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Summary

July 17, 20, and 27, 2012 White Plains, NY, USA

George Javor, was born György Weiss in 1929, Budapest, Hungary. His father József Weiss (1994, Huszt, Hungary at the time, now: Khust, Ukraine) was a textile merchant. He moved to Budapest before or in 1925 when he married Julia Fleischmann (1904, Budapest). Her father, Lipót Fleischmann had a furniture store in Ujpest, in Kolozsvári St. Her mother, Malvin, had 12 siblings, mostly sisters. The Weiss family was not religious, the Fleischmanns were. They kept a kosher household, the Sabbath, and all holidays.

György's father had an adopted daughter, Helen, who married an American, Frank, and left for the U.S. in the 1920's.

György had an older brother, István, mentioned as Pista throughout the interview, born in 1925 (Stephen Javor, Australia). He also had a half brother, Peter Pertis, born in 1939 by a mistress of his father, Margit, with whom he had 25-year-long relationship. Margit came from a Roma family of well-known musicians, and her family did not allow her to marry József Weiss.

György's mother, Julia accepted the extramarital relationship and the child. Peter was introduced to the family at age four, and spent his time between the two households. He became a concert pianist who performed all over the world.

The Weiss family lived first in Sándor St, then in Gyulai Pál St, and moved to 35 Röck Szilárd St. in the mid-1930s. Before 1939, the first anti-Jewish decree, the family had a middle-class lifestyle: GW had a nanny in his early childhood (Ilona Cseh) and his mother had a household help, Etelka.

György visited the local elementary school and the Vörösmarty Mihály high school. When he entered high school, a *numerus clausus* was in effect for Jews; he said that his father bribed school officials to accept him. He mentioned two very well-known persons as his school friends: Miklós Szinetár, who became the director of the Hungarian Opera House, and Pál Lendvai, the journalist and writer. He also talked about György Münch, a classmate, a very big and strong boy who protected him, since he was small in stature and weak. He often heard: "Beat that little Jew!" in school and on playgrounds. He said that everybody took anti-Semitism as a given, even if most of his teachers were not anti-Semitic. He was a good, but not excellent student. He was a chess champion at age of five or six, and a chess master at age 10. Once, there was a championship in Germany, but he couldn't travel there because he was Jewish.

In 1939, his father, due to the first anti-Jewish law lost his business license, and when he could not pay his taxes, the family's furniture was taken away with only their beds remaining. A *strohman* (a Christian) owned the business nominally, and his father paid for this service. He remembered German soldiers and tanks on József Boulevard on March 15 [19 correctly], 1944. Soon after they had to wear the Yellow Star and his father was called up for forced labor. In the summer, they had to move to a Yellow Star house, to 37 Népszínház St. where they shared an apartment with three other families. Someone—he thought it was a provocateur—fired shots from the building. Troops [not clear, whether Hungarian police or German] surrounded the building and rounded up its inhabitants. His mother, with him and his brother ran to the basement and hid in a big storage container for a day. Then they fled. His mother moved to Margit, his father's mistress in Németh St. His brother, Pista, was caught on the street

and taken to forced labor, although he had Christian papers. Eventually he escaped from forced labor, and with his Christian papers he signed up for the Hungarian army where he survived until liberation.

György also had Christian papers. He took off the Yellow Star, daring to do so because he was blond and “did not look Jewish.” Through his friend György Münch, he got a job at a bakery. They worked together and delivered bread to different locations in the city, to the Jewish hospital in the ghetto as well. The owner of the bakery knew that they were Jews, providing cover for them and several others. The only condition was that they could not leave the bakery. He and Münch once went to a movie and lost their job. This was already in December 1944. He found other work as a delivery boy at a flower shop and rented a bed in Baross St, surviving on his own. He had no contact with his mother until liberation. He said he was never afraid or scared.

