

U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum
Summary of Interview with Jaffa Munk Interview

October 8, 1996 - Tapes 1, 2, + 3; March 11, 1997 Tapes 4 + 5
Margaret Garrett, Interviewer

Tape 1 of 5, Side A

1932 TO 1942

Born Naomi Donath, April 10, 1932, Onod, Hungary.

Daughter of rabbi, one of three children. Brother, Joseph; Sister, Esther.

Children went to best schools, Lutheran school. Jewish studies in afternoon, private German teacher.

Father from Bratislava, wanted children to be cultured. Very religious background. Open-minded.

Lots of celebrations, holidays.

Whole town only 50 Jewish families, population of town less than 3000, about 300 Jewish people.

Father rabbi of town. He had a Yeshiva.

Beautiful house, fruit trees.

Brother educated in Budapest, introduced her to science and books.

Friendly with gentile people.

1942 TO 1943

1942-Gentiles started to throw bad words at them. Before then Jewish people couldn't have beef because couldn't kill cows according to Jewish faith.

Father had brothers and sisters living in Bratislava. Heard father saying, "Poor brother...."

Father used to listen to secret radio and would say Americans or British are advancing.

1943-Mother's relatives said people smuggled into Hungary from Poland--to big cities, not small towns

1942-43 Girls from Czechoslovakia came to Hungary because couldn't hide anymore in Czechoslovakia.

1944 When Germans marched into Hungary, parents asked priest to hide children. He said no.

In 1942 Cantor had no Hungarian nationality. It took 25 years of residence in Hungary to become citizen. He was from Poland. He had to leave country. Today he is alive, family of JM in ashes.

If Jewish and no citizenship, had to leave country.

Sensing the tenseness. Parents shielding more than before.
Until 42-43 fairly free and happy life. Then parents did not want children in public places.
In September 1943 older sister went to study in Budapest in special school.

1944

In 1944 when Germans marched into Hungary parents wanted children to come home. Jews could not travel on train. Aunt dressed sister of JM to look like Gentile, more like a peasant, not too attractive. Train station 7K from Onod. Sister knocked on door of Jewish family. Had become headquarters of German Army. Remembered another Jewish family. Slept there. They brought her home. Brother got papers from Gentile friend.

Had to have yellow star, on street only at certain times. Gentiles could not hire Jews.

Inventory of what had in house and submit to mayor. Watched mother do inventory. Did not realize the depth. Brother said "When we come back...." Understood had to leave house.

Father chosen to be head of ghetto not far from Miskolc.

Factories for iron. Emptied workers apartments. While doing inventory, father away organizing ghetto. People from Onod and surrounding towns. Expecting he would come back.

After a few days mother took few things to neighbor. Asked her to put them away for her or children. Indicates mother and father knew elderly people don't make it. Wanted mementos for children. At time didn't know, looking back understand.

Father gave collection of silver coins to Gentile family who brought food.

Jaffa Munk, October 8, 1996, continued

Tape 1, Side B

GHETTO

After inventory, giving items to neighbor to keep, announcement over loudspeaker- all Jewish families have to go to ghetto. They had to hire horse and buggy. Leave key and inventory at house of mayor,

End of May, 1944, had to go into ghetto. Mayor was father of good friend. When had to wear yellow star, friendship cooled off. Mayor said I am sorry, I cannot help. It hurt. Hungarian police worse than Germans. Hired buggy. Mother took one chicken. Mother grew chickens, ducks, turkey in back yard. Took some dishes, some flour. Each one packed a suitcase. Personal jewelry. Had to leave everything--clothing, books. At the beginning father took some books to study. Official statement of Germans was you will come back

Eichmann was in Budapest. Organized Jewish people from Hungary. Jewish organization was hoping to have some kind of agreement with him. Arrive in the ghetto. Shocked to see how many Jewish people were occupying already. Their small apartment was luxury compared to other families. Her mother placed little basket in kitchen. Her mother's father had been rabbi in home town before her father. Chicken reminded her mother of the town. Usually chickens lay an egg every other day. While in the ghetto that chicken laid egg every day. Mother said egg for youngest daughter. JM refused. Sometimes she made scrambled egg and divided. Sometimes made a cake.

Celebrated Shavuot, holiday of receiving Torah on Mt Sinai. Last holiday she was together with parents. Decision to kill the chicken, didn't know what was to be their fate. Mother made chicken soup, roast chicken hamburger.

Father had a special room in the ghetto where the people went to pray. Hungarian police came to the ghetto. Asked the people where did you hide things. You did not put everything in the inventory. Many times brutally beat up people, thinking that they were hiding something. Mother used to hear the screaming of the people. She just fainted. She grew up with all these people. She couldn't take it. Doctor who was helping the whole

town was beaten up very severely. Father had to intervene and get permission to take him to the hospital . He died from the beating. After being in the ghetto three weeks, new decree. Had to leave the ghetto.

Room set aside in the ghetto for people to pray. Father conducted services every day and corresponded with people in Jewish organization in Budapest. What do we have to do. Should we listen to orders or rebel. Order came in from Jewish organization. Eichmann was promising that they will be taken to working camp. They should obey orders. Police knew about services in the room but they did not interfere. Their approach was it won't last too long anyway.

Collected all able working men. Father and brother taken from ghetto. All the people from age 16 to 45 or 50, all able working men, collected and taken away from the ghetto. Did not know where they were taking them. Women, babies, children, old people remaining. Father no longer head of ghetto.

BRICK FACTORY IN MISKOLC

Two days later they said all the people remaining had to march 7 k to a brick factory in Miskolc. Hopeful in a short time go to Czechoslovakia where they need working people. Hoping. Hungarian police and SS soldiers. If slow, they beat you up and say go faster. Arrived in brick factory. As they arrive hear some men screaming to them. Her father there. They shaved his beard. No more nice suit. Pants and shirt. They were reunited. In brick factory, crying and starving for a few days. To eat, just left over bread mother had baked in the ghetto and maybe a few potatoes. Ate mainly stale bread.

