

NATIONAL

Life stories

**LIVING MEMORY OF THE JEWISH
COMMUNITY**

OLGA GUNZ

Interviewed by Devora Coutts

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Fl27 Side A

Could you give me details of where you were born, a little bit about your family, the background, where you came from?

Well, I was born in Makó, which is an agricultural town, they used to export onions from this town, and it was very famous really, from onions, they have a syndicate, like (inaud), or Diamond Borse, or you have got money market, or things like that, and most of the Jews, they're dealing with this, commodity, this was their main businesses. My father, actually, he was an engineer, but he was working for the Kehila, as an Orthodox Jewish man, and we have been a big family. We were 12 children, two girls, and 10 boys. I was right in the middle, I was the seventh child, and of course, my parents made a lot of fuss of me, being an only daughter, with me, I had older five brothers, and younger five brothers, so, anyway, what I really want to tell you is, that whenever since I remember, I remember anti-Semitism in our town, very strongly. I could have been about ten years old when the War started, and you know in War, children grow up very quickly. We were never really children. We understood everything what went on, we were interested in the newspapers, and we followed everything, because it affected us. Anti-Semitism became very very strong,

It affected you from a very very young age?

I remember it very well.

At School?

Very well. We were frightened, my brothers thought would be beaten in the street, they were frightened to go out in the evening, and in fact, there came a time once, when I have to leave my school, because I didn't go to Jewish School, and I was heartbroken, I loved my teacher, and I loved my friends, and I was so settled in there, and after I finished four classes, I had to change into the Jewish School, and I was very unhappy there.

Why was that?

Of course, I did understand, but it was a big change for me. The system, everything was different. Here, we were very large classes, but I went to a very very good school.

But you didn't feel more comfortable with Jewish children?

We had half the class was Jewish children in the non-Jewish Schools.

It was such a big Jewish community?

It was a big community. It was actually, I think, 150 families, Orthodox, and 150 families what you call here, "Reform". But they were a little bit more religious than Reform, but there were Jews who didn't keep anything. First and foremost everybody thought of themselves as Hungarians, so wherever they heard what went on from

Poland, the refugees would come from Poland, we didn't take, didn't took too much notice of that. Of course, we felt sorry for them, but we thought it could never happen to us, because Horthy will take care of us, Horthy will be for Hungarians, my father was in the Army, and he had medals, and we just thought like Hungarians. But later on, as time went on, we realised, when already the Czechoslovakian refugees came, and my father had a lot to do with it, he helped them cross the border over into Rumania, this was already in 1943, '44.

Can we just go back a little bit more to your childhood. I want to pick up the type of life that you lived, in connection with the whole Jewish community, and just to see what sort of house you lived in, was your family considered a rich family, or not very rich, obviously you had a big family, so I can't imagine you were very rich,

No, no, no. I would say here, we were quite poor. But actually everybody else lived in these circumstances, so we didn't think that we lived so badly. If I didn't have Saturday dresses, only had one, or one pair of Saturday shoes, I wasn't poorer than my neighbours. But there were very wealthy people also.

Jewish people?

There were two families, who stood out very well, they owned mills and fields, and there were a few very wealthy people, also, who had businesses, but practically, but really practically, every single shop in the main road was Jewish.

So it was really a very big community?

It was a very very Jewish town, in fact, our town used to be called, "Makó - Small Jerusalem". We had two very large Synagogues, two orthodox ones, and one Reform one. The Reform one was a copy of the Szeged Synagogue which is today, even today, is a most beautiful Synagogue in Europe, and

Your father was Orthodox?

My father was very Orthodox. We were not chasidim, but we were very Orthodox, my father wore a beard, that time all Jews wore a beard, and my mother wore a wig, our next door neighbours, both sides, were, we were actually, we lived in a house, was six tenants, and from these were two teachers, and two shochet (if you know what that is), and my father was the Secretary of the Kehila. Who else lived there? Well, I think this is all.

You were actually,

Oh yes, a dayan lived there as well, you knw, a Dayan, so this was the six tenants, and each family had lots of children, so we were really, with this big family, and a very big yard, we were happy enough with each other, with neighbour's children to play, but actually, the whole street would go out to the street, and play together. Shabbat, you could feel the Friday, when the Shabbat came, the atmosphere, everybody was cleaning, and there was an old man, who took it on himself, he used to come out Friday afternoon, like they do it today in Jerusalem. I haven't seen that, that time,

anywhere in the world, in our house, he used to call out, and he used to say to the ladies, "It's time to light candles." Which was very beautiful, because my mother was busy until the last minute, I used to send the children to the yard, we should watch when the old man will come and tell us to light candles. I hadn't thought of this, but you asking me, it comes back to me, it was very interesting.

Tell me about your non-Jewish neighbours. Did you have any non-Jewish neighbours

Yes. We were in very good relationship with some of them. Some of them were big anti-Semites, but some of them we had very good relationships. And it's very interesting, the next door neighbours, lady, they had no children, there was a couple with a very large dog, that the man was a big anti-Semite, in fact, he was a Schwab, you know what is a Schwab? His mother tongue was a German really, and he owned the grocery store somewhere outside our town, but his wife was the most, the darlinest woman I remember, and when we, before we had to go to the Camp, for instance, she would hide things for us, and bad times when her husband wouldn't notice, would come over and bring flowers from her garden to my mother. Then there was an old lady I remember, she was very nice, and I remember her tears, crying at the window, when we were taken away, and she was the only one who helped us when we came back, who would give us milk, or some food, without any payment immediately. She was a very old lady, at least in my eyes, I was a child, and she was the lady to whom we used to go for milking. You see, we had shomer the milk, because we were Orthodox people, and she had a few cows, and we used to go and buy the milk by her.

So who looked after the milking? The children, were there just to see,

Always one Jewish person, but otherwise all the maids, there was well-to-do to the people, believe me, a lot of well-to-do people, and it was a custom, even we were not wealthy when we had maids who would go for the milk, but that, we made rotas, you know, always somebody had to be there by the milking, a Jewish person had to watch it, that they didn't use the wrong utensils, and they washed their hands, and you know ...

So they milked, if you took your own utensils?

Yes, exactly. Yes, yes, there was not machinery that time, no. No.

And what about celebrating Shabbat and Hagim, how was the feeling there? Was there no problem about going to school, if children stayed at home?

No, well, well, Saturday was no school.

No School?

No school, no school. Neither in, in, in the High Schools they had to attend, but they were allowed not to write, but in, in the junior schools, we were just allowed not to go on Saturday mornings, but later on, we had, of course, the Jewish Schools, such problems didn't occur, I mean, it was no problem at all.

What about, what did the boys do? Did the boys go to ordinary school, or did they go to Chader, or to

The boys would learn secular studies in the morning, in the afternoon always, the Hebrew studies. Early morning they would go to shul, they get up very early in the morning, but the boys' day was very long, because by half past seven they have to be ready for breakfast. By 8 o'clock attend school, and in the evening, after, after Hehder, they would come home for supper and go back again for two hours to learn. So for the boys was much harder than for me.

And who was teaching? Was it the local Rabbi?

No, there were Jewish teachers, yes, yes.

What was the Rabbi like

Oh, the Rabbi was a very important person, and a very great person, and everybody feared him.

Do you remember his name?

Yes. His name was Forehand. And in fact, he had many brothers who were in other big towns, Rabbis, and even today, there are descendants who are Rabbis, and it's a very big family. This Rabbi Forehand's wife, as she passed the street, and then to Shul, we felt honoured that we saw her, she was such a great lady, and she used to have a maid following her, and carry her prayerbook, and I remember that my mother allowed me to wear a little bit shorter sleeves, and we called her the Rebbetzin, and she was always very much against it, that girls should wear short sleeves, or short dresses, and I would bend down and hide my, my elbows, that she shouldn't see that I have got shorter sleeves!

You didn't have Eruv in the town?

What?

Eruv.

Eruv. No, no, no. No.

Were there any, you didn't know about these places? Did they have any eruv?

I didn't know anything about such a thing, I only know Eruv we made in our yard, that it could carry to one neighbour to the other, but we have, I have never heard even that you can make it in town, no we did not have that.

There's something else I want to ask you. Did you have the tradition of carrying the children into the big bakery, and get somebody to take it home, or you made everything at home.

Oh yes, that was a very important part in our lives. Because we had to get up early, and in the morning before we went to school, and carry the dough to the baker, to bake it, sure, sure, and then in the afternoon break, we went and fetched the fresh bread, and I'll never forget the beautiful smell. Sometimes we used to break it on the way, we used to get telling off, but we couldn't resist it sometimes. And Friday, that was a very important part, we take the Chala, to have it baked, and then go in the afternoon for it. And also the cakes were baked in there, in the bakery, and also a hot pot, which was called the "Cholent", so Friday afternoon, when we fetched our Chala, would take along the cholent, and Sabbath morning, about lunch time, a Christian person would come, usually one of our maids from the yard, and go with a wheelbarrow, and it was a good little income, a good little income for her, because everybody paid a certain amount to be, this pot to be fetched home. And we children would go there and show her which is our pot, pick the right pot, and sometimes the pots you would go, on the bottom, and one on the top, and we were worried that as she was wheeling the wheelbarrow that it would fall off, and we would have no dinner!

But you usually got it?

Pardon? Yes, we usually managed it, because she would stop quickly, or we would quickly hold it, yes, yes, yes. That was a very interesting scene. But we could never photograph it, because it was Shabbat.

That's right, but it really was part of Shabbat?

Oh yes, yes, and also was the young boys and girls meeting place you see, because we had to go there, so it was a good excuse, with Orthodox families you see, they didn't see boys and girls, they didn't meet, and this was a good idea, and The usual place was in front of the shul, or by the Chala.

Tell me a little bit about your house, what it looked like, was it a big house?
Fashionable?

No, well, actually, I was the first one to be born in this house, so as soon as it was built my parents occupied it, and it, it was a long roof, underneath this roof was three flats. We had three rooms and the kitchen. So the living rooms, we had beds, which was very normal there. You turned off the light, and then you undressed, and then you went into bed, and you shared your bed with three or four little brothers, it didn't make, you know, it was quite normal! Yes. And even the maid, the maid could be sleeping in the kitchen, sometimes the maid would have a child with her.

Did you all speak Hungarian at home?

We only spoke Hungarian. Unfortunately, we did not speak, my parents did not speak to, they spoke between them, if they didn't want us to understand. They spoke Yiddish. The boys, as they grew up and went to Yeshiva, they learned Yiddish, but I have never learned Yiddish. I understood, but I've spoke Yiddish, only I learnt in Paris.

And not German either?

Not German either.

A lot of the Jewish people in Eastern Europe,

Yes, well, my parents spoke German.

They spoke German?

Yes.

And were your parents also born in Hungary, or somewhere else?

One of my, my mother born in Yugoslavia, and my father in Hungary. But it was the Hungarian part of Yugoslavia, so she spoke Hungarian.

So they spoke Hungarian?

But each had different accents like in every country, there are different accents in different locations of the country. My father had a different accent from Makó, because he did not come from Makó, and my mother had a different accent.

So they understood, and the language was the same?

The language was the same, they spoke Hungarian.

So really, there was no other language there?

No.

What about, tell me about your mother, a little bit.

My mother was a very very kind person, the young people used to like to come and confide in her. In fact, today, I would call her a Marriage Guidance Counsellor. My mother really was a very great lady, and as women did not go to the Rabbi with their complaints, they had to go to somebody else, but when women have problems in their marriages, or any other problem when they wanted to talk to the Rabbi, it always went through my mother. My mother would go to the Rabbi and speak to the Rabbi. And many many times, I used to hear my mother say that she did not always agree with the Rabbi, because, for instance, he was very much against divorce, he was very much against, he would never ever allow a divorce, and my mother used to say, "This is a young couple, they're not suited, they should really divorce, and they could have a happy life, separately." And this is one thing, but otherwise my mother also had a lot from the Rabbi. I remember people coming into my house, and always the last room, not the first room, like in England, you come into the first room, it is your nicest room, I asked you came into the kitchen, and you went through the living room, and the third one was the nicest room, where the visitors went, my mother would shut the

door, and we knew, as children, that we're not allowed to enter now, because she's entertaining. But of course, I knew always what she used to do, listen to the crying ladies, and problems and all these things. Yes, she was very much liked in the community. She organised a lot of help for people, and we were poor, but she worked hard always, to make the house look nice, she would embroider, and make tapestry for the wall, and see always our house didn't look like a poor people's house, there were always nice covers, and always been very clean, everywhere told to have, everyone had to help, and me as a girl, I worked very hard, if I think back today, I don't think three of my daughters help me as much as I did in the (inaud) days at home. They were very, our parents were very strict to us, they were very kind, but very strict, the word was "word", I don't remember we were ever smacked. As very small children we had to sit under the table, which was a big punishment, that was very bad. But, the fear, I really remember fear, I feared my father, and he had a very bad habit, he wanted to be between us, but he wanted us to be very quiet, because he got up 4 o'clock in the morning, and in the afternoon, there was a siesta, they always laid down, my parents, and sometimes he would lie down already, 11 o'clock, just for a little nap, and come in, because by then he did a lot of work, and he would lie down a little bit for a rest, and we little children, we were playing, of course, making a lot of noise, and he would call out we should be quiet, and that wasn't very easy for us, but we had to obey.

