

[INAUDIBLE] Camera speed.

This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Elizabeth Sandy on January 15, 2020, in Boca Raton, Florida. Thank you very, very much, Mrs. Sandy--

You're welcome.

--for agreeing to meet with us, to share what experiences you and your family had--

You're very welcome.

--during the war, and how you survived it. I'm going to start with the most basic questions, and we develop everything from there. So the very first question is, can you tell me the date of your birth?

May 19, 1923.

May 19th, 1923. And where were you born?

In Budapest, Hungary.

OK. And what was your name at birth?

Garbovits was the family name-- Garbovits.

Garbovits?

Elizabeth is Erzsebet in Hungarian.

Elizabeth is Erzsebet?

Erzsebet, in Hungarian.

I see.

Erzsebet Garbovits.

Erzsebet Garbovits. Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Yes, I had one brother. His name was Istvan, which means Stephen, Garbovits.

Stephen Garbovits-- Istvan Garbovits?

Istvan Garbovits.

Which was he, younger or older than you?

He was-- not quite four years younger than me.

So you were the eldest in the family?

I was the oldest.

OK. And your mother and father-- let me ask you a little bit about them. We'll start with your mother. What was her maiden name?

Her name was Carolina Drach

Drach?

Drach. C-H.

D-R-O-C-H?

D-R-A-C-H.

Carolina Drach. Drach, OK. And do you know about when she was born?

I am not sure. I'm not sure.

That's OK. That's OK. Did she have brothers and sisters?

She had four sisters and one brother.

And was she the oldest or the youngest, or in the middle?

In the middle.

She was in the middle.

In the middle.

Did you know your aunts and uncle?

I knew them all. Not only knew them, we were very close with them. We all lived in the same vicinity.

Can you tell me their names?

OK. Their only brother-- oh my god, what was his name?

That's OK.

I forget. It'll come to you later.

It'll come, it'll come back. One was the name Rosa.

Rosa.

Cataline-- Cottie.

Cottie, so Cataline, yeah?

Yeah. Sarah.

Sarah.

I think Jóska was his name.

Jóska?

Uh-huh. And [? Beshke. ?] [? Beshke? ?]

[? Beshke, ?] which Elizabeth-- it's a nickname for Elizabeth. [? Beshke. ?]

[? Beshke. ?]

[? Beshke. ?]

OK.

And--

And your mother Carolina.

My mother is Carolina.

So I count six people. Rosa.

Sarah.

Sarah.

[? Beshke. ?]

[? Beshke. ?]

Jóska.

Jóska.

And the first one that you mentioned to me.

Jóska, [? Beshke. ?]

Cataline.

Cottie. Yes. Cottie [? Nanny. ?]

Did you know your grandparents on your mother's side as well?

My mother's mother, I knew very well. She lived close, a couple houses away from us. The father passed away, my grandfather passed away before I was born, so I did not know him.

And what was your grandmother's name? First name. That's OK.

I [? cannot ?] [? remember. ?]

Grandma.

Yeah.

She was grandma.

I can't. I can't remember.

It's OK.

It was at least 75 years ago.

The questions that we ask sometimes, that I ask, are so ridiculous, asking someone to remember--

It'll come back. It could come back. Yeah.

But we will see how it goes, then.

Now let's turn to your father's side of the family. Your father's first name was what?

Arnold.

Arnold Garbovits?

Garbovits.

Garbovits. Did he have brothers and sisters?

Yes.

How many did he have?

He had two or three brothers, and Caroline Nanny-- three sisters.

What were their names?

OK. One was Rosie.

Rosie.

One was Szidi.

Siggy?

Szidi. S-Z is Szidi.

Bertha. And Irenka.

Irenka?

Irenka, Irene.

Irene.

Irene. Those were the sisters. And the brothers were Imre.

Imre.

Sándor.

Sándor.

I'm not sure if that's a brother or a brother-in-law.

OK.

I'm not sure.

OK.

Yeah.

And your father's first name was?

Arnold. Arnold-- you told me that. Sorry. And had your-- both sides of the family, had they lived in Budapest?

No.

No? Where were they from?

No. My father's side was about 30 kilometers south of Budapest. My grandfather was a main cantor in a temple there, and that's where they raised the children. That's my father's side. My mother's side was from the west side of Hungary, close to Vienna-- close to Vienna, and I don't know when they came to Budapest. I wasn't born there yet.

But it sounds that your family then had been really centered in what was the Austro-Hungarian empire.

Yes. My grandparents and the younger age of my parents.

What was the language that you spoke at home?

Always Hungarian.

Always Hungarian?

Always Hungarian. They spoke German.

OK. That was another question that I had.

Yes.

So you learned German?

At home.

At home?

Yes.

OK. Now was any Yiddish spoken at all?

No, never. Never.

Interesting.

Never, not in Budapest.

Not in Budapest. Because I've interviewed people who were from outside Budapest, but in Hungary, and many of them spoke Yiddish. They were from very religious families, and so.

Not in-- not my family.

Not your family?

No.

Would you have said that your family was very assimilated?

Very assimilated.

OK.

First, they were Hungarian. Second, they were Hungarian. And after that, they were Jewish.

Well, from the first names that you mentioned of your aunts and your uncles, they're very Hungarian names.

All Hungarian, very Hungarian.

Yes.

Yes.

And on your father's side, were they very observant? Because your grandfather was a cantor.

Yes. Yes, my grandfather actually came-- I'm not sure when-- somewhere from Poland.

Oh, really?

Yes.

OK.

Maybe the First World War, or maybe before, as a cantor, and he settled in a little town 30 miles south of Budapest, and he became a well-known cantor, beautiful voice he had.

And did he remain in 30 miles south of Budapest?

Always. They lived there, they had all their-- practically, all the children there. I remember them telling us a story about that, at the one time, for I don't know how long-- in fact, my father was born in this Slovakian place where my grandparents were at the time. Then they moved down to that small town.

And what was it called, the small town?

Aszod.

Aszod?

Aszod.

OK.

Aszod.

Aszod, OK.

Not a-sowed. Aszod.

How do you spell it?

A-S-Z-O-D.

I didn't pronounce it properly.

Yeah. That's the American way.

Yeah. I'm sorry for that.

That's OK.

And your mother's then family came from Western Hungary, near Vienna?

Yeah. Yes.

OK. And was it her parents who moved to Budapest, or was it?

It wasn't my time. I'm not sure who really moved, but I do remember very well my grandmother who lived not far from us.

OK.

But I don't know when they moved. I wasn't alive.

OK. And do you know how your parents met?

I'm not sure. I'm not sure.

So you don't know how their paths crossed?

I have-- I really don't know.

It's OK.

I don't know.

That's OK. That's OK. Sometimes people tell their children stories about their early lives, and sometimes not so much.

I don't know if-- maybe they did tell me, but I can't remember.

OK. How did your father-- and I assume it was your father, but sometimes it's also one's mother-- how did he put food on the table? What did you do to support the family?

Oh. [CHUCKLES] I didn't know what it meant.

To put food on the table?

No man ever put food on the table.

[LAUGHTER]

Yeah, they don't really cook it.

Not in our day.

Yeah, they don't cook it.

No. My father started as a young man from Aszod. He went up to Budapest, and he opened himself a hat factory. I don't know how you call that. It's not a hat--

It's millinery.

Millinery?

Millinery is the term for all kinds of hat production.

OK.

And sales, and things like that.

That's what he did. I remembered the place where he-- well, he owned, not far from where we lived. And then after that, he, with his brother and sister, opened a hat factory.

OK. So at first, what did he do? And then he-- for himself, what did he start? A hat factory?

No. It was-- it's not a hat. It's-- what is that, what you said?

Millinery?

Where you have a man who has not a hat, but a-- I don't know what they call it.

How do you say it in Hungarian?

Sapka.

Ah. A cap?

[INAUDIBLE] with a shield. An old kind of [INAUDIBLE] cap. Is it a [? cap? ?] I didn't know. Yes, that's--

Well, we think it's a cap. I mean, I've heard the word sapka and sapka, I always assumed not so much a hat that a man would wear.

No.

But one with the bill.

With the shield.

Yeah.

Yeah. That was the beginning.

OK.

Then the brothers and sisters got together and they opened the factory with-- I don't know how you call that, where they made the basic for the hat. It was like a big felt.

Felt? Yeah, felt.

Felt. Yeah. 300 people were working for them.

That's a lot.

It was-- that, in Hungary was a lot. Yeah. So-- they were very, very successful in business.

So was this mostly then ladies' hats, or both men and women?

Mostly ladies. Mostly ladies, then they had a place where they worked out some of the hats for women.

I don't understand that.

Some of those things, what they manufactured in the factory, then they had to work it out for regular hats for women.



Oh, so in other words, they would not only make the base of the hat.

Yeah, they had the factory working-- I don't know how many girls-- designing the hat and selling it.

Did they also have a shop as well as the factory?

Yeah, they had a shop too.

OK. And did they sell through the shop mostly, or were they more wholesalers that sold to others, who then sold to the public?

I think they had men who were traveling around the country and sold it to hat stores, and also in the-- they had a special store where they had only selling the readymade hats.

Did you visit that store?

All the time.

I can imagine for a little girl it's fun.

[CHUCKLES] Yeah, I visited a lot.

Yeah?

Yeah. That's another story.

Well, what would that story be?

