

Boyd Harbor, Long Island, New York, reference tones minus 8 DB.

Let's start with you telling me what it was like to hear that the war had begun and how everyday life changed wearing the yellow star, all the things that changed. Well, you know that the war started in 1939, and I was in Switzerland, minding my own business. And I just came back to Switzerland from a wonderful trip to France with other students.

And when we arrived back to Geneva in '39, beginning of September, there was a Zionist Congress in Geneva. And the people took time out in the beaches. And we were all out in the beach with my friends. And suddenly the microphone blared that Poland was overrun by the Nazis.

Well, you could have dropped a needle right there in the place. People, half naked bodies, they ran everywhere to call home and see what's happening. And this was my first inclination that there is really a war going on. But I wanted to stay in Switzerland, but we have very good friends, and they talked me into it to go back.

In the beginning of 1941, I went home because my friend said that the Allies will not allow it to go on and on, and Hungary will not be in the war. And when I got back to Hungary, it was fairly quiet. The Arrow Cross, what is the Hungarian Nazi Party, did not really take over completely in '41 yet. And the only thing-- there were even American films still shown all over.

And I was teaching English to a young lady who today is Congressman Lantos's wife. And she looked like Shirley Temple. And we used to walk on the street with our heads up and talking English. It was still allowed to speak English on the street. But then suddenly we got people in from Czechoslovakia, from Romania, from Poland, those who could get yet away. And they told us the stories.

We didn't believe, not the Jews and not the Christians who were anti-Nazis. We just didn't believe that that's humanly possible that they do that. We were listening to the BBC. Now, on the end of-- or let's say in the middle of '43, suddenly everything changed. Then the Hungarian Nazi Party took over. And suddenly they reminded us that we should put on the star.

My father has been taken from the house and took in a labor camp. But in a couple of weeks, they let him come back home. We were not moved out of our house. And then they started to forbid to talk English, and therefore Annette, or Aggie was her name, too, we went out in the street and we spoke English, because we had a chutzpah or whatever.

But nobody ever stopped us on the streets, because we didn't really look like two Jewish kids, and we did not wear the star. But we didn't go out too much. And then the BBC was not allowed to listen to it anymore. But of course, we did, because that was the only way to find out what's going on in the world.

And I was lucky enough to have a huge, big radio my parents brought me for my 21st birthday, where we could have the whole world. So whatever news it came in was through our house, because I could get shortwave stations. And it was very exciting to hear what's going on. And in the very heart, we begin to believe that it can happen to us any moment. And then it did happen in '44 March, when in walked Eichmann. And immediately he killed almost 600,000 people in the country.

In Budapest, however, they only went by list of people whom they should pick up. We were still not being picked up. And life began to be more and more difficult because we didn't dare to go out on the street. If possible, only to shop. And you didn't know what's happening next morning. And that was your question, what happened before. So that was the life just about.

What-- were you afraid? What kinds of things did you witness?

Well, I first witnessed-- and that was a horror for me-- the Hungarian Arrow Cross wore green shirts. As you know, each of them had their own shirts. The Germans, they wore the brown shirts. The fascists in Italy wore the black shirts. And our Hungarian guys wore the yellow-- the green ones.

And I went out on the street one day, and I saw a priest coming out of a church. And he had a green shirt on and the Nazi sign on him, the Hungarian Nazi. And there was a little boy of three, and he killed the child. That was the first time the religion went out of me. No more religion, thank you.

If a priest can do that, then I don't know. And I went home, and I cried, and I cried. And then this is something what we never can figure out. I worked in a wonderful hotel in Budapest. I don't know how many of you went there. Of course, these hotels are not there anymore. It was the Hotel Ritz.

And as I spoke a lot of languages, I have been working there, and it was wonderful. And one Sunday morning, or a few days before, I got this letter from the Swedish embassy to come and visit them. And I had no time right then. It wasn't so very important. But it was a Sunday morning when a very excited neighbor ran into us, and he said, "Oh, just I heard on BBC that Admiral Horthy is going to give up being with the Germans, and he's going to be with the Allies."

And my father was all excited. He was running for the champagne. And me spoke up, I says, "Papa, don't believe what you hear. Don't drink the champagne." "Oh, you young people! You don't know what you're talking about." And he brought the champagne, and we were just about drinking when Horthy came on the television-- on radio. And he said very beautifully that I now tell you that we are with the Allied forces and not with the Nazis anymore.

