

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Barbara Marton Farkas

April 27, 1990

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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Barbara Marton Farkas, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on April 27, 1990 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview cannot be used for sale in the Museum Shop. The interview cannot be used by a third party for creation of a work for commercial sale.

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BARBARA MARTON FARKAS
April 27, 1990

Q: Would you tell me your name please?

A: My name is Farkas-Martón, Barbara. I was born in, uh, Beliu--that's in Arad [**NB:** province], North Transylvania, Romania.

Q: In what year?

A: In May 4th, 1920.

Q: OK. Uh, Barbara, would you tell me, um, a little bit about uh growing up, about your family?

A: We were living in Beliu until 1937. I went to elementary school in that town, lived there. Was a small community of Jewish families. So around thirty, thirty-five families. We had a synagogue. We had a rabbi, a shochet. And the life was pretty good in that time. We have Purim balls, Hannukah balls, get together. Many friends. And we were uh at least fifteen, twenty children. And uh on Sunday morning when we went to the rabbi's house, and they teach us Hebrew and brochas [**NB:** blessings]. And that mean...when I reach the elementary school, I know to read, to pray. I know all the brochas. And the life was pretty good. Until, uh ...

Q: Excuse me. Be...before we go on, what did your father do?

A: My father had a grocery store, and my mother was helping him in the store. We had a maid who was taking care of the house. I mean, cleaning and uh...but not cooking, just cleaning. And working in the garden. We have a beautiful flower garden. And, uh, we had a pretty good life, that time.

Q: What was it like to be a Jew? Did you feel different because you were a Jew?

A: No. In that time, it was...I didn't, uh, have any bad uh treatment. I mean, uh, antisemite, uh, expression in the school. Nothing. Was very, very friendly situation in the school. I mean, in the elementary school; and also with the Romanian people. They were our, uh, clients in the store, and good relation.

Q: OK. What, um...what happened?

A: In, uh, 1933, we get a other store, a competition. And my husband gets bankrupt.

Q: Your husband?

A: My...I'm sorry. My father gets bankrupt, the store. And then after that, we open again the store on my mother's name. But the situation...the economical situation get worst. And in 1937--oh, I forgot to tell that when I finished the elementary school, the first two grades, I...I was learning at home the high ...the high school classes. And a teacher was uh tutoring all that...we other too children. And we went to Beiu_ for exam. But on the third, fourth and fifth grade, I was a regular student in Beiu_. That's a bigger town than Beliu, also in Bihar [NB: province]. Was a very...it's a very old school, with a...with French nuns and French uh priests, them...the boys school. And uh I was there until uh I finished the fifth grade. Then, in 1937, we sold the house and the store; and we moved to Oradea,¹ which is a big city also in North Transylvania--some seventy, seventy-five kilometers from Beliu. There we had...my father bought a house, a small house; and also in that house he opened a grocery store again. And I continue my high school in Oradea. [Altiadona (ph)] was the name of the high school; a very good, state high school--a girl's high school. Because in Romania the girls were separated from boys--different uh building, different street even. And I graduated there; and I was a very good student. Every...end of every year in Oradea, I was uh...I get medals; because I was a very good student. You call it premiums? Books and some medals; and I was considered a very good student. And I...really I was. That means when I graduated, when I...when ...when I had the baccalaureate exam at the end; because in Romania, that you finish with the high school you have to pass a other very, very difficult exam. They call it baccalaureate exam. And to that exam, they came from the other cities student to the Institute to pass that...that exam. The commission was formed from university professors, not local. And we were to that...inscribed to that uh exam, around seventy students; and I was the third one in the grade which I pass it. Very good grade. That was in May...in June 1940; and that was the last graduation at Romanian schools in North Transylvania. Because on August 30 was the Vienna Dictatum, and in September 6th the Hungarian army entered in North Transylvania. That mean, uh Oradea became uh Hungary; but South Transylvania, where is part of my family was living there, there...that's Romania, and...still Romania. Because the Hungarian had a law--uh, Numerus Nullus--for the students to enter the universities in the first year and the second year, I was not accepted to study further. I mean, to go to university. Because I would like to, in that time and after that, very much to study further. But I wasn't accepted, because of this law. And uh...then at the end of September, I went to the Jewish hospital in Oradea. Was a medium-sized Jewish hospital, some one hundred beds. And I was train to work in the laboratory of that hospital. And then, after very short time, I get a job. That means I was paid. Very low salary, but I had something to do. And I was...I worked there until, uh, came the... the Nazis enter in Oradea in 19...I mean, in Hungary in 19 March, 1940--'44. '44.

Q: Can we stop at this point? Can you tell me a little bit about what Oradea was like between 1940 when the Hungarians came in and 1944 when the Nazis came in? What was it like?

A: Was...was a...a atmosphere of antisemitism. The Arrow Cross uh Party in Hungary--the

¹ Also: Oradea Mare. **Hungarian name:** Nagyvárad. **German name:** Grosswardein.

