

IMPORTANT

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NATIONAL LIFE STORY COLLECTION

LIVING MEMORY OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

**LILY HERDAN**

interviewed by Milenka Jackson

This is the life story of Lily Herdan, in the Life Story Collection. The date is 18th September, 1989. This is Milenka Jackson, interviewing.

Could you tell me when and where you were born?

I was born in Ujpest, which, at that time was a separate unity of towns, and today belongs to a bigger suburb, to Budapest, it's a suburb of it. The date was 1st October, 1908. I was the first child of my parents, and two more came after me. My father came from Russia, as a young boy, to an uncle of his. He left a large and poor family behind. He worked very hard, he was a very talented person, a very clever man, a very intelligent man, with a lot of common sense, and he was a workaholic, they would call him today. My mother was also very hard-working, and she was a lovely looking woman, and a very kind woman, and a good mother. She came from a family of 10 daughters. They kept together, there were always family unions and Sunday lunches, and, and outings, excursions to the woods together, and cousins, not only the sisters and brother-in-laws, cousins were always together a lot. For instance, for Purim we dressed up and went from one house to the others, saying "Gibt mir Kreuzer und wirft mich hinaus. Heute ist Purim und morgen ist's aus". It was very nice. I went first, I went to elementary school, and then they called me a Jew, a "Dirty Jew", and I went home crying, and my mother said, "They're just angry, they're just jealous of you. Look, they are dirty, they are poor, and look at us, friends look at our family, we're much better than they are." And then I said, "Well, if it is like that, why are they not the Jews, and we the others? If they are the dirty ones?" And this was quoted in the family for a long time. Our room was always very nice, not only clean, my mother had a wonderful sense, she had taste and imagination. It was always nicer than most homes, although sometimes I said, "All that home, their house is nicer than ours", but if I think back on it, it wasn't, and my mother even could make things and design things, and find people who could make the curtain, and made Baldachins and things like that. They started, not poor, but with little, and they, at the end, my father finished, he was a tanner, he learned this with his uncle, and he finished, his was the Fifth Tannery in Hungary. It had about 350 people working for him. And he was, should I speak about my father?

Yes please.

They bought most of the hides, raw hides for tanning, from Germany and Holland, and when the men came, and the agents came, before they went round, they came to my father, to sell to him, because the others, even bigger tanners than he was, asked "Did Zigotny buy any?" If they could say that he did, they also bought. He had a what we call "Shrewd" whether the market is going up or down, so it was very much like today, with the Market. He was a wonderful father. He was much more religious than, than my mother, but my mother also came from a Kosher family, and we kept the Kosher house, and, but she didn't bother to do the Koshering of the meat herself, it was the maid, the maid who did the meat. But Friday evening was always Holy Day, the candles, the wine, and we all had to sit around the table, and pray, and sing together. This was the small family, I mean. Saturday was, was the same, Saturday lunch, but we didn't bother with, with Saturdays, with going out, and we went to the Synagogue, my parents only on the High Holidays, or my mother sometimes on Shabbath, when there was a Bar Mitzvah or wedding something like that. They, the thing was, to, to make a difference between the weekdays and the Holidays. For instance, we were thrifty, not putting the lights on if we were not in the room. But when the candles were burning on Friday evening, the lights, the electric lights had to be on, because the Shabbath lights are not there just to light the room, it's an additional, it's a holiday light, and we have to honour it with a candle, with the other lights on. There was a small community in Ujpest to which we belonged, and it, that was a time than later than I already got married, that three members of my family, my father, my father-in-law, and my husband, were members of the Community Group of Directorat I don't know now, I can't think of, members of the Jewish Parliament, which was called Neolog Kile. There was an Orthodox as well, to which not too many belonged, in Budapest, and I went, I feel I should go back to this elementary school, they changed my school after that, and I went to another school where anti-Semitism wasn't so hard, or it, it was there, in Hungary there was always anti-Semitism, it wasn't always showing, but it was always, it was always there, and I'm afraid it will always be there. They didn't need much encouragement from the Germans to hate the Jews and blame the Jews. After I finished my elementary school, I went ... Ujpest was a small town, an industrial town, full of factories on the side of the Danube. Ujpest means "New Pest", because they started

building it next to Pest, which is part of Budapest, and called it Newpest. I lived, I was born in a tannery, actually, when my father was still employed by his uncle, but later he left his uncle.

Do you mean you actually lived in the Tannery?

In the Tannery, yes.

Did you have an apartment there?

Yes, well, I don't remember it, I don't remember it, but, but I was told that it was one. It was a nice flat, it was, at the time, no bathroom, I'm sure, and no electricity, it was 1908, and, but it, it, comparatively, it had I think. Comparatively it was a Manager's flat, but as my father wanted to work for himself, he left his uncle, and bought a little grocery, and worked there, very hard, with my mother, and with some help, and made money on it. During the War, the 1914 War, he had to become a soldier, and he managed not, he wasn't keen to go on the Front, and he managed to stay in Uishpest, and worked in a tannery, because tanneries were very important providing shoes for the Army, and he was very good at it, and after the War, they got to know him, and they persuaded him, I don't think he needed a lot of persuasion, to start a tannery himself. It was a small workshop but he worked hard, and he knew how to choose his people, how to do things, and he grew and grew. There were others who started tanneries, and some of them finished very quickly, some of them grew, but nobody as quickly as high, as big, I should say, as he did. He was very concerned about our religious education. My brother, when he was 5, or not quite, he had a Jewish teacher, who came to the house, to teach him Hebrew, the prayers and everything about the religion. He didn't bother about me. Yes, I should go back to, you said, to the home. We lived in a big, ground floor, in a big house, there were about ten little tenants living in there. Our flat was on the street, and we had two rooms, and more than others, and when bathrooms came up, we had a bathroom installed. We went to, my mother took us to Gödöllő which is a little village, but the rural, there is a Royal Palace there, which was the summer residence of the King, and so, sold, but it was not, it was something, but it was really nothing but a village. But we had very good times there, and my mother went back by train, occasionally to see how the work is going on, and later on, we went back home, and we had the bathroom. We had a bath, I should say, every week, in the same bathtub with my brother, but I had to wear a shirt, because he was a boy, and he had to wear little trousers, because I was a girl. But we had a good time in the bath tub. And yes, well, I sort of grew, and when I was 10 years old, I went to a, what they call, gymnasium, and I was always there, I loved to learn, I was always a good pupil. I was, most of the time, I was first, and where, as well, I was successful. First, there was no gymnasium, which is a school, by the end of which, after 8 years, you get a, what the French call "Baccalarureate and the English maybe, "General School Certificate" or "Higher University Entrance", and that wasn't a gymnasium. Only when I was in the second class of the school in Ujpest, when I was 11, did they start, and I was in that.

Would you like to tell us how you amused yourself in the home, when you were young?

Well, there were always children around, always friends, children, children who lived near us, and we played games, and I had dolls, sometimes very simple, or very cheap dolls, but it was very nice to, to have them, and I didn't feel, as today, if somebody hadn't got an expensive doll, to keep to that child, they feel sorry for the child, and frustrated that they can't give it, it wasn't anything like that, we, not many had expensive dolls, not anyhow, those I knew at the time. We played like ringle-ringle-reier, other words, and songs, little songs, I'm not musical, and I was never musical, which showed, as I said, everything is relative, my mother was very musical, she always sung, sang, and my, and my grandmother, they were always singing something, but I still had a good time.

Do you remember any of the songs?

I remember the song that was sang when my brother was born. He was born at home, and there was the midwife who came to the house.

How old were you then?

I was 4½ then, and I remember the, the song. She sang different songs, but I became ill, I had pneumonia, and as everybody was busy with the baby, and with my mother, they hardly noticed at first, but then it turned out that I had pneumonia, and, of course, I had all the care in the world, and I got well, I had what they call "prisnitz".

Chloracine?

No, no, to put on. A cold

Compress?

Compress, and, but there was something left from me, I, I, what is this, that I couldn't look straight.

Astigmatism?

I, my parents noticed after the, after I, I was back on my feet, that I don't, don't see things well, because I had froze all the time, and it turned out that I, my eyesight was bad, and it was due to the shock of pneumonia, and I had to wear glasses ever since.

Did the doctor attend you at home?

Yes. Oh, we had a family doctor who was a friend, an old friend of, became an old friend of the family, and knew the children and, and I remember once, he came to see my little brother, who was four and a half years younger than I was, and sitting at the table, and complaining, and my father was there, and he complained to my father who, that he back ache, or something, and my father gave him advice, and then my mother came to the table, and she said, "Excuse me, who is the doctor? And who gives advice? Arnold, if you give advice you must charge!" A little thing that happened in the family.

Was it a Jewish doctor?

A Jewish doctor.

Yes

Did you deal entirely with Jewish people?

I don't, we, I don't think my parents had real non-Jewish friends at all. We did, when I got married, we had non-Jewish friends, but they were never as close as the Jewish friends. And I, I had books, and I had simple toys, and I also had my aunt, who came from Russia, to, and stayed with us till she got married. She married in Hungary, and was taken to Auschwitz with her husband. And she had, and she had to look after us, and she helped with cooking, and looking after things, a lot.

Can you describe the kitchen?

Oh the kitchen! They had a large cooker, with two ovens. It had to be heated with wood, and then they baked, they put their hands in, whether it's warm enough or not, there was not an oven meter on it, to, to favour the, I can put the meat in, or the cake in yet, but it always came out nice. And also, we had no gas at all at that time, I'm not sure whether there was gas later on, we had gas in the kitchen, it was, it was large and with nice white furniture in it, and doors, and we had a, what we called the small dining room, for our everyday meals. And we had a large dining room, which was only used when we had guests. The, the thing was to, to, how should I .... to be together and to tell stories to each other, and to sing, we sang German, little German songs.

Can you remember one?

I can't, I'll think of it, I know them, I can't think of it. I cannot. Little dances, and, and playing with string, making things from string, and taking it from each other's hands, and clapping.

Did you make string figures?

No.

You didn't make stories with the string?

No, no, no, we didn't. I didn't think of, how should I say, remembering things that I should try to remember it. I didn't think this would be a subject of our programme today! But I, I had a very happy childhood. There was only once that, I wouldn't eat something. And my father was very strict, and I had a little table, with two benches, and the plate was put in front of me, and my father standing tall, and he said, "You have to eat it. Here I stand, I stand here and you must eat it, or I beat you up. Or you have to stand in the corner." And I ate it, and it came back right again. My father turned his back, and I never was forced to eat anything I didn't want to eat, he learned his lesson! He, he was very good, the only thing that I hold against him. He very often said that he works only for his children, and I, I objected to that. It wasn't true, because he couldn't help working hard. I don't, he must have enjoyed work more than anything else, because that was his main thing. He was, he got up at 5 o'clock in the morning, and he did, he did turlenlegen,. He put a thing on in the morning prayers, before he went, before you had breakfast and he went out to work, and he worked till, till late in the evening. He'd be late, when he had the Tannery, he believed that the work started 7, then he has to be there at half past six, before they come in. The same thing when my brother started. He was working in the Tannery as well, at the time, with my father and he had a car, even, and he went out in the evening, and came to work at 8 o'clock, half past seven, 8, and so, my father says to him, "The workmen start at quarter to seven, that means that you, if you want to be the Boss, have to be there at half past six. I don't mind if you go out in the evening. I don't tell you what time you have to come back, you're old enough to know that. But if you want to work here, you have to be here at half past six." And so he was, he was strict in this sense, but he allowed us a lot of freedom in other ways, and well, I suppose, I, we have to finish the food at the table. My grandparents, when the children grew up, they lived rather far away, in Ujpest, but not near to us, and they were lonely, so my mother arranged a flat near us, so that she could help them, look after them. She was the one who, who sort of volunteered to do that, out of the sisters. And well, I am in the, let's say I am in the middle school, the gymnasium.

Could you just tell me a little more about your grandparents?

Yes. Oh, my grandparents. Well, they had ten, ten daughters, and they struggled. My grandfather wasn't a workaholic, but he, he was a very nice man. He enjoyed leisure as much as he enjoyed work.

What did he do?

He lived in, he, they lived in Slovakia, in Nyitra near Nyitra, and he had, at the time, a vinegar factory, and he used to play cards, and he used to be friendly with everybody on the Town Hall, but that didn't help much with the vinegar family, and the saying in the family was that the vinegar factory run away, flew away! And then they went and lived in, in Budapest. For a while, also, he went to America, and later on, my grandmother, with some of the daughters, went after him, but life was hard, he, he couldn't make a good living there, and three of the daughters got married there, and she came back, with the others and my mother was amongst them. My mother came back, I think in 1905, and met my father, and got married in '7, 1907. And this was an advantage, in a way, to my mother, who spoke English when they came to live in England. The, my grandparents were, how should I say? I think, very wise, because my grandmother had first twins, a boy and a girl, the boy died, the girl lived. Then she had a girl, then she had a boy only, and the boy didn't survive, she had three, she gave birth to three boys, and neither of them survived beyond a week, and they decided they don't want boys, they said, no, they don't want boys, "We have no luck with boys", it's much better to have nice daughters than sick boys, which I admire them for, and as I said, they were not rich, and my grandmother was always worried that, in those days, they had to give dowries to daughter, at least furniture, and trousseau, and it was, it was hard to give all that to 10 girls. My young mother was worried about this, by my grandfather wasn't. And he said, "They will look for all the Schwarz girls, you will see," and they were all tall, not beauties as such, but good looking, and intelligent, and sure enough, when all the time ....

END OF F367 Side A

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You were just telling me about your grandparents.

They were a good looking couple. When I knew my grandmother, or as I remember her, she was tall, but she was fat, after 13, 14 children, but she had a lovely face, a smooth, lovely face. And my grandfather was a tall, straight, slim man, blue eyes, fair curly hair. Loved animals. He had a chicken that came to beg his hand, to be fed, called Flora, and the Cock was called Reuben, and always, he loved plants. He could grow fuchsia in the room, and he always worked in the gardens, growing something special, and he, he educated his children accordingly. He, they formed a choir, they sang together, and evenings they sat around the table. There was no radio, there was no television to look at. They had to produce their own entertainment. And during the day time, in their free time, they had to do different exercises, gymnastics, and he made them march like soldiers, my mother told me. I also should say, that I am lucky, that I am not afraid of neither burglars, nor walking on the street, or, I think it is due to my mother, who, she was afraid, she was afraid of, she was afraid to walk into a hotel room, and it was due, she thought, to the fact that when they lived in, in the country, in those days, the Jews, especially, they had geese, they had to keep a lot of geese, and they were the feathers, and the feathers could be used, could be, I don't know, cleaned, and put aside, and there were always peasant women and also young and old, who came to their house, and eat they did this, they sat round in a circle and told, and sometimes they sang, and they told stories, and my mother,

And prepared the geese?

Not prepared the geese, the feathers.

What did they do with them?

They plucked the feathers off the stem of the feather, and sorted them out, here it was all the flocky part, here it was the harder part, and also

Did they use the quills of the feather?

No, no, no, the stem was no good, and also they took the corn off the stem, that was also, I think, they came to the house, and they did that, very little pay, I should think so, and my mother always, and they told stories, some terrible stories, frightening stories, and my mother said she always had to go there and listen, she was afraid when they stole the people and the killing and whatnot of the, of the people in the stories, but she was listening, and mostly she was hiding behind the skirts of the peasant woman, they used to wear many gathered big skirts, and she used to hide behind these, because she was afraid, but she was listening.

Did she tell you any of the stories?

No, she wouldn't. She said that she is afraid because of that, that she was listening to their, and on the contrary, we had a German girl with us, a nanny like, who, when she came, she was in that room, and then she came home, I was standing in the corner, a punishment, and crying, and "Oh, Mummy, I'm so afraid

And she said, "What is it? You were naughty?" "Yes", and the moo, she is coming, the nanny, she said, the moomoosh she is coming, that's why I am afraid. "What is the moo?" "The moo she is going to kill me and the moo ...." And my mother ran to the girl, and she said, "You frighten this child", and she said, "Well, I told her, that if she is naughty, the moo is coming," and she said, "Well, will you pack your things now and leave." And she had, she paid her, and she had to leave right away, because she was told not to frighten the children like that. And she was always careful that we should not be frightened, and I think this is due to, but I'm not afraid, is due to that. She experienced it on herself, and she very wisely wanted to avoid it with me. So my grandparents were a happy couple, and there was always understanding, and helpfulness between them. My grandmother fell ill in, seriously ill in 1928, I don't remember that they were ill, apart from that, really, very much, maybe a little cold, but not that I saw them in bed.

Do you know what was wrong with her?

Yes, heart, there was a heart failure, her heart was just tired, the doctor said, and I was going to get married then, and she wanted to give me a wedding present, and she decided that it will be the candlesticks, so that I should like the Shabbath candles and remember her, maybe. And one of the daughters bought a pair of candles, candlesticks, but she didn't like them, she had to take it back, and bring home a selection of candlesticks, which she looked at, and she decided which ones she is, she is going to give me, which are rather nice. She died whilst we were our honeymoon in 1928. My grandfather survived her 11 years. They lived near us in the last couple of years of their lives. And my grandfather stayed and lived there on his own, but very near. Once he was ill. I take it that he also had pneumonia, he had to have compresses, and my mother was always the one who went over and gave him the compresses. One day, she was busy, she expected guests, and she sent the Cook to give him the compresses, and my grandfather asked, "Where is the lady? Why doesn't she come?" "Oh, she is busy because they expect dinner guests." "Oh, she is busy to attend to her father, that's all right, I don't need anything, I don't need compresses then." She went back, the maid went back, told this to my mother, and she went over, apologising that she didn't come herself. "Don't you think the guests are more important than you are to me? I thought she can give it to you once." My grandfather said, "No, I didn't want it, I didn't, it doesn't matter." He felt sorry after all, that he said it. That was said and forgotten, except by me, maybe.

Could you tell me also about your father's parents?

I didn't know them. It was only my grandmother who came to visit us once, and my aunt, who, who came and lived with us, and stayed in Hungary. The rest of the family was in Russia, Polish Russia, and I only heard about them, and it was, and there was correspondence, and my father was there maybe twice only, to visit them. He actually was brought up by his grandmother, who only had one daughter, who was the mother of my father, and was a widow, and took the son of her daughter and brought him up, and later she sent him, or he went on his own, to Hungary, to a nephew of hers.

Do you know what that grandfather did?

I don't. I think something with wood, but he didn't do much. It was my grandmother who was the businesswoman in the family, and only my father never said it, till he was quite old, and we were here in England. He said his father was always studying, and even the Rabbi came to him often and asked him questions, but this was something he was more ashamed of in Hungary, because he disapproved my other grandfather's inclination, not, not to business, but to have little pleasures, the side, that part of life. He, he was, how should I say? He accepted it, and I think that was one reason that he didn't stay there, in, in Russia, or Poland, because one was Malnick, and Kiev, he was brought up in Kiev.

May I ask you about those ten aunts of yours, did you have any special favourites?

