

1
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:03,060

2
00:00:03,060 --> 00:00:07,080
This is a United States
Holocaust Memorial Museum

3
00:00:07,080 --> 00:00:15,000
interview with Mrs. Irene
Weiss on May 20, 2020, recorded

4
00:00:15,000 --> 00:00:17,190
remotely.

5
00:00:17,190 --> 00:00:23,220
Mrs. Weiss is in Vienna,
Virginia, or Fairfax, Virginia.

6
00:00:23,220 --> 00:00:27,510
And Mrs. Weiss, before
we go further, I

7
00:00:27,510 --> 00:00:33,780
wanted to find out from you, do
you consent to this interview?

8
00:00:33,780 --> 00:00:34,530
Yes.

9
00:00:34,530 --> 00:00:35,280
OK.

10
00:00:35,280 --> 00:00:40,020
It will become part
of the USHMM archives

11
00:00:40,020 --> 00:00:42,845
here in Washington, DC.

12
00:00:42,845 --> 00:00:43,345
OK.

13
00:00:43,345 --> 00:00:44,130

OK.

14

00:00:44,130 --> 00:00:47,790
So I'm going to start
kind of at the beginning

15

00:00:47,790 --> 00:00:52,020
and ask you a few
questions about your life,

16

00:00:52,020 --> 00:00:54,240
about your experiences.

17

00:00:54,240 --> 00:00:57,540
And then we'll also
talk about your work

18

00:00:57,540 --> 00:01:02,100
as a volunteer at the museum,
at the Holocaust museum.

19

00:01:02,100 --> 00:01:04,050
So my very first
question is, can you

20

00:01:04,050 --> 00:01:07,350
tell me when you were born?

21

00:01:07,350 --> 00:01:10,770
In November 21, 1930.

22

00:01:10,770 --> 00:01:11,460
OK.

23

00:01:11,460 --> 00:01:13,720
And where were you born?

24

00:01:13,720 --> 00:01:18,610
I was born in a small town
in Hungary called Bótrágy.

25

00:01:18,610 --> 00:01:21,420

26

00:01:21,420 --> 00:01:25,650

Actually, when I was born,
it was Czechoslovakia,

27

00:01:25,650 --> 00:01:32,010

but basically I grew up
after it became Hungary.

28

00:01:32,010 --> 00:01:35,470

Well, there is a part of the--
there is a part of Europe,

29

00:01:35,470 --> 00:01:39,000

and particularly near the
borders of various countries,

30

00:01:39,000 --> 00:01:43,770

that have neighbors where
one can be born in a city,

31

00:01:43,770 --> 00:01:46,350

stay in that city
their whole life,

32

00:01:46,350 --> 00:01:48,900

and have lived in
four countries.

33

00:01:48,900 --> 00:01:50,180

That happened to me.

34

00:01:50,180 --> 00:01:51,450

Yeah.

35

00:01:51,450 --> 00:01:55,560

So do you speak any Czech?

36

00:01:55,560 --> 00:02:00,340

Do you remember anything from
Czechoslovakia when it was--

37

00:02:00,340 --> 00:02:04,560

Yes, well, I do remember--

38

00:02:04,560 --> 00:02:12,600

you know, I do or can translate
some of it, but it's not--

39
00:02:12,600 --> 00:02:16,570
I would be-- it's not alien
to me, let's put it that way.

40
00:02:16,570 --> 00:02:21,210
But my other best
language is Hungarian.

41
00:02:21,210 --> 00:02:21,750
I see.

42
00:02:21,750 --> 00:02:26,910
I speak Hungarian, and
had most of my education

43
00:02:26,910 --> 00:02:30,360
before the war in
a Hungarian school.

44
00:02:30,360 --> 00:02:35,150
So was Hungarian your
first language at home?

45
00:02:35,150 --> 00:02:38,550
Well, Yiddish was the first
language in my family,

46
00:02:38,550 --> 00:02:40,440
and Hungarian was the second.

47
00:02:40,440 --> 00:02:41,420
OK.

48
00:02:41,420 --> 00:02:43,830
Did you have
brothers and sisters?

49
00:02:43,830 --> 00:02:46,550
Yes, there were six
children in my family.

50
00:02:46,550 --> 00:02:47,930

Quite a lot.

51
00:02:47,930 --> 00:02:48,440
Yes.

52
00:02:48,440 --> 00:02:51,080
It was common in those days.

53
00:02:51,080 --> 00:02:51,890
OK.

54
00:02:51,890 --> 00:02:56,090
And where were you
in the spectrum?

55
00:02:56,090 --> 00:02:58,700
Were you the oldest,
the youngest?

56
00:02:58,700 --> 00:03:00,110
I was the third.

57
00:03:00,110 --> 00:03:01,690
OK.

58
00:03:01,690 --> 00:03:06,250
And who were-- tell me the names
of your brothers and sisters.

59
00:03:06,250 --> 00:03:06,760
Yes.

60
00:03:06,760 --> 00:03:11,530
So the oldest was Serena.

61
00:03:11,530 --> 00:03:14,110
She survived.

62
00:03:14,110 --> 00:03:16,870
What year was she born?

63
00:03:16,870 --> 00:03:17,440
Pardon me?

64

00:03:17,440 --> 00:03:17,940

What?

65

00:03:17,940 --> 00:03:19,690

What year was she born?

66

00:03:19,690 --> 00:03:20,860

Oh, OK.

67

00:03:20,860 --> 00:03:24,580

She was born in 1927.

68

00:03:24,580 --> 00:03:25,930

OK.

69

00:03:25,930 --> 00:03:28,000

And then after Serena?

