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Summary

Nicholas (Miklos Bela) Neuhaus was born on August 5, 1933 in Budapest, Hungary to a Jewish father and a Catholic mother. Nicholas was raised Catholic. He was the fourth of six children. Both his siblings and his parents survived the war. His father was born in Budapest, though his paternal grandparents were born in other parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He also had several paternal aunts and uncles who all lived in Budapest, except for his father's oldest brother, Simon, who had immigrated to the United States. Nicholas's mother and her family were from Germany. His parents met and married in 1926 in Munich, Germany where his father had gone to dental school because of the quotas on Jews in Hungary. Both families were opposed to the marriage because of the religious difference. His father, however, later converted to Catholicism.

They stayed in Germany until 1929 when the depression and the rise of Hitler led them to move back to Hungary. Nicholas's father had applied for a U.S. visa but would not get it until 1952. The family stayed in Budapest until 1936 when they moved to Paris, France, where his father had spent time as a young man. His father practiced illegally as a dentist in the Jewish community and Nicholas went to school. They stayed there until the summer of 1942 when the roundups of foreign Jews took place in Paris, including two of their friends. Otherwise, Nicholas remembered very little of the Nazi occupation. In 1942 they moved back to Budapest and stayed there until the end of the war. Both his parents had narrow escapes from both the Nazis, after their occupation of Hungary in March 1944, and the Arrow Cross, extreme right-wing Nazi sympathizers. His father's father was less fortunate and was killed by the Arrow Cross. His father's brother died in a Hungarian work brigade in the Ukraine. One of his father's sisters was also murdered in route to Auschwitz.

After the war ended Nicholas and his friend played with the unexploded grenades and shells from the war. Many of his friends were killed; he lost one eye in an explosion. Although the Russian army treated the family well, the signs of an impending communist regime led his father to want to leave again for France. Nicholas attended a prestigious commercial high school there; he said that he could not go to a lycée because of French xenophobia. But in 1952 the family's visa for the United States came through with the help from his father's brother's widow. Nicholas's father wanted to stay in France, but his mother threatened to leave with the children. So, they came to New York and stayed.

In his final thoughts of the interview, Nicholas reflected that the purpose of life is to live, to weather any set back and return to living. He also expressed how important it was to be tolerant of others, unlike the Hungarians and the French. For that reason, he moved to Vermont in later life where he found people to be more at ease and kinder to strangers.