

**NATIONAL**

# Life stories

**LIVING MEMORY OF THE JEWISH  
COMMUNITY**

**MARGARET GOLD**

Interviewed by Ilse Sinclair

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Fl58 - Side A

Now, I'm going to start. I'm Ilse Sinclair, and I'm interviewing Margaret Gold, and the date is the 21st January, 1989.

Now, Margaret could you tell me what you were called when you were born, and where you were born, and when, please?

I was born in Ujpest, which is an outskirt town of Budapest, in 1920. My maiden name was Hoffman. I think I should start by my mother's family. My grandfather came from North-East of Hungary, which is a very, it used to be a very Jewish district, near to the Polish border. When he had his Barmitzvah, at the ripe age of 13, he was kicked out from the family, to earn his own living. There were quite a few brothers and sisters. So he went slowly to Budapest, and tried to find some work. He accidentally met a tanner, and he asked him what he was doing, as he was a very nice good-looking boy, the tanner took him up to be his apprentice. That chap was a very nice Jewish man, who took in my grandfather, as his own child, and he lived with them for a long, long time, learning tanning, but in the meantime, learning languages, Yiddish, because in Hungary they didn't speak Yiddish.

What did they speak, Hungarian?

Hungarian. The Jews spoke Hungarian or German. So he learnt Yiddish, he learnt German, and in the end, he met one of the members of that, of his family, of the tanner's family, who was a beautiful young girl, and he married her. That was my grandmother. He decided to go back to his native town, but my grandmother was not religious enough for this community, and she was very unpopular, so they moved back to Budapest. My grandmother was a so-called, well, not Orthodox, Neolog which is something like the Reform Movement here. And so my grandfather, I don't know what he did, but they had five children. My mother was the third. I know that they lived in poverty, real poverty. They had two rooms, and my mother used to tell me how very badly off they were. Then the Jews from this North-Eastern part of Hungary started to emigrate to America. They had to fill in forms, and they couldn't read or write, so they asked my grandfather, grandfather to help them. So he went up, filled in the forms, and as he spoke German, he accompanied them to Vienna. Then he went back to the next lot, and did it for years and years. So he was something like a travel guide. He helped emigrating his own family, all of them, except him. Unfortunately he stayed in Hungary instead of going to America. So he had four or five brothers and sisters in America, and I think, either his mother or father.

Can I just interrupt you a moment. You said he met this tanner, do you mean he was a leather tanner?

Yes. Yes.

And that was the trade that he had actually learned?

Yes, yes, yes.

But he didn't really use it?

I don't think he used it, I don't, I don't, I never heard about it.

No, I see. So he helped everybody else to emigrate, but not himself.

Yes. Everybody except. Anyway, so my grandmother died very young, and my grandfather lived with one of his children, all the time. He died in '26. He was a charming, very good-looking, very knowledgeable person, who adored history, and he was talking about history all the time. Well ... my father's family was a huge family. My grandfather had 16 brothers and sisters, and funnily enough, all, all these families, my grandmother's, my grandfather's and my, from the father's side, and mother's side, they all lived in Ujpest, which is about six, seven miles from Budapest. So, my grandfather's family, I don't know what my great-grandfather did, but my grandfather's brothers and sisters, all were quite well-educated people. One of his brothers was a university professor. There was a solicitor; a doctor. My grandfather was a teacher. He taught religious studies, Judaism, at schools. They had nine children. During, I think it was the First World War, there was a tuberculosis epidemic in Hungary, and five of his children died, so there were four left. He was fairly religious. My father had to learn a lot of things, and he was, he was really a very learned Jew, but then later he gave up, and he didn't teach his children so thoroughly.

My father was an engineer. He went to a, something like a Technical College, and had a very good job in one of Hungary's biggest factories, where he met my mother, who was a secretary of one of the ... (I don't know whether it was a Director, or something like that). And they married, and my father started on his own.

Which year did they marry?

In 1912. My father started on his own, I think, during the War, I'm not quite sure. And he built up a very good business. He had a factory, and adjacent to the factory, a fairly big house, and he was doing very well. Of course, he was called up in the War, and but if he didn't go to the Front, so...

But he became a soldier?

Yes. And in 1914 my sister was born, and then they had another child who died very early. [shall I stop?] and I was born in 1920. Now, as we had a big house, with a huge garden, all our relatives came to us, our garden was always full of children, 20 of them, and we were a very very close-knit family. My father was a very, very kind person, who adored children. For example, we had a cherry tree in the garden, and he got up in the morning, and we didn't have cherries on this tree, but he tied all possible fruits on this tree, so that when the children went out in the morning, we found oranges, or bananas, or strawberries, or even melons.

What a lovely thing to do.

And we were always thrilled to pieces, that something, we had again. And for example, at Pesach he held the Pesach, the Seder night, and the house was full of guests. We had 40 people there, or even more. Well, it didn't last very long because in 1927, his firm went bust, and he had to sell everything. And we moved into Budapest, which was very very bad for us, because we lost this very close contact with our friends and relatives.

Margaret, could I just interrupt you. Was that due to any political happenings?

No.

Or was it simply a very bad economic time?

It was bad economic times, and a nasty partner. So we moved into, well, I went to school in Ujpest, and my sister went to school in Ujpest, and we had lots of friends, and, and...

Can you tell me about your sister, was she older or younger?

She was 6 years older than I was, yes.

Six years older.

Yes. So we moved to Budapest, but we spent all the week, the Sundays, in Ujpest visiting the families. When we moved to Budapest, we moved into a block of flats, and above us was a family, non-Jewish family, who had two children. And I loved those children, they were much younger than I was, and this neighbour of us, was a principal musician in the Royal Opera House in Budapest, and they persuaded my mother that I should go to an audition, to the Opera House, as a ballet dancer. So I went, and they accepted me immediately, I was 7. But when we came to the details, and it turned out that I was Jewish, they said that I can go in to the Opera House to learn three, four hours of ballet a day, but I can't join their school. So I was, I was not really a member of the, the Opera House, but I was very persistent. I loved doing it. I went to school, and after school I went to the ballet classes, and by the time I was 10, 11, I had very tiny little rules, and well, I was doing quite well, and I had a dream that I would be the future Anna Pavlova or something like that! [laughs] When I was 13, I broke my leg very badly.

Your leg?

Yes. My knee, it was a very bad injury, and, at that time, that was in '33, the, the anti-Semitism was really started, very strongly, in Budapest, you could feel it all, all the time. So before I had my plaster off from my leg, I was fired by the Opera House, and that was that. So I went back to school, normal. I went to school anyway all the time. I was terribly terribly unhappy about it, but I couldn't help it, and that was that. My sister was an exceptionally intelligent, first-class student all her life.

First class what?

Student. She was always on the top of her class, and when she was 14, our Rabbi decided to do something about it, and wrote to Dr. Hertz, who was, at this time, the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain and the Commonwealth, who was Hungarian, and wrote about my sister, that he would like to get somehow a scholarship for her. I don't really know where she had the scholarship from, but she came to England when she was 14, as a boarding student in the Convent of Our Lady of Sion spending all her holidays and weekends with the family Hertz.

Can I just interrupt you. This means she went to a Catholic Convent School?

Yes.

This was to study?

To study English, and everything. It was just a boarding school.

And it was paid for by a grant?

It was paid for by a grant, and I remember, we had to pay one pound a week contribution, which was really very little. And she stayed here, in England, for a long time. She went to University, keeping - well, staying almost all of her free time with the Hertz family. When she went back to Hungary, she got a job in the Convent School of Our Lady of Sion in Hungary, they called it Notre Dame de Sion. And she taught there all the time. Later she became a university lecturer and so on, but that was much later. We couldn't really think about going to University, because there was the numerous clauses in Hungary, which means that only 3% of the population was Jewish, only 3% of the Jews, of the students, could be Jewish, and they accepted only the brilliant ones, and mainly boys, so there was no question about it. So I decided to go to Italy, where my father had some frozen money, learning Italian, a bit of History of Art, getting little jobs. I spent there two years. When the War broke out, the Second World War, and Milan, where I was staying at that time, was bombed by the aliens, I decided to return to Hungary. So I went back in 1940, September or October, I can't remember, end of September or October. When I arrived to my parents' house, the first man I met, by accident, was my future husband. So within five minutes when I arrived to Hungary, I met him. By the way, I asked him to help me to carry the luggages because they were very. He was very reluctant, but he helped me. [laughs]

How old were you both at that time?

