

George Pick

Tape 1 Side A

November 13, 1997

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Abstract

George Steven Pick was born Jorge in Budapest, Hungary on March 28, 1934. He was a single child in a family that had a long history living in Hungary. His family was assimilated but at age six George entered a Jewish elementary school. He completed the fourth grade when the school closed due to German occupation in 1944. George would hear Hitler's speeches on the radio and they frightened him. His father lost his lumber company in 1939 according to the laws against Jews at that time. In order to do some business, he was able to give a stipend to the super who obtained a license and became his partner. His father was sent to a work brigade in 1940 for a short time and then again in 1943 for a short time. Two relatives died in such a brigade in 1942. Relatives from nearby countries escaped over the border to Hungary where they were hidden by relatives. George's uncle in New York offered to adopt him and a Romanian friend offered to take him to a safer area but his parents refused. In March 1943 the Germans occupied Budapest and the Jews had to start wearing a Jewish star. Eichmann ordered all the prominent men including George's uncle to an internment camp and then for gassing at Auschwitz. Then the Jews in the surrounding area were put into ghettos. With the next order, George's family had to turn in their radio, bicycle and jewelry. In June 1943 his family was ordered to move to a special Jewish house and only bring some clothes and their beds.

Part two starts when George Pick's family gets orders via their newspaper to move out of their home. They chose to move to his grandmother's home, a Jewish star home, a few blocks away. George and his mother move into a room with his grandmother so it is crowded. The super is very helpful though he accepts bribes. It is a stressful time for George as he has no playmates and they frequently must use the air-raid shelter in the basement. There was a carpet bombing which left many dead bodies and craters nearby though their house was not hit. Horthy returns to Budapest and stops the deportations. George's father occasionally came home from his work brigade due to a kind commander. On October 15th, Horthy declared Hungary to be neutral and the Jews ripped off their stars but soon the extreme group, the Arrow cross, take over and arrested Horthy. Jewish women 18 to 40 were ordered on a death march. George's father was ordered to take a train to Germany but escaped to an army uniform factory run by the resistance and soon George and his mother join him. The Gestapo caught them and the other Jews in the factory and, except for the resistance organizer, let the Jews go for a \$10,000 bribe. George and the other children are placed in a Red Cross house but they have no food so George runs back to the factory. George's family moves to the Ghetto where his father works as a policeman to get a double ration for the family. The Russians were nearby so the War was ending but they were all starving causing death to the elderly. Even those who had been in Wallenberg's safe houses

came to the Ghetto as they were starving. This part ends with a young soldier notifying them that the Ghetto will be blown up.

Part three begins January 16, 1945 when George and his family are warned that the Nazis will blow up the Ghetto. They are liberated by the Russians the next day and decide to return home in their weakened condition by walking the 2 and ½ miles while trying to evade the shrapnel. Their apartment was occupied so they moved into a basement. Soon the schools reopened but George had to walk the 3 and ½ miles accompanied by his mother each day. Later the streetcars started running so life was easier. Their uncle in the US offered them a home but George's father refuses. Their super is helpful as he saved them food and the father's business materials. George runs away from the first Zionist camp he attends but enjoys a second camp. At 13 he has a Bar Mitzvah with a luncheon celebration. By the time that George graduated high school in 1952 the school had lost many students, and taught little Judaism as Communism had taken over. George had fallen in love but the love was not reciprocated and he gets sick. Soon he meets Judith, an old friend, who is four years older. She gets pregnant and is forced to get an abortion as George is too young to get married. Then he falls in love with Erica and they stay together. George's father dies just before college graduation but George succeeds in getting his degree in mechanical engineering. He participates in demonstrating against the Russians and decides to leave the country. He and Erica take trains and hike to Austria where they are helped by the JOINT (Jewish International Aid) and George's uncle to immigrate to the US.

Part four starts with George's arrival in the US with his fiancée. His uncle gets them jobs in a small town of New Jersey where Hungarians have settled. George and his uncle do not get along as the uncle has converted and keeps his Jewish background secret. George leaves by himself to study English at Temple University in Philadelphia and soon breaks up with his fiancée. Next he starts studying engineering at Drexel but leaves to earn money so his mother can come to the US. For seven years he teaches mechanical engineering at Catholic University and is enrolled in their graduate program. In '62 he obtains an MA and gets married but shortly divorces. His mother arrived in '58 and George lived with her until '64. In '62 he got his citizenship and obtained a passport and went to Europe for two months which he enjoyed. In '64 he married a Jewish girl, Toby Yaslav (?) In '66 George started working for the Navy and was located at the David Taylor Basin for 11 years. After six years of marriage, he divorced his wife as she wanted children and he did not. He enjoyed his job for NATO from 1988 to 1994 and then retired. Letitia (?), a Mexican, helped him care for his sick mother for 18 months until she died in May 1991. George married Letitia (?) in '92. He started volunteering at the Holocaust Museum in '92 shortly before it was opening. George has been active at the Museum by giving speeches on the Holocaust and his own experiences, attending conferences at the Museum, giving tours and, also, reads about the Holocaust. He feels that survivors give a special meaning to visitors' experiences and that appropriate teacher training on anti-Semitism should be given to Christian teachers who teach Christian students. Also, George believes in having exhibits that focus on the Holocaust rather than on Nazism and in having exhibits on missing topics such as French and Hungarian Jews.