What about the relationship with your mother and your father? Was your mother always listening to him, and always taking his advice, or did she make decisions as well? Or did he always decide what goes on with the family? Or your mother as well?

I don't know. I think they have done this always jointly. I have never found that, I, of course, to make the living, to be quite honest, I think my mother did as much as my father, because she worked in the evening, she, we had a ritual bath, and my mother would work there, would go to work in the evening, I think you understand what I am talking about? Yes? But they would, they had a book, they kept book-keeping of their own income, and of their own expenditure, and I think that they budgeted very well, they would see the summer what they need for the winter, and Yom Tov came, and they saw to it that all the children got their clothes, and so on. I don't remember my parents ever, well, of course, they didn't have enough to overspend, but they did go sometimes without.

So did she actually earn money?

Yes, what I mean without, that I thought, in school, children who were not sometimes, my brothers, as there were so many, the clothes was passed down, was mended, big patches on it, they didn't always have shoes, and, and so, it, it was a hard life.

So what, was,

Cooking in an economical way, you know, for instance, if they bought a chicken for Saturday, but then another chicken for the whole week it had to last. There was no meat days every day, you know. And there was no such thing that butter every day,

and eggs and so on. But, we did not go, I wouldn't say we were hungry, but they certainly made things go a long way.

And you remember being comfortable at home?

Yes. Yes, this was the norm.

Of course, you're going back to when you really were a very small child?

Yes, yes. Yes.

Because we're talking, how old were you at that time, talking about 8, 9?

Yes. Yes. Yes, I understood everything what went on.

I wanted to ask you about your father. Was he involved in any political parties?

No, no, none whatsoever.

Apart from the Jewish community?

No, this was his main occupation. He wasn't a political person. My mother was interested, but never involved, but my father used to tease my mother, "Your friends are coming." Some of the men used to come in and talk politics with my mother. She was an intelligent woman, and newspaper had to be, of course, every day, weekend Jewish newspapers, and my father also was a very intelligent, and he loved literature, in fact, when he died, the Hungarian papers wrote about him. Yes, he left some papers, some important writers wrote, was never published and he cherished that, he found it during the War, and he hid it, because these people were taken away, and these were already, that time, important writers, I don't remember names, but there was one from Seget, and my father told, left this paper, when he left Hungary, he left the paper with a cousin, so when he dies, afterwards they should take it to a Jewish Seminar in Budapest, and when they received these papers, they wrote about him in the, in the Jewish paper. And in the National Papers also.

What about your brothers, were they involved in any activities outside the Jewish community, because they were older than you?

No. No. My oldest brother was a very good scholar, he learned English already, when he was a young boy, and he, he used to teach Cheder to make some extra money. By us this was a normal thing, when the children got older, about 13, 14, my father used to send them away to another town for Cheder, because he liked that sort of education for the children. Later on, of course, they went all to Yeshivas. But this was before the Yeshiva. Whereas this, the oldest brother of mine, I realised later, after making Yeshivas, that he will have to fend for himself, he will have to earn some, some living, make a living for himself, so he went to a village where he was managing a Village Store. A village store contained, or consisted of everything, from shoes to clothes, to groceries, to everything you can imagine. And he was very good at that, but beside that, he would teach in the afternoon, Cheder. My second brother

was, he became a Sofer, and in (inaud) today, he's very famous. He is an older man now, and he won't write, his writing it goes up in value, every year, worth more and more, because now he's an old man, and he won't be able to write too long, and at the moment I know he's writing a Sefer-Torah. And my third brother, by that time, when they grow older, my parents realise that profession is a very important thing. So they sent my third brother to learn to be a, he went in an apprenticeship for three years. And it's very funny that time, you know, when you made a contract with somebody for three years, the first year, you even had to help by this person's house, every domestic, anything they wanted to be done round the house, but besides that, he was, of course, learning the trade, and he learnt to be a building woodworker, carpenter. My fourth brother he was an upholsterer. He was a upholsterer really, not a carpenter, I'm sorry, upholsterer, and then the one after, and the one after, my younger, my brother after me, also learned to be upholsterer, so this run in the family here today, because these boys, I mean, my younger brother went to Israel and taught my other younger brothers, and they all learn this trade, to be upholsterers.

Was it unusual for Jewish boys to be Carpenters?

No, that time, that time, this was a normal thing, that all the boys should have a trade, because, because the law came in already that they could not enter universities, Jewish boys couldn't study.

What year are you talking about?

Oh, I'm talking about 1939/40, so this time already, they have to learn a trade.

So, they had the old shops?

No, no, we were too young, they were children still.

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Fl27 Side B

During the War, what was happening in your town, how you heard about the Nazis, what did you feel with anti-Semitism?

Well, the very first time, I mean, I don't remember exactly when I heard it first time, because really since I remember my childhood, I all the time remember this anti-Semitism, Jews couldn't do this, and Jews couldn't do that, but if they were going to the Army, the young man have been called up from 16-18, to go to a preparation of the Army, and Christians and Jewish boys had to attend this, and this was very bad for the Jewish boys, because the trainers of these Organisations, they're all Nazis, they all came out of the Army, and Army Officers trained these boys, and they instilled into these young boys, anti-Semitism, and when the lessons were over, they would walk home, they would be attacked all the time. I remember an incidence, where two of my brothers were beaten up very badly, and they came home crying, and my father asked them, "Who did this?" And so he, he, he the boys named Sharvari boys, whose father was, my father was on very good terms, and they, they knew each other. So he went to his father, and he complained, but he wouldn't take any notice of my father, so he went to the Rabbi. My father went to the Rabbi, actually to the Reform Rabbi, because he was, he had a Doctorate and he would, he would receive and talk to Christian people, whereas the Chasidish Rabbi, or a very Orthodox Rabbi, perhaps would frighten away such individuals, you see, with his beard, and with the way he was dressed, and they ridiculed that, you see. So he asked this Rabbi to intervene, and he wrote to this children's father, and called him, and the same time my father got a call, and they had a Din Torah, a really proper Din Torah, you know.

But the other man didn't mind?

The other man didn't mind, he came, he was there, because he knew my father, and I remember the end was that he warned both parents, of course, he had to say to the Jewish father too, that he should also tell his children behave themselves, when they go home, but they knew very well that really, they did the beating, and not our brothers started, like he said, that is, the boys had a fight, and we shouldn't interfere, and leave our children. But these are very severe fights, and you had to intervene. So he warned his children for a little while, but it didn't last very long.

What about you? How do you remember the change of life in the town, or at home?

Well, I remember, we were looking at the newspapers, and every time new laws came in, and then, new laws came in for the Jews separately. They said the Jews must not keep only so much oil in their house, and so much livestock, and they could not employ Christian help and so on, and I remember when the Jandars came, and it wasn't the Police, there was the Police and the Jandars, with the feathers in the hats.

What was the difference?

This was a very big difference. I don't know why we had, they were, they were, we feared them more than the ordinary Police. The Police would take care of the, of the street, what do you call it?

The law in the street?

Yes, and other things. But here, these Jandars, they, I think they worked for the Home Office, but I'm not sure, I don't know, I don't know today, what the difference was, but they were very very cruel. They would come on horseback into our yard, and they demand everybody should show, and they had the right to search, they came into each Jewish flat, and they searched, and they were looking for more, they were looking for trouble, if they found a little more food or something, then they said we were storing it, which was punishable, and they would give them punishment by money, you had to pay so much. And of course, you know, we had to have kosher things, we couldn't go out to buy, we had to store, we had to store it, because the way we had the oil is, we would have a chicken, and you know, you take the fat from the chicken, so we had to have a little more, and we would hide it. I remember my mother used to ask us to go to the coal cellar, and shovel coal over this bucket, and the bucket would be sealed, and hide it like that, and they knew about these things, and they would ask us to, because there were always people who would give it away, you know. If someone came in, a Christian help or someone, they wanted to make themselves important, they would go and tell the Police that this person or there, or look here, or look there, and they would come, and only they just enjoyed annoying us, frightening us, and I remember with my brother shovelling the coal, of course, we knew exactly where the bucket was, so we shovelled over the bucket even more coal, so they went away satisfied, but we are not always successful like that.

What about, did you see already people were being deported at that time?

No. No. But we have seen a lot of refugees coming from Poland, and from certain parts of the country where these trains would pass, and they kept on telling these stories, but of course there are stories one just doesn't believe, just doesn't believe it. They used to come and live in our town, because they couldn't bear living up, certain parts of Hungary where these trains pass by, and they knew what's going on. But of course, they didn't know where the people were taken.

So people were, you remember stories,

No, we did hear stories, we did not really believe it. The first time when the Hungarians and the Germans marched into Yugoslavia, actually, the Hungarians already occupied a part of Yugoslavia and Rumania. We heard terrible stories what happened in Yugoslavia, where they (inaud) into the Jewish people, and they drag them to the Danube and they shot them, and I think we heard that Horty intervened, Horty was the Prime Minister, really, in Hungary, and he intervened and it stopped. But, till it stopped, thousands and thousands of Jews were killed.

And how long did it actually stop for?

It was about, it was a terror of about, I don't know, I think it was less than two weeks, but it was a very bad time, and unfortunately, we heard it. And we had, in Yugoslavia, we had an uncle, my mother's brother, who wrote us a card, because he knew that we will be worried. They mainly took the young men and the young girls from those town, and he wanted to let us know that we are all right, so he wrote a letter how happy he is that they re-occupied again, and became again Hungary, which I don't know if they were really so happy about this, but, but through this he let us know that they are all right, because they are happy, this is what it meant in the letter, "We are very happy." So that meant that they are safe, they are all right.

Did you have other relatives in other towns in Hungary?

Yes. In Hungary.

In Hungary too.

Yes. I had in Budapest, uncles, and aunts, and we had in this Yugoslavian part, my grandmother, no, I had a grandfather, but he died before we were taken away. While it was Yugoslavia very little communication, but later on when they occupied, Hungary occupied Yugoslavia, then yes, we did, regular letters were exchanged, even they started coming visiting too.

What about the relatives in Budapest? Were people already being deported from there?

No. No. The Budapest hasn't been taken, we were the very first ones to be taken, actually. The very first ones was the transport where people were interned. Unfortunately one of my brothers from Budapest fell into this. The very next day when the Germans marched in, they caught him, and they caught my brother's fiancée, and many others.

And where were they taken to?

They were taken to a concentration place, and from there they were taken to Auschwitz, this was the very first transport out of Hungary.

And people didn't know anything at all? The relatives of the people didn't know what was happening?

No. No, we didn't, it was before Pesach, and we were expecting him home, and then somebody came and told us, as they saw him, to be captured, and they didn't want to tell us because they didn't want my mother to worry, but unfortunately when Yontev came it had to come out.

How do you remember, as a little girl, suddenly this big upheaval, all the Jewish community, something happening, do you remember what you felt?

I, I do exactly. I know what happened. Gradually. I know exactly what happened. Every time, first of all, it started already, 1940, my father had to go to the labour

force, but that time, they did not take people out, only the younger men, who went in first to be in the Army. Of course, they didn't dress them into Army uniforms, because they were Jews, and they were taken out to Russia, they were taken through Poland, Russia, that was one of, my oldest brother had to go, and my father was, in 1940, for three months, in this labour force. They were building reinforcements, and after that, he came home, he was an older man, so they let him home.

That was in Hungary?

That was still in Hungary, yes. And gradually, the young men were taken away to labour forces, whoever went out of the country, never returned. If somebody was working in, in, if he was in the country, it happened that he got a leave, the leave, or we could go and visit and take them food. But when they were taken out of the country, they have never got a leave, like the Hungarian soldiers came home on leave. But I remember when the law came that we had to have a ghetto, and everybody, by then, really very few young men were in town, because they called in from the 18 years to 48, from 18-48 years old, everybody who was left, besides they have taken before, into labour force, everybody who was supposed to be in the Army, but later on, this is what happened. So, very few people were left in town really, men, who could organise, or make any stand against any, if anybody attacked us, or did anything to us. And also, this time, they have called out all the people who were well-to-do, who could perhaps, do, organise something with money, or who was capable enough, like teachers, all these people were interned, so we really felt very vulnerable, because we were only left there, women and children, and very few men. Only old people, all over 50, after that over 50, or up to 16 year old boys. And one day, it came the law, that everybody, who ever lived outside these Jewish streets, because there was about four or five Jewish street, practically each house, not every house, was Jewish. But the Jews were concentrated in this area, and the ones who lived out, further out, have to move into this area, and also from the villages around us, had to move in here, and they were allocated, by the Jewish community, rooms by other families. Well, we were one of the lucky ones, because we were a very big family, so nobody moved into us, but next door, on each, by each neighbour, they had people move in there, and everywhere the houses got very very crowded. And they had, they couldn't take anything from their house, they didn't allow them to take any beds, so these people had to share their beds, or give beds, or sleep on the floor. They could take with them, some of their clothes, but then they have to make a list, everything what they left behind, and the houses were, the houses had to be locked, and sealed with a special seal, and it was punishable if anybody would break that seal. So all these people moved into our ghetto, which was afterwards a ghetto, though they had no gates, exactly, but we knew exactly in the end of the street, that is the place where there was a guard, and we were not allowed to leave it. We had been given, the first two weeks, to ask everyday to go out shopping, and in this very first day, a friend of mine, who was, who moved into yard, our house, not in our flat, but in our house, she said she wants to go back to the house to see if there is any post from her father. She didn't exactly understand that she cannot open the door and look into the letterbox, but she asked me to go with her, and I went with her, and as we were walking, no one stopped us, all of a sudden, the postman who was very frightened, who was a kind man really, came up to me and said, "Could you please go back, you're not supposed to walk this part of the town, and you're not supposed to go, if

there is any letter," just for comfort told us, but he knew already, by that time no Jewish people had letters delivered any more. So we did not hear from our families for the four or five weeks we spent in the ghetto. We did not hear anything from anybody. We lost contact with my sister who lived in another village, we lost contact with all my brothers, we didn't know anything.

