This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Katalin Fried Braun on June 30, 2018 in Manhattan, New York. Thank you. Thank you for agreeing to speak with us today--

Let's see. Let's see.

--and to share your story. I appreciate it. And I look forward to hearing it. So we'll start from the very simplest questions and then go from there. Tell me what was the date of your birth.

May 16, 1938.

May 16, 1938. And where were you born? In Hungary in a town called Karcag.

How do I say that?

Karcag.

In Karcag.

Yes.

Is that a large city or a town?

Medium.

Medium. And what was your name when you were born?

Katalin Fried. F-R-I-E-D.

OK. And Katalin, is that a Hungarian name?

It's a Hungarian name but I was named after my German grandmother.

Did you have a German grandmother then?

Yes.

OK. German-Jewish?

Of course.

OK. So your family was not only from Hungary but from other places too?

Yes.

So let's hear about them a little bit. Tell me about your father and what his name was. My dear father was Imre Fried.

Imre Fried.

And he was an accountant. He worked in a bank in Karcag he was the head bookkeeper or whatever it would translate.

Bookkeeper or something?

He was running the show.

OK. So he was the director of the bank.

Yes. Something like that. Yes.

OK. And he was one of the most wonderful people.

When was he born? 1903, February 12.

February 12, 1903. So that made him 35, 36 years old when you were born.

Correct.

OK. And was it his mother who came from Germany or is that your mother?

No. That's his father and his mother.

Ah. And how did that happen?

My dear grandfather was a cultured, educated man. And he used to take his books and go to the park where they used to have music in the afternoon, and read in the park, and have sometimes meet friends, and have a cup of coffee. And one day, this young gentleman arrives in the park. And he immediately jumps up on the park bench and he makes a speech. And the speech was not too much liking to my dear grandfather. He went home to the family that was in Germany. And he said, "Mama, we are leaving Germany."

What year was this?

It had to be in the '30s, early part, mid-part of the '30s.

So do you think that it was a Nazi speaker?

Absolutely. It could have been even Hitler. Who knows? They were not one. There were a lot of these people.

That's right.

So what town in Germany did he come from? I'm not sure exactly, but they came from near Nuremberg. I'm not sure at all anymore.

OK. Well, if it's from near Nuremberg, we're talking Bavaria in--

Yeah. Yes.

--in that part of the country. So was your father born there?

Yes.

All right. And so was German his first language?

No. Hungarian, because he was-- I'm not sure of where he was when they went there, but his first language-- but they spoke fluent German. They spoke fluent. And Hungarian, as you know.

So if they came to Hungary-- OK. I'm a little confused already.

Good. But we can clean it up. Why did they go-- why did they go to Hungary?

Or how did they have Hungarian-- or how did he know Hungarian when he was from Germany?

I have no idea if my grandfather at all spoke real Hungarian. But my parents did.

And how was it then that they chose, of places to leave from Germany, why did they choose Hungary?

Beyond me. I thought that this was just where they probably had a population from someplace else, I don't know the names of the places, that they spoke German.

OK. And did your father have brothers and sisters? Yes. There were seven of them.

Oh, wow. That's a lot.

Yes.

OK. Did you know your aunts and uncles?

As a little girl, I remember them. They were real fun. They had bicycles for me. And they had taken me, of course, places in Miskolc and LillafÃ¼red. And they came to visit us in Karcag. But they were gone way too soon.

So then in other words, they died in the Holocaust. They were killed in the Holocaust.

Well, the men, they were called in just the same as my dear father when-- for serve in the army.

We'll come to that point then. Well, let's leave that part of the sorry.

OK.

My apologies, because I'm interrupting it.

And the ladies were taken to Auschwitz.

OK. And then perished there. Did all seven brothers then come from Germany to Hungary?

I'm not certain who was born where, but I had an uncle in this country who I visited after I came here. But he really didn't want to know much.

Uh huh. You ready? OK. I was off camera asking a little bit about what I was confused about. And I'll repeat it back. And you tell me whether or not I've understood it now. In truth, it's not only your grandmother who was German but your whole side of your father's family came from Germany from someplace around Nuremberg. You don't know the exact town. That there were seven siblings. And that it was your grandfather who was in the park who heard this speaker of we must take it to be Nazi persuasion--

Absolutely.

--and who comes home and says it's time for us to leave Germany. And what you're not clear about is about what year that might have been. But it had to either be mid to late '20s at the earliest or sometime in the 1930s. Early 1930s.

It had to be most probably late 1920s, because some of the documents, the graduation from schools and things, would be already in Hungary for my parents.

So your father attended school--

In Hungary.

--in Hungary. And he would have done it as an adult because if he was born in 1903--

No, no, no, no, no. I don't know the exact date when he was born, but something 1903 or 1913. I'm not sure.

Aha. Even 1913, he is 20 years old--

Yes. An adult.

--when he comes to Hungary. Can we stop for a second? What is that?

Yep.

OK. So you're not sure whether your father is born 1903 or 1913.

Not at all.

Not at all. OK. Let's turn to your mother. What was her name?

Brody, Rozsa.

Brody?

Rozsa.

Rozsa. So that means-- Rozsa was Rose?

Yes.

And so her first name was Rose, if we'd say it--

Rose Brody.

OK. Rose Brody. And is she from Hungary?

Yes.

She was born in Hungary.

Did she have brothers and sisters?

12 of them.

No. Really?

Yes.

OK. So your mother's name is Rose Brody. And she has 12?

Yes.

12 brothers and sisters. Did you know your aunts and uncles from your mother's side?

Some of them, I knew prior to the war, and there was one sister who escaped the Holocaust in Budapest. And we knew her after the war.

OK. You said your father went to school in Hungary.

Yes.

Do you know what kind of school this was?

Yes. Both my parents went to the same school in Hungary, and they graduated from a so-called Kaddish Academy. Probably, like, today, it would be a school where you go on the college level to learn accounting. And they had, both of them, degrees.

OK. Is that where they met at school?

No. No. They lived close by each other, and the families knew each other.

OK. Do you know of how your parents really met and how they fell in love or anything like that?

No. No, my dear father passed away during the war. And speaking to my dear mom was taboo.

About him?

Yeah. About, yeah. A lot about the earlier part of their life.

OK. That presents its own difficulties when you know you have curiosity, and you want to know more. So tell me what are some of your earliest memories?

From my childhood?

Mm-hmm.

I do remember when my baby brother was born. He was the most adorable baby, and I was the meanest sister.

Really?

Really. And we were walking by the river in Miskolc, and I was walking by my tanta. And I had a great suggestion to throw him in the river.

Well, he had a nerve appearing, you know.

Yes. But.

She didn't follow your suggestion?

No. But I'm so ever so grateful. He is the best thing in my life.

What's his name?

Paul Zoltan Fried.

Paul Zoltan Fried. And how much younger than you is he?

20 months.

So he was born in what year?

1940.

1940.

February 12th.

1940. And what kind of home did you live in in your childhood? Tell me about it.

We lived in Karcag, in a home that had four or five rooms or maybe more. And there was a room for what they called a bedroom, and there was a day room, and there was a children's room, and there was a dining room, and there was a kitchen.

Was it an apartment?

No. It was a private house.

OK.

But my dear parents did not own this house because it wasn't for sale, but they got another home elsewhere. But this is where we were living.

OK. Would you say your parents were well-to-do? Your family was well-to-do?

They were doing fine. Thank you.

OK. So, you know, you heard me in another interview ask, did you have electricity? Did you have plumbing? Did you have all these things? So that is an indication, let's say, of I had material--

I had everything.