The story would be that when I wasn't allowed anymore to go to school, I went to business school, and the second grade, I had to finish because the law said no Jews were allowed to go to the school. So what was the next step? All the Jewish girls from very wealthy families went to learn a trade. So I went back to our own hat factory, and learned how to--

The trade.

Yes.

That's very ironic, isn't it?

[CHUCKLES]

Did your father have any university education?

No, no.

Anybody on his side of the family?

No. Nobody had university education, but all the children-- every one of my cousin were either doctors or architects, or lawyers. And everybody, every cousin of mine who were older than me.

That's quite impressive.

Yes.

Did your father-- had he served in the Austro-Hungarian army?

No.

During World War I?

I don't know how he got out of it. If I would know, then I'm going to have to tell it.

That's OK.

Maybe they told me, but I can't remember.

That's OK. That's OK. As I say, sometimes people have-- people tell their children their own lives, and sometimes they tell it once, and sometimes it's just part of family conversation.

Yeah, I'm sure it was. But I was too young, and I didn't-- it went into one ear and went out of the other. Who cares what they were--

Of course.

--my great-grandparents were doing?

But what it speaks then, too, is that your father had business sense. If he didn't have a university education, if he didn't have an apprenticeship, or shall we say, it wasn't in the family-- he had started this business, and he made it successful.

He had--

With his siblings.

With his siblings, a sister and a brother-- three of them were in the business.

What was the name of the business, of the factory?

Garbovits and Nánási. Nánási was my father's sister's husband.

OK. Did he work in there too?

He never worked in his life. He sat in the office. Sat in the office, never worked. Yeah, yeah.

Yeah, but he had his name up there?

Oh, god.

[CHUCKLING]

Yes.

And do you remember the address of where the factory was?

One factory was in the tenth district of Budapest. The name of the district was Kobanya. Kobanya, and that's where the factory was.

OK.

And then there was the-- where they made out from the hat into-- whatever the women said. And there was a different store in Hajó utca.

Hajó utca?

Hajó utca, yes.

Which would mean Hajó Street?

Hajó Street, yes.

Do you remember the number?

No.

OK.

No.

OK. That's OK. Do you remember what it looked like?

Yes, definitely.

OK.

I remember, definitely. It was a small street, small street, and there were-- I don't know how many houses. The houses were three, four, five stories high.

Were they apartments?

On the top floors were all the apartments. On the ground floor were the businesses. That's where the store was. Have you ever been there?

No. I never [INAUDIBLE]. But now that we interrupted, tell the story about making hats for Hollywood actresses.

Oh, yeah.

[INAUDIBLE]. They were famous for high fashion.

OK, hang on a second. What I'm going to say is that Mrs. Sandy's son is here with us as well, off camera, and he asked you to tell us a little bit about the clientele of your father's factory and store. And so let's hear it.

They had a few-- they call it a saloon-- where they worked out-- what they made in the factory. And they-- out front on the store was-- the back of the store was the people working, girls working making hats. There were a lot of famous actresses coming in, and they made hats for them.

From Hungarian films?

Hungarian.

Yeah?

Hungarian, yes. My family also went to special hat shows in Vienna, and they copied the newest style, and they brought it back to Hungary. Yes, they were very successful in business.

And do you remember any of the names of the actresses who got hats? No?

No. No, we are talking about 70 years. No idea. No idea.

Now before you yourself went there as a teenager, under very difficult circumstances, to learn the trade, did you ever go there as a little girl just to visit?

Always, always.

Yeah?

Yeah. My parents took me there and sat in the office, or in the cashier, where they have a cashier girl, and I knew the people. I knew many of the people who were working there. In fact, after a while, when I couldn't go to school anymore, had to learn the trade, I got involved with the people who were working there. I knew them very well.

I see. Did your mother also work?

No, never. Never worked in her life.

OK. Would you say then-- it suggests that your family was pretty well-to-do.

Yes, the whole family.

OK, so at least your brother, your mother-- your father's brother, his sister, and yourselves.

Yeah, they were a company.

OK

And the rest of the family were well off too.

What kind of work or businesses did they have, the rest of the family, his brothers and sisters-- or your mother's?

One sister had a hat store also where we supplied the material, and she sold-- she was very successful. One sister married out of town and had two boys who I was very close with. Then after a while, they all moved up to Budapest. The guy was working for the railroad. I don't know what he did. I know that they were able to travel free. Yes. And one sister whose husband passed away-- he had tuberculosis, had a son who is eight years younger than I am. He is in his Israel, and I'm very close with him. And I can't think of anybody else.

That's OK, that's OK. It is whatever comes to mind. And can you describe to me your home that you lived in? That you-- did you live in the same place?

Yeah, to the end of the--

So what was that like?

It was like a foyer when you walk in like that.

Was it an apartment?

In a--

Or was it a house?

Apartment building. In an apartment building.

OK.

And I took my son there, but we didn't go into the apartment, because I don't know how many family moved in there after the war.

Yeah.

So as we moved in, it was a foyer. Then-- I can't remember it was left or right, the kitchen and the maid's quarter. And then to the other side, there was two or three rooms, and that's all.

OK.

And the bathroom, and the bedroom, bathroom.

Did you have your own bedroom?

Yes, I had my own bedroom.

And so did your brother?

So did my brother.

So you had at least three bedrooms-- one for the parents, one for you.

Yes.

One for your brother.

Yes.

OK. And this will sound a little bit weird, but I will ask this anyway, because I anticipate the answers. Did you have modern conveniences?

Yes.

OK. Did you--

Very modern. Oh my god.

OK. And how was the place heated? We had-- what do you call that under the window?

A radiator.

A radiator.

OK. So no coal ovens or anything like that?

No. [CHUCKLES] No.

OK, OK. So there was indoor plumbing, there was radiators.

Oh my god. [CHUCKLES]

There was-- did you have a telephone?

Yes we had a telephone.

Did you have a radio? Yes, we had a radio.

Did you have an automobile?

Yes, they had an automobile.

OK, OK. And where did they keep it?

I don't think they had a garage. Must have been on the street.

OK, OK.

I don't remember having-- you know, it was a high rise building, and--

Yeah, so where did one keep the cars in those days?

Yeah.

Was it unusual for people in your neighborhood to have an automobile?

No.

So it was a well-to-do neighborhood?

Well-to-do neighborhood.

OK. Do you remember the street address?

Four Huszar utca. Huszar. Yeah, I remember.

So Four Huszar utca. would be Number Four Huszar Street.

Street.

And Huszar meaning, H-U-S-S-A-R?

S-Z-A-R.

S-Z-A-R, OK.

Z-A-R, yes.

And--

Remember, [? Opa ?].

I don't remember the address.

But you remember [? the ?] [? house. ?]

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

We took them-- I took them.

The word "apartment--" it would be more accurate to call it a condo. They owned it.

OK.

And it was a pretty fancy place.

OK. So your son says-- and his name is Robert-- that it was not so much an apartment as in you rented it, but more what we would have as a condo, which your family owned.

Yes.

At that time.

I'm not sure if they owned it. They paid rent.

Oh, they did?

Yes. They paid rent. I don't think they own-- no. They did not own that the apartment.

I see.

No.

OK. About how many other apartments were in the building?

Oh, god. Well, it was four story, [? Opa? ?] And every store-- every floor--

Every floor, yeah.

--had about maybe 10 apartments.

Oh, that's a lot.

Yes.

That's an awful lot.

It's a big building.

Yeah. And was it built-- it sounds with modern conveniences, that it was a rather new building at the time. Was that the case, or is it an older building, let's say from the 19th century?

I'm not sure how old was the building when I lived there, but it was old.

Was it a stone building?

Yes.

OK, OK.

All these houses were stone.

Was there a lift?

Elevator.

Was an elevator--

I know what a lift-- [LAUGHS] I'm not sure if it was. Robbie, wasn't there?

I don't remember one.

Don't remember? And what floor were they on? Your parents.

It's the first floor, but not the ground floor-- the first floor.

What we would call the second floor in the United States.

Yes, that's it. Is that second floor?

In the United States, but in Europe, it's the first floor.

First floor. [CHUCKLES]

Yeah. Because in Europe, it is-- the ground floor is at the level of the street?

Yes.

And then one flight up, it's the first floor.

First floor.

OK.

Yes.

And did your windows look out on the street?

Yes, many windows.

OK. And did you have a balcony?

I don't think so.

OK.

I don't think we had a balcony. None--

There was that inner courtyard with a balcony.

Yeah, inner courtyard, a big inner courtyard, but nobody had a balcony in that building.

OK. And was it in the city center?

It is a city center.

It was in the city center? And what side of the river-- the Buda or the Pest?

Pest.

Pest?

Pest. OK, OK. And did you-- when I asked earlier about whether your mother worked with your father, you said she didn't--

Never worked in her life. As far I remember.

Does this mean that she also had household help?

Yes.

How many-- what kind of help was this?



Well, I don't know how you call them-- a maid.

[INAUDIBLE] was the maid also a cook?

I don't remember.

Did your mother ever cook?

All the time.

OK. And the maid did the housework?

Yes, suppose.

And--

If I would know, then I would have to tell you.

[CHUCKLES]

Not to worry, not to worry. You see, what I'm doing with all of these questions is, I'm trying to paint a picture with words of what your life--

Was.

--would have been like before the war, you know, to get a sense to get a context of the world that you had, and I do it through various types of questions. So some of it is about your home, some of it is about how your family supported itself, things like that. So if you don't know something, it's OK.

Yes.

It's OK.

Oh.

Do you want a break just for a second?