70

00:03:28,000 --> 00:03:31,620

And after Serena was
a brother, Moshe,

71

00:03:31,620 --> 00:03:42,620

and he was born
in probably 1937--

72

00:03:42,620 --> 00:03:43,820

'27, I mean.

73

00:03:43,820 --> 00:03:44,700

Maybe '25.

74

00:03:44,700 --> 00:03:45,200

No.

75

00:03:45,200 --> 00:03:45,700

No.

76

00:03:45,700 --> 00:03:47,100

No, later.

77

00:03:47,100 --> 00:03:49,550

Maybe '29-- 1929.

78
00:03:49,550 --> 00:03:50,060
OK.

79
00:03:50,060 --> 00:03:53,220
So he was like a year
older than you were?

80
00:03:53,220 --> 00:03:54,050
Yes.

81
00:03:54,050 --> 00:03:55,580
OK.

82
00:03:55,580 --> 00:03:56,330
Just about.

83
00:03:56,330 --> 00:03:59,450
There were year and a
half, something like that.

84
00:03:59,450 --> 00:04:00,050
OK.

85
00:04:00,050 --> 00:04:04,200
And then the other
siblings after you?

86
00:04:04,200 --> 00:04:04,700
Yeah.

87
00:04:04,700 --> 00:04:08,780
So then there was
a sister, Edit,

88
00:04:08,780 --> 00:04:15,200
and she was born in
1932; a boy not--

89
00:04:15,200 --> 00:04:18,529
Ruvayn, 1935.

90
00:04:18,529 --> 00:04:19,870
How do I spell his name?

91
00:04:19,870 --> 00:04:22,580

92
00:04:22,580 --> 00:04:26,870
Well, it will be phonetic,
because it's the Yiddish name.

93
00:04:26,870 --> 00:04:32,720
So R-U-V-A-Y-N-- Ruvayn.

94
00:04:32,720 --> 00:04:33,500
Ruvayn.

95
00:04:33,500 --> 00:04:34,920
I didn't hear it properly.

96
00:04:34,920 --> 00:04:35,420
OK.

97
00:04:35,420 --> 00:04:35,920
OK.

98
00:04:35,920 --> 00:04:36,430
OK.

99
00:04:36,430 --> 00:04:40,640
And then there
was Gershon, 1938.

100
00:04:40,640 --> 00:04:43,880
Oh, so he was a baby when
everything started, a toddler.

101
00:04:43,880 --> 00:04:46,880
He was the youngest, right.

102
00:04:46,880 --> 00:04:50,320
What were your mother
and father's names?

103
00:04:50,320 --> 00:04:56,180
My mother's name was
Leah, and she was--

104

00:04:56,180 --> 00:05:00,590
in 1944, she was 44 years old.

105

00:05:00,590 --> 00:05:03,071
So she was born in 1900.

106

00:05:03,071 --> 00:05:04,550
1900, right.

107

00:05:04,550 --> 00:05:05,990
And your father's name?

108

00:05:05,990 --> 00:05:10,100
And my father's was
Meyer, and he was--

109

00:05:10,100 --> 00:05:13,370
in 1944, he was 47 years old.

110

00:05:13,370 --> 00:05:16,670
So he would have been 1897.

111

00:05:16,670 --> 00:05:19,670
Yes, or '98,
something like that.

112

00:05:19,670 --> 00:05:21,320
I think '98.

113

00:05:21,320 --> 00:05:23,220
What was your name
when you were born?

114

00:05:23,220 --> 00:05:25,780

115

00:05:25,780 --> 00:05:28,950
My Yiddish name was Rahel.

116

00:05:28,950 --> 00:05:30,240
Rahel.

117

00:05:30,240 --> 00:05:30,740

Yes.

118

00:05:30,740 --> 00:05:31,930

OK.

119

00:05:31,930 --> 00:05:35,500

And your maiden name?

120

00:05:35,500 --> 00:05:36,340

Fogel.

121

00:05:36,340 --> 00:05:39,050

F-O-G-E-L.

122

00:05:39,050 --> 00:05:40,360

OK.

123

00:05:40,360 --> 00:05:43,480

So how-- just a side
note, how did you become--

124

00:05:43,480 --> 00:05:46,870

how did Rahel become Irene?

125

00:05:46,870 --> 00:05:49,990

Yes, it's puzzling,
because usually they

126

00:05:49,990 --> 00:05:56,320

try to match up at
least the first initial.

127

00:05:56,320 --> 00:05:57,310

I don't know.

128

00:05:57,310 --> 00:06:02,680

It doesn't match because
the others are pretty much--

129

00:06:02,680 --> 00:06:07,480

their Hungarian names do sort
of match up with the Yiddish,

130

00:06:07,480 --> 00:06:08,390
and mine doesn't.

131
00:06:08,390 --> 00:06:09,980
I really don't know.

132
00:06:09,980 --> 00:06:13,540
Oh, so does that mean that you
used to have-- even from birth,

133
00:06:13,540 --> 00:06:18,230
you had a Hungarian name
as well as a Yiddish name?

134
00:06:18,230 --> 00:06:18,790
Oh, yes.

135
00:06:18,790 --> 00:06:23,590
The Yiddish name was registered
also at the registry,

136
00:06:23,590 --> 00:06:26,890
and the Hungarian
name had to be given

137
00:06:26,890 --> 00:06:28,790
because of the schooling--

138
00:06:28,790 --> 00:06:32,060
Hungarian school or
any other school.

139
00:06:32,060 --> 00:06:38,260
So who did you identify
with more, Irene or Rahel?