--well being.

We had everything.

You had everything. Did you have a telephone?

Not before the war. Just in the bank that my dear father worked, they had a telephone.

Was the bank far from your home?

Walking distance many times everyday.

Yeah? So would you visit him there?

I was taken with my nanny and my dear father every single morning to my kindergarten.

OK. And the kindergarten wasn't far then either.

It was walking distance.

Walking distance. OK. Can you paint a picture for me with words of what your neighborhood looked like?

Where I was born and reared it was mostly nice homes.

Residential?

Only residential. This was a relatively small town, and it was lovely. Our home was very beautiful.

Did you have a back garden or front garden?

We had a garden which was all green grass where we used to picnic.

And did you have any pets?

We had a dog by the name of Bodri.

Bodri?

Bodri [? Kutya. ?] And he was a beautiful, tall dog.

Did your mother work in accounting as well having gone to school for it?

She worked before the war in Miskolc. And after liberation she was our breadwinner in Budapest.

But while you were-- when you were born and your brother was born.

No.

She stayed at home.

Yes.

Did she have anybody help her?

Yes.

OK.

We had help. Yes.

Tell me about how about how many people would that have been.

From what I remember, there was our lady that I call it a nanny, but she was doing also housework because we were taken away to the schools and kindergartens. And there was a lady who was doing everything-- cleaning, cooking, washing, whatever.

And your mother, how did she occupy herself?

By raising two kids, and entertaining, and having, I guess it was called, a civic life at the time.

OK. I mean, but it was-- she had the home life to take care of.

Yes.

OK. What language did your parents speak with one another?

I'm not sure. But I do know they both were German, but front of us it was all Hungarian.

All Hungarian.

All.

Your parents come from large families.

Yes.

What was the reason for that?

I guess it was in style at the time. I think so. I'm not sure, but my father comes with seven. And my dear mother has 12.

That's a lot of kids.

Yes. That's a lot of kids.

Did you know your mother's parents?

I knew my grandmother.

OK. What was her name?

And I-- my grandmother. Oh, god. Hanna. Hanna. Hannela.

Hannela. Do you know her last name?

She was at that time Fried. F-R-I-E-D. That was going back to the other five.

So that your father's mother.

No, that was my grandmother.

Your mother's mother?

There were Frieds and Frieds. Yes.

Oh. There were different Frieds.

Yes.

OK. And did you know your grandfather on your mother's side?

Yes. I remember him, and I remember when he died. I had to go and see him because he wanted to see me. And I remember when he was very, very young.

How old were you?

Probably five.

OK. Was this the first time in your life that a person had died that you knew?

Yes.

Were you allowed to go to the funeral?

No. No, no, no. He was ill that time, and that's the last time I saw him.

Was your mother's side of the family very religious?

Somewhat religious not as religious as my father's side.

So your father's side from Germany were more religious?

Extremely so.

Really? Would they have been orthodox?

Yes.

OK. And so it was your mother's Hungarian side that was more assimilated, could I say, or more modern, more secular?

More secular.

More secular. And if the town-- forgive me that I'm not good with Hungarian name.

That's fine.

The town was Karcag?

Karcag.

Karcag. About how many inhabitants did Karcag have?

No clue. But there was a nice size of Jewish population.

That's one of my questions.

There was orthodox Jew and Neolog.

OK. What is Neolog?

[INAUDIBLE]

OK. And your family belonged to?

Both. But we went to the Neolog Sure, because that was more beautiful and more modern, and the services were more easy for us, you know, as a family.

Did you go regularly?

My dear father went every single morning 5:30 in the morning.

Wow. He was very observant.

Yes. He used to wake up the whole neighborhood.

Did he really?

Because his walks, they used to go in at 5:30.

Wow. And what do you remember of him? What do you remember from your father?

Well, I do remember him. From the beginning of the day he would be davening.

Praying.

With the twillum.

Yes. Praying. twillum, every single morning. And then he would be shaving. I remember that was a big production number. And I do remember him walking with me and taking me to school every single morning.

And the most vivid memory that I have of him is when he was called in for service to the army. He got an invitation, and this was-- we took him to the train station. And this was the first day of Passover.

And you were how old at this time?

I had to be between five and six somewhere.

OK. Normally, I would be asking these kinds of questions later on.

That's fine.

But it sounds to me that you-- it sounds to me you lost him very early in your life.

Yes. Yes.

When you took him to the train station, what was the mood like in your family?

Sad. Very, very sad. But at that time already, I think they had an inclination of what to come. But, of course, as kids, we had no knowledge of it. But I did know that he's going away. We took him to a train station, and there was no answer or question about it. When is he coming back? Oh, that was what we were taught.

Remind me. You were five years old?

Yes.

So this would have been 1943?

No. This would have been '44.

So this would have been.

I was-- it was early part of '44 when they took him away.

And so that means that the Germans had just marched into Hungary.

Correct.

OK. You're a little girl, and I know that I'm asking your questions about the time when you were a little girl. Did you remember seeing any Germans in town?

I do remember that they came in, but I don't recall but they looked like. I knew there were in, but I remember that the Hungarian, whatever they call it-- army or whatever-- they were very open. Everybody was open and running around with the big hat and the big feather in the hat.

That's the Arrow Cross?

Arrow Cross. The Hungarians. That I recall. And there were the most-- they were the meanest bunch.

Did you experience that directly?

I mean, I was very, very young. And my dear mother and grandmother protected us from everything. But, I mean, leaving our lovely home.

Did you have to do that?

Absolutely. We were told this was just Passover-- right after Passover.

So your father has left?

Yes. And it was grandmother, and my dear mother, and the two kids.

And you remember being told that you have to leave.

I remember that was very vivid. We were taken out of our homes standing in front of the house and waiting for us to be taken away.

And where were you taken to?

It was a gathering place for the local people. They examined us, and they basically cleaned us out to come out with most of our possessions. And then from here, I don't remember how long we were there, but it was a short couple weeks or something.

From there, we were taken by train to Szolnok, which was a gathering place.

What's the name again?

Szolnok.

How do I spell that?

S-Z-O-L-N-O-K.

OK. Thank you. So it was another gathering place.

It was more of a gathering place.

So more people?

More people and from surrounding towns or cities. That were others, as well.

OK.

And from here we were going to be taken away.

So you had just said goodbye to your father.

A couple of weeks or a couple of months.

Yeah. And did you ever see him again?

No. Never.

Did any letters come from him?

I don't know. Thanks.

You're welcome. When you were taken to the second gathering place, it was two women then who are running, you know, the heads of the family-- your grandmother, your mother's mother--

Yes.

And your own mother.

And my dear mother. What about all of these extended aunts and uncles? Did they cross your path at this time?

No. Because they lived in Miskolc, and they were taken away from Miskolc. And excuse me.

It's OK. And from Miskolc, they were directly taken to Auschwitz, and they made big [INAUDIBLE].

And Miskolc was how far from where you lived?

In today's world, nothing. And, you know, nice ride. But when we used to go there after the war we had to change trains two or three times.

And it would have been like a two hour or a three hour?

No. This would have taken about more than the whole day.

Really?

More than-- yes. Because we had to get off the train and wait for another train to come. And it was TiszafÃ¼red and FÃ¼zesabony, and then Miskolc from Karcag. And each station, we had to wait for the trains when they come and board again and so on.

And in today's time, how many kilometers apart would that be?

I have no idea. But I could tell you that one of our visits from here, of course, we were taking a car. And we went to Miskolc, and LillafÃ¼red and DiÃ³sgyÅ‘r. And I went in between the cemeteries. And we stopped probably for lunch, or dinner, or whatever. And then we drove back to Budapest.