Yes. Cutting. Camera rolling.

Sound speeds.

OK. Your neighbors, did you know your neighbors in your building?

Not much. We were not-- it wasn't in style to be friends with the neighbors, but there was one on the other side, of the back side of the house, who actually was working for us, and yeah. I don't remember very well, except that at the end, she refused to work, yes. When I think-- if I would know, then I'm going to tell you that, I would think about it. She was pretty nasty.

At the end or throughout?

No. Not to work. To work, she was very good, yeah. But then she showed-- what is, the skin of her? The real herself, that she was practically a Nazi. And after the war, when I took my children home, I saw her coming down the steps, yes, and I turned my face. I didn't want to talk to her. She never, ever offered anything to us.

OK. So that was at least one person.

One person in the building.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Was the building-- was it a Jewish neighborhood or a mixed neighborhood?

Mixed, but mostly Jewish.

OK. Was your family-- I mean, not your grandparents' generation, but your mother and your father-- were they observant? Were they religious people?

No, not at all.

Not at all?

My father actually was from a religious family, but my mother on the opposite, she didn't care to hold any [INAUDIBLE]. Maybe the major holidays they observed, and went to the temple, the main temple, in Budapest. But she wasn't religious at all. None of her family was.

So did she keep a kosher--

No. No, no.

OK.

No.

None of those types of things?

No.

OK. Did your school, when you were going to school as a young girl, was it in your neighborhood?

Yes.

Or did you have to travel?

No, it was in my neighborhood.

And how far was it from your home?

A couple blocks away.

OK, let's cut.

Cutting. Camera rolling.

Sound speed.

OK. So we were talking about your school, and how far away from your house was it?

The elementary school was about-- mostly three blocks away.

Did you walk there by yourself every day?

When I was younger, if I remember, I was taken to school. Then I went by myself. I was able to go by myself.

Were you close to the maid or nanny-- did you have a nanny as you were growing up? Someone just to watch the children?

No, I don't think we had a nanny. We had a maid.

You had a maid?

Yeah.

OK. And did you have friends at school?

Yes. I can't remember.

Were they from part of your family's circle of people?

No.

Or was it-- OK.

There were a part of my family going to the same school, but mostly strangers.

OK.

Mostly strangers.

And your girlfriends or your friends from school, were they Jewish or were they Gentile, or were they both?

You know those days, we never cared. We never ask. I have no idea what religion. I have no idea.

Well, that's actually a very nice answer-- it means it didn't matter.

It didn't matter.

You know? I don't know how to phrase this question, but it suggests to me, did you have an idea of what it meant to be Jewish as a child? Did you have an identity that-- you said earlier that first you were Hungarian; second, you were Hungarian.

That's right.

Only third you were Jewish.

Yes. When I went down to that little town, also to my grandparents' house, then I found out my background from my father's side. They were religious people, you know. Not on the Budapest side, on my mother's side. No, they didn't want to hear anything about Judaism. Very assimilated.

Were they-- was anybody in your family political in the sense-- was there anybody who, let's say, liked the socialists a lot? Or was progressive in any way? Or interested [INAUDIBLE]?

Nothing. I don't remember as a child. I have no idea if they were in politics. I don't think so. I don't think so.

Now in the '30s, you're already becoming a teenager.

Yes.

Do you remember-- now 1933, you would have been 10 years old.

Yes.

And 1933 is when Hitler comes to power. Do you remember your parents ever talking about what's going on in Germany, about what this means?

It was top secret. They would never talk in front of all their children what was going on, even if they know. I don't know how much they knew, you know, but later on when they occupied Austria, they had a lot of people coming in to Hungary and working for the hat factory. And they told us these stories, but we just didn't want to believe in it. . It cannot happen. It cannot happen anywhere, especially in Hungary. We were so Hungarians, you know. So-- but [INAUDIBLE].

Tell me, in the hat factory-- again, it's a question of, were most of the employees?

Were Christians.

They were Christians?

They were Christians.

OK.

Yeah, most of them-- most of the people, yeah.

And so when there are people coming from Austria, and that-- I think that annexation happened in--

'38.

'38?

38, yes.

And so then an influx came to Budapest?

Yes, a lot of people came. There were a lot of Hungarian who lived in Vienna, and I do remember people coming and working in the hat store, and they told us what happened. But it went into one ear and out of the other. We just couldn't believe that. It could never happen in Hungary. We were so Hungarians. So much Hungarians.

And it was-- the sense of, is it close or is it far away, is different when you feel like it hasn't to do with your country, you know? Vienna's not that far.

That's right.

But it's not the same country.

I know.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Do you remember-- did you ever hear any speeches of Hitler over the radio? Was there any broadcast?

Yes. If I could-- if I would know, I talk to you of them, would think of it more. A lot of speeches, constantly putting down the Jews, and they don't deserve to live. They are the burden of the country, and don't try to

have them. If you would do any kind of a help for them, we're going to arrest you with them together.

And I had a girlfriend who wasn't Jewish. I was very close, not close. But when we went to a summer vacation-- we had a summer home, like. We took her, too. And when that Hitler time came, she said that, you dirty Jew. I don't want to be friends with you.

And her sister was married already, lived far away to the east side of the country. She came in with her husband and children. And I went down and visited them. And they were very antisemite, very antisemite. And after the war, she disappeared, that girlfriend. She just disappeared. She went with the Hungarian army into Germany and served the Germans.

Well, I was thinking of something. I forget. Anyway, after the war, she came back. Oh, the father. After the war, he asked me to come into the house. He opened the linen closet. And he said, whatever you would like, please take it. So I said-- Mr. Kovács was his name-- it is too late. I don't need anything. And then the daughter came back from Germany. She was-- how do you say that? She went voluntarily to Germany with a group of people. She came back, and she married a Jew after the war.

[LAUGHS] Go figure.

Yeah. But I never seen her. I never talked to her. I have no idea if she's alive or what's happening with her.

But what a personal betrayal.

That was a slap. That was a slap in the face. But I had other friends. I had a lot of Christian friends. And when I was in the [? barge, ?] one of them came from the sidewalk where the people were working, and we were marching in the middle of the road. And she ran into me, and she said, it cannot be-- you cannot be here. And she called me Rebecca. Never, ever would she call me that. And then they told her, if you not going to stop that, you're going to go in the group. We were going that time already to Germany for whatever. So anyways.

OK, we'll come to these things. But right now, I still want to step back to the '30s. So I wanted to get a sense of how much Hitler and the Nazi Party was in your, I guess, consciousness. And from what you told me, it was not that much.

No. I was a young kid first. I had everything in the world. And I can't remember anything really, really bad, except when I went to business school. The second year, they said that you don't belong here anymore.

What year was that?

That was in the '40s.

OK, I'll get to that. Let's turn to your brother. What was his name?

Istvan.

Istvan.

Istvan is Stephen.

Right, you mentioned that earlier.

Yes.

And he was born four years--

About four years younger. I remember-- that, I remember like today. My father took me to my grandmother's house, which was across the street on the fourth floor apartment. And he says that, I take

you here today. You're going to sleep here at your grandma's house because tomorrow, you're going to have a brother. I still have no idea how they knew that it was a boy.

Yeah.

Yes.

That was the first thought that I have.

Yeah. I don't know how it was. But maybe they guessed. Maybe they guessed, and it came through.

That's true.

Yeah. So my brother was born.

At home?

No. No, no. In a special clinic. They called it a clinic. A special hospital. And I don't know how long I was staying in my grandmother's house. Then when I went home, I had a brother, about four years younger. Beautiful, great. You see the picture.

When you were growing up with this kind of age difference in the--

With my brother?

Yeah. Did you hang out together or--

Yes, we hang out together because we had a family, my mother's sister, who lived across the street in the same house where my grandmother lived. She had four children. And we were very close with the four children. So my brother was close with her-- with his cousin, who the same age. And I was close with my cousins, three girls who were about my age, a year younger-- a year, the same year, and a little older.

What were their names?

OK. The three girls was Magda, Edith, and Ibi.

Ibi?

Ibi. Yeah, Violet is Ibi. And the boy's name was-- I think he was Stephen.

Also Istvan.

Also Istvan. I'm not sure. And that he and my brother were very close. So we were practically living in their house.

This was your mother's sister.

Mother's sister, yes.

And what was their last name?

Spiegel.

Spiegel.

Spiegel. [LAUGHS] We're talking about 70 years.

I know. I know.

Spiegel, yeah. Edith Spiegel. Yeah, you remember them. We visited them, whoever remained alive. They were living in London. After the war, they came. And we visited them, yeah. And the whole family didn't like London. So they've went to Australia. They didn't like Australia. They went back to London. Remember?

Well, when you're kind of thrown out into the world, until you find your place, it takes awhile.

If you ever.

Yeah.

If you ever find your place.

Yeah.

Yeah.

OK. So let me bring it up to 1939. And 1939, you are 16 years old, yes?

Yeah.

15, 16.

Yeah.

And on September 1, Hitler invades Poland, and World War II starts. Do you remember where you were when it happened?

I was in Budapest, in our own home, yeah.

And do you remember hearing about it?

I do remember on the radio. And not only on the radio. They don't have that in America or anywhere anymore. They were big-- how do you call that-- things written on the middle of the street. So people who didn't have radio, they were reading what was the news on the street.

Ah, so you know like those circular columns--

Yes, yes, yes.

--in Europe sometimes you'd have. And you'd have posters pasted there.