One day the German soldiers said they needed people to work in headquarters, cleaning etc. She and her sister went with the soldiers for two days. Cleaned , washed dishes. They were given some bread and cooked potatoes. Brought some home. The third day they were waiting to be picked up. Work occupied them, given something to eat. Transportation didn't come. Announced had to march from the factory to the railroad and going to travel to factory in Czechoslovakia to a working camp.

TRANSPORT

They couldn't believe what kind of train. Cattle train without windows. Gave them two bottles. Old people screaming and crying. Squeezed like

sardines. Mother and father sitting next to each other. Heard her mother crying. Is sure they sensed it, they knew it, not going to a good place. At the time she was thinking where could I have some air, something to drink, calm young children who were crying. Saw mother not feeling good anymore.

When got to city of Kosice? said one person could fetch water and empty bathroom bucket. Thought a trick. Her brother volunteered. He saw they were in a city. He fetched water. Before they closed the door they said if you have any jewelry give it now. Took away the last jewelry they still had. Before they went away from the ghetto they took jewelry except each of them tried to hide. They said you better give it or we beat you to death. They gave last possession. Closed door. Train rushing. Noise tremendous. People crying. People died in the train. No more water. The bucket full. Smell, crying, screaming. Old people died, smelled.

AUSCHWITZ

Suddenly opened train. In Auschwitz. German soldiers with dogs came to the door. Said get off train fast. Leave belongings. Striped clothed men screaming go fast. In between screaming said in Yiddish. Don't go mothers with babies. Give babies to old grandmothers. They didn't understand. They lined up, her mother in the middle. Men in separate line. Remember her father screaming her name. He was worried because she was the youngest and very skinny. Father was screaming her name. He said whatever happens you continue to believe. Apparently he knew terrible things were coming and he wanted to reassure them that they should continue, that the faith should give them strength.

Jaffa Munk, October 8, 1996, continued

Tape 2, Side A

They were walking and there was a huge tall beautiful man in Army uniform. When their turn came he pointed her mother to the left and JM and her sister and the two other sisters Solomon from her home town to the right. Her mother said to him, I am capable of working. Can I go to the other side. Probably her mother saw more young people went to the right or she wanted to be with her children. He became angry, threw her to the left. The last time JM saw her mother. Gassed the same day.

Taken to a huge place, sheared their hair off completely, had to take off clothing. Taken into shower. No more clothing. Waiting. Naked. German soldiers came to count them. JM screamed, Esther. She said, I am standing next to you. Didn't recognize her. Old shoes, old dress. Marched 5 in a row. Painted back of dress red. In case they tried to escape. Marched into Birkenau. Given a huge bunk. Pushed in 1000 girls. No beds, no blankets. Stand for appell, roll call. Asked head of camp, Where can I go. Beat her face. She was blamed that missing one person. Counted again. Given food, black coffee, bread. Head of bunk said, Lie down on bare floor. Threw blanket for every two girls. Exhausted from train, shearing hair, starvation.

The next day took them to a different bunk. Had bunk beds. Again counting. Sometimes three, four times a day. Even in June the nights cold. Sometimes standing four hours. If someone too pale or too skinny they would call them out. Camp name meant "elimination camp." Nobody working. Everyday less people in camp. Opposite their bunk so-called hospital. People never came back. Her friend from child hood, _____Weiss?, came down with scarlet fever. They tried to hold her, to make sure she didn't go to hospital. Went to hospital. Luckily nurse told her don't stay in hospital.

After 2-3 weeks in camp, Lager B 3, announced those children under 16 should be lining up, will be united with their parents, will have milk, cake, bread. They lined up happily. Solomon sisters said we will stay here because we are older. Around them soldiers with huge dogs. JM heard a voice saying go back, do not go with this group. She did not know if voice was female German soldier, instinct, soul of mother. She grabbed sister and German lady soldier let them go. The whole group taken to gas

chamber. Sometimes she feels guilty, why was she the one. Why the other girls had to go to their death. Perhaps special reason to save them. A lot of miracle things happened.

After a while taken to a different headquarters. Through crack saw fire and smoke. Gypsies gassed that night. Jewish people when taken to gas chamber were singing, saying prayer. The gypsy people have no religion. Very primitive people. Trying to fight. Trying to take their nails and attack the soldiers. It is still ringing in her ear. The screaming of the gypsy people. The first time they saw with their own eyes there is a gas chamber and there is fire. And from that day on they knew. If you are taken from this camp you are taken to a gas chamber and you are being burned.

End of August they were aware their holiday coming. Marching to bath, near men's camp. They would scream did you see this and that. Do you know tomorrow is Shabat. Tomorrow is the New Year. One day one of her uncles screaming, asking if they saw his wife Olga. The men were in Auschwitz.

Beginning of September they needed some workers for a factory. The entire camp had to line up in an empty field. They were going to choose some people for work. The entire camp had to line up naked. Dr. Mengele counted the entire camp. He started to point to the right and to the left. This time the left meant you stay in Auschwitz. The right to a factory to work. Soldiers busy at front. Sister chosen to go to work. JM to remain in camp. She didn't want to be separated. Each strengthened the other to continue. She started to crawl to the group that had been chosen. Soldier beat her. Crawled into the group. They started to count, again and again. 300 with her. She doesn't know how. Took them to a train. Going back and forth because bombing.

BERGEN-BELSEN

Didn't know whether new method of killing them. No air. After 3 or 4 days arrived at Bergen-Belsen. ^{Germany} Day before Yom Kippur. Decided to fast. German people didn't do anything with them. A lot of people came down with typhoid fever. Food tiny bit better than Auschwitz. They requested wanted to fast, would they give us two portions. They fasted. Sleeping on bare floor, a little bit of straw. Infection of gums. Whole face swollen. Not dare to go to infirmary. Knew that the end of you. Yom Kippur--fasted,

a few prayers. Remained in Bergen-Belsen a couple of weeks.

ROCHLITZ(phon,) CAMP in Germany

To another camp, really a factory. Amazes her to this day, Teaching them technical measurements. Amazing, every evening to a school for two weeks. The factory tools and gadgets for airplanes. Worked 3 shifts, different times. Foreman took pity on her. She thankful. Used to call her in to his office, close door, give her a little of his farina. One day in his office eating the farina German soldier sees her inside, foreman grabs plate, screams at her. She understood cover-up. He could be in trouble doing anything for her.