In one day?

All in one day. It was not too far.

And so Budapest was not that far from either place. Is that true?

Exactly.

The reason I ask this is so that people would have some orientation in what part of Hungary you would have lived. Some people from Hungary will, of course, know immediately. But those who aren't-- to kind of get the sense of the distance.

Yes, I understand.

And also it's interesting to know-- you see, if you were taken so soon after the Germans arrived that seems to support. What I've read, and what I've been told is that Jews from the surrounding towns and villages outside of Budapest were the first to be taken.

That's my understanding also.

OK.

Of course, I don't have memory about it. But from speaking to other people, yes. We were gathered up and shipped off like animals.

So the people who were-- your family who were in Miskolc?

Yes.

Mother's side or father's side?

For LillafÃ¼red, which is also Miskolc, that was my dear father's family. And DiÃ³sgyÅ‘r Miskolc, that was my dear mother's family. We were all very close.

But none of them crossed your path after this time when?

Well, after the war.

Different story? But at this point, it's just the four of you-- grandma, mama, yourself, and your brother?

Yes.

OK. So you're taken. You're at the second holding place. You've gone on to the first one, then you go to another one. What happens then?

Well, when we reached from Szolnok, we reached in to Austria and Strasshof. And this was also another gathering place.

Strasshof?

Strasshof.

Strasshof--

Hoff. Yes.

--is in Austria?

Austria. And that was another big gathering place. And we were sort of cleansed or whatever you call it. And this is the place where my brother and myself got sick.

Do you remember the-- do you remember the trip from Hungary to Austria? Do you remember anything?

It was in a wagon. It was in a wagon, and there was lots of people in there. And I don't really remember if we ate, or we didn't have any food. I don't recall any of it.

OK. OK. So you and your brother get sick.

Yes.

He is four years old. You are six years old.

Yes.

What kind of sickness was this? [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. That's both contagious German measles.

German measles?

Yes. In Strasshof.

What happened?

In Strasshof, we got this.

Yes. So what did they do with you?

They immediately, when they identified the problem they dealing with, the gentlemen who was handling the camp called in the Red Cross.

The real Red Cross?

The real Red Cross because they were afraid that now here we go. The whole camp is going to be. And the Red Cross came in-- a gentlemen with the Red Cross wagon. And they took us away from my dear mother, and they didn't even stop till they reached Vienna-- the other side of Vienna. But actually he made stops-- I'm sorry-- to try to get rid of us.

Really?

Yes. Who would take these Jewish kids? And nobody wanted us. Absolutely no one.

So you stopped at individual private homes?

No. He stopped at hospitals and schools. I can't tell you exactly, but we made several stops. And he was very anxious at this point too. He had enough. And we reached the other crossed side of Vienna. Well, he was able to find a hospital that was run by nuns, and they accepted us. They took us in.

And what do you remember from being in that hospital?

I was very scared at first, and we wanted to sleep in one bed-- a little girl and a little boy. They agreed because they just didn't know what else to do. And then they brought in a little boy who was also contagious who was from Vienna. And he had his parents visiting him.

Jewish? Non-Jewish.

Not Jewish. Everything from here on, it's non-Jews. And the parents came, and they tried to find that. I spoke very, very few words from German because I went to the kindergarten, so I had a bit of a knowledge very tiny. And they were very nice.

And one time they brought us an apple. They brought us something, but they were very kind to us. And after, we were there for a pretty long time. But during this time my dear mother was transferred. She spoke fluent German.

And she somehow convinced everybody with her beauty and with her charm that she really wants to go to Vienna. She had a feeling that's how she's going to find us. And they put her into work in a factory where they were making parts for ammunition.

There were such factories around Vienna.

Yes.

And my dear mother worked double shifts because she also worked for her mother.

So they were together?

Yes. And my dear mother had this mantra. And every single day, this gentleman who was the former owner of this factory had a full speech from her about her children. And she would tell him, I lost them. You know, whole story from A to Z.

And this gentleman was attending a Christmas party. And at that point there is conversation and everything at the Christmas party. And one of his friends was a doctor at the time. And somehow the other gentleman who was from the place from the factory overheard the conversation.

I have two Jewish kids that I don't know what to do with. And he was telling the story. One is a boy. One is a girl. And this gentleman from the factory went over and asked, you know, what age were they? And he says, I'll take them off from your hands.

And during that night he went back to the factory. He picked up my dear mother and brought my mother to the hospital to get us.

That's amazing. That's amazing.

We were in an OR some operating room with lights. Not like this, but huge ones. And when my dear mother came in, we flew off the table. And so there we were reunited.

But the circumstances of that happening, you could have really been lost for good.

Oh, absolutely.

You're so little that you could forget what your names are. You could forget.

Not me.

You couldn't have?

No, never. I was brought up with a certain discipline. I had to know the name, address, names from everybody.

Really?

Mm-hmm.

Even as a little girl?

Oh, I was-- yes. That's how I remember some of the stuff.

Do you remember the address from which you were taken where you had the lovely home?

[? Madarasi utca ?]

Number?

20 something. I don't exactly know.

Pretty good. Pretty good. And so you knew that you are Katalin Fried.

Oh, absolutely. And I knew my brother's name. I knew our Hebrew name.

What is your Hebrew name?

Gitele.

Gitele.

Yes.

And his Hebrew name?

Oh, God. [INAUDIBLE]

That's OK.

No, it's not OK. It's a mental block.

But it happens. It happens.

Naftoli Avrohom.

Naftoli Avrohom. OK. Do you remember your mother coming to the hospital?

Absolutely. How could you forget? I flew up the table from where we were.

Yeah I can't imagine-- I mean, a little girl separated, it's a childhood trauma, you know.

That's why I'm so cuckoo.

No. I don't believe that. But these things leave their marks on children. So she's able to take you back.

Yes.

What were the circumstances to which you all went then?

Oh, it was very-- this was the place where the factory was. Downstairs was a factory. And upper floor there was the slave labor as the Jews. That's where they lived. And when we went back, my brother and myself, during the day we lived under the bed because we were not supposed to be there.

So they weren't supposed to be any children there?

Absolutely. So after, you know, when people-- we knew already. We heard-- under the bed.

So this man who had been the former owner to whom she complained every day, who must have still had some authority, knew she was taking children back and allowing her to have those children.

Absolutely.

Did you ever hear his name?

No. Even if I did, it's very, very, very [INAUDIBLE].

OK.

That was a godsend.

Yes, of course. And so you spent your days under the bed?

We helped when we had to, and we made toys out of tissue paper that was from the roll and things like that. And somehow we were fed. My dear grandma sold her handkerchiefs for bread, and that's how we were fed because legally we were not even there.

So you're not supposed to have-- you don't get any rations.

We're not supposed to be down there.

And do you remember about how large a space this was that everybody slept in where the slave labor is?

This was a very large floor of a factory, and there were many people who were working there.

Women only?

I don't remember. I couldn't tell you. I only remember being with my family.

Would you have known whether there, like, 10 more people in the room or 100 more people in the room?

It was in between somewhere, I'm sure.

OK. So it's more than just a little.

Yes. These were all workers because this was a morning shift, during the day shift, night shift because the ammunition, they had to produce. And my dear mother stole ammunition a little bullet which we had all the way till I came to this country. I left it in a hurry.

No kidding.

Yeah. Which was, how much can I carry? Now it was just by accident.

Did you play, you and your brother, was it something you could use as a toy?