How many children were at home at this time?

And this postman told us to walk back fast, as fast as we can, so nobody should notice we had left the ghetto. And then we re-read the law with my friend, and she went to High School, she was a very intelligent girl. I was by this time, 14 years old, 15, nearly 15, nearly 15 really, and we realised that we had done something that we were not supposed to do, and every single day, the head of the community, there was two men, there was from the Orthodox Community, and from the Reform Community, these two men had to go out to the Town Hall every day, within these two hours when we were allowed out going shopping. Later on, was only one hour we were allowed out, and also it was said, which area we may go shopping, in the market, in the centre of the town, and back and nowhere else, the side streets were not allowed any more, we were not allowed to enter the non-Jewish houses, and the non-Jewish people were not allowed to enter our houses.

And the shops as well?

The shops were, the shops were closed. There were no shops, no more Jewish shops existed. Everything was closed, business had stopped.

But didn't they take over the shops? Didn't non-Jewish people take over the shops?

Not,

Or just shut them?

Just shut them, as that few weeks we were in the ghetto, I think it was just shut, was not yet used.

So where were you

But, I remember, for instance, every single day, every day, they brought out a law, we had to go shul, from every house somebody went to listen, what sort of laws came out, and then one day, came a law, which we expected really, because after, we heard already, other places where the ghetto was, that the following stage will be that they will take us away. We knew this from the first, really, and we prepared for this. My mother baked very nourishable biscuits, and, and prepared food which would last, and we had this in the house, so in case this is going to, when it's going to come, so we should be able to take this with us. And then this law came that the next day they're going to take us away, which came from one day to the, no, I think they gave us about two days. We had about two days, and I remember it was a Friday when we left. My youngest brother, and they called out always, this was, this was every time, that, "If you don't obey this law, you will be shot."

As simple as that?

As simple as that. Every, every single report came from the Town Hall, the end was always, "If anybody does not obey this law, will be shot." And when they read out, in our yard, what's going to be, they're going to take us away, if anybody's ill, has to be carried, if anybody cannot walk, or won't walk, will be shot. On this, one of my little brothers, who was at that time, seven years old, started crying, and he said, "How will I go? I've got a broken leg." And he had a plaster on his leg. So I picked him up, I took no notice of the curfew, and thank God, nobody stopped me, I rushed with him to the hospital, I wheeled him to the hospital, and I had that piece of plaster removed, and the doctor said, "It isn't really time yet to take it off, I should wait, and I told him that there is no way I will wait, I insisted that he should take that off. And we had a good argument, this is what they looked like, those Jandars, on horsebacks, with the big feathers on there. Anyway, so I was very lucky, really, so I could smuggle back into the ghetto, when the guard didn't notice me, and we had that removed, and they were all very happy about that. Now, in these two days, when this law came out, the middle of the night, the night before we got this law, that we have, we will be taken away, all the wives of those men who were interned, they were all taken into the Police Station, we didn't know where, but they were all taken away, and they were let out in the very last hour before they had to leave their houses. And I remember going to the neighbour, the teacher's wife, whose husband was taken away, and whose only son has been in the, already taken to the labour force, to help her to pack. And I quickly got back to our flat, and our flat was already, the stamp was already on the door, and I was very upset because I left some valuables on the table, which was my personal things, my diary, it was some pearls I got from my mother, and the other things what was packed, my parents were already standing in the street, six people in a row. The whole street was lined with people, and as we moved further, more people entered the street, and this is how it was organised. In the edge of the street, was a table, with two baskets on each side, I remember like it was today, and everybody had to throw in there, their jewellery. You had to tell your name, and put something in the basket, and people who had nothing because they were poor people, the better off people always gave one piece of jewellery, everybody, every head of the household, should have, especially the women, so they shouldn't start with the money problems. Now, when we put this in the basket, everybody put in their jewellery, they were asked, "Have you got anything else? Because otherwise you will be shot." So people got frightened, they put a little more, or they put everything. Then the women had to enter to the Synagogue Hall, where we were examined by midwives, their put their fingers up, and they examined us, and if the midwife knew you personally, that you were not well-to-do, then she did not do exactly that, because she knew you didn't have. But then the men had to go to a different side of the hall, and the entry was, that afterwards we met up with our father and our mothers, and in the edge of that street, there was lorries, where they put us on a lorry, and they took us to the railway station, and in the railway station, there were wagons which was really transport for animals before, because we felt that terrible smell on the wood as we entered, as we were put in here, and we were about 80 people put into one of these wagons, and it was very interesting, because the Mayor of the town came to say goodbye to us. He made a speech on the railway station, and send us on our way, with God's blessing that we should find, when we should, whoever is going to take us over, we will be very

valuable citizens for them, and this is the speech he made. And for this we had to sweating, being hot for hours in this, in this, in these wagons.

And nobody said where you were going?

Nobody, we didn't know, we had no idea, and when we asked, there was no answer, nobody talked to us, but the people lined, whoever, all the Nazis lined the streets, and they were laughing and being happy and joyful that we are leaving the city.

Were they Hungarians?

They were Hungarian. No, they were Hungarians. I have only seen two Germans, standing end of the street where we gave up our valuables. Only there. All the way, only Hungarians, you see, the Hungarians were very big anti-Semites, they didn't need any help from anybody else, they did it on their own. And they were too happy to do it on their own.

And the Mayor knew what was going on?

Well, the Mayor knew that we won't come back. I don't know anything else. I was young, but I know now, after the War, I found out a lot of things about that Mayor, but I don't want to tell you about it now, at this moment. I just want to tell you that this journey did not take very long, it took only one hour, and then they opened the wagons again, and we all had to get out, and whatever we could carry with us, we carried, and we were marched into a very large space, where there were tents, this was usually an Army place, where they used to teach the Army to shoot, it was an enormous big, green, green grass, and all these tents were stood up there, and then they had on one side, they called out that everybody who is ill should come, this will be the hospital, that was a building for the hospital, but we were in the open air, and whoever could, went under a tent. So we were really broken up from our families, three, four of us in a tent, and three or four of us in another tent, because we couldn't say we are a big family and they should give us this big tent, you see. But all the time, on the loudspeaker, can be heard, "You have any valuables give it up now, so no harm will come to you. If you have any valuables, please give it up." And some people, instead of giving their money, they went to the toilet, and they throw it into the toilet, which they soon found out, and we Jewish people, we had to go and fish it out from the toilet, and wash the papers and put them out on the sun to dry. But there were the guards to watch, and as luck had it, there wasn't even a wind to take the paper, the money away, they was all just laid out, and then they picked it up and took it away.

What time of year was that, do you know?

At what time of the year? This was July . June, I'm sorry, it was June. We were taken away at the beginning of June, from the ghetto in 1944, and it was on a Friday, this I remember. And Saturday morning I went, I went in this concentration place, to get some water, there was a well, and you had to queue up for water. And as I was queuing, a miracle happened. A big gate opened, and a lot of people were entering, all the time entering from other ghettos, and I saw a figure, holding a bundle, a little

child holding the skirt of a woman, and a little baby on the arm, and somehow it seemed to me like it is my sister. And I ran nearer, and it was my sister! And she was in a completely different place than we were. She was in another ghetto, which we didn't know she was in a ghetto. I ran to my father, and I said, "Daddy, come quickly. My sister entered here. She just came in with her children." And we ran and we took my ...

End of F127 Side B

Fl28 Side A

Can you tell me where it was, and how it was managed, with the tents, you came, and you found your sister.

I mean, we had to have our own food, whatever we had on us, they didn't give us any food or anything like that. They were just, it was a concentration place where they brought in, from all other camps around Seged, and around our area, from Debrecen, from Solnok, from Seged, from small little places all around there. All the Jews were concentrated there.

Did you know the number of the Jews that were there?

I have no idea, hundreds and hundreds, and hundreds and hundreds of people. I have no idea. It was surrounded with a fence, and all around the soldiers were guarding with the gun.

They were Hungarian?

They were Hungarians, definitely Hungarians. And then one day they called out that everybody should line up, because we're going to march to another place, take everything with you, when we are going, it was a very hot summer day, I remember, and we have to march a very long way. I don't remember how long. I remember that when I was crossing the Tisza, which is a big river in Seged, I thought I faint from schlepping, carrying the bundles, because all our beddings were with us, the little food what we carried was on us, and as my brothers were young, and me and my brother after me, and my mother and my father carried everything, and a soldier marching next to me, and suddenly a civilian was crossing the bridge, and called to me quietly, and said, "Little girl, I would help you, but I mustn't, I am not allowed." And so every time, if I go back to my mother's grave, I have to cross this river, and this is such a terrible thing for me. It reminds me always of this time. What we looked like, and but, in this time, we are still very happy that we found my sister, and she was with us, and we said whatever happens to us will happen to her, and we are together. Then

How long were you in this place, this camp with tents? A very short time?

It was a short time, but I don't remember how long.

Days, or ...

Days, just days, yes.

How many members of your family were there together? Do you remember who was with you?

Yes, I remember. It was my parents, myself, five little brothers, my sister and my two nieces. And three of my, three of my brothers were in Budapest. As I mentioned before, the fourth one was already taken away, and the oldest one was taken to Russia, in the labour force. So from here we walked, and we carried our things, it was a terrible sight.

Do you remember how long it was? The march?

I don't remember, but I'm sure that we went quite a few kilometres, to get to the, then we entered a place, it was a brick manufacturing place, an enormous big place, and some people settled down on the open air, but we managed to get a cover over our roof, it was just a roof over us, no doors or rooms, everybody was, and we settled down there, on the floor, and whoever can get a little space, and in between us we made a little path, so people could pass, but just a footpath. It was absolutely jam packed. Here again, the hospital was brought in there, and also as they have opened all the houses where are abnormal people, ill people, some dangerous people, they were all locked up like animals. It was terrible, because in our town there was two boys who was mad, but they were friendly and kind, and nice people, the boys, and they were crying and asking, "Why did they lock us up here? What did we do? Why are we locked up here? Why don't they give us to eat. We didn't do anything. We didn't harm anybody." It was a terrible, terrible sight. Then the Germans called out, asked the Hungarians to make up lists of people. Everybody should line up, and they will be taken again to the trains, but they want a certain list, we didn't know what list it was, they called from every town, somebody who could come as a secretary, and they called my father, my father knew everyone in our town. Make up a list from our town, and he didn't understand himself what he was doing, because he wasn't told, they were not allowed to know what this was. Later on, I found out that this was Eichmann transport. Eichmann wanted to make a deal for so many lorries, so many people, and they wanted some proof that he's going to, he's not going to send these people to the death camps. So he said, "I have to take them out of Hungary, but I will leave them of Austria." Which, of course, we were not aware at all, what's going to happen, who is this list. But my father, people were lining up and giving names, but some people, some must have leaked out something, because some people put down their children's ages for 2, 3 years, where they were already grown up children, and then in the night, my father returned, and told my mother the story, and said, he thinks they are putting himself and us on this place. And my mother was quarrelling with him, and told him, "Don't you dare put us on that list. Take us off from that list, because those lists are only old people and children. What would the Germans want with old people and children? We will be," "But" he says, "I don't know", my father says, "something must be in it, because people put down their children younger, and everybody's trying to get on this list. Everybody's fighting to get on this list. And I know the people who come, and I tell them, 'Why do you give me false years?'" He said, "We tell you to write this, and we write this." And he did, and I, I never forget this quarrel between my mother and my father, and it turned out, in the end, that my father was right, though he didn't know himself what he was doing. I can honestly tell you that he had no idea. All he was told, was to make a list from so many people. Now,

People were just guessing what would be the right thing to do?

Yes, they just guessing, just guessing.

Without knowing what to do, what would become of them.

