

Summary of Oral History Interview with George Bauer July, 1990

His immediate family consisted of a father, mother, sister and himself. They lived in Budapest leading a normal and happy life. His father was a merchant, made a good living, and they were comfortable. Hungary slowly changed. In the beginning of 1938 many restrictions were put into place. Until 1940, almost everything was intact. In 1940 they could only employ a small percentage of Jews. They could not support themselves while they lost their jobs. His father tried to help any way he could, but his income was limited. They lived in an apartment with other families. The fascist party was formed, and they tortured the Jewish students. By then George had to attend a Jewish school. In March 1944, the Germans occupied Hungary. One Sunday afternoon the director told George to go home and not to return to school. They were forced to go to Russia and Yugoslavia to work in copper mines, where the conditions were terrible, and many of them were gunned down. The Iron Cross set up the Jews in big apartments and took all of their wealth from them. The Jews had to wear the Yellow Star, and a curfew was imposed. They worked in a winery, which was a Jewish labor service. In 1944, Hungary wanted to make peace with the Allies, but the Iron Cross was in command. Men between the ages of sixteen and sixty and women between eighteen and forty were drafted into the Army. They dug trenches, and not many survived. They put the remainder in a ghetto with barbed wire. Food was scarce, and they were fed only a few times during a long period. His father was a knowledgeable leader, and he escaped back to the winery. His mother was not in the ghetto. Instead, she was among others in Swiss protected houses, and many were saved by the clergy. A major who knew his father hid him, George, and others. The ghetto was liberated on January 21, 1945. His sister and a child were saved, but his brother-in-law was killed. They returned to their homes which were in order, but a lot of the others were destroyed. In December 20, 1944, prior to the liberation, they gathered the Jews from the neighboring villages and killed them. George was sent to take the corpses to the cemetery and clean up. Some were spared by hiding in a cloister. They went back to the winery for food, and late that summer they received packages from America. When asked if he knew what was going on in the camps, he replied there were unconfirmed rumors about Auschwitz, but they did not want to believe it. The message from him was a simple one. He hopes that people will prevent it from ever happening again.