Yes, yes. That's how are they-- most people knew. But we had a radio, and we knew what happened. And so that was horrible from one minute to another. And we did have many Polish people coming to Hungary.

And I remember one thing. There was a young boy coming-- I don't know how on earth he came-- and rang the bell on our door. And he hardly spoke Hungarian. But we understood that he's one of those Polish people who evacuated from Poland into Hungary. And he was begging.

So I don't know what my parents gave him. But I was so independent. I said, I have to take you to my uncle's house. So I took him practically by hand. And I don't know if he told me this story, I understood him at all. I went up with him to my uncle's house, my mother's sister's--

Husband.

--husband, and went in. And I told him that this kid is a Polish refugee. And I want you to help him. And he

said, if you don't want me to report you to the police, to get out of here with him, and don't ever think that this is true. It cannot be true. They're making up stories like that. And never-- nobody believed it. They just plain don't believe that.

So that you're--

My mother's sister's husband. Yeah.

Wow. What an unexpected kind of harsh reaction.

I don't know. But that was probably the truth. They couldn't believe it. You just could not believe the stories of what they were telling us.

At that point in 1939, were you still in school?

Yes. Oh, yeah.

OK.

I was still in school. I was--

So that would've been gymnasium or not?

'39. I'm thinking of the special school where I went to. But that was later than '39 when I couldn't go in anymore. It just-- from one day, no Jews were allowed to go.

What year was that?

It must have been in the '40s.

OK.

It must have in the '40s.

See, I'm trying at this point to get a trace of how things change and what point do they change. Doesn't have to be precise.

Yes.

But it is just to get a sense. So in '39, the war happens. And from what you remember and what you see and stays there is that a lot of people from Poland come to Hungary. And you remember this boy knocking at your door.

Yes, definitely. And a lot of people came from Slovakia, a lot of people from Slovakia to Budapest.

Was this when Czechoslovakia was annexed?

I suppose.

OK.

Yeah.

OK. So that would also have been, I think, '38. But it may have been '39. I mean, Austria was '38. I believe was--

Maybe '39.



Maybe '39.

Huh?

'38.

'38--

'38?

--was Czechoslovakia?

Yeah, that's when--

The Munich pact?

The Munich pact.

OK. I thought it was, but I don't remember the exact date. OK. So then you have a lot of people from Slovakia coming.

Yes, yes, yes. If I remember correctly. I was a young girl. They were begging. They were standing on the street and begging for things. Whoever had relatives, if they were willing to take them in, it was another story. But it was a very hard life for them, even in a free country.

So it seems it comes wave after wave. First come those from Austria--

Yes, in '39.

--then from Czechoslovakia, then Poland.

Poland. Yeah.

And at that point, what kind of government did Hungary have?

The same government. Horthy was the-- what was he?

OK, it was the--

He was an admiral.

Yeah. So it was the Horthy government in '39.

Horthy government.

OK.

Oh, yeah.

At that point, did your parents start talking about politics in front of kids and what's going on? Or was it still quiet?

If I would know that I would have to talk to you 70 years after, I would remember.

Yeah. Not to worry about that.

I don't know. I don't know what they were talking or it was not allowed to talk about, not in front of the

children.

Yeah. And your father continued in the factory.

Yeah, the factory was still very well. But the woman-- I don't know what year-- she took over just namely.

In name only, you mean?

In name.

Yeah. OK.

In name only, yeah. But she became a real Nazi. When my parents sent me up to her house for the monthly whatever we were supposed to have, she told me, it's not you people anymore. Never come here in my house anymore, and I'm not giving you anything. So I don't know what exactly the amount it was from the business. She took over.

So did she take over after the Germans marched in or before?

After the German marched in.

OK, so this is '44. This is in 1944.

No, marched in in Hungary.

Yeah.

Yeah, that must be.

OK.

That must be.

OK. I was still trying to concentrate on--

I'm not sure.

That's OK. I was still trying to get more sense of what was going on in your life before the Germans arrived because that is crucial when they arrive. But before--

I had a beautiful life. I had a perfect life, beautiful family. I never had any worries. I never thought of what could happen tomorrow. And everything was normal, just like you people over here.

Yeah. And when the war started, did life change at all in any way for your family?

Well, the war started in--

In '39.

1939, I don't remember changing.

OK, what about school? You continued in your school until--

I continued my school in the business school. I'm not sure any more of the year. It was '39.

How old were you when you were in business school?

I must have been 18.

So that would have brought us up to '41.

'41 already?

Yeah.

There is a point where I read from some of the information that I was provided that you had desires to be an opera singer.

[LAUGHS] Yes.

And how did that go? Were you able to pursue that?

Well, it's a horrible memory. There was a very famous-- how do you call it-- movie director whose mother was a piano teacher. And I went up to her house and asked her if she would ever teach me to sing. And she said-- oh, before I had to go and report to her, I had to fill out a paper who I am, what my religion is.

And I went into her house. The living room had I don't know how many grand pianos. And she was the teacher. And she sat at the piano, and she played [? scales ?]. And she couldn't believe that I went so high. And she said, my dear, you would be an excellent student to become an opera singer, but I cannot take you because you're Jewish. So that was such a slap in my face.

That was a crushing.

So crushing that I wanted to kill myself. I went down to the Danube River, and I wanted to jump into the river. And I walked up and down and up and down and decided not to. So I went back home and gave up my career as an opera singer. So that was the end of that.

By the way, this lady's son is a famous man here in America. He came to America after the war. And I don't know where he-- hasn't cannot be alive anymore. But I've heard about him. He was an American-- can't remember the name. I can't remember.

It's OK.

I can't remember.

It's OK.

It'll come.

It happens.

It happens to the best of us.

Did you tell your parents about this incident?

I told my parents. And they weren't for it anyway. They didn't want me to be a singer at all. So [? that was ?] [? all. ?] My life went on from there, yeah.

So how old were you when you finished what would have been the equivalent of high school? How old were you?

Regular high school? I don't know. I could've been 18.

And did you want to go to university?

Well, the business school was like university.

OK.

And I went there for two years, and I couldn't attend it anymore.

And why was that?

Because I was a Jew. No Jew was allowed to go into the school anymore.

OK. So let's say if you start at age 18, this is 1941. And you go to the business school. And you go for two years.

Two years. The second year, I had to finish.

OK.

Yeah.

Were you allowed to finish the year, or it was don't come back tomorrow?

I don't know how it was.

OK.

I don't know.

So in other words, you were only in this school for two years, and you weren't allowed to go any further?

No, I never finished, and I couldn't go back to school.

So that's sort of like a second blow.

Oh, yeah.

Was this becoming more common?

Yes.

This is before the Germans march in. This is still--

It's before the Germans march in. Yeah, there were a lot, a lot of very antisemitic Hungarians.

But what about the laws and the rules? Were they changing? Because there could be people who are antisemitic. But if the law is the law and it doesn't allow for that--

Yeah, then in '38, wasn't really allowed the [? diverse-- ?] like, what happened in '44 when the Nazis really took over. But it wasn't easy to be a Jew, even in the peacetime in Hungary.

OK. Were people starting-- by the time you're not allowed to go to university or to the business school anymore, are people started to believe the stories that they hear from other countries?

No.

They still don't believe them.

No. They did not believe them. In fact, I had a few cousins who weren't allowed to attend university

anymore. So they went-- one went to Spain. Two went to Italy. And one were somehow staying in Budapest going to the university, knowing the topnotch Christian people, helping out their children who went to the same class. And they were able somehow to finish. There was a certain percentage still was allowed.

So it was a numerus clausus.

It was numerus clausus. But then it came numerus nullus.

[LAUGHS]

Yeah.

Yeah.

What?

Numerus no clausus.

Numerus nullus.

Yeah.

Yeah.

[INAUDIBLE].

What?

Sure, let's cut for a second.

Cutting.

Camera speeding.

OK. Before we cut for a second, we were talking about the fact that the university also became closed to Jews, at first after being limited with a limited number, then totally.

Totally.

And you mentioned that some of your cousins left for other countries, Italy and Spain, which then raises a question in my mind. Does that mean the borders for Hungary were open to those countries because they were Axis powers?

It must be. It must be.

OK. Did you hear of other people leaving Hungary?

Yes, many, many, many people left Hungary who were able to. And it cost a lot of money to travel. Yeah.

And so that must have-- I mean, this would've been Jews, I would have taken--

Jews, Jews.

--who were leaving Hungary.

Yes.

And Hungarian Jews.

Hungarian Jews. Christian didn't have to leave.

OK. So that means that some of those folks were believing the stories and were getting more frightened about what the situation in Hungary itself was like.

I don't know how much they believed the story. But the law came out black and white. They didn't want the Jews to be in school, in the universities.

OK.

Yes.

And was your father-- was there any question or discussion at your home that any one of your family would just leave?

Yes. Yes. We also-- I don't know why they got the paper to go to Turkey. It cost a fortune. And my mother refused. It couldn't happen here. It could not ever, ever happened to us. So why should I leave the place where I was born, where everybody-- we didn't go. We didn't go.

I see. I see.

Yeah. And whoever went to Turkey, they remained alive. Not all the doors will open.

Did your mother survive the war?

No. Not my mother. Not my 16-year-old brother. Not my father.

So you're the only one.

I'm the only one. I'm the only one.

She paid a high price for saying, I want to stay home.

Yes. Yes.

OK. Let's go now to March 1944.

When they came in.

When they came in.