I was 20, and he was 35. It turned out that he was my parents' next door neighbour, living on the same floor, and well, we started talking, and two or three days later he came in and said that he would like to take me out for a coffee, and about two weeks later, he decided to marry me. And we would have got married very soon, but he was called up into a Labour Camp.

He was Jewish, was he?

Of course. At that time, the Jews were called up, almost everybody, up to the age of 65 ... and then later they let them, they released them, but called them up again. Most of them went to Russia and very few of them returned, because they were ... they were used as living mine detectors, or they, they starved to death, illnesses and so on. But my husband, my husband had three Diplomas, three Doctorates, and/of, Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry, and he was a graduated engineer, but in the labour camp, he shovelled manure, or he had to build railway lines, in the most appalling conditions. Anyway, he was released, and in, and we married in 1941, beginning of 1941.

Where had he studied?

Budapest.

In Budapest.

Now, he was one of the persons who couldn't get into university, although he was brilliant. He went for a year to Vienna, to work there, and he was accepted at the University. And of course, then we were worried, when would he be called up again? Because they called the Jews up all the time. He comes from a little town, very Jewish town, from ... Well, there were many Jews in this little town in Hungary. They had a Jewish Elementary School, but only a Catholic Gymnasium, how they called it, so it's Grammar School, which was, which belonged to the Pyrrhist (ph) Monks, it was one of the best schools in Hungary.

Fl58 - End of Side A

So we were constantly worried about his next call up. By the way, I have four cousins who were taken to Russia, and only one returned. To understand what happened later, I have to tell the story of my aunt. She was my father's youngest sister. She married in Hungary, a Jewish jeweller, and had a son. When her son was about a year old, they went to Germany to buy jewellery, to \_\_\_\_\_, and there a German jewellery factory owner, fell in love with her, she was beautiful. And she divorced her husband, and married this German, so they moved out to Germany with her son. And as my new uncle was about 25 years older than my aunt, he, as a wedding present, gave her all his wealth, his factory, his house, everything. And they lived very happily until 1933, or 1934, when it turned out that all this wealth, which was really quite a big wealth, was Jewish wealth, under Hitler, so they didn't know what to do. In the meantime, her son got married to a non-Jewish girl, so he lived in Rasse-schade - I don't know what you call it in English.

Yes, it's a typical German expression, if a Jew, is, liaises with a non-Jew, it's shaming the race.

So they decided to go back to Hungary, and they smuggled out everything which was possible, and came to Hungary.

Can I just check out, that was after her husband had died, was it?

No. No.

He hadn't died?

No. He came with her.

He came with her to Hungary?

He came with her.

He was not actually Jewish himself?

He was not Jewish, he was an Ayrian, and my cousin's wife was Ayrian.

How come his wealth was Jewish?

Because it was in my aunt's name.

Oh,I see. Yes, I get it. Of course. It makes sense, sure.

He gave it to my aunt, it was in my aunt's name. So they came to Hungary with a lot of money, and bought a little house in the outskirts of Budapest, and they had a flat in Budapest, so they lived happily ever after. Nobody knew about them, that they were

Jewish, my aunt, or my cousin. And they had lots of German friends. They were quite, quite a lot of Germans lived in Hungary.

But the Jewish relations knew that she was Jewish?

Well, we knew it.

But they had nothing to do with you at that time?

Oh yes, yes, we came together all the time. By the way, I was, my sister and I, was one of her favourites, and we spent our summer vacations in Pforzheim(?) with her. She loved us, and we, we were always with her. But her friends didn't know they were Jewish, my aunt and my cousin. And so, to understand later what happened, I have to tell you this. When the Germans ... Oh, sorry, the most important thing, I forget. My son was born in 1942, and well, he was a lovely child, we were very very happy, until the Germans came in, on 19th March, in 1944. On the first day, the prominent Jews were taken away from Hungary, we have no idea where they went to, and how they disappeared, but they disappeared on the very first day. My cousin, who had a lot of German friends, warned us not to leave Budapest, so we shouldn't even go to Ujpest, which is about five miles away, because if you leave your district, you were, you were in danger that you are caught and, well, we didn't know what would have happened, but we followed his advice. He told us to burn all the literature we had, I don't know - Stefan Zweig, Jacques Lobel, and things like that, that we shouldn't have anything which is anti-Nazi in our house. My mother was very ill at that time, and she had two very big operations. She was, she couldn't, she, she was very very ill and she couldn't move, and of course, we were worried about her too. John's family, my husband, John's family, lived in a little town, and the first few weeks, we could get some letters from them, even telephones, and then nothing. And John's school friend told us that they were, they had to go into the Synagogue where they were locked in for two or three days, and then they were taken away by train, he didn't know it was Auschwitz.

How soon after were you aware that they were sent away?

Well, we knew it, I think, around the 1st or 2nd of March, they were taken away on the 29th April, it was my sister-in-law's birthday. They were taken away and we never knew about them, and learned only after, when we came to England, maybe in '60, we met somebody who was with my sister-in-law all the time, that everybody was sent to the gas except her and her husband. And my sister-in-law died of Scholleblut (ph) or something like that, six or seven months later. And my brother-in-law was in, I don't know whether you heard about this, when the gas chambers, they wanted to blow up the gas chambers, the Jews, and he was in this crowd, and he was shot dead.

So he was a very brave man?

He was a, he was a lovely man.

But you didn't hear about any of this until in the 1960s?

We, we heard that my sister-in-law worked in the Kanada, there was a Department in Auschwitz, the Kanada, where they searched through all the pockets of the clothes of the people who were sent to the gas, and she found her father's and mother's belongings.

How dreadful.

We got even a photograph back of my father-in-law. [noise on tape] So I think it was on 5th May, when we had to start wearing the yellow star. I just refused it, I can't remember ten occasions when I had it on.

This was 5th May, 1944?

1944. I think it was 5th May, it was at the beginning of May. And then we had to hand in all our jewellery, which meant that everything what we had except our wedding ring. Now, I, well, of my family, as we were, we lived in the same house, my sister and I, we lived in the same block of flats. My mother and my sister lived in the same block of flats, and I lived three houses away, and we decided not to hand in anything. So we went to a shop, and we bought bracelets, and rings, costume jewellery, and we handed that in, and we hid the real ones.

Where did you hide it?

I put mine ... We had two very big electric meters, one for, one for the normal lighting, and the other for the cooking, and I undid this, and I hid that inside the meter, which was left there all the time. But later not. So, we handed it in, we had our receipts and all. Because we were afraid that somebody who saw our jewellery would ask whether we gave it in, and so we, we, we must have had a receipt, and we had this. So we put it, the jewellery, and I just, somehow, refused to obey the German orders, not wearing yellow stars, not giving what I, I felt that it didn't belong to them. So we were very broke by this, my mother's illness, because she was desperately ill, after her first operation, and then she had the second one, and she felt a bit better. Now, at that time, we started to have food shortages, and we were queuing up all the time. I think I was very foolish, because I took my son always, on my arm, to queue up. Once I was queuing up in one of the main streets, in Budapest, for bread, and the German lorry came, and just sprayed us with machine guns. I wasn't hit.

Very frightening?

But there were 30 or 40 people who were hit. A few days later, that was a good joke, because they were mostly Jewish women that were queuing up, because there were certain times when we were allowed to leave the house, otherwise we were under curfew.

This was for Jews, or for all Hungarians, being under curfew?

Only for Jews.

Only Jews.

Only Jews were under curfew, I think we had two hours in the morning, and two hours in the afternoon. I can't remember precisely.

And was your house actually guarded?

No. No. Not then. And one day, I went over to my mother, who said that she wanted to have some food, and opposite us, was a little greengrocer's shop, and I saw German soldiers in the street. But I said, "Well, I just go over and buy fruit for my mother." She was so ill, that whatever she asked for, we did. And I went there, with my son again, and when I crossed the road, there was machine gun fire, and there were about 20 people dead. I was, I was again not hit. So I was just lucky.

