

This is an interview for the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. We are interviewing Eva Adam. My name is Esther Finder. Today is March 31, 1997. This is Tape 1, Side A.

Can you tell me, what is your name?

My name is Eva Hava Adam.

Was this your name at birth?

Oh, yes. Of course, I married. So this is my married name. I was Eva Hava Beer.

Could you spell that for me, please?

It is Beer in English. B-E-E-R.

When were you born?

I was born in September the 3rd, 1932.

And where were you born?

In Budapest, which is the capital of Hungary.

Is that where you grew up?

Oh, yes yes.

What was it like growing up in Budapest?

Wonderful. We were an orthodox Jewish family. We were quite well to do. We worked hard. We joined the only Jewish affairs. We never included ourself into anything else. Therefore, we were quite protected from many things that we might not be in if we would go to a different school, not a Jewish one if it wouldn't be. Always almost in Jewish company.

Did you live in a Jewish neighborhood?

Not really, no. We lived in very good neighborhood, but it wasn't Jewish. It was near the Jewish school that we all attended. And it was a very beautiful, unusual setup. So we stayed there.

Let me ask you a few questions about your family. What did your family do for a living? My father was a contractor, a painter of synagogues, of artistic works. My mother was a housewife. Also, she was the buyer for a big textile company for my grandfather and others. All my families otherwise were either music minded, or musicians, or painters of different degrees and letters.

What were your parents' names?

Beer, Adolf. Artu. My mother, Czinn, Gizella.

Did you have any brothers or sisters?

I do have a brother and a sister in Israel. And my brother, Menachem George Beer. And my sister, Sara Reuveni Beer.

Were the oldest or the youngest? Where did you fall?

I am the third, and I'm the youngest. Yes. We are coming from a very large extended family and a very close knit extended family. Till today, we feel that we are coming from there although it seems to be so sensible, much younger because of the Holocaust where we lost most everybody.

When you think about growing up in Budapest, what kinds of memories come to your mind?

Mostly nice memories, almost all nice memories. I was the youngest, as I said. And it was full of music. It was full of museums. It was hardship also because of the later years. Because of the war, my father couldn't earn as much as before.

But by and large, I know that there are people that dislike us. We did not pay that much attention to them. We were sometimes told "Jew" and something. Then I really feel that as a child I felt that I could answer back, "You are a dirty this and this if I am a dirty Jew." And it did not probably affect me the same way if I would have been taught to be quiet or not to answer. To be proud to be Jew, it was one of the absolute basis and base of life. Absolutely. During, before, and, I think, after hard times, the Holocaust. This made a big difference.

You said you came from an orthodox family. What traditions did you observe? Did your mother wear a wig? And did your father wear a yarmulke?

My father did wear a hat all the time. And my mother was in every respect an orthodox woman, except long sleeves and hair. Otherwise, we very truly belonged to the orthodox community. Those two things-- my mother said our feelings are inside, and it's not necessary always to show them.

We are as good and orthodox as anybody else. We kept extremely kosher. We never ate any of that. We didn't ring the bell on the Shabbat to come in. We used to beat on the door. We didn't tear paper for any reason. We didn't drive. We didn't. And most of the morning, we prayed. We went to the synagogue. And also Friday evening, Sabbath evening. Of course, every and any holiday obviously.

And I prayed at least three times a day, which means the morning, after meal, and in the evening. And Saturdays more. And it was a very nice life. It was a very, very demanding and very rich type of life. Yeah.

Did you have a favorite holiday growing up?

Maybe when we-- all the holidays my favorite, really. You can't help but Pesach when you clean the whole house, and then everything is new. And everything has a different fragrance, of course. And then, I love very much when we had to bring in a lot of flowers and put behind every picture and every place where we could to dress up the house for. And [HEBREW] we also had. And Purim, Hanukka, they were our favorite. Not the high holy days, they are never favorite. They always very, very frightening also. Yeah.

What did you do for fun when you were a little girl?

We lived in a world of music. We really, truly did since the age of three or four. Not only that we have learned and studied music but, well, our family played. So we were used to extremely good quality music, therefore. And we went to concerts, preferably not too expensive ones. All of us, we went to Jewish private schools where it was customary to bring in at least two or three times a year Jewish theater or children's theater, which was Jewish, by the way also, and to go outing. We did swim. We did skiing, skate. We rode bicycles, although it was bought secondhand. That's true. But we repainted it.