March 19, Sunday, Sunday. We were-- a group of my friends, mostly Christians, went climbing on the mountain. Budapest is two city. One is the Buda with the mountains. So every Sunday, I was allowed to go meet that group upon the-- if you call it a mountain. It's little hills.

And out of the blue sky, we saw the sky going black from the German planes. The Germans came in. We didn't know what was going go on. And we saw the Hakenkreuz--

Yeah, yeah, the swastika.

--the swastika on the plane. It darkened the sky there were so many. So I don't know how I had any idea that I shouldn't be up there in the mountain. And I told my friends that I have to leave. I have to go back home because it doesn't look too good. And they said, don't worry about it. We take care of you. Don't make a move.

And I didn't listen to them. I went down the hill to the first street car station. There were hundreds and hundreds of people. They were grabbing already.

Were these Germans who were grabbing them or Hungarians?

Hungarian Nazis. Hungarian Nazis. They were top-notch that time already.

Were they in government by then?

And everywhere.

OK. OK. Was this the Arrow Cross?

Arrow Cross. The Arrow Cross, yes. And the young kids, 16, 17-year-olds kids, they were carrying the badge that they belonged to the Arrow Crossing. Wherever they stopped a Jew, they were pulling them to a group of people. And I saw that I was supposed to go by street car to go home. And I was afraid that would be too close to people, and I walked. I walked home. That was Sunday morning, noon maybe.

And my parents heard that on the radio. They knew what was going on. They were worrying themselves to dead because of me. They didn't know what's happening. And they knew that something is going to be terribly wrong. And I was staying there with my parents till from one minute to another, one day to another, they came out with new laws like you have to wear the yellow star.

Then we had to move from our house into sort of like a ghetto, into a Jewish star house first, big, big, huge building. They put a star on those building, and we had to move in. But it wasn't that easy. You had to hire somebody to take a mattress, and something-- in the middle of the street, the guy was-- I don't know, he had a horse or what-- but took our stuff to the certain place.

Was it a new apartment?

No, no, no, no.

I mean, was it another apartment you could move into?

Yes, another apartment house.

And did you share an apartment with anybody or a room? Or how was your living situation?

I figure now after the war that my mother-- I don't know-- talked to her sister, who had the four children in the house where my grandmother was staying. And she said, this certain number of a house and certain street, we're going to move in. You come with-- you're going there, too. So that's how we went to a place, and my aunt with her four children and a husband. My father was still home.

And we moved into that house. Every room was taken by a family. The kitchen was taken. The maid's room was taken. Everything was-- families in. And we were there for a while. Oh, while we were on the street with that horse wagon or whatever it was, the man who took our stuff, people passed by. They said, where you going? You're going to be killed, anyway. It's no use for you to go anywhere. Just stay and kill yourself in the Danube.

So we went up to this house. We were there for a few weeks. Every day, they came out with a new law. We couldn't stay-- oh, in the meantime, they called my father and my brother to a forced labor somewhere. So I went down the street with them.

And there, you could see hundreds and hundreds of people my father's age, my brother's age. And people said, don't follow him. You're not going to see him anymore. They knew better than we did. And that's what they wished for. So that was the last time I have seen my father and my brother. And then--

What happened to them?

They marched them to Germany. They killed them, both of them.

Did you ever find out any details?

After the war, I went to Vienna. And somebody sent me an article for a newspaper that my brother's name was there. So we went to Vienna from here, [INAUDIBLE], long after the war, and didn't find out anything. So from the United States, you went to Vienna.

Yeah, after--

Years later.

Years later. And I was called in. I don't know the story. We had to go in the basement because it was bombing constantly. When the siren came up, we had to go in the basement, and nobody could be on this street. And there were a group of Jewish forced labor people. They couldn't go into any of the buildings because they were Jews. They had to find a house with the star on.

So they-- I don't know who on earth was there. They let them. They came down the basement. And young boys. And they came and said-- oh, there was a rumor if you're married, you're not going to be taken right away.

Either man or woman? That is, neither spouse would be taken. Neither gender.

No. No. Just the woman who is married to a forced laborer. Or maybe-- that was a rumor, anyway. But we believed that. So mothers and parents went with their children to the station with the soldiers standing. what's the name of that?

Barracks? A Kaserne?

Kaserne.

OK, so a barracks.

Kaserne, with money in their hand to beg people to marry their daughter. Because if she was married-- that was the rumor-- they wouldn't take her.

For forced labor.

Forced labor wherever.

Now, while they're saying these things, are the Germans involved at all? Or is this all being done through Hungarians?

The German was-- the top-notch involved was telling the Hungarian government what to do. And then they had the best friend of the Nazi, the Hungarian Nyilas.

Did you ever have a German come to your home? Or did you have ever cross with that of a German soldier or German authority?

No, never.

Never.

Never. Never seen, really. So anyway, we are in the basement. And a group of Jewish forced labor people came down, and they all said to me, to my mother, can we marry her in name? But never saw them, never



knew them. And the next day, a man came back with a paper to marry me. I never, ever seen-- I never knew his name. But I had a paper. Oh, and you had to have two witnesses. So he grabbed two people on the street and went into the office and married me.

So you got married in an office to a stranger.

To a complete stranger.

Do you remember his name?

Oh, yeah.

What was it?

I'll tell you later.

OK. OK.

But it didn't matter. They took me anyway. I don't remember exactly the date. 17,000 girls were gathered together in a certain place. And we were marching south of Budapest, away from Germany, away from Austria. And we were digging holes, ditches against the Russian army, that we were supposed to stop them. And we were there for a few weeks. And then they decided that wasn't a place anymore for us. They were taking us to Germany.

So this was in the summertime?

It was-- it must have been. They came in March. And that could be-- that could be in May.

That soon?

Yes. Oh, everything went very fast.

Now, your father lost his business after the Germans come in or before the Germans come in?

Much before the Germans came in to this woman, to this woman who took over everything.

And was she part of the business before?

Never was part of the business. She was a top-notch office worker in the business, [INAUDIBLE] years, many, many years.

Oh, so she had been one of the employees.

She was one of the employees.

What was her name?

Mrs. Faust.

Mrs. Faust.

Faust. Mrs. Faust. Yeah, yeah.

So she had been an employee, and then she takes over.

Yes. And she didn't want to give us a penny anymore. Yeah. So anyway, we were called in, 17,000 people marching down south and digging, digging--

Digging ditches.

--ditches. And then out of the blue sky, they decided that Russian coming too fast. We have to move the place and go in a big group, 17,000 girls. Can you imagine? Middle of the street, middle of these highways or whatever. And I saw while we were walking there were like little mountains of people laying. They couldn't walk anymore.

Were they alive?

They were still alive. There were policemen standing there and people bringing them some food or whatever.

This was outside of Budapest?

Still in Budapest. Still in Budapest. We became from outside through Budapest to go to Vienna, to Germany. And I had my star on. And I started to chew it off because I decided I'm going to go and lay down there or make believe that I want to help them as a Christian.

Oh, I ask one of the police-- there were all kind of Nazis, Germans, policemen marching with us, watching over us. And policemen-- they said the policemen you were able to talk to in that time in Hungary. So I said, what's gonna be those people who is laying down there?

He said, I don't know. There probably going to come a truck, pick them up, and take them to Germany by truck. So I said to my three cousins we were staying in line. I said, it's even going to be better if they're going to take me by a truck. I'm going to go out and lay down in between these people.

They beg me not to do it because they said whoever escape, they're going to kill every tenth of the people, and they were sure they going to kill them, my cousins. So I tried to chew off my star. I don't remember if I did it or not. And I stepped out. And the first police, I said, can I help in any way those people? He said, listen, if you don't want to go back where you belong, you run.

And that gave me such a boost. I just run. I didn't know where to run. All the gates were closed. You couldn't go into a house. I was running till I found an open gate. I went into it. I didn't want to go up to the high floors because-- by the elevator because I would've been too close to people. So I started to walk upstairs. I went all the way to the highest floor. And I decided I'm going to jump down from there, and that's it. I'm not going anywhere.

So I was standing on the rail to jump. And I hear the noise coming in. From that 17,000 people were a lot of noise. And it came into this building. All of a sudden, this noise stopped. So I went down and looked around. The people left already. I don't know where I was standing in the 17,000. But by the time I came down and decided to down, under there was no marching people anymore.

So I started to run. If I'm remembering correctly, I bought a newspaper and covered my star with that. And I was running, running till I went to my [PLACE NAME], the star house. But you couldn't go in. The gates were closed. You had to-- either you had the key, or you called the-- how do you call that, housemaster or--

Oh, like a superintendent?

--superintendent to come and let you in. And I was standing outside and waiting. Maybe somebody would come in, I sneak in. And somebody did come in. I snuck in. I ran up to the apartment. That was the star house apartment. And I went upstairs. And my aunt was there with her son who decided to move into that certain place, my mother's sister.

And she said, where are my children? Where did you leave them? Why didn't they come? That's all she wanted to know. So to her, I had a story that they are better off where they are. And then my mother comes in. Something I'm missing. And then if they are better off, why did you just escape? I said, Mom, I don't want to tell her they are going to be killed. So I had to play two different stories.

So I'm not sure exactly how it was. But my mother disappeared. She went and look for a better star house. They allowed people who had connection or paper that they are citizens of Australia or whatever. And all of a sudden, a young boy comes up to the apartment with a note in his hand and said, I'm looking for Elizabeth Garbovits.