HANUKKAH

While in that camp, the day of lighting the menorrah and they wanted so much to light because they were so broken by then. Thought maybe that would cheer them up. Girl working in kitchen brought home some potato, made a menorrah. Found oil. Tore from dress and made wicks. JM asked soldier for match. They lit Hanukkah candle the next night Sang Hanukkah song. Gave them strength. Human, not completely oppressed. Soldier who came to check. You are inmates. You can't do it, can't have fire. Had to kneel four hours for punishment. When asked why didn't they revolt, their revolt was showing they were human. To help each other. They couldn't destroy their spirit.

Jaffa Munk, October 8, 1996, continued

Tape 2, Side B

RELIGION IN CAMPS

All the time in the camp religion gave a lot of strength. Devotion to keep religion and to each other gave strength. Whenever could observe customs of any of the holidays, spiritually, emotionally, mentally gave uplift and strength. In Bergen-Belsen a girl would collect in an old broken can rain water so she could wash her hands and bless bread and thank God for giving her food. In Auschwitz celebrating holidays, fasting. Gave emotional and spiritual strength. Most people who had faith, tried to say a prayer they remembered, were the ones who could take the suffering and overcome a lot of the hardship. People with no faith and from spoiled backgrounds were the ones from her home town who did not come back. Her mother made sure they had a job---making beds, washing dishes,---even tho they had a maid. She is grateful to her. Thankful to her parents they raised her to have faith in God. Whenever anything bad happens know to whom to turn, her God.

ROCHLITZ (phon.) CAMP, ^{in Germany} CONTINUED

Back to camp where she worked in factory and celebrated Hanukkah. One day were roaming around the camp, the group that was off work. Suddenly from far away saw a column of men marching. They were very tired and weak. Striped clothing. Screaming that the war was over. Thought they were crazy. Two or three weeks later told they were going to leave the camp and go to a new concentration camp.

GRASLITZ (~~phon.~~)

Taken to Graslitz (~~phon.~~) Not a camp, jail house. 1800 girls. Bunk beds. Very meager food. Only twice a day. German soldiers said they didn't have any more food either. Every morning were marched 2k from the jail house under supervision to a huge mountain. In a line from top to bottom of mountain. Had to take stones down mountain. If dropped stone, beaten up. Thought at least helping to build something. The next day took stones from bottom to top of mountain. Went on for days. Even if slave, if building something, have a certain satisfaction. But just to work to belittle was very bad for morale. Some girls said want to collapse. Who wants to live any more. In this camp from end of March. One day SS came in and said stand up next to bed, serious talk. Thought they were going to shoot them. Choice. Either stay in jail house and SS will not provide with

food. Or line up and march with SS. All decided had to leave that place. Thought who would provide with food. They will lock door. Iron bars on windows.

DEATH MARCH; GRASLITZ (~~phon~~) TO _____

Everybody marched out. Death march for 6 weeks. Sometimes marched 40 k a day. Sometimes slept outside on bare ground. Cold. Sometimes on top of snow. Licking snow because nothing to drink Ate grass. Sometimes in big barn. Collapsed hungry, wet, without food. Sometimes in morning she couldn't move. People lying on her, dead. Each day fewer remained. Sister said, Leave me here. Lost her shoe. Swollen leg. Pus in leg. JM very determined Put sister on her shoulder and carried her. Said we must go back. Repeated every day. Once in a while the Germans asked farmer if left over potato for pigs. That would be a feast for them. Sometimes flour. Would lick the flour. Rotten apple. Sometimes German noticed them going off the road for rotten apple, shot. If couldn't walk, shot.

One day at a farm young German soldier started talking to them. Secret. Said he a Jew. Joined SS to help you. They were shocked. Asked why do you want to find favor in our eyes. He said I will get you food. They waited. They only wanted to eat and go to sleep. He brought cooked potato that was half rotten. They ate and went to sleep. The next day went by a ditch and a bridge. Thot how nice to drink the water. They were thirsty, dirty. German soldiers said can't go down. March fast. Toward evening went past same place. Happened several times. They thought something going on. Still didn't believe end of war coming. There were 400 persons left. Esther and the two sisters were still with her. Gave strength to be together. Thought any minute would collapse and be shot or expire from nothing to drink . One of the Solomon sisters said she would sit down in the ditch. Said if they don't shoot, you join me later. No German soldier shot her. Soldiers had gone ahead of column. They went back and sat down with her. Heard shooting. Got very scared. Thought they would come back and kill them. Where could they go . Saw little forest. Went into forest, May 7, 1945. Felt starved. What will happen if no food. Looked around forest for grass, garbage. Heard a little noise. Saw a little creek. Drank. Washed face. Strated to say a little prayer. Started to cry. Heard a rooster, cow. Sister said must be close to a house. Said she was going to go. Suddenly she was able. Going to go for food. Will say a refugee. Solomon sister said would go with her. Like in Hansel and Gretel, tore from dress and tied to bushes. At edge of forest a little farm. Got mashed

potato and a little milk. Feast. Decided couldn't sleep all at the same time. Rotated 2 sleeping, 2 awake.

LIBERATION - in Germany

About 5 am heard tremendous noise. Said a prayer. Thought maybe a beast, lion, smelled human being. Suddenly huge soldier standing in front of them, screaming in Jewish language. Children, don't be scared, I am your brother. You are liberated. May 8 in the morning. Russians captured that part of Germany. They knew a group of inmates marching, they were looking for girls. Searching in forest. Said get up. Go into town. Close by. Any house you want, go in. Say Russian Occupying Army said you should be put up.

VILLAGE

Opened a gate. Priest came out and greeted them. They said, We are inmates. We are going to be here because that is what Russian army told us. He pointed to barn. They went into yard. Sat in grass. Woman who was his cook brought out mashed potato and milk. Later went to sleep in barn. Clean hay. Slept. In morning got up and sat outside. Wanted to be in fresh air. She brought bread with a little butter on it, maybe some cooked farina. About 9 in morning same Russian soldier came to check on them. He told priest, You have such a huge house and you put these girls in the barn. You sleep in the barn and put them inside. Priest became a whole different person. He realized his mission to help the refugees. He gave them a room. Beautiful cover and pillows. Had to sleep on floor because too soft, not used to it.