Just guessing, but now I know that two Jewish people came down from Budapest, who came into this place, and they were, somebody was told that they should make up this list, and there were certain people who did know what's going on, the discussions between the Jews of Budapest, and the, and the, and Eichmann, and all this ... and the Gestapo. So, but of course, it would have been very terrible if they would have told us what it was, because then there would have been great fights between the people, and they were so well organised, these Germans, that you have no idea. Of course, they were already learned, because they have already taken Poland, Czechoslovakian Jews, all the other countries, from Russia, from everywhere, this was for them, already a child's play. Besides, it was easy, because the Hungarians helped, but the organisation went for them, very easily, they knew exactly how to do it, and what to do.

So what,

So the first transport, without the list, without the list, the people left, who were not on the list, all were the people first left. There was two very large transports. The very first one went to Auschwitz, which I know today, that time, I had no idea. And the second transport, was supposed to go to Auschwitz, but there was some bombing on the way, and they brought them back to Strasshoff.

Where was this place, Strasshoff?

Strasshoff was in Austria, it was not too far from Vienna, and we were, we had to walk to the transport. We had to walk now, it was our turn, the list, the people who were on the list. So there were people when they were leaving, they called back to us, and they said, "Who knows, you are the lucky people who are on the list, or maybe you are not." And one day, we had to walk to the railway station, and we were put in again, into this lorry, into these wagons, which was really for animal transportation, not for humans, there was no straw even on the ground, nothing. Again, 80 people, we were squashed into this wagon, old, young, but I knew almost everybody, because it was from our town. Somehow, people who knew each other, sort of kept together, and this journey is taking five days. By this time, we had hardly any food left, and people had no place to sit, there were squabbles, and quarrels, and squashing, and my sister, and me, we were, we were one of the first ones to put off to this wagon, we went right inside, near the window, so we at least had some air from the window, but after that, being at the window, I had the most terrible job, to empty everybody's potty, and the wind blow it back onto our faces, it was terrible. And it was so hot. And if somebody said "Don't", the other person was jealous, they called each other, it's as you're sitting there like a Duchess, so that poor woman called out, "I am sitting on a saucepan, it's hurting me. Am I sitting like a Duchess?" And there was an old man who sat at the door. The doors, there was a little opening, and that's where we got the bit of air, and he smoked a pipe, can you imagine? In such a heat, somebody sitting and smoking a pipe. And I was very young and very angry. And

you know, in this teenage age, you are more excited, and you feel you want to do something, and you don't think of the consequences. I went up to him, and I told him, "Mensabachi, if you don't stop smoking, we ask you very nicely, and very kindly, many times, and you did not stop. If you don't stop smoking, I will take your pipe and I throw it out." And do you know, my father pulled me back and slapped my face, and said I should be quiet. And I had never, in my life, ever got smacked, and I felt so hurt, and believe me, I did not understand what he meant. He thought, like, "Who knows how long this old man can sit here and smoke. Let him have his pipe, at least it is his comfort." And he made me, and I looked at my father, and I didn't think that he was right, I thought he was wrong, because all the children suffered from the smoke, and we really suffered from, couldn't take the smell. But later on I did understand what my father was thinking of. Well, on the way, the, after the third day, they opened the doors, and they let us down at the station to get water, but it had to be done very quickly, because when we crossed the Hungarian border, the Germans took us over, and they were always shouting, and shouting, and shouting, the train stopped a lot, because they had other trains which was for them more important, had to pass, and so we were standing, in this time, a lot with the train. Well, one day, they opened the door, and we ran out, we had to run for water, and I had three pairs of stockings on, because I wanted to save whatever I could. What I could, I could, I was afraid that we won't be able to carry the bundles of, bundles too long, so we put on double coat, and double dress, and triple stockings. I remember running, I fell on the railway, and I cut my knee, and I cut through all my three stockings, and my blood was running, but I didn't take notice, because the main thing was to get water, quick, quick, quick, and we were, and they were shouting, "Schnell, schnell, schnell" and we had to rush back, and I arrive carrying the pail of water, half was going out, but I managed to get some water. When I returned to the wagon, I saw a doctor standing over my father. My father was a very shy man, and somehow he just couldn't pass water, and in the end, he wanted to, but he couldn't, and so they got hold of a doctor, because he fainted while I ran for the water, and the doctor came, and took off the water from him, openly, in front of everybody else, it was terrible, but we all felt relief when he was relieved from this water, and then he felt better. Anyway, so this was altogether a half an hour. Not more than a half an hour. I had no watch, but I can tell you that it wasn't more. We had all went back, and the wagons was closed again, and the train started. And we went again for two days. Some people didn't manage to get food, or was not prepared, like my mother prepared something. Some people, for instance, the people who were interned, or people who were taken from hospitals, or they were taken from, from, you know, the night when I told you this before, when they were taken away. They had no time to take any food with them, they had absolutely nothing. So when they opened up after five days, this wagon, people got out, they looked black, they had black lips, and I didn't understand. "Why do they look black?" I thought they were gipsies, they were coloured people. But they were not, they just were starved of food, and that's what they looked like. So we carried our bundles on our backs, and on our hands, and I remember looking at my sister, she was a long time in the ghetto, and she looked so bad. She was so thin already then.

Did you know where you were?

Yes, we knew, it was said, it said as we got off, "Strasshoff". then we had to pass some fields, and this place where they were taking us, this was a concentration place,

which was wire around it, it looked like a prisoner of camp, and they might have had it full with people, because they had no place for us, we couldn't enter the camp, we had to settle down on the dirt road, in the open fields, and some fields had beautiful apple trees, and we settled underneath the apple trees, so we had a bit of shade, but I remember, as we were going, not very far away where we stopped, finally, there was a well, and I remember it, because we were always looking for water, but in front of the well, there was an enormous big hole, and fresh earth, they dug an enormous big hole, and fresh earth around it, and I thought, I was looking there, and I thought, "Oh, I can go round the earth, and I can get to the well and get some water, if I, if I, if we're not going too far from here." And as it happens, we didn't go too far from there, but, not even a half a kilometre, much less, and I asked a friend of mine to come with me for water. And we told our mothers we are going to fetch water, and we walked off to this dirt road, and it was so quiet, it was such a silence. We heard the birds, and it was so beautiful to walk in the fresh air, and nobody stopped us.

Nobody was there?

Nobody at all. And no guards, nothing at all, until we came to this well. There stood two soldiers, two German soldiers, with their guns, ready to shoot us, and they said, "Schnell zurück." And we showed our buckets, "We only want some water." But they started walking towards us, "Zurück, zurück." We got frightened, we had nothing else to, I turned round, and we had to go back without any water. And it became late afternoon, everybody tried to make, on the ground, on the wet ground, we were settled down for the night, this is where we have to sleep for the night, and they told us tomorrow, we will go into that camp. And opposite us was an enormous big lorry. Actually, we were facing a forest, with enormous big trees. I remember it so well, and there was a huge big van, and on this van was a Red Cross painted on the top, and on the side, and at the door, and it was just an, it was like a juggernaut today, enormous big van. Then we were, they started next morning to open the camp doors, somewhere, because we were always going closer and closer to the camp, moving with our luggage, and it was late afternoon by the time we entered this place, but this place was like, like, like you had to go through a maze, you couldn't just walk up to the gate, but you walked like, right and left, and right and left, and that was a fence, it was like a maze, you had to walk through. But it was a wire mesh, so we saw each other, but this is how we walked to the gate. Now I know if somebody would have opened the gate, couldn't have run out, you see.

It wasn't in a straight line.

No, so this is how we went in there.

Now, you had the guards?

We always had guards around us here.

They were,

Yes, they told us always, "But here..." I haven't seen again German soldiers, I have seen Ukrainian men and Ukrainian women. the Ukrainian women took care of the

women, and they were so cruel, they were so bad, and they spoke German, and they shouted all the time. Well, we went into a stone building, and the first thing was that we had to undress, and make a bundle of our clothes. Imagine that, it was one of the most terrible things what happened to me. I had to undress in front of my father, my brothers, my sister, completely naked, our neighbours, everybody I knew, and they knew, and I knew them, and it was terrible. Nobody spoke, it was so silent, we were so quiet. We bundled up our clothes, and everybody was handed a little string to tie it up, and all our luggage taken from us, and this all was put into a big oven, to sterilise it. They said they sterilise the clothes, and we will get it back. So we made sure that we wrapped it round well, so when we get it back, we can get dressed again. Then they took us into a shower, and the water came, cold water, all of a sudden the showers opened, and we were bathing, washing ourselves, and when we came out of the shower, then we had to go and pick up our, we did get back our clothes, and we got dressed, no, no, I'm sorry, we didn't get dressed, but we had our bundles with us, and we had to go into a certain hall, where there was an Austrian Jewish man, who was working probably for the Germans, or was a guard, Jewish guard, or something, was teaching us how to inhale and exhale when we are going up to the German doctors, that it should go fast. "You stand in front", he said to us, "And this is how you do it." He lined us up, and he made us inhale in and inhale out, and "Now, you march, you go up and you give your details to the secretaries." And there was a row of German Jewish women, I know they were Jewish, but they were not allowed to talk to us, they were secretaries, and they were taking the details from us. Everything, all the particulars, your name, your age, where you come from. And then you was given a number, and then you had to walk to an X-ray machine, and hold this number, and they took an X-ray from you, our lungs. Everybody had, then, all this time, we were, we were naked, and then after this, when they took our details and took our X-rays, then we came in front of the doctor, who listened to our heart, and who asked us questions, what illnesses had we had? And I remember, on my right, was my mother, on my left, was my sister, and I was standing in the middle, and I was a beautiful young girl, I mean, you can imagine in that age, what your breasts looks like, a teenager, and this doctor was fondling and touching me, and asking me again and again, longer than anybody else, and I didn't answer, and my mother said how old I am. He said, he said to him, like I am older, and my sister said I am younger. They were afraid, they saw that like, he picked me out, and they were frightened for me, and I was just shaking, I couldn't speak. So I walked further, finished, then could get dressed. No, no. First, before we got dressed, a Ukrainian woman came, and all the, everybody had some petrol poured over their hair, in case we have lice, so they put, but we were very sensible by then, in the, in the ghetto already, we didn't have good opportunities to clean ourselves, we knew that we won't be able to go to a bath, so we all had short hair, so this was a very big advantage that time, because long hair was hard to handle and wash, and they poured this petrol over our head, and after all that washing, which we were so happy to be clean, you smelt of this petrol. And we got dressed, and by this time, it was so dark, they told us now we can go into the barracks. And we are walking on a dirt road, and rushing into barracks, because the sooner you got in, the sooner you got a place. And I got separated from my sister and my mother, and I had three little brothers with me, and we squashed in, just about made out that there is a bunk, there were bunk beds, and we occupied a bunk bed, the three brothers and me, and we tried to sleep. I think I slept a little. But then, very early, as the day breaks, someone called out and said, "The 6th July today." And I said, "Oh my, that's

my birthday." And on the next bunk was our doctor, our family doctor's wife, who knew me, and said, "Oh, poor little girl, this is how you spend your birthday. In such a place, poor little girl. I feel so sorry for you. You're so young, and you have to be here." And she was so nice, she says she will give me a present. Later on, she gave me a slice of bread, which was like gold. I shared it with my brothers, and I've never forgotten it. And this woman never came back, with his daughter, was there with his daughter, and they never returned.

What was the routine in that place?

I remember even her name, was Dr. Rotenstein. What was this place like?

Yes.

It was like a prisoner of camp, it was barracks made of wood, and wooden bunks. Quite big huts, yes.

With lots of women inside?

Women, men, we were mixed here, we were all mixed, yes, we were not separated. We stayed together.

So you stayed with your family?

Yes. In the morning, the first thing was to look for my mother. We could walk into, from one barrack to the other, inside the barracks, they let us walk around, and what I forgot to mention, that when these secretaries took our details, we each had got a food card, every single person had a food card, and when lunch time came, we could queue up, and each person got a bowl of soup, and a slice of bread. But they punched a hole into your card, so you couldn't queue up twice. But I cheated, I saw how they do it, and I took, they were, they counted the cards, from a family one person would come for the food, so six cards, five cards. Sometimes they looked at each card, but sometimes they just counted the ends, they punched the hole, and they they counted. So I already had some, and then I collected two more from my parents, and I placed that outside, on the bottom and on top ...

End of FI28 Side A

Fl28 Side B

Bread, it was something wonderful.

What did you get to eat?

Oh, that was a soup, which I could only describe it as they put some straw in some water, and they cooked it, and that's what it looked like.

It tasted like?