140
00:06:38,260 --> 00:06:42,240
Well, again, in my house,
as we spoke Yiddish.

141
00:06:42,240 --> 00:06:43,545
They would call me Rahel.

142
00:06:43,545 --> 00:06:46,980
In Yiddish, it's even a

different pronunciation--

143

00:06:46,980 --> 00:06:48,540
I would be Rahel.

144

00:06:48,540 --> 00:06:53,190
And outside playing with kids
or in school, I was-- actually,

145

00:06:53,190 --> 00:06:58,180
the pronunciation was
in Hungarian, Irén.

146

00:06:58,180 --> 00:06:59,250
Irén.

147

00:06:59,250 --> 00:07:01,230
Yeah, dropping the last "e."

148

00:07:01,230 --> 00:07:02,220
I see.

149

00:07:02,220 --> 00:07:03,240
I see.

150

00:07:03,240 --> 00:07:05,520
Irén.

151

00:07:05,520 --> 00:07:08,250
So both of them were
familiar for you?

152

00:07:08,250 --> 00:07:09,120
Oh, yes.

153

00:07:09,120 --> 00:07:10,140
Oh, yes.

154

00:07:10,140 --> 00:07:11,820
OK.

155

00:07:11,820 --> 00:07:14,580
Tell me a little bit
about your family.

156

00:07:14,580 --> 00:07:18,270

Were you a very
religious family?

157

00:07:18,270 --> 00:07:20,820

Well, we were an
Orthodox family.

158

00:07:20,820 --> 00:07:22,320

I see.

159

00:07:22,320 --> 00:07:30,030

Not the most strict
and, you know--

160

00:07:30,030 --> 00:07:34,860

not the Hasidim that we
know now with the special--

161

00:07:34,860 --> 00:07:39,450

my father did not
wear special clothing

162

00:07:39,450 --> 00:07:42,420

to be identified as a Jew.

163

00:07:42,420 --> 00:07:45,850

But everybody in the town,
all the Jews, I mean,

164

00:07:45,850 --> 00:07:47,640

were Orthodox.

165

00:07:47,640 --> 00:07:52,000

I mean, everything was observed,
but there were distinctions.

166

00:07:52,000 --> 00:07:58,410

My father did not have the very
visible payots the Orthodox

167

00:07:58,410 --> 00:08:00,810

did, or the clothing.

168

00:08:00,810 --> 00:08:04,260
But he did have a beard.

169

00:08:04,260 --> 00:08:07,780
But again, it was a
trimmed beard rather than

170

00:08:07,780 --> 00:08:09,330
the free-flowing.

171

00:08:09,330 --> 00:08:14,880
So I would say in today's
understanding would

172

00:08:14,880 --> 00:08:16,940
be more modern than Orthodox.

173

00:08:16,940 --> 00:08:17,760
OK.

174

00:08:17,760 --> 00:08:18,300
OK.

175

00:08:18,300 --> 00:08:24,170
And Bótrágy itself did have
a large Hungarian minority?

176

00:08:24,170 --> 00:08:28,620
The town was very
small, population 1,000,

177

00:08:28,620 --> 00:08:30,700
and it was a farming town.

178

00:08:30,700 --> 00:08:32,320
It was a farming area.

179

00:08:32,320 --> 00:08:32,820
I see.

180

00:08:32,820 --> 00:08:38,110
Just all of the
Hungarians were farmers.

181
00:08:38,110 --> 00:08:38,940
OK.

182
00:08:38,940 --> 00:08:43,049
And your father himself--

183
00:08:43,049 --> 00:08:45,720
was it a large-- was there
a large Jewish community

184
00:08:45,720 --> 00:08:46,830
within it?

185
00:08:46,830 --> 00:08:47,950
No, not at all.

186
00:08:47,950 --> 00:08:51,180
There were a total of 10
Jewish families in the--

187
00:08:51,180 --> 00:08:52,110
in Bótrágy.

188
00:08:52,110 --> 00:08:54,220
Oh, so it was quite
small that way?

189
00:08:54,220 --> 00:08:55,340
Very small.

190
00:08:55,340 --> 00:08:59,740
A small village and
small Jewish population,

191
00:08:59,740 --> 00:09:06,660
and the general
population, 1,000 farmers,

192
00:09:06,660 --> 00:09:08,970
so it's kind of a--

193
00:09:08,970 --> 00:09:12,920
not a very wealthy town, yeah.

194

00:09:12,920 --> 00:09:16,680

How did your father
support the family?

195

00:09:16,680 --> 00:09:21,630

Well, my father had a lumber
yard, a lumber business,

196

00:09:21,630 --> 00:09:28,620

in the neighboring town,
which was about 5 kilometers--

197

00:09:28,620 --> 00:09:31,680

it's something like
2 and 1/2 miles.

198

00:09:31,680 --> 00:09:38,160

And he would go to the town,
which was called Batyu.

199

00:09:38,160 --> 00:09:42,300

And he would go on his
bicycle in the morning

200

00:09:42,300 --> 00:09:44,010

and come back in evening.

201

00:09:44,010 --> 00:09:50,820

The lumber yard was substantial
in the town of Batyu,

202

00:09:50,820 --> 00:09:53,400

which was much larger,
and many more--

203

00:09:53,400 --> 00:09:55,650

maybe 50 Jewish families.

204

00:09:55,650 --> 00:10:02,790

And he-- the other
interesting aspect of it

205

00:10:02,790 --> 00:10:07,890

is that my mother's parents
lived in that town, in Batyu

206
00:10:07,890 --> 00:10:11,950
How would I spell Batyu?

207
00:10:11,950 --> 00:10:19,960
So in the Hungarian way,
let's say, would be B-A-T-Y-U.