And that moment, the German Horst-Wessel came over the radio, and we didn't hear Horthy's voice. I dropped my glass, and I ran out, because I knew I had to go to work to the hotel. And it was a gorgeous, beautiful March day. It was sunshine. Very cold. And I come out, and it was blackened by aeroplanes. And I thought they were Americans, or British, or Russians.

And I was running all the way to the hotel. And when I get there, the porter said to me, "Mr. [? Marantis ?] wants to see you at once." And that was the manager of the hotel. He was a gentleman, huge, big gentleman, about 250 pounds. He spoke 12 languages. He was Yugoslavian, and he was the manager.

And he took me in his arm, and he said to me in French, "child, go home. These are not British or Americans. These are the Germans, and Horthy was already arrested. Go home. I don't want them to take you from here."

So I ran back home and Father, all he could say is "You were right." Now I decided I'm going to the Swedish embassy. And there was difficulty to go up there, because everybody was afraid to go to a foreign embassy. But my cousin had a very wonderful boyfriend who was a Christian, who had a big black Mercedes Benz. And he said, I'll take you up.

And he arrived in a Nazi uniform. He had a Nazi flag on his car. He pushed me in there, and he took me up to the embassy. And the ambassador was quite surprised when they looked out and saw the Nazi flag. And I explained to him what happened. And then he explained to me the absolutely out of the world thing that I have a fiancee in Sweden.

Well, that's a long story. Yes, I had a very dear friend in Sweden with whom I corresponded for 12 years. And he explained to me that this young man went to the King, and to the foreign ministerium and said that this woman would be my wife already but the war came and therefore she should be Swedish. And they handed me a Swedish passport.

And I looked and I said "a what?" So I became a Swedish citizen. And you can see on those, I have that passport here. It says there "emergency passport." They also gave this to Swedish people if they didn't have the hard covered passport--hard-covered paper. And then the ambassador explained that he would like to keep me at the embassy.

And I said, yes, but I have my parents home. And he said we will send somebody down to your parents and tell them what happened and why, but we are responsible for you. So I have been the guest of the Swedish government for three glorious weeks except my heart inside was hurting, what can happen to my parents. And I found out while I was up there that I wasn't the only one who was--

Wait, wait. We have to change rolls now.

We're changing film to camera roll 2 and same day. Number one is up.

Can you explain to me about the edict to separate mixed couples, Christians and Jews who were married? Explain. Just tell me about that, so-- because people can't believe such a thing would happen, and then explain what happened.

I will explain to you, because I had an uncle who was a Unitarian and an aunt who was a Jew, and they had a wonderful marriage. And suddenly the radio declared that all married couple mixed marriages either divorce immediately or both of them will be killed.

And my-- many, many people, they were found dead together. They cleaned the house, and then they went into a clean bed, and they found them suicidal by themselves. My uncle and aunt called, too, and they said we want to die, because we will not separate.

And I screamed at them. I said, you can't do that. By the time we already had Raoul. I said, I'll get you papers. And I did. And they got themselves false papers, too. And thanks God, they lived through the war. But it was thousands of people who killed themselves. So it was a very easy people to kill-- easy time to kill people. Because most of them would not divorce.

One of them Kodaly, you know, the famous Hungarian musician whose wife was a Jew. And he said, "I would never, never leave my wife." And they didn't touch him, and they didn't touch his wife either. But very few of them. Thousands and thousands, they died.

What about converting? Could you convert from Judaism to save--

Yes. Now, on the other day there was a phone call there that anyone who is not in the Jewish religion will be saved. Now, of course, we wanted to believe anything. And again, I was a very lucky girl, because I grew up as an only Jew in Budapest's best Protestant school. And our principal that time, and later on he became the bishop of Hungary, the Protestant bishop, he was also my best friend, because he had seven daughters, and I was always in his house. And he arrived to our house, what was then still the Christian house.

And he said to my father, who was the same age, he says, "Uncle, I want to baptize your child, because she's my seventh daughter." Of course, Papa couldn't say no. We went down to the church, and my father cried very loud, and he kept on saying "Papa, don't cry. I have a lot of Jews down there whom I saved. And if the Nazis find out--" and he christianed me, because he believed that it will help me. Possibly the miracle helped.

