

## **RG-50.030.1069**

### **Summary**

Elizabeth Sandy (née Garbovits) was born in Budapest, Hungary on May 19, 1923. In addition to her mother and father she had a brother Istvan (Stephen) who was four years younger. Her mother, Caroline Drach, had four sisters and one brother who lived nearby and with whom Elizabeth was close. Elizabeth was also close with her maternal grandmother who also lived nearby. Her maternal grandfather had already died before the war. Her mother's family came from near Vienna. Her father, Arnold Garbovits, had two or three brothers and three sisters. His family came from a small town thirty kilometers from Budapest. Her father owned a hat factory with two of his siblings. The family was well off. They spoke Hungarian at home but also knew German. They were very assimilated and saw themselves as first and foremost Hungarian and only secondarily as Jewish. Elizabeth's friends were a mixture of Jews and gentiles, but she said that no one paid attention to one's religion before the war. In general, she lived a very happy life right up until the Germans occupied Hungary in 1944.

Even before the German occupation, however, there were signs that not all was well for Jews. The Hungarian government instituted antisemitic legislation, and she and her cousins were affected by quotas. Elizabeth had to give up a possible career as a singer because she was Jewish and instead attended business school. In addition, some former friends turned away from her. Although her family still did not believe what was happening in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia could happen to Jews in Hungary she remembered Polish and Slovakian Jews coming into Budapest telling their stories and begging for food.

After the Germans occupied Hungary in March 1944, Elizabeth's father's business was taken over by a former employee who now showed her antisemitic self. Elizabeth was also not allowed to continue business school. Despite the increasing threat from the Hungarian Nazi Arrow Cross and the German Nazis, her mother refused to leave Budapest. So, the family stayed. Elizabeth's father and brother were taken to a work camp and later deported to Auschwitz. She never heard from them again. Her mother, later in 1944, was deported to Bergen Belsen. Elizabeth was more fortunate. She escaped one roundup by crossing the street from where Jews were being marched and later hid out for several months in a glass building that she was told was the Swiss consulate. Although it was not, her future husband, then a member of the Jewish police, helped rescue her. He had already "married" her earlier when women were told they would not be taken if married. She recognized him in the glass building, and they became close. They again married. Her husband's name was Gabor Schwarz. It was not made clear how that turned into Sandy in the United States. After the Russians occupied Budapest Elizabeth and her husband went to the village where he came from to see what happened to his family. His mother and father had died when he was young. His sister and her two children were killed by the Nazis, and his brother survived Auschwitz.

Elizabeth and her husband then went to Bergen-Belsen to find out about her mother and ended up staying in Bergen for four years. She then heard about a new law in the United States which allowed refugees to enter the United States. They were sent to Worcester for four years, but

she hated it there. Her husband, a baker by trade, then got a job in Detroit, and they and their two children stayed there for forty-five years when they moved to Florida in retirement. Elizabeth reflected that it was impossible for people to understand the horrors of the time. She felt fortunate, however, that she survived and lived a “perfect” life afterward.