Three days later sister came down with high fever and the two other sisters. Had to be put in a nearby city, in a hospital Typhoid fever. JM started to gain weight, look human. Priest kind. Wanted to learn Hebrew. Asked her to become Catholic. Told him she daughter of rabbi. Promised parents that whatever happened she would remain faithful to own faith. He never bothered. Kind. Czechoslovakian agency in town. If refugee, could go to them--clothing, direction. Requested bicycle so could visit sister. Gave bicycle, scarf. Put scarf around head, neck. Woman in her began to come back, to look decent. Cook made cookies to take to hospital. How could she ride a bike. Every day on road to visit sick. Decided dangerous. Russian soldiers on road, not so nice except the one who liberated them. Sister very sick. Her mind not there. Asked doctor if could have job in hospital so could be near sister.

Jaffa Munk, October 8, 1996, continued

Tape 3 Side A

POST LIBERATION GERMANY CONTINUED

Doctor looked at her and said, You look like a skeleton. You want a job? She explained had to be near sister. He said ok, can be in hospital. There is a little porch, I will provide bed. You don't have to work unless want to cheer up sick people. He said saw in her special ability and she very cheerful type person. She said, I should be, what I've been through. I am here and I am normal. Made her a little room near sister. Sister was unconscious. JM rubbed her feet and talked to her. She came back to herself. JM went to other sick people and sang for them. Sister got better. When she released, they wanted to go back to Hungary. Hoped for brother. Maybe Father. Didn't know he perished. Was told sister too weak for trip. Given room in a kitchen Every few days back to hospital for check up for sister. JM came down with infection on body. Russian doctor without anaesthesia cut. Painful.

PRAGUE AND BUDAPEST

End of August permission to leave Germany and go to Hungary. Czech organization, the Army, gave money to purchase tickets for train. Went to capital of Czechoslovakia. There the American Jewish organization had names of people who perished. Found neither parents or brother remained. Torn. Maybe someone remained. Went from Prague to Budapest on train. Found two uncles remained. Didn't have room for them. Everyone living together. Shortage of space and maybe good will too. Painful thing. Put into orphanage. Education. People who survived right away active and organizing schooling for children. Both went to school. Sister had to be in a sanatorium for a couple of months. Typhoid fever had attacked her lungs.

In 1946 at beginning of year talking about older orphan children should go to Israel. Memories too heavy to be in Hungary. Maybe if in new country it would be easier to forget, psychologically easier transition. She didn't want to go yet because wanted school year to end. Had been deprived of education. Told since doing very well would give credit for year.

ISRAEL

In 1946 about May went with to Israel, occupied by Britains. Even

though knew what went through not eager to admit to Israel . A lot of orphans and broken people. They went on deck of boat and British boat came to greet and wanted to send to Cyprus. They begged them and said so broken . After long discussion admitted to Israel and put in a camp for three weeks. Some teachers from the Jewish agency came and they released first the young children. She put up in orphanage and went to school. Most of education in Israel. BA from Hebrew University of_____ and became certified teacher over there.

US

Continued in US in Ohio University. Came to States as exchange teacher to NY , Brooklyn, Flatbush, Yeshiva of Flatbush. Principal visited in class and asked if wanted to come to US for a while. Esther in US. Thought for 2 years not so terrible. Lasted for 38 years. Happy to be in this country.

CONCLUSION

Thankful to parents that she was able to hold out in the depth of the darkness and most difficult days due to their upbringing, and special supervision of God. Even when darkness in the world he wanted people to remain, perhaps to tell the story.

Very happy, nice family, God was very good to her.

Four lovely children and thirteen beautiful grandchildren who know what she went through and are really trying each moment to sweeten her life.

Married rabbi who was her teacher in Israel.

Married in Israel and had two children there and two in this country.

In those days Jewish people gave Jewish name, also a name accepted by country in which lived. Her Jewish name Schendi (phon.), means pretty; and Hungarian name Naomi. When she arrived in Israel people thought she not Jewish , blond. She told them her name was Naomi, in papers her official name. They said not Jewish girl. She said had Jewish name, Schindi. They said that means pretty. Why should you have that name. That name in Hebrew is Jaffa. Jaffa means pretty. In Yiddish Schindl means pretty. From now on your name is Jaffa. And from then on in papers both names Jaffa Naomi. The only name not in her papers, the name in Jewish language parents gave her, Schendi, which has been translated into Hebrew.

Father's name Philip Donath, mother Olga Donath, born Schuck.
Grandfather Rabbi Schuck, very great rabbi. Established special school.
People learned not only Bible but also trade. Believed person should have a trade. Proud of him. She thinks that is how we should be in life, combining the two. Brother was Joseph, perished. Sister Esther, alive and lives in Montreal.

Married to Rabbi Munk

End tape 3

Tape 4, Side A March 11, 1997

PRAGUE

Prague was center of information. Who survived. In Jewish Center and Temple, JM and sister, Esther, looked to see if father and brother survived. Somehow knew mother perished at very beginning in Auschwitz. Didn't find their names. Still had slight hope. Didn't want to spend any more time in Prague.

BUDAPEST-- September 1945 to May 1946

Took first opportunity, train to Budapest. At Budapest train station big trucks waiting for survivors, organized by the Joint, organization from America, Jewish organization helping refugees. Doesn't know details of name, in existence until today. Help in Diaspora in many other countries. Took to headquarters in a school for refugees who came back and had no family. As going thru Budapest noticed going past house where aunt lived and started to scream, This is the street where my aunt lives. Didn't let anybody get off. Went to place established for refugees.