So I said, that's me. And my mother's writing a note, give the guy a few dollars. I had money sewn into my winter coat. And the note says, come look me up. I'm in this-and-this house, this-and-that street. So till I leave, I have no idea how on earth was I there when that guy came with the note. It is another miracle. And that he was willing to do it.

So I went downstairs and started to walk toward that house, what my mother wrote me the address. As I'm walking in big, wide boulevard, a German guy comes behind me. And he talks to me in German, something-- he wants to take me out. And I had-- I'm not sure if it was a star. But anyway, I was covered.

And I saw a lot of people in front of me, groups and groups of people in front of a hotel, Hotel Royale. And I had a feeling I shouldn't go that way. I have to cross the street, and I have to leave that German guy by himself, wherever he is. I went across the street. And after the war, what I found out that this time at the minute when I was there, all these people were killed, taken into the hotel, down the basement, and they were killed at this exact time.

Oh my goodness.

So I went on the other side of the street and went all the way to the address what my mom send me to. She was by the gate waiting probably all day, all night, waiting for me to come. So I went up to the apartment with her. You can imagine an apartment like that, a living room like that. There was mattresses on the floor, one on top of-- next to others. And people were laying down. And my mom made it sure that I should be the very end so nobody should touch me.

Was this men and women together?

Men and women, families. All the young all [? crying. ?] Yes. And we were there for a few days. And my mother went out. I'm not sure if I told you that I was in the basement in our star house, and this one boy came and wanted to marry me, give me my name-- give me his name. So we were sleeping there. I was there for-- I don't know-- a few days, a few weeks.

And my mom went downstairs and found a policeman. He gave money to the policeman to take me to the Swiss consulate house. And he did. He took the money. He took me. And when I saw what was going on in front of this-- oh, my mother said, you have to look up Dr. Gideon. Dr. Gideon I never, ever heard before, and nobody ever heard after. I don't know who the Dr. Gideon was. But he must have been connected with the Swiss consulate. And my parents probably knew him.

So when the policeman took me all the way to the Swiss house consulate-- there was no such thing as a Swiss consulate house. The owner was-- it was a famous house. It was a glass house. Everything was glass. The owner was a glass-- had a glass factory. And he built the house for himself. There was the steps and everything was glass there, that they call it a glass house. I have the picture. And where was I?

Well, the policeman was taking you to this place.

Yeah, the policeman then dropped me, dropped me plain. And I saw hundreds and hundreds of people in front of this so-called consulate house. They all wanted to go in. So what am I going to do? I have no way to get in. I don't know anybody.

So I phoned my own cousin, Edith, who was standing-- I was going back and forth to see what to do. I was going to go back to my mother. And my cousin, Edith, was standing by the door to get in. And I hold her hand. And she said that, hold my hand. Hold my hand, and maybe next time when the door is open, we could sneak in. And in the meantime, there were inside policemen, Jewish people.

Jewish policemen?

Make-believe policemen.

Got it. OK.

And one comes through the door, grabs my-- Edith first, and I'm holding Edith's hand. And pushed me inside the building. And who is the guy? The policeman? It's the guy who marry me. Yeah. So I had his name, but I never knew him in my life.

So he took me. He told Edith-- opened some doors somewhere-- you go this way, and will you find yourself wherever. And you stay here, he says to me. [INAUDIBLE] was a make-believe office. And there was a door he put up against the wall and said, you stay inside that door by the wall. And he was sitting outside-- he was a volunteer policeman in that building.

Yes, but this was-- if this was not the Swiss consulate, what was it?

The owner was a factory-- glass factory owners who bought himself this opportunity to make believe that was a Swiss-- there were hundreds and hundreds of those houses at the end of-- close to end of the war. So he made [? opportunity ?] he was able to do that, that make believe it was a Swiss consulate house.

So the authorities, the German authorities, the Hungarian authorities believed it was a consulate?

Yes. No, [? wait. ?] But they came in at once and took me included, took out, hands up, to the Danube and killed them in the Danube. So anyway, I-- where was I?

Well, let me ask a few things at this point. You're at this glass house that is supposedly the Swiss consulate and therefore supposedly safe.

Yes, for the minute.

And there are a lot of people trying to get in?

Oh, god. You see the picture.

And your cousin Edith is at the front of the line?

Front of the line somewhere. And she never told us-- we lived in the same building. And she never told us that she's going anywhere. Everything was top secret in a way to save yourself.

Ah. So there you come in.

I'm coming in.

Your husband on paper says-- pulls you both in, sends her in one direction, you in another, and tells you to sit behind a door.

Behind a-- a door was leaning against the wall.

OK. Now, was the door of glass? Was the wall of glass?

No. I don't remember what the door was. But I remember sitting there and sitting outside, and he's telling me stories.

OK. I mean, but if it's a glass house, can you see all the people inside of the house?

Oh, yes, did I see all the people, hundreds and hundreds of people hiding there. And they bought the next

building also and made the people to-- I don't know-- move out or whatever. And hundreds of people were safe there in the next door building also.

So anyway, I was sitting there with my supposedly husband. And he tells me his life story and asks me my life story. And he says that, you would never recognize me in peacetime because I'm only a baker, and I'm delivering goods on a tricycle. And you're not this kind of a girl who would go out with a baker. So that was the end of him.

So then he took me to-- it couldn't be too long in that space. He took me to a place up in the attic somewhere. And he was working there as a baker. And he was able to give bread to people. He gave bread to one of his cousin, who made money out of it. This guy gave away bread. Never, ever a penny he took for it. So I said, this is some kind of a man that I never seen in my life. So anyway, he said he wants to marry me.

But you were already married.

[? I knew ?] we were married in paper. So we were there for a few months in the Swiss consulate house till the Russian came. And he said he wants to go back to his village to see what happened to his family. And then either I come down, or he's going to come back to Budapest so he had family there in that Swiss house who decided to follow him a few days after. And I went down. And ever since that, I was Mrs. Schwarz. This is my husband. This is my husband.

The husband that you have with your whole life?

All life, all my life. So anyway, we were in a little city where, after war, he became a top-notch policeman. [INAUDIBLE].

But I want to ask a few questions. What was his first name?

Gabor.

Gabor. So his first name is Gabor. His last name is Schwarz. So now you are--

Sandy.

Sandy. So first, you're Elizabeth--

Garbovits.

Garbovits, Schwarz, Sandy.

Not really, because at home, after the war from Schwarz, he changed in Hungarian, which means fekete. Fekete was our name after the war.

Fekete?

Fekete. It means black.

And why did he change it?

Because Schwarz was a typical Jewish name. And he couldn't exist anymore with that name.

Even post-war Hungary?

Oh, yeah, post-war Hungary. Not only that, he was a top-notch policeman. And one day, he got shot. The other policeman shot him. So he said, that's it. I'm not staying here anymore. We left that little town, went up to Budapest to whoever was still there, my family, and left Budapest.

So what happened to your mother?

That's what I was going to say. When we went into the house, in my own house, my own-- no, no, the star house, I found pictures on the steps, letters, everything. And I found a letter from my mother. It's written from a wagon, from a train. The number of the train is this-and-that. Please come and try to pick me up. I can't be here any longer.

So after the war, we find out that number of train went to Bergen-Belsen. So after the war, right after, I didn't want to stay by the communists and went to Bergen-Belsen to find my mother. And it took us about a half a year from Budapest to Bergen-Belsen on top of trains and walking barefoot, whatever. And then we find out what Bergen-Belsen was.

You didn't know.

No, no, I didn't. I couldn't imagine. I couldn't imagine. Even today, it's impossible to imagine what it was. So my mother-- I don't know which way, but she passed, I suppose. I don't know how they killed her. So never, ever found her.

Was she on any list anywhere? Did you ever find her name on a list?

No. Never, never, never, never. In the last minute, the Hungarian Jews by the thousands were taken to different-- again, there was no-- once, I found a name in Vienna of my brother. And never my father, ever. And I have no idea where and how and what really killed him.

So we went to Germany and stayed in Bergen-Belsen for four years. We couldn't go anywhere. One uncle went to Israel. And I was corresponding with him. I just wanted to go to Israel in every way. Never, ever any more anywhere. And my uncle said-- oh, I told him that I have a chance to go to America.

There are people here, top-notch office workers from America. They said they're going to be able to give us papers as a refugee to go to America. So my uncle said to me, if it's true what you are writing to me, you better go to America. But you wouldn't be able to take it. It's very hard. In the 1946 in Israel was very hard. So we were staying--

I want to clarify something. You were in Bergen-Belsen. It was a concentration camp. By the time you got there, what kind of a place was it?

Yeah, the concentration camp place was unimaginable. It was a horror. But we were staying in-- I think that was either Belsen or Bergen. It's a city where the German soldiers were, regular buildings. That's where we were staying for four years.

Oh, I see. So you weren't in the camp area.

No, no, no, no, no.

OK. You were staying in a place called Bergen or Belsen, which was close by to where the camp had been.

Yeah.

So when you got to the camp, though, tell me what it is that you saw. What did you see when you got to the camp?

Just ground. Nothing you have seen. You couldn't see anything. People were standing and looking for people and asking or microphone asking if you know this and that person. But nothing. It was as flat as anything, as far as I remember, 70 years after. So we were staying in Belsen, and that was Bergen, I think, for four years till they came out with the Truman law that they were able to take the American Jews to-- the Jews to America.

What was your husband doing at this time? He was a chauffeur for the Joint Distribute Organization.

I see.