The toilet paper. And I don't remember anything else. But we did play. And when the sirens were gone off, then everybody goes. They had to run down to the basement or whatever it was protected.

So people saw you.

Yes. But those were all Jews. There was only Jewish forced laborers at that point. And it was pretty good, you know. We were able to have some food. They were working. And what happened is, one day, the bomb hit the factory.

And we were very lucky. We were on the other side of the building because there was no sirens, and my dear mother took us and grandma. And we walked down.

Into the basement?

To the street at that point because, you know, we were.

So there was chaos, and she was able to just leave the building.

Yes.

Did she have to wear a uniform?

I don't recall. I don't think so.

OK. So they were wearing civilian clothes.

Whatever they had.

So in other words, if she goes down into the street with you, she's not immediately identifiable that she belongs to that factory.

But who would dare? Who would dare?

Go to the street?

Yes. You did what you were told.

You remember going down with her?

To the basement for safety. Yes.

Do you remember going to the street with her after the bomb falls?

No. Where we went from the basement or whatever it is called. We went back there. And when the bomb hit that's when they reported to the owner that he's-- it's a very dangerous situation, that he needs the people to be removed. And they were so nice to us. They took us back to Strasshof.

So when she goes down to the street it's not to run away?

No.

She can't run away.

We can't run away. Who dared? And she had two kids and grandma. She had no place to run.

Oh, I was assuming that she might have tried to run with you all. That's why I thought.

I don't think so. Everybody, I guess, at that point, we were threatened to be afraid.

Yeah. Did you ever know the name of that factory?

No. I probably knew, but that's-- I forgot. It's in Vienna.

Because it would be curious to know which factory it was.

Yes. I would have liked to know myself and to be acknowledged to be.

I have heard stories of factories in Vienna making armaments and with forced labor and slave labor, and I just don't know whether there was one or whether there was 10.

Not 10. No. It was a limited number even if there was maybe another one. Very few people I met after the war. They all came practically from the same place.

So then you're taken back to Strasshof.

Yes.

What happens then?

What happens then? It was not good. Not good at all because there was not much food, and there was chaos. But it doesn't matter to the Germans. They, again, took us to the train station. And they told us we're going to a wonderful place now where we'll have no more problems and everything will be wonderful.

And by this time my dear grandmother was very weak. And I don't know how they got a loose stool for her to sit on. And my dear mother tried to take care of her, and she fell asleep forever.

Didn't wake up?

No.

On the train?

No. This was on the street in the station at Strasshof.

Oh dear.

Yeah. And a couple of Jewish men came, and they got some kind of a light cloth. They put her in it. And that's the last time.

And you had to then leave on a train?

Oh yes.

--when you said--

Whoever capable at that point to got some white-- today I would say a white sheet. And they put her in that, and they took her to a mutual grave.

A common grave?

Yeah. But they're just the guys that took her away.

No child should have to see that. No child, you know. What happened to you, and your mother, and your brother then?

We had to get back on the train. And the train went out from Strasshof. And the Russians came, and they bombed the tracks.

Tracks?

Yes.

So this is so close to the end of the war when all of this is--

Before they took the Hungarian Jews, it was already pretty much coming to the end.

Yeah.

Anyhow, they--

Russians bombed the tracks.

Bombed the tracks. We got off the train and back to the camp in Strasshof. And there was everybody who was taking care of this camp at this point. Basically most of them ran away. We did not see any soldiers anymore. We didn't see much people.

There were just a few of them who were brave enough to stay. And our food came from the train where the men or ladies-- they found there was food there. There was jam in the barrel and things. So that's how we had a potato peel or something. I don't remember exactly.

Do you think it was food that was meant for the guards?

There was food that was being transported because it was on the train, so I'm sure it wasn't meant for us. I'm sure of that, but that's where they went. And they had gotten some food for my dear mother. At that point, there was only the three of us then.

How is your mother behaving? Was she crying?

No.

She probably was--

She was numb. At that point, she had to be numb. She lost, at that point, everything. And I was-- nobody told her there was going to be end of the war-- there was going to be something that's going to happen that's going to turn out to be an end. It was just one thing after another thing.

How long were you in Strasshof?

I could not tell you.

What?

I could not tell you when we were there. And the Russians came in, and they liberated the camp. And we had the yellow star. And they tore it off. And he said, you are free to go. That is, everybody went back to the barrack because it was such a horribly shock to the people who now where to, how to. And we went back to the barrack. And during the night, the Russian soldiers came to visit.

Oh no.

Oh yes. They were looking for ladies. And somehow she was the most wonderful and the smartest lady. She went under the cover.

Your mama?

My mother. My dear mother. And there was only baby brother and me. And they asked for-- they said-- we didn't know what they were talking about. But I knew how to say no. No. And they went. But they came back a number of times.

Did they?

But it was, by then, my dear mother got very clever. And she had her mother's clothing, my dear grandmother's clothing. She put the babushka on and the coat with the fur collar. And the whole coat probably looked like she was about 300 years old and malnourished.

Did you hear other women being taken?

Yes. Young ladies were taken.

Even if they knew that these had come from the barrack.

Sorry. That's why my dear mother was smart enough. By that time she must have known about something that was going on.

About how long do you think you stayed in that barrack after liberation?

I don't recall. But I remember that there was one gentleman who also came from the slaves, and he had a wagon that they put the children on the wagon. And the men and the women somehow started to leave the camp.

And along the way, we stopped in homes. And in one home, we even found a horse. Now we were--

Now you had a horse to pull the wagon.

Now we had a horse. Now we had a wagon, and now we are going. The next night, we stopped again. Same thing. We took anything and everything we found in the house. Sometimes, we find things to eat. Sometimes we didn't.

Was this still in Austria or not?

Austria.

Austria.

Yes. And what happened the next morning, no more horsey.

Someone took it?

The Russians took it. They liked our horsey, so we continued with the wagon.

Did you see any Austrians? I mean, the people who were from those homes, were they're hiding? Were they?

It was all empty. When we got in, there it was all empty. There was-- I guess they were afraid of us as much as we were afraid of them. But there was nothing.

So it was your mother, your brother, you, and another person?

Well, that time, we were running already away from that. So we met other people who were also in the same situation. So there was a bit of a gathering, and there was a man. And then we had a horse, and then we lost the horse. We lost the carriage, but we kept on walking.

But you had a man with you?

At one point.

At one point, you had a man with you, which could make a difference.

Possible.

Yeah.

But probably he wasn't much of a man at this point.

That could be too.

What he went through, he couldn't have been a youngster.

So you're walking in which direction? Did you know?

We were trying to get to [PLACE NAME].

[PLACE NAME]

Yes.

What is [PLACE NAME] and where is it?

It was-- in that time it was Austria if I recall correctly. And it was a bigger town or city that we were hoping to be able to get medical help.

And did you see any soldiers?

I don't recall. So you just--

When we ran away, I guess the Germans ran away. And at this point the Russians weren't occupying all, but it took the time also, too.

So I guess I was mainly-- did you see Russian soldiers on the roads?

I don't recall.

You just sort of--

We just saw them in the camp where we were, you know, in the camp that we had contact. They had contact with us.

Of a certain kind. But it was clear that you were in Russian-occupied territory rather than American-occupied.

Absolutely. The Russian soldiers indicated that that's where we were. I learned a few choice words.

Oh. Did you really?

Absolutely.

At age six?

Well, why not if you hear it so often?

So did you get to this place? Did you get to [PLACE NAME].

