

A Life's Journey

Věra Tománek

1928 - 2021

Presented by
David Tománek, her son



1928–1938

Kladno, Czechoslovakia

From Birth to Nazi German Invasion



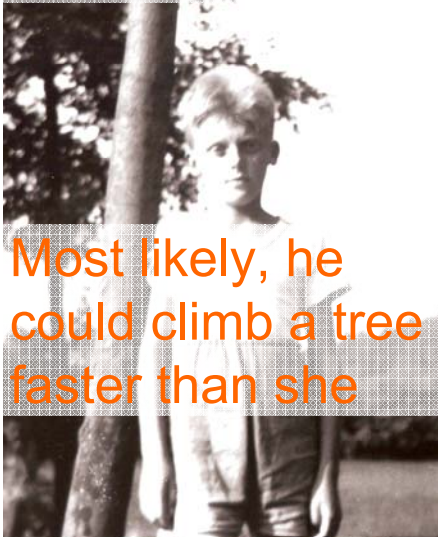
Do you believe in possessions? Think twice -
Věra's family, with no fault of theirs, lost everything.



1938–1945

Growing Up with Extermination

I believe he was
her first real love



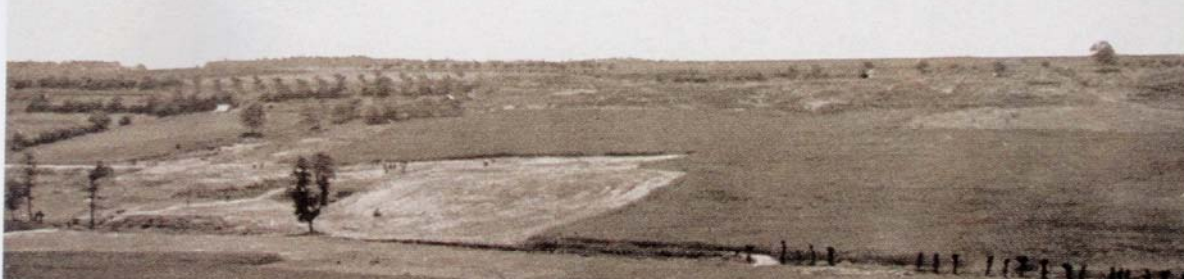
Most likely, he
could climb a tree
faster than she

He died in gas in
a concentration
camp in 1942.

He lived in the neighboring village of Lidice, ...



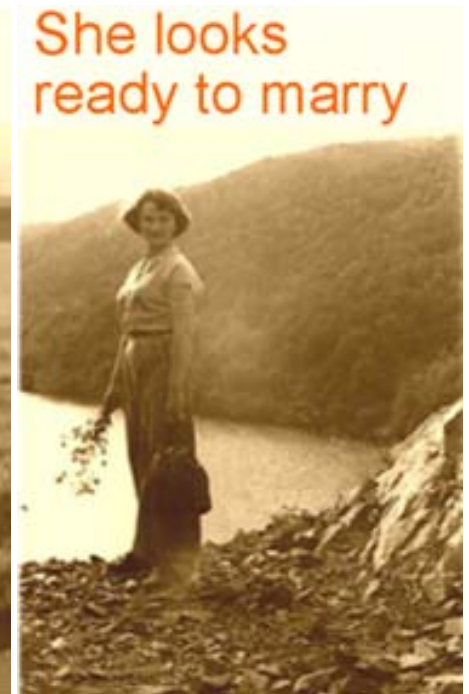
a short bicycle ride away, until Lidice was no more.



7 of Věra's family members got shot or gassed ... in 1942.

1938–1945

But Life Was Still Worth Living



1945–1948

No! Being Acrobatic Pilot Was More Fun



- This is *not* Věra flying. She flew *before* I was born.
- There are no pictures, just stories.
- Scary stories!
- So that I could be born, Věra had to get married first.
- She had to make a choice: to fly or to get married (Dad refused to be a widower soon).
- Věra made a choice: she got married.
- I (David) am the result.

1945–1948

From End of War to the Communist Coup

- More scary than aerobatics was the communist take-over of a democratic country.
- Few remember the coup d'état of 1948 and the militia taking over.
- In Věra's words: The communists were worse than Hitler.

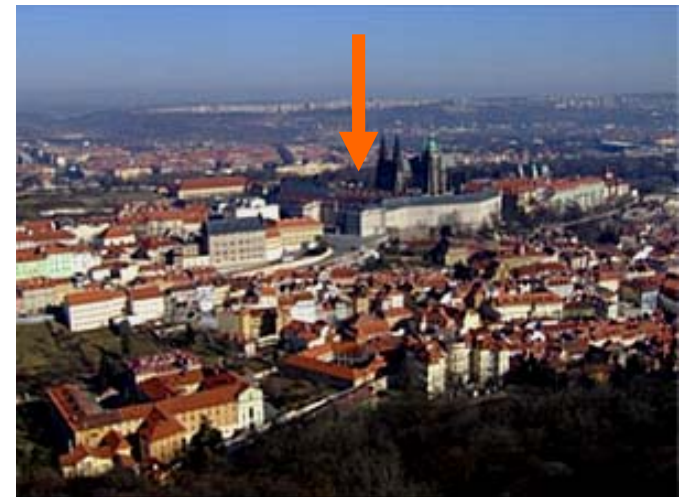
Do you still believe in possessions? Think twice - Věra's family, with no fault of theirs, lost everything ... the second time.