208
00:10:19,960 --> 00:10:21,900
OK.

209
00:10:21,900 --> 00:10:22,530
OK, Batyu.

210
00:10:22,530 --> 00:10:23,880
Batyu, yeah.

211
00:10:23,880 --> 00:10:28,830
And Batyu was a
railroad center, and it

212
00:10:28,830 --> 00:10:31,080
was an entirely different town.

213
00:10:31,080 --> 00:10:38,890
It was a more modern,
up-to-date busy place.

214
00:10:38,890 --> 00:10:41,290
And was your father from--

215
00:10:41,290 --> 00:10:44,530
and tell me again, how
do you spell Bótrágy?

216
00:10:44,530 --> 00:10:46,990
Was that your
birthplace, your home?

217
00:10:46,990 --> 00:10:56,950
So Bótrágy was B-O-T-R-A-G-Y.
That's Bótrágy.

218
00:10:56,950 --> 00:10:57,640

OK.

219

00:10:57,640 --> 00:11:00,370
And your father, was
he born in Bótrágy?

220

00:11:00,370 --> 00:11:02,710
Was his family from there?

221

00:11:02,710 --> 00:11:08,110
He was born, yes, in the general
area when Batyu and Bótrágy

222

00:11:08,110 --> 00:11:12,740
were sort of the same region
from what I understand.

223

00:11:12,740 --> 00:11:15,610
Then it got divided.

224

00:11:15,610 --> 00:11:20,300
Yeah, his father was born there.

225

00:11:20,300 --> 00:11:24,670
And so it's his grandfather,
from what I understand,

226

00:11:24,670 --> 00:11:28,040
originally came from
Poland to that area.

227

00:11:28,040 --> 00:11:29,740
He was a young man at the time.

228

00:11:29,740 --> 00:11:31,000
I see.

229

00:11:31,000 --> 00:11:33,820
And did your mother
and your father

230

00:11:33,820 --> 00:11:36,990
also have a lot of
brothers and sisters?

231
00:11:36,990 --> 00:11:38,980
Oh, yes.

232
00:11:38,980 --> 00:11:40,310
Quite large.

233
00:11:40,310 --> 00:11:47,610
So there were-- my
grandfather was married

234
00:11:47,610 --> 00:11:55,110
and had three children,
which included

235
00:11:55,110 --> 00:11:57,690
my mother and two brothers.

236
00:11:57,690 --> 00:12:01,560
His wife died-- his
first wife died--

237
00:12:01,560 --> 00:12:05,700
and he remarried
a younger woman,

238
00:12:05,700 --> 00:12:08,880
and she was the one till--

239
00:12:08,880 --> 00:12:15,180
that was alive during-- when
the Holocaust came about.

240
00:12:15,180 --> 00:12:20,580
And with the second wife, he
had, I believe, six children.

241
00:12:20,580 --> 00:12:21,240
Wow.

242
00:12:21,240 --> 00:12:27,490
So she had six stepbrothers and
sisters and two other siblings?

243
00:12:27,490 --> 00:12:29,600

And there were three
from the first wife.

244
00:12:29,600 --> 00:12:33,210
So it was my mother
and two brothers.

245
00:12:33,210 --> 00:12:35,590
So yes, it was a
very large family.

246
00:12:35,590 --> 00:12:40,020
My grandfather was an
interesting person,

247
00:12:40,020 --> 00:12:48,240
because he lived in and grew
up in a different area, which

248
00:12:48,240 --> 00:12:52,530
was in the mountainous area
of Carpathian Ukraine, where

249
00:12:52,530 --> 00:12:56,310
he established himself
as a wealthy man.

250
00:12:56,310 --> 00:12:59,580
And for some reason,
he decided to move

251
00:12:59,580 --> 00:13:04,710
to the more flat area
of the Batyu area,

252
00:13:04,710 --> 00:13:06,600
and there he opened--

253
00:13:06,600 --> 00:13:11,080
without selling his
holdings in the mountains,

254
00:13:11,080 --> 00:13:14,880
he bought and
established a flour mill.

255

00:13:14,880 --> 00:13:20,150

And, as I said, this was a
farming region altogether,

256

00:13:20,150 --> 00:13:25,140

and the flour mill was
an essential industry

257

00:13:25,140 --> 00:13:26,340

for the farmers.

258

00:13:26,340 --> 00:13:26,840

Of course.

259

00:13:26,840 --> 00:13:35,020

So he became a very wealthy man,
having property in two places.

260

00:13:35,020 --> 00:13:36,660

Did you know him?

261

00:13:36,660 --> 00:13:37,350

Oh, yes.

262

00:13:37,350 --> 00:13:37,950

Very well.

263

00:13:37,950 --> 00:13:38,700

Right.

264

00:13:38,700 --> 00:13:41,430

What kind of personality was he?

265

00:13:41,430 --> 00:13:44,490

Well, I perhaps will
retract very well,

266

00:13:44,490 --> 00:13:48,720

because it's interesting to me.

267

00:13:48,720 --> 00:13:53,020

Now, I'm-- been a grandmother
for a long time, and of course,

268

00:13:53,020 --> 00:13:59,850

my husband's grandfather,
we were a different type.

269

00:13:59,850 --> 00:14:01,380

But that is how he was.

270

00:14:01,380 --> 00:14:02,920

He was reserved.

271

00:14:02,920 --> 00:14:08,000

And the thing that--

272

00:14:08,000 --> 00:14:10,070

when we went to
visit as children,

273

00:14:10,070 --> 00:14:13,010

and we went often
because it was very near,

274

00:14:13,010 --> 00:14:16,730

the greeting at that
time was in Yiddish.

