

## Uri Winterstein BEM



Uri Winterstein was born in Bratislava, Slovakia in October 1943. His parents were both lawyers, but his father's main passion was the welfare of the Jewish community and he was very active in Jewish community affairs.

When Uri was only a month old, his parents put him in the care of a non-Jewish woman, and he was not reunited with his family until after the war. They did so because they realised that it would be very difficult to keep a baby quiet if they needed to go into hiding, an eventuality for which they felt they always had to be prepared.

Nine of Uri's wider family were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where they were killed. During the war, Uri's father was a member of an underground movement known as the Working Group, who attempted to halt the deportation of Jews from Slovakia for almost two years (from October 1942 to late September 1944). They did this by bribing key SS officers and government officials.

In autumn 1944, Uri's father was deported to Terezin in what is today the Czech Republic. His mother and sister managed to evade being deported and went into hiding underground. However, they were eventually caught and sent to Terezin.

When the Russian army was approaching Bratislava, the family Uri was with decided to give him to a local peasant woman. This woman did not wish to be bothered with the care of a child and Uri received little attention. When he was reunited with his family at the end of the war, aged 19 months old, he could not walk or talk and ate only a roll dipped in coffee, the food he had eaten during his stay with the woman. Despite this, without the minimal care she gave him, he could not have survived.

After the war, following the takeover of Czechoslovakia by the Communists in 1948, his family left the country and ended up in Brazil, where Uri grew up.

Uri is married and has two daughters, a son and five grandchildren. He lives in Chiswick and has been speaking in schools for the Trust since 2013.

## Glossary - Uri Winterstein BEM

**Auschwitz-Birkenau** - The largest Nazi death camp in Poland.

**Deportation** - The rounding up of Jews living in one place and their transportation to another. Frequently this referred to the movement of Jews in Western and Central Europe to ghettos, concentration camps and death camps in the Eastern territories. This removal commonly saw Jews transported in cattle wagons.

**Terezin/Theresienstadt** – A concentration camp / ghetto in Czechoslovakia, known in Czech as Terezin and renamed Theresienstadt by the Nazis.