Nyilaskeresztes Party they call it--start to make propaganda and wrote all kinds of graffiti on the walls against the Jew. And, uh, the commun...the people, if they thought that they are communist, they were taken away. And, uh, was a very strange atmosphere. People were...it...we...we heard about what happened in Poland and, uh, in Germany, about the Kristallnacht. And, uh, we got a little bit, uh, scared, but everything happen far away from us. Even we saw, because we were living very close to the main railroad station in Oradea. I saw long wagons with people taken from...they said they are from Ukraine. I don't know, I don't think they were Jew. They were prisoners, and they take them to Germany to work. And people start...uh, tried to give them bread and water through the window. They were in...in cattle wagons. But the Hungarian, uh, gendarmes didn't let ge...uh, get close to those wagons. That I saw, and I ...I hear about what's going on. We had radios, and we hear what is happening; but we said, "This can't happen to us." We very... we were very optimistic, a little bit. Very fool optimistic. And then when the Nazis, the Germans, occupy Hungary--really occupy, in 19...March 1944, that was March 19th--starting from April 1st, 1st of April, we were uh wearing the David uh star on our clotheses. And I was afraid to go in downtown or in the streetcars without star on...on my coat--because was still uh spring, and I was wearing still a coat. But I went to work. That time, I left the hospital because the hospital was occupied by SS. And uh Jewish girl, other friend of mine, was working in the x-ray lab. She also didn't went to work for them. And also I left the hospital, because we were afraid to go to work for uh ...in the presence of the SS. Maybe they wouldn't take it out either. But I left the hospital, and I start to work only a few weeks at [Angelo (ph)]--was the name of that photo company. And I was working their laboratory developing films and doing copies on...and so on. And I went home always when was already dark; and I put a uh overcoat over uh...about my coat, that the uh... the Star of David can't be seen. But my parents didn't let me continue to work; that they were very afraid that they're going to catch me. That means, I stopped working at [Angelo (ph)] before the ghetto, be two weeks. Then on--that was from 1st of April, we had the Star of David. At first May, the same year--I mean, '44, 1944--they start to take people into the ghetto in Oradea. Ghetto was around the orthodox synagogue in Oradea. That was the Jewish quarter...quartier. And in the hospital... they...the...in the synagogue, they set up the hospital. And uh in the ghetto, we moved to a family who was the rabbi in the town of Beliu. But unfortunately, he too, after the Hungarian came to Oradea...come North Transylvania, he want to be moved from Beliu to Oradea. And they...we move in their apartment; because we stay in the one room, and they stay--only the old man and his wife--in the other room. And I start to work in the hospital in the ghetto; doing very simple, very routine test. Because they didn't have the equipment. They don't let to take the equipment from the Jewish hospital to the ghetto. Just simple test: drawing blood and doing some urine test. Very simple test. And also they trained me to give shots, because they didn't have enough nurses. And that was from 4th May. That was my birthday when they took me to the ghetto. And we were there until May 26th, when start the deportation from the ghetto. I didn't want to let my parents alone; and I preferred to stay with them and go with them, not with the hospital group. And that was my luck, because the people with the hospital group--nurses, uh sick people, everybody, doctors--they were taken direct in Auschwitz to the crematorium. That at 1st of June, going to the rail station--not the main train station in Oradea, to a littlest rail station in the [Rajdio (ph)] Park--they put us in the

wagons. Cattle wagons, very very crowded wagons. We...everyone had just a little room to sit down. They put a [kibla (ph)] for uh toilet. No water, no nothing...a little water daily, but in a half-hour it was gone. And they locked the door from outside, and the train left the railroad. They told us--these were the Hungarian gendarmes who take us to the...to the...to the wagons--in the way before we start to leave the ghetto, they came with a bag to each of us and say, "You have to put in this bag all your jewelry." They took my earrings, my watch, my ring. Everybody put his jewelry in that bag. That means the Hungarian gendarmes took those jewelries, not to... Because people, uh...they hide at home, or give to somebody to keep them; but even they keep earrings or uh watches. Then the wagons start and they said that they will take us to north Hungary in the pusztá [the Hungarian prairie] to work in ...on the farms. And we...we trust them; but later on they mis...we find out that they misled us. Because then we arrived in Kassa.² That was the last Hungarian north city in Hungary. After Kassa start already...well, the...the border to Czechoslovakia, which was occupied by German in that time. And because we then...they didn't get out at Kassa, didn't let out us to get out from the wagon in Kassa. They...the wagon and the train went to Poland. And...in Czechoslovakia, and then to Poland. In that moment, everybody was very very very scared; because we find out that they misled us, that we be in no Hungary, no pusztá work, no nothing. They took us to Poland, but we didn't know where. And we traveled...I don't know, from Monday morning 'til uh Thursday dawn--I mean, Thursday early morning--when we arrive in...in Auschwitz. When we arrived there, we smelled the smoke. Was dark. And when we get out from the wagons, we saw people out the doors stripped dresses...uh, coats. They were Polish people, mostly. They speak Yiddish; and they said, "You have to do separate lanes...uh, lines. The men for on one side, the women on the other side." And they told to the womens--they have young children on their arms, or uh beside them--they said, "Give the children to the old people, old womans." We didn't...these poor womans, they didn't know what means. Which mother would left their child out from their hands? And then we have...there we have time to say adieu to my father, to kiss him. And then (pause - crying) ...then we start to go ahead in line. I was in the same line (pause - crying) ...with my mother and with the lady what...who...whom house we were living in the ghetto. I mean, the rabbi wife. And we just passed a few, I don't know maybe ha...quarter of mile. Very short way. And we saw a big side lights on the...directed towards us, that...and on there was staying a very nice looking SS man. And we find out later that man was Mengele. And beside him there were some helper--people with those stripped coats; and with the...his hand he pointed to people. And because I was not on his side on the line--I was the inside line--he pointed to me, and came two men. They grabbed me and put me out from the line, on the right side. I didn't have time to kiss my mother, or to see...to say something to her. I was terrible shock. And after that we find out that the people, they... I mean, the women, they... All the people--I mean, my mother and all the others-- they then direct to the crematorium.