1948–1968

20 Years under Communism

- Věra married Dr. Vladimír Tománek in 1950 and moved to the beautiful capital Prague.
- To here!
- *Tough luck*: Getting married in a *Catholic church cost her a job*. Forever!
- The only son David (I) was born in 1954.
- *Tough luck*: Being *baptized* within the hospital he was born in turned David into a *black sheep* at school.



1948–1968

More Problems under Communism (1)

Problem 1:

- Vera's husband Vladimír was the son of a well-known Medicine Professor, Dr. Ferdinand Tománek. He had his *own clinic and had to be eliminated*.
- As student of Mme. Curie, Ferdinand established *Radiotherapy as cure for cancer* in 1920. Many were jealous of him. *His life was terminated* soon after the 1948 communist take-over.
- Husband Vladimír became a well-known *Chemical Engineer*. He designed experiments. He held a *temporary* job from 1948-1968, always *prepared to be fired* when a suitable substitute would be found (none was ever found ...)
- The communist *incentive for innovation* was
 - if Vladimír succeeds, he can live
 - if not, he will receive a *20-year prison sentence for "sabotage"*.
- The house Vera lived in was under *Secret Police observation*. Two men in black stationed across the street. Especially visible when foreign scientists visited.
- Can you imagine the *fear of the Secret Police ringing the door bell at 2:00 am* and taking Vera's husband and David's Dad away, forever?

1948–1968

More Problems under Communism (2)

Problem 2:

- Věra and Vladimír (and me, David) believe in God. We are Catholic. *We go to Church to praise God*. You get banned from Society for that!

Problem 3:

- David (I) was a problem:
 - As the black sheep, he was *banned from eating with other kids*. So ... he refused to eat. He was *about to die of under-nourishment* (in the words of the School Doctor).
 - He was also *banned from higher education* (High School, University)
- These problems were about to put Věra into a madhouse.



1968

Invasion by Tanks: a Blessing in Disguise

Soviet invasion in 1968



- What would you do when your country got invaded by tanks again?

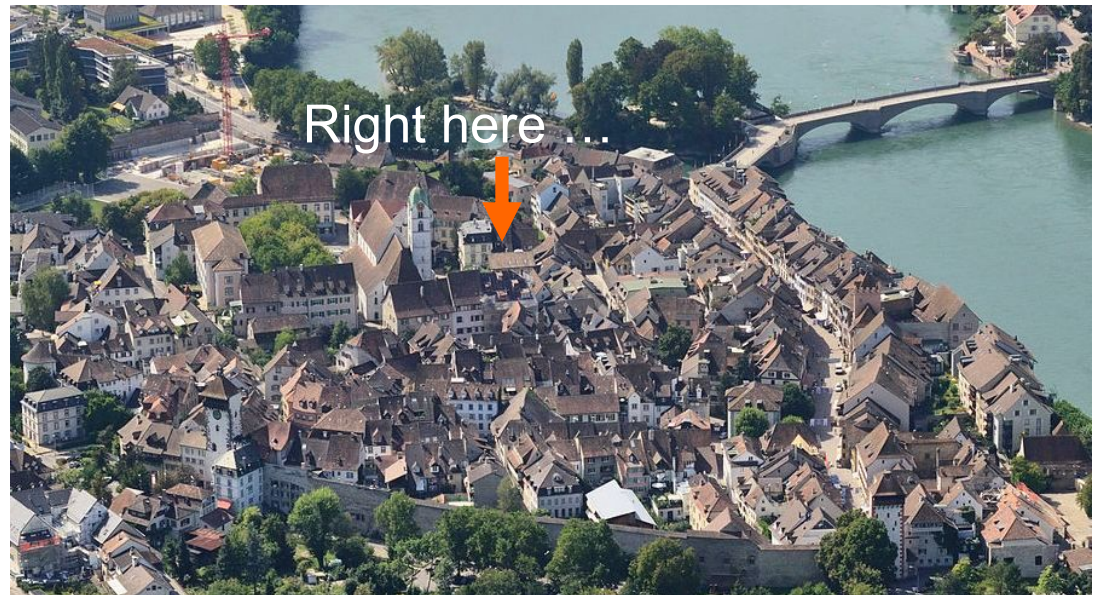
Go on a vacation!

Do you still believe in possessions? Think twice - Věra's family, with no fault of theirs, lost everything ... the third time.



1968–2011

Life in Rheinfelden, Switzerland (1)



- This is where Věra lived with her husband Vladimír and son David.
- Věra and her family became Swiss citizens.
- David graduated from the University in 1979 and left for Germany and the USA.