I had my eldest sister of my mother, was my special favourite. She was a very kind woman, and my mother came to her when she came back from, from America, and got to know her husband, my father, through them, at their place. She was a very nice woman, who had a daughter, gave birth to a daughter, who died after a few months in this world, it was, it was some infection that they didn't know then, and she was injured in some way, and couldn't have any more children, and she adopted the daughter, she would have liked to have me, but my parents wouldn't give me, and she adopted one daughter of her sister's, who had twins, twin girls, they lived very near to each other, and stayed sisters, friends, sisters with each other, and they knew that they are sister, and one of them who was brought up by my Aunt Anna, was speaking to her stepmother, or adopted mother, I should say. She, she was very meticulous. When I got married, for instance, she came with a tape measure, and she showed me how I have to put the linen into my linen cupboard, how the sheets, how the pillow cases, and the shirts, and everything, has to be in the cupboard, and look how nice it is. "You have to keep it like that", she told me. And she always dressed very solemnly, black coat with Persian collar. I was there once, they lived in a house, on their own, no, grandfather lived there and another sister, and there was an overflow, the kitchen was flooding, and I was there, and they didn't know what to do. My uncle was there, my other aunt, and the other uncle, grandfather, a niece, no, my cousin, she wasn't niece, and they didn't know what to do. She had a black coat, she took the coat off, no, took the lid off the

water meter, went down, closed the water meter herself, and it was all done. She, the men and nobody thought of that, and the flood was stopped. She was a very sensible woman, she was a good teacher, how to cook, and how to save and how to preserve, to make preserves, she knew better than my mother, and, and, I was very fond of her. I was at that house every Friday morning, after I did my shopping, I went there, and she was preparing for Shabbath. When I got married, we usually went to my parents' house for Shabbath evening, it was maybe a pity not to have it with the children at home. Later, they also came, but very much later. And

May I ask one more questions about your aunts? Were they all housewives, or did any of them work outside the home?

Well, one worked outside the home as a Secretary, but the others, they were all housewives. My mother was a, was a housewife, but she helped her husband. Yes, and I had another aunt who also had no children, and also had a grocery shop, in which she helped, and she was, she was lonely, she wanted a child, and they went to a funeral, there was an influenza epidemic, after the War, many died, and they went to the funeral of a friend of theirs, and after that, they said, "There is another funeral, where a couple died. A couple, with children", and they went there, it was in the same cemetery, and they found that there were four children at the funeral, of, of this couple, and they said, "The fifth is at home, is a baby, at home." And they went with them, home, and there was a little girl, very sick, and they asked the eldest of the sisters whether they can take the little one. There were only four of them altogether. Whether they could adopt the little baby, but they could take her, and she was glad, she said, she would look after, but if they want her, yes, they can have her. And they took the baby with them, and it took a long time till the child got hair, got back to good health, and my grandmother said to her daughter, "You know, I was very worried that you took that child, to adopt, without knowing anything, and whether you'd be a . . . But with all the worry I saw you going through, with all the help you gave it. I think it's as good as giving birth to a child, and I approve of it now." And it was a very happy relationship between the daughter and parents, and she didn't know that she was adopted, until she was quite grown up, and went to work, because of the Jewish laws, in a factory, where she met her sisters. They knew, the sisters knew her name, and recognised the child of, of their family, and told her. She was terribly terribly upset. She cried, she went home, and she didn't speak to them, and then she settled, and my aunt told her that she didn't want to upset her, that she didn't tell her, because she wanted to, didn't want to see her upset. And if she wants to go back to her sisters, if she didn't get everything that she needed, she can go back. But then she settled, and she stayed, of course, and she even got married from there. And she was expecting and she was taken, she was in the factory, and she was taken from the factory to, near Vienna, I can't remember the name of the lager in Austria, not far from Vienna, that she gave birth there to the baby, and it was killed there, with the child, together. And the son-in-law came back to my aunt, and was, you know, kept the relationship, but then he found a girl who was rather like her daughter, Borishka and she, he married her, and my aunt couldn't look at him, and didn't want, told him, she doesn't want to see him, it was so near to her heart, the child she, didn't really give birth to, except, except that, from, being taken to the lager, because my uncle was in the First World War, and he was an invalid, a War Invalid after the War, and that way they were exempted, and survived, and she couldn't forgive herself that she didn't hide her daughter. And they both died very soon after the Liberation, and the Russians came in. Other sisters of my mother, I wasn't so near to, there were three in America, four in America. I knew, but I, I wasn't very close to them, because of the distance. And one lived to 102, of the sisters. She, I, I loved her daughter, my cousin, we hit it off very very quickly, when we got to know each other, and we were very close. Unfortunately, she died, and I lost contact with my aunt, not really, but, but I, I wasn't so near to her. I don't know whether it's of any interest. That aunt, my mother told me, had a non-Jewish, an Italian boyfriend who she got to know, and she was interested in, and he was interested in her, and he wrote letters, and my grandmother wouldn't allow it, so my aunt paid the younger daughters, the younger sisters, who were at home, and who knew when the postman was coming, they were paid by her, then to work, to meet the postman, and ask for letters addressed to Flora, and keep it for her, because grandmother wouldn't let her have it, because he wasn't a Jew, of course, he couldn't, he was wrong. But it was all right, because she didn't marry him, she didn't even want to marry him, and she married a Jew, and had two children, and everything was all right. And I can't, I can't see much of them, because, because they, they are quite a distance away. The husband of my Aunt Olna, was also one of my favourites, because he had sense of fun, when we went on Purim, to them, and I, of course, girls wore boys or mens dresses, and the boys girls dresses, and hats and whatnot, and I had a boy's suit, a navy blue suit, and we went on the straight, and we went with baskets, of the boys, the boys

carried the baskets of the girls, and I had fun, and when we were there, they said they didn't recognise any of us, and then he said, "I couldn't have recognised Lily, because she was, she was so, really like a boy, like a man", and I said, "How come, really?" "Yes" he said, "you've got bow legs, which are, which men have bow legs. Girls have X legs, you know", that stands like that, "and you don't", and "I couldn't think that you were a girl. I thought it was a boy, that the girls found a boy to come with them." And when he said it, I had a good laugh, and realised that it wasn't properly meant, that he was just pulling my leg. He was full of fun, he was always, he could always say something to make us laugh. ... I was at school, and I was very lucky, because I found learning very easy, and I liked to be told, I am very undecided, I found that out later and I liked to be told what's right, and what's wrong, and I don't find it difficult to follow. I had languages, my mother's motto was, "If you learn, whatever you learn, they can't take away from you. And learn." And she made, she helped us to learn languages, and languages, German from a German, not really, Austrian, they were there, and French from Swiss, and French citizens. I had four French teachers, French born teachers, sorry, French born teachers. And that was also an advantage, and history, and literature, was very easy for me, because I was interested, I loved to read, and I read, and it was useful, it came useful in the school. And mathematics was my favourite, I was not, that I was the best, but I was maybe more than most, and, and I loved it. So everything was all right. I did well at school. I enjoyed it. We went in the afternoon, to the school, because it was a new school, and had no building, our school was a used, they used an elementary school building, and we went for 2 and stayed till 6, but there was no danger, we walked to school and walked back at 6. There was no danger of something happening on the way. It was true that sometimes we went home, separate, together, and that sometimes some young boys met us round the corner, and they pushed us, and we pushed back, and once it happened that I was waiting for them to push, and the boy who came, who had no intention of touching us, and I threw my books on him, and was ashamed then, and apologised. But it, I, we lived quite a distance away from the school, but it, it didn't matter, of course, I was young, and distance didn't matter, and I was, I wasn't alone to walk from there.

What did you do in the mornings?

Prepared for school. We always had homework to do, not like in England. We didn't have meals at school, we had our ...

End of F367 Side B

You were telling me how you prepared for school in the mornings.

Even in the gymnasium we had religious lessons, twice a week, one hour, the school divided into Roman Catholics, Calvinists and Jews. We had the same religious teacher all the time. I can't say that he was an excellent teacher, and even less, that the method religion was told, was very good, because we learned to translate the prayers, which didn't help us to learn the language, or to understand the prayers, because we only translated the words, "Ael - God, Malaf - King, Nehrman - faithful and so on, which wasn't very good, it didn't, it didn't understand the prayers, the other prayers, with the same words, of course, and, but we weren't upset, it was very important, and we learned the history of, of Jews, in a very broad way, I would think, and some of the religious rules as well. We went, had to go to Synagogue on Saturday afternoon, it was student service. We didn't, we were not encouraged to do anything Jewish at all. Latin was one of the very important, in our school, we had four hours every week, of Latin, after we were 14, and we had an excellent, I had an excellent teacher. She was, she knew a lot, and was enthusiastic. My memory is very bad now, but it wasn't very good then, either, because memory test, which means, of course, to know the verses and not only Vergilus and Herodotos word by word, but also history. Even the Greek, they didn't have those, we had to do it by hard work, by work, and I found it difficult to learn everything else that had, that wasn't word by word, I found easier to learn, and my teacher understood it, she was, she was very understanding, and, "but you must learn it, that's no excuse, I know you find it difficult, but even so, you can learn it if you want to" she told me.

May I ask a question about the attitude of the school to Jews, did you feel any discrimination in that school?

I didn't feel any discrimination from the non-Jewish teachers, but there was one teacher who was born a Jewess, and became a Christian, her name was Anna Maria. He gave her away, that she was Jewish, and her looks and ways as well, and we knew that she took up the name Maria, which wasn't originally her name, and she made a distinction, she preferred, she, how should I, she encouraged non-Jewish students more than Jewish ones, and we didn't like each other. She didn't like me, and I, I didn't like her, but otherwise I didn't notice any discrimination at all. I was quite well-liked with the other, by the other teachers and I didn't do any, my eyesight enabled me, or enabled my mother to exempt me from sewing, and from handiwork, and from drawing, and I was bored during that time, but later I had to take it, I had to take up the drawing, and I was pleased that I did very well, because seeing that I never learnt it before, but nobody learnt very much in those lessons. I, we had, when we were, when we were sort of in the seventh class, that means 17, 18, that some girls were, had boyfriends, who waited for them and walked home with them. I didn't, and the teachers were against it, and told that they will tell their parents what they're doing, and one Jewish girl said, "You don't have to tell my parents, because they know very well that I have this friend, and they don't mind that he comes and that we go home." And she was a Jewish girl, which some of us didn't like. There were not many, there were maybe five, all Jewish girls, who had Matura, the Bachelor Degree, which enables one to go to University. Before that, there were maybe in 8, in the whole class there was never more than 22, so the percentage was quite big, because Jewish parents wanted their children to learn, and they, they enabled them to go to higher class. I wanted to go to University, to carry on, but the "numerus clausus" as it was called then, was already on, and only 5% of the number of students could be Jewish. And although I had the best results, School Certificate in my class, I didn't get in, and I thought my parents could help me with money, because that was a possibility, but they didn't, and I'm very grateful now that they didn't, because it enabled others who, a friend who was, for instance, became a teacher, and who couldn't have afforded to, to afford it, got in, and I made my life without it, it would only have been an additional, not ... an additional jewel, maybe, to have a University Degree.

What did you feel about the "numerus clausus"?

Terrible. I thought it was very unfair, because those who are best in learning, in studying, should get there, but then there were nothing of non-Jews, and they were, who hit the scale, so it was better that they did this, because they wanted more non-Jews in white-collared jobs.

Did you feel a sense of discrimination in the society, against Jews, by this time?

Oh yes, oh yes. One knew it, one knew it all the time, but one got used to it, and one found it natural and accepted it.

Why was it natural?

Because it was always there. It was always there, and we didn't fight, not, I didn't fight it when I was sort of grown up, married and with my husband, and, and my parents didn't. Also, because we thought it's jealousy, it's envy, and they can't change it, because we get on without it, we do, we reach our aims, and then, the different Jewish societies in Budapest, the Hevra Kadisha which helped students achieve them, as well, they were, to people who couldn't afford to send their children to school. They helped them with the old age home, where old people could get in, and then were, they had poor people, who went every day to Jewish families for their dues, and you gave them, every week a certain amount, and it was, you know, if you were on holiday, "You weren't here last week", they told you and you gave it to them. For instance, I had one woman who came to me every week, and because she had, I don't know, five or six children, five children, six children, here I am expecting the sixth, you know, and I said, "Well, goodness me, you can't bring up those you have, why, why do you have more children?" "Why, because I can't afford a scratching", an abortus, and it's only people like you, and they said, "But I haven't got" I believe it was 20 pengös to have it done. So I said, "You want to have it done?" "Yes", she said, "I would if I had the money." So I gave her the money to have it done, and she came back, I didn't ask her when she came back, but after a few weeks I saw her, and I said, "What's on, you will have the baby, you know, I gave you money, you said you would get rid of it." "My husband said that it's not allowed, it's against the religion. The religion won't allow to do it." "Ah", I said, "That's all right. I didn't want you to have it done, but you said you can't have it done because you haven't got the money." "Yes." I said, "All right then, I take it off, and don't come to me the next," I don't know how many weeks. But she did come, and I gave her ...

Was abortion against the law?

Oh yes, it was. It was against the law, yes.

And you felt very sympathetic towards it?

I had one done myself. I didn't tell anybody, I didn't tell my husband, and I didn't tell my mother either, at the time I had it done. I'm sorry, but I knew I would be sorry if I didn't, because it was in, in 1940, when I had it done. I couldn't have looked after the baby, and hiding and doing all the things I did, with the two, with children. I don't know, I very often feel very sorry that I had it done, but I did. Not, not because of that, not because of that I was afraid of not being able to hide, or because I didn't think that we will ever have to hide, so we had, yes, we were speaking about the poor. And then there was the Jewish Ladies' Guild, and they paid so much, and had, not coffee mornings, tea parties, making money, and the poor got every week so much. Some had to collect it, some, some were given it in their homes. I remember a Jewish elderly woman who was sitting in an armchair all the time, beautiful and very clean, and everything, and she had nothing to live on, no fixed income, or pension but she was kept by the community, at home, in her little one-roomed, little flat. I don't know, sometimes I .....she keeps so clean always, in, being poor, and incapable of walking, she could walk in her flat, but I don't think she could go out, out of, you know.

So you were aware of Jewish community charities from an early age?

Oh yes. Oh yes, you couldn't, you couldn't help being aware of it, and, and it was a natural thing, you all did it, you had to do it, because the need was there, and, and you had to do it.

The State did nothing to help in those days?

No, I don't think so. There were things that one did, for instance, there were needlework jobs some little alterations you had done by a poor Jewish woman, just to help her to work, and, for instance, I had initials in my lingerie, in table cloths and things, that was made by an old Jewish woman, and you helped them like that, and, you know, clothes, you gave to, there were no Charity Shops, you gave the

clothes directly, your dresses and shoes, and whatnot to the poor, and maybe some you liked more than others, because she would alter it, and she looked so nice in it, and I, I enjoyed it, you see, that was my dress, and it looks very nice, you know, things like that, but, and went to visit people in the Old Age Home. Sometimes you did something, but they were very well managed there, and they didn't need anything, but you went to visit them, to see them.

And this would be a home run by Jewish charities, would it?

Yes, yes, by the local, the local Jewish Charity. That was a very nice little Jew who founded it and who went round and, and,

What was his name, do you remember?

Yes, a Hungarian named Arányi and Arányi and although his daughter survived and, and in Palestine, and went to live, she lived in, near Boston, somewhere in New England, after the War.

Just one thing that I was going to ask you, that I forgot, do you remember anything at all about the 1914-18 War, or did that not affect you?

It affect that I was quite young. But I remember something that I, I can say. Well, my father was, was in the Army, but wasn't sent to the Front, he worked in a Tannery, and once my mother, I don't know what, sent me with a message to the Tannery, to tell my father something, and I, which I did. And I ran through the Workshops of the Tannery, and the Tannery, even now, are smelly and dirty places, but in those days, they were really dirty, and my father had a leather apron in front of him, and his shirtsleeves up, and I don't know what he worked, and he quarrelled with my mother that she sent "your little daughter sent there, and she saw me like that, dirty, and working in the dark." But it didn't matter to me, I didn't think less of my father because I saw him like that, but it wasn't clean. And on, yes, after the, the War wasn't over in 1918, Communism came, and I remembered that they said, you know, the soldiers didn't know what it's going to be, so they had a button, a red, white and green button, which means Hungarian, and the Hungarian Army, and they had a red button on the other side of their jacket, red, that they're Communists, and according to the thing it changed, they said that they turned it. I remember nothing else, only that it was great celebrations when the new King, King Carlo, Charles IV was crowned, that was a big big celebration, and we had pictures of them, my parents, I don't know, they were singing, loyalists, new King, and that. And then when the Communists came, well, I don't remember much of it, but my parents were not Communists, of course not, my father was a, how should I say, a Capitalist more than poor, and he believed in working himself, and getting where, that he wanted to, without help, and didn't like, that it was all Jewish, the Béla Kún and Rákossy and Géro and others were all on top, and didn't like it. But it didn't last very long after the Red Peril came the White Peril, came The White Terror and pogroms, many Jews were killed then. But as he got in, I should say to his credit, mostly, he settled the anti-Semitism, not the anti-Semitism that was there all the time, just the active anti-Semitism that worked with guns.

Have you any memories of any pogroms?

No. No. No. Not, not myself, we didn't ever have to hide or anything. Maybe things were, we didn't live in a ghetto, we didn't live amongst Jews at all. Maybe, maybe with, either they respected, or liked, or what, there was no, no fear, we never had to be afraid that somebody will do anything to us, no.

And did you hear your parents speak of it at all?

No, no. No, it was, well, I was young, you know, I was born in '08, and I was ten when the change came. You know, I only know, but I never, never heard anything. Never. I don't remember and I never heard it mentioned when we spoke about things with my parents, about being afraid. I am sure we were never, because we would have been hidden, or told to keep quiet, and we stayed in the same house as we lived before, so there couldn't have been any, any danger for the Jews then. In the country maybe more, but not, not, not at all, not at all. No, because the Synagogue was still there, and ...

And what changes did you notice after that? Any particular changes in the society, attitudes?

No. Against Jews. As I said, I was quite young then, and I went to school afterwards, I didn't know, no, I didn't, as I said, anti-Semitism was always there, and, and you, you looked at the green leaves, and you think they're green and now they get yellow, but it's natural, and so was the anti-Semitism. There was never anything else here, and today, yet the Asians, I don't think they ...

Talking earlier about Jewish charities, could you tell me something about whether you noticed that the society in general, had a lot of poverty?

Oh yes. There was a lot of poverty. I don't think people went hungry, anyhow, not that I saw anybody going hungry. They had just their food, and just their clothes to put on. No change. My mother had said about one woman, who had, I don't know, six or eight children, that they have to undress on Saturday, stay in bed till the mother washes their clothes, dries and irons them, and they can dress again. But even that wasn't, you didn't feel sorry for them. My mother just admired the woman who, who could do it, and they were lively, and around. There was, there were cobblers sitting in their little door, of their little shop, and doing the repairs, and there was one child, I remember, who was a cripple, and I only found out later, that he had polio, that he had because he became ill.

Would you think that was during the 20s, would you say?

No, earlier, before, before. This was before the War.

Before the First World War?

Before the First World War, yes.

What about poverty after the First World War, and before the Second one?

I didn't, I think it was better. In Hungary, I think it was less, there was less poverty, but poverty in that time, didn't mean that they didn't have bathrooms, or they didn't have water in their flat, or didn't haven't a selection, that they didn't, they couldn't afford to buy a dress in a shop, anyhow, people didn't buy dresses, not even our type of people, they bought the material and had a very good little dressmaker, or there was one big salon where you had a dress in a season made. But poverty as such, was only poor people that they couldn't eat, that's when you felt sorry for them, but you didn't feel sorry for them, it wasn't heartlessness, I just have to repeat, everything is relative because there were so many, in that sense. Not, not to, because they, what else, because you don't have to wear everything, and you can have a pair of shoes repaired, a new sole put on three times, four times, why not, it's all right, you saw it, and for instance, this was later, this was during the War, that somebody came to my sister's house, begging and saying that they came from Slovakia and, and my sister, and he wants clothes and he wants money, and my sister says, "Slovakia, where my mother comes from, in Slovakia", "Oh, we also come from Nigra and maybe we are related." And my sister not only gave him money, but also a suit of her husband, which she was happy to get rid of, because it was very worn, and he still wanted to wear it, and she thought she shouldn't let him, but gave him the suit, but it was, you know, you gave things like that, and you feel sorry for the people.

What reason do you think they were poor?