Well, we were walking and a train or whatever-- somehow we got to [PLACE NAME]. And in [PLACE NAME] we had a problem with our-- we were wearing the same shoes for all this time. And we both had-- my parents and myself-- infection in the back of the foot.

So we had to one end up in an emergency cab. They cut a little bit of a bone out to stop the infection.

It gotten to the bone?

Yes. And we both had the same surgeon at the same time. We went away. And then up the train, off the train, up the train, off the train. And somehow we got back to Hungary. And from-- don't ask me. But I know that we got back to Karcag.

And we, of course-- we didn't find anything in our home. It was looted totally. And we couldn't even stay in our home because the Russian soldiers also liked their comfort. And they did bring the horsey in the house.

And they did not like our bathroom because they had gone I don't know where. They got something. They got a live fish, and they put it into the base of the toilet, and they wanted to be kind with it. They pulled that thing down for the water and the-- the fish went down.

And the fish?

Of course, they were very, very, very smart. You got to be able to catch this fish. They throw the toilet out. And there was no fishy anymore.

No fish. No fish and no toilet.

Sorry. And that's when my dear mother decided this was not the place for us to stay.

So no more home.

Well, there was nothing, you know. And at this point, somehow, I don't know how, we wound end up in Miskolc.

OK. Where part of the family had been from.

Both my father's side and my mother's side, they were all living there in DiÃ³sgyÅ‘r and LillafÃ¼red. These are smaller towns around Miskolc.

Anybody come back?

At first there was no one, and after a little while a little boy came back. But I don't recall how he got there, but he had a big horse. It was, like-- and anyhow, my dear mother took care of him for a little while, but then he had to leave.

And after that I had an aunt who was from Budapest. And she found out that we are here, so she decided to join us.

Mother's sister?

Yes. My mother's sister.

What was her name?

Ella.

Ella Fried?

Ella Brody.

Ella Brody. Excuse me.

Yes, that's OK. But she was very lucky. She survived everything in Budapest.

Had she been in hiding in Budapest?

She, I don't know how, wound up in the hospital but not as a patient, but she was providing things for the people who were there.

OK. So she was working there?

She was black mailing them. Whatever. I buy you a food, and I'll do your dishes. She made a living for herself.

OK. And she joins you then?

Yes.

And what kind of place were you living in?

At the time, we went back to DiÃ³sgyÅ‘r, which was my grandparents' home from my mother's side, which was very lovely. The home was very lovely.

And your grandfather had been--

My grandfather died before the Holocaust. He died, I would imagine, probably 1940, '41, '42.

And your grandmother on the station.

My grandmother was with us.

And she's the one.

She was the one. Yes. And my grandparents from my father's side, they remained in LillafÃ¼red in a home where they had-- it was, like, seven different businesses in the front. It was U-shaped home. And then in the home, they lived in the back of the home.

A very beautiful spot. LillafÃ¼red is gorgeous. And they lived there, and I don't know what happened. But they were murdered in the house.

In the house? How did you-- did you ever find out what happened to your father? He had people from a similar background with him.

So they had come from Germany originally?

They came-- no, no, no. I'm talking about now at this point from Hungary because we were taken--

From Hungary.

He was taken away from-- but they were similar places. And they get through. And a gentleman came to visit my dear mother, who my father told the stories about his family. And he did tell us what happened to my father.

What happened to him?

They were on a march, and they had to cross a river. But my dear father was pushing in a man made something or other. A friend of his who had a something. It was like a-- I think it was a little bullet or something. But he could no longer walk. And they made something like a--

Something to push it.

Push it. Yes. So everybody had-- this was a tiny little bridge of some sort where they were crossing over and begging my dear father who was pushing this thing, but he let everybody go. And everybody went. And he was remaining with his friends. And in the end, people who came back heard loud shots-- very heavy shooting. And this was the Don River in Russia.

Were you there when this gentleman told your mother this?

I don't recall, but I know the story. It was no big deal. At that point, really, I was stronger than I am now. I was a very strong, little girl.

You do what you have to do.

I think so.

Yeah.

I think so. Oh, thank you.

Just in case. Do I have to return it?

No. So did you ever leave this particular town?

Oh yes.

What happened then?

We went back and forth. We were in Karcag, and then we decided to go to DiÃ³sgyÅ‘r or LillafÃ¼red, where there were more homes and stayed there for a while. I went to school there for one year. I finished.

And only your aunt had come back?

Yes. I'm not-- we're not going to talk about it. OK?

OK. So you went to school for one year?

One year in Miskolc. And then we went back to Karcag. And we lived in Karcag. And my dear mother decided that Karcag is not a place where she can raise her children. It was very limited in terms of education and everything.

So she decided she's going to live in Budapest, so she went to Budapest alone. And she had friends and family. And somehow they find somebody who wants to live in Karcag. Miracles and more miracles. And they'll give us an apartment in Budapest if we give them a house in Karcag.

And you had owned the house even though you weren't living in it.

Yeah.

You know, the one that.

This was another house we had. My dear father who had another house during-- they stayed with a huge garden. And he was going to build a huge house and a huge garden, but there was a little house where we lived after the war.

I see. And you were able to exchange this.

That little house that had a tremendous garden with beautiful trees. And we took this. I mean, my dear mother exchanged this property for a small apartment in Budapest.

And where was it in Budapest? In a residential area?

Yes. We were living in an apartment house.

OK. OK. And was that your then more permanent home?

We lived there till we escaped in 1956. We went to school there in Budapest.

And how did your mother make a living? You said earlier.

She went to work.

What did she do?

She was an accountant there. She had her degree, and she went back to work as an accountant. And then she was in touch with her family in America at that point. And one of my uncles was in the shipping business, and he was able to send us rice, and needles, and thread.

Rice, needles, and thread.

Which was a lifesaver.

In what way? How was?

The needles and the thread was better than cash.

Why?

Because nobody had needles. It was after the war. It was like unreal.

So does that mean there were no consumer goods at all?

Probably not much. Let's put it that way. And this was right after the war. And he sent us rice by the bag and sugar by the bag. And this was our uncle who was in the shipping business in New York. He was an uncle to us by marriage. He was a very kind, kind person.

And he was related to you through your mother's.

Mother's. My dear mother's sister-- the eldest got married. And the families, my grandparents and his parents, were somehow-- I don't know the name for it in English. But when you have a bris you taking the child it's like a God child, and they were exchanging this kind of favor. So it was a very close relationship.

OK. And he lived in New York City?

Yes.

In New York City.

Yes. He lived in New York City. He had two daughters-- Margie and Evelyn. And I met both of the girls and their families when I came to America.

Now during this time after the war was there a frequent exchange of letters?

There was exchange of letters. Yes.

Was it difficult?

At one point, there were people like-- we had a rabbi coming to visit. And then he would bring us something. And he put it as money, and he put it under one of the paintings. And then my mother had a letter prepared. He would take that away.

So this didn't go through the post office.

Not the early part of it. No. No. There was no post office. There were no stamps. This is the very beginning of right after our liberation.

And when you were in Budapest you continue school?

Yes. Yes. We both went to school. We finished. And I don't even know what it's called. It's elementary eighth grade.

Elementary. Yeah.

I finished that, and my brother also finished. He was younger than I am, so this was probably fifth or sixth grade. And in Hungary I had to go to work.

At what age?

1954. 16.

16.

Because otherwise I couldn't have been able to live in the apartment.

Did you own it, or was it state owned?

Well, this was the apartment we gave a house for.

That's right.

The ownership is now, at this point, I don't even know what to tell you. But it doesn't matter because we closed up the apartment, gave a key to someone, and we left it.

In 1954?

1956.