How did it feel, Margaret, at that time, because you must have been terrified. I mean, to think of it now, walking across the road to the greengrocers and there are lorry loads of Germans machine gunning you, it must've been pretty terrifying?

I don't, you know, I really think that I was either too young or too stupid. I don't know, but I was never terrified. I just said, "Well, I was lucky again", and that was that. I never felt it.

Amazing.

Well, it's not amazing. You know, the whole thing was so unbelievable. So, you, you really couldn't grasp it. You had no idea what was going on. So we couldn't go to Ujpest to visit our families, but we were in telephone contact. My father had a factory again, at that time, very near to our home, and he had a telephone, because the telephones from the Jews were taken away from the Jewish homes.

Really?

Yes. We didn't have any contact. But, my father, as he was working for the Army, his telephone was still on, and our relatives could phone us, from the street, but on the 2nd July, they rounded up the Jews from Ujpest, each man, a tremendous lot of people of our family. I, I couldn't even count them.

Did you have prior warning for this sort of thing?

No.

You didn't get a letter saying, "Would you come tomorrow".

Oh no, no, no, no, no, they just went and you had to go, within five minutes, for families.

Were you given time to pack anything?

No, well, everybody was already packed, because we knew that was the procedure, so everybody had a little suitcase, but not even a suitcase, just a little thing, because you had to carry it. Some food, and the most important things, and a blanket, everybody took a blanket. Everybody was terribly naive. So on the 6th, I think it was on the 6th July, when they deported all the Jews from Ujpest. From my immediate families, that meant that my father's and mother's brothers and sisters, and their families, and I'm not talking about my father's cousins and so on. There were 28 people taken, amongst them three children under five, were taken from Ujpest to Auschwitz, of course, we didn't know. A few days later, my mother could hardly walk, but they went down to have a little bit of fresh air, and as they came home, my mother was very tired, two minutes later, they came to take them away.

Where were you at that time?

I wasn't, it happened in my father and mother's flat. I didn't know about it. And well, it was about one minute's walk from my place, but we didn't know. So they were taken away, and they were lined up, there was a park in front of that house, and they were lined up there, many, many, many Jews, elderly Jews, from our district. My mother couldn't walk, so there was a bench and she sat down, and my father sat next to her, and the line went, and they were left there.

Sitting on the bench?

Sitting on the bench. By the time they were taken away, one of the neighbours rushed to me and told me, and I tried to find them, but I couldn't, you know, and about an hour later they came home, and Mother had a good rest on the bench!

How amazing that they didn't go with this little transport.

I don't think that they were taken to Auschwitz, these people.

You don't?

No. Because they didn't take people from Budapest, at that time, to Auschwitz. They were maybe just taken away for some work to do.

But were some of them found again later on, or not?

I don't know.

We don't know ...

Nobody knows who came back, and who wasn't?

No, no.

But your parents weren't?

They were all right, they were just sitting on the bench, and went back home. So you know, I think we were an exceptionally lucky lot.

Very. Incredibly lucky, makes a very good story, doesn't it.

Now, my husband was called up to labour camp, and by that time, they gave us, there was an order that those people who have, who have, who are engineers and work in factories, where they work for the Army, they would be released within four days. Sometimes it took six weeks, sometimes he was released within four weeks, but it didn't make any difference, two days later, he had another call up come. Now, then we started to collect Schutzpasses.

What does that mean?

It's a protection passport. First, the Swiss Consulate issued, it was just a piece of paper, with your name on it, and they issued it for people who went there and asked for it. There were thousands of people waiting there. Now, there was a business too, that somebody had two or three, and it was made out for names, and then we rubbed them out, and wrote in our own names.

This was supposed to protect you from forced labour camp or something like that?

No. For deportation. It, it stated that we are under the protection of the Swiss Government. Then, that was, the first one was the Swiss, and then there was the Portugal, and people queued up for Portugal Schutzpasses. The only really valuable one was the Swedish. Well, you must have heard about Wallenberg?

Yes.

So then we had from the Vatican, that was the fifth one. I had five, I can't remember what was the fifth one! [laughs] And all the others were just ...

Were you under the impression, at that stage, that these would really save you from deportation?

Oh yes. Oh yes. Definitely.

So it made you feel safer?

Oh yes, though it didn't count at all, because the Germans, or the Hungarian Army just tore them up and they didn't care, but they respected the Swedish because of Wallenberg. So we had all the Schutzpasses.

Did you have to pay enormous sums of money for them?

Not a penny.

Really?

No. No. If we asked somebody to queue up for us, then of course we did, but, then they started to organise the Jewish houses. Those Jews who were, who lived in a house where the majority was Jewish, was pronounced a Jewish house, and from the other houses, the Jews had to come to our houses. Our house is a Jewish house. My sister's house, where my sister and my parents lived wasn't Jewish house, so they moved to us, and we had a bachelor flat, which meant a room, which was about 6x6 yards, a bathroom, and a tea kitchen, and a hall. The tea kitchen was about 4x4 foot. So the eight of us lived there, in the beginning. My parents, my sister, my brother-in-law and their daughter, little daughter, and we three. But then other families came.

Into your tiny flat?

Into my tiny flat. And there was a time when we lived 28 of us - my uncle and aunt, and lots of unknown people, strangers.

It's very interesting to hear, I mean, it's a ghastly situation. How did you manage? Did you make little patches for yourself? So one person would have a few square inches ...

Oh no, no, no. Just, we tried to be very civilised, and we tried to be very nice. But for example, there was a dying old lady. She had to have some room, and she died in the end, but these people were absolutely desperate. Imagine that 28 people with one room, no cooking facilities really, because I had no, only two electric rings. By the way, when I got married, we ate at my parents' place, I never cooked, and I didn't have a household. So I had no cooking facilities, we had one small bathroom. It was the most difficult thing, to, to remain calm, to, to behave like human beings should. And I think I was very fortunate, because in this crowd, people behaved wonderfully. And those people who couldn't stand it, tried to go to another place, and, you know, it was just very nicely done.

How did you sleep? Like sardines next to each other?

Oh yes, yes. Well, I had a bed, which was, you know, it was continental, you, you,

A quilt?

No. You,

A proper bed?

You, no, it's called a Kammerlet (ph) which you open up, during the night, and then you, you put it back, and it's like a settee.

It's like a Put-U-Up?

Something like a Put-U-Up. That was 2 metres x 2 metres, and five of us slept on this. You know, it was, it was, I think we organised it very nicely, we took out whatever we could from the room, that people should be able to sleep.

How did you eat?

Well, that was the most difficult thing. I must tell you. I had an aunt who lived with us. She adored cooking, and she had a peasant woman, who brought us a big goose, or chicken, or I don't know what, and she was a very good-hearted woman, and she cooked, and cooked, and cooked. Well, of course, she couldn't cook for 28 people, but, I don't know how but we managed it, it didn't last long, it lasted maybe two weeks. And then slowly the people were taken away. Some of them found other places, some of them were called up. Some of them were taken away. And in the end, it was almost empty. Now, one day, as it happened, I think it was during the hours, when we could go out, there was only my sister, her little daughter, me and my son in the house. And the Hungarian Atokross (ph), which is the Hungarian Nazis, came in and said that we should line up immediately in the street.

[Right, we'll have to just stop there and I'll turn it over]

Fl58 -End of Side B

Right, we're now on the second tape. And can you just recap what you said on the first one?