We were three children, but we were in the house always at least five children or more because we were in the capital city, where our cousins came to study. So they lived with us. Sometimes our other relatives also. And before the Holocaust, it was all different. People, came and they had nowhere to leave, people from Slovakia and Poland et cetera. So any good Jew was able to did have one or two people like working for him, cleaning, or doing whatever there is. So they will have the possibility to remain in Budapest and to be saved.

So you're talking about refugees from--

Yeah, but it means that they lived in the apartment. I mean, I remember times when I slept with my sister on the bed and so forth, which wasn't really a hardship. It was not considered a hardship.

When did you start taking refugees in?

But I remember. I could only tell you I remember at least two years before. I mean '41, '42, '43. My father that used to have many workers, he took always a few that they were only by name professionals. But this was the only way to keep them in Budapest. And they didn't always know Hungarian. Sometimes they did, depending where from.

Did you study a particular instrument yourself?

Oh, yes. I was a violinist as a child. And I sang. It became apparent that I could sing very good. I think even in the ghetto, I used to sing. And young people used to dance to my singing. We had no any other thing to make music.

You mentioned that you had refugees coming to your home in the '40s. But let's go back a little bit. Do you have any recollection of what was going on in Germany? Or had you heard anything when you were growing up?

Before '40s.

Before the '40s.

A lot. I've heard a lot of things when my father and others discussed, mother and so forth, the situation and the front where the fighting is going on. It was especially the Russian front. One of my uncles was murdered there where the dawn, the river dawn turns. It was a big battle. And we know for a fact that he was wounded. And he went to that station. And he was beaten to death. We know this because another relative saw him at the time. It was in '42, 1942.

We are talking about my uncle who was younger brother of my mother. Very good looking young guy. So as a child even, we liked to play with him. He was in the army, not as a soldier but as a Jewish soldier, which meant that you don't have rights. You don't have-- you cannot carry a gun. You have to do any and every work. And you are sometimes, many times not given food. And you are tortured in many ways that they are very well known, like sending you up on a tree during the winter of Russia, and making you shout out like a bird for hours, and then thrown at you some cold water until you fell off like a broken bird. And it was really fun. It was really funny for the soldiers, probably, because they did it quite a lot.

It wasn't the way that my uncle died. He was hit by a bullet in his stomach. And he crawled, and he moved toward the first aid station. And my other uncle, my other sister's husband, saw him and tried to help him. And he was beaten by the soldiers, the Hungarian soldiers. 1942.

Back in the '30s, the late '30s, to the best of your recollection, were the Jews in your community concerned about what was happening in Germany? Was there much talk about things like Kristallnacht and the invasion into Poland?

Yes, a lot. I was then-- as you know, I was born in September '32. So my recollection quite clear. But only here and there some things that I could remember. I remember every summer we went to my grandparents' home where my other uncles, aunts, and cousins lived. And we spent the whole summer together. And it was quite customary for us to be running away, laughing, and be afraid because of the Hungarian fascist was running after us. And, "I kill you, I kill you." They never even tried to catch us, really. But it happened. And we know the names. These are [? Elish ?] brothers. Where home, they run after you, and be careful.

And there were several occasions when we heard, mostly in small places where my family used to live, outlandish anti-Semitic remarks. "Jew, you are smelly" and so forth. And we heard discussions of the happenings in the late '30s, the very late '30s.

I was born on the third of September. And if you recall from maybe in history, it was 1939, 3rd of September, when everything was known already that the Germans run over Poland and so forth. So this is something that I remember very well because of course it made my birthday nonexistent in feeling and in every other way. Also before that, some talk mainly about happenings in other countries. It wasn't clear to me which countries are those.

Did your family ever think about getting out of Europe?

My family never thought about getting out of Europe. My grandfather, who was a very strong figure in the family and absolute totally loved. And maybe he was tyrannic. I don't know. But he was the person that we follow, all of us, not only children. And he called us together. And he told us we will be the last Jews that we ever leave Hungary. And we will kiss the earth if when we could come back if we have to leave.

We were not supposed to speak German or Yiddish ever. We did study German because it was part of our education. But he wouldn't allow, and he wouldn't let anybody speak the language except Hungarian in the house. And we were terribly patriotic Hungarians. We did think that we are Hungarian Israelites. We didn't think that we are Jews that happened to live in Hungary, America, [? Rostov ?] or wherever.

I know very many families like that. To be Hungarian, it was number one. And to be Jew, also number one. And we thought that this is something possible until we were told [INAUDIBLE].

Did your family have a long history in Budapest?

On my mother's side, we know eight generations of Hungarian descent. On my father's side, we know one generation, only from Poland where they came from because of reasons of anti-Semitism and also looking for a better life in Hungary.