Oh, they were poor because the earnings, not enough to live on well. For instance, as we travelled, which we did quite a bit, and I mean, in those days, not everybody went to Austria and Germany to, to compare things. My husband always asked "How much is the average earning?" "How much is this? How much does a tenant have to pay for a small flat? How much does potatoes and meat cost?" And he was always interested. He compared the different financial, or material conditions of the workmen of different countries, in the countries we travelled in, and he said, "They are, the Germans are better off than the Hungarian workmen," but it wasn't always the case, for instance, in Rumania, they saw that they are worse off than the Hungarian workmen, but it was just as an interested, he didn't, he wasn't a politician, and he didn't take part in any political Party. We had the right of, to, the right to vote, the Jews, but not, not women. Not only not Jewish women, it was very funny, because a woman had to be 30 and have two children.

End of F368 Side A

F368 Side B

Would you like to say anything about your brother and sister at home?

That my brother is 4½ years younger than I am, and that the difference in age makes a big difference in interest, as well, as boys grow, grow up later than girls. We didn't have an awful lot in common, he was Bar Mitzvahed, he was there, he had his Bar Mitzvah, and he had his friends, and it was different, the interest was different to mine, and I liked to go, I had many friends in my schooldays, and we went to theatres, we went to cinemas, and he was too young to do that, and my sister even more so, because my sister was more than 12 years younger than I was, so she was a little girl, a baby, her name was Baby always, even after she got married, even her husband called her Baby. She was not a Baby in any other sense, she was very intelligent, and she had her own mind in every way, but her name was Baby because she was very much younger than us, and all I, I did, was, was cuddling her, and spoiling her. She, she was a cheeky little thing, because when my husband started to court me, or wanted to court me, he had a boat, a rowing boat, it was very water conscious in ujbpest, because the Danube was very near, it was five minutes walk from, ten minutes walk from where we lived, and everybody went swimming in the summer, in the pool, in the open swimming pool, and both on the peninsula which was there, near us, and a rowing boat. And my husband, and he wanted to take me rowing, and I didn't want to go, I just didn't want to go, I didn't want to go with him, I thought, you know, I don't want to go. But she was always ready to go, my little sister, she was six years old then, and, and she said that, at the end when he actually proposed, and we got engaged, and she told him, aunts and friends, "Do you know, Gyula didn't want to marry Lily, he courted me." And eventually, she wanted to marry him, I don't mind, she was six years old then. And then, so, it, they didn't play a great part, my views, but at the school, from the school, and we had a dancing school, dancing classes, I should say, the gymnasium of girls and boys, united in these lessons, and I was never a good dancer, I had no sense of rhythm, and no sense of music, but I was quite, I quite enjoyed the classes, and had friends from there, and brothers had friends from school, mates, and we went everywhere, and I loved the theatre, and there were different actors and actresses, and dancers, who came to Budapest, and we had to see them all. We sometimes had good seats, sometimes we sat right on, on the top. I can't remember what the name of that seat is, but we saw Pavlova, we saw the the, everybody, French actors, from Russia,

Nijinsky?

Not from, Nijinsky as well, Nijinsky had a Hungarian wife, and what was the name of, Reinhardt, Reinhardt was later, I was already married when Reinhardt came with Konrad Feit, and played Jedermann, with the English duchess, the mother of Julian Norwich.

Duff Cooper? Lady Diana Cooper.

Lady Diana Cooper, that's right. Diana Cooper, yes, yes, she was there, and several, several French actors.

Was it Cocteau?

Also Cocteau was there, there was one who became a Nazi, sort of, I can't think of his name, and plays and played in them, he was a movie actor then, he collaborated with the Germans, and sort of disappeared, he said he didn't, he disappeared. Anyhow, we had to be everywhere, and this was, this went on when I got married, as well, but as a schoolgirl, I did all, we had to ask permission from the teacher to go and see this play, or that play.

Could I ask you what you did after you left school?

After I left school, and I couldn't go to University, I offered my services to my father, there was nothing much to do, and his office was in town, and he used to take me to town with him, and I worked in the office, a few hours, till, till lunch time. In those days, he used to come home for lunch, take me home, and then I didn't work any more.

What did you do in your free time in the afternoons?

There were, again, somewhere to go, something to see, swimming, or in the summer, or rowing, or went to each other's and had, there was similar to the Ladies' Guild, there was a Girls Guild.

What age were you when you left school?

When I left school I was 17. I finished school.

So that would be 1925? That would 1925 wouldn't it?

No, '28, and I, I wasn't, what's happened. What has happened, '26.

Yes, 1926.

Yes. And 18, I was in '26, yes. And there was this, this Girls' Guild or whatever, and they had coffee mornings, and, and not coffee mornings, they didn't have coffee mornings, tea parties, and social things, June it was, when we invited each other with boys.

Was this the normal way of life for a middle-class

Yes.

Well-to-do girl,

Yes, yes,

in the 1920s.

Yes, yes.

They didn't work very hard?

Not at all, very very few worked at all. Very few, because, also I don't know, there were maybe some who, who couldn't find jobs at all, I really don't know.

Was it socially acceptable for a well-to-do girl to work?

Yes. Yes. It, it was. That, I don't think it mattered in the least whether they worked or not. It was only, morale, they got on with friends and society, and boys, and this and that. I was never, I don't know, I maybe didn't have a lot of sex appeal, I didn't have many courtiers, but I had some friends, and I could have married others than my husband. I, when I, I knew my husband before it came to anything like seriousness, and he, he was 12 years older than I was, and he pulled my leg. He met me when I went to the Matura, the Bachelor's Examination, Baccalaureate examination, and he said he is coming, and I was quite, I said, "You can't come." He said, "Yes, they are public, and anybody can go there, you can ask." I did, and he was right. And I was quite worried that he is coming, because I didn't want him to come, I didn't want anybody, there was no strangers, and he didn't come. But this is how it sort of started between us. I thought that he is a decent man, and a good man, and that he really loves me. I thought somehow, that there will be nobody in my life who will love me as much, or more, than he does. And I got to, to first like him, and then love him, and, and I married him. I didn't realise it was a good match for me, but at that time, I didn't sort of realise, I thought it was just natural, why shouldn't I marry the best man that I could see around? There was somebody else who came, and who my father quite liked, and was in the trade in, in leather, and he used to come and I decided that I don't like him, and I came very near to him asking me to marry him, and I knew that he was coming, and I went from home, and I told my father, both my parents, that I am not interested in Sanyi at all, and I heard that he'd got a baby by a manicurist, anyhow, so that makes it even less, and you can tell him not to come again. My father liked him very much, but he accepted my judgement. I went out, and when I came back, he didn't come again. I met him, and we sort of were friendly, but I never ... and I married my husband, I lived a very happy

What age were you when you married?

I wasn't quite 19, I married in '28, not quite 20, when I married him, we married in August, and my birthday is on 1st October, so I wasn't far from 20. But in those days girls married early, now they marry later, but in those days they got married earlier. And I sort of, I, I, love to travel, it wasn't natural as it is today, I think girls go to Asia, Africa, and, never mind America, and all over Europe, in those days they didn't, and I told my husband-to-be, "Yes, but I want to travel. Our parents travelled twice a year on holidays." They went, one went to Abazzia (or Opatija) as it is, in the winter, and to Karlsbad (now called Karlovy Vary) in the summer, all Jews ate too much fat, and had trouble with their, their liver, and, and had to go there. I said, "I want to travel before something", and he said, "All right." My granddaughter asked me, "And what did he say?" And I said, "What else could he say? He said all right."

What was his job?

His job was, as a young man, he wanted to be a doctor, not a doctor, a surgeon, and he had, he was at University for two years. He wasn't accepted, he was "untauglich" you know what that means? That he is not fit, unfit, for, for military service then, but then he had to go back every year and they found him fit, and he started in this, so in 1916 when he got his training in Transylvania, he, he was in Transylvania, and then in Italy, and came back at times, because his father needed him. He had a workshop at, an engineers workshop, and he needed his help, and if you bought so much, work, War work, then you could have so much of your son's military time, they could have one month, or two month, or three month's vacancies. And he helped his father run that, and when the War ended, he knew more about the business side of the, of the business than his father did, and he persuaded him not to carry on, not to go back to University, but stay with him, and you know, he just told him, if everything goes all right, we'll get somebody and you can carry on. But this never came, and he stayed there, and helped to, to make the factory grow.

And what was the factory?

It was a machine, they made machines for, for, wood, woodworking machines for, how you call the people that make the furniture?

Furniture makers?

No, there is a different word.

Carpenters?

Carpenters, carpenters, and also for tanneries, that's how they got to know each other, came to, sold to my father, sold machines to my father, and then, so he stayed in that, and that's a different story. But his brother-in-law came, his sister's husband, into the factory, and they quarrelled, they quarrelled, and it wasn't very happy, and he was, he was well-off, and so were we, and we went to look for a house for us to live in, which we found, and for which my father paid, and I, they paid for the furniture, and trousseau, which I got, but so many girls of my standard, received money on top of it, but I didn't, and my husband didn't want any, didn't ask for any, we had plenty to live on, and to, and he wasn't interested in nothing, he wanted me, and it, it was very, we were very happy together. We had some differences at times, and we had quarrels, even, but nothing lasted for three days, ever. We had something, we, we made up quickly, you know. So we agreed that we won't want children, because there was a friend who had, a couple, and we knew about, who had two children, and they both, they were little, and I thought it would be unbearable, if we don't get on, if we don't be happy together, and have children, and want a divorce, so we agreed that we won't have any children for two years, till we know that we get on. It was my bright idea. But it didn't last for two years us, for us to find out that we want to live together, that we love each other, and that we want to live together, and want children, and it didn't happen right away, and very upset, so specially, Stan once said, "You have more than you want, don't be impatient." And then after two years, George arrived. We were married '28, August, and he arrived in '30, October, and I never forget, I never felt so happy. I never knew that I'm very lucky and that I'm very happy and everything is wonderful, than when I first pushed the pram with my son. I thought, "Look at me. Aren't I lucky. Here I am, I have a beautiful son, little boy. I am all

right. My husband is all right. The sun shines. I am very lucky." That never never happened before, and not really either, because I never had so much reason to be consciously happy. Also because when I was expecting, my husband kept saying, "My son will come in October. I want a boy." And I said, "Please, don't say it so often, a son, because I am getting so worried, and what if it will be a girl. How do you know?" "Of course it won't make any difference", he said, "and if it's a girl, what difference does it make?" I said, "But I can't" "But you'll see, it will be a boy", he said. It was, I was happy and we were separately happy, and everything was all right, and up till then, up till I, I had my son, I kept a Kosher house, but then I found it too complicated, too difficult and I gave up being Kosher, but I lit the candles, and I did ... my husband came from a less religious family, really, but he used to go, to Synagogue, and he knew all the prayers, and everything, he was a well-educated man, in Jewish things as well, and so, it, it was all right, and, and we were, we were very happy and there was nothing, no, no unhappiness or anything in, in our marriage. Then when the, the one Jewish law came after the other, that made us worried. My brother, he foresaw things, and he decided that he wanted to come to England. My father exported to England, and had a sole agent at the Tannery, sole agent, for England, and he got the information from him, and he persuaded him as well, and there were development areas in England at the time, partly with the people in the development areas, partly to provide the material that is necessary for the people of England, and for the British Army, that will not be imported, because of, if a War breaks out, to have it made in England, and one of those development areas was Cumberland, Cumberland, and my brother got into, in touch with the Secretary of that area, and with the help of the Sole Agent, who later became my husband, my second husband, to start a tannery there, and as my husband knew a lot about the machines, because they made it, and he even sent some, exported some to England, to, before him, we came in '38 to England, and it was my first visit to England, and went up to Cumberland and saw all the things, and taught him, and he helped him, and it came up that Hitler, there will be a War, and Hitler will be in Hungary as well, that we should leave Hungary. We even met somebody who my husband could have found a business, for nearly, those Dr. Scholls, he could have been Dr. Scholls agent in England, and got a return Visa to England, with the children. But when we went back home, my father-in-law wouldn't let him, not let him, but persuaded him, he told him, "If you want to leave me alone here ...". So we didn't come, we stayed, that's how we stayed in, in Hungary. It was stupid, and it was too optimistic, but as my husband's brother, he died of cancer in 1941, and my father-in-law, during an operation in '42, I don't think he would have forgiven himself, ever, that he left them. And that we survived maybe, it was better to stay there, to terminate, the terrible strain and ..... The, we did the best we could.

Could you describe how things developed at that point?

It was, new Jewish Laws came in, that only 20% of the workers in, in white-collar workers, could be Jewish, and it was thought to be by the Christians, very fair, because only 5% of the population, of Hungary, the Jewish, that they allowed 20% to be in white-collar workers, and some businesses had to have a part-owner in, in their business, and they were called "Ornamental Boy", those who just were there, they didn't work there, they gave their name, and took a salary, all businesses had to have, not had to, but had it as prophylactic and there were many Boys who had made the Baccalaureate, finished the schooling, they didn't know what to do, they had to go, and they didn't learn to become engineers or smiths, locksmiths, or anything like that, but, or turners, there were turners in our factory, and my husband knew a lot of parents who had boys of 18, 17, 18, and he took on IO apprentices, to be turners, or locksmiths, or engineers, not, without Diploma. In English, Engineers means who has the hammer in his hand, and that was because it wasn't an easy art, easy trade, and it was well-paid. It was the, on top of the workers, and later, a few months later, we, when the War was on already, there was a high, high ranking Officer who was sent into the factories who provided the Army with anything, whatever, they provided with tool machines, not machine tools, machines, and somebody, and he was there, and we supervised, and it was, it was quite friendly towards my husband, and then somebody, a workman, who must have been a big anti-Semite, said that, "There are IO Jewish boys, apprentices in the factory." Yes, I should say as well, if you had the Bashul, then you only had to serve apprenticeship for one year, if you didn't, you had to have, serve three years, but these only one year, and they could earn something, and make use of it, and work like engineers, and earn good money. So this officer ...

End of F368 Side B

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Could you tell us about the increasing tensions in the late 1930s?

Of course, the tension increased, but it, it only increased, it was always there, so we didn't think, and one always believes what one wants to believe, what one hopes to be true. We didn't accept that the fact, that what Hitler does, if he really does it, what you read in the paper, it's surely an exaggeration.

What did you read?

That he didn't mix differences, and all the differences between Jews and non-Jews, and so what? It won't last long, it won't last forever, the Germans won't allow him, they can't, they are a people of culture, and right, there is jurisdiction there, and they won't let him do what he fancies to do, it won't last, it can't, it's impossible. And, the things we had read, we accepted, but it was in small letters, and it, it won't affect us, we thought, in any case. They brought Jewish Laws, but what can we do? We couldn't emigrate, we can't, we have to do, to suffer and then it will be all right. And I never forget the Rabbis, one, one sermon of a Rabbi, who said that, "It is in the Bible", I don't know where, "That when there is a storm, you should go and take shelter and keep quiet. Not to do anything, because you can't fight the storm, and the storm will settle, and then you can go out and repair the damage of the storm." And people who were in the Army, because quite early they put them in the Army, it wasn't the Army, it was a Jewish Army, they had to, they worked only, they didn't have guns or ammunition, or anything like the others, but they were taken, and, well, we thought it's even better, they don't have to fight if they are not in the front line, it's, it's not so bad, it will be better, we thought. But there were things that affected us, for instance, not all Jewish children, a certain, in the gymnasiums, first we heard that they couldn't go to University, that happened a long time ago, but now it was that they only accepted 10% of the students to be Jewish, and I wasn't very worried about George because he was a very good student, he had very good marks, they both went to a Jewish School, Jewish Elementary School, and the competition, we thought, was big enough, and they got good marks, so it's all right. If all this, we were not always conceited Jews, we thought we can compete with, with any others, it will be all right. And when I went with him to, to register, the, he had to pass an exam, a written exam, and, and examined in words, and there was one teacher, he taught my husband, he went to the same school before, and he went to him, and he said, "Jula, I am so sorry, I am so ashamed of myself, that we have to examine your son, to, whether he's fit to attend our school, instead of being proud that he comes to our school. I can't tell you, and I'm not alone." That's what he said. But still, he stood up to the exam, and he passed the exam, and was accepted, and he went there from 1940 till '44. Till March, till the Germans came in. And so was my daughter, Julie, later, she was accepted in the same school as I went to, and they were both at school, with Jewish friends, and non-Jewish friends as well. I always, we had a big garden, and I always liked children to come to me, come to our garden. They were not all Jewish, the boys and girls who came, friends at school, but I always felt safer if they are in, in our house, than if I have to worry what they doing, on the other hand, I didn't have to worry when they went to school, that I had to take them, or anybody had to go with them, because it was safe, it was, and this time, Jewishness didn't come into it, they didn't only attack Jewish children, and there was no danger of misguiding them, or taking them, or hurting them, Jews or non-Jews, either. I remember when Judy went to the school first, and we showed George how to take her, and to look left, and right, and left again, and then go quickly across the road. And go to the school and not, if there is an old man who wants to speak to you, "Sorry, we go because we have to go to school, we will be late." Eight, it was around that time. I, I think, I hope they had a happy childhood. There was never anything awry or wrong. I couldn't, I, I maybe quarrelled with my children, and tried to discipline them, but I never had the same authority as their father had! I remember once, he, they did something naughty, I don't know what it was, and I wanted to prevent him maybe even smacking, and he ran into the bathroom, and didn't lock the door, he went and stood next to the bath tub, and I wanted to go in, to catch him, and he put the shower, the hand shower against me, and keep showering me with water. And I said, "Put it down", and it he wouldn't. I had to phone his father. It lasted about half an hour, or longer, and I couldn't get on with him, and phoned for his father. And he came, opened the door, and he said, "What is it? What's happening here? Will you come out right away?" And he put the shower down, and he came out, I couldn't, I couldn't actually deal with him, and ran after him, and was smaller, and I said, "You can't get anything else, till you've finished to, till you've eaten this eat", or this vegetable. "You must eat", and he wouldn't. He got up, "I said I didn't want anything." And he didn't have anything. The next day, I went up, and I told him, we should give him something to eat.

Breakfast. He wouldn't accept it, because Mummy said no. So I had, when I came home and they told me, I had to quarrel, I had to tell him then, if you, "Today is a new day, and if you want it, you can have your breakfast, the next time you will eat your portion."

Did you have a house or a flat?

A house at this time, we had a house.

Was that quite common for people who were well-to-do?

Oh yes, yes, in Ujpest, in, in Budapest, they lived in flats, they, they lived quite, and very elegant, and on the other hand, it was very expensive to live on the here, as it was called, Rózsadomb in Hungarian. They had very expensive houses there, but also mostly two living in, in one, one room only. By that time, my parents move to Budapest, because they lived in Budapest, and lived in a very elegant part of Budapest, not on, not in Buda Budapest, not on Rose Hill, in a part of Budapest that was near the Liget, which was like Hyde Park, and near my father's office.

And how many people did you have helping around the house?

I had two girls living in, and I also had one woman who came, who worked in the factory, but who came to help cleaning, and a gardener, sort of, and a street sweeper, who came in to do the garden. Oh yes, I must say something, we had twice a week, sometimes only once a week, a boy, an office boy from the factory, to help me to take the vegetables and fruit home from the market. It was generally done at factories, in small workshops, employed apprentices for not teaching them, not for the work that they were there to learn, but used them as, as office boys, to send them out with letters or, or bring things in, and would send them, or use them to go to the market. It never happened, never, never, in my husband's factory. There were always two or three boys who were employed, they didn't get a lot of salary, but more than the apprentices, of course, and they did this kind of jobs, as I had one to go with me, help me to do my shopping, and some delivering letters, and they had to be signed, the letters, or taking some, not, lightweight things, if it was heavy then it was sent by lorry to certain places, which is, how should I say? I say this, because it was an honest thing to do, and they always treated their workmen fairly, and people paid for that, because I moved in, and we were in the Jewish, had to move into a Jewish house, I moved into my mother-in-law's house, which was on the premises of the factory.

You mean you were forcibly moved?

Forcibly moved.

Was that after the War started?