After a day somebody from orphanage visited. Her name, Esther Eckstein. Today alive, lives in Israel. She was head of orphanage. Made effort to find every Jewish girl and bring to orphanage that she established in Budapest immediately after liberation and try to re-educate girls who had lost a year or some years of schooling. Took a lot of girls who arrived with that transport to Budapest and put them up in orphanage where they had regular schooling during the day. How she organized and where got money---she was a survivor herself. For many years hiding in Budapest, then to Theresienstadt. On her return her dream--as many children that survived she wanted to see them educated again. Had meager but some food. Simple headquarters for sleeping and resting and excellent teachers. In Budapest a lot of professors and teachers from the gymnasium survived.

Missing her home atmosphere. Two uncles and one aunt remained alive in Budapest. Visited aunt. Traumatic to see they lived in their own home. They had a family life. Cherished that she was with people who had the same fate. More understanding of moods, crying, not being able to cope sometimes with the daily situation. Had each other. Difficult that no mommy to discuss that monthly period did not return yet. Would be lovely to hear from a mother don't worry or lets go to a doctor. Even tho they had teachers not the same as talking with your own mother. Not as easy to

talk to them. Certain things you kept to yourself. In Budapest family life returned more or less to normal. Contrast to life they maintained in orphanage.

Have to praise three teachers. In addition to Esther Eckstein, who today is Esther Weinberg. Two other teachers, she recruited them. Both still alive, one in Brooklyn, the other in Israel. JM has contact with them. Last summer in Israel, Esther organized a get to-gether evening in honor of JM's visit to Israel. Very moving. Some very few who remained from the school came to greet JM. She in strong contact, mainly with Esther. The third one, Miriam _____less involved with the group. The majority of the girls from the orphanage are living in Israel. JM visits Israel often and is in touch. Each time interesting reminder of the era after the war. To visit as the years passing by more and more admiring their mission and undertaking and all the attention they gave them. Remembers that Esther went to a sewing lady and ordered beautiful blouse and skirt for a celebration to give back a feeling of humanity and to feel good about themselves and to look good. Very important. They had no clothing, came back from the concentration camp. Winter coat was German soldier's army coat that she shortened. Somebody helped her to change the buttons so she would feel a little bit better. Here was a woman, at the time the situation in Budapest was very difficult, under the regime of the Russian Army, people were standing for bread in the streets, clothing was a rarity. Didn't feel that outcast with their poor clothing. Yet she was doing everything to get some clothing to look more decent.

JM not personally abused by Russian soldiers but on the train used to see them seeking out nice looking girls and when the train stopped, stopping the girls from continuing their trip and grabbing them and taking them down and whatever they did with them that could be understood. Frightened to travel on train. Took a trip to Onod with aunt. Mother had hidden family pictures and silverware with a Gentile lady. Aunt wanted them to have some mementos from their parents. Traveled together. Aunt put babushka on JM so shouldn't look decent but frightened and skinny, was anyway, and very pale. Aunt was protecting her. Doesn't think she would ever travel by herself in those days. When time off from orphanage would walk to aunt's but never alone and never in evening. It wasn't too far. At aunt's when it started to get dark would head back to the orphanage. Was very cautious.

When at Onod to get mementos, former neighbor greeted friendly. When aunt said my sister whom you loved and who loved you left with you a few important items would you give it back. JM's sister in sanitorium and couldn't travel with them. She said, I am sorry I know she gave me a lot of things but the Russian Army came into the houses and took them. Looking around it didn't seem like the house was robbed by the Russian Army. Aunt said we are thirsty, would you get us some water. There were no faucets. She went out to pump some water from the well. Aunt opened up her drawer. There it was. When she came back she was white and said she really didn't know that the things remained. She said I am so happy that you did find it. We got it back and that is how JM has some pictures of her family. Very moving moment. To see her parents again. Before she thought, no cemetery and nothing to remind her of her parents and here she was seeing her beautiful father and mother and brother. Very great moment. Every time she takes out the picture she feels she is close to them. When thought of woman trying to deprive her, felt a little bit angry at her. Felt she could keep the silverware, but pictures--at least the pictures. Couldn't grasp it. Why would the Russian Army take pictures. Felt the whole world had changed. People who had been very friendly and helpful, used to shovel their snow. JM's family would help them in any kind of situation. Especially her mother who was the mid-wife of the town, Jewish or not Jewish, poor or rich. They came back and they were so cold. Hard to know. Puzzles her sometimes.

Back to Budapest. Remained in the orphanage for almost a year, from September 1945 to May 1946. Esther was in sanatorium until January 1946, joined in orphanage. Solomon sisters went back to Onod. Found their little home. Not afraid of living in the home town. One who was married found her husband, who came back. A man protecting them. Lived together. After a short time moved to Miskolc, the nearest city to Onod. There were many Jewish people who found some of the family or established family life. Some got married a couple of months after the Holocaust. Fairly dynamic Jewish life. School, temple, visiting rabbi. Even today a few families in Miskolc who came from Onod who are survivors. Still have a temple.

Orphanage was orthodox, religious home. Same type of life as brought up at home. Praying, blessing over the bread, dressed according to the code of the religion. A lot of people who survived turned away from God. Head of Yeshiva University, ____Dr. __Lamb?_____. Had an interesting discussion

with him. He said to JM, I am not surprised the ones who turned away after the Holocaust. Most surprising the ones who remained so faithful, such as JM. Many of them who completely turned away never truly recovered from the traumatic experience and slowly came back to the realization that even tho this terrible thing happened still there is God. It could be for a reason that He turned away or He left things to happen in the world. But definitely there is a God. Unfortunately many people just cannot cope with it and they have so much anger and disappointment in God that they can't turn back again. She feels very lucky that it didn't affect her and she remained the same faithful person. Pity the ones who cannot recognize the hand of God because it gives her a certain strength in her whole life, if it has to do with coping, with what she went through or her daily life today. To see a beautiful day , how all this is taking place. Yes science has to do with it but definitely above all is God. Pity the ones who can't see and recognize His presence. How to explain the Holocaust. Difficult question. All the time trying to answer to herself this puzzling question. Why it took place and why she had to lose her parents and why 6 million Jews and so many Gentiles and so many Gypsies who were innocent. The most hurting is when she thinks of the one and a half million children who were completely innocent. Even if want to blame or put any kind of pressure on people or say it came to them because they did something. But what of children--they were innocent. The only way she can explain it, it is above her human understanding. There is no explanation for it. The greatest nation, the most cultured, the most educated people were the Germans. People of science, so many good things, music. That they could go down to such a level. That they could be so cruel, such an organized way to kill so many people, it's beyond her human understanding. For her the best answer: a great sage, _____, one of the great scholars in Judaism, who said, You are allowed to search the ways of God. When there is no answer it means it is above the human ability to understand. She can cope with that answer. She doesn't buy any kind of answer that they were mad or they killed the Jews because they were rich, they took away their jobs. There is no justification whatsoever to kill so many million people in such a cruel way except this is one of the things that we don't understand. Faith helped her all the time. Has always felt the presence of God and the miracles that happened to her during the Holocaust and after. He was watching over her. All survivors have the question why me and not others. It is not always the easiest thing to live with that but have to believe there is a special reason why some of them and so few of them remain to tell the story and