I think I told you that it was only my sister and I with the two children, when they came to fetch us, but what I'd forgotten to tell, that was my husband was always called up and went to labour camps. And my father had this little factory where he employed, of course, almost everybody was, well, I'm sure everybody was Christian. He had a worker there, who was a very nice man, and this man visited my husband every time he could. He was really, he, he wanted to help us, and one night he smuggled him out from this labour camp, and my husband went into hiding. He was hiding two houses further up in the street, so I could go and visit him whenever I wanted to. And I could take my son, and so it was lovely. I went home one morning, and I think it was at the time when the Jews were allowed to go out, and in my flat there was only my sister and her little daughter, and me and my son, and the Hungarian Ero-cross (ph)

, the Hungarian Nazis, came in to fetch us, and they said we should line up immediately in the street. I didn't feel like going, and so we just dressed up, I think we had ten minutes. We dressed up very nicely, fur coats and everything, my daughter-in-laws, my sister's little daughter had a doll in her hand, my son his teddy bear, and we went out, and just went past the line, and went walking, and nobody stopped us, but we were afraid to go back, so we went to my father's factory, which was again, very very near to us, and as we arrived there, we just saw that they collected my father and my uncle, put them on the lorry, and they were taken away. So we didn't know what to do, we were terribly terribly upset about it. At that time, my father, my mother, and my sister, moved to my aunt's place, quite near to us again, about ten minutes walk, because they had a big flat, and they were more comfortable there, than amongst so many people. So I went, well, we went to my washerwoman's place, and she was again, a very nice person who took us in. But she lived in a very small flat in a big house, and there were two children, one two, the other one four, and we were afraid that the neighbours would notice the noises, because you can't keep children very quiet. So we stayed there only for one day, and then we went to my mother's, where my mother stayed, to my aunt. And to our greatest surprise, my father and my uncle were there.

Yes. Could I just go back to that, because I didn't quite understand. When you first went to the factory, to stay with your father and your uncle, had they been taken away, or were they taken away while you were there?

No, just before then, as we approached it.

As you approached, you realised they were being taken away, so you then turned round and went to your washerwoman's?

And we went to my washerwoman, yes. Thank you. That's right. So we went to my aunt's place, and my father and my uncle were there. So it turned out that, you know,

these, these open lorries, and at a red traffic light, my father and my uncle jumped, and my father was just very apologetic he left, because all the Jews had always that little luggage with them, and my father said, "I'm sorry but I left your quilt there", on the lorry. So he escaped too, they escaped, and we were awfully happy. Then we didn't know what to do, and we went back to my place. Do you know, in every Jewish house, there was a Christian who was responsible for the Jews. This Christian happened to be my friend's husband, well, my friend was non-Jewish, to add, she behaved marvellously, she was really very good to me. Her husband was a, well, a nice chap. Anyway, so we went to, we told them that we were released, they sent us back. Nobody could control it. So we stayed in my place, and we were there for a while.

But your husband was still in hiding?

My husband was still almost next door, hiding, and, but, you know, I could just go through the garden and see him, and well, we were constantly in touch, and it was no problem. And soon, we were at home again, and then my sister decided to move to my aunt, to escape this crowd, and so my sister went to this aunt, to my aunt, with her little daughter. [pause] A few days later, in, at, almost all the people moved out from me, only one of my neighbours stayed, a young woman. And one morning, at 5 o'clock, a knock on the door, a Hungarian Ero-cross (ph) came, and said that we should line up within ten minutes in the street. Now, at that time, I couldn't do anything, and I just woke up my son, put him on the potty, and I told the Ero-cross (ph) that my son was only two years old, because the women who had children under two, weren't taken away, but my Christian neighbour who came with the Ero-cross (ph), said that "Oh, he is over two", so I had to leave. I left my son on the potty, and went. It was a horrible, cold, rainy morning, and we were marched across the bridge, by then, the nearest bridge was blown up, so we went quite a long while to the next bridge, to go to the other side of the Danube, and we were driven to a brick factory. I don't know whether you know what is a brick factory. It's a big platform, with holes in it, and the roof, and then again, a big, well, underneath another ...

Several layers of,

Three, in this one there were three layers of platforms with holes in it, and on the top of that was a roof. We were sent, we were taken to the second platform. It was so crowded that we couldn't move at all. It was bitterly cold. We couldn't even scratch our hands, we were just like sardines. And we were sitting on the floor, avoiding the holes, because it was terribly draughty. But, as we couldn't get out from there, the holes were, in the end, our lavatories. We didn't know that people were underneath us. And the people above us didn't know that there is another platform below them. We had, well, the house was taken away.

Did you have any friends or relations with you at all, or were you, did you feel very lonely?

No. No. No. We had, the whole house went together.

So you felt,

I knew about 16, 17 people from there.

Right. So it wasn't as frightening as it might've been.

And five of us were very young, under 25. And we, we were really together. We were, anyhow, we were good friends. So we joked, and we put cream on us so that we should be beautiful, and we, we really made the most of it.

What were your thoughts about your little boy whom you'd left on the pot?

Well, you can imagine. I was shaking, and I didn't know what was happening.

What were you hoping for?

I couldn't hope for anything. I just closed the door behind me.

But you would hope that somebody would come in and find him.

I had no idea whether my neighbours would do something, or I, I had no idea whatsoever. I was terrified and these four other youngsters, who didn't have children at that time, kept me going, they were really wonderful. And do you know, I was just hoping that something happened. I was terribly terribly afraid, and at that time, I didn't know whether my husband was still there, hiding. So, on the third day, on the second day, in the morning, they said that we should line up, and we tried to be the last ones, so we, we mingled and tried everything, and ... Well, I, somebody, one of us decided that she couldn't go as long, as she doesn't go to the loo, so we formed a ring around her, waiting, and she couldn't do anything, so in the end, other people came in, so we said, "Well, we don't have to go because there is a new block coming in." So we mingled amongst them, and we stayed on, we didn't go. But next morning, there was another line up, and we couldn't escape. So we went to line up, and we took out our Schutzpasses, hoping that they would accept it and let us go. And they asked us who had Schutz passes, and we showed them, of course, they didn't accept it. I didn't have my, at that time, I think, I didn't have my Swedish Schutzpass with me, or I didn't have it at all yet, I can't remember, but anyway, they started to march us. Now, I left everything behind, because I can't carry, and could never carry. I had a friend with me, who weighed about five and a half stones, and she carried my things for a while, but then she put it down, so I didn't have anything in my hand, I just couldn't carry. And then the death march started. We knew that the direction was Austria, maybe it was Germany, well, we went to the West, and on the way, I was suddenly, I got so terrified that, no, I'm going to die here, because I can't march with them, because I want to go home, I want to know what happened to my son, and the only thing is, that I waited and waited till it was getting dark, and I told my friends, we were, we five were always together, and I told my friends that I'm going to escape, even if they shoot me, because if somebody stepped out of the line, they shoot them. And as it was getting dark, we went through a little road, where there were bushes, and all of us, all five of us, went nearest to the bushes, and marched and marched and marched, and I stepped out, and sat down in the bush, and they went by. I was sitting there for a while, and then I just started to walk back. As

it happened, the other four did the same. We didn't know about each other. Well, I didn't know about them, but they decided that I could escape, they would too. Anyway, I ran back, and it took me about a day, a day and a half to go back to my place. I couldn't go in because the concierge, the, you know we had a family who opened and closed the front door, he wouldn't let me in, but on the ground floor, there was somebody who said that "I'm going to help you to climb in." I said, "Well, I don't want to climb in, I just want to know what happened to my son." And she went upstairs, and she said, "Your door is open. I don't know where is your son, he's not here." So I went to my parents' place, and there was my son. My mother and father heard about that, I was taken away. So they made enquiries whether I'd taken my son, and they said, "No." So my mother bribed a policeman, who went to my place, broke in, took my son, and took them, took him to them. You can't imagine how happy I was.

Amazing!