It tasted like, it was terrible. Do you know, we were so hungry, and I remember I left the straw in there, but I drank the water because I was so hungry. My sister was very ill, she had diarrhoea, she was very weak, and I had constipation, I am always being shy, and whenever unhappy, or anything, I just can't go, so I saw there was a hospital, also Red Cross, Red Cross painted on a barrack, and I asked a Russian woman, who was a Jewish Russian girl, to come with me, who lived in our town, because these Ukrainians, I thought, maybe we spoke to them Russian, it will, it will help. And we walked over to this barrack, and we met a doctor, a Jewish doctor, with a white coat on, and he had a stethoscope hanging on his neck. And he said, "Where are you going?" He looked at us really angrily. And I said, "I would like to go to the hospital to ask for some help, I am constipated." He said to me, and very sternly, he said, "You are not constipated and you're to go back, but right away. If you want to see the daylight, you turn back and go." And somehow we understood, if we would go any further, we would walk into danger. We didn't understand it, what danger, it was certainly danger the way he told us, so we went back. And as I came back, we came, there was a puddle of water, and people were drinking this water, and my sister was there on the edge of this water, and the doctor was standing over her? And said, "Do you know this woman?" And believe me, I didn't recognise my sister. I only wanted to complain about my complaint. And again, I said, "I've got constipation." He says, "Take care of this woman, she's very ill." I looked down, and it was my sister, she was so weak, she just happened to get this diarrhoea, and she was very, very bad. And I thought to myself, "Here I am, complaining about I feel unwell." I thought she was going to die, she was so ill. I carried her back into the barrack, and my mother made a place, and laid her down, and my mother took care of the grandchildren, already, she had two little girls, because she was so ill. She already by then, was a widow. She lost her husband 1941, in Russia, he got frozen, and actually, she happened to know it, because some Hungarian soldiers came on leave, and they came and told her, so that she already knew that she is a widow. And in daytime, they were collecting some women to work, to clean for the Germans, the barracks, and we had to go and scrub these barracks and make them clean, and make their beds, and I remember that next day, late in the afternoon, there was an air raid. We heard the sirens, and they called out on the loudspeaker that everybody should go into the barracks. And we went inside, it was late afternoon, they had to turn off all the lights, it was dark in there, and we heard bombs falling, but very far from us, and then it was over. This was a Thursday, when we entered this concentration camp. I don't think we were there very long, maybe a week. Then we had to line up again, and they

were, at that time we already knew, oh yes, by the way, I didn't mention, that when we went into this concentration camp, I saw some gipsies across the fence, we were also in the camp, but we were fenced away, and it was very funny, because we came into the camp late afternoon, I saw them, and early morning they were not there any more, nobody, it was silent. There was nobody on the other side of the camp, and they called out that everybody has to line up, and this went on every day, people lined up, and they were taken away to work. They told us they're going to work. And they did go, actually, to work, because in Austria they were placed in different towns and villages, where people applied for work, as the Jewish people were taken there, and they were working for. But here we lined up, and this place we had Germans, not the Ukrainians, and they called out, "Is everybody here from this number of barrack?" So one of my friends stood behind me and said, "Yes, we are all here. Only my mother, and my little sister who is not well, they are in the barracks, because they don't feel well." And this guard who asks if everybody is out of the barracks, was also an Austrian Jew, and said, "You go back for your mother if you want to see her alive. You'd better go back and bring her out." And she was pleading, and she said, "But please, she's not feeling very well." He says, "You're not going back, any of you, to the barrack any more. You're going to work, you're going to be taken away. Go back for your mother, because you'll never see her again." She ran back, and she brought her mother and her sister, and every day, they were stamping on your hand, they stamped a stamp on your hand, and it said, it said which town you are allocated to go to. You had to go to the railway, march, walk to this railway, again the wagons, the same pattern, and then you were taken away. And here before we queued up, and called out "Viener Neustadt", and everybody in front of us started running to the back, whoever could went back and back and back and back, and in the end it was my mother and me, were in the very first line, in the very first line of the row. And nobody wanted to move, because they said that town is always bombed and they are frightened to go to that town, they should go somewhere else. But as we were a big family, with our luggage and everything, we couldn't run to the back, and they called out "March." Like we should march up to the place where they stamp your arm, German women were there, stamping your arm, German men as well, but women with rubber whips in their hand, and we just didn't move, and we thought, if we wait, perhaps they will change, perhaps they will send us somewhere else. But one woman came up with a rubber whip, and started hitting my mother, I never forget, the first thought was, I want to run and hold her down, and I shouted, "Don't beat my mother." And my father got hold of me, held my mouth, and put his hand on my mouth, and held me back, because he saw I was running to, with my mother, and he just held me back, because he knew that something will happen to me to, and he understood because we were all guarded with these German soldiers, and the German women with these whips in their hands, and then my mother called out, " Yiddishe Kinderlach Kim", that we should start coming, because she couldn't take any more. So our arms were stamped, so we walked to the railway, which wasn't very far, and we got into this railway.

This is all of the family?

All of us, and many other people from our town, from Debrezen, from Solnok,, but this was also wagons, but here we were not so much squashed, we were not so many people, perhaps 50, but not 80, and about, I don't know how many, but a few

hundred people were taken to this camp. We arrived the railway station, and here again we met with air raids. It was terrible.

Did you know what was happening?

All the guards were, went away, all the guards were went away, and we were locked into these wagons, and the bombs were falling, left, right and centre, and we were very lucky, it didn't hit out, it didn't hit our train. And they opened, after the air raid was opened, they opened the trains, and we took, they came with lorries, and every time they filled up a lorry, they went to the camp, and a man came back on a lorry, one man and told us that we are taken to a nice camp, and it was a nice camp, because it was so virgin, it was so new. The grass was a half a metre high, it was so beautiful and clean there, and wooden barracks never, never been used. You could see it was new clean wood, it was just made.

They just built it?

Just built it, yes. The fence was still being done, and the fence wasn't a wire fence, it was just a wooden, high wooden fence, so we didn't, couldn't see out, but the fence wasn't too high either, you know. But there were guards rather than, but anyway, we would have run, where would we have run? I mean, there was nowhere, I mean, we were very, we knew we are in Wiener Neustadt, but we were far from the town, it was the outskirts of the town, and the other side of the camp, and the railway, and further on was the mountains, and in fact, I think we could see Semering from there, it was fresh air, beautiful air, and beautiful mountains, you would think it was such a beautiful place, and they have such cruel places, where they are putting people in camps. Well, I have to say now, that we thought we are in the most terrible place, and we had the food we got, and the treatment we got, but now, looking back, and I know what Auschwitz was, and all the other death camps, I could say, comparison to that, perhaps this was Paradise. It was, at least we got some food, we walked every day to work, we had to get up 5 o'clock in the morning.

What sort of work did you do?

Well, we were hired out by the streets, street cleaning, parks, keep the parks clean, the streets clean, this is not such some simple thing when I say this, but you know, in bombing times, to clean streets was not an easy matter. You had to clear of walls, clean walls and, and break the bricks and clean the drains, and sweep the streets in the snow, break the snow. The parks had to be kept in order, and then after that, we were different works. We worked in a cement factory, we worked in a cemetery, that was my best work. The cemetery, because they took only 30 people, we had a very nice guard, a Jewish guard, and a non-Jewish guard, and somehow, we were a nice lot, that's why I say this was perhaps the nicest, though, it was a great advantage to work on the streets, because in the streets we could beg the civilians who passed us by, we could ask them for food, and sometimes they would hand us a piece of bread, or a fruit or something.

They knew you were Jewish? Did they know?

They knew it.

Did they know how you were, who these women were?

They knew that we are heflingen, we are prisoners, they knew that, and they had probably family, or they had young boys, for instance, a woman took a liking to my brother, because he had a young son who was taken away from her, and one night my brother sneaked into her house, and chopped some wood for her, because you could, you could for a few minutes, disappear, and he, he, she came and gave always a little food to my brother, and so we called her, my brother's Godmother! You see. But I had one, a very terrible experience, in this, in this cemetery. We worked very hard, as you can imagine, the young girls, lifting gravestones, there was a knack, a knack to that, and there was pieces of wood with what we did it with, and in the end, we became quite professionals, but to learn and to do it, it was very hard work, but this cemetery was next to a factory, a train, where they manufactured trains and wagons, and this factory was constantly bombed, so we had a lot of air raids, and when it was an air raid, and not because they were worried about us, but the guard was worried about himself, so he would take us down to the crypt, and that was deep down in the earth, so we felt quite safe there, and we are hoping that it will last a long time, so we won't have to go up to work, and also we thought perhaps it will bring the end of the War nearer. Anyway, when we came out of this place, we had to continue, of course, working, and one day, I remember it was Yom Kipur, and I had a little sidur, and I took that with me, with my shovel on one hand, and my sidur on the other, and my rucksack on my back, and we walked to work, and I asked, I told my friend that I got a big secret, I'd got a sidur with me, and she said, "Oh, that is wonderful", she was religious also, and she said, she will say, she will stand and daven, and I should watch over her. And, because we were working on different rows, the guards was always, could only be in one place, so he would cycle around and see if we are okay, and if we are working, but, and if I will watch, so I can tell her to stop praying because he's coming, and I did that, and I guarded her as she managed to daven, Shmoneh Esreh, very nicely, and then I said, "Now I will pray, and you watch over me." But she wasn't watching properly, and suddenly, the man who is on charge of this cemetery, was, who was a Gestapo, a big Nazi, and whenever he saw us coming, or pass by, they are giving out the work to the guard, he was always cursing us, he knew we feared him a lot, and this girl didn't want, and suddenly he just appeared next to me on the bicycle, and I was so frightened, I couldn't even speak, I couldn't even answer, and he was shouting at me, and cursing at me, "Du blüde", "Betten, vas betten - die Keine Gott, vas gehest du?" And I didn't understand even the curse, what he was saying to me, and he got fed up with me, because I didn't answer, and he says, "Oh, wait a minute, I will report you." I understood what he said. And he said, he is blurred, he can't even speak.

Can you translate that, please, what did he say, in English?

I am mad. He said, I am mad. I don't, there is no God, who am I praying to? And standing and praying. And I'm supposed to work, and you schweine, you terrible Jew, you dirty Jew, and whatever you can imagine what he called me, names. And, and I just trembled and I didn't answer, and because I didn't answer he thought I am deaf

and dumb, and I don't even hear what he is saying to me, so he got fed up, and he said, "Oh, all right, I will report her." And rode away like this.

So you were,

Well, my friends from the other row were watching this, and listening to this, and they all went home very scared, and they told the whole camp, they told everyone what happened to me, and my parents were bittering (trembling - Yiddish), "What's going to happen now?" For sure, they're going to take me away, or something is going to happen to all of us, but they, somehow nothing happened, the day passed next day, and we walked out again to work, and nothing happened. Because every time, it so often it came at that time, these air raids, that maybe he had no time to report, I don't know, he forgot, or he just, I don't know, but he didn't, nothing happened, but everybody feared for me, everybody.

Tell me about these air raids, what were the feelings about it? I mean, you knew it is the Allies?

A good feeling. Yes, we felt happy about it.

You felt happy about it?

Yes.

Were you frightened that you would be killed, or you didn't care?

Yes, yes, we were very frightened. At one time, I worked on the roads, and then here again, also, the guard is afraid of himself, so we worked near a hospital, and would take us down in the hospital bunker, and we were, then he would go away, lock us into this room, and the hospital patients would be carried down also, but we didn't see them, we only knew that on the other side of the door, they are the hospital patients. And I remember that I used to take my brothers, and, because two of my brothers marched to work as well, they were young but they worked, and they were crying and holding on to me, and one occasion I remember my father was with us also, and I said, "Daddy, what shall we pray?" And he said, in the Prayer Book, I could show you, it doesn't come to my mind at this moment, adonaia Kiviti, that God should watch over us. And I remember that I knew the whole prayer, and I would say it with my brothers, just, I was saying it, not to ease the bombing and take my mind of, and like educating my little brothers, and they were saying it with me, very diligently, and my stomach would shake, I was, every time after the raids, I had cramps which they stayed with me, for many years, I have to go out of the building when I heard an aeroplane, because I couldn't bear it inside the building, though it had a different sound after the War, but before that, it was those heavy, heavy, Russian planes, you know, and when they emptied their bombs, then they flew back, and it echoed, and it had a different sound, the planes, I learned to listen to that, to know that. We were very frightened, and we screamed and we shouted, and they would knock on the doors, these, these nurses, and banging us, "There are ill people, please we should be quieter." But you know, we Jews are very excitable people, and we think if we shout, and loud Hakadosh Baruch Hu, you know, to God, he will hear our prayers. But I

remember, every time I came up from there, I had such cramps in my stomach, terrible. Because I controlled myself, while the bombing went on, and afterwards it came out. Well, you know the normal sights when you come up, and you see houses bombed apart, and people running all over the place, whoever didn't go away to a bunker, and we had, they had been called, oh yes, this was a very important part of our work. We were covering the roofs of houses where the slates fell off from the bombing, and this was hard work, and we became such professionals, that I walked on five-storey houses, on the roof, like you walk on the pavement, I got so used to that, and then we chained, like chaining, you know, throwing the stones one to the other, and slates one to the other, without seeing the slates, I would stand on a ladder, catch four slates, throw it up, like a machine. And

And there were women and men working?

Women, men, children, old young, everybody, everybody.

What was the feeling then, did you think the end was coming?

Oh yes.

Or did you not know what was happening?

Oh yes, yes, we were hoping the end was coming, because, because we knew, my mother would tell us about the First World War a lot, it lasted four years, it can't last forever, one day, you can't live without hope, it's only we hoped for, that they will lose the War, or we will be liberated, and we hoped, and we dreamed, and we waited for this moment, sure.

Did you hear at all about the death camps?