1968–2011

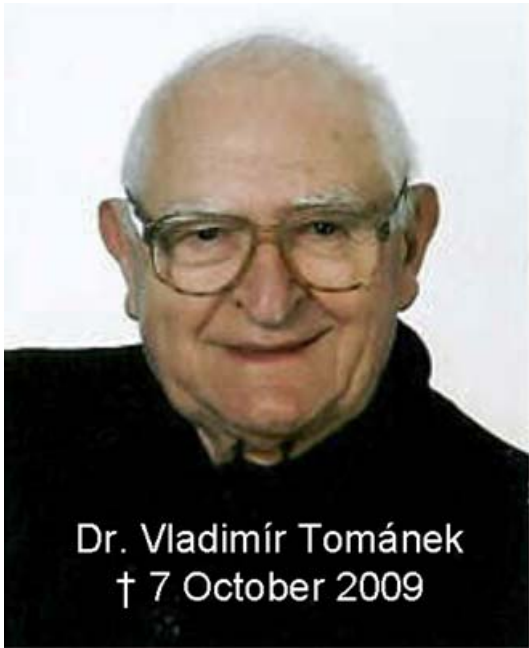
Life in Rheinfelden, Switzerland (2)

- There were annual end-of-the-year family reunions in Switzerland.
- Every year, Věra and Vladimír would visit David for 3 months in the USA.
- Věra never liked pictures taken of herself ... they are rare.



2009–2011

Life in Rheinfelden, Switzerland (3)



- Věra's husband Vladimír died in 2009.
- *Věra was devastated.*
- Now ...
 - Věra was alone in Switzerland
 - David was alone in the USA
 - There was a lot of thinking going on about what to do ...

2009

- Věra had hard time adjusting to the loss of her husband
- Travel with her son David helped a little to distract her

Seoul, South Korea



Regensburg, Germany



2010

- There were other curiosities in the World
 - ... Ephesus appears in the Bible, but not for fake watches!
- By the way, this is not the legendary clock in Prague ...
- ... just a Korean replica of the original.

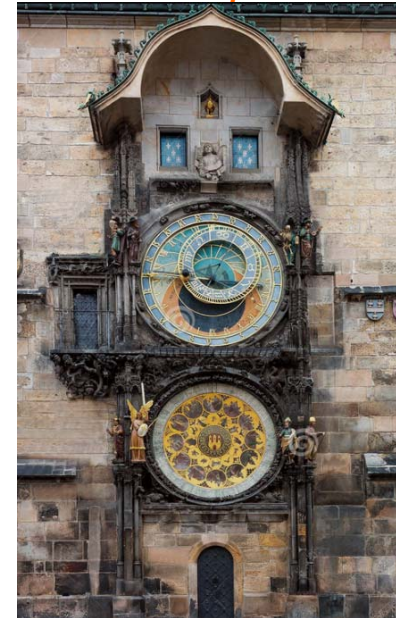
Ephesus, Turkey



*Seoul,
South Korea*



*Prague,
Czech Republic*



2011–2020 (1)



- Věra joined her son David in the USA in 2011
- They bought a house
- Věra became U.S. citizen
- From then on, she traveled with David, around the globe, wherever David was invited to speak.

*Jiading,
China*



Lhasa, Tibet



Nagano, Japan



Johannesburg, South Africa



2011–2020 (2)

There was more travel to be done



Cape Town, South Africa



Singapore

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



There were more friends to be met



Nagoya, Japan



Lansing, USA

Friends from the German Club near home



2011–2020 (3)

- There were also animal friends to be fed

Wild deer in Nara, Japan

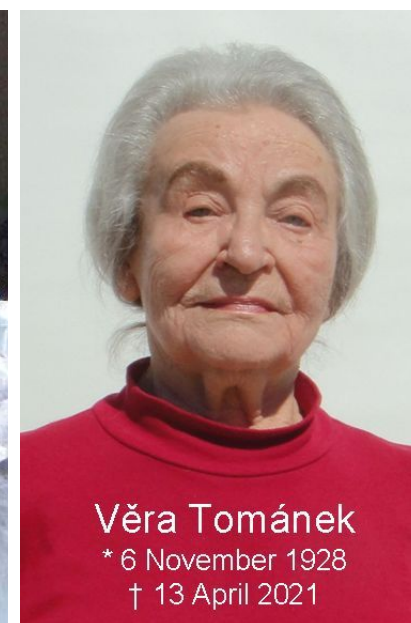


Raccoons at Věra's house



2021

- All good things eventually come to an end



Věra has left us.

She stepped across the threshold to a new way of life. Gone is the suffering she encountered. Joy replaced tears. Věra has entered a life full of love and adventure. Forever.

Music: 

V nový život (Into the new life) by Josef Suk

This musical piece, composed in 1919, was considered to be "political". It was forbidden to be played in Communist Czechoslovakia during 1948-1968.

Věra loved this music