² Hungarian name for city currently located in Czechoslovakia. Czech name: **Košice** (German name: Kaschau). Located in an area which originally belonged to Hungary, but was made part of Czechoslovakia in 1918; occupied by Hungary from 1938 to 1945, but returned to Czechoslovakia after the war ended.

And they...when we were around one uh hundred or maybe more on the right side, they take us to the bath. We left all our clothes on the floor. They cut our hair from all our body; and we get a shower. We...you know? We...and then, with[out] any towel or anything, just that's how we were, they give us a very very strange looking dress: long, short, terrible-looking. And some also very bad shoes; and they put us immediately, still wet, outside in the... in the yard. Outside the wash building. And there, from far away, were the mens also; because we saw people with those stripped coats. And up today, I think--and maybe was just imagining--that I saw my father between them. But I have...I was not sure. Then from there after a while, after waiting outside maybe one hour, two hours--I don't remember exactly how long time -- we marched to the C Lager. And they put us in the Block 15. There was nothing. Just some uh straw on the floor. And, uh, the Blockälteste who was a Slovak--I mean, the Jewish girl from Slovakia--that was the Blockälteste. I mean, the boss over us. And she has some Stubdienst--I mean, some helper--also Slovakian, because they spoke German. These people, they were...they have some, uh, position. I mean, Blockälteste or Stubdienst were, uh, choosed by the SS because they spoke...spoke, uh, German, or a little bit Yiddish. They understood German. And those Blockältestes, they're very very bad people. They start to scream to us, "Why you came...let them to take you here? You know they are...they want to put you in the crematorium. Your parents are on the smoke." Uh, terrible things they talk...talk. Everybody was in shock--crying, screaming. We didn't know...up to that moment, we didn't know anything what's going on. And many people, they lost their consciousness and they get their prayers.... Terrible situation happen in the block. Crying, screaming. Many, uh, some of them went to the...to the fence, touched the wire. Get, uh...and they die, because they were with electricity. Very, very terrible situation happens. Then...we were sleeping on the floor, on that straw. And...and the night was pretty cold, because in--I don't know what kind of climate-- maybe because we had only one cloth on...one dress on us. In early morning in dark, they took us outside from the block to say the "Appell"--counting us. Sitting five in a row or, uh, sometimes more, and they count and they count us hundred times, 'cause they knew how many should be. And the many times they made mistakes, and again count. And we stood out on that terrible.... I mean, was cold in the early morning. Very, very, uh, tight to each other; and finally when the SS, uh, woman came and recount us, some of us, they fell down or sit down because they couldn't stay. She start to beat that...that person in the face. And was...was a...was a terrible, uh, way to...to stay at say the "Appell." And this say the "Appell" again was afternoon. That means, was very warm. The sun was very...very warm, that people were fainting from the warm...uh, from the warm. In the morning, was very cold. In afternoon, late afternoon was very cold...very hot. Finally when we get in the block, we get in a big bowl some kind of food: some soup--sometimes with a piece of...of, uh, potato in, sometimes just fluid. And we passed that bowl around five, six people; and we were counting how many sips each one did. And save God if somebody did...took more sips than, uh, uh, we were, uh, agreed to take each one. And we get a piece of bread--was all as ...as black, almost black and strong like a...like a stone. But we were very, very hungry, and we eat every.... Somebody, some people couldn't eat; and those people they couldn't eat, or [NB: either] they were very fancy or, uh, they didn't like it. They didn't realize that is for survival. They die for famine. And uh the food had some kind of smell, [cabron (ph)]. There, after that, we found out that they put some bromide in the food to make

that the woman don't have the period. And I didn't have the period more that one year. And uh that was starting from June 1st. Then...I was eating, forcing myself to eat everything. The bread. Sometimes they give us a little little piece of margarine, or a little bit of piece of wurst--I mean, uh, cold cut. But very little. In--I don't know exactly--in July, they came and ask us who wants to help to take some container to the other side, to the other, uh, lager--to the B Lager. Because the kitchen was in C Lager. And those girls or women who get to work in the kitchen, they had a good life. I mean, they have enough food. And I went and I said, "I want to...to work, to take those container to the B Lager." Because they said, "You will get a little bit more food when you finish with that work." And because I was hungry, I said I preferred to go and held those heavy containers and get a little food. And they took us...they take us very early, in dark in the morning, to take out those containers to the B Lager. And we...we passed through the main gate of C Lager, and that then we pass through the B gate of the ...of the B Lager, the gate of the B Lager. Once happen that uh the two of girls who were coming on back of my side push us, touch our container. And the food was not covered--I mean, the container was not covered. And a little bit of food spill out from the container; and the SS uh woman saw this, and they punish both of us. We put down the container aside, and they take us to the C Lager gate, and said to us to kneel. And we took bricks, bricks in our hands. We held up our hands with the bricks, and stayed there from the...from dawn until the sun was...I think was already noon. And we were very afraid with the other girl, because we...in that time, we know already about crematorium. And we were afraid that maybe as a punishment they going to take us to the crematorium. But uh at noon, they let us go back to the block. And during that time when we were staying kneeling with the bricks on our hands, we were uh heard from far...from far away their music bands playing "The Merry Widow." And we were crying and crying (crying), listening to that music; because I knew that uh music from my home, from before. And then finally at noon they let us go back to the to the block, and we were happy that we escaped and they didn't take us to the crematorium. And since then, I never went to carry those uh container. Even when I was very hungry, I was very afraid of something happen and that's the end. In August, came...they announce in the block that those people they were working in before--I mean, in their homes, in laboratory, in photography, as uh seam...as uh tailors--that means they have fine hands, fine fingers. They go aside, and they choose us. I don't know how many we were in our block. Maybe twenty-five, thirty. They take us to the Lager, the Block number 10. And there were also girls from other uh blocks from the C Lager, also in the same category. After a while--maybe one week, ten days later--came a commission... I mean, two civil wearing.... I mean, not SS. Two men, and uh two SS men; and we had to pass in front. They took in a...in a room where on the wall there were a sign like in a ophthalmology office. And we, they put us to read the numbers, to what...and they were looking how our eyes are good or not. I mean, what line, lower line you can read. And also they touch our fingers. And uh I was choosen to go with that group, but I don't know where. We didn't know where, whats means that. And they choose three hundred of us. Only three hundred. They take us to B Lager in a block. Empty block. That means, only we were there. They say that they going to keep us in quarantine for...I don't, I think three weeks. To see if somebody gets sick or some contagious illness. Unfortunately, one of the girls get sick; and they said that she has typhus. I don't know if it's true or not, but they keep us, I think, two...uh ten days