Well, this I have to tell you, that we worked sometimes together with French and Greek prisoners, and everybody had their own characteristics. I remember the Greeks were lazy, and always being cold, they used the word always, "creo, creo", which meant "Cold, it's cold." And the French, they were not very tidy, even we had, I mean, we were, we had wooden shoes to walk in, which we got in the camp, for the winter, but we kept our clothes as neat, as clean as possible, this was our pride, to make ourselves not to look, of course, we looked very shabby, but we know, we tried our best to look good. We had a yellow band on our arm, and a yellow star, and when we got in the camp, the yellow star, we still had from Hungary.

What clothes were you wearing?

We wore a whole, all the time, our old clothes, we got no other clothes, so clothes had a very big value. There was a person for whom with food we paid, should mend, and we became very big experts of finding a piece of rag, and create, make a hat from it, or gloves from it, for the winter, and newspaper was wonderful value, because that you could put into the wooden shoe, wrap your feet, and that kept us warm. But we scraped everywhere, we ran out to the dustbins and scraped for food, we pulled out the carrots when we passed the field, and wherever we can put our hands on anything.

How long were you there for, do you know?

A year.

A whole year?

Just under a year.

And the Germans were there all the time guarding?

No. Austrian uards. Austrian guards, but we saw the Gestapo and the Germans in town.

And did you have any experience of them shooting people in the camp, or torturing, or, or things like that?

No, they had a different, they had a different way of frightening us. They caught somebody, for instance, begging in the street, so they came in, then the Germans came. They came in with a lorry, and they knew, they already knew who it was, because he was caught, or she was caught, and then they, then the Camp Commandant knew that who is the family for this person, and they would take the whole family and that person, and they were taken out of the camp, and they were never seeing them again. That was a very good way to frighten us.

(Interviewer asks a question here, which I cannot hear.)

They did. And on one occasion, something happened. Our next door neighbour, in the camp, I mean, next barrack, the woman was begging, and they came in for her, and they took her away, and her mother and her father, and the sister had already the husband's other name, they left her there, they pretended they don't belong, and so only the mother and father was taken, and her, and her son, and somebody got friendly with one of the German guards, Austrian guard, actually, and asked that Austrian guard to find out, to follow, to find out where they are taking them, and one day, he came back, and he reported that they were taking them only 20 kms. away in another camp, but unfortunately, this was so end of the time when we spent already in the camp, that the first fright, when somebody was caught, was very bad. Also it has happened how thorough they were. You remember I told you that they took X-rays, and if somebody had a lung trouble, they trace them, and they traced this man to our camp, a man from Debrezen, and took his wife and children away, and they told them why, they said, "Because you have got tuberculosis, and you will infect everybody." And they took them away, and those people has never come back, I don't know where they took them.

Can I just ask you one thing, can you tell me, how did they, the women, manage with hygiene problems, menstruation?

It's interesting that you are asking me the question, because, and here I have a story to tell you, that we knew, that in our bread is bron (bromide), and people didn't

menstruate. But I do not know why it has not affected me. Everybody had blown up tummies, and I didn't, I had periods, but it was terrible. I had to look for rags, and for leaves and it was terrible. But after the War, I knew that it was good for me, I was healthy, and it helped, because my, Yes, and I came back, and everybody had to go for medicals.

End of F128 Side B

Fl29 Side A

Bombing in the camp.

Yes, well, this bombing came frequent, more and more frequent, and then they, we changed our work, we have to build a, they took us to different work now, we have to work on fortifications, in the streets, in case tanks will enter, we didn't know, of course, we didn't know, we are only told about this, this is what they made us do, we had to build with heavy logs of wood, we built these fortifications.

And the women did that as well?

The women, the men, I told you there is never, never, no difference between women's work or men's work. The women did just as heavy work as men did. In fact, when we came, the cement, it was 100 kilos cement, and we lifted it up to our shoulder, and we carried it. And I carried more, because I wanted, everybody had to carry so many, and I wanted my sister to carry less, so I ran with the sack, anyway, coming back to this, when we were building these fortifications, one day we saw a lot of, lot of Germans, and refugees, coming from Hungary, from Hungary, they were running from the Russians. So we understood that the Russians are closing in, coming nearer, and one day, the, the Mayor of the town, who was responsible for our Camp, came into town, and I have to mention here, that this person, this was our luck, all the time we were in Camp, that he was very lenient, and he was a nice, and a kind man, sometimes he picked up two or three women to go home to his house and we cleaned his house, we cleaned his yard, we did his garden, and I have noticed that in the middle of the garden, like in the English gardens, has got middle of garden, a grass patch, and such a big grass patch, was dugged up, and ammunition was put in there, and covered up with a canvas. So we came back to the Camp, and we said that, "Oh, this man is hiding some ammunition in his garden. I lifted it up." You know, I did not, the first opportunity, I was curious what's underneath that canvas. And I have never thought of seeing so many guns, hand guns.

Really?

Yes. And I suppose the Russians knew about this also, that when we walked out from our Camp, the street, in the middle of the street there was also such grass patches, and underneath these patches, there were bunkers which was full of ammunition, so when it was bombing in there, you have no idea what fireworks went on, and it's just a miracle that, we were so close by there, it's a miracle that we survived there really. Only once it happened from a nose of a bomb fell in, fell through a barrack, and it fell on somebody's bed, but it's the only one incident. Of course, we got flying things, we got a little bit hurt, but not really serious damage, and so when this Mayor came into town, then came in late in the evening, and called all the Jewish, they called it the Yupo - the Jewish man who was instead of the soldiers - they were the Jewish, in some camps they called them "Capo", and here they called them "Yupo", and called them together and quietly he sat with them, and said, "Listen, this is the position, the Russians are very close by, and I, I want, I'm not supposed to tell you this, and I'm not supposed to be here, and I didn't tell you anything. When it gets very dark, pick

yourself up, run into the forest tonight, because they are coming very fast, and we want to hold them up. We do not want to fight the Russians, because we cannot fight them. We can't hold them too long. There's not strong enough defence that we can hold them." Like he told us, he told this man properly, he says, "But the thing is this, that this is the position is where the Camp is, this is where it will be, so you should be safe, go into the forest." Well, some people believed him, some people didn't believe him, some people were suspicious, and they said, "If we run into the forest then we come across Germans, they will shoot us, what will happen? It's dangerous." But there was one place, middle of the town, where we always felt, when we worked in the street, to, to escape the bombs, it was quite a safe bunker, so one by one we sneaked out in the night, quietly. It was such an upside down position then, and we didn't even have serious guarding, we had the guard there, but I think that the guard shut his eyes, he knew what is going on, and we felt it, somehow we sensed it, so we went there, we didn't even take too many things with us, because we left our belongings in the camp, but we knew that we must not stay there for the night. But there were people who couldn't move, there were ill people, there were people who couldn't leave their mother, or they had little children and they stayed. Those people suffered terribly. I will tell you later why.

Can we now go back a little bit, to the attitude and the behaviour of the police in your town? A few things that you remember,

Well, I shall go back, and I remember many, many terrible occasions, frightening occasions, but one stands out especially for me, because here I remember, there was big banging, middle of the night, and they always came middle of the night, I don't know why, but mainly to frighten us, to wake us up, not to give us any peace, they are banging on the main door, and while somebody went to the door, my mother quickly hid my father, because they used to beat the man, or take the man away, so we had such a door which looked like it's a wall, the wallpaper was on it, it was painted over it, and it looked like, like there is no door there, and my mother quickly put my father in there, and pulled a cupboard over, and then then by that time, they got to our flat, and they were banging on our, by the flat, you know, at the door, and we children all sat up, and I remember, as they came in, three or four of these Jandars, and being very loud, very noisy, but I didn't hear a word, I could only hear my own heart racing, but so loud, that in both my ears, I only heard my heart racing, and I saw what's going on, but I heard nothing, and this, I think it was so terrible, and I thought, "If this is going to go on for a little while longer, I'm going to faint." But then they went away.

Nobody opened the door?

Yes. Yes, they came into the flat, yes, they went through all the rooms, and they were banging on the table, they had sticks in their hands, and they were banging here and there

Did they say what they wanted?

They didn't take anything, I think they were looking for things. They might have asked my mother, but I tell you, all I heard is my heart beat. I don't know what they wanted, I don't know what they talked, but the fear, it was so strong. And the children

were all crying, I heard it afterwards when they went away, I relaxed a bit, I heard my brothers crying, but I, I really, I know of course, afterwards, my mother told me they were looking, we should give up all our jewellery what we had. We were not rich people, we didn't have much jewellery, they were looking, where is my father? And my mother said, "Well, my father is away in the labour force." Actually, he'd just returned from the labour force. So this is the things we had to endure. And one night, when I was coming home late from a friend, and some Christian boys saw me, and they were shouting after me, "Jew, Jewish Girl, there is a Jewish Girl there." And of course, I ran as fast as I can, I hardly touched the ground while I ran. It was things like this that happened a lot.

All the time, yes.

All the time.

One more thing I wanted to ask you, if you can recall back, when you were talking already about the Camp, or just before the Camp, you were talking about the big van, in the big pit, next to the well.

That was before we entered the camp, but this was on the ground, outside the camp. But I had no idea, they said, they kept on calling,"
If anybody feels ill, if anybody isn't well, should come into the hospital, we have here an emergency hospital." But now, many years after, of course, we know what it well was, and what that big hole was, what I have seen in front of that well, but at that time I didn't know.

You didn't know?

No.

And nobody knew about that van either?

No. No. We had no idea. We had no idea, the only thing was, it was very, it wasn't suspicious to me, but it was very peculiar, that every morning, that whoever went into the hospital, the hospital could always take more people, and it was only just a little hut, and in the morning there was nobody there, always, new doctors, and always new people came to the hospital. Somebody was going to give birth, or had a heart attack or something, because there were hundreds and hundreds of people.

And did you actually find out later on?

I mean, that alone, that alone, when we walked into this camp, and there was full of gipsies on the other side, and in fact, we thought, "What are those gipsies doing in here?" You know, we thought we are somebodies, and they are nobodies, but they were just in the same bad position.

And the people just disappeared?

They just disappeared, in the morning we looked over, there was no one in that camp,

Did anybody ask?

Behind the fence.

Did anybody ask, or you were frightened to ask?

We had nobody to ask. Nobody communicated with us, everything was just shouted through in German on the loudspeaker. We should now line up for this Dergermuesli we called it, this terrible soup, and the bread, or we should now line up to go somewhere to clean the German barracks, or something like that. And nobody could really, communicated with us.

Can we now return back to the time when already the Russians were,

Oh yes, here I must, excuse me, but here, I would like to mention it. When we went into these barracks, these barracks were also quite new, the wood was very fresh and new, but on the walls inside, we found names of people, and recognised people from other towns, left their name and date when they were there. Of course, I can't remember today, any more, what date, but about a month before, there must have been another group in that camp. Because we found lots of names all written all over the wall, and this became our occupation, and holding up the children, and they should read the names, whichever we couldn't read high, you see, or anywhere.

But these people were taken away?

They were not where, we don't know anything about them, no, we don't. No, I don't think that these people stayed in Austria, because I don't know anybody, I mean, I knew, from Yugoslavia, we knew, these names, and they never came back, so I don't know, not since they have been employed there, like, like our Camp, in Austria.

Yes, because the Camp that you described was very different from what we,

It was a concentration camp. It was a camp where people stayed, with people. Well, in this camp, they mainly took the people's personal details, they came in for sterilisation, fertilisation, and to allocate them to places to work. This is what they have done with us.

Can you explain what is this sterilisation and fertilisation, that you are talking about, what is that?

Well, that they sterilised our clothes, and cleaned, and you know, what I told you before, they put petrol over our heads, and if anybody lice they went to a special place, and thing like that.

And the other word wasn't correct, the fertilisation is nothing to do with that? That's not quite the correct word.

Fertilisation, what do you call it?

Sterilisation, yes. Okay. Can we carry on now, from where you stopped about, where somebody told you to run away and go to the forest. Can you carry on, and tell us what happened after that, if you remember?

Well, in the morning, we spent the night there, as many as we could, we, we squashed into these two rooms in the basement, and we heard guns, very very fierce battles. In fact, our, it wasn't bombing, but our, our bunker was shaking, what we know now, because my father went out once and looked out to the street, they were running all over the place, these tanks, and my, I had a younger brother, who went up to the tower, this building had a tower, and he climbed up there, and he looked out of the window, and he came down quickly because he saw a gun was pointing at him, he ran down very very fast, and in fact, when they occupied our part, they ran up there, and they were looking for him. It's a good thing he came down quickly, but he came down with the very good news. He said he could see from the outskirts there were Russian soldiers.

How could he tell?

He could, he was in a very high point, so he could look out.

And he could see that they were Russians?

He could see Russian tanks, and soldiers. Soldiers lying on the ground with guns, and anyway, the battle went on for two days, so we got really liberated only when we went into the bunker, after two days. Well, that was very true what this man said, this Mayor. They took up the battle there, and some of the barracks got damaged.

It was very very close to you, it was?