Oh much, in 1944, only when the Germans came into Hungary, that was only then.

Could we just go back to 1938. Were you thinking that the War would happen at that point?

We thought that it might, yes, we thought that it might, but not enough that we, we, I didn't insist that my, that we should move to England, that my, my husband, although my parents were in England at the time, with my sister, and my mother wanted to come back, and came back for my sake, for our sake. She couldn't bear the idea that we would suffer in Hungary, and they will do well in England. And they nearly, they paid with their lives.

So could you describe what happened when War broke out?

When War broke out, it was that we had to go to the, to the cellars, but it wasn't, it didn't make as big a difference, as before, for Jews, I mean. It wasn't, how should I say, business was maybe even better, because the Army needed things, and they paid, I don't say they overpaid, but the factory could go on.

What about Kristallnacht, did they have one?

No. No. No. We didn't know anything then about Kristallnacht, anyhow, we didn't. We were so stupid, we had a friend, for instance, this was also later, who's family, they came from Slovakia, and he had a brother in, in Slovakia, and two girls, two daughters of the brother, appeared once at his house, he said, in the middle of the night, ringing, and they came because they don't know, Army, or private people came, and took the parents, and wanted to take them, and they hid in the, the bird's nest, or in the stables, or somewhere, completely, they did not see them, and when darkness came, they started to walk, and walk, and hid in different places, and eventually came to Budapest, Ujpest, rather, and were there, and then we said, and it's all right and everything, Slovakia is (incomp), and Hitler is there, and it's very bad, and my husband told them, "Well, maybe we should hide as well." He said, "Don't worry." He was a friend, and a Jew, and "Don't worry, not yet. When the time comes to hide, I let you know." We finished in Auschwitz. He didn't. I don't, I don't know why, experience should have told us that things are going to be bad, but we, but why did not your parents come to England? Why did they send you alone? They could have come from Prague.

They were booked to come.

They were booked?

When War broke out first.

They could have come a few weeks before that.

They weren't allowed.

They were not allowed. I thought everybody was allowed to come from,

No, no, it was extremely difficult to get out.

To get out from Czechoslovakia?

Yes, extremely.

Oh. I didn't know.

When did you first hear about the concentration camps? Did you hear early?

No. I knew when they came for us, when they took us, on the 1st July, we knew about the wagons.

Which year did they come?

1944.

So what happened between 1939 and 1944 to you?

We, not much, not much really, because, wel, '44, only when the Germans came in, in March the Germans came in, that's when changes came in. That's when changes came.

Hungary was left in peace until 1944?

Left in peace, yes, yes. And my husband went to Leipzig every year, to the Leipziger Messe, it was a very important Fair for machinery. They sometimes, he went with a chief engineer, and they made the design of the different machines that would be of interest to us. And he was there when the Germans marched in. In '38, I think that was 13th March. It was frightening. It was, ...

Was he there?

This was in '38, but they marched in, what was the German Chancellor's name? But, well, it happened in Austria, you know, it didn't happen in Hungary, and in Hungary, it won't happen, no, it can't.

How did you know of the progress of the War in those years?

Of the progress of the War, we knew something because we were listening to the BBC, and my brother-in-law was very ill, and had an operation in 1941, I remember, I can't remember, except the, and we called the BBC as, the Vitamin C, we lived on it, it made us lively, and I went to see everybody. Every day he had one member of the family staying with his wife, his sister, and he asked for me, and I went there, and I stayed with him, and the professor, the surgeon came to see him. "Well, how are you today?" "Oh, I'm fine today, because I've, my, this is my sister-in-law, and she brought me Jewish vitamins." And he said, "What are you taking?" He didn't know what it was. "Oh a special, I brought him what his mother made and it is, you know, Jewish, I said, his mother makes a special vitamin." And they didn't know, but really it's done that.

So you heard progress of the War through the BBC?

The BBC.

What did you hear of what was happening to Jews in the rest of Europe?

Very little. Very little. And even when they took me, when they had taken us from our homes, and into the wagons, into the concentration camp, of, of a brick factory, I knew that they take me to forced labour work, what else? What else do they want to do with me? We have to work, and when they said, "Take everything that you want, and that you will need, but only as much as you can carry on your back", we took blankets, and food. What food? "Well, you can take bread, and that, maybe." "Oh, I take beans, dried beans, that's very good, it's very nourishing." But where can you cook those things. They advised us to take

Had you seen other people taken away before they came for you?

No. No. Also, because they, they were in the factory, surrounded by, we had a gardener there, and workshops.

But you had been taken away from your home by then?

Not taken away from my home. We were given, I think, four or five hours, to clear our house, and we took some furniture.

What reason did they give you?

Well, Jews are not allowed to, Jews have to be concentrated in Jewish houses, and Jewish houses are all on the side of the Danube, because it was, War was on, and they're going to bomb the factories. They didn't say, they gave credit to the Allies, they didn't say they will bomb the population, that they will bomb the houses, they will bomb the factories, and that's why we should be there, the danger is, they should bombard.

Did you have a sense of fear by this time?

Yes. Yes. When we knew that we, when they took, because they took my husband first. My husband wasn't at home when we had to leave our, our house. I started saying the prayer of Hash Kiveden which is, "God help us not to suffer from hunger. God help us to have a roof over our head. Save our lives." I haven't got the prayer book in front of me. And we said it. People say it today in Friday evening prayers, but they hardly know what they're saying, but then, every word meant what it said, what it was written, they felt we wanted not to suffer hunger, we wanted to have a roof over our head, not to be, not to be our enemies, to suffer from our enemies, and then we felt fear, yes, yes.

And when you were made to move from your house, did you realise then what a huge disruption it was?

Yes. Yes. Yes. We did, of course we did. My husband, I must tell you, and something else about my husband. I said that, you know, that he, he treated the workman as people, as you wanted to be

treated yourself, I suppose, I hope, that when they took us from the house, there were children on streets, calling out "Dirty Jew", and "Smelly Jew", and "Jews are all this and that." There was nobody, not one workman out of the workshop, nobody looking at us jeering, or, or saying anything. We went out with our (incomprehensible words) against the workmen, the workmen showing anything against us. It was, I felt it was repaid, and while we were waiting in front of the factory gates, these others, I thought, "I have bran and I have beans here, and I have nothing of bread", and there was a little boy there, on the street, and I called him, and I said, "Go into the office, and ask who the boss is, and ask 20 pengös from him, and say that I asked you, it is for me. There is enough they can give from what we left there. And then you go to the baker, and buy two loaves of bread, and a kilo of cherries." Because I thought it was really important, because we have to work there, and the children should be strong. They were, they take us to work, I didn't know anything of the concentration camp. On the contrary, later, when they took us to Vorzugslager, I, I mention it, I've got it all written down, then when they told about the gas chambers, I couldn't believe it. It was the first time in the middle of July, 1944, that I heard about it. I didn't, I didn't hear about it before. I must tell a story against, for my husband, who was in a slave labour camp, in a gas, coke, coke factory.

How long before you, was he taken away?

I don't know the exact time, I suppose in March, and we were on the 1st July.

Did you know where he'd gone?

No. No. But he came back, I don't know what the reason was that, the factory asked him home, or something like that. He came back for a day's leave. One night, a day, and the next morning. And the most of the men, or all of the men, or most of the men were there, from Ujpest, and he had a list, he brought a list of the men who worked there, who asked him to contact their families, and tell them that they are all right, and tell the men how their families were. And he went, and he had all the addresses, but all the addresses were wrong, because by that time, Jews had to move into Jewish houses, and they were not to be found, and not, so many didn't know where the other was taken to, and he spent the whole time, the whole day, looking for them. And I said, "Jula, you don't have to do this. You are home, and I want to have, we want to have a bit of you. Let me, give me the list, and I find out where they are, and I tell them that their husbands are all right, and what they're doing and how, how it is." And he said, "What do you mean? You can do it? I came to see them, I promised the husbands that I'm going to tell them how the family is. How can I leave it to you. I didn't come for a home leave." And he went on, and looked up everybody. And after that, one Jewish woman told me, "Do you know, it was very nice of Mr. Donáth to look up everybody. It's said that he didn't miss anybody." And I said, "There is a saying, a Hungarian saying, 'A gentleman is a gentleman even in Hell.'"

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But I must say now, that Mr. Donáth is a gentleman, even in the ghetto, which I feel, was one of the greatest honours we could have had. Yet, we were not allowed to go out, I think between, not after 4, only certain hours, I can't remember how long we were allowed to be outside. We had to wear the yellow stars, and, and if we used, we could have used the trams, of course, we couldn't use cars or private transport at all. And we had to be a certain compartment of the tram, or bus, we were allowed to use the bus, I'm not sure of that. But we managed to do our shopping during that time, and we were only allowed to use, to have Jewish employees in the house, only, only Jews were allowed in there. And soon after the German Occupation we had a room, requisitioned for two German soldiers, and our nursery was large, was the largest room in the house, and it had a corridor to connect it to the bathroom, only Judy lived in it at the time, and we had a Jewish nanny, who was cooking and housework, or what she could, and we did it together. And the two German soldiers were very decent, very good, we, I put a bottle of liquer on, and a bottle of rum and glasses on the table, there was a handbasin in it, but the loo and bathtub was off the corridor, off that room, and they said they don't want to use our loo, there is a loo outside, they can use they, and they can have their bath in their offices, where everybody else had it, and don't worry, we don't want use it. They behaved really wonderfully with us, and once we invited them, not for a meal, because they didn't want a meal, but for a drink, and talk, and they reinvited us, and when we were with them, in their room, they showed us, we showed them pictures in our room, a few days before, and they showed us pictures that they had with them, and at that time, the news from Germany were not very good. The Allied had managed to bomb, I don't know which town from which they came, and one of them showed, they showed pictures, and one showed his father's picture. He was in uniform, and that young man, and I said it sort of jokingly, "You must have another picture of your father, why don't you show it?" He is a very young man, this is a very young man. He said, "No, I haven't got another picture of my father" and he stayed a very young man, and he was killed in the War, and here am I, and I ask why, "Ich bin da und frage warum?" which I thought, went very deep, and was very understanding towards us. It never came into question, "Jews, or why Jews?" Of course, I didn't ask them, but they were very very decent, and stayed there till they had to move out. .... And he had to go back. But before, before he was taken to the slave labour, he had to go to the slave labour Camp. My sister was engaged, and as things were, they said that they want to get married quickly. And they got married on 6th May, and

In 1944?

1944, and at that time, only workers, Jewish, could use the tram, not even during the time, the things went gradually worse. My husband, he was employed by the factory, by his own factory, and I asked to be taken on as an employee. And I had a little certificate, that I am employed by the factory. And we went to the station where, the bus station, where the bus went from, started from, in Ujpest, there was no bus for Jews who did not work. We got the tram. So I could go in the tram, because I wanted to be at my sister's wedding. She, I must be there, and my mother didn't go because she couldn't, wasn't allowed to, to go, and I went with my husband. He will bear witness on the wedding, and an uncle of my brother-in-law to be, his uncle, will be the other witness, and we arrived there, to the Town Hall, to the wedding, and the uncle wasn't there. He couldn't get there, so I was the witness, and I went to my mother's then, we went and had a quick lunch there, and went home, that was the, the big wedding, I had a huge big wedding with the synagogue and cars, and wedding dress and whatnot, and they had a wedding, and it turned out that he, he was not there, he wanted to walk and he couldn't walk to the wedding, the uncle of my brother-in-law. And this was before my husband was taken to the slave labour Camp. They fed them there, and my husband was always very fussy, he was very clean, his face washed, he, he would have been a good surgeon, because when he washed his hands, he always used the nail brush, and soaped it twice, and he said, "It's sterile clean. My hands are sterile clean." And there things were not very clean, and he complained that it's not clean. And he had two cousins there, and I asked one day, they were there as well, "Is it so dirty?" "Ah, he's too fussy, it's not clean, but it's not too dirty, no, it's not too ..." And I think, because he thought it wasn't clean enough, that he became ill, he got coli bacteria infection, and eventually that killed him. So, at that time, he only complained about things being dirty.

Which slave labour Camp was it?

It was a local, not a Camp as such, they had to work in the, a coke factory, they made coke out of coal, well, it was a mine, it was a mine, I suppose, I'm sure. It was a mine, and they had to shovel the coal in, in to burn, and make coke of it, and do things like that. It wasn't, and they needed a lot of, of men, to do it. They had to save electricity so, and the Jewish men had to do it all by hand, and also many of the workmen went, the non-Jewish workmen were in the Army, went to the Front, and to fight. The Jews, they could not trust them, and they were doing that kind of job. And that also made me think, when we were taken, that if we work, we will have to work in factories or on fields, or whatever, but why do they kill us? They need working hands, they won't kill us, and I was so afraid, and I was so happy that both my children are big enough to work, so they will work.

How old were they when you came away?

George was nearly 14, and Judy was, well, 12. And I, I thought that they, they will work, they will be able to work.

Can you describe the journey?

Which journey?

The journey to the work camp, that you did.

We didn't do any journey to any work camp. It, so we lived in my mother-in-law's house, with my sister-in-law, and she had a Jewish housekeeper, who, who did the cooking for her, even before we went to live there, and I heard about the Concentration, that they will take the Jews away, and our caretaker, in our house, where we lived originally, I got into contact with. I gave him money, and I asked him to speak to a peasant who brings in vegetables, or fruit, or, or something to the market, to come to fetch us, two evenings before they took us from our homes, and take us as, to the country, to their house, and keep us there, as evacuees, and we were sitting in the porter's room, waiting, and going out and seeing whether the, either lorry or car has arrived, and it never did. The caretaker was, kept the money and didn't send anybody. And my mother, my sister-in-law was very cross with us, that we wanted to escape, which was true, but I couldn't have taken her and my mother-in-law with me, and, and this housekeeper, it, it wasn't, it wasn't possible. I don't know how we would have fared like that, the peasant maybe would have taken us to the Police Station right away, but promised a lot of money, I thought we had, but I, I paid that man in advance, and well, he didn't come. So we went back and into ... the Police came, not Police, Gendarmes, two men came and said to pack our things and go. I managed to phone my parents and tell them that we're going, we were very upset and that, but we went. We went to, where they took us, to a railway line, and there were the wagons waiting for us, they were cattle wagons, and they put 80 people into the one wagon. And next to us, there was a, an old lady, whom I knew very well, who was a very good woman, religious, not Orthodox, religious, and kind, and had trouble, she also lost her daughter, and she brought up a grandson. Lost her husband, lost her son, had another daughter, and she sat down at the corner of the wagon, and started to sing a prayer, some song, and you know, so many joined her in the prayer, in the song. We were in the wagon next to it, and were taken into a brick factory. They, we were told afterwards the brick factory suited Hitler, he thought it's a very good idea to put the Jews into the brick factories, there is space for them, but there is no opportunity, they can't keep clean, they can't look after them, they will be as dirty as they should, they belong to dirt, so it's all right. And it was also very good, because there were railway lines that went right into the factory, and they could take us into the factory, it had huge big grounds. They could take us there, and take away, take us away from there. And we went there, and there was enough room in, on the roof, it was 1st July, it was not cold, but we couldn't cook, we had beans, dried beans, which we couldn't cook, and I said, "Even in my waste-paper basket, if I only had the paper we have in the waste-paper basket it would be nice", but we didn't. In one corner, I had an old friend who knew that her husband died in the Concentration Camp. They both were medical chemists. They had a shop and she had a little daughter, and her widowed mother, and they took poison, and they died there. They were very upset about it. And I met my aunt, I met, met many relatives there, and that was it.

What did your children do in the brick factory? Did they work?

Nothing, you couldn't work, there was no work, nobody worked there, the brick factory was fenced, as a factory, it was just used as a concentration camp, for the time being, till they send us to different places. They had the, the men had to dig loos, which was a long hollow,

Trenches?

Trenches, yes, and to a long long one, and from each side you had to queue to get in. And people were sitting on, on the ground, and the hole was behind them, a long hole. One side men, the other side women, waiting to get in, not in, but to get down. And in the middle they met, you know, it was like that. And in the middle there was one woman, one man, you know, just like that. It, there, there it was terrible, but I still hoped that we will work. And I didn't know how my mother-in-law is going to get on, and don't worry, there are the three of us to work, and Asti, she was my, Esther, she was my sister-in-law, she will do something, we'll see, don't worry, it won't be so bad.

Did they let you keep your ordinary clothes in this Camp?

Oh yes, yes. And we didn't have much clothes with us, but yes. We were there from 1st-6th, and there was one tap, somewhere far away from where we were, and I went to fetch a bucket of water for us to drink, not to wash, to drink, and it took a long time to get there, and back, and queued, and when I came back, they said, that my husband's name was called, that's his name, Judy said, and we have to be, he should be in front of the office tomorrow morning, I don't know, at 9, we didn't have watches, and family. So it was my mother-in-law, my sister-in-law and my children, because my husband wasn't there. And I invited the housekeeper, the Jewish woman of my mother-in-law, but she wouldn't come, because she has her sister here, and she'll be with her, be with her sister, so I was very sorry I didn't take any children of my cousins, because when I arrived there, I met somebody who had two children, who were not her own, and we were there, and a lorry came, we all had to get on, and we were taken back to Budapest, into a School, which was the school of the Jewish deaf and dumb, and we were settled there. There were so many coming and going, so near to each other, making so much noise, I thought, I didn't know how Hell is, but I'm sure I know what it is, that it is, it is too many, it was worse than the brick factory. Because at the brick factory we were sort of divided, we were not crowded. But I must say something, before we left the brick factory, the wagons were already there, we saw it, and saw an old friend of my husband, not a near friend, a business friend. He was a very witty very nice man, very short-sighted, strong beard, and he was also a tanner, and they had to, they, they had put steps next to the wagons, and we had to go up, and one woman, an elderly woman, I take it, couldn't go quickly, and the Gendarme shouted and pushed her, "Hurry up. I don't, don't do it, what are you playing about?" And this man said, "What are you doing? She's an old woman, can't you see, she can't do it quickly. Why do you push her?" He was shot there and then, right away. We saw him being shot. So we had some idea of what we, what we were going, but we didn't know where we were going to, and on the, this was on 7th July, and when we got there, into the school, I told my daughter, Judy, "This is your birthday present", she was born on 9th July, and "it's a salvation, we are saved, because of you, for your sake. It's wonderful." And then a different life started. But before I go through that, I want to mention something that happened on the first day of the War. We didn't know that War was going to break out, and made fruit preserves for, for the winter, and we had, this was September, peaches, and peaches we usually put through sulphur to keep it white, and we did it outside, in the garden, and there was a tap, water tap, so that we could do it, and the smell stayed away from the house, and wash it right away, and Judy was at home as well, and at the same time, I was working, I was doing this, but at the same time, I wanted to hear the news, and I brought the radio out to listen to it, and she, she was a little girl in, in '39, she was 7, and she heard Hitler's voice, and she understood German, but she couldn't have understood the meaning of what he said, but the voice, and one or two words, she started, that little child, started to cry, and couldn't stop crying. I, you know, I started to cry then as well, but I didn't start, she started crying, from the voice, from the attitude of the thing. And it was terrible, but I want to mention something else as well. I had an Austrian at first, with the children, to learn German, and my brother was, studied in Germany, beforehand, he came to us once, and there was this girl from Corinthia, and she sang well, she sang always, I didn't know the tunes, I didn't know what she was singing, and my brother said, he was a young man then, "Do you know what she is singing? She sings the 'Horst Wessel Lied'". "Oh", I said, "she wouldn't. Don't say." "I know it." So I asked her, "What were you singing?" She was quite embarrassed, "Am I not allowed to sing this?" And I said, "Of course you are allowed, you sing what you want, but I wanted

to, I just wondered whether this is the 'Horst Wessel Lied'." "Yes, it is, it is." And I got rid of her, but not because of that.

Was your daughter able to tell you what she heard when Hitler,

No, I heard it as well.