So when you were growing up and things were happening in other parts of Europe, you had only partial knowledge of what was going on?

Yes, very limited, very limited partial knowledge. But I knew when people were gathered together and were taken out of Hungary because they came just one or two generations from Poland and other places, and they have never asked for Hungarian papers to become a Hungarian, to change their nationality to Hungarian. And therefore, they were murdered. They were sent out from Hungary.

When my father and mother got married, and my mother heard that my father actually Polish national, she said, "No, I will not marry a Pole." So they just asked for the papers. So did the whole family of my father. And they become Hungarian nationals, although my father, of course, was born in Hungary. But at the time, you had to ask for it even if you were there three or four generations. So this why we were not persecuted as Polish or other nationalities.

Jews were born in Hungary for generations that did not change their nationality. They were persecuted. They sent to [PLACE NAME] as far as I know, where they were thrown back and forth on the border, and gotten raped, and beaten up, and shot into ditches.

And we knew this because one of the boys in my brother's class and his very outstanding family, socially, financially, and intellectually, were one of those that did not change their nationalities. The boy came back because all the dead bodies fell on him. His sister was raped and cut to pieces, actually. And he came back. Somebody just felt sorry for the 16-year-old and took him back to Budapest or inside Hungary. But at the time, the Hungarian Jews said, OK, this cannot happen to us. This only happened to those that were different nationalities, although they were born in Hungary, of course.

Who did this to this boy's family? Who actually were the perpetrators?

On the border of Poland, the Polish and the Hungarian both pushed the Jews back and forth, and murdered them, and raped them, and all the terrible things happened to them.

How did things start to change for you and your family? From the late '30s into the early '40s, did you see a progression of change?

Yes, even as a child, I detected-- not only the financial picture was extremely different. All those privileges like studying in good schools and studying sport, or music, or languages were almost impossible. Food was a little bit different. And mainly the atmosphere at home, it was filled with the fear from the future and what will happen to us. And also places were thrown into the-- names of places like Madagascar, which was a place that we didn't know about anything whatsoever. And we heard that we will have to leave Hungary and live in Madagascar, where the Jews will be taken to.

All sorts of places that things happened. Generally, it was said not already. It was later, after '40, '39, '40. Already, the Polish Jews, and already the Slovakian Jews, and so forth. We also had quite a large number of people running away from those places where the Germans already arrived. Ever since '39, in September when the war actually started. But even before this, we heard about the terrible happenings in Austria and Germany itself. I remember for some reason that we heard that many people killed themselves, jumped out of the window, not wanting to live a life of deprivation and torture.

Those are the things. And I've heard terrible stories also. I don't know if it was true, but as children, one child to the other, that GÅ¶ring-- I remember as a very young girl, that GÅ¶ring caught the body of Jews that put their bare hands like a puppet. And also, other names came up, like of course Hitler. At the time, before '41, we were able to go to movies. Later, we were not allowed to. And we always saw the Germans. We always, we had seen Hitler, and the goobers, and the pictures. And we heard the way they talk about Jews and so forth.

And in the school, in the school system, we did attend Jewish schools. Except myself-- for two years, I went to a very good Christian school because of English and things that my parents wanted me to study. And one of my teachers talked about Jews in a very derogatory way. And I asked to be excused from the session. And she said, "You want to go to the bathroom?" And I said, "No, I cannot listen to this. I'm not allowed to be listen." And I was thrown out from school. They called my mother. We didn't have phones. Nobody had phones. It's not only we. Nobody had phones at the time. And so I was advised not to be sent to school because I am too sensitive for those times, which was very nice of them because they could do more harm.

But school started to be a very hard place to visit for a Jewish child unless it was a Jewish school. I was sent later to a Jewish school again. And then also, the bigger you were, the harder it fell on you because there are certain things that you were supposed to do. But I only want to talk about my own experiences. This why I am not mentioning you.

What changes started occurring? Can you walk me through some of the progression of changes? Did you see, for example, a change in the social policy, the governmental policy toward Jews? Did you experience any new anti-Semitic laws?

Obviously, I am not talking now about the last year of the war, which stands out very much in my mind. But I am talking about times before, when my father could not have his working people because he was not allowed to get big jobs. And he was certainly not allowed to have any Christian working for him. And since most of the workers were Christian, he had to let them go. Those are people that worked with him 20 years, no other job extremely well. So he couldn't even do the job. And then, he wouldn't get it.