Sometime back in October, he contacted a former neighbor in Röck Szilárd St, Lajos Tóth who took him to the Swiss Embassy to get a *Schutzpass* for his father. He took the papers to the forced labor unit in Budapest where his father worked. He was released from forced labor, weakened and in bad health. He also moved to Margit's. This seems to have happened before the Arrow Cross came to power on October 15, 1944, an event that scared everyone. His father spent about a month in hiding when he got stomach bleeding and had to be taken to St. István Hospital. The Arrow Cross raided the hospital and a doctor revealed who the Jews were. His father was marched to the Danube in pajamas and shot into the river, close to the Lánchíd (Chain Bridge, where there is a memorial now). His mother, visiting his father when this happened, barely escaped. He only learned about the father's fate after liberation.

On January 14, 1945 the Soviet army liberated Pest (east side of the Danube). In the last days, he watched Germans and Russians fighting on Baross St. He saw many corpses. During a pause in fighting, and after liberation, he tried to get meat from dead horses on the street. He talked about Russian soldiers raping and looting in the first few days, but said it was forbidden after that, and he saw a Russian soldier being shot by an officer after being caught raping a woman. He went back to Röck Szilárd St, where he found his mother and brother.

His mother, who had never worked before, became a market seller on Rákóczi tér, dealing in ducks and geese. Later she opened a big grocery store on Thököly St. They lived well until the store was taken over by the state in 1948. His mother married Árpád Stern, who was close to Béla Kun in the 1919 revolution. Stern fled to Germany, but was sent to Auschwitz, where he became a Kapo and thus survived. György, who disliked the Communists and their ideology had many political discussions with Stern. When his mother married him [no date], they, at the suggestion of brother Pista, all changed their names to JÁVOR. They did not want a Jewish name again.

Pista completed two years at the university studying architecture. In 1949, with the help of HIAS, he left for Israel. However, he ran from the train, because he did not want to go to Israel, only to leave Hungary. He ended up in Australia, became an architect, and still lived there at the time of the interview.

In 1945, György went back to the same high school, found most of his friends again. In 1947, he entered medical school, specializing in internal medicine. In 1950, he met his future wife Ibolya Kulcsár, a Christian woman who grew up in Nagykanizsa and they married the same year. She worked in the Ministry of Heavy Industry, initially in an administrative position. She climbed the

ladder fast, and became the head of a division responsible for heavy industry in Budapest. They shared the old apartment with his mother.

He did remember Stalin's death; the radio was playing funeral marches for days. He worked in a hospital in Kispest at the time.

In 1956, he treated patients who participated in the uprising and passed Corvin köz [an alley where the fighting was fiercest against the Russians] every day to and from work.

On December 13, 1956, he and his wife, and three other people hired a small truck to drive them to the Austrian border. At the time, Soviet soldiers patrolled the border and they were caught and jailed for a day. He played chess with the officer in charge. Everybody was released and they successfully crossed the border during the night.

In Vienna, while they were waiting for a U.S. visa, his brother supported them financially. He said it has always been his desire to live in the U.S., because of the individual freedom it provided. As a medical doctor, he fell under the first preference quota, and they arrived in New York on February 22, 1957. First they were in Camp Kilmer, where they received food and clothing. They had left Hungary without any luggage. They spent a few weeks in New Rochelle with his father's adopted daughter Helen. He needed one-year internship, one-year university training, and three years residency to practice medicine in the U.S. He spent his internship in White Plains, N.Y, where he and his wife settled after getting his N.Y. State Medical Board certification in 1962. He opened a private practice a couple of years later. In 1960, his wife contracted hepatitis after a dental procedure and died of liver disease in 1979. He lost his best friend with his wife, he said.

He re-married in 1980, an American woman, Alexandra and had two children with her. His second wife was not Jewish either. His children did not know Hungarian and Hungary, and he did not talk to his second family about his past, of which they would have no idea and understanding, he said.

The interviewer asked him about the turning points in U.S. political and social events and his political views. He declared several times during and at the very end of the interview that all his life he was an individualist who refused to identify with any nation, religion, group or organization. He never denied that he was Jewish but also did not identify himself as a Jew. He strongly stated that he thought that the state of Israel should not exist because it was based on the dislocation of hundreds of thousands of Arabs.

The interview was conducted in Hungarian, but Mr. Javor slipped into English, sometimes for several sentences, if he could not remember Hungarian words or phrases. Most of the third part of the interview is, however in English, therefore I do not provide a summary on his views on important events that he witnessed while living in the U.S.