more, to see if other girls get sick or not. But nobody gets sick; and I don't think she had typhus. Just a diarrhea, or something [like] that. We don't...didn't have doctors there, just uh uh nurses; or there wasn't a good diagnostic to say that is typhus or not. Anyway, after...in the...after the quarantine was over, in the end of September, they put us in a wagon, in a truck. They take us to the wash...I mean, to the shower room in Auschwitz. We were afraid to go...always we were afraid to go to shower, because in the shower happened that they let the gas come out in...instead of water, they said. I don't know, but they said that that was the way how they did it. We...we get a shower there, and we get pretty good dre...clotheses. Underwear, better dress, coat, better shoes, some uh stockings. That was something uh batik [NB: a scarf] on the...in the head. We...we feel pretty ba...good, because we we didn't have lice in that time. But uh we very much afraid of lice. During the Auschwitz stage, I passed two times through a selection. There came doctors from uh...I don't know from where, SS doctor; and we...we...naked, we shoot past in front of them. And if somebody have some little uh sign on his...on his uh body, this for put on the left. And they took them to the crematorium. Was terrible selection, because they were afraid that the whole Lager B is going to have typhus or some kind of contagious diseases. And they do this...I was passing two times this kind of selection; but thanks God, I didn't have any thing on my body and I...I go through. Now after we had that better clothes, we...they take us in a wagon. Not... not cattle wagon; a better wagon. Was not dirty, was pretty good. And they take us to Weißwasser.³ Was a place that the telephone ca...company had a big factory of air plane lamps. My factory was very close to Breslau [NB: Wroc_aw]. And there we have three barracks. Each one of us, we had individual beds; uh, some, uh...some, uh, beds...not bed sheets, but uh blankets. Was uh was a a brick oven there. That means, in the winter we had some brick, and we...we...we stay in warm room. And from there we were walking every morning to the factory, under the supervision of the SS woman. And, uh, we worked eight hours, and at night we came home. I was working first in the chemistry lab, because I was registered as a laboratory technician. But then they put me to...after a short while they transfer me to the Cathode Abteilung [NB: Cathode Workshop]. That means I did the cathode part of the...of those lamps. Very fine, very little pieces, with, uh, four chips working, uh...very, very fine. Very small, and very fine job. All day with the lights on those cathodes; and with some machine, I pinch each one and put something on the end. Anyway, was very...a good situation there; because we was warm in the la...in the factory. That means, we were not feeling the winter. Was already winter. The food was not too much; but, uh, we had a nurse in the...in that, uh, barracks, was a part of barracks was the infirmary. There somebody if he has something, uh, sick or, uh, cold or diarrhea was taken there; and the nurse was a Jewish girl was taking care. But they didn't keep...keep us too long in the infirmary, because they were also afraid that they going to take us to crema[torium]. Because they say that Groß Rosen--or I don't know which camp--was not far from there. And I

³ Subcamp of Groß Rosen. There were actually two subcamps with this name, one located at Kreis Rothenberg in Lower Silesia and the other at Kreis Hohenstadt in the Sudetenland. The camp in Sudetenland is where Firma Telefunken had its facility. The camp in Lower Silesia had a glassworks. It was evacuated in February 1945.