Yes, the battle was quite close to us, but, but really they took up the battle where the camp was, just before the camp was, because that was the edge of the, of the town. But a lot of people, the people who were coming from Hungary, trying to escape, and the German soldiers who was coming back, not all of them could escape, and a lot of them got shot, and a lot of tanks couldn't go through there, and into very narrow streets, and they just couldn't go through, if they had gone further, just the houses would have fallen apart, which many places did, and I have seen, when I got liberated, I have seen many Germans shot. The terrible thing was, for those people who stayed in the Camp, the Russian soldiers came in the night, after they have captured this part, and they were drunk, and they were looking for women, and there were young girls, I remember, I had a friend who was 15 years old, a young girl, and she told me, and I didn't understand that time, I said, she told me what happened, so many men forced her to bed. And I said, "Well, how many?" She said, "I don't remember, a whole regiment." That's what she said. And the clever women who were already once married, knew what the men wanted, they managed for a longer time, keep a person or a soldier with them, so they didn't have to go through so many, but it's terrible, I tell you it was terrible. They cared no, young or old, or ill, these men, they just, the soldiers they were drunk, of course, I don't know if they knew what they were doing,

you know, because they probably wouldn't go to an old woman, children. It's terrible.

So it ruined the whole atmosphere of liberation really.

Yes, yes, it had, I'm afraid to say yes. I am still very grateful to the liberating forces, but unfortunately, we had very bad experiences. Well, here is another experience. There were three families from Debrezen, who didn't trust this Mayor, and they didn't want to our camp, and they went into a house where the people run away, and they went up somewhere very high, where they kept the horses, and there was straw and they laid down there, but when the Russians came in, they did exactly the same with the women, so when we got liberated, my father knew that we have to be very careful when the evening comes, because he went up to one of these Russian officers, and said, "I got daughters in here, could you send a guard or somebody." And he was a Jewish officer, and he spoke Yiddish, and so my father could speak to him, and then he said, "I can't control them. They fight very hard, they work very hard, they haven't seen women or a long time, and I am not in the position, it is you, you as a father, it is your duty to take care of your children, of your daughters." And in the night, we escaped into the hospital, where they brought back all the wounded soldiers, and these wounded soldiers were walking around with high temperatures and big wounds, and they were looking for water, they didn't care about women, and this is the place where we felt safe, but not everybody could go there, just I happened to, to know that place, so I went in there with my sister, and also, immediately we got liberated, well, I haven't told you how the soldiers entered the bunker, and it wasn't such a beautiful sight what I was expecting, I was dreaming about. They came in, they were drunk, they were angry, and they were holding guns, of course they were fearing for their own lives as well, because they were frightened across the German soldiers, but, and they made sure that, you know, they were telling us, there was one or two girls who understood Russian, and they said, "No, there are no, no soldiers in here. We are Jews." So they tore down our, our, you know, we had to wear the yellow star, and they says, "You finished with this, you don't have to wear this any more." But we wanted them to see that we are not the enemy, and so we carried on wearing them for another day. But the moment we first saved, the first thing was, my parents went out, and went into a Austrian house, and looked for food, and they found food, and they were bringing it to us, and on the way, my father who's trousers were already going in shreds, he saw a German soldier's trousers lying on the floor. It was a good pair of trousers, so he quickly pulled it on himself, and he was happy having a good pair of trousers, and he was bringing us the food, and they were rushing into the bunker, and on the way, an officer stopped him, pulled him aside, and put him next to all these captured German soldiers, and they lined them up, and they were just going to march them away, when my mother ran in and said to this Russian-speaking Jewish girl, "Come, come quickly, save my husband. They are taking him away." So she ran up to the officer, and the officer was shouting, "Would you please go away? Do not interfere in our business." But she shouted, and she said, "Please let the Jewish man, don't take him away. He just got liberated." So he said, "Why is he wearing the German trousers?" And there, on the spot, she called, she says, "Markovitz Bachi" she called him like that, this means, Uncle Markovitz, "Would you please take off your trousers quickly, because they think you are a German soldier." There, on that spot, he dropped his trousers, and stepped out of it, and he ran in like this, still

holding the bread, and an egg in his hand, what he was holding, you know, trying to bring to us.

This is quite a story. I wanted to ask you, did you only see Russian soldiers? No soldiers from any other country?

No. No.

Only the Russian soldiers came?

We had only Russian soldiers, yes.

And I wanted to ask you something else. What was the situation with the whole family, at that moment, where was everybody? Who was with you, who wasn't there? Did your parents

I had my parents, I had five younger brothers, my sister, whom I told you that it was just an accident that she came into the same camp, because she was in a different ghetto, we didn't hear from her for months, before I saw her entering this big gate. And we left five, my five older brothers were not with us. My older brother, we knew before we left, that he is in Russia. And the other four brothers, they were, they were in Budapest, they were already working in their trade, and they all lived in Budapest. But unfortunately, my third brother, the moment the Germans entered, he was captured, he was taken away. And later on we found out that he was one of the Zonderkommando's in Auschwitz. And other two brothers was taken away by the Nazis, and dragged, and they walked to Austria, marched to Austria, and they froze, unfortunately.

Did you find that out later on?

We did, yes, because there was somebody who returned and who saw them. And one brother got liberated in Austria, but then he was never seen again. We don't know what happened, we only think that he started eating, because he was in a very bad condition, and maybe that killed him.

And you didn't know?

We didn't, no, no, we didn't. So when we got liberated by the Russians, two days later, my mother said, "Let's go back quickly, towards Hungary, in case the Germans will push back the Russians." Because they took up again, the War, you know, the fighting, in front of Vienna, they wanted to hold back. Again, they knew they can't save Vienna, but just for the people to, to go behind the enemy lines, they should be able to go back towards Germany, and so my father said, "No, let's stay and wait. We will be, it will be okay, and we should wait here, and wait to get some American papers, and go to America." We had nothing to go back home to. We lost our home now, and, but my mother insisted, that we left three brothers in Budapest, and we should go back to Budapest then, we should look for them, and because by that time, somehow, we knew from some people who were in other camps, I didn't tell you stories where my parents sent me to other camps to take food, the little we had, we

shared it with other camps, and they put me over the fence, and they put a scarf on me, I didn't look Jewish, and they told me, if anybody asks me where I am going, I say, "I lost my parents, and I'm walking back to Hungary." because the other camp was towards Hungary. And I walked about five miles, but these people were not given any water, or any food whatsoever, very, very, I can't remember at this moment, that village, but I know where I have to go. It was just a straight road, on the, on the main road, five miles, nearly five miles.

And that's going towards what?

And a guy carried a basket, and in this basket, the whole camp, whoever could donate a potato, a carrot, a piece of bread, letters, a glove, a hat, I took that, but you know, when I got to the camp, they tore it out of my hand, and they were fighting over it so much, that I couldn't bear it, but they must have had somebody organised in that camp, because they always handed me over a whole list of people, that we should know who is there, who is alive, and through these letters, we found out that the Budapest ghetto has not been taken, so we did, we had these big hopes that we are going to find my three brothers in Budapest. We walked back on foot.

So, where did you go back to? I mean, you were in one camp, and you were bringing food to people in another camp?

No, this wasn't, perhaps I have made this journey three times. I begged my parents, and I cried very much that they shouldn't make me do this, because I just simply couldn't bear it, and I did not understand that they do not get any food. I thought they behaved like animals. All right, I understood they were, we were also hungry, and we were also fighting for food, but not like them. And

There also were a lot of people?

It became later on, you know, it, we had nothing to, nothing to send to them any more, so they didn't send me.

There's something that I want to ask you about Hungarian Jewry, did you have any knowledge about Warrenberg at all? Did you hear about him? Were you there at the time?

No. We did not.

Not at all?

I tell you why. Because when the camp, when they, they, first of all, as I told you, they stopped the post, we could not travel free, we could not get any post. We didn't know what went on from one village to the other, one town to the other, unless somebody risks their life, and this was also in the Camp, an accidental thing, that we found out that there are other Jews, and they ...

Fl29 End of Side A

Fl29 Side B

And to find, and they sent us, with this cyclist, we don't know who he was, but he brought to us a list of names, and was asking for help. Well, that is all we could do, and help for them, and do you know, many times, the railway run behind the camp, and we saw human cargo, and they used, we used to shout, but they couldn't hear us, it was a little too far away, the rail line, but we could see that they were taking trains, and, but I remember at least three times, passed trains there with human cargo, just like we were locked up, in those wagons.

So what was happening now? Carry on with the liberation a little bit. As much as you can remember, what was happening.

Well, the Russian soldiers were looting. They broke open all the shops, and they told us to go to take things. And as we were so very, our clothes were already in such a shabby state, I remember I found one shoe somewhere in a shoe store, and I couldn't find the other one, I was so upset about that, and there were so many beautiful shoes, the shops were full of, goods, and we never thought that these Germans had such beautiful shops, and they had so many, such good food like salmon, and of course, the first thing was that we took food home, and I remember, we found a little sack of sweetex, and also we found a sack of pepper, so we took that, we took it home, never thinking of that, that this was our very beginning of making a life, we made money from that in Budapest, with my brother, because he took it, and I took it, it belonged to us.

So you were now back in Hungary?

No, I just mentioned it, I just mentioned what we took from there. Anyway, we could get hold of bread now, and we could get hold of some margarine, and so my mother would melt the margarine and put it in the bread, dip in the bread, and we ate that, but she worried very much that it will be too fat, and we would get ill, because we were not used to fat food, and she was very sensible, so slowly made us eat it, slowly, and eat little, and not too much at once, and then we put everything we, my father went somewhere and got hold of, from a yard, a little carriage, what has four wheels, and we packed everything on, whatever we had, and the little children, and my mother, and we started walking towards Hungary, pulling that carriage, ah well, it was a terrible sight. And we took turns ...

Were you with a lot of other people?

Yes, everybody was leaving, everybody's trying to walk back, towards Hungary, because everybody had this fear that God forbid, the Germans will push back the Russians, then we will fall into their hands, and that will be our end. But by then, the Germans, they just couldn't bear the sight of any Jew really. And this walk was very hard, sometimes up the mountains, and down, as we passed we saw human flesh and saw bodies floating in the river, and at one time, we stopped for a little while, because we came down from a high mountain, and it was very hard to hold back the carriage, that it shouldn't run down, holding back is harder than pushing up, and all of a

sudden, I saw four women holding on to each other, walking, and they looked black, completely black, and their hair was in such a state, I thought they were mad women from a madhouse, and they said very quietly, in Hungarian, "Could you please help us? Put us up on the carriage, we have no strength to walk." And they want to go home. And I ran away, I, I, I, I just told my mother, "Let's pull this carriage faster, let's get away from them, they're mad, they're mad people." And later on, I found out that these people had been so starved, and in such a bad condition that this is what they looked like. They were not mad, they just had no energy to speak properly. I don't know if you can imagine that. I tell you something, you have to see it to believe it. I think back now, I somehow can't believe that I went through that, and I lived through that. Sometimes, oh, I know a lot of people were in a very much worse condition, and positions, and it was (inaud). Going back, sometimes I thought it's harder to come back to ourselves, to become again a human being, a normal human being, and being respected, than, than when we left. It was a very strong struggle, we entered the first town, which was called Sopron, and we knew that many Jews lived in there, and we went into the Jewish houses and there was no one, the houses were empty, so we settled in for the night. Suddenly, somebody came and said, "Come quickly", they said to my father. "We discovered some people here from the labour force, and they are in very very bad condition, typhoid, let's take them to the hospital, and let's see what we can do." So my father became very busy, we hadn't seen him all day. He was carrying these people to the hospital, and brought one man to us, and told me that I should watch him, and I was cooking something, a soup, on a stone, because we stood up two stones, and we took some wood, and we lit it, and that was our stove. And I was cooking there, and he was so hungry, oh yes, I remember what I was cooking, I was cooking potato. And this man came there, and he put his hand in, onto the boiling potato, and he put it in his mouth. And I thought, I said, "My father said you mustn't eat anything. You mustn't touch anything." But he took no notice of me, he was absolutely starving. There are things like this. And then, we walked in the morning again, we ate something, we packed up again, and we walked further, and we got to a village, and in this village again, we were still frightened from the Russian soldiers, because they were still looking for women, in here as well in Hungary, so we hid in the night, in a peasant's house, and my father put us under the bed, we two sisters slept under the bed, and the others were sleeping quite freely in the room, and in the morning, we found some peasants who were taking the ammunition for the Russian soldiers, and unloaded, and they were returning to Hungary empty. And they accepted us, that we should board their carriage, horse and cart, and they took us again, for a little journey, which was perhaps, another ten miles, to a railway station.

What was the attitude of the local people, in the places that you passed, suddenly a whole lot of people coming, pushing carts and coming back to Hungary?

All we could see, I will be quite honest with you, that they were surprised, they were not friendly, they were angry.

That you actually came back?

That we actually came back.

So they knew what was happening?