But thousands and thousands of people died because nobody cared that they were another religion-- that was just another off day, funny saying. Many time of course, many people survived with false papers, and who didn't look really Jewish, so. But it was also just a lie, like everything else.

Explain to me more about those lies. How? How did they fool people at the beginning and keep it so you didn't believe what was happening?

Well, you see, because every day there was something new in the radio. And also the threatening. "If you go out, we kill you. If you do this, we kill you." And also very quickly the bombing started, and that made them extremely angry that the Americans started to bomb us.

And the American and the British bomb that went all the way down to the basement. The Russian bombs, they only took the last two floors up on the top. And so much so that while I was at the embassy, my friend who brought me up came one day and he said to the ambassador that I have to go home, otherwise they're going to kill my parents in the meantime, because of the Hungarian Nazis' anger.

What they did, they made every second house in Budapest a Jewish house with a huge big Mogen David on the house because the idea was that the Americans will not bomb the Jewish houses. And therefore-- or the Christians will be saved. Of course they were wrong, because they bombed the Jewish houses. They bombed the Christian houses. But

they found the headquarters, and they bombed there, too.

And my parents had to move out from our apartment. And they moved in-- thanks God, my grandmother's house wasn't too far, her apartment. And they moved. And the Nazis came every morning, and they were reading names. And my name was still on. So they argued for a while, and I told the ambassador that it is my job to go home to my parents, because they might kill the whole family.

So he wouldn't allow me to go home with him. I had to go down in a street car with one of the diplomats who was sitting quite away from me, because he wanted to see where I'm going with the promise that whenever they allow us out on the street, because we were allowed every day two hours to go out and shop with the star on. And you were lucky if you came back from shopping without being killed.

And if the telephones still worked, would I please call up? And I was hardly down there for two weeks when I called, and I was told to come back at once because there is something new happened. So I had to go down on my knees to my friend to take me up once more, promising that I will not stay. And there was Raoul Wallenberg.

And he introduced himself. I didn't really know who he was. And he asked me in English at that time, would you like to work with me? And I showed him my star. And he started to laugh. And Per Anger was laughing. He says that's nothing. That's getting off. I said, yeah? How?

So they told me how. They gave him-- they must have bribed the Hungarian police station, because I had to go down all by myself. I didn't find out only later on that actually they were around in case I'm not coming out, so they can pick me up. And I went down to the police station, and the police chief, whose name I can't remember, he took me in his arm, and he cried.

He was a very good actor. And he said, "I'm so proud I am the one who cuts the star off." And he did cut it off. And he said, "remember my name when the Russians come. Or the Americans. How good I was." He must have gotten quite a lot of money.

And as I walked out, I heard somebody say "here goes another bloody Jew." And I thought, "ah, now they're going to kill me." But they didn't. I made it all the way back. So now Raoul Wallenberg hands me another paper. He said get down to the house commission. By now, it was incredible.

We had a housing commission. Because as soon as somebody got out of their beautiful home, somebody moved in. And he said, "get your apartment back." I said, really? He said, yes, really?" So by that time, I was all Raoul Wallenberg. I felt if he's that strong and has not to do it, I can do it. And I was a rather pretty girl, so I took up the best suit I had, and I walked with my paper in my hand. But inside, of course, I was twisting. And I sort of threw it to the head of the men, and he gave me a dirty look.

But without a word, he gave it back. He said, here. I walked out, and I said, why? How come they just give it to me? Well, I forgot that it was actually in my father's name. So I walked back to our super, who was living on us like a leech for years and years and years. And his wife was delighted to see me alive, but not him. And I said, "I came to get my apartment back." Whereby, she said, "Oh, my daughter already has--"

No, he said, "my daughter is going to have your apartment." And the wife spoke up. She said, "our daughter already has an apartment!" So I existed, sort of. And he said, "well, he can't give it to me. I have to go to the house's lawyer." And I said fine. And I walked all the way to the lawyer. And there was the same thing as with the policemen.

"Oh, I give it to you, of course. But you must remember my name when they come in, to tell how much good I did." I said sure. And I had my finger like that. I said, "of course I will, naturally." So then I walked back to the super, who was very surprised that I got the signature. And we went upstairs, and funnily enough, the apartment was completely empty.