Yeah. And in the meantime, I had my son. In Bergen-Belsen, he was born. Yes.

What's the date of his birth?

May-- two, three days ago. January 12, 1947.

January 12--

January 12, 1947. Yeah.

And I'm sorry I keep interrupting. But you said that-- did you ever get married a second time?

Four more times.

You got married four more times?

Four more times. I can't even remember the way. When we had to come to America, we had to get married in Germany because the marriage license that I had was in Hungary, and I wasn't supposed to be in Hungary in order to come to America as a Bergen-Belsen--

Person.

--person. It was taken there. So I got married in Bergen-Belsen. Then I got married in Jewish in Bergen-Belsen. Then when we came to America, we had to get married over here, regular marriage.

Civil marriage.

Civil marriage. So I was married to the same guy four times.

[LAUGHS]

Yes.

Just to make sure.

It was worth it. It was worth it. I would do it over and over again. He was a perfect, perfect husband. And so how far was I?

So you were saying that the Truman law came in that allow-- and your husband was working for the Joint Distribution Committee.

And somebody said to him, a top-notch officer-- he says, if you wait long enough, you could maybe go to America because of that new law, Truman. And then I wrote to my uncle in Israel. He said, if it's true, what you're writing to me, you better go to America. Because right now in Israel, it's very bad. So that's what we were waiting for four years. Bobby was 2 and 1/2 years old. And they brought us to New York.

How did you leave? How did you come to America? By ship? By plane?

By ship.

By ship.

By ship. By ship. Definitely by ship. And Bobby, we didn't have anything. We lived after the war in maybe

that much of a--

A small room.

A small room was my bedroom, my bathroom, my kitchen, my toilet, everything there. And Bobby was born there. So I was going to say something. And my husband made-- we didn't get money, what he was. And he was never a Schwarzhändler.

Never in the black market.

Never in a black market. He was too decent to do anything like that. So he was working there till we came, too. We had one suitcase for the three of us, one. Can you imagine? And then we had a little-- like a tricycle, a tiny tricycle. Bobby was 2, 2 and 1/2. And we were staying in New York for a while. And they said that, your time is going to come, and you're going to go to Worcester, Massachusetts. And they took us on a train.

And who was this? Was this the Joint--

The Joint Distribution Committee. They put us on a train, the three of us. And somebody from the people who helped stole the little bicycle of Bobby's. And anyway, we arrived Worcester in 1947.

No. In 1947 is when Bobby's born.

'49.

'49.

'49. [LAUGHS] And I never liked it. I couldn't stand it. It was a village for me.

After Budapest.

Have you been?

To Worcester? Yeah.

No.

To Budapest? Yes.

Yeah? When?

Several years ago. Several years ago. Beautiful city.

It was nothing, nothing compared what it was before the war. Anyway, we were staying for five years in Worcester till somebody said, the best thing to stay put till you become citizens. But I was corresponding with the world. I couldn't stand Worcester. For me, I was choking there. So Bobby was going to school. He was already six years old. And my husband was also corresponding with everybody. And he found out in Detroit, Michigan that they looking for bakers.

Is that what he was doing in Worcester, too?

In Worcester, oh, yeah.

He was working as a baker.

As a baker, yeah. And [LAUGHS] I went down with my son to the bakery, and I couldn't find the place. So I didn't speak English. So when a man comes to me, I don't know what he said. I said, you speak German? He said no. I said, are you Jewish? He says, I'm sorry. I thought that the end of the road, somebody should say



that he's sorry that he's not Jewish. That, I never, ever heard in my life. For that alone was worth it to come to America.

[LAUGHS]

And we found the place when my husband was working.

This was in Detroit or in--

In Worcester.

In Worcester.

In Worcester. In Worcester. No. Then we were there for-- yeah, somebody said that the best thing to stay put for five years till you become citizens. So that's what we did.

OK.

And we were staying there till Carol was maybe a year old. Carol was born in Worcester.

Your daughter.

Yes.

So you have two children?

I have two children. The best, the most-- nobody has children like I do. So anyway, this boy is something else. I cannot describe him, how wonderful. He [? learned ?] that his sister has to go up to Atlanta. He flew down flew down on a day when his daughter had to have a mastectomy. He came to his mother. Anyway, that was-- we arrived in Detroit. That's where I am?

Yeah. You stayed for five years in Worcester. Your daughter was born there.

Yeah, and then my husband left the town. He couldn't stand it anymore. Somebody-- we were corresponding with the whole America. And somebody said that in Detroit, they need bakers. So he flew-- no. I don't know. By train, he went to--

Detroit.

--Detroit. And he found a excellent job for himself, although he didn't speak the language practically. And he was OK. He said that I should come with the two kids, and the apartment, to get rid of things. I didn't know what to do. Carol was trained already, toilet trained. And all the things, I forget to bring diapers. So she went back for another-- I don't know how long. She was not able to go anymore to the bathroom [INAUDIBLE].

All of this was in planning to go to Detroit? All of this was how you were preparing to leave Worcester--

Worcester.

--by yourself with the children.

With the children and get rid of all this stuff, what we had. So we arrived there, and my husband was waiting. And he had an apartment already for us. And we were there for '40-- no, '55 till we came to--

Florida?

--Florida. Yeah.

And how many years would that have been?

[? I'd have to ask ?] God in heaven. At least 25 years in Florida.

OK. So we're talking till 1995 maybe? For 40 years you lived in Detroit?

Oh, yeah. It could be 40 years in Detroit. Yes. And he had a business of his own. He was an excellent baker. And we came down once in a while to-- what is the--

Florida.

--Florida. And we liked it. We had family-- not family, far from family-- and friends, a lot of friends. So we sold everything. Oh, my son moved down to Indianapolis. He got a job as a professor in the Indiana University. And we were traveling, going every Monday and Tuesday to see him and the kids. He had a son and a daughter. And I was there all the time.

And we bought a little condo in Indianapolis. And we had to sell everything because we moved down to Florida. And my daughter decided that she wants to move with us. So she came down from Detroit and moved in with us. And then she got married and has two best children. The son, there's nobody like this boy.

And tell me this. We've just been introduced to your husband in a most unusual way, first as the person who comes in the air raid shelter who offers to marry you, and then as the one who pulls you into what is the false Swiss consulate, and then who eventually really becomes your husband, and you marry him four times. Tell me this. What was his story? Did he have brothers and sisters?

Yes.

Did he have anybody who survived the war?

Yes, his brother.

Tell me. Tell me where he's from.

He's from a village next to a bigger village--

In Hungary.

--in Hungary. His parents had a shah-loon. I don't know if you know what-- where they drink.

Uh-huh. Oh, a saloon.

A saloon. Oh.

They had a saloon. OK. And the parents passed away he was young. The sister got married, who has two children and continued the business. And the brother moved off to Budapest. And they lived together once for a short time. And they took the sister with the two children. They took his brother with the brother-in-law to Germany. And the brother-- they were liberated somewhere, the both of them, the two brother-in-laws.

And the husband of the sister found out what happened to the wife and the children, that they took them to Auschwitz. He didn't want to live any longer. He was very thin already and not in a good health. But he refused to eat, and he died after the war. And the brother came back to Hungary, married, had a beautiful daughter, and a top-notch position by the communist. He was the bigger communist than Stalin, I'm telling you. And they all passed away. Even the daughter passed of a early breast cancer.

So he stayed in Hungary while you and Gabor left?

Oh, he came to America. We brought him to America. He didn't like anything.

Did he go back?

Oh, yes. He didn't like anything over here. He went back to Budapest. Yeah, yeah.

Tell me this part. We didn't really talk about this. When you were liberated, you were liberated by the Soviet Army. Is that right?

Yes.

What was that like? When that happened, were you still in the glass house?

Yes. I was in the glass house. And we found out that we were liberated. So we left the glass house. In worn-torn Budapest, people were laying on the middle of the street with horses. People were cutting pieces from horses to have meat to eat. And went back to my apartment. I found people were living there who never belonged there. And I didn't want to stay.

The apartment that you had-- in your home, your real home?

My own home, yeah. And phoned my aunt. I phoned a few aunts and uncles and cousins after the war. They were hiding in Budapest. And then we went down to this village where my husband was born, stayed there for a while. He was a policeman, I told you.

How long was he a policeman for in this village?

Months.

Just a few months.

Just till they found out that he's Jewish. So they shot him. Oh, yeah. And he said that's it. [INAUDIBLE]. He doesn't want to stay in Hungary anymore. So we went-- after the war, we went to Bergen-Belsen to find my-

Did you have difficulties leaving Hungary at that time?

It wasn't easy. But we went by foot, by top of the trains, and many different ways.

What about documents? Did you have any documents, or did you need any documents?

I don't think that-- no. I don't know if I-- I must have had papers. But no, they didn't care. They didn't want Jew papers. We were illegals all over, all the time, till we reached Bergen. And that's where we were staying till we came to America.

When you were in Bergen-Belsen, or in Bergen, did you get refugee status as displaced people?

Oh, yeah.

OK.

Oh, yeah. We got food free, a little room, I told you, in one of the barracks where the soldiers used to be. But we had to wait.

And did you have any interaction with local people?

Never. Never, never. That was a separate little town where the German soldiers were staying that became empty. And we never had anything to-- one day, I remember I got so skinny, and Bobby couldn't hold his head after the war. There was no food or I didn't know how to feed him probably.

So they send us to a resort place, and we were there. We had everything. Under Jewish organization, we were there for a while and then went back to the so-called camp-- it wasn't a camp anymore-- and stayed there and waited till we were allowed to come.