Oh you,

Oh yes, yes, I understood it more than she did. You know, I very often thought that I would like to have the, the exact copy of that speech.

Who was Hitler addressing that day, do you know?

The German people, I remember.

Do you remember any of what he was saying?

No, no, no. I don't think he mentioned Jews, as such, but maybe, maybe he did. It was, but she heard, the child heard, at that time we were already speaking, before the War, we were already speaking about it.

Did you find it frightening too, when you heard his speech?

Yes. Yes.

It was very threatening was it?

Yes. It was very threatening, it was very threatening. But I should also say, that the Jewish Vitamins, was a very good, in a way, it was encouraging, but it never did ever, never never mention, not that I know of, the threat, what's happening to the Jews. They didn't say, "Be careful," or "Hide", or "Go away", or anything like that. They arrived concentration camps, they never never said that.

Do you feel they should have done?

I do, yes, yes. Because I, I wasn't illiterate, I wasn't uninterested, I read the newspaper, there were never articles with capital letters, what he did with the Jews, no, no, and I knew, I believed, I was sure, you know, not that I had any doubts, that I am going to have to work, and I will have to work very hard and maybe very little food, but I will survive. I never never thought that there are gas chambers, that they take them to gas chambers, and use them for nothing, but to satisfy their sadistic feelings, their inclinations I never thought of that. I, it's, it's very difficult to believe, and I, I see it. Last night I looked at the film, Remembrance. I don't believe that it is right, I don't know, they show people being taken and, and they had such a gay, not gay, that word now is not used for that purpose today! Eve, the Shabbath evening, that they sang and, and you know. It,

When did you learn,

It is very, very, very true that you ...

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September 25th 1989.

We had to go and meet all of the families, who's names were mentioned the previous day, in front of the office, where the SS and the Gendarmes were. I took my mother-in-law, my sister-in-law, and, of course, my two children, with me, and I was very surprised to see that some, whom I knew, took friends children with them, and I didn't take anybody of my family, children of my, children of my cousin, or near friends. I didn't think of it, or wouldn't have dared to do it. Anyhow, we were put on a lorry and taken into Budapest to the Institute, to the Jewish Institute of the Deaf and Dumb. There were some people there already. Some slept in the school itself, and they built shelters in the courtyard of the school. When this was already built, after a couple of days, it wasn't bad, because everybody had a place to sleep on, and one had the family next to one, but beforehand, it was terrible, the crowd, and people next to one another, pushing and pulling, everybody excited, and I knew then what Hell was like. I thought Hell must be where it's crowded, I thought the pictures I saw of the Renaissance painters were right, because this is Hell. But later on, it, it wasn't Hell any more, because it wasn't so crowded, and I got used to it. I was proved right, that one can get used to everything. We slept together, and we washed separately, there were the washrooms, there were showers where we could keep ourselves clean, but they cooked for us, all together, and there were queues waiting for the food to be distributed. We had an advantage because the family of those men who worked, who worked in the, on, in the garden, or peeling potatoes, doing some useful work, or cleaning the rooms for the Gendarmes, they had the advantage of getting their food first. And my son George who was nearly 14, went as a 16 year old man, to work, and that way, it was very good, we had our meals first, with those other families. When we, we spoke about the future, we avoided that they take people to Auschwitz and kill them in gas chambers. I was very surprised to hear it. I didn't believe it at the beginning, I couldn't imagine it being true. We were against, we Jews were against the Germans, of course, because we read about it. We read about what they did in Germany, and we thought we're going to be taken into slave labour camps maybe, that we will have to work hard, but not that they will want to kill us. The Germans, when they came into Hungary, in March 1944, came as Allies to Hungary, to Horthy's Government, and only the Jews were upset, the others were not. They, they liked the Germans, and when we saw them stopping in front of houses, we saw women going out and taking food for them, taking bottles, different drinks to them, and hugging them, enjoying that they are there.

Could you explain why they were so welcome? Was it that Horthy's Government had reached an agreement with Hitler, or what?

Horthy's Government must have reached an agreement with them, I don't, don't remember exactly that this, of this agreement, but it was, they were not against them at all.

Why would they have been so welcome, do you think?

Because also, partly, because they were against the Russians at that time, and the British and the Americans were very popular in Hungary in general, but they were too far away to defend us.

Did you feel threatened by Russia at that time?

We personally did not, because we would, I mean, Jews, we would have preferred to have the Russians then, to the Germans, but the rest of the population wasn't, and the Russians were considered very low class, and, and the wrong people to be Allied with. Also because Hungary tasted Communism in 1918, and didn't like it, and there were many Jews amongst them, and Horthy came, and changed the, the Jewish Communism, which it was called then, into a White, for us White Terror. For us the Red Terror changed into White Terror only, but for the rest of the population, it was right. Even the, the working class people liked the Germans.

Did they come as conquerors, or why would they enter at all, to run the country for the Hungarians?

I don't think they came as conquerors, they were quite diplomatic, they were, they were very friendly, even to Jews, who were, were not showing anything against them. They, in our town, in Ujhpest, we

heard about Jewish families, well-to-do Jewish families, being robbed during the night by Germans and the Hungarians, who were their enemies, to whom they did something wrong, or who didn't treat their employees properly. I am proud to say that didn't happen to us. We were not attacked by, by Germans or robbed by Germans at all. We only had to do what was prescribed, or what was the Law then, for everybody. We, going back to Colombus ucca which was the deaf and dumb school, it, it wasn't bad apart from, it was a, apart from that we were closed in. We had even visitors, you know, from the factory, and I heard about my husband, that he was all right. And there was the Chairman of the Zionist Society, Otto Komoly who was a wonderful man, who explained the Zionism, and explained how we can avoid death, we will get to Israel. We felt we achieve our aim, and there will be a Jewish country, and we will be saved. Unfortunately, he used a wonderful expression, "The reservoir of the Jewish people is in ruins now. The reservoir is Poland or was Poland, but we have to keep Jewish, and we have to, to fight the way we can, to keep our lives." It was just the contrary to what our Rabbi said. I remember he said, he quoted the Bible, where it says, "When there is a storm, don't go out, stay hide, stay covered, under cover", and that meant we shouldn't do anything against the Germans or against anything, we should stay in our homes, which was, of course, the wrong advice, and I saw him in the brick factory, and he was taken to Auschwitz, with his family and never saw again.

How many people were in the deaf and dumb school, approximately, do you think?

I don't know, but thousands. There were some from Budapest, there were some from the side of the Danube towards Austria, which is, was called Dunántúl, there were some Rabbis, there were some very nice Rabbis, but there was a Rabbizen who pinched my little towel, that you wash with, from, I left it in the shower room, and it disappeared there. And there were also Jews there who, of course, were against certain things which we had to do, but they did it, and it, it was, it was a mixed lot. There were some good people, and some helpful people, and there were some people who just pushed and wanted the best they could get, so did everybody else. But I remember, we had to make the shelters, which were not shelters, but dig, into the garden, so that there would be a place where we can hide if the bombing comes. And we worked there, and when I, once we worked and we saw the planes coming, they were, I thought, wonderful silver birds, we said, and we said, "Come, and it doesn't matter if you kill us, if you kill the enemies, if you kill the Germans, it doesn't matter if we die as well." But we didn't. We were, oh yes, I should say that after we sort of settled, we started learning, there was some man who could teach us the Bible, and Jewish Laws, could teach us about Herzl and languages. There were little groups, we hardly, and ivrit of course, there were hardly pen and pencil, but there were choruses and we sang together, and spoke the languages together, so that we, we were kept alive through that.

Did you work during the day, you and your daughter?

No. There was no work for everybody. Sometimes we worked to clean the bathrooms and the loo, things like that, and our shelter, but only this kind of work.

And did you have sufficient food?

We did.

And clothing?

It was summer time, it was July and August, which are the warmest months, but it, it wasn't, it wasn't the work that, that we did, but what we could, it was the news that we heard, it was the discussions why it happened, it was, there were arguments, there were opinions that you shouldn't have been here, but somebody else would have deserved it more. How did you get here? I didn't really know, and I was always grateful to God, and I was very religious at the time, but it was, in some form, not repayment for, now, it was a grace in somebody's married, whether it was my mother or father, or my husband, I wondered. I played a part in it, but it wasn't, I didn't think it was for my sake that we were saved.

Did you see any cruelty in this place at all?

No. None at all, no. No cruelty. The bit what they called "Vorzuglager" we were guarded by SS, two SS men guarded us, and, but we could have visitors who came outside the fence, and if somebody was, there was always somebody near the fence, because the weather was nice, and they would call us, the names, and we went and met them at the door. We had a very nice Jewish woman in the last month of our time in our home, in our real home, real house, who didn't stay with us, who went to her sister and who heard about us and who brought us food, very nice. We had food, we had enough food given to us, in the kitchens, but this was special, and sweets for the children, and there was somebody else who brought us food, and it, it was, it was all right. But,

Have you any idea, in retrospect, why you were so much better treated than Jews in other countries?

Jews were better treated, I still don't think they were better treated.

In this place you were in, this is what I mean.

In this place. Oh yes, I know why. There was Dr. Kastner, who was a wonderful man, he came from Transylvania, he was a journalist. He and Newel Brandt, were negotiating with Eichner to allow the Hungarian Jews free, alive and free, to leave Hungary, and for that, they promised different things to Eichmann, and they went, Kastner went to Turkey, and negotiated with the Zionists in Palestine, as it was then, and with, with the Allies as well, but they could never achieve anything. At the end, we were told that Eichmann would have accepted 12 lorries from the Allies but they didn't get it, and that Eden said, "And where would they go? We can't take them in here, they're not very popular anyhow." So they didn't get the, the 12 lorries, and the Jews had to go to Auschwitz, except a few whom they kept in case they get the 12 lorries. Kastner persuaded them that they will get it. Kastner, I'm sure it's a well-known fact, he became a member of the Knesset in Israel later, and then one Jew who's family in, was killed by the Germans, and who thought that Kastner did it all for money, accused him, and there was a big Court case, and he was proved innocent, but then, I can't remember whether it was the same man, or another one, went crazy and killed him, on the street. He, he died, I think, a martyr's death, because we didn't pay for this, it, it was a payment for my Zionist feelings, for the little I did for the future of Israel. I founded a Vizo Group in Ujpest after I heard about Zionism, quite accidentally, in a train, when I came back from holiday, from Marienbad, and I met a woman who originally lived in Prague, and who came back and gave talks in, all over Czechoslovakia, and Hungary as well, to spread the gospel, to persuade people to give to Zionist causes. And this was in, in 1929, before I had a child. We had, in our Group, we met, we studied Jewish History, we studied Herzl story, and Zionist aims, and what is, what happens in Palestine, and collected money, not an awful lot, and did, I went round and emptied the blue boxes, and yes, we had to give shekels which was in memory of the old Jewish tax, the shekel, and we said that everybody has to pay it, and they did. And for that little that I did, I was so rewarded richly, I never will forget it, I never can, I never will be able to get over it. So we were there, but on the 1st September, Eichmann had enough of waiting, and wanted to put us all into wagons to go to Auschwitz. For that we were collected on a big sport court, and sorted out. By that time, my sister who was in, in Switzerland, at the time, sent us a, a National, that we were, oh, ... .. my sister from Switzerland, sent us my, to my parents, and to myself, ourselves, to our family, Salvadorian Citizenship, and I had that.

Did she manage to get those

They were not real ones, there was a Hungarian, her man, a very nice young man he was, at the time, called George Mendel, and he signed the Citizenship Certificate, Georgio Mandelo, and they looked very nice, very nicely done, impressive, and when I first got it, this was, and we were still at home, and I went with it to the Swiss Embassy, because it was only the Swiss Embassy that stayed in Hungary, because they were neutral, and when I showed it to, I think he was second in command on the Embassy, that, oh yes, at the end of the Certificate, it said, "We ask all Governments to help these people if in need." And I went to the Swiss Embassy and I showed it, and he said, "Well, what do you want me to do? What help do you need? When you need help then you can come to me." Of course, when we needed the help, we couldn't go to him. But there, on, on the sport courts, I showed it to the Police, and they accepted it, and they put us at a separate corner, and didn't take us to the wagons and then I remembered that there were another family called Bernstein, who also had this Certificate, and I sent my son, George, to tell them to go and show it, which they did, and they also were taken out of the other group, and sent to us. We were taken to the ghetto, the Budapest ghetto, where we were put in a

Jewish house, it was very crowded, we lied, had to lie on the floor, next to one another, we arranged it in such a way that my husband was on one side of the, oh yes, my husband was there then, I didn't speak about it. At that, my husband was on one side, and I was on the other, so that there should be no strangers.

Do you want to say how your husband got there?

Yes. Yes. My husband was, was in this slave labour camp, and he was sent back to Budapest to get jacket, warm clothing, for the men, and he went round, he said he is going to, and he asked from others, but if not, he's going to pay for it himself, and they could buy plenty of jackets, which were sort of uniform, of the Jewish slave labour camp members, and he came to see us as well, and I begged him and persuaded him to stay with us, not to go back with the jackets. It wasn't easy, because he was, he sort of believed in keeping the rules, but I managed and he stayed with us.

When you persuaded your husband to stay, did you realise the danger the other people were in, who were being sent away?

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Did you realise, when you persuaded your husband to stay with you, what danger he might be in if he went back to the slave labour camp?

It, it wasn't so much the danger he was going to be in if he went back, than the feeling that I wanted to, to be with him, and with the children, and my mother-in-law and my sister-in-law. I thought he could have been in danger because he didn't go back, because he didn't obey the rules, that was his worry. But they didn't have time, there were thousands of Jews, they didn't have time to look for one, so that danger was not real, a big danger.

And may I ask you also whether you realised that all the people on the playing field, who were going in wagons, to Auschwitz, did you realise what danger they were in, and that you escaped from that danger?

At that time, I did realise that they were in danger of their lives, because I, I saw things happening and I heard things happening and I knew that it was the end of, of their lives, or our lives, but the fact was that we, we wanted to, we couldn't save our lives for good and get out of the danger completely, we realised it was only temporary escape of, of the big danger. Horthy must have seen that his country, his, and his own life is in danger from the, not from the Germans, but from the, who were already there, but from the Allies, he thought that the Allies will win, and he made a Declaration saying that the Nation, we were always poachers, and we did something that we shouldn't have done, but he didn't mention Jews by name, but everybody knew that it was something that he felt sorry to what happened to the Jews, and, and that everybody knows it abroad as well. When this happened, we thought we were free, and we went to a Jewish house, and, and he, not, hiding there, but staying there with members of our family.

You mean you went out of the ghetto?

Yes.

Temporarily?

Well, everything was temporary, but we thought if we can stay there. But then, on 15th September, 1944, Szálasi a Hungarian, Halenkreuz chief, took over from Horthy and seemingly ruled over, ruled the country, then it wasn't safe for us to stay there. We went, only the children and myself then, my husband wasn't with us, to a farm, which was next door to my father's factory, to the tannery, it was in Kőbánya there I knew the farmer, who was very decent, and asked him whether he would keep us as evacuees, not as Jews, and he said, he knew who we were, and he said, "Yes." And we went there. It was very good, there was nobody living very near us, but there was no water, tap water, we had to go to a well which was not far from the house, and I had to wash the clothes for my children and myself as well, I couldn't expect the farmer's wife to work for us, although she did the cooking, and they gave us food, which was quite something at the time. We couldn't pay for it then, but they knew that they're going to be paid, and they hoped with us that the present era is not going to last forever. Well, I went out to the well, and I put a red peasant scarf on my head, and I thought I look as any other, but I don't, I always looked very Jewish, and they sort of recognised me as a Jewess, and soon there were two civilian Policemen, who came for us, and took us into a Nazi Court Room, and asked us what we were, and how, and we, we said, "Well, yes, we came," we didn't tell them that we escaped from the ghetto, and that we were hiding, we were evacuees, because of the bombs, of course, they didn't believe us, and they sent us, with the two Policemen, to town, and they took us to, it wasn't a prison this, but it was like a prison, I don't know the English name of it, where they keep the drunken, where they take the drunken women, the prostitutes in and keep them there for a few days, that's where they took us, and we found that there were many Jews there already. It was very funny because they really kept us clean, that we had to have a shower before we entered the place, with the children, and we felt dirtier after the shower, because there was so little water, than before. And we were put into separate rooms with, I could stay with my daughter, and George had to be with the men. I didn't like that, but he wasn't allowed because he was 14, nearly 14, he wasn't allowed with the women, and there was a very nice man, who said, "Don't worry, I look after him." Which he did. We met, we had, we were allowed

to walk a certain time in the corridor, in pairs, and then I could look into the men's room, and say hallo to my son, and thank the man. And it, it was very funny, because there was a very nice atmosphere in that huge big room, where we were about 80, and we had to lie on the floor, but all that didn't matter, we were there, and there was one prostitute, and she was the boss of the room, she did everything, but apart from, from giving orders, every morning she cleaned the place, for which we paid. There were some who had more money, there were some who had less money, and we rewarded her, and she, after that she sang, entertaining us. "Krasznahorka Vara Bűszke" which was not a peasant song, it wasn't very popular then, but ...

What did it mean?

No, I don't know what it means, it doesn't, it has no meaning, it's a nice song, I think it's from, from an opera or an operetta, I don't know. And I already heard about the, the Swedish saver,

Wallenberg?

Wallenberg. And I had an address that, where the Swedish houses, and Wallenberg's office is, and I managed to persuade the bosses of this place, or this prison, to allow me out, because I had this Certificate, that I am not a Hungarian Citizen any more, and that he will take care of us, and I managed to achieve it, that he allowed me out of the prison. Of course, they could be sure, I told them, I would leave my children in here, I wouldn't escape, save my life, and sacrifice my children, they believed me, they let me out. And I went, and found the place which stopped being Wallenberg's office a week before that. I went, and they told me where it was, but I had no time to, to look it up. I had to go back, because my time was limited. They said I should be back by such and such a time, and I went back, and I never tried again to get in touch with Wallenberg. ... .. After this, after over a month, they allowed us free from, from this prison. We were, they wanted to send us to Auschwitz, we were waiting from 5 o'clock in the morning one day, till 7 o'clock at night, on the railway station, some did go into the wagons, and the wagons couldn't move because the bombs fell and ruined the railway lines, and they allowed us free then. All to go to ghetto houses, to Jewish houses, we did.

Excuse me, before this, did you appear in Court at all?

No. No, never in Court, never. I should tell the story of my father which is quite interesting, but then we went into our family, again, on István Road and there we heard that the Columbus Street house, the school of the Deaf and Dumb, is going, is reopened and people can go back there if they want to. And then, as I had my husband there again, with us, he knew somebody who had coaches to lend, and he hired one, or he asked him to send us one there, to Columbus ucca because there was not enough room for everybody to have beds, or sleeping places, and we went there with the whole family, with my mother-in-law, my sister-in-law, my husband and my two children, and even with a little boy of a woman who was there with us, and the little boy was with us for about a week. I was going to adopt him for the time being, and the mother came for him, and took him, from, yes. From there, we went into the ghetto again, we had to, and from the ghetto it was terrible, very alive. There were young men who gave different Birth Certificates. They had the prints, they filled them in, or hair was dirty, and they put the paper on heads, to make it greasy and dirty, generally dirty, everybody was helping everybody else, and it was, we didn't have a lot of food, but we had some, we were hungry at times, but nobody died of hunger because people brought things in, the caretakers, non-Jewish caretakers, of course, made a lot of money through that. But we were alive.

What access did you have to any money?

We were very lucky because we had quite a few honest, or friendly employees who took money out of the factory, and brought it to us, or sent it with somebody, so we did have, we did have money, not a lot, but just, just enough to stay alive.

Do you think there were many thousands in the ghetto?