I just didn't know about my husband, but maybe two days later, this Christian worker let me know that he's alive, and that he's hiding at another place. So the whole family was alive. And now comes my German relatives, my aunt decided to save us, because it was really a desperate position, and she knew that we would survive. So she got somebody with a car, and came to my aunt's place, and said that, "Listen, I can take you two by two, to my place. Nobody will know that you are Jewish." All right. So she decided first to take my father and my sister, and they went immediately, and she said, "I come tomorrow", to pick up my mother, me and my son. In the meantime, her son conspired somehow, with the, the Swedes, and decided to make a hospital, which wasn't a hospital, of course, it was just a big house, which belonged to the, once belonged to the Jewish, the Havla kaditische and he made a hospital, which he decided that he, he, he would save so many, as many people as possible. So, he had, at that time, about 500 people in this hospital. Now, as he was brought up from the year, from the, I think from his second year, in Germany, his Hungarian was pretty bad. But I still don't know how he acquired an SS Uniform, and he paraded in this SS uniform, that he made this Jewish Hospital and he is in charge of it. He even got four Ero-cross, the Hungarian Nazis, people there, to take care of us. And the, we're expecting my aunt to come back for us, but she never came, so my cousin said, "All right, then you come to the Hospital", the so-called Hospital. Well, in, we had a little room, where it was my mother, my brother-in-law, my niece, my son, and eight strangers, in one little dark room, with a kitchen. Before I went, I heard that my husband went to a Swedish house, that house was protected by the Swedes, and it was the Swedish flag outside, so it belonged to the Swedish Embassy, and I was quite relieved, because I knew that the Swedish houses were quite safe. So we went to this place, to, to, into this Hospital, but my brother-in-law decided that that wasn't a safe place, and he wanted to save his little daughter. We phoned the Convent, the Notre Dame de Zion up in the mountains, that was in the mountains in Budapest, whether they would take the child, and they said, "Oh yes." So my brother-in-law and I took the little girl up to the Convent, on 24th December.

24th December, 1944?

'44. And they were very nice, and we heard that there were other Jewish children, not only her. But the Mother Superior, who was a fantastic French lady, didn't say who, and how and what, but said "She will be all right." When we came back, we saw that the Germans and the Hungarian soldiers were working on the bridges, and we knew that they are doing this, because they want to blow up the bridges. At that time, Budapest was almost surrounded by the Russians, and when we arrived back, we didn't know whether the child was in a good place, and we were really, we really didn't know what to do, and around 8 o'clock in the evening, we phoned the Convent, that we want to bring the little girl back. And the Mother Superior, answered the phone, and she said, "This is Russia. The Russians came in. We had occupied, don't worry. The Russians don't hate the Jews." So, we were quite relieved, she is in a wonderful place, it was really a beautiful building.

All in the same day. You took the child one day, and the same day,

The same day, the Russians came. So we were quite relieved that the girl is in a good place, and she was a darling, she was really my child, I adored her.

Can I just interrupt you, Margaret, because, meanwhile, your father and your sister had disappeared, hadn't they?

Mmm. They went to, went with my aunt to,

To Austria?

No. No, they went to, to my aunt's place, by car.

And they hadn't come back?

No. She said that she would come back next day to fetch us and she didn't.

So you didn't, you must've been really worried?

No, we weren't worried, we just didn't know why she didn't come, whether she couldn't get another car or what. So we were in the hospital, and at the beginning, we had, we had food, not much, but we had food. But we, we, of course, we, we, pretending not to know my cousin in the SS uniform. By the way, I must tell you that he wasn't just a nice man, because he got quite a lot of money for that, you know, some Jews paid for him, and he accepted it. Anyway, at the beginning it was all right. I didn't know about my husband, I didn't know about my father and my sister. But we knew about each other, so ... We slept on the floor, of course, it was only one bed, where my mother sleeps, she was still very ill, and a little cot for my son, and all the others on the floor. The food was getting shorter and shorter, and we were, we were a bit hungry, but, well, there was nothing else to be done, so, on New Year's Eve, it was New Year's Day, really, it was about 2 o'clock, or 1 o'clock, a woman came to me and said that her son just arrived to the hospital, saying that the Swedish house where her husband and this little boy, and my husband were, were evacuated by the Nazis, and taken to the Nazi Headquarters. They stripped them naked, and started to march them. They didn't know where to, but when they were quite, they

marched very near to this hospital, and this woman's husband pushed out his son from the line, and sent him to his mother, and that was after midnight.

How old was this child?

About 13 or 14. And so, we knew that the Swedish house wasn't really as safe as they thought, as they thought it was.

Right, we'll leave it there.

F159 - End of Side A

So, next morning, I phoned the Swedish Embassy.

Where?

One of my really good friends worked there, because there were many Hungarian Jews working there, and I asked her what happened, and she said, "I'm terribly sorry, but he was shot into the Danube."

He was what, could you repeat that?

My husband was shot into the Danube. All the people from this Swedish house, 280 of them, were shot into the Danube. So there I was, I didn't, you know, I really didn't know what was happening to me. I, I couldn't think, I was just absolutely lost. I didn't know about my father whom I adored, about my sister. Well, I knew that my husband was dead. I didn't want to tell my mother, because she was very ill. It was no use telling my son, anyway, so I kept it in myself, and my only aim was to survive, and think of my child, nothing else, I didn't care about anything else. But everywhere's starving, we were really starving by then. We had a little piece of bread, some powdered milk from the Swedish Embassy, they couldn't really support so many people, and my cousin couldn't do much. Anyway, I discovered that there were two big barrels of tomato puree in the cellar, well, I think my, I can't remember who told me, but somebody told me, and I decided to steal from this. But you couldn't tell anyone else, because I wanted to survive, and I wanted my mother and my son to survive, so I wanted to eat it, you know, you just don't share the secret with anybody else, if you want to, I know it's very naughty, but you couldn't help it. But to reach to these two barrels of tomato puree, I had to climb through dead bodies during the night, because the dead were just left there. There was no way, it was a siege, and there was no way to take them out, or to, to bury them, so they were just left there, lying, in the yard. So I had my expeditions every night, two or three jars of, well, I found some empty jars, and I took the tomato puree which was very sweet, and very good, and I think it was very nourishing. And we ate tomato puree. I found some frozen kohlrabi's, which were really horrible, but we ate whatever we could. Most, there were quite a few people died of starvation, in this hospital, and, and illnesses, although we had a few doctors there, but, well, they just didn't have the means, or the medicines, or anything. On the 17th January, '45, the Russians came in, we were liberated. We rushed to the Russians, saying then that we are Jewish, they just pushed us aside, they didn't care, they didn't understand, they didn't care. Anyway, I was standing in the yard, and somebody came in, and I looked at him, and I said, "That's a familiar face." And it was my husband. I couldn't believe it, I thought I was mad. He didn't really look like him because he was, he was terribly terribly thin, he lost about 3 stones, 4 stones, I don't know. And immensely filthy. But I just, you know, I can't, I can't explain it, what a fantastic joy it was, that he was back. And for him, that we were alive, and, and you know, it was fantastic. So he stayed with us for a day or two, when suddenly my father and my sister arrived. My goodness! And my aunt, and it turned out that on the day they went to this little town, the Russians came in, they couldn't, it was just like this, my niece, they couldn't come back for us. By

the way, that place changed hands a few times, but, well, they just couldn't come back for us, so there was our whole family except for my niece. Now, my father, mother, my brother-in-law and my husband went back to my flat. My sister, my son and I stayed in the hospital, because the Russians raped the women, everybody, everybody went through it, you know, and it, that was a very safe place to stay. So we stayed there for a while, and then we went back. In my house, in my flat, there was nothing left. There was a built in cupboard in which I had, we found three dinner suits of my husband, nothing else. Not a piece of bread or anything. Fortunately, we found about two kilos of poppy seeds, which is very nourishing. You chew it and chew it and chew it, and that was our first food, the whole family was chewing, like chewing gum. And then we went, you know, we didn't have electricity, we didn't have water, we didn't have windows, we have, we have absolutely nothing, only the filthy dresses we stayed in for, for a long time. I didn't tell you my husband's story.

Don't worry, we can come back to that.

I must tell you, I mixed it up.

Yes.

Now, I want to go back to my husband's story. He went from the Swedish house to the Hungarian Nazi Headquarters, stripped stark naked, and it was 31st December, midnight, temperature was 5 or 6 degrees below zero, centigrade, and they were driven to the Danube. They lined them up there, and started to shoot them, into the Danube. My husband was towards the end of the line, and he thought, "I'm going to die anyway, but I don't want to die by a Nazi bullet", and he jumped. The Danube is, the shore of the Danube is quite high, because, because of the floods, it's built up high. He jumped into the water, and the bodies were coming, you know, on top of him, and he swam, well, he thought that he swam a few hundred yards, which is impossible, but he swam a bit, and when he saw that there was nobody there, he climbed out. And to this day, we don't know who it was, but somebody was there, who gave him a coat, and accompanied him to the ghetto, because there was a ghetto where all the Jews lived, and he went in, and.