And we couldn't have a-- where should I start? We couldn't have a radio. We couldn't listen. Of course, we personally had a very big apartment. And in one of the rooms, they put in a family of a high ranking refugee officer. Not a Jew, a Christian. And we were forever afraid that he will hear anything that we might talk about.

We had four rooms were a lot of rooms at the time in Hungary. And they took away one. They were not paying us. They lived there. And he was indeed the head of one of the divisions that from the whole Division III Jews came back. They were sent from there. We know the story, to be sent up the tree and to be doused with water. And his wife came to my mother and, on her knees, after the war to ask her. I was there. I know this for a fact. So she should come to the-- Oh,

God.

I took my mother to come to the court and to tell everybody how nicely they behaved with us when they lived in our apartment. And of course, under his tutelage, they murdered the whole division of Jews. So my mother declined. And he said although to us, you didn't do anything. But we cannot be there and say anything for you.

And if you live just in an atmosphere of shh, hush hush, don't talk, don't show, don't do anything, it was extremely frightening even up to '44, which was, of course, the very unusual year for Hungarian Jews because although during '42, '41, and all the 40s up to '44, Jews were murdered by large numbers but never in such a concentrated way. Never, never in any country. It never happened. That within six to eight weeks, actually, the Jews were wiped out. It was Eichmann that came. If we could arrive there 1944.

You're running ahead of me just a little bit.

So then, OK.

During the earlier years, before '44-- and we will get to '44-- did you have any idea what was happening to Jews in other parts of Europe?

Since we had people that were running away from Poland, and from Czechoslovakia, or Slovakia, Czechia, et cetera, or Yugoslavia, we had very clear, very clear picture of what happened. We didn't know it maybe as a whole story, but we had here and there very deep and exact pictures brought to us by people that were staying with us whom my father took in, like a worker, a whole family.

The two brothers I remember. And they told us what happened to them, that they were running away at night. And they saw that their houses burned down, and they heard the shouting of women, and children, and men. And they were young, and they don't know what happened to their parents. But they could imagine. And their sisters who did not run with them. An older brother I remember. And then about 29. And the younger brother, 17, that used to live with us. And they worked for my father. So my father was able to get some kind of papers as a working paper.

Paper. To have papers, it was a very big thing. Without, you were constantly stopped on the street. You had to identify yourself even as a very young one. If you had no papers, it was obvious that something is funny, something is strange. And you were taken under terrible circumstances to the police or police offering [INAUDIBLE]. And your life was not worth a lot under the circumstances.

When you were hearing about what was going on, did you hear specifics about things like ghettos in other countries or concentration camps in other countries? Did you hear anything like that?

No, I did not. Not me. I have never heard this. I've heard that people were heard. I've heard that people were gathered together and put somewhere. Never the name of it. Except later. Again, this is '44 when we got to a card, post cards from my cousins from Auschwitz, which we didn't know what is it and where it is. And my mother said, "Why is it that only the three girls signed and not the whole family?" then, we started to hear about names of places. And truthfully, only when we came out of the ghetto of Budapest we heard the very first time the whole story of gassing. And it was something that my father said, "Don't ever even listen. It's impossible that human beings will do such a thing."

So in your life experience, you didn't know what was going on in Europe, in other parts of Europe?

I didn't know. I didn't know names of concentration camps. I knew that people were taken away to places where they were murdered and tortured. I didn't know where did it happen.

But you knew the Jews were being killed?

Oh, yes. Just because being Jews, they were murdered. They were thrown away like just waste. I did know, yes.

Tell me about what was going on in your life in the '40s and into the big year of '44.

As I said, I was thrown out from the school because I say that I am not allowed to listen when they are talking about Jews in a derogatory manner. And I remember that I was studying mostly at home and going back to the Jewish school, which couldn't really accept many students because already everybody wanted to go to Jewish schools because it was very hard to be even in the best Christian school. Not Christian, I mean just no denomination.

And it just meant for me that I did less things. I couldn't go freely after all the things that little children or young children supposed to do. There was no money and no freedom for it. We were more even more-- not very but we were even more holding together family and Jewish friends than even before.

And of course, we couldn't participate. I was a very good gymnast. And our club-- it was a Jewish club-- couldn't perform anymore. Every year, we used to swim with other schools. And we used to race with other schools. And we were of course not allowed to do this anymore.

I have to pause now and change the tape. This is Tape 1, Side B. We are interviewing Eva Adam. And you were telling me about what it was like as things started to change in the '40s for you, and your family, and for the Jewish community. And I wanted you to continue telling me, besides the sporting opportunities that were limited because of changes, what else was happening to you and the Jewish community in those years.