275

00:14:16,730 --> 00:14:18,980

It was-- it meant--

276

00:14:18,980 --> 00:14:22,220

it would-- it meant
you kissed his hand--

277

00:14:22,220 --> 00:14:24,570

kiss the hand.

278

00:14:24,570 --> 00:14:27,520

And that was the
greeting, kiss the hand.

279

00:14:27,520 --> 00:14:31,120

And then that was it.

280

00:14:31,120 --> 00:14:35,640

And he was in the background.

281
00:14:35,640 --> 00:14:39,990
But I understand from the
history of the family--

282
00:14:39,990 --> 00:14:46,020
see, my mother was very young
when his first wife died.

283
00:14:46,020 --> 00:14:49,020
When her mother died
she was very young,

284
00:14:49,020 --> 00:14:50,940
and the little boys
were even younger.

285
00:14:50,940 --> 00:14:56,430
And so then a stepmother
came into the situation.

286
00:14:56,430 --> 00:14:59,560
And the story my
mother used to tell

287
00:14:59,560 --> 00:15:03,150
is that her father was
an exceptional father

288
00:15:03,150 --> 00:15:06,810
because he did not
allow the first three

289
00:15:06,810 --> 00:15:08,880
children to be
treated differently

290
00:15:08,880 --> 00:15:11,710
than the following
children by the stepmother,

291
00:15:11,710 --> 00:15:18,210
and that he was very honored
by his first three children

292

00:15:18,210 --> 00:15:21,750
because he protected them
and took care of them,

293
00:15:21,750 --> 00:15:24,240
I imagine financially too.

294
00:15:24,240 --> 00:15:28,590
And so was your
stepgrandmother--

295
00:15:28,590 --> 00:15:31,190
did you know her very well?

296
00:15:31,190 --> 00:15:37,130
Well, again, she-- you
know, it's a long story.

297
00:15:37,130 --> 00:15:40,310
We were little kids
who loved to go

298
00:15:40,310 --> 00:15:42,340
to Batyu to the grandparents.

299
00:15:42,340 --> 00:15:45,110
We just couldn't get
enough, because there

300
00:15:45,110 --> 00:15:50,120
were the young uncles and the
young aunts, and they loved us,

301
00:15:50,120 --> 00:15:55,850
and they played with us, and
they took very good care of us.

302
00:15:55,850 --> 00:15:57,320
And there was activity there.

303
00:15:57,320 --> 00:16:00,410
There was the mill that
was humming and working.

304
00:16:00,410 --> 00:16:03,170

And my father was
across the street,

305
00:16:03,170 --> 00:16:05,810
his business was
across the street,

306
00:16:05,810 --> 00:16:07,310
and we went back and forth.

307
00:16:07,310 --> 00:16:12,770
And it was just a magical
place to be there.

308
00:16:12,770 --> 00:16:15,710
And when we were
children, we were not

309
00:16:15,710 --> 00:16:18,410
told that she was a stepmother.

310
00:16:18,410 --> 00:16:23,240
And not until I was maybe
13 that I found out.

311
00:16:23,240 --> 00:16:27,140
So since grandparents
were not hands-on--

312
00:16:27,140 --> 00:16:30,080
she was not hands-on.

313
00:16:30,080 --> 00:16:33,645
But we did not know
that any different.

314
00:16:33,645 --> 00:16:38,090
And so we didn't know that
she was not the real--

315
00:16:38,090 --> 00:16:40,280
you know, [INAUDIBLE]
my mother's--

316
00:16:40,280 --> 00:16:42,680

So we didn't expect anything.

317

00:16:42,680 --> 00:16:46,200
But in retrospect, I
know a whole lot more.

318

00:16:46,200 --> 00:16:49,370
So I don't know
which is authentic.

319

00:16:49,370 --> 00:16:56,210
In retrospect now, I
realize that we were not--

320

00:16:56,210 --> 00:17:01,100
she was not as
interested in us as I

321

00:17:01,100 --> 00:17:04,640
am in my own grandchildren.

322

00:17:04,640 --> 00:17:07,700
But that was the way it was.

323

00:17:07,700 --> 00:17:11,270
Grandfather had this great
reputation, and she--

324

00:17:11,270 --> 00:17:13,609
by the time I knew
her, she was--

325

00:17:13,609 --> 00:17:14,730
she looked elderly.

326

00:17:14,730 --> 00:17:15,980
Now, she wasn't.

327

00:17:15,980 --> 00:17:20,359
So the fun there was the
young uncles and aunts.

328

00:17:20,359 --> 00:17:23,780
They provided tremendous
amount of love and attention

329
00:17:23,780 --> 00:17:24,710
and excitement.

330
00:17:24,710 --> 00:17:27,440
And it was really
great to go there.

331
00:17:27,440 --> 00:17:28,910
Well, it sounds lovely.

332
00:17:28,910 --> 00:17:30,440
It really sounds lovely.

333
00:17:30,440 --> 00:17:34,340
And you're telling it in
exactly the right way,

334
00:17:34,340 --> 00:17:36,500
the way you would as a child--

335
00:17:36,500 --> 00:17:41,060
what your child's experiences
were, and what comes later

336
00:17:41,060 --> 00:17:42,290
comes later.

337
00:17:42,290 --> 00:17:46,460
But this is what I
wanted to get a sense of.

338
00:17:46,460 --> 00:17:49,700
Was your parents'
marriage arranged,

339
00:17:49,700 --> 00:17:52,250
or did they meet on their own?

