn’t have any nutrition or anything. But it healed up. I said, “Wait a minute, what happened?” You see, I was so dazed I just didn’t think, didn’t care. It was best if you didn’t think.

So then from there, they—God, how did we get to Mauthausen? I think we marched again. We marched twice. And then from Mauthausen—I’m not sure whether it was Buchenwald first or Mauthausen. They took us with—we marched to one of them, and then from there they put us in a regular train, and we wound up in Nuremberg. For three days, we couldn’t move because they were bombing the city day and night: at night the English, and during the day the Americans. About a hundred yards from us, a little bit further down, was a German train; it wasn’t prisoners, you know. They bombed that. How did they know we were there? They knew we were there. Somebody must have told them, from the ground, you know.

They bombed that train, but there was nothing to eat. But this is one time the Germans didn’t have what to eat, either. But then they found, I think, a potato—you know how you used to put away the potatoes in Europe? You dug a hole, you put the potatoes, and you put a lot of straw and different things to preserve the potatoes from freezing. And they found one of those, and I think—what happened I don’t know, but they made a fire and

baked it or something. Everybody got something and we got a little water, but we didn't get to eat much. And then I think they did bring in bread, a small little piece of bread one day, but that's all we ever got. I don't even remember how we survived. A lot of them didn't.

So then they took us to the other men's camp, and I don't know how I got to Breslau. We were only about two, three weeks in each one. They were just taking us, because they didn't know where to take us. Because, you see, each time they took us to some place, I think the Russians or the English or somebody was getting close, so they took us again. I don't know why they occupied so much time and effort to take the prisoners when they had to take care of themselves. No, they didn't want us to survive or didn't want us to be witnesses. So then they took us to the other one, and I don't know how we got to Breslau—I mean, to Bergen-Belsen. We got in Bergen-Belsen, and they took us to the woods to work. But what did we do? We took a log and we put it here, and then the next day we put it there, or we'd carry it someplace else. And we kept going back and forth, and they didn't give us much to eat at all, and a lot of people were just dying. All of a sudden, I couldn't see. I was so weak I couldn't see, and I got a hold of Gizzie and she says, "Just hold on to me. Hold on to me." So I did, and then when we got there, there was some grass on the floor. So I picked a couple pieces of grass and I ate it, you know.

And then the English came in, and they saw us. I think we had parts of dead—there was lice all over. That was just parts. There was so many dead they couldn't get rid of them. But they did have a family camp; they had some families, a few. One little camp had—there were thousands and thousands of people there. They had the mother and the father and the children, but there wasn't too many. But there was some for show. The English came in and they saw us, and I think they were horrified. So they made pork and rice. At the stage we were in, that pork and rice killed half of us, because we couldn't tolerate it. I swear to you, dumps of dead all over. That's all it was, is bones. It didn't stink, but the lice were all over, 'cause there was no flash. I was sick. I had diarrhea for a month. Then I had boils about this size; I couldn't sit down, so I went to the doctor and he cut them open, and he said something—not to me, but to the other guy. He says, "Vitamin deficiency." So I remember that. I don't know why, because I didn't know what the hell that was.

And I stayed there for a while, and I met my cousin. Those were the young cousins. I was the youngest, and then Mimi, who went with me to school, she was the next youngest, and her sister a year older than her. So I was like, for instance, fourteen; Mimi was fifteen, and she was sixteen. They took Mimi to some kind of a hospital, and Rosie and I came home. I thought I'm gonna find my father or my brother. Actually, I was looking for my brother.

So we got home, and there were a few Jewish people who survived. A shoemaker took me in. And then after a month and a half or so, I didn't find anybody I knew; they're not coming back. His daughter got married and they were gonna go to Israel, so they took me to Prague. He said, "I'm taking you to your uncle." So that's how I got to Lily.¹ Lilly come home and she looks at me and she says, "What the hell am I gonna do with this thing?" (laughs) She didn't say so, but the way she gave me that look—she was engaged to my uncle, and she had my other cousins in her apartment; she had a lot of people there. And he came down, because he was working in a hospital at that time; he was a doctor. And he came down, and he said, "Where is your mother?" How do I know? I don't know.

I think I'm finished.

End of interview

¹Lily Salcman, who was also interviewed for the Holocaust Survivors Oral History Project. The DOI for her interview is F60-00026.