remember I was one time I was very very hungry and very very very weak. I went to the factory. I work, but I feel very weak. And the nurse was a very good person. I still...a long time I keep in touch with her. She remain in Sweden. She married a Swedish man. And we ...when we...when I was in the infirmary, she gave me extra food; and I get it, little bit, I feel much better after uh three, four days. And also she told me to come...after they divided the food to everybody, to come to the infirmary. And she gave me a little extra food. She was a very good person. She gave extra food to those girls they were a little bit...know a little bit they were weaker. And I was between those. Then, at end of February--we were there from October [1944] 'til end of February [1945]--during the night we start to hear all kind of noises; airplane and shooting. And they said that the Russia are starting to clo...to get closer and closer. And they evacuate the...that... those barracks, and they put us on feet to walk. I don't remember exact the place where they took us--other Lager. And there also were a good number of people. They took those people, too; attached to our group, go further. Like a snowball; at the end, we were a lot of people. I don't know how many--thousand, maybe. And from that date--from Feb...end of February until end of April, that means March--two months, more than two months, we were all the time going from here to there by foot, by train...uh getting out from the train, on the camp. And eating green leaves, and no water. And then we start to get a lot, a lot of lice; because we didn't have water to drink nor to wash ourselves. And already was uh...at one night we were in wagon and the wagon was lock up. One night we heard the SS men outside talking, of the wagon, "Our Führer is dead."-- "Alter ist töt," he said. And we...we just were listening, and we di.. we didn't know which Führer; because was a Führer of the camp, and was the Führer Hitler. And then after that--that was around end of April...23, 24th April. Something like that; we didn't know exactly. I just _____ glad said these, uh...find out this date. After a while, they...we were very close to Denmark, we find out; to the Denmark border. They put us...they take us from the wagon, and they set us in lane on that camp. And around us they set up some cannons, you know? And we were very, very afraid that they going to kill us. You know, I don't know how you call those, which uh...Katushka⁴ or something, they kill in line people. We say, "Now, this is the end!" But after short time, maybe half hour, we saw an airplane flying very low. And then gear down, landed not far from that point. Pass maybe one hour, two hours. They said, "Get up, go back to the wagon." We didn't know what happened. Then we were sitting in the wagon; and in that moment, the SS was change to the Wehrmacht. People came...I mean, Wehrmacht soldiers came to take over the wagons. And they were sit...they opened the door, and we were sitting on the floor with the legs outside, clinging outside from the wagon. And he said--I remember I was very close to the door--and he said, "Yah, you're going to go to the good places. What...I don't know what going to happen to us." And we passed through very nice places, very nice uh towns and very nice places we go ...we went with the wagons through. And we didn't know what were going on. After a short while the train stop, they open large the doors; and we saw... I was not in the first wagon. I was mostly in the middlest part of the wagon, but was a very long train. I find out later that we...that mean, we were four thousand. And during this uh going and coming, many times we... we observe that in the

⁴ NB: Katusha rockets, or perhaps reference is to machine guns (such as Kalashnikov rifle).

morning we are in the same place, circling around. And during the night, we heard many shootings; because they said that men started to try to escape. Anyway, when uh they opened the doors, we look out and we saw nurses with white dresses and caps with red cross on their front head. And...on the caps. And uh when they arrived to our wagon, there were two or three civilian...two or three nurses and the Wehrmacht people. Maybe one Wehrmacht person. And a man said to us, "You are free now, and you going to stay overnight here." Yah, they said that we are in the border with Denmark, at Padborg. That was a town or city. We were not in the city; we...they take us to a farm during the ni...over the night. They said, "You are now in the border of Denmark and uh...and uh Germany; and tomorrow you will go to Sweden. You stay here overnight, and you are now free people." Everybody start to cry, to scream: "Where is my mother? Where is my sister? Where is my father?" We were in terrible shock. We didn't know what to...what to...what to think. Then came the Red Cross cars at every wagon, and they put us in those wagons, take us to the...to a very close farm. And so full with lice; they didn't uh disinfect us. They put us to a table, and they give us to eat uh oatmeal with a little milk. Not too much milk. And naturally, we eat like wolves. We very hungry; and they said that they don't give us too much food, because they don't want after that big starving to eat too much. Because will not be good for us. And uh they give us some, uh, sleep bags. And, uh, in a barn, a covered barn, we stayed there. We sleep in those sleeping bags over night. What was interesting in that barn, that in our...that group there were also Kapos, Jewish Kapos, and the Blockältestes and Stubdienstes. They were strong. You can see from that picture, the last picture of mine, not everybody was skinny. Those, uh, good looking girls, they were Stubdienst or...or Blockältestes. They were eating well, from our food. Some strong--stronger, not too very strong--people are start to beat them well with some sticks, start to...to beat them. But, uh, even they arrested one of them, one of the Kapos. Because the girls start to scream that he was a Kapo, he was a devil; and they arrested that person. In the morning, they took us to the railroad--so full with lice, with the same clotheses on us...on us. And, uh, they put us in some wagons, first class wagon. All, everything was in, uh, velvet. You can't imagine. We are so...feel so bad, too, with those lice and dirty how we were, to sleep on those velvet, uh, seats. And they...I don't know, they...where they took us, to Copenhagen or where. And then we ...

Q: OK. Let's stop here. We need to change tapes. This is a good place to stop.

A: OK.

Q: OK.

TAPE #2

Q: OK. We're on? Are we? We're on. OK. You've arrived in a city, which the train took you where...