He actually led him to the ghetto?

Yes. He went with him.

So this man must've been waiting for people to escape?

This man must have been somebody of the Wallenberg crowd, and we don't know. Anyway, he went to the ghetto, he went, he got some clothes there from people, and he survived the 17 days there, in the most appalling conditions, of course, and he didn't know anybody, but they, at that time, people were really nice and they gave him food and clothes, that's when he came back after 17 days, he hasn't seen water since, and funnily enough, he has a long, for about 30 years, he couldn't touch cold water. As soon as he put his hand into cold water, he got a rash, it was just ...

Tell me, this ghetto, was it actually a sort of Swedish occupied safe place?

No. No, no, no.

Because of the, it was a Jewish ghetto?

It was a real Jewish ghetto, in this part of Budapest, mainly Jews lived, so they pronounced it as a ghetto, all the ...

How come those Jews hadn't been lined up and taken away from the ghetto?

Because from Budapest they didn't take them away, because Wallenberg, because of the negotiations, from Budapest, very few people, only, only the people who were in labour camps were taken away, but most, the civilian people were left there.

So just to make sure one understands you had been taken away, that wasn't from Budapest?

It was from Budapest.

But from another part?

Another part. And the, the ghetto should have been blown up by the Germans, they wanted to blow it up, and it was only Wallenberg who, who stopped them. He said, "All of you will be hanged." I don't know whether you know the story. He really, it was he who saved all these Jews who went into the ghetto. So, and almost next door to this ghetto was this house where I was, at the so-called Hospital. It was quite near. So, let's find my husband. Now it turned out that only one other person jumped, and he survived.

The other person survived too.

It's a marvellous story.

There were 280 people, but the killing started before they arrived there, they, they shot people, and somebody who wanted to defend his brother, both of them were shot. Anyway, so, that's what I, I think that was,

That is a most horrifying story, it really is. Margaret, there is something that I would quite like to know for this tape, of your history, when you were a child, and when you grew up, and a little later on, were you a member of the Jewish congregation, or were you at all religious? Did you ever go to the Synagogue? Did you, for instance, have a Jewish wedding?

No.

No.

No. I tell you why. Anyway, I was brought up as a good Jew. We were members of the Jewish congregation. My, I went to Talmud Torah, and I was quite happy, I had

many many friends, even in Budapest, where we lived, all Jewish friends, and on High Holidays I went to the Synagogue with my parents, especially on Yom Kippur, to be honest, I didn't like it, because what I used to see, that, amongst the women, because the women were separate, separated from the men, I learned how to preserve peaches and tomatoes because they were just chatting and chatting and chatting, and I hated it. That was one of the things. The second thing, which I couldn't bear, my father was my God, I adored my father. On Yom Kippur he wore his kittel, and I just couldn't stand it. I saw all these Jews in the white robes, and I just couldn't help crying, I just, I hated it. Although they were not religious Jews, but that was the custom, and the third thing I didn't like, the Schnodering, I don't know what you'd ...

Schnoren?

I don't know what you call it.

Asking for money.

Yes. I, you know, it was just against my principles. But on high holidays we had to go, of course, and, by the way, we kept all the holidays, we kept the Pesach.

What about your wedding then, why didn't you get married in a Synagogue?

I, I, when this anti-Semitic rules came out, people who converted weren't punished as badly as the others. I didn't tell you that I had an aunt, my father's oldest sister, who married a non-Jew. My grandfather and grandmother said Shuva, that she, when she married this man.

They kind of cast her out?

Yes. And they said Shuva, you know.

I don't know what that means.

To sit, sit for eight days.

To sit Shiva? I know what you mean.

So they,

It was just like as if she had died?

Yes.

I see, so because she married out, as far as they were concerned, she was dead.

Yes.

I see.

Later, they forgave her, and they were great friends, because my uncle was a very nice chap, but he was a Lutheran, and he wanted his son to be a priest, and he became a priest. Yes. Now, from this cousin of mine, we got papers, that we were Lutherans, so he said that we converted and, and so we, and that meant that my husband, you had to wear, in the labour camp, a yellow armband, when you were Jewish, but if you were converted, you had a white armband, and you had a better treatment, so we got these papers, but we wouldn't tell our parents, because they would have been terribly terribly unhappy about it, so we decided, but you know, at that time, it wasn't really very fashionable to have a Synagogue wedding.

Wasn't it?

No. No. My sister who didn't convert, they didn't have a Jewish wedding.

But your cousin was very interesting. Your cousin was half-Jewish by, by Jewish standards he would've been Jewish because his mother was Jewish,

Yes.

And he was the one who took the SS uniform?

No, no, no, no. Well, I had two cousins.

I see.

I had two aunts who married out. That was the oldest one.

So in fact, two cousins.

... and the other one was the so-called SS soldier. No, who became a priest, he was very, very, he was, he was very stupid, because during this time, he said to his father that he should divorce his mother, because there shouldn't be any Jews, any family. Mother would bring danger to the family, so he was a real, very believing Lutheran priest. Anyway!

I didn't know there were Lutheran priests, actually.

Well, he became something like a Deacon. He was a very, he had a very high position. He died very young.

Yes. Now, do you want to talk about how you got to England at all?

Well, I haven't finished yet. So, in the end, we were at home, eating, finding some food, we went, we went always looking for food, and the next, very, very important thing was to find a, my niece, in the convent, but we couldn't cross the Danube because there were no bridges. There was no telephone, there was no electricity, no nothing. Then they built a pontoon bridge, and my sister and my brother-in-law, went over, walked up to the Convent, which was absolutely empty, nobody there. They made enquiries, nobody knew about anything, and this went on and on, and they

crossed the bridge, every time, every day, early in the morning, they started to find their little girl, and they couldn't. It took about three weeks, when they got the news where she was. So they went there, and they saw a big heap of ruins. The house was bombed, and it turned out that in the cellar, there was my little niece, with a 104 Jewish children saved by the Nuns. Two of the Nuns died, and two survived, and the two Nuns saved 104 children. And it was, well, she was half dead when they brought her home, she couldn't move, she couldn't speak, she, she was absolutely dehydrated.

How old was she?

She was 4. Unfortunately, she acquired there a rheumatic eye disease, and she died at the age of 14. And I must tell you something about, when, when we were liberated by the Russians, we didn't have food, the shops were closed for about six months. We had no electricity, no water, no windows, no nothing. And everybody was stealing, everything possible, and we exchanged everything for food. The Russians weren't very kind to us, these type of Russians, the Mongolians, who invaded Hungary, I'm sure they didn't know what Jews were, because we kept telling them that we are Jews, they didn't know anything about us, of course. Anyway, after about six months, it was getting a bit better, the shops opened, and we went down to the provinces and got bread for a sheet, or something like that, and we survived. We, we started eating, and getting stronger, and my father started his factory again, so we, it was almost normal. My husband went to the factory every day, where he used to work before, which was eight kilometres, he, he had his dress suit on, and a rucksack, and a pair of shoes of my father, because he couldn't wear his own, well, he didn't have any shoes, and very very slowly, we almost lived a normal life. When the Communist regime started, it was getting worse and worse, and we realised that the Communists were almost as anti-Semitic, anti-Semite as the Germans, they just hated us. Unfortunately, the high posts in the Communist Party were all in Jewish hands, our Prime Minister was Jewish, and in the Government, in the Cabinet, there were about six or seven Jews. So the population hated the Jews again. Well, at that time, it didn't matter, but we felt it all the time, and we heard all the time, anti-Semitic remarks, but at that time, nobody cared. When '56 came, the Hungarian Revolution, we heard a lot of anti-Semitic remarks, and all those people who hated Jews, hated them even more, and, and, and there were slogans that we should get rid of the Jews. Unfortunately, my husband was away at that time, he was in Albania, and I couldn't get in touch with him, but I had a Swiss friend, who smuggled my son out to Vienna. I phoned my cousin in Germany, asking him to pick up my son, and he said, "Yes, I go." So my son went out to Vienna, I got a telephone call two hours later, or three hours later, that he was safely in Vienna, and when my husband came back, he was rather upset about it, but we decided to get out from Hungary. By that time, it was very difficult to get out, and it lasted about six months, asking for a Passport, and I couldn't get any, so in the end, I bribed a policeman, a high-ranking Police Officer, who said that if I leave everything in my flat, as it was, he would get me a passport, so that's how we came out. We stayed in Vienna, from 16th July '57, waiting for some good job for my husband. He was offered quite a few jobs, one in Israel, one in Spain, and one in Greece, one in Switzerland, but the best one was in Germany, and he didn't want to go to Germany, he said that it was too near to the Russian border, and he didn't want to go, to accept this place. The Austrian Police were absolutely horrible to us. They kept us, every day we were called into the Police, that we were, because we weren't

refugees, in that sense, because we came out with a Passport, and I was in the Vienna Police Station, a chap called Dr. Hollisch, who behaved very hollisch, and he said, "Oh, all the Hungarian Jews are coming here, and you won't leave Vienna." So, that we didn't like.