340
00:17:52,250 --> 00:17:54,770
Oh, I am absolutely sure that--

341
00:17:54,770 --> 00:17:56,540
you know, nobody explained it.

342

00:17:56,540 --> 00:17:59,930

However, the following--
you know, there was--

343

00:17:59,930 --> 00:18:04,080

from the new marriage, then
there were three girls,

344

00:18:04,080 --> 00:18:08,540

and of that, I was aware
even as a young person

345

00:18:08,540 --> 00:18:13,160

that the grandfather
was searching everybody

346

00:18:13,160 --> 00:18:17,570

who had any money, particularly
who had some property

347

00:18:17,570 --> 00:18:20,820

and was wealthy, that
it was all arranged.

348

00:18:20,820 --> 00:18:25,130

It had to be matched
according to family,

349

00:18:25,130 --> 00:18:31,970

reputation, a family's financial
standing and all the rest.

350

00:18:31,970 --> 00:18:33,300

It was all arranged.

351

00:18:33,300 --> 00:18:39,470

So I am sure that my mother's
was arranged way back even more

352

00:18:39,470 --> 00:18:43,820

seriously, because she
didn't have a mother who

353

00:18:43,820 --> 00:18:45,290

looked after, you know.

354

00:18:45,290 --> 00:18:49,670
And when she got
married, then the family

355

00:18:49,670 --> 00:18:52,280
still lived in
the mountain area,

356

00:18:52,280 --> 00:18:54,260
which is quite a distance.

357

00:18:54,260 --> 00:18:59,660
And so however, my father
comes from the new area

358

00:18:59,660 --> 00:19:02,450
where my grandfather moved.

359

00:19:02,450 --> 00:19:08,720
So I don't quite know where it
all happened, but then it was

360

00:19:08,720 --> 00:19:11,090
arranged, I am absolutely sure.

361

00:19:11,090 --> 00:19:11,990
OK.

362

00:19:11,990 --> 00:19:16,040
And was your father's
family also a large family?

363

00:19:16,040 --> 00:19:18,690
Did he have brothers
and sisters?

364

00:19:18,690 --> 00:19:20,640
Well, that was a
much smaller family.

365

00:19:20,640 --> 00:19:28,590
Again, it is very sad to say,
the women, not just the Jews,

366

00:19:28,590 --> 00:19:32,470

women died either in
childbirth or illness.

367

00:19:32,470 --> 00:19:38,700

So my grandfather Fogel only
had two children, a daughter

368

00:19:38,700 --> 00:19:39,630

and a son.

369

00:19:39,630 --> 00:19:42,210

The son was my father.

370

00:19:42,210 --> 00:19:44,220

And his wife died.

371

00:19:44,220 --> 00:19:50,420

And I don't know whether
it was childbirth or--

372

00:19:50,420 --> 00:19:53,370

the illness there
was tuberculosis.

373

00:19:53,370 --> 00:19:54,090

Ah.

374

00:19:54,090 --> 00:19:55,070

Yes, of course.

375

00:19:55,070 --> 00:19:56,040

Rampant, you know.

376

00:19:56,040 --> 00:19:57,660

So it could have
been either one.

377

00:19:57,660 --> 00:20:01,650

They didn't-- I didn't get a
chance to really know that.

378

00:20:01,650 --> 00:20:06,960

But when-- so when
his wife died,

379
00:20:06,960 --> 00:20:09,870
so he left two young kids.

380
00:20:09,870 --> 00:20:13,350
And my father was
younger than the sister.

381
00:20:13,350 --> 00:20:17,340
And basically, the
sister raised him,

382
00:20:17,340 --> 00:20:20,460
and they remained
in the same house.

383
00:20:20,460 --> 00:20:25,830
And I understand that sometime
later their father remarried,

384
00:20:25,830 --> 00:20:28,780
and that somehow
that didn't work.

385
00:20:28,780 --> 00:20:32,700
And so basically, they
grew up in the house.

386
00:20:32,700 --> 00:20:36,570
As my aunt-- my
father's brother died,

387
00:20:36,570 --> 00:20:41,040
as she got older, my aunt,
she was the head of the family

388
00:20:41,040 --> 00:20:41,820
there.

389
00:20:41,820 --> 00:20:43,530
And so there were only the two.

390
00:20:43,530 --> 00:20:47,910

And I do remember that
grandfather very vaguely.

391
00:20:47,910 --> 00:20:51,960
I think he died in 1934,
and my memory of him

392
00:20:51,960 --> 00:20:57,140
is sitting on the lap of an
older man with a long beard.

393
00:20:57,140 --> 00:20:58,770
Oh, yeah.

394
00:20:58,770 --> 00:21:01,140
That's my-- I must have
been four years old.

395
00:21:01,140 --> 00:21:01,770
Of course.

396
00:21:01,770 --> 00:21:03,690
You're little at that time.

397
00:21:03,690 --> 00:21:09,460
And did you know your father's
sister, your aunt, very well?

398
00:21:09,460 --> 00:21:14,550
Oh, now, she played a huge
role in our upbringing.

399
00:21:14,550 --> 00:21:19,990
But she, to all of
us children, all six,

400
00:21:19,990 --> 00:21:24,350
was a most important person
in our lives to the very end.

401
00:21:24,350 --> 00:21:24,850
In what way?

402
00:21:24,850 --> 00:21:27,250
I have lot to say.

403
00:21:27,250 --> 00:21:31,510
Well, my mother had to--

404
00:21:31,510 --> 00:21:34,900
she originally--
it seems that she

405
00:21:34,900 --> 00:21:37,940
had a hard life
without a mother,

406
00:21:37,940 --> 00:21:39,940
even though her
father protected her.