OK. That's when you leave Hungary.

Oh yes.

But what I'm interested in is if you have to go to work in 1954, and otherwise you wouldn't be able to live in the apartment, that means somebody has rights over who lives there, who doesn't live there.

Oh absolutely.

So it's not your ownership. It means that somebody else owns it.

No, no, no. The government owned it. There was no ownership at that time. When my dear mother made the exchange, it was I will give you this, and you give me that. And we're done.

Yes.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

It was a communist era.

I understand. But if it's a communist era, she had nothing to exchange because she doesn't own her own house anymore.

They didn't own their apartments.

True. True.

So we did exchange.

So you did exchange.

We gave them a house. They gave us a small apartment in Budapest, and it was perfect.

OK. How did the new system, the Communist system--

Communists.

--how did it influence or impact your lives in post-war years?

Well, when we lived in Miskolc, they changed the money from pengo to foreign. And that's when the black business under the table started because that foreign-- when the pengo was printed on a big sheet of paper, and let's say there was 100 units on it.

And you said this is 100 units. I'll give you three more. So that money was absolutely devalued. So that was the money exchange. And then we had the help from my dear uncles, and I think that was our survival.

So that meant, for people who will not know, that you not only kept thread, but you sold thread in order to get something else.

Oh, absolutely. But we never sold anything. We exchanged.

You exchanged.

The money was nothing. Who wanted more of that? You got another roll and if it's worthless. That time was the pengo, and they had to exchange it somewhere around that time to foreign. So the pengo became zero.

OK. And so with needle, thread, and rice, you were able to exchange it for what kinds of things?

Like, bread and some meat. I'm not certain of the exchange. I know that, at one point, my dear mother got a pair of shoes for herself and that was a big thing.

That was a big thing.

Big thing.

Well, you're a growing child, and children outgrow shoes.

Doesn't matter. That mattered none. I had surgery. We both had surgery there. I have a bone missing. I have a bone missing from my foot-- from the back of my foot.

From the surgery that you had in that place. So how did you find shoes after that in a place where there's a deficit economy?

My dear mother was a master of all tricks. I have no idea. I mean, don't forget I was six, seven years old. She did not come find all her information or doings because some of it was probably not, let's call, it illegal. You know, that the money came to us.

It certainly wasn't a currency of Hungary. It was dollars. So this was all.

Tell me now a little bit about her personality-- about your mother's personality.

College educated, beautiful, wonderful, and want nothing. After the war, it was a very difficult time for her to adjust, but somehow because of us she did readjust. But she had gone in to where she knew that she has to leave Karcag because that was not good for the children.

We went up to Budapest, and she was educated. So she was able to go to work as an accountant. So she went to work almost to the end of her life.

Did you feel-- I mean, children still need to have a parent to take care of them. And in those circumstances, I can imagine that you and your brother would have thought, we'll make the least amount of trouble for mama as possible as children because she has so much already.

That's correct. I mean, we were as good as it comes, I imagine. You know, my brother befriended friends in the building where we lived-- two boys whose parents were dear friends of my mother. He was a doctor, and the wife, they were friends. They were wonderful, wonderful to us. But they were non-Jews.

Did they offer a kind of not substitution but additional adult kind of protection?

Not at that point. At that point when my dear mother was alive they were wonderful to us because they included us in some of their events. You know, Christmas dinner or something. And my mother would be baking beautiful things, and they would exchange.

Take this beautiful cake to the doctor and his wife. We called him [PERSONAL NAME] and [PERSONAL NAME]. I mean, it was a mutual admiration, a love society.

And this was in Budapest?

Yes.

Did you feel comfortable in Hungary after the war?

So comfortable. So comfortable that soon as I had a chance to run away.

Oh. Well, I know. It's a leading question in that sense. But here you do have people who may not be Jews but are friends.

Yes. Wonderful friends.

And you're in your home country.

Yes.

Why would you run away?

Home country is not accurate. It's not because we were tortured so much I did not feel that if I leave this country I'm leaving my home behind. I felt when the revolution came, and I told my brother that we are leaving, and then I discussed it with the doctor and his wife. And they gave us their blessings. I did not feel anything that I owe or any reason at all why I should stay.

And what I'm trying to find out is what made you feel that way because up until now, after the war, I'm hearing of maybe a few deficits that you can't get goods. But that's not-- what was going on that made you want to leave so much?

Misery. Misery loves company. It was a very difficult life after my dear mother passed on.

When did she pass on?

1954 in September.

Is that why you would have had to go to work?

Correct. Because otherwise we would have not been able to live in that apartment in Budapest at that time. If you did not have a household who went to work-- I mean, we worked with the papers and everything-- no apartment. And the man who collected the rent, that was his position and his job to make sure that we have the red books stamped.

I see. So you lost her at age 16.

Yes.

What happened?

Cancer. She was very, very sick. And there was a special hospital in Budapest, OnkolÃ³gia, and the doctor somehow made sure that she was able to attend that hospital. But at that point, they did not have anything what we know today.

And she had to come home because the hospital finished [INAUDIBLE]. And Dr. [? Gaty ?] he was able to-- or trying to keep her pain free. And he was writing papers. How to call it? Prescriptions for morphine. And I was the one who had to go and get the morphine for her.

And as soon as I brought the morphine, I had to give it to the doctor because there was no trust. He was able to get to not to keep or pain free totally but just to manage.

What do you mean, there was no trust?

Well, how could a kid of my age be trusted with morphine? That's a killer.

I see. And that came in a vial that had to be opened end of the store, and I was very well informed about what it was. Because why I had to go personally and get it, and I had lectures from Dr. [? Gaty ?] to be able to go to the place to pick it up.

My goodness. I'm just thinking of a 16-year-old girl having all that on her shoulders.

Great.

No. So you decide when the revolution comes.

Oh, that was the best part. By that time, I was a very big girl. I had friends and definitely not my age group. They were much older than I am. I was-- I don't know what to call it. He was a professor of mine that we were very friendly.

Were you romantic friendly?

No. I was a baby. No romance. But he liked me a lot, and he taught me a lot because he was a professor. He taught me to dance. He taught me to curse. And he was, at that time, the afternoon tea 5 o'clock was a popular thing.

We go out for the afternoon tea where we met all of my friends which we, you know.

Were your friends Jewish, or non-Jewish, or did it matter?

We knew who was who, but it was mattered none. But I knew that one of my friends whose father was a big shot in the postal ministry-- he was the big wig. She came from a Jewish father but not a Jewish mother. So that was that.

And then my other friend who was much older than I am, she was all Jewish. And then I had Jewish friends that were coming and going. And I was 16 years old. It mattered not who was Jewish.

Of course.

That was important for me to go to school-- make sure that we're living in decent condition as much as possible. And then came the revolution.

And how long did this period of time?

1954 September to 1956 November.

That's a pretty long time for a revolution.

Yes. Yes.

How did it change your life?

Oh, everything.

Tell me.

OK. Well, at that point, I was very friendly with people definitely none of them my age. And when the revolution came, I was content with my family here.

In the United States?

They supplied us with packages, money. And that's how we were able to exist. And when the revolution came, all these people who had any sense in their head, they all wanted to leave. So friends, we gathered up, and we are going to America.

And, of course, we went to doctor, and Mrs. [? Gaty ?] and the two boys to say what our plans was. And he gave us his blessing but not with a full heart. He was very worried for us. But everybody was going everywhere, and the radio called Free Hungary, whatever the name was, announced how many people arrived in Vienna that day.