There were many thousands in the ghetto, and there were no bombing of the ghetto, except once when two big Jewish houses, the hit, and everybody who was in it died, and there were hundreds who died. But we didn't feel safe, and we wanted to, to go out of it. We did, we managed to get out of it, we sort

of, we dressed like everybody else, but my husband had his jacket, that every Jewish slave labourer had, and that also, and I'm sure we looked Jewish, and we were stopped at night, and taken to a Nazi flat, to be imprisoned or, or they had done something with us. Afterwards we found out that there were many hundreds of Jews that went from there to, to Auschwitz, to the wagons, but there were no more wagons going out from Budapest at the time, and they were going to send us to some Concentration Camp, and as they were ... .. on the streets, there was the four of us only then, one young boy with a gun, in front, and one young boy with a gun, behind us. My husband started talking to the young man, and he was wonderful he could sort of persuade him that we are innocent, we don't want anything bad, but he was a Nazi, and he spoke, he sort of defended themselves, and my husband said, "What are you, what faculty do you attend at University?" He said, "Faculty? What is faculty? And what University? I'm not at University." "But you are so intelligent, you speak so well about things, you know so much, you must, you must go to university if you haven't been." And he said, "Well, I can't afford it." And he told him, "Well, look, this thing is not going to last. My name is Donat, and we have a factory, a machine factory in Ujpest. All these things are going to stop. You must come to see me and I will pay for your studies." And he said, and do you know, "You shouldn't take us to the Camp, because look here, we have this Certificate of Salvadorian Citizenship, and if you take us to the Swiss Embassy, they will expect us." And this, this boy listened to him, and at 11 or 12 o'clock at night, we arrived to the place, to the house which used to be the American Embassy, a beautiful big building, but was now the Swiss Embassy. He rang the bell, and he said, "Look, here is a Certificate, Salvadorian, they, it says that these people are Salvadorian Citizens. You should look after them, shouldn't you." And they said, "Yes, we will." "All right then, march in." And we went in and said goodbye, and never saw them again. We don't know, we would have liked to repay him, but he never came, whether he survived or not, we never knew. And we stayed there and found that there were many other Jews there already.

How many, can you think, dozens or hundreds?

Maybe a hundred, I don't think more than a hundred maybe. It was very accidental that we went there, we sort of passed it, and it was a well-known building on the Szabadságtér which means Freedom Place, and so we got in there. They didn't keep us there very long, because there were too many, and the offices were there, and then they requisitioned a house, in a street, which also they declared, in Weckeler Street, which they also declared to be a Swiss Embassy, and they took us there, and we stayed there.

What sort of accommodation did you have there?

Accommodation in the first, in the American Embassy, it was very good because they allowed us to stay in the Library, which was a big room, and, but there as well, we were lying like sardines, really like sardines, but in two rows, where the head of the second row was near to the feet of the first, and you could sort of smell it even! And, but it was in the middle of the town as well, and they said that it's going to be bombed, and we shouldn't stay there, and we were sort of persuaded to go, to leave it. Forced and persuaded, we didn't mind going, and we went to this other one, which used to be a textile factory's offices, there accommodation was even worse, but we, we, we didn't mind, there were other Jews, only Jews there, of course, and Jewish sort of commanders, and we had food.

Were the Swiss kind in their attitude towards you?

There were no Swiss there, who we saw. They, they were not kind, I don't think they were kind, but we only saw old employees of the Legations, of the American Legation rather than the Swiss Legation. And they, they were very severe, very strict, they sort of did their duty, and they didn't mind showing that they are in command. There were some old Zionists there who knew a lot, and there again, we spoke a lot about Zionism, and, and future, and what one should have done, and what we should do, if, if, there was no *if* we survive, no, no, everybody was optimistic, and there were groups, questions asked, like the Brain of Britain questions, I don't say it was the same level, but there were groups always, and the children, the children's groups, and there were some teachers who, who formed groups of children, the teacher, and they taught them, or asked questions, rather asked questions to entertain them.

Did you believe, by this time, that the Allies would win the War? Had you got news?

We did. We did have news.

Did you think Hitler would be defeated by now?

We, we, we had to believe it. We always did, we always thought he must be defeated, but we didn't know whether we will be alive to see it. We always, we always thought "They can't beat America", we always thought America is, which was right too, but ... Even before we left in June, there was somebody who came and told us, we didn't hear it on the radio that, that Allies are back in France, and marching forward, and, and getting back, even we were deported, we were taken out of our homes for the first time. ... .. In, in, here in Bacala it was, we were all together downstairs, in, now on different, I think, two floors high, and on the roof every evening, the men had to watch the bombing and the, maybe if, if the German Army could withstand to the Russians, because we heard that the Russians are coming against now, against the Germans, and we had to, to keep watch, and one evening, when my husband was in, on watch on the roof, there were always soldiers from the Army sent in, and who watched with them. One of our soldiers, tells him, "Good evening, Uncle Jula", and he looked, and he couldn't believe it, it was the son of our doctor, of our GP, who was a friend as well, and who was a Jew, and he says, "Here, you're here." And he caught his hand, and that he shouldn't speak, in case the other one hears it. It turned out that he sort of joined, he was fair, and white skinned, blue eyes, he joined the Army to save himself, and ...

(END OF F370 Side B)

F371 Side A

I mentioned that my husband met the son of our General Practitioner, our doctor. And, and we survived through bad health, that they checked whether there was bombing, and if they wanted to come looting, which they often did, in different houses, they could prevent that. We went to the cellar at times of bombings, using it as shelters, but we heard that the Russians are coming, and they came near, and one day they said they're here. And people went to the windows, and saw the Russian soldiers, who were already in there, going, practically climbing next to the wall, like, like flies, to see whether there is anybody round the corner, they had their guns in their hands, pointing forwards. I don't think I will ever see as beautiful a sight as that, we were so happy to see them, we shouted, we hugged each other, that they are there. And that meant Liberation, of course. And it was 20th January, which is my mother's birthday.

1945?

1945. And after that we went out, in town, and spoke to soldiers, and spoke to people, and everybody, nobody was against the Russians at the time, not only the Jews were glad to see them, but everybody said that how nice that the Germans left. The Germans were only on the other side of the Danube, it took quite some time to push them out of Hungary. The Danube gave them a wall of defence, they bombed the bridges, and the Russians couldn't get through. After being away from home for all this time, we went back to Ujpest. And the road to Ujpest led us to Algur ... Road, and we went and took everything we had with us, which was blankets, and a change of underwear, and little things like that. The Russians stopped us, and asked for chasy which meant clocks, watches, and we didn't have watches any more, we sort of got rid of them, we sold them, or gave them away, or changed them for food, and my son George lost his, but they looked at our hands for wrist-watches, and on our body, yes. And they didn't find anything. George lost his watch, it turned out later that he had his watch, his pocket had a hole in it, and the watch fell into the lining of his jacket. We were so happy that they didn't find it, because they would have beaten him up, that he hid his watch, that he didn't want to give it to them. Later on, we managed to buy five kilos of sugar for the one watch.

Did you find that the Russians were rather violent liberators?

No. They were not violent liberators, as such. They were thieves, they took everything they could put their hands on, and they took the women, not only young and pretty ones, just any woman they, they could find, and

Raped?

Raped them, everywhere, in front of their husband or father, or, or whatever. They, they, they had no feeling for the enemy at all. But for us, they were liberators.

When you say no feeling for the enemy, do you mean they were raping the German, surely there were no German women there?

There were no German women there, the Hungarians, yes, yes, whether they were Jewish or not, or whatever, didn't matter. So we went to the factory where we could stay in the shelters that they, during the War, they used as shelters, because, for us, because for Budapest at that time, the War was over. There were no bombing or no shooting any more. We couldn't go back to our house because our house was occupied by, not friends, but somebody my husband knew, did business with him, he was the Manager of a factory, but they, they didn't have a nice enough house to stay in, and our house was empty so they moved in there. They were very surprised, and not very pleasantly surprised when they saw us. But they said, "Oh, it's very nice, we had to move in our, sorry, and I thought it better if we move in and take good care of your house, than let others move in. And I'm going to look for something and we move out." And they gave us one room, and the one room was a large room, it used to be the nursery, and we moved in there, and had two beds there, and I slept with my daughter, and my husband slept with George.

So nobody gave them any permission to walk in, they just walked in in your absence?

Oh no, no, they were given permission, they just had to apply for a Jewish house, and prove that they can wish for a nice house, because they are somebody, so they were given, no, they didn't, they couldn't do that, couldn't move in. And later on, first we stayed in the factory, in the shelter downstairs, and then we moved into our house, into this one room. It was very difficult to find food at that time, and we were lucky because we knew, or my husband knew a baker, whose bakery wasn't very far, who needed somebody there in the bakery, some work of engineering, and they did it in the factory, and my husband, and "How much would it cost?" he asked, and my husband said, "It will cost so many loaves. How many loaves of bread is it worth?" So we received so many loaves a week for the family, which was a great help. And the wife of one of the workmen, who was really decent, collected sugar,

Sacks?

Potatoes, no,

Oh, sugar beet?

Sugar beet from the field, on the, on the estate of the Count Karoly. They couldn't collect it in time, in, in the autumn because the War was on, and it was lying there, and she brought it for me, and I had to cook it, for, I don't know how many hours, and that was a sweetener, we used it as a sweetener. There were, there were some friends who had corn, and when you put the corn on fire, it sort of,

Popped?

Popped. There is the popcorn, every day for at least three weeks, and there were friends who came to me, my husband was working in the tannery, although he wasn't in good health, he worked in the factory, and there were women who came, and, because I had popcorn, I could give them popcorn, it was, it was wonderful. And my husband, who was a very helpful, a very good man, not just good husband, he was a wonderful husband, and he was a very kind man. He came, we walked home from the Swiss Legation to Ujpest, with our belongings on our backs, and he didn't carry anything, he wasn't well, he had temperature, he was ill, it all came out already, and he could hardly walk himself, there was ice, slippery, and we had to do it slowly, till, till we got home. And, but he made himself work, he, he didn't want to give in, he thought that it is malnutrition, which partly it was, maybe, that he will get well. And, and he worked for, for the Russians, and he, he wasn't well. Once I was ill, and I couldn't cook, and he told, we had a Russian Commander in the factory, and they had to work for the factory, for the Russians in the factory, mainly for the Russians, a little private work maybe, but mainly for the Russians, and he had told the Russian Officer that his wife was ill and can't cook, and they sent us food, sent us a lot of soup, which was, I am sure, horse meat, but it didn't matter, we, I was very grateful, they sent it three times, sent food three times, and I sort of got well. It was a very very severe winter, '44/'45, and everything, what they didn't eat on that day, I could put out, we didn't need a fridge, I had to put it out, and it was all right. It kept. ... .. I must remember my mother-in-law who also came back, and she went to live with her daughter, with my sister-in-law, who was also with us part of the time, but she was old, and used up her energy. Her husband wasn't alive any more, and she died. She died and at that time, there was no possibility to have a coffin made even, and they made the coffin, they put a coffin together in the factory, and they put it on a low, four-wheeler carriage, that was always pulled by men, it wasn't meant to be pulled by a horse, and I remember that they put her body, her coffin on that four-wheeler, and we went to the cemetery. There was no Rabbi to bury her, but there were some men who said the prayers, and dug the whole, which wasn't easy, because the soil was frozen, and buried her they buried her.

Do you mean that no Rabbis had survived?

No. Not our Rabbi didn't, we had two Rabbis, and they didn't survive.

Could you tell me what happened to your parents?

My parents, I should start with 1942, when my father, who had a tannery, quite a large tannery, in, in Kőloánya where I went to hide at the farmer's house, he worked there, he was workaholic and expected everybody to work very hard, and maybe he drove them too hard. He wasn't very popular amongst many, and they wanted to get rid of him, so they decided that he sabotaged the manufacturing, the tanning of the hides. He worked for the Army, and he could buy the raw hides, and tan them, and, so that the soldiers would have shoes made, or repairs made, and he thousands, tens of thousands of skins in his factory, in his tannery, and he was found by a Military Court, that he sabotaged the production having 130 part skins next, in, in the tannery, and they got too warm lying on each other, and went off. And for this he was given three years imprisonment, in a Military Prison in 1942. He was there and it was, it was terrible to go, for us to see him. I went with my mother, I could go, we could go every week, and we could take him food, once a week. He caught a cold, and his kidneys, not only his throat and

Chest?

Chest, but his kidneys as well. Luckily, he survived, because there was a doctor also imprisoned there, he was a Communist, who helped him, who gave him the medicine, who gave the prescription to my mother, and could take it, and he survived through that. And also through that, he got out of prison, into a hospital, and because he was in hospital, in 1944, in March 1944, when the Germans came in, he wasn't arrested, and wasn't deported, and he stayed in the Hospital, survived in the Hospital, where he could bribe the doctors and nurses, and everybody who was there, and could stay there, and even my mother was accepted in there for a while. And then, when it was impossible to stay there, they went into hiding, and to get food, my mother tried to get out of the house, and buy some food, but she was caught and she was imprisoned by the, in a German prison, in Hungary, in Budapest. But when the Germans had to move West, the prison was opened, and everybody could get out, and my mother always said how good the policemen were, told her where she was, because she didn't even know where she was. She wasn't taken there in daytime, and she didn't know where the Danube was, and, and where she could get out. And she came to us because she knew, before she was taken prisoner, that we were in the American Legation, and she came to us, she had very little to eat there, she was very thin, and we, at the time, had no bread, but we had bacon, very fat bacon, and we gave that to her, and she became very ill from that. It, it was called "Uckranke", "Uckranke", she had terrible diarrhoea, but it started already there, while she was there with us. She didn't want to stay with us in the Legation, she wanted to go to my father, who was still in the same place, hiding, and she walked there, and there she was very very ill, but luckily, thank goodness, she survived. But my father was ill with his kidney, all his life, but he survived. He came to England in '46.

Did he come to England ahead of you and your husband?

Yes. Yes.

Would you like to describe how that happened?

My brother came to England in '37, and started a tannery in Cumberland, on the West Coast, and he succeeded, not only surviving, but earning as well, and he, he came, he came and he asked my father to come and see what he has done, and my father came out just to see the factory, and planning to come back, but things deteriorated very much in Budapest at the time, the Russians took over, the Communists, and we didn't want my father to come back, we asked him, on the telephone, not to come back, and my brother kept him here, and he didn't come back then, but my mother, this was in '46, and in, on 2nd January 1947, my mother came to England, bringing my son George with her, who, by that time, had an acceptance of a school in St. Bee's, St. Bee's Boys School, and came with her to, to England, and stayed here. We only came in '49, in September '49, because my husband, we wanted to come earlier, but my husband was very ill from the illness he got in the slave labour camp. He was in hospital seven months, and I was with him there, day and night. Sometimes we had a night nurse, in spite of me being there, in the same room, even, because I couldn't manage it.

He the E. coli bacillus, didn't he?

Yes, yes. And then he got better, and we managed to, to come out to, to England.

In what way were the Communists making life difficult for everybody?

I don't know whether they were making life difficult for everybody, but for those who had something, maybe.

Like factory owners, for instance?

Factory owners, and they nationalised the, the bigger factories, and ours was just, my father's was taken because it was big, it was the fifth factory, tannery in Hungary, fifth in size. There were many more, many bigger machine factories, and iron foundries in Hungary than ours, but as they provided tool machines, and necessary articles for the Army, so they said that they will be nationalised as well. The nationalisation came out about Easter time, after Easter, and it was a blow, because my husband hoped it will not be nationalised, but this was about the time when he was better, and I said, "Well, I would rather have chosen that your health should be better and the factory should go", and so he accepted it. Soon after that, he came home, but he wasn't, still wasn't very well. It, it was so difficult to, to know what to do. He was at home, and he was ill, and they said, "If there are special circumstances, they will pay something for, for the factories that they've taken", and I thought it was a special circumstance, that my husband was ill, that his illness was due to the Nazi cruel, and that we had nothing, and that we are on the border of nationalisation, that we will get something. I went to the factory, which had a, a Communist Manager, who didn't know anything about managing a factory, but he was a political man. And I went out in the workshop, and asked the leaders whether they would recommend that we get some compensation, and they give this signed letter, with their names, and address and how long they'd been in the factory, that they should, that they recommend that we should get something, and I took it to the Director, and I went to the Ministry, I did everything, without the smallest result, we didn't get anything, and so we started to prepare, and asked the doctor, and the doctor said, "If he is all right, if he will be all right for three months, then you can go", because we didn't want to come to England and be a burden on anybody, and he was seemingly all right. We packed the things, that was left, oh yes, when we had to leave our home, when the Nazis were, when the Germans were in, we took all our furniture to the factory, and put it in a warehouse there, and they said that they auctioned it, so there was very little left of our furniture. But we couldn't buy things, and we could make up the furnishing of the house, partly, not completely. First we thought we're staying, we didn't plan to leave Hungary at that time, but when, when we left Hungary, we, we had a lift van, and could put our things in there, what was left, and came out, with, with, some of the pictures were left. They didn't find some of the china, which they didn't find, it was in a cellar, we could bring out.

Did they make any difficulty about you leaving?

Oh yes. It wasn't, we had to have a permission from the Hungarian Authorities, and then a Russian Exit Visa, and all our belongings had to be supervised, somebody came and looked at everything that we're taking out from the country, before it was allowed to go.

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I should like to mention it, that whilst my husband was in hospital, he went up and down, he had five operations for this Coli infection, and once the surgeon told me, "There is nothing I can do, because he doesn't help me. He hasn't got the will, he doesn't want to get well. You must do something to persuade him", and I said, "I can't, I don't know, I do it all the time." He said, "Yes, I know, but do it more." But then, I thought, he was always very proud of his son, and if he was here, he was a jolly boy, he was a very likeable boy, and, and I will try to call him, and I phoned, and I asked my brother to send him back, and he thought I was crazy, because it was very difficult for anybody to leave Hungary. "But", I said, "it's very important. He will get out again, but it's his father's life." And he came, and it was successful, he, not, not that he told his father that you must get well, but his being there, and the way he spoke about England and the future, he made him want to live on. And he was there two months, and came back to England, and my husband got better, and we got home then, and, and he didn't go back to work in the factory any more, because he couldn't, we came out to, to England. It cost money, but we,

Did you have to pay the Communists to allow you to get out?

We had to pay, how should I say, officially, and bribe unofficially, we had to do both, but we came out. Unfortunately, 15 months later, his illness came out again, and 15 months after we'd been here, he died, he passed away. It, it, it was a terrible struggle, and it was, it was terrible to go through it, and I, I don't know, but it's not for me to, I didn't have the choice, I didn't make a decision, that I'm going to fight it, because I had to fight it, it was instinct, and I think everybody wants to live, even in the greatest danger, when one is ill, and one felt that life isn't worth living, one still, when it comes to it, fights for life. That's my explanation and excuse of being here. It was, my relationship with both children was very good. With my daughter it was maybe nearer, because, maybe because she was a girl, and she needed maybe more from me. Not that she wanted, not that she thought that she need me, so she's kinder to me, nothing like that, but I think it, it was, like that. For instance, when my husband, after my husband died, and George brought home, he was at Leeds University, he brought home, he brought once, a very nice girl home, with whom he was in love, and I thought he, he would like to marry her, and I asked him, he was very young at the time, maybe 22, and I asked him, why doesn't he want to get married? "Don't you think that you should help us too, to, to stay alive, and give us all the help you can?" And he said, "If one hadn't got any worries outside, if one is happy at home, one can help others much better and do it, but it came to nothing, it was, not because I was against it, or not for it, it came to nothing, and, and he finished his University studies and stayed with my brother.

What was he studying?

He was studying leather tanning, which was only at Leeds University, and, and to which my brother helped him to get to, and Judy went to Harrogate Ladies College, we sort of sent a circular to most Girls Public Schools, we just managed to get out of the, of the hold of the Communists in Hungary, and would like to place our daughter in your school. And the first school that answered, accepting, was Harrogate Ladies College, and she got in there. After that, we had a letter from Cheltenham as well. Yes, yes, we also said first survived the Germans, the German Jewish killings, or what, and now escaped the Communists, and these two schools accepted it, and we were sorry actually, that she didn't get into Cheltenham, but we couldn't, we felt we can't do it.