[We'll stop there for now. That's the end of the second side of Tape B. We'll continue on a new tape.]

Fl59 - End of Side B

This is Margaret Gold being interviewed by Ilse Sinclair, and it's tape 3, and today is the 19th May, 1989.

So, after staying in Vienna for four months, my husband had an offer to come to England. The person who offered him the job, had a factory here, similar, he produced similar machines to what my husband's old firm produced in Hungary, and he knew him very well. So he offered him a job, and we were delighted to come to England, because I really wanted, we didn't accept the other jobs, because I wanted to give my son a good education, he was very bright, and I was maybe a bit biased, but I really wanted him to get a good education, so we came to England, and my son stayed back in Austria for a while, in a boarding school, which was sponsored by Queen Juliana of Poland, and he was again, the only Jew there. He was beaten up a few times, but he was very strong, so he didn't make too much fuss about this. He came in January '58 to England, without knowing a word of English, and he started to learn English immediately, he went to a school where he, English for Foreigners, and the next year he went to continue his normal education in a Grammar School. At the age of 18, he went into Oxford. So our life was really all success since we came to England, although it was not very easy to get into the English habits, the English way of life, but we coped with it quite well. We both worked, my husband and I, and we are very happy here, and ...

What did you do, Margaret?

Well, as my English wasn't very good, I decided to do something with figures, and I learnt computers, programming and control. I got, I was very lucky, because I got a job where they taught me, and later on, I got a better job, and again, a better job, so I was quite well paid, and I retired at the age of 60, and well, I earned quite well. My husband was a director of the company here, of this company where he started, was bought off by a very big company, and he was a director there, and he was quite happy in his job. He went very often to, all over the world, really, and sometimes I was able to go with him, and he was very very happy in his job, because this is what he did all his life. Of course, we'll have 28 years of pension, very high pension, back in Hungary, which is lost, and we had to start our lives from the very beginning, but it wasn't too difficult.

So you really made a success of it, didn't you?

Well, I think I made it, well, we all made it, and I think the greatest success is my son's success.

So what is your son doing now?

He is a patent agent.

A what?

Patent agent, who is, has his own job, own office, and he's a Magistrate, and he's, he works with hundreds of voluntary services, and he is a very very good chap. He married, has a wonderful wife, two children, so unfortunately I lost my husband, but otherwise we are happy, the happiest people in the world.

And you did join the Jewish community, didn't you?

Yes. Well, when I came here, I joined immediately, the Jewish community, because I felt terribly lonely. Unfortunately, I joined the wrong community, where I was treated as a foreigner, and nobody cared about me. I was a member for more than two years, and nobody talked to me one single word. So I left them, I was terribly upset about that, they were really nasty to me, and mind you, they thought that my husband wasn't Jewish, I think, that's why I was so excommunicated from the Jews!

They thought your husband was what?

That he wasn't Jewish. No, because he never came to the Synagogue.

Oh I see.

And then, very fortunately, we met a family, a Hungarian family here, and we became great friends, and they said we should go over to Weybridge, where they, where there is a very small Jewish community, which is not really that religious a community, so we started from the scratch, and about 20 families founded the Synagogue, founded the W, what is it?

The North-West Surrey Synagogue?

The North-West Surrey Synagogue.

You were a founder member?

My husband was a founder member, or we were founder members, and at the beginning, it was only, we grew very very slowly, 20, 30 families, and we grew quite well, and then we had our first Rabbi, and then we had our second Rabbi, and we are growing and growing, and I think that this is what keeps me in Weybridge, because I've got so many friends, and when my husband died, this community behaved so wonderfully, and they were so good to me, I just couldn't leave Weybridge for anything.

And Margaret, looking back on your incredibly interesting story, would you say you were lucky? Or what would you say your happy ending, as it were, is due to?

Yes. I think we were very lucky. I don't think that many families in Hungary survived, as a whole, as we did. Fortunately, I know another one, a distant cousin of mine, who's family survived. And we were very lucky, but I really think that, in some cases, I, I just wanted to show the Germans, that I'm just as clever, maybe cleverer than they are. It's, as I told you, I really feel that I, I didn't grasp the gravity the things, because I, maybe because I was always an optimistic person, and I, I just

couldn't believe that the, they can kill us. I, I, the whole thing was so unbelievable. Somebody asked us whether we ever had any nightmares. We never have, because the whole thing was a nightmare, and because it was just, a very bad dream really. I don't think we grasped that our life is in such danger. Of course, we didn't know what happened to the deported people. We knew it only when, after the War. I didn't tell you, for example, that I had, I don't know, well, 26 people were taken away from my family, two came back, one from Dachau and the other from, from Mauthausen, no one from Auschwitz. Later she was sent to Mauthausen, and they survived, and they told us that we shouldn't really expect anybody. My uncle and aunt, who stayed with us, when we were 28 in our flat, they went out, they were dressed up like Hungarian peasants, and they went out from the house to do some shopping, and somebody recognised them, and reported them, and they were shot dead within five minutes. We could never find my aunt's body. We found my uncle's, but ... it's probably, it was then that we realised that life is terribly dangerous for Jews.

But you were very very courageous, weren't you. I think you were young, you had youth on your side, you were very very optimistic,

No, I don't think it was courage, I think it was, it was stupidity! Well, I don't know, I don't know, it was just that I, I didn't want to die, and you know, I have such a wonderful family, we were so close, and we had such fun together, and I just couldn't imagine, I really think that if somebody from my family would have died, I, I would have committed suicide, I just couldn't have cared about anything else.

So it was the closeness of your family that gave you the will-power to carry on?

Yes. Sure, yes. We, that was a habit in our family. We weren't, my father came home from work, and the whole family sat down and we discussed what happened during the day. We had at least half an hour together, every day, talking, and if I had a secret, I rushed to my father and told him, or to my mother, but mostly to my father.

Tell me, we didn't hear what happened to your parents.

Unfortunately, they died, much later.

After you had come to England?

Yes, yes, they came out to England a few times to visit us. I went to Hungary many times, and my mother had a stroke, and then she had another one, and another one. And my father, he just, he was just so sorry for my mother, that he refused to live. Anyway, my father died, and then my mother died, four years later, and unfortunately, my sister died, so that's what I said, why I started to cry, we all survived, but now it's only me.

Yes, from your generation, but you have a lovely family. I would like to thank you very very much, for giving us a really heart-warming story, beautifully told, thank you very very much, Margaret.

Thank you.

Fl6O - End of Side A

Fl6O - Side B - Blank

**END OF INTERVIEW**

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

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Ref. No.: C410/O17

Playback Nos: F158-F160 inc.

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Collection Title: THE LIVING MEMORY OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

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Interviewee's surname: GOLD

Title: Mrs.

Interviewee's forenames: Margaret

Date of Birth: 8/7/1920

Sex: F

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Date(s) of recording: 21/1/89 and 19/5/89

Location of interview: Interviewee's home

Name of interviewer: Ilse Sinclair

Type of recorder: Marantz CP430

Total no. of tapes: two and a half

Speed: -

Type of tape: C60 cassettes

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Mono or stereo: Stereo

Original or copy: Original

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Copyright/clearance: full clearance

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### Fl58 - Side A

Margaret Gold, nee Hoffmann, born in Ujpest, Hungary, on 8/7/20.