Everything. We were turning very much toward each other. Youngsters that started to play in the orchestras were thrown out. So they started a Goldmark, who is a very well known Jewish Hungarian composer. A Goldmark place where the Jewish youngsters played. So we were excluded from more or less everything. And we started to develop more even our own Jewish type of whatever children do.

Of course, it's rather an unhealthy situation if you were born in a country. You speak the language. You feel that you belong. But it was accepted as part of those hard times that we hoped to get out. And we had no belief that it will happen to us. We heard all those things that happening, but it was also explained forever by the like of Kasztner and those that didn't want people to know what is going on.

I believe, I think, that the reason we didn't know names, and places, and actual stories-- only here and there pictures that we privately happened to hear-- that was there was a policy, probably, of somebody, definitely, that we should know this, how it happened. And Hungarian Jewry was so readily available to be taken. And time was not on our part because when we arrived to the situation that we could see what's happening to us, it was already very, very versed and learned by the Nazis how they did for the Russian, Polish, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia Jews. And in Hungary, it was really like only a triumph. They did it in eight weeks. They did it terrifically. They murdered, and nobody ever talked about it.

Everybody was afraid even because this was the policy, I think, of the Hungarian hate people, of those that they were really supposed to say, "Listen, this what happening to you. No matter that you keep quiet, at least know about it." No, it wasn't known. It was not known by and large, only as a story from a certain family to our family. But none that you were able to hear when in the school these young men came back from communist [INAUDIBLE]. He wasn't allowed to talk to the children. The teachers heard him, and then they told him, "Keep quiet." And he kept quiet until the second time he was taken to Auschwitz. And then, there was nobody to return from his family.

But I believe that people were supposed to let people, Jews, know what is going on in other countries, not only that we hear here and there this happened with my family, this happened in my city or my place, because Hungarian Jewry always felt as separate and different because of historical reasons. 1848, Hungary wanted to be so much free from the Hapsburg, from the German Austrian, that they wrote in every Jewish family's paper "Hungarian." And in any other country in the neighborhood, all the other countries, a Jew was a Jew. He wasn't a Russian. He wasn't a Pole. He wasn't anything, just a Jew.

In Hungarian in 1848, because Hungary wanted to become independent, they counted the Jews as Hungarians. And from this time, there was a very huge separation. Hungarian Jewry felt that they are Hungarian. And the Slovak Jewry felt that they are Hungarian, which was, of course, a big hoax and nothing else. But because of that, we were told much

less than we would've been otherwise. And I believe that if many Hungarian Jewish families did not speak the Yiddish or the German, it did come to play against us because we understood much less even when we got to Auschwitz what's going on.

So all those little things that I said about my grandfather, it has meaning. It has tremendous importance. Unfortunately, it couldn't be changed. It was too late. And be aware that your people, that they are heading the Jewish this and the Jewish that should tell you everything that happens to you in your own country today because all those things wouldn't be ever thought that could happen to the Hungarian Jewry, which are 800,000 people. And within eight weeks, they were 200,000 people.

Tell me.

I'm talking about 1944, of course.

Tell me about 1944. How did things start to change? And take me step by step.

1944, it did not start to change. The change came to a tremendous fortissimo, came to a tremendous big bang. It's not the beginning. It's what happened before that for four years. In four days it would happen or four hours. The laws from-- OK, let's start there. March, 19th of March, Sunday afternoon. We all remember just like here we remember when Kennedy was shot.

The Germans took over Hungary because Hungary wanted to get out of the war. Hungary's head person wanted to get out because he saw that this is a lost battle. 19 of March 1944, the German Army came into Budapest and other places of Hungary, took over the army places, the police stations, the railroads, whatnot. This you could see by just watching from the window of your home. You could see suddenly a lot of German soldiers with guns and with tanks-- not tanks the way we know them but they had at the time. And we all understood that this is a very, very serious and very dangerous time.

And people from this day, 19th, Sunday, of March, every day there were new laws. You lost even the semblance of your citizenship, and freedom, and any kind of protection that the country would give their own citizens. Namely, you weren't allowed to buy food. You weren't allowed to go out, only certain hours. You were supposed to make yourself stand out by wearing a 10 by 10 yellow star. You were not supposed to use any place that was run by Christians. On the other hand, you were not supposed to run any place.

In the beginning, you could buy some food and other things from Jewish stores. But they were closed down. People like my father, of course, never got a job. They had anyway taken away. Families were already broken up. Young people-- young people, I mean up to 45 and 50-- were taken out from the families, like young men.