407
00:21:39,940 --> 00:21:47,180
So there was a point
where she was sent to my--

408
00:21:47,180 --> 00:21:50,890
the new grandmother's
family, a brother

409
00:21:50,890 --> 00:21:54,160
who lived in Budapest
of all things.

410
00:21:54,160 --> 00:22:00,470
My step grandmother's brother
was a chazzan, and he lived--

411
00:22:00,470 --> 00:22:04,360
he sang in the fine
synagogues in Budapest.

412
00:22:04,360 --> 00:22:10,600
And my mother, as a young girl,
was sent there, probably, I

413
00:22:10,600 --> 00:22:17,620
would think, to get her out of
the new family it seems to me.

414
00:22:17,620 --> 00:22:20,300

And so-- but she lived
there for a while.

415
00:22:20,300 --> 00:22:21,850
And then when she
got married, she

416
00:22:21,850 --> 00:22:24,640
came into this very
small farming town

417
00:22:24,640 --> 00:22:29,020
that had very few conveniences.

418
00:22:29,020 --> 00:22:33,040
Our house didn't have running
water and similar things

419
00:22:33,040 --> 00:22:33,740
like that.

420
00:22:33,740 --> 00:22:37,870
So my mother became a
very hardworking person

421
00:22:37,870 --> 00:22:40,570
when she married and started
having children, practically

422
00:22:40,570 --> 00:22:42,100
one a year.

423
00:22:42,100 --> 00:22:45,640
So she was hard-working.

424
00:22:45,640 --> 00:22:47,620
She had to cook and bake.

425
00:22:47,620 --> 00:22:52,120
And she had a huge
vegetable garden,

426
00:22:52,120 --> 00:22:57,790
which was very necessary because
everything had to be grown.

427

00:22:57,790 --> 00:23:03,040

And she became very
hardworking, very efficient.

428

00:23:03,040 --> 00:23:08,480

And she was, I think,
must have been overwhelmed

429

00:23:08,480 --> 00:23:17,410

with giving birth to children
in the house with a midwife,

430

00:23:17,410 --> 00:23:19,490

taking care of all these kids.

431

00:23:19,490 --> 00:23:23,410

And so my aunt, my
father's sister, was there,

432

00:23:23,410 --> 00:23:24,970

and she raised us.

433

00:23:24,970 --> 00:23:30,160

She actually raised us because
our mother was very, very busy.

434

00:23:30,160 --> 00:23:32,720

What was your aunt's name?

435

00:23:32,720 --> 00:23:34,480

Her name was Leah.

436

00:23:34,480 --> 00:23:38,050

My mother's name was Leah,
and hers was Leah, too.

437

00:23:38,050 --> 00:23:42,130

But-- yeah, they were both Leah.

438

00:23:42,130 --> 00:23:51,220

In Hungarian, my aunt was
called Lene, of any interest.

439

00:23:51,220 --> 00:24:05,730
So Lene would be spelled like
L-E-N-E. So she was patient.

440
00:24:05,730 --> 00:24:07,570
She was loving.

441
00:24:07,570 --> 00:24:11,550
And we-- she raised us.

442
00:24:11,550 --> 00:24:17,880
And she married briefly,
and that didn't work out.

443
00:24:17,880 --> 00:24:20,890
We children didn't know
all this until much later.

444
00:24:20,890 --> 00:24:23,740
And since she was--

445
00:24:23,740 --> 00:24:31,220
young women, single or married
or widowed, never lived alone.

446
00:24:31,220 --> 00:24:34,150
That would have been a scandal.

447
00:24:34,150 --> 00:24:36,480
And so she lived with
her brother's family--

448
00:24:36,480 --> 00:24:38,510
my mother and all the children.

449
00:24:38,510 --> 00:24:41,360
And of course, she
couldn't support herself

450
00:24:41,360 --> 00:24:45,000
because in those
days women didn't.

451
00:24:45,000 --> 00:24:50,200
So not only in retrospect,

but we children

452

00:24:50,200 --> 00:24:56,140
became aware that in a small
house with so much going on

453

00:24:56,140 --> 00:25:04,130
she felt displaced by my mother
because that was her house,

454

00:25:04,130 --> 00:25:06,320
and my mother came to her house.

455

00:25:06,320 --> 00:25:07,830
Oh, I see.

456

00:25:07,830 --> 00:25:09,110
I see.

457

00:25:09,110 --> 00:25:11,690
So we remember the tension.

458

00:25:11,690 --> 00:25:15,650
And that had an effect
on us, but not so much

459

00:25:15,650 --> 00:25:17,090
because we were young.

460

00:25:17,090 --> 00:25:22,310
We were just-- felt her
total love and devotion.

461

00:25:22,310 --> 00:25:28,160
And she was very,
very close to us

462

00:25:28,160 --> 00:25:30,560
because of her loving nature.

463

00:25:30,560 --> 00:25:34,550
And our mother was
just simply overwhelmed

464

00:25:34,550 --> 00:25:37,040
with the many
chores and children,

465
00:25:37,040 --> 00:25:41,600
and she was unavailable.

466
00:25:41,600 --> 00:25:43,910
Oh, well, I mean,
when you think of it,

467
00:25:43,910 --> 00:25:49,040
if her first child is in
1927, and her other child

468
00:25:49,040 --> 00:25:50,910
is in 1934--

469
00:25:50,910 --> 00:25:56,420
1938, her last one, then
the decade, the 11 years,

470
00:25:56,420 --> 00:26:00,050
the 12 years that she is
both giving birth and raising

471
00:26:00,050 --> 00:26:02,600
children, I can't
imagine that she

472
00:26:02,600 --> 00:26:05,330
had any time to turn around.