Only one room. We had a maid's room, and that was closed. And when he opened it, I was terribly surprised to find all our paintings, furniture, everything was in there. So first I thought to myself, "gee, he isn't such a bad man." Until he

opens his mouth and he said, "I'll get even with you yet."

But at least right now I had it. So I did the terrible thing. My parents didn't have any papers yet, but I walked back to the house, and I said "out." and my father said, but how? I said just get out. I have already Schutz-Passes for you from Raoul. Just get out. And I brought them back home, and nothing happened.

And then what I did with Raoul, every day I had to go up there. And I went on the streetcar, because they were over in Buda. And for a while, I was hostessing. You know, thousands and thousands of Jewish people and anti-Nazi people came up to ask for this paper.

Because when Raoul arrived and he asked what the embassy has done, I said, we have given out 80 passports. And he said, 80 passports when there are 280,000 people to be saved? That's nothing. And that's when he designed this beautiful Schutz-Pass, what means "protective pass." And people still keep on saying passports. They were no passports.

OK, we have to change rolls.

[BEEP]

There came a knock at the door, and it turned out to be a German soldier that you had-- that you actually knew?

Ah.

Give me the background.

OK, the background was that I was just about graduating from high school. And I got scarlet fever. So I never really graduated, but they just gave me the paper. And I was supposed to go to a German island at that time to very dear friends who were Jewish. And it didn't work. But then 1936 Olympic Games came. And that was about the last time that the Jews were allowed to be around, and they invited me to Berlin instead.

So I went to Berlin, and I had a wonderful time. I watched Jesse Owens winning the gold medal for his flying instead of running. And I thought he was wonderful, because he was hated as much as we are, because he was Black. And it was wonderful. And then in the days what we took there, we went out to swim. And I met a lot of German youth. And one of them was a young man who we exchanged cards, and my name was Mandl.

And then years go by, and there is the war, and the Nazis are in Budapest. And suddenly, the bell rings in my house. And I look out, and I see a uniformed man. And my parents were, I mean, shaking. And I said, "but Mommy, this is the boy from Germany." And I opened the door but didn't let him in. And he said, "Aggie, you remember me." I said, "yes, of course. I remember you. That was already we were back in our Christian house."

And he said, "would you show me Budapest?" And I said, "sure, I'd be glad to. Goodbye, Mommy and Daddy," and out I went. I couldn't say I'm not going with you. Everybody in the house looked at me, and they didn't know whether I was taken or walking. And we walked around until we came to the synagogue.

And this young man stopped there and he said, "do you see this synagogue?" I said, "yes, sure." He said, "that's where I'm going to kill every single Jew." So my stomach went all the way down. What am I going to do now? If I tell him I am one, he will kill me right on the spot, and I can't afford it.

And I turned to him and I said, "did you ever know a Jew?" And he said, no. I said, "well, did any Jew ever hurt you?" He says, no. I said, "then why do you want to kill them?" He says, "Hitler told me." So now I had to think very fast, and I looked at my watch. I said, "Oh, you have to forgive me, but I am teaching English and I have to run to a lesson. It was wonderful seeing you." And I ran away. I never see him again, but it was a frightening couple of hours.

And now I want you to tell me about Raoul Wallenberg. And I've never heard of him. I don't know who he is. So tell me very generally if you had to tell me briefly who he is and what he did.

OK. Raoul Wallenberg is-- was then a young 32-year-old man from a neutral country. He was an architect. Everybody says he was the ambassador. He was a diplomat. He was not. He got his education here in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He became a top architect. And his uncle-- his grandfather, Wallenberg grandfather was a diplomat. He was an ambassador to Tokyo, and later on to Turkey. And he was the one who really brought Raoul up, because his father died three months before he was born.

And this little boy was surrounded by love, and he grew up with always caring about other people. And his grandfather saw to it that he learned all the European languages, and that he's a well-educated young man. And he was funny. He was wonderful. He was a great actor. He usually imitated everybody, and he was just great.

And when he came back from America, it was way in the '30s, and Hitler was already around. And he couldn't find anybody who wanted to build. So architect he couldn't be. So they sent him first to South Africa. His grandfather wanted him to learn the business of the Wallenbergs, what was banking mostly.