From March the 19th to the 15th of October, the situation of the Jews deteriorated completely and tremendously. Their lives was constantly endangered. They were taken away. They were deported.

First, we were supposed to leave our homes and go to larger places if we were in a small town, then to be in a larger town, then to be even larger town in the ghetto. Then during October the 16th and till October the 16th, 80% of this concentrated Jewry that they were concentrated in larger places. In small places, there were no Jews whatsoever. They were taken to Auschwitz. And they were--

I know my family. Three of them came back. They were 36. Grandfather, grandmother, or my uncles weren't there. Excuse me. They were taken away already. And very young. 18 years old, they were taken away. So those people were mostly with young children, parents with young children, mostly mothers, grandparents or the children themselves. You couldn't find or seek people. You couldn't find amongst them people that really could fight, not neither women nor men. And if women, yes, then with smaller children than 14, 15.

What happened to you and your family? What was your experience during this time? This time, we didn't know that. We only knew this when we got the cards from Auschwitz. What happened to us, that we were taken. We were sent to a



house that is what's called the stars, house of stars, meaning that is a Jewish house. It means that you leave your home. You go to another. Specifically told you where you could go, which houses were Jewish houses. There was a Jewish big yellow star put on the house. And in every apartment, you had-- I don't know-- five, six, seven, eight families together. And you were there.

Food was scarce. The Jewish community organized some food for those houses, but there were some hours that you were allowed to go out yet. And if you know people and they knew you, so you got some bread, and this and that.

Later came October the 15th, which I mentioned several times with very good reason because the Hungarian Arrow Cross party, which was the Hungarian Nazi party, took over from the anyway pro-German and pro-Nazi police. And from that day, the 15th of October, until the end of the war for us, which for me personally was the 18th of January 1945, your life was in limbo. You were taken. In 20 minutes, you were supposed to be ready. And we were taken, myself and my family, I mean, to the ghetto. Budapest, where constantly during the time that you walked your city's beloved streets, you had your hands up.

And in 20 minutes, you really don't know. Believe me, it's a very short time to decide what is it that you need. And you never think about the things that you really need. You always take all sort of albums and whatnot. And you go, and you have no clothing. And you have no food. And you have no nothing.

And they are just telling you, "Move. Otherwise, I hit you." There were some people they hit. I was not hit. And we were taken to a concentrated square in Hungary, where we were supposed to throw all our belongings-- gold, silver, money-- in a few big, big boxes because we were told that where we're going we do not need them at all.

I have a question. You made a gesture, which obviously can't be picked up on the microphone. You said that when you walked through the beloved streets of your town, you had to walk with your hands up. And you showed me your hands up in the air like you're doing now. Can you explain that in words? What do you mean, you had to walk with your hands up?

You know when somebody holds a gun against you in a movie? Hopefully, you never experience this. This is the way you were supposed to walk through Budapest. And those were Jewish Hungarian people because they killed and they took out all those that were in there for enough generations. And this was the way we were holding up their hands in order to show that we are not going to harm anybody.

And don't forget that we didn't have our really young people with us anymore because they were taken out in different times. In Hungary, Eichmann knew very well that you leave mothers with young children because they will afraid to do anything. So they won't harm the children. You leave all their people who will either cannot or will not be able to do anything, or they will think what with the family. I am an old person. Doesn't matter. So I'll do it.

So since we didn't know for a fact where are we going, really, so we went. We just went with our hands up. In the Klauzál tér, in the square that I have mentioned, we were divided into certain groups. And we were sent, my mother, and myself, and my father that came back from the army duty just those days. Of course, not with the gun or something, just like a Jew with the star.

And my father came back because a young woman went out of her way, a Christian woman, and took him papers that he is a Swedish speaking, Swedish nationality, which was not true. But my father's brother lived in Sweden, and he sent us several of those papers, which usually didn't do much difference but it did enough difference. So he was taken out from the group that was taken to Auschwitz from Budapest. And this young woman name was Savoy's [? Dobozini. ?] So we were forever grateful to her.

And everybody else from the family was taken away. My brother, my sister, and myself, and my parents remained alive in Budapest in the ghetto. In the ghetto, we were taken from this square, Klauzál tér, to again all sort of apartments where nobody knew who lived there before. And many families in the apartment.

But you have to realize that at the time, the Second World War became very, very near to us. So we didn't have any

more air raids or maybe had the actual gun fight for Budapest, this by the Russian army. The air raids before that were some years ago and very effectively done by the Americans and the British. But at this time, 1944, we only had the fighting of the Russian Red Army that nearing Budapest. And they really had to fight from house to house.