473
00:26:05,330 --> 00:26:07,130
Well, you know,
and not only that,

474
00:26:07,130 --> 00:26:10,910
she had several, at
least three, who died.

475
00:26:10,910 --> 00:26:11,730
Oh, my goodness.

476
00:26:11,730 --> 00:26:13,302

These were not all--

477

00:26:13,302 --> 00:26:15,680

well, these six
were not all her--

478

00:26:15,680 --> 00:26:17,460

these were her live births.

479

00:26:17,460 --> 00:26:18,245

Oh, my goodness.

480

00:26:18,245 --> 00:26:19,850

And children died.

481

00:26:19,850 --> 00:26:23,810

There was there was no
medicine, and they [INAUDIBLE]

482

00:26:23,810 --> 00:26:26,270

either in childbirth--
the miracle is that she

483

00:26:26,270 --> 00:26:27,830

didn't die in childbirth.

484

00:26:27,830 --> 00:26:28,650

That's true.

485

00:26:28,650 --> 00:26:29,150

That's true.

486

00:26:29,150 --> 00:26:33,230

Primitive way of giving
birth without running water

487

00:26:33,230 --> 00:26:36,680

in the house, with
a midwife who didn't

488

00:26:36,680 --> 00:26:39,620

know any more than anybody
else about any of that.

489

00:26:39,620 --> 00:26:44,210
And so my mother had
a very hard life.

490
00:26:44,210 --> 00:26:48,830
But we remember her as
working all the time,

491
00:26:48,830 --> 00:26:52,610
and being exceptionally
productive,

492
00:26:52,610 --> 00:26:55,160
and never complained.

493
00:26:55,160 --> 00:26:59,060
She just worked and
worked and worked.

494
00:26:59,060 --> 00:27:03,860
And coming from Budapest, for
a while that she was there,

495
00:27:03,860 --> 00:27:07,190
it must have been
very hard on her.

496
00:27:07,190 --> 00:27:13,070
We-- I don't have any misgivings
about her love for us.

497
00:27:13,070 --> 00:27:15,580
She not only loved us, but she--

498
00:27:15,580 --> 00:27:19,250

499
00:27:19,250 --> 00:27:22,370
like, she trembles
for our welfare.

500
00:27:22,370 --> 00:27:28,490
She just-- she was just totally
terrified because she lost

501

00:27:28,490 --> 00:27:29,750
one--

502
00:27:29,750 --> 00:27:33,620
it's our impression that she
lost the first one who was

503
00:27:33,620 --> 00:27:35,600
about three or four years old.

504
00:27:35,600 --> 00:27:37,970
And that set the tone.

505
00:27:37,970 --> 00:27:41,360
She never got over that,
which is understandable.

506
00:27:41,360 --> 00:27:43,640
And after that,
she was desperately

507
00:27:43,640 --> 00:27:45,230
worried about all of us.

508
00:27:45,230 --> 00:27:48,440
So it wasn't that she
didn't pay attention to us,

509
00:27:48,440 --> 00:27:50,010
it was she didn't--

510
00:27:50,010 --> 00:27:52,700
she did the work of 10 mothers.

511
00:27:52,700 --> 00:27:53,210
Yeah.

512
00:27:53,210 --> 00:27:53,710
Yeah.

513
00:27:53,710 --> 00:27:55,040
It sounds that way.

514
00:27:55,040 --> 00:27:58,850

And it's sad to know that
there was tension between them,

515
00:27:58,850 --> 00:28:02,160
because both of them were
devoted to you it sounds.

516
00:28:02,160 --> 00:28:02,660
Yes.

517
00:28:02,660 --> 00:28:04,310
And not only that, it's also--

518
00:28:04,310 --> 00:28:05,900
I certainly understand now.

519
00:28:05,900 --> 00:28:07,940
That was my aunt's home.

520
00:28:07,940 --> 00:28:09,980
That's where her mother died.

521
00:28:09,980 --> 00:28:13,010
That's where she raised
her brother and my father.

522
00:28:13,010 --> 00:28:16,400
And if I look back
now in retrospect,

523
00:28:16,400 --> 00:28:19,310
my father was in a
terrible position,

524
00:28:19,310 --> 00:28:25,220
because he had to take sides
with his wife and his sister.

525
00:28:25,220 --> 00:28:27,110
And he loved both.

526
00:28:27,110 --> 00:28:30,590
And it must have--

527

00:28:30,590 --> 00:28:33,230
things must have been
hard on everybody.

528
00:28:33,230 --> 00:28:36,380
But, you know, I only
remember a lot of love

529
00:28:36,380 --> 00:28:40,700
and a lot of concern by our
parents for our welfare.

530
00:28:40,700 --> 00:28:45,090
And my mother didn't give up
on plans for her children,

531
00:28:45,090 --> 00:28:48,830
especially when it came
to education later on.

532
00:28:48,830 --> 00:28:51,500
She made many
sacrifices to make sure

533
00:28:51,500 --> 00:28:55,100
that we had more than
the local education.

534
00:28:55,100 --> 00:28:58,700
Your father-- let's turn to
your father a little bit.

535
00:28:58,700 --> 00:28:59,390
Excuse me.

536
00:28:59,390 --> 00:29:02,420
I'm going to pause because
I need to check something.

537
00:29:02,420 --> 00:29:04,670
I'm getting too much
noise on my phone.

538
00:29:04,670 --> 00:29:07,040
I'm going to pause
just for a minute.

539

00:29:07,040 --> 00:29:08,860

Hang on.