A: To take us, they...the cit...the train took us to the port. And they, we took a sh...they put us in a ship. And we went to Malmö in Sweden. The ship debark in Malmö--that's the southern uh port of Sweden. In Malmö, also they put us in some uh Red Cross trucks. And they take us in a forest; some military camp was there somehow, because there were tents. And that... there, they disinfected us. They took...take all our clothes. They look over our body...body. They wash us. Two persons wash us on a...on a bed--you know, a rubber bed. Because we have...I have, I was so skinny that I couldn't wash myself. And uh because I have so many lice uh pinches on my skin, the doctor thought that I have scabies. And they put a note on my wrist--"Scabies." And I said, "I'm sorry, it's not scabies." Because I know that scabies is itching, and I didn't feel any itching. And I said, "These are lice pinches." Anyway, they put some uh sol...solution on my body. They wash it. They put some DD...DDT on my hair, because my hair uh where I had a little hair on uh... They put the DDT on my head. They made a turban with a towel. And they give us very nice clothes--a coat, nice shoes. Everything new. And from there we went to Landskrona, where in a school they set up a quarantine from us...for us. We get some uh sleep bags, and where we...we were uh sleeping on those sleep... uh sleep bags on the floor in...in the classes. The second day after we arrived there, they...everyone was taken to x-ray, to a medical center or some...I don't know. Was a hospital, I think. They made x-ray on everyone. They check us; a very long medical check-up. They didn't took any blood. Just physically they check us: the eyes, the throat, everything. And then, who they find out they are sick--something on the lung, or they find something wrong--immediately they take them to the hospital. I didn't have anything wrong. I mean, just I was very very skinny. I had sixty pounds--thirty kilos. I was almost bone and...and skin. But in the quarantine, we had very very good food. I mean, very dietetic food that didn't hurt. Nobody get diarrhea or stomach pain. Very, very careful given...uh, they give us very careful, uh, dieting food, that after, uh, ten days everybody get a lot of pounds. And I don't know how many pounds I get, but I feel much stronger. And in this time, start to come every day, uh, Jewish woman [**NB:** women], some... I don't know what was the name of the Jewish association of that...those women. They came to visit us, and ask about our family; and everybody was asking, "How I can find out about my family--my parents, my sister, my husband?" And they take the addresses and, uh, try to to find the list, what they find in the...at the Nazis. Because they have lists. For example, our group--the three hundred people--they find the group a telephone can with our names. I found this out not that time, but later on. And, uh, that was May 4th when we arrive in Sweden. At May 7 was the end of the war; and was a big procession in the street with flags, with uh...with uh... How you call? Uh, Christian, uh, reverends, or...in their, uh...

Q: The priests in their robes?

A: ...in their, uh, church robes, with, uh, lights, with, uh... How you call those? Uh... Saw

lighting in the hand...

Q: Torches?

A: Torches, yah. With torches. They parading in the street for the Peace Day. We find...they said that the...the war is over. And they stop in front of the...of the school--that was the school then where we in, uh, staying. And they star...start to cheer us. Everybody was crying. (Crying) And then during that time already, we find out that North Transylvania became again Romania. And we were from Romania--I mean, from North Transylvania--from Hungary, from uh the...all part of Hungary, from Czechoslovakia, from Poland. All kinds of people we were there. And the consulates from these countries came to visit us, and make the list. And because I was from...taken from Oradea, they said, "Oradea now is Romanian; you belong to Romania now." And they give us...I don't know, very little of money; and they said to write letters if we have some relatives in South Transylvania. Because they knew that in North Transylvania, no Jewish relatives survive. And I knew the address of my uncle in Arad, who was South Transylvania; but I miss the address with one number. I put 34 [Nikoufilipescou (ph)] Street instead of 32 [Filipesc... (ph)]; and he never get the letter. Because the 32 was a dormitory of uh...I don't know which school, and they never get the letter. That means, from May I didn't get any answers. Nothing. I was very very...feeling very very alone, and very so lonely; because other girls, they get immediately telegrams and uh news by telephone to the embassy that uh they were happy that they are alive, so on. I didn't get anything. And then from there, after the quarantine was over, they take the Romanian woman from the quarantine to a place near Stockholm. I don't remember the name. There, we were only girls and womans from... from Romania. I mean, from North Transylvania; because all the Romania was not deported. And uh we were very well treated there: food, and we get other clotheses. And from Stockholm, ...we were...it was very close to Stockholm, that place. There were some villas on the seashore; very nice place. And uh we had movies; and uh the Jewish ladies--I don't know exactly, I don't remember the association of those ladies--they came. They took us to Stockholm, to visit...to see Stockholm. And they take care of us very closely. Very...very nicely. And we start to...to regain our...our uh lost pounds. And uh after a while, when we feel ex...not strong, we...we feel boring [NB: bored] there. Because we didn't have what to do all day; just talking all the time about the lager, about our life before, and.... We didn't ha...do anything, just waiting what going to happen. And once... after a while, we find out that we can go to work. And I get very friendly with three sisters. They, three of them, they get ...they survive. The older was a seam... How you say it? She made uh clotheses...

Q: Seamstress.

A: Seamstress, yah. The older--the younger, the middle one and the younger, they had no any skill. Myself, also; because we were just graduated from high school. And we said, "What...what to do? How...what to work? What work we can take?" And this older sister said... She left her girl in Budapest at the Red Cross; and she find out, until that time then we were in that place, that her si...her little girl survive. And she was so happy, and...but she

can't get home immediately. Anyway, she said, "Come with me to work as uh...in a confection factory. And you have to say that uh you work in the past--a little lie--to work, to be together, to don't separate us." And they...they... we went to Örebro. It's a pretty big city, west of Stockholm. Not very far from Stockholm; maybe, I don't know, one hundred and fifty miles from Stockholm. A very very nice old city; and there was a confection factory by name [Tulene's (ph)]. They did uh suits for men and coats, for men and womans too. And we start to work there. They...you know, the work in factory goes in line. We did all the...all day the same thing. Uh sewing the line of around the hems, in...in the vest of the...of the suits. That means, uh was a very nice place. The daughter of the owner find us a nice apartment with two bedrooms; and we stay in the same apartment and went to work. Very close was the work place, in downtown Örebro.

Q: How long did you stay there?