And we were in the ghetto. There was no food. There was only lice. And there was only terror. Some 15, 16 years old youngsters came into the house. At the time, we were not in the apartments. Nobody was because of the bombs and the gunfight. We were in the bunkers below the house. And those young soldiers came in, and they took out half of the house. And they shot them to the Danube River.

And some of us also stood us against the wall with the hands up. And they said, "This one goes. This one goes. This one not goes." And they pointed to each and every one who will go out. And you didn't know why would he go out and why would you be staying behind. And then, they sent back all of them. Then, we heard they took the other building. And all of them were shot into the Danube, including the children. And things like this showed the deterioration, the complete deterioration of everything.

I didn't mention, of course, we didn't have water. We didn't have fire. We didn't have food. We didn't have electricity, God forbid. We only had the constant rattling of guns, big and small, and the possibility to be murdered. We were told that the whole ghetto will be blown up. But they didn't have time. They did blow up all the bridges, too, because the Germans found that this is more important.

The Russians fought heroically. They have freed us in the ghetto. They didn't harm us in any way, although we heard that in other places they didn't behave so chivalrously. But with us, they did.

When you were in the ghetto, was it an enclosed ghetto? Was there a fence, a wall?

There were huge fences around the ghetto. When we were taken in and the day that the ghetto was opened, they did not have the fence. They built the fence. The Jews had to build the fence. And the fence was not closed down. At least about a week, you couldn't get out to buy food. I did look rather not Jewish. And I was the one that went out to bring bread or whatever.

And I remember an old Jew asking me, "For you, it's nothing, darling. Please, please if you know God, go out and buy this medication for my wife." And I didn't want to say I am Jewish. I just took off my star. So I went out again, and I gave him the medication. But it was almost impossible already because there were no breads, not only for the ghetto, I think. I believe that they had some difficulty to find food for everybody by this time. I am talking about October, November, and December. In October, you were able to go out of the ghetto if you took a chance and they took off your star. You had a hard time to come back then.

I was caught once. And I was in a very perilous situation. And somebody went to my brother and told him he wore a Nazi Hungarian uniform. And he came to my rescue. And he started to shout at me, "What are you crying here? Go to hell." And he pushed me into the ghetto so I could go home.

And most of the youngsters, like 18 years old, or 17, or 16, like my brother and sister, they were trying to live amongst the Christian population because in the ghetto. But later it became very dangerous for them because if you are 18 years old, what are you doing not fighting against the Russians? So life was so perilous, it's incredible. The way you stayed alive, you really don't have much explanation. There was no food. And I know for a fact that for grown ups, they allotted 390 calories. And for workers, 600. And for children, growing children, 900.

I wanted to ask you who was guarding the ghetto.

Nobody. The Jews were guarding the ghetto. I remember I was sent to guard duty in the building where we lived. And I was standing-- I was 11 years old. I was at least 27 kilograms. I was standing inside the closed gate door. And of course there were bombings. And the door fell in and fell on me. But I don't believe that anybody ever was guarding the ghetto because everybody could come in. If you have any kind of gun and you say, "Let me in, you Jew," you don't let him, then he shoots you. So what difference does it make?

There was no guard in the ghetto. No expect, no thought that somebody wants to guard you. The Hungarians wanted to kill you as much as the Germans if they were Nazis. There was no difference. Those that took the people out to the Danube and killed them, and murdered them, and shot them, they were Hungarian officers and Hungarian 15, 16, 17 years old that were put into uniform or not put in uniform. But they had the Arrow Cross armband and the hat, which many Jewish young men used in order to save Jews.

There were many instances on the Danube actually were Jewish boys came in with the Hungarian logos and armbands. And "I need five Jews to kill in the other side. We have only 20. Give me." And he took them away, and he sent them to houses where they were more or less protected.

There were many instances where even we-- I remember we prepared papers. I told you that the identification papers were very important things for some reason, up to a certain time. There were some days that nothing helped, of course, some time. And identification papers were supposed to be old papers. I remember myself sitting on a small Ottoman and, with a hairbrush, trying to make the paper look very old. And my father who drew very nicely, and he was really an artist, was able to make out any kind of identification papers. So we manufactured them. And my brother, and sister, and other youngsters. Later, I've learned that they are from a Zionist party or something. But at the time, I didn't know. We just did it, and we tried to supply everybody with as many papers.

Some other people did it, too. It wasn't such an, I think, unusual situation. I know my brother and sister, they were living amongst Christians with papers like this, like they have some kind of work. Or people earlier that worked for my father, this is the way they got their papers, all important identity papers.