to teach people be careful. When you are angry you have to calm down. A lesson for humanity, to be careful and to know how to conduct yourself, in daily life too, with your friends, with your neighbors, with your family. At least if you learn from it and better your way of life and the whole humanity is learning from it then at least it wasn't completely in vain.

TO PALESTINE

End of April 1946 in orphanage, teaching a little bit to younger children.. Mainly math. From childhood on a very good student. In home town used to teach daughter of mayor privately. Must have been 10 years old. One evening they got them in the social hall and said an organized group going to Palestine. Who would like to join. Told it was a difficult journey. Not legal. British don't want Jewish people there. Going to organize. There would be put into schools and orphan home. Appealed to them. Reminded them--hostility and abandonment and coldness and cruelty of people. How did they let all this happen. Why didn't they try to hide them , try to go against the German regime, fight for them. Were not happy to be in Europe. Wanted to get away from there. Reminded them at every turn . Reminded of when in Budapest with mother and father. In a way happy because clothing , food, friends, school, but everything reminded them of the tragedy that happened to their nation and were anxious to leave. When could go to Palestine were very happy. Prepared them that would be difficult journey, would have to go through borders, from Hungary to Romania in the night, have to hide, they were going to try to get a boat from_____, port city of Romania, and from there to Israel. They joined it. A Zionist group organized the group. Based in Budapest. They know emotionally best for the children to be away from the environment that reminded them of what took place. A new country where most of the year is spring or summer. Being more free.

ROMANIA

The group was mainly children or young people. The elderly people were sick. Very few remained except in Budapest. No elderly people came back from the concentration camp. Organized the trip . She remembers taking few items. Had to be in a truck. Went thru the border during the night. Stranded in Bucharest, capital of Romania, for about 6 weeks. In a Jewish organized home. Girls and teachers. Continued, even on the truck, learning. They thought the kids should not suffer lack of education. What they had suffered in the camps should be given back to them.. To educate and be busy with knowledge instead of too much time thinking.

Tape 4, Side B

In Bucharest took a long time to deal with the ship company. 1800 in group; most girls, others boys. Continued to learn. They tried to make life as normal as possible. Joyful when told ready to leave Europe. Had uncle in Jerusalem. He used to write to them when in Onod and describe beauty of country. In school were told a little about Israel. Understood Jews in Palestine were seeking the British to leave and a little bit of conflict. Wanted to be away from conflict and with nature and love.

BOAT TO PALESTINE

Boat waiting in port. 1800 on ship. Ship for transporting goods or animals. Singing and lectures on boat. To go to new life in different place connected with a lot of hope. After traveling one day thought all young people should go on deck. Britains did not want to let them in to Palestine. Had been on boat one week. Many sick; not JM. Esther was sick. Esther very sensitive until this day. Saw military boat, screaming to head of their boat they should go back to Europe. Each allowed to speak in loud speaker. Begging. Had lost everybody, suffered, have nobody. Want to start a new life. Went on for three or four hours. Do you have a lot of men, ammunition. They were frightened the Jewish people would be strong and oust the Britains from Palestine. After three or four hours they agreed to let them in to Palestine.

ARRIVAL IN HAIFA

Boat came to port of Haifa. Saw beautiful mountains. Very moving, emotional. Spring, end of May. Flowers blooming. The people who already lived in Israel were greeting and giving all kinds of goodies. Singing and hugging. Some people found relatives and friends. Britains did not allow to go to city. Put in camp, not concentration camp, surrounded with gate and fence, army barracks. Very emotional arrival to Israel which represented freedom, That is what we had been dreaming, but in closed camp. Brought anger because felt that did not learn from the tragedy and they were people who need comfort and love, to be in resort place and be given all that could be given and there they were again, closed in, no contact with outside world. Knew eventually they would fight for their freedom, the people who had organized the trip, Youth Going up to Israel. Lovely movement who wanted to save the children. Confidence that they would be able to help. Could move within camp. Given food. Some had

visitors. Slowly contacted uncle in Jerusalem who sent his son-in-law. He brought goodies for them and very first silk scarf. Uncle sent. Wanted them to feel human, as girls feel, beautify yourself. Cherishes to this day every new little thing. Scarf--trying to put around neck, waist. Had one nice dress and it matched--blue. Not there too long.

TO JERUSALEM

Jewish agency subsidized by money from here and Palestine demanded from Britains that young children be let out. Let out after three weeks in the camp. Gave them some tickets for bus to Jerusalem. Had been asked where do you want to go. Uncle in Jerusalem had corresponded with uncle in Budapest. They made decision that should be attending certain kind of religious school in Jerusalem.. That school had dormitory. Refugees. Kind of orphanage-dormitory. Like a school dormitory. Felt somebody making the decision, she did not have to break her head knowing what to do. Later on wished they had not made the decision for her. Perhaps she would have chosen a different school. School was more religious, too pious, too strict. She wanted to go to a lesser. It was like a church school. Very restricted code of dress and behavior. Very little freedom in the evening, home a certain time, long sleeves and long skirts. Only girls. More to the right. Learning on a high level. Wanted to further her education At beginning difficulty with language. Majority of students local, born in Israel. Refugees trained by private teachers so could cope with the rest of the students. In many things such as science, math, geography they were ahead of the Israelis. Education in Europe was on a high level in certain areas. Religious education was behind. Needed language and religious studies. Previous Hebrew lessons not very helpful for spoken Hebrew.