And when he got to Africa, very shortly he wrote to his grandfather, "Why aren't you doing something? They are killing the Blacks here. They shouldn't do that. Those are wonderful people." And he was very disturbed, and he was wanting to come back. Then his grandfather sent him to Palestine, what was no Israel yet, to Haifa.

And that's where he met first these people who came from Germany, Poland, those who could run away. And they told him the horror stories. So again, he asked his grandfather to come back, because he has to do something for humanity. So he came back to Stockholm. And of course, he couldn't do a thing for anyone. But he became a partner of a Hungarian Jew, who couldn't travel anymore, who had a big import-- export-import business in food.

And Raoul became his partner, because he could travel around still. And every time he came back, he said to his partner, "Kalman, they're going to kill everybody. You can't imagine what they do in Germany and what they do in Hungary. Let me go back to Hungary and bring your family out."

And this Hungarian was laughing. He said, "Raoul, whom do you think you are, Jesus Christ or Moses? You can do nothing." In the meantime, finally, somebody went to Roosevelt, our president, and told him that Hungary was the last country where there still a Jewish population, and it looks like that the Germans are going in there to kill everyone. Would he please help?

So the Hungarian-- the American Refugee Board has been erected, and a gentleman by the name of Olson has been sent to Sweden to find a person who would go with a mission to save people in Hungary. The Hung-- the American embassy was in the same house with Kalman Lauer, the firm Raoul worked.

And they figured they go to a Hungarian Jew. Maybe he knows someone. And then they told him what they want. He started to laugh. He said, "Yes, I have a young partner, and he can talk of nothing else but saving the world." So I don't want to go in with you how many interviews he had, and probably because of these interviews it is that he's now 46 years in prison. Stockholm was a real spy center. There was a big coffee house there, where there were Russian spies, German spies, you name it.

And Raoul had a lot of meetings there with this Mr. Olson. What turned out later on that he was a man of the OSS, what was before the CIA. But Raoul had absolutely no idea. He just knew that he was an American. And talking to Raoul and seeing how excited he was and what he wanted, they gave him the job to come to Hungary.

He was 32-year-old. His demand was, of course, that he needed a diplomatic passport. Because without that, he couldn't travel. That's how he became the third secretary or fourth secretary of the Hungarian embassy. He also demanded unlimited money. And when they asked him why, he said "because I'm sure I will have to bribe the Germans and the Hungarians to save some people." And they said yes.

And then the third one was that he wanted a free hand to do whatever he wanted in Hungary. Well, of course when he arrived to Budapest on July 9, 1944, they didn't look at him very happily, the embassy. Because there is someone who

was never a diplomat, and he wants to take over. But it turned out that that's what happened.

Raoul was the one who went to talk to people. Raoul was the one who saved the people. So now you know who Raoul is or was, a great, wonderful human being, whose only idea was to help the innocent. And for this, they took him. And for many other reasons. But the way he saved the people was so incredible, and I can only talk for myself, because I have not met anyone except the photographer Thomas Veres, who has the same feeling that Raoul gave us such an enormous strength to do the same thing, unafraid.

Of course, we don't know either whether he inside himself being afraid, and we, too, maybe our stomach sometimes didn't work the same way. But we just said, no, we can do it. And we did the most incredible things, because Raoul wanted us to do. And that was the beauty. And he never thought of being afraid. He went out to the trains when the Germans took the people, to already to take them to Auschwitz. And his pockets were full of all kinds of papers, not just real Schutz-Passes but driver's license and this and that, because the Germans couldn't read.

And before he even shouted, he first gave the Hungarian man some drinks, because they love cognac and all that that, and made them good and drunk, and asked them to help him. And he was shouting there, "come out, come out, all the people who have my papers!" And of course people suddenly realize that there is some angel who want to help them, and he just handed them papers out. And before the Germans could really start shooting, he had 100 people on our trucks, Red Cross trucks, to bring them home.

And then Raoul looked back, another 100 people were killed. But you can't just save everyone. And then another day when in Hungary this year it was very early snowing in November, and even in September already, they were enormously cold, the coldest winter in 40 years. And they were marching people from Budapest all the way to Vienna. Even today in a car, it's five hours. You can imagine what it was walking old people and children.

And he would scream. I had a girlfriend there, who was there with mother--

Let's stop. Let's stop here.