Of course, the day that the Jewish women of Budapest were taken out-- they were from Budapest, from Hungary-- there were no more enough trains. They were mostly bombed down, and Hungary didn't have enough trains. So they were taken. It was called the Death March. They were taken by walk to Vienna, toward Vienna. And of course, 80% of them never arrived. They were shot on the road, and they were killed in all sort of ways. Of course, no food and no any human possibilities.

In the ghetto itself, it was hellish. I tried. I understand today that I tried not to see what I see. I saw all the bodies lined up. It was January. It was December. So it was minus 30, something cold. And 30 Celsius, not Fahrenheit. And the bodies were just like pieces of fire food lined up high. And you saw children in the snow and people in the snow. And you just tried to walk. And the big difference between me and others was that I was with my own parents.

And in the very last few days, my sister and brother came to the ghetto because outside it was just impossible for them. And we put them in the basement in a bed behind the coal. And because even as Christians they weren't supposed to be there. They were supposed to be fighting the Russians or some kind of other enemies.

So life was really no life. And the day we were freed, it is a day that will never leave me. I will always remember because it is a very, very huge human experience. People coming down. You can't move already a week at least. You don't eat. You don't anything. You just stare. Your father also. And foreign soldiers coming, and picking you up, and saying, "No, no, nyet," and tearing off your star, putting you out under the little sun in December. There is not on January 18th not much. And bringing you some kind of little fruits. Or suddenly, you pick up your head, and you see all those soldiers with the fur hats and with the Kalashnikov. They are using their Kalashnikovs to break down the walls of the ghetto.

I tell you for romantic and sentimental value, there is nothing like memories of anybody that comes to your rescue. You ask me who was standing posted the ghetto? Nobody. Nobody wanted to save Jews. The Jews didn't have right, a right to save themselves. There was no such a kind of idea.

So there was nobody guarding them. So Jews could not get out. Is that what you're trying to tell me?

Nobody got out. They are out. They are out. There is maybe a dead horse. And a friend of ours who was also a child ran out and cut a piece of meat from the horse, and brought it back, and tried to feed his sister. She was about five years old.

And she was already dead. He didn't notice because he was seven years old.

So the situation was such that it's almost impossible as much as you try to say, to tell, to conjure up, it's almost-- you don't really want to, maybe, because also everything must be explained by such different terms. Dirt is not dirt. Dirt means that lice is moving in somebody's hair and clothing that you see the constant movement. What do you mean, dirt or no dirt? There is no water in the whole city for how long. There is no hot water. No wait.

I remember myself like a maniac. I was ironing-- ironing, would you believe?-- my white kerchief because this was the only thing probably in my life that was white, and clean, and ironed. Iron. How did I iron? You don't even ask me. We had a piece of some kind of material. And I heated it up in the coals. And it wasn't an iron. We didn't have this kind of iron anymore, but something. And it was so important for me that my kerchief will be ironed. It didn't matter that I had millions of lice and all sorts of bodily problems. Of course, I had. I had [? folliculitis. ?] I had rheumatism really very bad. And I was underfed like hell. And I should have been in sunshine.

You were telling me about the conditions and the idea, the concept of what is dirty.

Also, there is a concept, what is food, what is dirty, what is to change clothing, what is to be able to wash yourself. It is not Auschwitz, but this is the ghetto of Budapest, where there is no any kind of heating. It is December. It is November. It is January, where the times itself are very hard and very cold. It's huge snow.

No shoes, no. You can't go and buy a pair of anything, You have a sweater or you don't have a sweater. You have a coat or you don't have a coat. This what you have. You will not have. There are no shops, not for Jews at all. And not in any time. Everybody else has allotment of bread, or clothing, of shoes. Jews do not have such luxuries. Of course, you do not have any kind of transportation. And if there is any kind, you are not allowed to use it. Of course, you're not allowed to go to the movies.

I don't even-- it never occurred to me, but for years we were not allowed to have a radio or any kind of understanding, global understanding of what even you could hear which will be distorted. But at least you hear the distorted. Since from the Hungarian Jewish elite, you didn't hear anything because their belief was the best will be if we know anything because then somehow we will survive.

But for us, it was a very, very terrible time. Of course, since I was with my parents and this what made the whole difference. Nevertheless, I had lice. And they tried to clean it. There was no way. And you see the people on the street. Their hair is just like a huge, huge forest. And you come closer, and you see the huge amount of infestation.

I have to stop and change tape.