Girls were very outgoing. Invited by friends who tried to help them, invited to their homes. Only refugees lived in dormitory. Certain subjects took a long time to join in with the rest of the group. Felt good that ahead in other subjects. With uncle on the Sabbath, never slept over. Boarding school. Didn't like the idea. Lived in poor condition. Housing difficult. Uncle had three children in two bedroom apartment. If lived with uncle they would be sleeping in the living room. Didn't want to cause such a commotion in the house.

Went for a meal here and there. Aunt intelligent, uncle was a rabbi in Frankfurt. Always tried to tell them things a parent would. Uncle went to

Israel in 1939. Certificate from Britains. Meant was allowed citizen, to come to Palestine. They had quotas. In this country you had quotas. When she came to this country, came on a quota. Uncle to Palestine in 1939, right after Kristallnacht. Not too long in the country but established a nice life. Refreshing to talk with uncle. He told beautiful stories about their parents. Reminded them of when he had come to visit in Onod. One day took JM and Esther to a store in Jerusalem and bought pocketbook for them. He wanted to give them a feeling that they were girls, human, had a pocketbook like other girls. She has a picture of when came out of the store. Walked with pocketbook so proudly. Cherished. For years. Only gave away a couple of years ago. Couldn't part from it. So special. Gave to a girl from Poland. Now in contact with a girl whose parents are survivors. Girl is young, here to study. Brings back so many memories. She goes to a school in Silver Spring. Daughter of librarian of JM's school goes to that school. She introduced them. JM wants the girl to visit them for a weekend. Giving her the pocketbook was very meaningful. Wanted the pocketbook to be used by someone that it would be meaningful to.

School paid for by Jewish agency. When let out from camp given money for the bus to Jerusalem. Had to stop over in Tel Aviv. Lady approached and asked who are you. Told her story. Daughters of rabbi from Onod. She bought them cake and candy and chocolate and gave a small amount of money. First money they had in their pocket. She hugged and said God bless you. Wanted to know who she was. Many times repeated story. Learned from cousin that she was sister-in-law of her sister. She didn't know related. Learned from this that she likes to go places where there is a need to cheer up people, old age home, orphanage. Little but on time. Hopes she will be able for many years to cheer up people.

In Jerusalem difficulties learning at the beginning but got better. Girls invited to homes. Being in normal homes with families. Seeing not everything wiped away during the Holocaust. Gave them a lot of strength. Good meal here and there. Food in orphanage fairly meager. Ate bread, here and there a potato.. Good to be among people who were cheerful, seeing children, babies. Saw life was going on and families were together, working, learning, normal kind of life.

WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Had to go through war again in 1947, War of Independence, British were ousted. Visiting friend in Jerusalem. As going back to orphanage saw

street was empty. Heard boom, didn't see anybody . Hid. Heard someone screaming come in. Took her down to basement. Told couldn't go back because Arabs attacked them. Went thru difficult time. Arrived in 46-47. Already started with the British, with the Arabs, Independence War. Jerusalem was seized. No water. With all that suffering never gave up. Not so depressing. Didn't see the gas chamber or see the smoke. Fighting for their independence. A different kind of fear. Wasn't easy. Not to compare. Had faith in soldiers, faith in God, but difficult. Food was poor. Main problem was water. Bucket of water per family. For time being school was closed. Still in orphanage. Attacked and afraid to have children walking in streets. After a while they reopened the school.

TO TEL AVIV

She left Jerusalem during that siege. With armored car that took children to Tel Aviv. Esther by that time working in Tel Aviv. Esther had been in a school for one year, learned to sew, same dormitory. Esther couldn't go back to the books. Best thing for certain girls to be busy with hands not mind. First time separated from Esther. Once Esther learned her profession she got a job and went to Tel Aviv. After a certain age they didn't keep the girls in the dormitory.

Tape 5, Side A

Difficult to be separated from Esther. Esther older sister, substitute mother. Friends supportive. Constant touch. Jerusalem surrounded and JM couldn't leave and Esther couldn't visit. Hope but also fear. Esther initiated that JM leave Jerusalem. Soldiers were going in secret ways and they organized to unite families and each time would take a few people. Esther made the arrangement. In convoy of soldiers JM went to Tel Aviv. Made arrangements that she could continue in the same kind of school setting and in orphanage. Orphanages established all over Israel. Back to school. Esther visited daily. Earning money. Bought her a blouse, food. After in orphanage for a year they rented a room with privilege of using a kitchen. Joined together. Lived on their own.

About 1948. 16 years old. JM continued to go to school, Esther to work. Family rented out one room.. Used burner in their room to make soup, a little food. Felt again independent. Little room--no more orphans. Living normal life like other people. Friendly with people who rented the room. Intelligent. Piano teacher looking out that they come to her house. She had two young children, brother who was a teacher. JM wanted to learn English. Planned to be a teacher. Knew she would need more languages. Assumed she would live always in Israel. Living on outskirts of Tel Aviv. Went to the brother of the piano teacher for English lessons. He used to be amazed with her handwriting. JM didn't notice he was teaching because he was in love with her. He was not charging her. Not interested in that time in getting married. 16-17 years old. He wanted to take her to the theater. Felt she was a girl but he was not attractive. Did not want to be in his company. Later said he would like to go with her. He about 28. She said too young. Many years later when visited Israel, in the temple with his mother who loved JM. Understood why they invited them so much. His mother asked, Why did you not want to have him for your husband. JM did not want to tell her he not attractive to her. Wanted to get back to the things parents wanted to give them.. Difficult because did not have the means to take lessons and here was the opportunity. JM stopped the lessons. Difficult to stop because wanted to further her education. Learned a little music from other sources.