A: We stayed there...I stayed there--my friends, they went home earlier than me, because they let go home first those people they find their closest relatives. I mean, the oldest--by name Blanca--she finds her daughter. She was the first. She went home. The middle one had uh get telegram from her fiancé, who came from Ru...from uh Russia. I mean, from the forced camp labor. The youngest one, they didn't want to separate them, they went together home first. That mean, I was left alone. And I feel very bad; plus, I didn't know anything about my family. Finally, around Christmas, somebody gave me the idea... Because I know for sure that my uncle is alive in Arad. I was thinking maybe they changed apartments or new address, but I didn't know that. And somebody told me, "Write a let...a telegram, send a telegram to the Jewish community in Arad. Give their name, his wife name, his son name, approximately their age. And maybe they knew them, and they will answer you." And I did that. And after very short time, maybe ten days, I get answer from them. From my uncle, saying in the telegram, "Came home! We...we wait you with open arms." And I was very very happy that finally I get in touch with them. We start to write to each other; but that was Christmas '45. But I can't...couldn't go home until '46 in September. All that time, I was working at [Tulene's (ph)]. I getting friendly with other girls; because in that factory, there other girls from other groups also taken from uh Germany camps. And we get friendly with the..I get friendly with them; and uh we went to each other. We get in to movies. We have a pretty good life there. The Swedish people were very, very nice to us. They invited to their houses. But we didn't speak so well; very very little we speak Swedish. And when we start to speak a little bit better, they still invited us; but we didn't felt good to go up to go to their home. Because they all the time they were...they were asking us about how it was in the camps, in the lager; and we were so...feel so bad that we didn't want to talk anymore about [it]. And finally in September, ...because I write...wrote a letter to the Romanian embassy that I want to go to university and if I don't go uh sooner I will miss the scholar...the starting of the...the school year. Finally they send me...send me home in September. The coming home was a torture; because we --together with other girls from other group--seventy of us, we came by plane 'til Prague. Was exactly between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. That means, we spent the holidays there in Prague, in a hotel uh supported by Joint. Forty people, they were going to America, to other countries. And when we said that we came from

Sweden and we go home to Romania. They said, "You are crazy. You go back. We just go uh...leave Romania, and go to..." And we were a little disappointed, but was no way to turn back. Finally, the Romanian embassy in Prague took--I don't know how many--fifteen or twenty former war prisoner--Romanian, non-Jewish war prisoner. They were prisoner in the west. I don't know by the Germans or by who. And they came together with us. We had a common...together the same visa, the enter visa to Romania--those prisoners and seventeen of us. They were very good people. I mean, uh they help us very much; because we be... we had heavy luggages, you know? And they help us to carry those luggages. They...we give them cigarettes and uh chocolate we have. And uh we pass from uh Prague to Budapest in a wagon full with uh wood. In the front of wood trains, where are the longer bars is a little place. We were staying there until we passed the...the border. When we arrived in Hungary--I don't remember the name of that town--was a Sunday afternoon, and the peasants were staying in. You know, in the...in the country, the peasants go to the railroad station to see who is coming, who is going. And they were then, when they sawed us and they asked, "Who are you?" We said that we are uh coming back from the lagers, and so on. And they said--you know what they said. That was the first first disappointment of ours. They said, "Oh, they come more people back than uh they left." And then from there, we went to Budapest; and from Budapest, again by very strange way, we went to Arad. Because Arad is on the border between Romania and Hungary. And at the border of Romanian...Romanian uh...last Hungarian station and between the Romanian station, was a big trouble. The former prisoner, they have some blankets; and they said that those blankets are stealed, I don't from where stolen from. And they had a big discussion, and almost they fight. We were very scared, because that station was full with Russia soldiers. And the Russia soldiers that time, they're taking everything what they can from the people and rape the women, and so on. And we were very very scared in that little station, because they didn't let the train to pass to Romania. They stopped it; because they said that those uh prisoners, they have stolen some blankets. I don't know from where they said from them. I don't remember exactly. But we were staying there overnight. Very scary. Then finally, we went though. We arrive in Curtici [Hung: Körtös]. That's the border, uh first stop in Romania. And uh from there...there I find... Naturally, they... all of us went out from the train, and they start to look in our luggages. To control the... How you say? The...

Q: Immigration?

A: Immigration.

Q: We need to move on a bit. Uh, you went from there back to Arad finally?

A: I...my...I sent a note with somebody who says he goes to Arad to my uncle. That "I am here, and please come to see me, take me from here." Because we...we stood there more...more than a half day. They look in the baggage for... What is it? The Custom[s]. And my uncle came with my...his son to Curtici, and we met there. And uh he came with a car. I don't know, was not his car. He didn't have car. And they took me home, to his...to Arad.

Q: How long did you stay...did you live in Arad?

A: After the holiday--was after Yom Kippur, because was the Yom Kippur coming--I said to my uncle, "Look, I came home because I want to go to study. I can stay in Sweden, but I didn't want to be a a confection worker all my life in a confection factory. I want to study." And uh he said, "You can go to Cluj." Cluj is the biggest uh city, university city, in Transylvania. Has a very old university, very famous university; and I went to Cluj and I get first grade at uh... How you say? Uh, I mean I didn't pay any tuition, any...

Q: You had a scholarship.

A: A scholarship. I get a first grade. I am excited, I get first grade scholarship--not to tuition, no pay for the dormitory.

Q: OK. We don't need...if you don't mind, we don't need this kind of a detail at this point; because we're talking after liberation. Just because of this tape, I would like to know just an outline of how long you studied, and where you went from there. You went to Israel...