And why should I be left behind? I had family here. And I said to my brother, I have friends, and we're leaving. He wasn't happy at all. He said, you go to America, which is very good and very nice, and you will send me American packages. And I'm staying. And I said to him, it doesn't work that way. We are going now.

You pulled rank. Used that seniority.

No. I just-- not seniority. I wanted to make him understand that we are leaving. I saw no future for him. He-- one of the brightest people. And he was not able to go to a really good school. He had to go to a school where he was learning how to grind flour from, I mean.

[? Vocational ?] school.

Totally something that he wasn't even qualified for never mind if he loved it. So he will have to leave.

How did you leave then?

Well, my older friends. At that point, I had two boyfriends. They all were lovely. You know, they were all good, good people. One of them came with a wife and a child. And then we had picked up other people along the way. I mean, it was a group activity.

And we started to walk. And they took us off the train from Budapest. We boarded the train. And then they took us off the train because they realized that these guys are into something else. They're not going to visit grandma.

So they took us off the train, and then we went back on another train. And then somehow we got very close to the border. And we started to walk into these smaller villages. And one of the-- it was a guy who said, not a problem. I will help you across the border. But what do you have for me?

Yeah, of course.

So we had Omega watch, and I had-- I don't remember-- a chain and a-- I mean, and the other people, also, they had a watch, and a ring, and this and that. But he collected everything. He made sure we were clean as a whistle. And he provided for us an overnight stay in his place where the animals are staying.

In the barn.

In the hay. Yes. But that was fine. And during the night, he came and got us. And he said, we are leaving. So we left.

And he showed us, you know, this is the way you go. This is the way you go, and this is the way. And at one point, he stops us. And he says, do you see that light over there? That one little, tiny, little light? But do you see it?

Of course, we see it. We have good eyes. He said, I'm glad you do. Now I'm going to leave you and make sure that you never lose that light.

And once you come to a certain point, you'll have to cross a road where automobiles are going to be in-- cars and everything. And once you on the other side of this road, you made it.

Was it true?

Yes, it was true. We started to walk. And it was night, and I fell in some kind of a river. And everything was wet on me, but that's OK. No problem. It was wintertime. I felt nice and cozy. And we kept on walking till we hit a house that he was describing to us.

But it was really far. We thought we were there already because it's dark and this teeny, weeny, little light. And we kept on walking and walking till we-- and it's true. That house was a safe place. They took us in, and they had-- I don't remember what.

They exchanged my wet clothes for something else. And we stayed there, and they called the agencies for HIAS or something because we were mostly Jews but not all of us.

So HIAS was a Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

Yes.

OK.

And they called them. And they suggested that somewhere along the line we will have to make it to Vienna, but that was not really what they gave us transportation. But somehow we made it to the outskirts of Vienna. There was a camp.

The camp was prior to our use a military camp that was the American soldier's. You know, Vienna was--

Divided like Berlin.

Exactly. So we were in the side when we were on the American side of that time. And we were staying there. And the first thing I did is send a telegram to my family. And my uncles and my aunts, they had-- and my uncle married this lady who was from Vienna who had family in Vienna.

And Nandor [? Batchi ?] came one day to the camp. The most handsome, most beautiful man comes to the camp. And he immediately took charge of the situation. And he gave us money that was coming from my family from America.

And he invited us to stay with him a couple of nights. But of course, we couldn't go together because we have to keep an eye on when are they going to have some movements, or where we received documents to leave, or something. So I was the big girl. I had to go to with Uncle Nandor [? Batchi ?].

And he was kind and wonderful. And he had a girlfriend, [PERSONAL NAME]. [PERSONAL NAME] was very lovely, and they didn't know what to do with. Me they took me to the theater, but I understood nothing. They took me for dinners, and then I had to go back to exchange place with my brother.

But my brother never really did go to Vienna because he didn't-- he was a young boy. So I didn't even trust him at that point. I says if he goes to Vienna he might never come back. So I want him to the whole space and make sure that we are under the right position.

We're not losing position for the transport out of here. And we were, luckily for both of us, in this camp. And something came. And I did not understand everything at that point. But my brother said, we have to leave the camp, so take all your stuff.

So we had to go to a certain place to report, but it was-- from all the people we came with, it was only my brother and myself. So these are the only two Jews. There was a friend who was half Jewish, but he was stupid enough to be not declaring it.

So that means they weren't able to get out of Vienna?

No. No. No. They were evacuated because there was something going on against-- our dear Hungarians started a revolution against the Jews again. They were jealous because the Jews were evacuated by certain numbers. I guess, by a bus load.

So you're saying within that camp in the outskirts--

There was a revolution. Yes.

At the outskirts of Vienna?

Yes. They left during the night.

My goodness.

Yeah. And we were sitting on a bus front of the American embassy waiting for clearance to get to go to America or wherever your choice was. We wanted to come to this country. And when we reached over day-- it was an overnight trip that was most magnificent to the mountains and fresh snow all over. It sparkled.

And somewhere along the line we got to another city-- Salzburg. And we stayed there. This was again some army situation or some camp of some sort. And being, for some reason or other, we had a preference. And after a few days, maybe less than a week, the army flew us into Camp Kilmer.

And tell me where's Camp Kilmer located?

In New Jersey. In New Brunswick, New Jersey. New Brunswick, New Jersey.

And how long were you there?

Well, that was not really long because as soon as I was able to contact my family, that was, I don't know, a day or two. I don't remember. But, you know, everybody wanted to do just pretty much the same thing-- get out of there because it was. I was able to contact them.

And a day or so, whenever it was, they came to get us. My uncle, my aunt, my cousin Margie, and her husband, Harry with a huge automobile with the tails.

Did you feel like you were coming home to family or not really?

No. No. I did not know them. But I had the warmth and the love of them. So it was-- and they spoke English, and we did not understand much. And at that point, they were here for many, many years. They came in the late 1920s.

So for them to speak fluent Hungarian probably was a stretch, but they were kind. And they were wonderful.

Where did you live then?

Within the Bronx. They lived in the Bronx. And I went to school from there. So did my brother.

So you lived with an aunt and uncle?

Yes. My uncle, and his wife, and the sister of hers, they lived in one big apartment. My aunt and her husband lived next door to their apartment. And the floor below, their parents, the mother and the father, to my aunt by marriage.

So it was like a little clan.

Oh, it was wonderful. Yes.

And were you able to be a kid again?

No. I went to school. And I first become the American. I knew who Elvis Presley was. And I had a nice poodle skirt, and I had my new clothes from my cousin. She was very stylish. And they immediately made sure that I am fully dressed American style.

But it sounds like you also had to take care of your brother.

Not at this point anymore.

No?

Because we were living with my uncle at this point. So it was-- I mean, of course, I didn't neglect him. We lived in one room. But we were going to school together.

And you were being then taken into the family.

100%. Yes. They were wonderful, nice. And their friends were also very lovely to us. And one of the Sundays, it's pretty much early in the whole thing, Else calls up that, you know, I have to take the kids to meet some people from Budapest. This is not fair. You're keeping them home and doing, you know.

They need to get out and meet people.

Maybe they'll find some friends. Maybe they'll know someone. So she convinced my uncle, and my aunt, and Else, with the big car and her husband, Mr. MihÃ¡ly, they're going to the HIAS to meet friends. So we go in, and everybody is little clusters.

And everybody's talking and everything. And I had-- my aunt had a sister who was there. And she went everyone and everything. She talked, and she was busy. And she met my husband. They were talking. And she said, you know, come over.

I have a niece and nephew who just came from Hungary. They are kids. Maybe you would like to meet them. He came over. He met us. And we sort of-- I think he took the phone number from my aunt or something. Anyway, he telephoned.