Do you know what the resort name was? You don't remember. Was it by the sea? Was it in the mountains?

No, no. It was-- no. It was next the village. I didn't know.

Oh, so it could've been like a sanatorium or something like that.

I don't remember.

OK.

I don't remember. So anyway, that's what it was.

Did you go back to Hungary ever?

Oh, many times

Yeah?

Many times we went. I took the whole family to Hungary. I went back with my husband to see his brother. Yeah. But I never wanted to live there under the communist. They took away our apartment. They took everything away, whatever I had.

Did you ever feel-- it could be a mixed feeling because the Soviets were liberators.

Yes.

But did you ever feel fear from any of the soldiers? Because there was talk also that the soldiers didn't behave very well.

The Russian.

Yeah.

Yeah. No, I didn't--

You didn't have any of those--

And I never had any real connections with the Soviets. Yeah. So that's the way it goes. I have the most wonderful two children in the world. I'm telling you. Can you imagine staying with them for years already, for years? Yeah. And the son-in-law and the daughter-in-law, perfect, beautiful, great.

Well, it's quite a testament. Quite a testament. Tell me. We've now covered a lot of territory. Is there anything else you'd like to add before we finish our interview of--

Like what?

Well, something that you think is important for people to know about if they hear your story, if they hear different parts of it, what you'd want them to understand from all that you went through.

I'm not sure if didn't who ever, never went to that could understand. There is no way for me to tell you this story. This is just the minimum what I could tell. This is nothing compared to the real stories. So maybe [? it's ?] [? was ?] [? nice. ?]

Your father and your mother, whom you lost-- how to put this. If you could speak to them today, what would you tell them?

That I had a perfect, beautiful life. And I miss them. There is not a night that I'm not with them. There is never a minute that I'm not-- that something reminds me of my family. And that's the way I have to go. I have to live like that. So I had a beautiful childhood and a wonderful family after the war, really, really. Do you ever see anybody living with their own children?

Many people do.

Yeah?

But not all of them are happy.

Oh. And my daughter-in-law, she is so good to me. There is not a day that she doesn't call me or my son, every day. Yeah. [INAUDIBLE].

Thank you.

[INAUDIBLE].

Thank you. It's a hard story that we were hearing, and it's a hard one for you to share. But I very much appreciate it.

I'm so glad that you came, although the story, what I am telling you, is not even 1% of this story.

I understand. We can't cover-- in a few hours--

No, no, no. What we covered, it's impossible. I want you to see the--

We will do that. What we'll do right now, though, is I'll formally end the interview, and then we will film some of the photographs, and you'll tell me what's in them.

OK.

OK? So I'll say that for this part, this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Elizabeth Sandy on January 15, 2020 in Boca Raton, Florida. And some photos are going to be following.

That's great.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you very much for all of you. That's beautiful.

Now stay where you are for right--

Speed.

Sound speeds.

So Mrs. Sandy, tell me, who is this lovely little baby?

This isn't Mrs. Sandy.

This is Mrs. Sandy?

This is Mrs. Sandy. Yeah. I wasn't not a year old probably. I don't know how I found the picture. OK?

OK, so that was when you was a baby.

Yes.

1923, 1924.

Yes.

Something like that. OK. Thank you.

Do you want me to cut or just--

And then just pan. Just keep moving.

I'll move to these two [INAUDIBLE].

Yeah, and these two. Now this is-- tell me about these two photographs, both the one where there's the back and in front of the car.

Standing in front of the car. I don't know when it was taken. I don't know the year.

Uh-huh. But this is yourself.

Yes, that's me, both of them.

Both photos of you. And this is the one in front of the family car.

Yes, I suppose.

So that would be before the war.

Before the war.

Yeah.

And this is before the war.

OK, so you're a young lady, a young teenage lady. OK, fine. Let's see what else we can find here.

Yeah. This is definitely before the war in our house. This is also--

So would have this been in the early 1940s, that is, before Germany invades Hungary?

Before Germany invades Hungary.

But would it be after 1939?

Oh, yeah.

Because it looks like you're a little older here, like you'd be 18 or 19 or something.

Could be. Yeah.

OK. And both photographs are of you.

Yes.

OK.

OK. Get this thing off.

Can we cut?

Yes, cutting.

Camera speeding.

OK. And Mrs. Sandy, who is the couple here to the left?

I think it's me and my husband.

Gabor?

Yes.

Uh-huh. So this would have been after the war.

After the war.

After the war.

And this is before the war.

The three girls there?

Yes.

And who would have that been, the three girls?

Just friends.

OK.

The two of them are just friends.

OK. And yourself.

And myself.

OK. Thank you.

[INAUDIBLE] There is a date. All right. Cool

OK.

[INAUDIBLE].

In Budapest.

Before the Germans come?

Oh, yeah.

OK.

OK. [INAUDIBLE].

Also with friends?

Yeah. In Budapest.

In Budapest.

OK, I'm going to cut before moving on to that side.

OK.

Ready, John?

Cutting.

Cutting. Speed.

--anyone tell you that we had to sell my home?

Oh, so this is you at your summer home?

Yes.

In the bathing suit. And the one next to it looks like you're in a phone booth.

Yes.

All right.

Somebody made a picture of me.

OK. OK.

And this is the two friends of mine.

Mm-hmm. Looks like it was the same time as some of the others were taken, same hat, I see.

Oh, yeah. Must be. Or the same picture maybe it is.

Mm-hmm. OK, and then let's go further down.

That's me with a cousin. And it's me--

And that's us.

--before the war.

OK. OK, we have another-- thank you very much. We will now have another-- cut.

Cut.

OK. Who is this lady in the bathing suit?

My husband's sister.

What was her name, do you know?



Gissy.

Gissy.

Giselle.

Giselle Schwarz.

Yes.

And then she had a married name, too.

Yes. What was her married name? I can't think of it.

But she didn't survive the war.

No.

OK. And it was--

And the two kids. They took her in the gas chamber right away.

And so when her husband survived the war, he's the one who--

Who found out what happened. He didn't want to leave.

OK.

He never came back to Hungary.

OK. And then let's see what the-- can we pan now to-- just below, yes.

My brother.

This is your brother.

That's my brother.

Istvan.

Garbovits. This is-- I don't know.

On the left, it says 1943.

Yeah. To a swimming place. He had a season to get or whatever. He could go in.

OK. He was just a young kid.

He was. He was 16 when they took him.

Yeah. So there he is, Steven Garbovits, Istvan Garbovits.

Does it say it?

Yeah, it says it. It says it. OK, and let's go further down. And this is Arnold Garbovits. So that's your father.

My father by his father's grave with his brother who went to Israel.

So your father is the one with the mustache or the father is your-- next to him? So he's on the far left?

This is my father.

This one right here?

Yes.

So first comes your uncle who went to Israel.

Yes.

Then the second from the left is your father, Arnold. Then is his father's grave, the stone. And who is the lady on the other side?

OK, this is a sister of my father.

OK.

I can't even see him.

OK.

And then the man next to her?

I think that's her son and the daughter-in-law.

OK. So it's titled "Arnold Garbovits at His Parent's Grave." OK.

That's my grandmother from my mother's side.

We will take a look. We will focus on this in a second. All right.

And that's my husband. Before the war, he was a wrestler.

I see.

Yeah, in the Jewish clubhouse. And this is him.

So your husband is in the second row at the very end on the right.

Yes.

I see. All right. And then let's see. Next to him is the gentleman in a hat. Next.

Oh, next.

Next. Yeah.

That's my father.

That's your father, Arnold Garbovits. And then it's hard to see, but this lady with the baby. Yeah, here we go. This is Gizike Molnar Schwarz. So is this your husband's sister?

This, you say?

Mm-hmm.

Yes, my husband's sister, Mo

Molnar was her last name.

Yeah.

OK. And now we can go down a bit. And this was your grandmother, you said?

Yeah, my mother's side.

OK. So Drach was her name.

Drach, Drach.

Sarolta? Sarolta?

Yeah.

Krausz Drach.

Drach.

She had a very, very lovely face, very friendly. Did she passed away before the war?

Before the war.

OK. And let's go down a bit.

Oh, that's my brother.

Your brother. Which one is he?

I can't see. I can't see that far.

OK.

This is my brother.

OK, so he's on the second row to the first on the left. And in front of him are two boys, one on each side.

This is a cousin.

And that was a cousin who was in the front-- in the front row. So your brother Istvan is in the second row, and there are only two boys there. He's the one on the left. OK.

Do you want me [INAUDIBLE]?

Boy, I'm going to have a night.

Can you hold it?

I'm sorry about that. OK, we have one more photo.

Oh.

I hold it here.

OK.

That is [LAUGHS] my aunt and uncle's 25th wedding anniversary. Here's my mother, and this is friends or relatives.

So your mother is the one with the glasses--

Yes.

--on the left-hand side. And the rest is the anniversary party.

Yes. 25th.

25th. All right. Thank you. OK.

Cut?

Cut.

Give me one second. [INAUDIBLE] record audio. And recording.

OK, Mrs. Sandy, this looks like it to your brother again, yes?

Yes, this is my--

About how old would he have been in this photograph?

He couldn't be more than 15.

OK. Istvan--

Istvan.

--who was taken with your father.

I'm not sure. At the beginning, they were together, I think. But I don't know what the end was, how, where.

OK. Thank you.

OK, cutting here. And we have one left.