A: Yeah. I was in...in Cluj, I stood [**NB:** stayed] two years in a Jewish dormitory, supported by Joint. The name was [Anton Mark (ph)]. He was a famous mathematician, director of the Jewish school in Cluj; and the dormitory and the canteen get the name of this very famous man. He die in the deportation. After two years, the...all the private dormitory were nationalized; and I went to live in a dormitory with other Romanian girls together. Was very nice. Was not any anti-Semitism. Was...was a good place. And I studied in Cluj until from '46 till '51; and I graduated as a industrial pharmacist, majoring in indus...industrial pharmacy and minoring in bio-chemistry. That was '51. In 19...in vacation I used to go home to my...to Arad, to my uncle. He send me money for the railroad, and I went home to their home...uh house in vacations. And I met my husband in that time. In 1950, we get married; and one year we were separated. I mean, I was finishing the last year in Cluj and he was in Arad. When I finished...I graduated from university, they were asking of everybody in that time where you want to work. And because my husband had a good job in Arad, I said--and because in Arad was not any pharmaceutical factory--they said, "You should work as a bio-chemist in a hospital laboratory." And I choose that, and I accepted. And I went to Arad in '51, and I get a job there. I get the job. They was something official. You know, in Romania at that time you didn't have to look for job. They sent you to the fixed job. And I started to work there, and I work there until 1961. This time, we ask for immigration. Right in the beginning. In uh '51, we ask...then start to...people to ask for immigration to Israel. We asked also; we fill out all the papers, a long questionnaire, to go to Israel. We waited from '51 'til '61 to get to Israel. And when we left Romania, we didn't left with a visa to Israel; because in that time they didn't let people to go to Israel, because they were very friendly with the Arabs. And how to cheat them, people were asking to emigrate to other country but they turn in Vienna to Israel. And because two of my friends get married in Sweden to Swedish uh men, I...I wrote to them to send me a letter that I am their relative. In a very, very, very...in a very very strange way I sent that letter; because they...they censored the letters. Somebody

went to Israel, and I told her their address and she wrote to them. Very very difficult way. And she send me a letter, and with that letter we went to Swedish embassad [NB: embassy]. They give us a visa, and we get out from Romania with visa to Sweden. But when we arrive in Vienna, we turn and we get into Israel.

Q: You lived...you lived in Israel for how long before you came to the States?

A: We live in Israel from January 9...uh 19 '62 until uh February 12th--Lincoln's birthday, I remember exactly--19...uh 1968. That means, seven years. Yah. In Israel, uh we were... they put us in Afula, in some [sfrifim (ph)]--[academaim sfrifim (ph)], they call it. I get the job immediately in the first week to work in the Afula Hospital laboratory. That was uh one of the first hospitals in Israel, from the Englishman that time. My husband, being a... They said that you don't need to speak Hebrew, because in the lab they had Hungarian and Romanian people and you can understand each other and do the job. And really, was that way. My husband being an accountant, they put him in a ulpan in Haifa; and every Friday afternoon he came to Afula, which was very close. Forty minutes, by bus. And after he finished, he can't get a job in Afula. And uh he get a job in Jerusalem. Some friends of our was living there. They have a bakery factory, and they give him a job. And very difficult way, I get a transfer from Afula to Jerusalem.

Q: We're going to have to move on because of the tape and because of the focus. OK? But in '68 then you came to the United States. Uh, in 1968 you came to America.

A: Yah.

Q: That's correct? And you settled where?

A: We settled in Brookline, Massachusetts.

Q: And you've lived there ever since?

A: We will live five years in Brookline. And in '73 we bought a house in Newton. And we still live there.

Q: I thank you very much, Mrs. Farkas, for your story.

A: You're welcome.

Q: I'm glad you came. Thank you.

A: You're welcome.

Q: OK. That's it, guys.

TECHINICAL CONVERSATION

Photographs

- (1) Her parents, Alexander ("Sandor") Marton and Fani Marton. Taken in 1916, while her father was on leave from the Romanian Army. He is wearing his army uniform in the photo.
- (2) Her mother, Fani. Photo taken prior to the marriage, in her single days. Studio photo. Kept for Barbara by family members in South Romania and given to her after the war.
- (3) Barbara at age 4, with her teddy bear (circa 1924). She explains that she was a spoiled child. Two older siblings died during the first World War. She was born after the war, and was her parents' only surviving child. Her parents were very fond of her.
- (4) Barbara at age 7, with her mother (circa 1927). Taken at studio in Arad. Given to Barbara after the war by her aunt in Arad.
- (5) Barbara's high school graduation picture, taken in Oradea in June 1940. Last Romanian graduation before the Hungarian invasion of North Transylvania took place (September 1940).
- (6) Barbara with three companions (Oradea, 1940). After the Hungarian invasion, Barbara was not allowed to attend university. She entered a laboratory training program at the Jewish hospital in Oradea, and is pictured here with 3 companions from that training program. Of the four young women, she was the only one to survive the war.
- (7) Barbara's uncle, her mother's brother, with his wife and daughter. He perished in 1942 while doing forced labor in the Ukraine, where he had been sent by the Hungarian Army. His wife and daughter died in Auschwitz in May 1944.
- (8) Barbara with five young women. Photo taken in 1945, while Barbara and the others were in quarantine in Landskrona, Sweden. Barbara is the second girl from the left, holding flowers.
- (9) Group photo of approximately 20 young women. This was also taken at Landskrona, Sweden, during the quarantine. One of the women in the picture is a Swedish Red Cross worker.