Well, first thought was, of course they're looking at us, we look shabby, we look dirty. We looked like beggars, beggars and gipsies, that's what we looked like, we were dirty, and you know, neglected, and then we, we went to, got to a railway station, and they told us if we take this train some time of the day, it will start, we don't know exactly when, but it will go to Budapest. And this wasn't too far from Budapest already, that much we walked. And then we got onto these open carriages where they used to transport coal, or, or goods, goods, wood or something, it wasn't a closed carriage, it was an open carriage, and we settled in there, and I remember my mother and my father went into the village, and tried to get some food, and somehow they got hold of a half of bread, so they brought it back, and then the journey started, the train went, it stopped, it went, it stopped. I don't know exactly how long it took to get back to Hungary, it took quite a, two weeks I think. And arrived the outskirts of Budapest, because the railway were not running properly, you know, during the War, they were bombing railways, a whole upheaval. So here again, to Budapest we entered on foot. By that time, my father was ill and very exhausted, and one of my brothers caught bronchitis, and she, he was running high temperature, and we had to settle down by the railway. We walked out from these outskirts of Budapest to a railway station, it called, and we sat there till my mother and father will go into town, look for my brothers, and my uncle and auntie, and they will all come and help us to go into town. Well, they had to do this journey on foot, so we sat there for a day, waiting for them to return.

So both your mother and father went?

Sleeping on a pavement, with my sister, with my brothers, with her little two children, with our bundles what we managed to bring back with us, and we were sitting waiting for them, and my

And how were the two little children? How did they get through all this?

Oh well, when we went to camp, my sister said, "It was God's blessing that she had, she wasn't well, she was running a temperature, so the good thing was, she didn't ask for food." And the funny thing happened when we were coming home. The same thing happened, all the way, she was ill, the little one, the little one could have been about two years old by then, and the five year old was such a grown up girl, she behaved like a grown up, and she understood everything, she knew she can't ask for anything, and she thought, "Every time we have a little hope now, Grandma and Grandpa will return, will bring us food, and we go and lie in, and go in a normal room, and we will have a bortsch, and we will lie down." This was her hopes, so, my mother visited, found my uncle and my aunt, who were already from the ghetto, they were back in their own flat, and he said that he has seen one of my brothers, very funny, the brother who was in Russia, but he hadn't seen the others, and my second brother was engaged, and I saw the fiancée also sometime during the ghettos. So they came back, with my uncle, and we walked to their house, which was, took a long time, but in a half a day, I think we arrived their house, and surprise, surprise, my aunt was very cold, and very frightened from us. You see, today, when I look back, normal people who already lived like civilised people, looking at us the way we came

back, of course, they thought, "Well, these people are full of lice and dirt, and I don't want them in my house. What will happen that we don't get dirty from them?" So they gave us only the front room. I didn't have the wonderful surprise and the hug and the, I haven't seen the joy, but of course, this auntie was never too, too keen, I mean, they were not, she wasn't a very friendly lady, we were not very happy, lucky, but I expected the Jews when they saw us, but really, you know, to be happy and ... but they didn't understand.

Weren't they taken away at all?

We were the very first to return. They were in the ghetto, in the Budapest ghetto, and they returned to their home after liberation.

And they didn't go to camps, they were not taken away?

The Budapest ghetto was not taken away. People were taken from the ghetto, unfortunately my brothers too, and lots of my cousins, but the ghetto was not taken away in Budapest, they had no time for that.

And nobody spoke there about Wallenberg, you have no recollection of that from other people in Budapest?

Oh yes, we heard about it, afterwards people were telling us that they have escaped.

You heard about it afterwards.

They got papers from him and they got papers, they were at these safe houses. Oh yes, we heard. But I myself, personally, did not know about it.

So what's happening now? Did you stay with your aunt and uncle? For how long?

Just for a few days, and then they allocated, the Jewish community allocated a school for all those people who return, they put some straw on the floor, and everybody moved in there, and lay down, and they also prepared for everybody to have a bath and wash our hair, so we cleaned ourselves in the public baths, and then they, there was a soup kitchen, so we could go for some soup, something to eat. By this time, my brother was so ill that we had to call an ambulance and take him to hospital. And my mother went with my little brother, and my father just laid down there, and he wasn't feeling very well, and we thought we will have to go home to our home town, and start looking round and see what we will find. So my sister with her two children, me and my brother who come after, two years younger than me, we went home, here again the journey took a long time, because the train stopped, and we have to get off and get in, and then bridges were bombed, so we had to go across on,

Did you have any money?

Funny you should ask me that. The very first time when I got, went onto a tram in Budapest, and the ticket collector came up to me and said, "Tickets please." It is the very first time when I felt that I am a normal human being, somebody comes to me

like to anybody else, and asks me for tickets. And I laughed. And the man looked at me, and he said, "You haven't got any money?" I said, "No, I don't have any money." So he says, "Then you have to get off." I said, "Let me finish my journey, then I will get off." And then I laughed. And this is the very first time when we returned from the camp, I felt, "I am a human being again." I don't know if you can imagine that, what that means. Anyway, I don't want to go into too much detail how we get home, but we got home, and at the railway station, some, this wasn't the railway station really, because a train could not enter the town. We had to, we went as far as the river, because the train is supposed to cross over the river to go to the railway station, but because the bridge was bombed, we walked across from there, and we walked into town, or sometimes carriages would come and carry people, in these horse and carts, or other, other, other form of transport. But this was the main, the main transport. And there were some men, Jewish men, standing at the railway station, they came every day to the railway to see who arrived back, and who came back. These people were already liberated three months before us, I think, approximately, and they were already living at home in their houses, and they were expecting people to return. They were a very great help. They took us to a house where there was beds, and gave us food, and then from then on, of course, we had to pick up the pieces. But I remember this incident, that I went into a bed in the night, a clean bed, proper bed, proper covers, clean sheets, and I felt so uncomfortable, I couldn't sleep! The bed was too soft for me, I just couldn't take it, so after a few hours lying in bed, I went out of the bed, and I laid down on the floor, and I covered myself, and my sister called out and says to me, "Come back to bed, you know, we have to become civilised again. We can't live like that. We are normal people again." And, and, I went back to bed, well, of course, I don't have to say that I got used to sleeping in a bed, I am not sleeping on the floor!

What house was it? Did you go back to your own house?

Actually, this house was my sister's mother-in-law's house, and as her brother-in-law was back, it was her brother-in-law who took us to this house, and he particularly got, I don't know from where he got hold of these sheets and this beddings, but they tried as much as they could, to make us comfortable, and he also brought us some food, and then I went to, into the house where we used to live, and to my surprise, a Rumanian Sofer had lived in my house, in our house, because these men, they're Orthodox Jewish men, and they brought from Rumania, Sofer so that they should be able to eat meat, and they were quite well organised already. In the other flats in the house, non-Jewish people were in the flats.

So a lot of people already came back? A lot of the Jews?

Not too many, not too many, I think it was about 30 men in town, who came from the surrounding villages also, they all lived together somehow in that town. Not living together, but there was such a little community, there were no women, of course, we were one of the first women returning.

To come back.

Yes. There were a few women from Rumania, Hungarian women who, who escaped and lived through the War in Rumania. And I went in there, and I remember, and I told him to get out of our flat, this is our flat, and we are coming back, and we want to, and the old man said, "Give me a chance, I will go out of here, and I'll let you back if this was your flat. But just give me a chance." And I was very impatient, I remember! And then, because when we returned, as I told you before, that my sister's little girl wasn't very well, she couldn't do very much, she was very busy, always looking after her little girl, so my brother and me we have to and look for wood to make a fire, and we want to boil up some water, or to cook something, and so because we had no wood, I chopped down our hall, which I was very sorry later on, but I gradually took away the wood, and the door, and I burnt it up, chopped it up and burnt it up, used it up, and when that ran out, I went to another neighbour's house and I chopped it up, and they said to me, the neighbours, they said "Well, yesterday you said to me you lived over there, today you say you live here, so it is yours. How come?" But of course, I didn't care, there were no other ways. But then, I remember, that we took in Austria, some peppers, which was very big treasure, because they couldn't cook, they like to cook with pepper in Hungary, and also this Sweetex, there was no sugar, so that was a big value, so we went to the old woman where I used to go for milking, and she gave us some milk, and she gave us some flour, and also she gave us a chicken, I remember, so we had it, you know went to the shofer and then had it cut, and cleaned it, and returned again up to Budapest with my brother, with the big treasures, and also I remember, she gave us a bottle of jam. And of course, we gave her the pepper and the Sweetex, and we said we will pay for it, you know. And then we went to Budapest, we stood on the street corner, in the Jewish area, and a lady passed by, and we said, "We have a Kosher chicken." And she said, "Is that real? That's marvellous. Come into my house, I will give you some money for it." And she paid us with money, and with the money we went quickly and bought some fresh bread, and we went to see my mother, and we told big lies to my mother, just to comfort her, to make her feel good, because she was such a lost spirit. I said, "Mummy, can you imagine, we are comfortable at home. We have our home back, we have everything back. And we have food." And of course, I said a big lie, because we didn't have it yet! And she said, "Yes. And, and, children, how do you have money, where did you have money for? Where did you get the food from?" So she knew somehow this is not a legal way, we couldn't have done it in a right way, there was no way. And she didn't know how to tell us that we shouldn't covet any things, we mustn't, they wanted us to stay on the right road still, and she said, "Oh children, this bread and this jam was so good, but you know, children, you mustn't, you mustn't." And I laughed with my brother, I said, "What you mean, Mummy, what we mustn't." Well, she didn't say, she didn't say it out, she just was very worried that we shouldn't do something what is not right.

But, of course, everybody else was doing the same? There was no other way, of course.

Oh yes, oh yes. The Black Market came after that.

And so, did you all go back to your house?

Well, gradually, my brothers returned, my father came back and he was very ill. He had boils on his neck, and he was delirious, we had to bring the doctor, he was, it was too dangerous to take him to hospital, there and then we had to operate on him. We went through a lot of, a lot of difficulties with him, and then he got already a little better, he went to Rumania for convalescence, and after that, my mother returned home with my little brother, who came out of hospital. He was left for a long time, with problems in his lung. But slowly, gradually, he cleared that, he got nourishment, and we looked after him, and then he was sent by the Jewish organisation, which was supported from America, that's called the Joint, and he was sent to the mountains to recuperate properly, and after that, well, we tried to make a living, one of my brothers returned. I asked him also to do black market with me, this was the only way to, to have something, and he refused. He joined the Zionists, and he emigrated to Israel, in fact, he took a group to Israel, and this was our plan. There was no plan for us to really, to settle, once we knew that my three brothers won't come back. We had decided to emigrate. Well, for some reason, America was out of the question, so we talked about Israel, and unfortunately, my mother became ill, she had cancer, she died in 1948, and after that, I was corresponding with my boyfriend from, I had a boyfriend from Germany, and for two years we were corresponding, and finally it came an opportunity for me to leave, and because we just did, wouldn't settle in a Communist country, so the following year, my father, I left, and then my father left in 1950.

Where did your father go to?

Israel.

Your father went to Israel?

Yes.

By himself?

He went to Israel and he found my brothers there who were all working, studying and working, they were young. My youngest brother was only nine when I lost my mother. And I think this is the end of my story, what I really want to tell you about. Nothing more to tell really, from this period.

Where did you leave to go to, from Hungary, you went to where?

I went to Budapest, and it wasn't easy, it took six months, till I could get my papers to leave.

And you went to what country?

I went to France. I went to school in France.

What year was that?

That was 1948.

Okay, thank you very much.

End of F129 Side B
END OF INTERVIEW

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Ref. No.: C410/010

Playback Nos: F127-129 inc.

Collection Title: Living Memory of the Jewish Community

Interviewee's surname: Gunz

Title: Mrs

Interviewee's forenames: Olga

Date of Birth: 10th January 1931

Sex: Female

Date(s) of recording: 1.11.1988

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F127. Side A

Family background - member of a big family.

Life within the Jewish community (Mako, Hungary).

Jewish education. Relationships within the community.

Traditional way of life.

Anti-semitism experienced.

F127. Side B

Recollections of beginning of war.

Official decrees against Jews - change of life for Jewish population.

Creation of ghetto in town - new laws about movement in and out.

1940 - Father joined labour force. Members of family taken away. Beginning of deportation.

1944 - Family taken away to army camp.

A chance meeting with sister at same camp.

F128. Side A

Management of camp. Inmates had to look after themselves.

Moving to another camp.

Later on moved to another in Austria, Strasshoff near Vienna. Appalling condition of journeys - on cattle trains.

Personal stories and anecdotes.

Survival in barracks.

F128. Side B

Working conditions at new camp.

Prisoners taken to various places of work in town, German barracks.

Evidence of cruelty and illness. Prisoners disappearing without trace.

Beginning of bombing by Russian planes.

Hope for end of war.

F129. Side A

Hard labour for women - working in roads.

Compassionate Mayor of local town tells people to run into the forest.

Battle outside camp. Continued bombing.

Unpleasant encounters with liberating Russian soldiers.

Helping prisoners in another camp of much worse conditions.

F129. Side B

Liberated from camp - starting to walk back to Hungary.

Local people displeased to see the Jews coming back from camp.

Arriving at Budapest after two weeks.

Local Jewish community looking after people returning from camps.

Attempt to return to some fashion of normal life. Help from American Joint (Aid Organisation).

Family united, apart from 3 brothers who did not return.

End of interview