Did you have to pay the fees?

Yes. Yes. Actually it was my parents who paid her fees, and George got into University on, he didn't have to pay, because he had very good results from school. And she, yes, yes, but George was not, they didn't ask religion in St. Bee's School, and he, Judy insisted that she should be accepted as a Jewess, which she was. She had to take part in the morning services, she even had to kneel, which she said, she said she could say all the prayers, but not, she never said, "Through Christ", in, in the prayers. She was happy there, and she found friends, and finished the College with good results, applied to different Universities, even had a letter from Oxford saying that if her English isn't good enough yet, and if she waits a year, she might get in. Her headmistress said, "I was a Girton Girl, and you should be a Girton Girl, you, you belong there." But I didn't realise the importance of going to Oxford, that it

means so much in England, and I thought, "Why should she wait another year?" If she got into St. Andrews which was a good University, and she went there, she was very happy there. Oh yes, I should also say that I, I learned languages, my mother was very much for languages, my father had no talent for languages, which is at all, he thought he speaks English, and he said, "Gut morgen", and that was English! "Gut morgen", you know, and he, but my mother had a sense for languages, and my father was also that we should learn all one can, pour it into our left and right ear, and everything one possible. And my children couldn't, I couldn't give my children to learning of languages. I felt we should make up for it, and I took them to Grenoble, to a summer course, languages, the French language course, and I left them there. It was already, I found it through correspondence, and left them there, and when I came home, after two weeks, my husband was already, was ill, and we had to take him to Manchester, and he had to undergo an operation, but they couldn't help him, and four days later he died.

It was always on his intestines, wasn't it, the problem?

Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes, but that was no help. I don't think it, it's interesting what happened afterwards.

Yes, do go on.

I should go on.

It's your whole life.

My whole life. Well, I was very lucky. I lived in a small place, which was a town, Millom, in Cumberland, on the West Coast, between Barrow-in-Furness on the South, and Whitehaven to the North of it, and where, which was in the development area, and where my brother had the tannery. There were other refugees there as well, and also others invite him, and the English, the people in Millom were very nice to us, they heard what we had to go through, and, and helped, they were kind and friendly, and it was, it was really very nice. We had to share the house with my sister, who came also, with two children, and her husband, but the house was big enough, and we managed very well. Just before my husband died, my sister, they got another house, and they moved out, and I was there alone, and my husband died, and the children at school. I started to work in the tannery then, I was in the office, and of course, I was very unhappy and very lonely, but I, I was kept busy, I always had things to do, and this went on for nearly three years, like that, and the partner of my brother, who was the originator actually, of the tannery there, because he was my father's sole agent for England, his wife died, and they were a very nice, and happy couple, and his wife was ill for nearly a year. She had endocarditis, which is heart trouble, and I got near to, to her widowed husband, and he, he married me. I, although I was really happy and it was a nice marriage, my marriage to, to Gyula Donat, I was very happy, and I was in love like as if I had been 16 again! And we were there, we married in '53. He died in '49, and we married in '53, and lived there, and then in, in '59, we came to live here in Wimbledon, and unfortunately, he passed away as well, I should never have moved. It seems moving doesn't help me, because 15 months later he died here.

What was wrong?

It was a cancer of a gland, of a gland under his arm, and he was not ill for a year, it was a very quick illness in his case. They said that cancer, if it attacks a gland is not, is not curable. He had operations, and it didn't help him. He suffered, and he was very good to me, very good to my children, and I, I was really penniless when my first husband died. I brought our furniture, but all what we had went into getting the furniture out from Hungary, and what he earned there, we had to use to live on. And my second husband, he, he was well-off, he worked, and he could keep what he had, and he left, he had never any children, and he left everything, very generously, to me. He was very good too, to my children, and he, my daughter was 21 when we married, a few months later, and he gave her a car, a new Mini at that time, Mini Minor, at the time, which was a great thing, as a first present, and he, he was very good to her and, and, also to George, he did all, anybody, any real good father could have done.

What made you move to Wimbledon?

He retired, partly because, or mainly because he didn't get on with my brother. The partnership wasn't very happy. At the beginning it was all right, because my brother appreciated it, but he is not very easy to get on with, my brother. He is bossy, and conceited, and he didn't want to, to be with him, my husband, and he, he wanted to retire. And there's other people who live in town, during their working life, retire to the country, he wanted to do it the other way, from the country, retire to London, and we went round and I didn't, we went to North, to Golders Green, and that part, and I didn't, although I'm Jewish, I'm very Jewish, but I didn't feel happy there, I didn't want to live there.

Why did you not feel at home among the Jewish people of,

I felt that I couldn't keep up the competition. I mean, I'm not interested in clothes, and showing off. I didn't want that, that won't make me happy to live there, and, and that my interests are elsewhere, and I, I got very fond of the English as well, I was, I was very well treated by the English, I thought.

You prefer living among non-Jewish people, do you?

Not really, because I'm mostly, not only non-Jewish friends, but Hungarian Jewish friends and my interests are, I go to, I go to Art History and Art Appreciation classes, as well, but I'm, I was always very interested in the Jewish history, in Jewish religious laws, I don't say I keep them all that well! But I am, I am very interested and I go to the Spiro classes now, as well, but there is a lot of showing off, I think, which is not necessary, and there is a lot of competition in things that are not important, to my mind, anyhow, that is going on there, and I felt that I, I wouldn't like it. And my husband who, although his first wife wasn't Jewish, and his mother wasn't religious, so he wasn't religious at all, and he never denied that he was Jewish, not to his wife, or not to his business companions, or, or friends, or, or to anybody, but he wasn't feeling any religion, and he wouldn't have minded to live there. But then we came to Wimbledon and found this place and we thought it, yes, this will be fine, yes, and it's all right. It would have been, it would have been too nice to last, maybe.

In Cumberland, did you take part in any Jewish community?

There was no Jewish community in, in Cumberland. My parents went to Barrow-in-Furness, for the High Holidays, for instance, because there was a small community, and there was a house where they said the prayers, and they stayed in a hotel. And on Yom Kippur, the fast days, they, we had, they had dinner in Millom, with the family, and then they went by car to Barrow, and went to the prayers, and next morning that they're going to say the prayers again. Next morning, I don't know, six or seven o'clock in the morning, there is a knock on the door, "Tea". They wanted to sleep a little longer, and they were woken up with tea, and my mother thought, "Well, I'd better accept it", and she took the tea, accepted the tea, and poured it out, and went back to bed.

Could you tell me whether any of all those aunts that you had survived, apart from the ones who were already in America?

Yes. There were two who survived, but I didn't see them, I never went back to Hungary, not, not till now. I corresponded with them, and I have cousins.

Immediately after the War, there were only two left?

Yes.

What happened to the others?

They went to Auschwitz, where, there were three in, in, in America. One, two died, that's five.

Two died of natural causes, you mean?

Two died of natural causes. Then there was my mother, two, yes, two survived, and two died in Auschwitz, with their families. Died in Auschwitz. And, and one survived because her husband was, a War Invalid of the First World War, and one was hiding in different places, and survived. She was over 90 when she died. I have three cousins in, in Hungary, one is, the daughter of one was here just

now, she visiting. She, her mother gets compensation from the Germans, and that's how they, they can live better than most of them, of course.

Do you mean that her mother survived Auschwitz?

No. No.

She survived in hiding?

In hiding, in hiding, and her aunt as well. And one was married to a non-Jew, who, whose family could hide her, and her children.

When did you hear about the aunts who were in Auschwitz?

Well, I was in Hungary, I was there, and they didn't come back. There was always a table, with these four or five women at the railway station, of Ujpest, which was a small railway station, not the main, but near the main line of Budapest, and those who lived in Uishpest came there, arrived there, and they received coffee and food to eat, and and there was a nice reception for them, you know, welcome.

And was this, at this table, was it also a place where relatives could go and say, "Have you heard ..."

Oh yes, yes, there were always people who were there, who had relatives who didn't come back yet, asking them, "Have you met them?" "Did you see them?" "Were they there?" "What do you know of them?" Oh, I must tell the story of a friend. There was one family who, the, practically a schoolmate of my husband, was a schoolmate, and the wife was hiding with her two children, a boy and a girl. Eventually they caught her, caught her with her daughter, and in '44, '45, New Year's Eve, the, many Jews were taken to the Danube, and they had to stand in a row, and the soldiers shot them, and they were amongst them. And the mother died, fell down the water, and the daughter survived. She was clever enough not to move, not to swim, just to lie there still, because they looked at, and if they saw some who were still alive, they shot at them again, in the water, and she survived. It was a very very cold winter, survived, and, and went out and she was taken to nuns, who had a little hospital there, a room there, where they nursed different kind of sick people, and they knew where she comes from, although she said she didn't, and they nursed her and she, she stayed alive. She stayed alive and she came, she came home, and she met a young man, who came back from Bor where there were many slave labour, it was a slave labour camp, a mine, and who many died there, and, but he survived, this young man survived, and fell in love with the girl, and married her, and we were friendly with the boy, mainly, but also knew the girl as well, very well, and my husband was a witness at the wedding which took place in the Town Hall. During the wedding, there was quite a few friends who, survivors, and it was a big thing that two survivors got married, and the story of Suzy Kohlmann, everybody knew. The door opens, and her twin brother, who was in Auschwitz, walked in, in the Town Hall, to the wedding. If somebody reads this in a novel, its sounds unbelievable, doesn't it, and he walked in and he was there on, on the wedding. It was, it was fantastic. Unfortunately he didn't live very long. They went to Australia after that. He didn't live, the husband didn't live very long from Bor, he didn't have much chance, he died.

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I forgot to mention that my, whilst we were on the sports ground ... in Budapest, it was the Police who told us where to go and what to do, and we could see the wagons where we had to go in. There was a high ranking Police Officer, who directed the other Policemen, who gave the orders, and when he saw the Jewish mothers who cried, who shouted, who howled, the children who cried, the babies, this has, "I can't do this anymore. I shoot myself. I kill myself, before I do this." But he didn't, he had to do it, and he went on doing it, and although the Jewish mothers cried, they went to the wagons and entered them.

And you said he was Hungarian, didn't you.

He was a Hungarian Policeman, yes, and it was in Budapest. Oh, also one, this was a German Officer, it was at the time when we thought that the Germans won't touch the Jews any more, because of the speech Horthy made, that we have to be right with the people who lived amongst us all those centuries, meaning the Jews, and we were wrong in doing things, what we did with them. We went out to the street, and we still had to wear the yellow star, and one Police Officer, one German Officer, saw us, and went into, bumped into my son, as if he did it accidentally, with his gun, or sword, hitting him, and he fell. He walked on, he just showed his anger, he didn't say a word, but he just showed his anger against the Hungarians and against the Jews. There were all sorts of people, I can't say that all the Hungarians, or the Germans were good, because we had experience of both of them. They were all mixed, so I mean, the Jews, some Jews were kind to each other, and some were not. It maybe, it's not such a crime if you save your own life at the price of the others, I don't know what I would do! I was lucky, I didn't have to try it. But some did have to risk their lives to be kind or understanding, or helpful, even if in little, but, they, they were not kind. I met one family, especially one woman, she was a schoolteacher, who was, came from Transylvania, a big Hungarian patriot, a very religious Roman Catholic, who was good always to us, very understand. I even gave her my silver cutlery, which she gave back to me after the War, intact. I gave things to others who, what I didn't get back, and my mother gave the grand piano to somebody who said "You can't ask it back. My daughter is learning to play the piano." So she didn't. There is the same difference between people, I think, in, in trouble, as in, in a good life, just as much as there was beforehand, and maybe it always will be.

Do you feel that such a thing as the Holocaust could happen again?

What a question! I'm afraid it could. I'm afraid it could. I don't know, I hope I'm wrong, but there is a need for cruelty in, in many, not, not in all of us, but in many of us, I should say, and they say "lager louts" and hooligans, there is no need to be afraid of, and no, no real discipline. I don't know whether it's, whether a War would help if, if you have to fight for your life, and show how, how, what a big hero you can be, or if you go to a football match and get annoyed with the other part, who wins over your favourite Club, and they annoy you and tell you that you're no good. I, I am afraid it's, it's there and it, it always will be. There are all those religious Commandments that were there, all those thousands of years ago, in the Old Testament, "don't do this, and don't do that", and we still do it, we still do it, we still, and if you don't do it, it's very difficult not to. It's, I, I don't know whether it will ever be, that the lion will lie with the lamb. I wish, I wish there was some hope for that. It's more and more, and the part is, I don't understand it, they don't say that this is what the people want, no, we can't say that, because the people don't want it. Should the leaders not say, "This is what we should have, this is what is good, and this is what you should want, this is what will be good for you." Is the leaders' role to go after the sheep, after the crowd? I don't, I don't know. It's the leaders that matter. I think the leaders matter more than the crowds, because the crowds, they follow the leader if he has a good idea. I, I, I don't, I don't know. But I also think it is religion that is the best medicine against evil, because there are many who are afraid of Hell, who are afraid what will happen, and God won't forgive, I don't think there is anything else that could replace it, no human or national law can keep so many people a way of sinning, as religion can. The Buddhists say that you, you come back to life, as such and such an animal, you go down, and if you do the right thing, then you, you go up in life, you will be the next Maharajah, and we choose, we, I don't know, we try to, to go to Paradise, I don't really know whether we do ...

Would you like to say anything about Israel?

Oh yes. I think Israel is very necessary. I don't know how it happened, for all those thousands of years, Jews survived. Jews survived because, because of the faith, because of, if, if they had no faith, if they had no ability, they wouldn't have survived. I think Darwin is right, that the survival of the fittest is, is the rule, but they need a country. We need a country where to, as we need green fields, they say. We need a place for the Jews to live, if they want to live there. If they don't want to live there, I thought of opting out, more than once, and I proposed it to my husband, who wasn't as religious as I was but who, who didn't agree that we should opt out, with our children. It is, it is very important to have a country where Jews can try and live in peace together. I'm very sorry when I read about Orthodox and the foreign Jews quarrelling and arguing with each other, because there is no point in that. That isn't the main thing, whether you have a hat on, your head is covered with your own hair, or with a, a what is it? A

A scarf?

Not a scarf, a, artificial hair.

Wig?

Wig. With a wig. I don't think that is the main thing. The way you treat people is much more important, and Jews were the first to, to use the Shabbath, the one day in the week when nobody should work, not you, not your wife, not your servant, and not even the stranger who is within your doors, within your house. They don't make you responsible for the things that anybody does outside your house, but you are responsible what's happening in your house, and your house is your factory, maybe, or your workshop, or your business. This, this was the first, as far as I know, in history, where they made it necessary and obligatory to have a day's rest, ever, as a must. Which is, I think, something to be proud of. There is no exception of rules, whoever is, not to keep the Shabbath, and the fact that they say "Don't do," they said it was Rabbi Hillel, who was when he was asked, "Can you define the rules that God gave us, very shortly." And he said, "Don't do, perhaps you stand on one foot." He said don't do to others what you don't want them to do to yourself. I think that is very nice, and wise and kind laws. But we're not made to be good always.

What do you think about the situation in Israel at the moment?

It is very difficult. I've got a niece there, and I've got very, very good friends there. They argue and they quarrel, and they would like, they would like peace, everybody would like that. There is a lot of, of right on their side, I'm sure, but there is a lot of right on the Arabs' side as well. It was, it was their country as they took it for a long time, but it wasn't theirs as their own, and there are compulsory purchases of different homes in England as well, when they want to build a railway line, or a waterworks, or something like that, and then one has to sell one's house, and there are Arabs as well, but they can't live together, because of outside pressure, I think they could if they were not told by, by outsiders who have nothing better to do than fight, or, or be, make heroes of themselves. Oh yes, you, you won't allow the Jews to rule over you, they don't belong here, they should go back and we won't live with them, and it, it doesn't make, the two bads don't make one good. On the contrary, and, and I can't see an end to it for a long time, I'm afraid. ... .. Well, we lived here with my second husband. And although he retired, he said he wants, he is looking for a place where to hang his hat, and he went back in the City, and found himself a job, he loved to work, apart from doing the garden at home, and he was very happy doing it. But then he fell ill, and didn't know what it was. Well, it turned out that he is very ill with a malignant cancer, and he went to hospital, and had to have an operation, and had to, came home and had another operation, but unfortunately, they couldn't help him, and 15 months later he died in, here in Wimbledon, in 1960, on 18th August. Since then I live here alone, but at that time, I should say, that my daughter, she finished her studies in St. Andrews University, and she became a mathematician. She loved maths and it, computers were very new at the time, but she was very good at it, she was very interested, and she found a job from which they sent her, a job in Reading, and they sent her to London on to a Programmer Course and she went back to the job and she, she was very good, but she wanted to go to Israel, and she felt that she, if she goes, is in Israel, she, she wants to stay there, and she looked round and saw an advert of the Weizman Institute in Rehovot advertising for mathematicians, and she applied and I had also some letters of congratulatory from friends, explaining to me what a big thing is that, her to get a job in the Weizman

Institute, and she had this job of programming, and she was very happy there, she, she was a Zionist, she was very Jewish, she was a Zionist in heart for a long time, and she made friends and in she could have married several times, but she, she didn't want to, I don't know why, she was dilly dallying, she didn't want to get married and I begged her to come home, try it, come back to England, I should say, try it here, and I was very lucky that she was here when my husband, my second husband was so ill, and she stayed with me, and she didn't go back, she wrote to Professor Perers who was, at the time, the Head of the Institute, Mathematics Department, that she's not coming back. And she postponed it, kept postponing, till unfortunately, he died, so that I shouldn't be alone. And then she took me on a holiday, and went back to Israel, and she was there for two years, after which she came on a holiday again, and she met a Hungarian boy, whom she married. But unfortunately, she wasn't well, already then, and she, she died. She passed away in, in, she was married for about five years altogether, and she died in '68.

She had cancer?

She had cancer. She had cancer. I was back with her, on a holiday, in Israel, she wanted to go back again, and she enjoyed the holiday, it was in '67, before the War, '67 was the big War with Egypt, and she enjoyed it, she, she loved it, she loved Israel, not the War, before the War, and we came back, and then the War came, and, and we watched it. She was ill, she carried it very bravely. She, she was wonderful. She was not married for a year, and she had to have her breast taken off. She never once complained, never once that, why she had to go through this operation, and she was in the Marsden Hospital a lot, and came home to me, because they lived in Manchester then, and went back for the, the treatment, and came home, and then they moved to Essex, to Chigwell, which is practically London, and lived there, well, altogether five years, and, and she passed away. It was, it is something one never can forget, not forget, to, to suffer enough, every day, there isn't a day when I don't think of it, how she was, how it would have been, what she did, what she would have said, and what I, I learned from her, because she had a lot of common sense, and she was very kind and very honest. When she came home once, for instance, she had, she earned quite well, comparatively, in the Weizman Institute, she was paid well, she had a good job, and I took a lot of things when I went. I sent her coffee all the time, because she loved coffee. I posted the coffee, and I took her dresses from here that she should be smart. She didn't enjoy dressing very much, but I wanted her to look nice, and when she left, she had, I don't know how much money, and she went to the Headmistress of the Girls School in Rehovot and asked whether there are girls who would like to go on with their studies in the school, but cannot afford to pay, because, at that time, I don't know how it is now, everybody had to pay, I think, after 14, quite a bit, and she paid for two girls, for two years. And I said, "Well, did you have so much, had you got so much money?" She said, "You don't think that I am going to take out money of Israel? How, how can you imagine a thing like that?" She felt that she is not entitled to it. She paid for them, and she, she was very kind, and in '56, old school mates came out from Hungary, and advised her, she, when she, when they were here, she helped them, she was here in '56 still, she helped them to find lodgings, given advice where to go, what to do. One who was staying in Paris, who wrote to her that they are here in Paris, but she, she doesn't like the uncle to whom they came, he has no idea what they want to do. She went to see them in Paris, to give the advice, to do what she could do for them. She was very good. My father wanted her to become a dentist before she started mathematics, because, for everybody, but for my father even more so, mathematics was so far, and how can you make a living of just mathematics? It's very good it helps you, in business, with this and that, but not, not make a living out of it, and if you become a dentist, I pay all your studies and I give you a surgery, whatever is necessary, and if you get married you can stay at home, and attend to the surgery, and you can have your children with you, it's a very good profession for a girl, and she said, "No, I, it's not for me, I couldn't, I couldn't breathe in anybody's, the smell, or mouth," she didn't, and she made a very good choice, and I went to see her every year in Israel, I stayed with her, I stayed outside, and she was always, always very happy that I am, that I went. For once, she, she said, "You know this boy, he wants to see you. He said he heard that you are here, and" we lived in a flat then, I lived in a flat with her, and "he said he wants to meet you. I invited him for tonight. Is it all right?" I said, "Yes, of course, yes, why not. Yes, it's very nice the flat," you know, I was full of hope that she is going to marry him, or is serious or something, and he came and was very nice, he was sitting on the balcony, and she made coffee for us, and some cake, and then, oh, "I think it's half past eight. I'm late. I have to go to Abigail now". I said, "You have to go?" "Yes." "Well, he wanted to see you." And she left us, and she left me with the young man, or the young man with me. Of course, he soon left then. He was very nice, and left, and that was it. I never, I don't know, I don't know why she didn't want to marry.