And he wanted to take me someplace. And I have curfew and everything else. And we met. And he was very nice. Everything was wonderful. He even brought me home. That was a big thing for them. I survived because at this point, you know, I didn't speak English.

So then I started to date my husband. I cut my beautiful, long hair. Big, big mistake. But I wanted to be as American as American can possibly be. And we, both of us, baby brother and myself, we went to Morris High School to learn English.

And after this, I was no longer that age where I had to go to high school, but I have-- we didn't have paper. So whatever I had, whatever I told them, that's how it was. My brother continued his education, and I went to Hunter College to learn English.

And I went to work, and I got married, and I went to school. And then I got to be a big girl.

When did you get married?

I was 18.

You were 18? So very soon after you come over.

Yes. I was in a hurry. I was going to be an old maid, I mean, come on.

Were you really thinking that?

Absolutely not.

Because 18's very young even in this--

Yeah. But, you know, it's-- I don't even know. I don't remember. But this is many moons ago. But it was.

So I have a question that--

Sure.

When we interview people who were children during those times, the war times and the Holocaust times-- and you're not only a child but a little child maybe a little older than your brother.

Yes, 20 months.

But that's not much.

Yes.

That's not much. Well, what we find is that those experiences that the children went through and endured left marks that are much different than those that grown ups bore.

Absolutely.

And so my question to you is, in what way were those marks left on you? What kind of-- how did they affect you or change you?

Well, change, I don't know what I was before, but I'm ultra sensitive. And I really wanted to do a lot of things. I wanted to study. I wanted to do everything, learn to cook, learn housekeeping, and do everything-- I wanted to do everything that was normal to the point when it was no longer normal. Overachiever.

OK.

I went to school. I went to work. I accomplished. I became head accountant in practicing Law Institute, which is quite an achievement for someone who comes from the other side.

Yes, it is.

It was at that point. And I was very, very lucky.

Did you miss your mother during these years when you're?

In a different way.

OK.

It was no longer-- because we left her behind. So I had a new life over here, so I did not miss her, like, this closeness that the mother and a child. I miss her as my dear mother. I was an adult.

And the years before she passed away when you were growing up with her but not your father, do you remember missing him?

Not really. Not really. And that was probably for a very short while. I don't recall that I would at that point because we had hope. That was the whole big thing at that point. In the Jewish tradition, after a dead person, you go and say yizkor or yahrzeit. And you acknowledge it and you say prayers for your dead. My dear mother never allowed it because he's going to come home any minute.

Oh, dear.

Yup. She had to have something to go by, too.

One of the questions that I hadn't asked but crossed my mind is that, if after the war, she found somebody else? But it sounds like no.

She would never even dream of it. She was beautiful. She was statuesque, and lovely, and educated, and everything you want. She wasn't interested. She had enough to do.

Certainly that. Certainly that. Certainly that.

She went back to work. She had that. And I think that she no longer had the desire to do anything except the immediate and that was job enough.

Yeah, certainly. Certainly. Is there something I haven't asked you that you would like to share?

It was a longer life in terms of after the war and before the war.

Let's cut for a second. I lost my thought. Yes. You said that, in one way, you became-- you have a sensitivity an ultra sensitivity.

Absolutely.

And it comes from that. It comes from these experience?

I guess so.

OK.

I should be tough.

Well, it's.

Of all these things.

But I think you are.

You think I'm tough?

Yes.

Thank you.

Because you're here. You are here, and you have-- and you have a life and achievements. Well, if that isn't it-- the fact that somebody might cry doesn't mean they're not tough.

Well, I tend to agree with you that I was pushy, and I wanted it to be something and somebody. Just staying home was never enough for me. I wanted to have a career like my dear mother had. I wanted to be somebody.

Do you think-- do you say, I've achieved that?

I did. I went to work, and I've worked my way up to be head accountant in Practicing Law Institute, which is a legal firm and between 25 to 45 attorneys. So that's.

That's quite a bit.

Yes. That is lots of people to answer to as an accountant. They all wanted to know what's going on in their little heads.

Of course.

Out of their little heads, that is.

Yeah.

That was a quite a well position. But after 30 years doing it I retired.

You mentioned over the phone to me that you do some volunteer work or some nonprofit work as well.

But now I don't want to talk about it.

OK, that's fine.

This is something for another time please.

OK. I'm sure your mother would have been incredibly proud.

I hope so.

Is there anything else you'd like to add to what we've talked about today?

Maybe one day when I look at it I will let you know what I left out.

OK. Because in one interview we can never cover it all.

Yeah. Once I'll look at this.

Then you can tell.

Maybe. But I do know I'm very grateful for life to be able to get away from where I was to be a refugee. May I have one of those.

Absolutely. Here. All of them. Oh.

Kind. Very kind. Thank you. And I have my brother who is an electronic engineer and a medical with-- he has double degree.

He has a double degree.

Yes. One is the most difficult, electronic engineering, five years, and then he decided there was a career war. And he was-- he was less than happy. Then there came the Vietnam War and everything else. I made sure that he will not go to there.

I had him-- make him sick enough that I got him forever. And I said, if they take you, they'll have to take me. And that's not a deal for the army. They wouldn't have approved of me. So he, you know, I gave him a we got him a 4F.

And he was able to go to school. He was an electronic engineer once, and then he became a biomedical engineer for the second time. And he's got a gorgeous family-- two kids, a boy and a girl. And let them be well.

Thank you. Thank you very, very much.

This means you're welcome.

[LAUGHTER]

It's you're welcome. But you know what I mean.

Yeah.

If any time you want to correct anything or do something else--

You let me know.

No. It's up to you because I don't know what's in there.

OK.

I have no idea.

You will see it. And if you have things to add then we can talk and make that happen.

Thank you.

OK.

And I know I would like my brother to be interviewed. Now I have to have his OK. Do I contact you?

We'll talk about that.

He needs to be in the interview at one point. But right now the summertime, they are out on Long Island.

We will try to make this happen.

Good. But he is at home at Long Island now. So I don't know. Maybe during the week they will come in.

OK. I'm going to, at this point, just finish our interview and say the final words. And we can continue talking about your brother.

OK.

So this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Katalin Fried Braun on June 30, 2018, in Manhattan, New York. Thank you.

Thank you.

OK. OK. Can you tell me, who is this a photograph of?

My dear father Imra Fried.

Imra Fried.

Correct.

And about what year would that have been?

This had to be, I would imagine, late 1930s early '40s.

So when you were already born?

Maybe. Yes.

And when you say Imra Fried, that would be his Hungarian name.

Yes.

What would have his German name been?

No idea.

OK. Thank you. Thank you. Tell me, and who is this a photograph of?

This one is my dear mother Rozsa Brody Fried.

Rozsa Brody Fried.

Yes.

And was it taken, do you think, around the same time that your father's photo was taken?

Most probably.

OK.

Some of the pictures have dates on the back. This may have a date.

All right. Thank you very much. And what is this a picture of?

My parents.

OK. It seems to be a special occasion.

Their wedding picture 1935 December.

December 1935 is when they're married?

The wedding day.

And you're born in 1938.

'38.

OK. Thank you. And tell me, who is this a photograph of?

These are my grandparents from my mother's side.

Their names please.

SÃ¡ndor and Hannela, Hanni. And my grandfather died in 1941 in Hungary, and my dear grandmother passed away in a concentration camp.

Well, is she the grandmother who died on the platform of the train station--

Yes.

--in Strasshof?

She's the one.

She's the one. OK.