Finished high school. Not too many years after met husband. He was living by the principal of her school in Tel Aviv. Husband was living in their house, boarder. Principal said I have a lovely girl, just the girl for

you, similar kind of background. He was in Israel since '39. He came from Czechoslovakia, from the exact same city as her father, same school as her father, same type of religious background, educationally the same type. Financially middle class, a room and a bed. He was in the Army at that time. On vacation. He knew her from before, seeing her in the streets of Tel Aviv. Knew from before when attended the wedding of her teacher, Esther Eckstein. She is second cousin of her husband. Was introduced at the wedding. When on vacation from the Army came to the school, she called to the principal's office. He said had two days off from the Army. Want to take you out. She said had to ask her sister. And sister has to get married first because older. Slowly from this in a year developed a friendship and got engaged and married.

Married at 19. Still in school. Teachers Seminary. Don't have so many anymore. He still in Army. Wasn't easy life but they were very happy. Lived in one room apartment which was living room and dining room. When baby came it was baby room. They were very happy and very thankful for everything. The first baby born into family after the Holocaust. When they interviewed her for the Holocaust testimony-- this was the highlight of her life. She felt there is continuation. The nation and the people are renewing and getting back their strength. Named him after her husband's father who perished also in the Holocaust, Gabriel. While pregnant discussed--each one lost both parents and a brother. As many children as they had they wanted in that way that their name should not be forgotten. So would name the children. If a girl, after her mother and if a boy after his father. Was a boy. Girl who is now getting married named after her mother. Four children named after four parents.

The life was not easy. In Israel after married lived in one room, three families shared a kitchen. It was a three room apartment with one couple in each room. The kitchen divided and three women shared the kitchen. But a lot of happiness. A lot of positiveness. a lot of sharing and doing together and respectfulness. And tried to cheer each other. Other women were older than she. When lived with Esther, she in charge of cooking. JM in charge of ironing and cleaning. After married difficult. Once tried to make a cake. Husband said on Shabbat would be nice to have a cup of coffee and a piece of cake. JM tried to make a yeast cake. It wouldn't rise. Put dough in garbage can. Should have been hiding it more. Husband took garbage from apartment. As throwing it he saw the dough. Shabbat morning he said it would be nice to have a piece of cake but it is in the

dumpster. But slowly she did simple things. The taste came back remembering from home. She remembered how good potato soup tasted, remembered seeing her mother doing things. Certain things came back. And learned from experience. She experimented on husband. He survived. 47 years married in April.

In school after married, for a very long time. Went to teach in the outskirts of Tel Aviv. Head of Israel was Ben Gurion. He asked all the students who went to Teachers Seminar to volunteer to go out to teach because influx of immigration was so high and Israel was not prepared with enough teachers. It was counted to a certain degree as learning. Went to remote areas of Tel Aviv. First job 42 students in the class. Teaching first grade. 30 different countries the children were from. Many different languages. Not only teaching children but helping them adjust to a new life again. Later on teaching children who came from Morocco. Not yet married when helping out in the special observation center. Used to take child home to bathe. Not only teaching children but teaching the parents. They came from Morocco, from caves that they lived in. Very little knowledge of how to maintain hygiene. Used to take home children for the weekend that they should have a little better food. Got sick from one of the children. They had a lot of trouble with eye infections, glaucoma. Developed from one little child sleeping with her. Husband teases her that when she said, yes she would marry, she was not seeing well. Were pioneer years. Everybody was helping. Even tho a lot of difficulties, all together, building back a normal life. A new home for all of them. Establishing back a nation that had been destroyed. To this day when sees a pregnant woman, blesses, because means one more life is coming to this world. Have to replace the ones who were lost. Like a spring, everything comes to life. Difficult in one way, little income, hard to find a job, hard to have normal living quarters, who had a car. Walked. Never minded. All determined to try to prove to themselves, to the world all that they went through they are back to humanity and building a normal kind of a life. Gave them a lot of courage, a lot of strength and a lot of hope seeing that things are getting back to normal

Finished school 2 years after married. Teaching and going to school at the same time. Studying elementary education. Always wanted primary grades. Until this day 40 years she is teaching. Always young children. Pregnant and teaching and going to school. Continued school after had baby. Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Have BA from Hebrew University in

Education. Came to this country as exchange teachers. Husband out of the Army shortly after married, Very shortly she pregnant with first one and he was out of the Army. He went back to his profession, high school teacher, back to teaching. Subject was Talmud and Bible and Prophets. Both teachers. Came as exchange teachers. To America because sister, Esther, got married 1 1/2 years after JM married. Married rabbi from America. He was visiting in Israel. Met her, engaged, married. She had to wait for papers to join him here. He was Rabbi in Pittsburgh. She came out. Didn't see each other for a couple of years. Happy to come to the States because would see her sister. Thought came for two years. School named Yeshiva of Flatbush, one of the best Jewish day schools in this country. Had two sons then. Israeli born. Citizens of America. Able to move to New York. Saw each other almost on a daily basis. After two years wanted to return. Asked in Allentown, Pa. Knowing you as pioneer kind of people, would you extend your stay. Stayed 10 years in Allentown. Left 25 years ago. Still have people in touch with them. About 27 or 30 years ago decided to stay in US. Love Israel but thankful to this country. Good to them. Like the education that her children were acquiring here. After Europe this is a country that gives a lot of freedom. Would not go back to any country in Europe. This country is a home to her. Israel. Two places she can see herself living. Can give kids university education here much easier. If made right decision. Raised four beautiful and educated children who contribute to the country as much as the country has contributed to them. She went to Lehigh University, got Masters degree in children's literature there. Hard to jump from one place to another. They spend a lot of time in Israel. Have a little condominium in Jerusalem and as much as can. When she goes tries there to be with young children. Desire to be with children and teaching, she thinks, comes from the time in the cattle car. Crying in the night of the children. She was young but there were younger children. She tried to sing to them, remembers a lot of stories. Mama into poetry, father always reading to them or walking with them and telling stories. Used stories and calmed children and they took to her during the trip of a few days. At that time it went thru her mind that maybe one day that would be her profession. Parents had encouraged her to go into medicine. But maybe helping children would be better for her. So when came back from war--Had always been tutoring younger children and it came to her very naturally to go into it.