Maybe the one she wanted wasn't there, or wasn't ready to marry her, I, I will never know, she never told me, although we had some very nice conversations with each other. She was a wonderful person, she, when the girls, my granddaughters, her nieces, came to the hospital, she could entertain them in, in the bed, where she was suffering, but she put a handkerchief on her hand, and she used a pencil to make eyes and mouth on her hand, and they, it was an old woman who spoke, and there was a young girl, "Where is ...." "oh ...." could speak, and she was wonderful with, with children. She wanted to have children adopted.

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F372 Side B

Maybe you would like to tell us something about your son?

Yes. He was always a wonderful promise. Ever since he was a little boy, a two year old, his father used to have a lie down after lunch. In those days, work started early, he left around about 7 and he came home for lunch roundabout one, then he had a lie down, and took a cushion, and he was about two years old, and he would carry the cushion for Daddy to have a lie down. And then when his sister was born, he was about, not quite two, and he saw me feeding the baby, he started once, I never did it in front of him, if I could help it, and once he just came in, and he started to shout, "Daddy, Daddy, the baby's eating up Mummy, look!" And they were very good with each other, they never, there was never quarrels, as is usual with sister and brother, "This is mine", and "this is mine", he never did. Once I came into the room, and he put toys into the pram, and I got quite worried, "What are you doing?" I thought, you know, that he hits the baby, "But she wants to play, surely she needs toys, she wants to play. The baby needs toys, Mummy." "Because why are you putting this all in the pram?" I said, "She needs toys." And later as well, he, they went to school together, he always led the little sister, and then they grew up and sort of parted, he went to the Gymnasium, and he was a good student there, and he was, he always can be funny, he can be witty, he can make people smile, and he also is very kind, he's very, how should I say? Helpful, and, and understanding, but he gets moody, he gets worked up quickly, and he, he, then he can be rude, or not even rude, I don't know, he, moody, and then he's a different kind of a person, but then, when it's over, he is like having a fit, when it's over, then it's over, and he's all right. And then he, when they couldn't go to school, when Jews couldn't go to school, he was at home and he, his father thought that he should come to the factory, into workshops, in case we have to work for the Germans, or for the Army, there will be a War, that he should know what to do and how, and he did that, and after the War, we, we found that there was an English College in Hungary, to which he was that, accepted, he had to pass some exams, and he was accepted and he was there a year, in that College, and after that he came to England and he went to St. Bee's, and he, he was there till he finished and then when the time came, he went to Leeds University.

And after Leeds University?

After Leeds University he was in the tannery as an apprentice, and he didn't earn very much, he earned £5 a week at the time, and, of course, he lived at home, he lived with me alone, his father had died by then, and Judy was in St. Andrews, he didn't like gardening, I always told him, "The lawn needs cutting", or this, and he did it, but he didn't enjoy doing it, and he told me so. He worked in, in Millom, and he had a sense, he had a feeling for tannery, and my father, his grandfather was very happy to teach him, to tell him what he thought he should know about, and how, and when my brother bought skins cheaply, he explained it to him, that these are not, they are more expensive than those which he thought are expensive, because these are the skin of, they were imported, a lot of the skins were imported from Argentina, because in those days, Argentina provided the meat for the big part of Europe, and some skins, are animals that were killed in the summer, are much better than the animals that were killed in winter because in winter the hair is thicker on an animal, and the skin is thinner, and so it weighs more and isn't so good, so he told him all, he told him, he was very happy and enjoyed teaching him, and he was a good pupil, he worked once, he worked in Morocco for a French tannery who bought the know-how from my brother's tannery, and he introduced it, for which my brother got well paid, and he also, and I still have a very nice letter of acknowledgement from the Manager there, and praising him, how good he was in, in his work. He also had a job like that in Mexico, where he introduced the method, but this was for himself only, he found it himself, and, and he, he got very well paid. And he stayed with friends, and, and he was very popular, he was invited again, which means that they liked to have him, that he wasn't a nuisance. Eventually, he got a job in Puerto Rico. A friend of my second husband started a tannery there, and he was looking for a Manager, and he was there and by that time, he knew already his present wife who's father and mother, with whom they lived in Milan, and he knew them, he got to know them, I told him to go there, to phone them, and I said, "Well, I understand that they have a very pretty daughter and you will see, and if you not, I'm sure you get a nice evening meal!" But yes, he, he fell in love with, with the daughter, and the daughter with him, and they got married eventually, and she, they got married and they went back, no, they got married in Millom, but she didn't have the permission to go to the States, she didn't have a Visa to settle in the United States. He had a Visa to settle there, to work there, but they were just

married, and she didn't, so she had to go back home, which was in June, and by Christmas time, he arranged that she received a Visa, and then he came back, fetched her, and they went to, and lived in, in Ponsa in Puerto Rico, and there were the children, the twins were born in Puerto Rico. I knew that she was expecting, and my husband was still alive, and we planned to go there for the birth, because the, no, one child will be born in January, and I wanted to be there, and we went before Christmas, well before Christmas, there is a telegram, "Congratulations Grandmother! Your two granddaughters are well, and their mother are well." I didn't understand it. What is this? It is a joke! She wasn't expecting two. And after telephoning, it turned out that she had, yes, she had two babies, the two girls, little girls, and they all well, and we went there, and found them well, and nice and everything was in order. She even had a nice help there, which wasn't very difficult in those days. And he did well in this factory, and the children, and I went to see them every year, and to stay with them a long time, every year, and went to swimming pool there, and went to the sea. It, it was all very nice. But after they were five years old, that they have to go to school, they thought that isn't a good idea to bring up children there, because there was a big difference between the Puerto Ricans and the, the British, he, they were not British, or they were not English. There, they were English, and Puerto Ricans, and there were some Americans, quite a few, but the schooling wasn't good enough, they didn't think the schooling was good enough. And he left it, and found himself a job, actually he was asked to take a job here, and he had a job of, of manufacturing, tanning materials, and he had that, then he had something else, and now he, also he's in partnership, in a business, with hides and skins, and travels a lot. He was, it's not, not two weeks yet since he came back from Korea where he was for a week, then he was in Scotland, and today he went to Italy, for instance. He's a workaholic, he works, and, and well, I hope he's all right.

And he lives near you here?

He lives, yes, his office is in, in New Malden, which is not, not far from here. There was a time when it was here in Wimbledon. He lives in, actually, he lives in Belgravia, he lives in South London. And my daughter-in-law, I must put a word in for her. She's very good, I love her dearly, she was very good to my daughter, and she's a very good wife, and a wonderful daughter-in-law. I love her dearly. If we have differences between mother and son, she's the one who settles it. I really don't think there are many like that!

(END OF F372 Side B))      END OF INTERVIEW

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NATIONAL LIFE STORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

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Ref. No.: C410/051 Playback Nos: F367 - 372 inclusive

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Collection title: Living Memory of the Jewish Community

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Interviewee's surname: Herdan Title: Mrs

Interviewee's forenames: : Lily

Date of birth: 1/10/08 Sex: F

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Dates of recording: 18/9/89 and 25/9/89

Location of interview: interviewee's home

Name of interviewer: Milenka Jackson

Type of recorder: Marantz

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### F367 Side A

Birth in 1908 in Ujpest, Hungary, industrial neighbouring town to Budapest "Newpest". First child of Jewish parents: father from Russia, mother Hungarian. Siblings born much later. Father left large poor family behind. Intelligent workaholic, worked himself up to owning the fifth largest tannery in Hungary, with 350 workers. Mother one of ten daughters; very close family. Wonderful mother and homemaker.

Kept Kosher home though less religious than father. All festivals, Friday nights and Sabbath observed. Father said early prayers daily. Family belonged to small Jewish community Ujshpest; not Orthodox synagogue.

Aware of anti-Semitism in first school, interpreted as envy of Jews' superiority.

Parents owned grocery before tannery. Father worked in a tannery during 1914-1918 war, making boots for army; then started own tannery.

Lily born in apartment in tannery, where father was employed. No bathroom then. Eventually got courtyard apartment and bathroom introduced, weekly bath children sharing water.

Religious education more important for boys than girls.

Started Gymnasium aged 10. Describes dolls and simple toys, songs, games with string. Satisfied with little.

Brother born when she was four and a half and ill with pneumonia. Simple home treatment, left her with poor eyesight. Doctor and all whom they dealt with were Jewish.

Father treated her well. Maternal grandparents a tramride away. Grandfather not a workaholic despite ten daughters. "Vinegar factory flew away". Dowries for ten daughters!

### F367 Side B

Description of maternal grandparents.

Home made entertainment.

Education respected; animals, flowers, learning languages. Ten daughters formed a choir.

Description of peasants sorting goose feathers.

Mother took care that Lily should never be frightened by anything.

Grandmother died while Lily on honeymoon. Grandfather survived nearby for eleven years.

Paternal grandparents lived in Polish Russia; family did not know them. Describes nine maternal aunts. Custom of childless women adopting babies who lost their parents in illness or childbirth.

Schooling: learnt well and easily. Languages, literature, history. Maths was her favourite. Homework in morning, school in afternoon. Safe to walk around alone.

### F368 Side A

More details of Gymnasium.

Separate religious instruction for Jews, Catholics and Calvinists.

New discrimination against Jews at school. Jewish instruction of poor quality. 4 hours of Latin weekly. Jewish children did disproportionately well at studies, but numerous clauses limited university places to 5%. Lily had best results in class, but the numerus clausus prevent university entry. Parents refused to pay for her go to. Payment was allowed. She feels glad that a poorer girl got in.

Anit-Semitism was pervasive in the society, based she feels on envy of Jews' success. Much welfare work among Jews; not much government provision. Also employment privately given to poor Jews. Poverty not despised or pitied.

Talks of 1914-18 war. Coming of Communism in 1918; soldiers pretended allegiance to both sides. Parents were capitalists. After that came Horthy and the pogroms. Many Jews killed. Horthy stopped active violence against Jews.

Family did not live in identifiable ghetto. Synagogue not attacked. Pogroms in countryside only.

People poor but not starving. One set of clothes. Respected for battling through. Between wars, slightly better conditions than the rest of Europe. People only pitied if starving. Mutual help automatic. Low wages the cause of poverty. Jews had no right to vote; non-Jewish women only had vote if aged 30 and had 2 children.

### F368 Side B

Age difference between self and brother was a bar to closeness. Little in common; led separate lives. Led life of well-to-do, middle class daughter after leaving school. Helped father in factory office in mornings: social life rest of the day; theatres, opera, ballet. Social life and young men much more important. Few middle class girls worked; no stigma either way.

Marriage at just under 20. Husband twelve years older. His parents owned a machine making factory. No material worries. Husband well-to-do; house and furniture provided.

Her family travelled - unusual in those days. She travelled more with husband. Very happy marriage.

Kept Kosher home until her son was born, then it was too complicated. Husband came from less religious family. Still lit candles.

Increasingly number of anti-Jewish laws passed. Her brother foresaw serious trouble ahead. Brother went to Cumberland in England and started a tannery there; wanted the family to emigrate but her father-in-law persuaded them against it.

She feels they were all stupid and optimistic. Visited England in 1938.

More new Jewish laws came in. 20% quota of white-collar Jewish workers. "Ornamental Goys" employed by Jews.

### F369 Side A

Increasing tension against Jews. Yet her family's optimism that it would all pass remained. Rabbi preached that Jews should just lie low till storm passes. At outbreak of war, Jews allowed in army at base jobs only. 10% Jewish children only allowed education.

Her son George accepted at school for 4 years; daughter also accepted.

Germans did not invade Hungary until 1944; came ostensibly as friends of Horthy's government. Until then, learned of progress of war through BBC, known as 'Vitamin C'.

No danger to Jewish children in streets. Had comfortable house, large garden, servants; conditions did not change for them when war broke out.

BBC did not broadcast news of what was happening to Jews of Europe; she resents this. Factory continued as normal;

products need in war. She heard only of wagons taking Jews to work camps; expected to work, not be killed. Excuse for work camps was that factories would be bombed.

Germans came into Hungary in 1944. Husband taken away to work as slave labourer: she felt fearful, said prayers. Still did not know of concentration camps until several months after this: found it hard to believe. Husband allowed out on one day leave; contacted families of fellow workers. She greatly treasures husband's reputation as 'a gentleman even in hell' (a Hungarian saying).

#### F369 Side B

"Husband was a gentleman even in the Ghetto". Now there was curfew, they wore the yellow star, couldn't use buses. Room in house requisitioned for German soldiers who behaved perfectly.

Husband contracted E. coli bacillus at camp. In poor health for many years. Eventually died in England after war because of it.

Forcibly moved, first to live with mother-in-law, then gendarmes came and gave them four hours to pack and go to railway line; wagon trains, eighty people closed into each. All family taken together to brick factory in countryside. One tap for water a distance away.

Family returned to Budapest by lorry and housed with many others in deaf and dumb Jewish school. Began to understand danger when saw a man shot dead for defending an old woman.

#### F370 Side A

"You believe what you want to believe".

Describes assembly of families for deportation. Remained in Budapest at deaf and dumb school. Crowded but bearable; families together. Food, sleeping and washing adequate.

Found it impossible to believe about Auschwitz.

"Hell is being crowded."

Her son George worked, enabling them to have enough food.

Hungarian population welcome the Germans in as they seemed better than the Russians; Jews would have preferred the Russians. "Red terror and White terror." Germans did not attack her family because they'd always treated their

workers well. In the deaf and dumb school, many classes were set up; studied Judaism, languages, history, etc.

Experienced no cruelty. Factory workers brought them in food, money, etc. Relatives procured family Salvadorean/South American visas (forged). These saved her from the wagons for Auschwitz. Taken to Budapest ghetto instead. Husband had rejoined them by then; he did not return from errand to collect warm clothing for slave labour camp.

#### F370 Side B

She had persuaded him to remain with them. By now she did realise that they had escaped death. She knew that those assembling in the wagons on the playing field were being taken to die. Knew that her escape was temporary.

She felt that Horty must have know his own life in danger, so he made apologia for his government.

They were allowed to leave the Ghetto and live in a Jewish house. Did not feel safe there, so went to farm near father's factory and were kept safe by farmer. Farmer knew they were Jewish (though pretending to be refugees); knew he would be paid later.

Recognised by Hungarian police as Jewish and sent to local remand prison. Children kept safe with adults in prison. 80 adults in one room; room organised by prostitute.

Lily attempted to find Wallenberg's office to obtain a free pass, failed.

After one month, all allowed free, after waiting at railway station to be taken to Auschwitz. Railway line bombed, so wagons couldn't travel. Some has even got into wagons.

Returned to family at deaf and dumb school. Husband hired a coach to take all family back to Ghetto. Many thousand there. Adequate food and money from factory. Everyone helped each other. Forged needed certificates. Many escaped from the Ghetto and were caught but there were not wagons to take them to Auschwitz.

Lily's family caught in street by German soldier; husband offered him free university education after the war. Fortuitously passed the Swiss Legation; went in and were kept safe on account of their Salvadorean citizenship.

Moved from there to requisitioned house owned by the Swiss; sternly but adequately treated.

Learnt that Allies had landed in France. Had always felt that Hitler would be beaten but the question was whether they would survive to see it.

#### F371 Side A

Russians liberated area; thieves and rapists.

20 January 1945, liberation of Budapest. Took time to liberate both sides of Danube.

Family returned to Ujpest.

Russians wanted all clocks and watches. Sheltered in factory; house occupied by non-Jewish acquaintances. Severe winter; food shortage. Husband worked at factory, still in poor health. Russian in command of factory.

Mother-in-law died; no wood for coffin; no rabbi to bury her as all had been killed.

Her father spent 3 years in military prison. Accused of sabotaging war effort by using unsuitable hides for shoes. Helped to survive by prison hospital doctor. Prison liberated when Germans had to move West.

Parents preceded her and husband to England. Joined brother at tanning factory in Cumberland. Communists took over in Hungary and father's position in his own factory impossible. Received no compensation. Son George went to England next and went to boarding school, St. Bee's. Lily and husband went to England in September 1949 after he had had repeated surgery to a damaged intestine. Had liftvan for limited number of possessions. Communists inspected what was allowed out. Official payments plus bribes made in order to get out of Hungary.

#### F371 Side B

Husband died 15 months after they went to England. She had done all she could to help him to live.

Had a lonely struggle bringing up the children, but relationships good. George went to Leeds University to study tanning; daughter Judy to Harrogate Ladies' College where she had no problems being accepted as a Jewess. She subsequently read Mathematics at St Andrew's University.

After husband's death lived at Millom, near Barrow in Furness. Found everyone kind and friendly. At first shared house with sister-in-law's family; then alone. Lonely and unhappy but kept busy. Worked in tannery office.

3 years later married her brother's partner, a widower. Extremely happy and successful marriage. Well-off financially. He retired and they moved to Wimbledon in 1959. Died of glandular cancer fifteen months later. Left her everything as he had no children of his own.

Preferred Wimbledon to Golders Green; did not like competitiveness of Jews there. Still regards herself as very Jewish; keeps all festivals etc.

On maternal side two aunts survived Auschwitz, two died there, two died of natural causes and three lived in USA. She has three cousins alive in Hungary.

After war, a table was kept at railway to welcome returnees from Auschwitz and pass on news of lost family members.

Describes wedding of survivors and coincidental reunion of twins.

#### F372 Side A

Recounts behaviour of Germans and Hungarians: some good and bad on both sides. Also some Jews good, others not. Moral dilemma of saving one life at another's expense. Some property returned, some not. Feels Holocaust could recur because of man's problem of needing to sin. "Will lion ever lie down with Lamb?" Feels religion is the best medicine against sin, so people fear hell.

Dislikes Jews to quarrel over forms of observance. Feels Israel to be necessary, but both sides should compromise.

Has lived alone since second husband died in 1960. Daughter Judy emigrated to Israel after St Andrew's; got excellent job as computer programmer at Weizman Institute. She was a Zionist. Married in her thirties but got breast cancer one year after her marriage and died four years later. She had no children. Lily thinks of her daily.

#### F373 Side B

Son George got on well with sister. Good personality though sometimes volatile. Had a talent for tanning; managed a tanning factory in Puerto Rico for a time after the war. Details of tanning business. George happily married with twins. They live in London and she has a wonderful daughter-in-law and twin grandchildren.

END OF INTERVIEW