Mother's family: Mother third of five children, lived in poverty. Grandfather acted as interpreter to illiterate people. Grandfather died 1926. Grandmother died young in Budapest, having been born near Polish border.

Father's family: Grandfather 16 siblings, quite well educated. Some university professor and doctors. Grandfather a teacher. Had nine children, five died, so four left.

Father: Engineer. Parents married 1912. Built up good factory, lived in big house. Was a soldier in First World War. Sister born in 1914. She herself in 1920. Celebrated Passover and might have 40 people for Seder. In 1927 firm went bankrupt and sold out. Margaret went to school in Ujpest, later Budapest. Ballet dancer training at seven years old at Opera House. Lessons 3-4 hours daily, but was not allowed to actually join the School because of being Jewish. Antisemitism and so had to leave Opera School. Her sister exceptional student and got a scholarship to a Convent School in England. Hospitality and contribution of £1 (one pound) given by a Dr. Hertz. Sister went to university in England, then back to Hungary and became a teacher and lecturer. Margaret went to Italy then back to Hungary in 1940. First man she met was her husband on return. She was 20 and he was 35. Decided two weeks later to marry. He was sent to labour camp. All Jews up to 65 called up. Mostly sent to Russia, very few returned - either killed or starved to death. Husband did come back. He was well qualified with Doctorates in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Engineering. They married in 1941. He came from a small provincial town, went to R.C. grammar school run by monks.

### Fl58 - End of Side A

### Fl58 - Side B (mono - no dolby)

Story of aunt married to a German non-Jew who died and left all his worldly goods to her. They went back to Hungary, but nobody knew she was Jewish.

Margaret's son was born in 1942. On March 19th, 1944, Germans invaded Hungary. Prominent Jews disappeared at once. All Jewish literature or anti-Nazi stuff burned.

Mother ill, had various operations. Husband's family in little town, after a while no communications. Jews were locked in synagogue and taken away and sent to Auschwitz. Only heard this in 1960. Of his family, everybody except sister-in-law

gassed. His brother-in-law had tried to blow up the Gas Chambers, and consequently killed.

Yellow star had to be worn. Margaret hardly wore it. Jewellery was confiscated, so she bought cheap stuff and handed that in and got receipt. Real hidden in electric meters. Refused to co-operate with Germans in many ways. Food shortages and queuing or food taking son, often sprayed with machine guns ... 30 - 40 people killed. Jews had curfew. Permitted to go out for two hours a day. She not really aware of the horror of it all, either too young or stupid she thinks now. Father had a working factory again by 1932 and he had phone there. All Jewish private phones taken away. 2nd July Jews rounded up. No prior warning. Packed emergencies and blankets, etc.. 6th July whole families, including small children, sent to camps. Parents too lined up, mother unable to walk further, sat down with father and they were left behind, and just walked back. Margaret's husband called up to labour camp. They had been issued with Schutz passes by Swedish and other Consulates, only Wallenberg ones any use. Under impression this would save them. did not pay money for them. Jewish houses were organised. Sister and parents moved into her tiny flat, joined by other relatives. Later there were 28 people in that flat for short period. Tried hard to be civilised and nice to each other. If people could not stand it, they left. Peasant woman brought them food. Eventually people either taken away or went elsewhere. Hungarian Nazis lined them all up every now and then.

#### F158 - End of Side B

#### F159 - Side A

Husband sent to labour camp, she visited him. Once when asked to line up downstairs, she dressed up in best clothes, fur coat and hat and high heeled shoes and went downstairs past Nazis unrecognised, and went to father's factory. Father and uncle taken away on lorry but managed to escape too. They had jumped off the lorry and hidden themselves, leaving a quilt on lorry. In Jewish houses a Christian responsible for Jewish behaviour. One friend staunch and helpful. Husband in hiding and she was able to see him occasionally. One day, Hungarian Nazis lined them up again, she left two year old son on potty in flat hoping someone would rescue him. She was marched across a bridge to a brick factory - hundreds of them. Herded on to several floors with holes in floors. Packed like sardines and no toilets, so had to use the holes which fell on people below. She was together with about 17 people she knew. Even able to crack jokes. But terrified about son. They were all marched off after a few days. She managed to escape and hid, others did the same. Some help given. Went to a flat, no son. He had been saved by friends of parents and taken there. Cousin converted a house into a hospital to save as many people as possible. He wore stolen SS uniform and kept about 500 Jews there. Brother-in-law took their daughter (her sister's) to a convent on Dec. 24th, 1944. Bridge blown up and nightmare situation. Russians already in convent. Back in hospital food was desperately short. Husband taken away to Nazi Headquarters, naked. Swedish houses not safe any more. They were all starving by then and lived on tomato puree they found in barrels in cellar, having climbed over dead bodies to find food ... also

some kohlrabi (root vegetable). Many died of starvation. On 17th January 1945, Russians liberated them. They did not care about Jews. Husband suddenly re-appeared. She thought she was going mad. Emaciated and filthy but joyful reunion. Father and sister arrived with aunt. Russians just in time. Family all together except for niece in convent. Back to flat and two kilos of poppy seeds, in filthy clothes.

Husband's story: 31st December 1944 stripped naked, temperature well below freezing. Lined up at banks of Danube to be shot. Managed to get himself near end of line so jumped in and floated out of sight, climbed out and hid again and saved by people who gave him clothes, and led him to Jewish Ghetto. He so shocked, could not touch cold water for 30 years after.

Wallenberg stopped the blowing up of the ghetto. Out of 280 people, only one other person jumped and survived.

Questions about Jewish life. No Jewish wedding, not fashionable, but to Synagogue on high holidays. They did not like services because all the women did was gossip. Father was her God. She hated to see father wear a Kittel in Synagogue. However, they kept high holidays. Converted Jews were not so badly treated. Her aunt was at first cast out as she had married out, but later forgiven. Her cousin became a priest and he later gave them papers as if they had converted. So her husband only had to wear white armbands instead of yellow. Her cousin later became a Deacon.

After the Russians came to the rescue they had to retrieve the four year old niece from convent. No phones. Convent was empty. Eventually found the child in a cellar of a bombed house where two nuns had died, but two survived and saved 104 children. She was dehydrated and nearly dead. She survived, but died some years later, aged 14, of heart disease.

Husband became director of firm and travelled abroad, but once back in Hungary was not allowed out again.

In 1956 husband was in Albania, not able to get back. Revolution, and she decided they must get out. She sent son in car boot to Vienna. Husband must have got back but did not at first get permit to leave again. She bribed policeman to get them a passport, and they went to Vienna.

Fl59 - End of Side B

Fl60 - Side A

Husband had offer of good job in England, they wanted son to have good education. The boy had gone to school in Vienna and encountered some antisemitism. So in 1958 they moved to England. Son could not speak a word of English. After a year, he went to grammar school and after two years, aged 18, he got to Oxford University. Both Margaret and husband worked. He was a director of a company and travelled widely, and she worked with computers.

They had lost their 20 years of pension due to them in Hungary, but they were happy and life was not too difficult.

Son is now Patent Agent and has his own office. He is a magistrate and does a lot of voluntary work. He has a wife and two children.

Margaret's husband died two years ago.

They had joined a Jewish community, but because husband did not go to services, they felt ostracised. So then they joined the North West Surrey Synagogue in Weybridge, and became founder members. Found a lot of support and made many friends.

She feels very lucky having survived. She simply wanted to show the Germans that they were cleverer than the Germans.

Feels now that they did not recognise the gravity of the situation at the time. IT WAS TOO UNBELIEVABLE. It was a nightmare, but she does not have nightmares about it now. From her family, 26 people were taken away and only two survived. One uncle and aunt tried to escape dressed up as peasants. They were recognised and shot. She feels she was not courageous but simply did not want to die. She had such a marvellous family, if someone in the immediate family would have been killed, she would not have managed to cope, she would have committed suicide. Her family had been so warm and supportive and she has memories of father coming home from work, and they all sitting down and talking over the day's happenings and problems. Her parents stayed in Hungary and eventually died, as did her sister, but not before they had all visited each other in England and Hungary.

Fl6O - End of Side A

SIDE B - Blank

END OF SUMMARY