Summary

00:00 George Steven Pick was born Jorge (?) Steven Pick. George is the English version of Jorge (?). He was born in Budapest, Hungary on March 28, 1934. His family history intersected with the history of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. They lived in Hungary at least 200 years. George had a large family. He did some genealogy research and found 250 family members in the Empire. When the Empire broke up after World War I, his family remained in the same geographic location but became members of three countries: Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Austria and a few relatives in Romania. They are a closely knit family. On his father's side, one great-grandfather was a physician and the other imported fruit and spice. On his mother's side, one great-grandfather worked in a lumber yard and the other was a lawyer. His mother's grandfather was a mechanical engineer in a factory and her grandmother was a housewife. His father's grandfather directed a lumber company. George's father was a mechanical engineer and his mother was a secretary. He was an only child. His father's name was Ishtwan (?) or Steven and his mother's name was Margit (?) or Margaret. Her maiden name was Kornhauser (?) and her mother's maiden name was Spitzer. His grandmother on his mother's side was Argonfeld (?).

05:00. George's father worked a short time as a mechanical engineer when he lost his job in January, 1939. George was born in Buda and lived there, on the other side of the Danube, until he was six or seven and then moved to Pest. Buda had a nice hilly section. They lived near a square and his mother took him to the hill and the square so he remembers it well. They were not religious and they did not live in a Jewish neighborhood. They had a Jewish neighbor when they lived in Pest. George's family was assimilated. They observed the High Holidays. On his father's side, a number of relatives married non-Jews. They did not observe any religion and a few converted. He hardly knew that he was Jewish until he was six. At four or five, his mother took him to a Jewish high school, a gymnasium, for physical activities. The teacher was Jewish. There was a Catholic church on the corner and his mother permitted him to enter when he requested it. He was six years old when he entered a Jewish elementary school. The reality of his Jewishness hit him when his father lost his job. His parents and grandparents spoke German so he would not understand. George was taught German in kindergarten. Hungarian was the main language. His parents were not Zionist. His uncle had immigrated to the US in the late 30s and wanted them to follow him in 1940. Hungary was neutral until 1941 so they could leave. His uncle was a physician and took out papers and sent affidavits but his father did not want to start all over again. His uncle had warned the father that he would be a tradesman, not an engineer and his father did not want to step down.

- 10:00 In 1940 the uncle offered to adopt George but his mother would not let him go so he was stuck in Hungary. George has vivid memories of Hitler speaking in 1938 as his speeches were broadcast on the radio. He recalls the speeches were frightening as Hitler was screaming. He told his parents that Hitler was frightening in the way he spoke. The Prime Minister was anti-Semitic and also spoke in a frightening manner. George was precocious and aware of political figures such as Churchill, Roosevelt and Hitler. When asked in Kindergarten the name of the President, George responded correctly. In May 1939, the second Jewish laws were announced and his father lost his job and those considered non-trustworthy and Communists were inducted into labor groups. In September 1940 George's father was inducted into a labor brigade and sent to Carpathian (?) to build roads. His uncle was also sent to this area which was part of Hungary. After they lost their jobs, the Jews had to figure out how to get around their loss. They hired Christians to take out a business license and work under him. They asked the super in their building to obtain a license and he worked under George's father.
- 15:00 His father gave him a stipend and they continued the business. It was not a formal business. His father went to a coffee house and arranged for business with Jews and non-Jews. His father sold scrap iron and had Jewish and non-Jewish partners to make a living from 1940 with inductions until 1944. They had non-Jewish friends. George's grandparents had a little bungalow with a small yard about 20 miles away which George's family and other relatives used. In 1940 George and his mother used it for a month and his father visited. He played with the peasant children nearby. Girdalo (?) lived in the village and a friendly Serbian couple lived next door. Next door at home there lived an Army officer who had two daughters who were very friendly. If George was not at home, he was at their house. They had a Christmas gift waiting under their tree for him. One of the daughters was George's age. Another friendly neighbor had a daughter his age and they all played together with no mention of his being Jewish. There were anti-Semites in the building. There was one incident. A teacher disliked George and it was mutual. The teacher did not like his response and slapped his face.
- 20:00 George's parents had never slapped him and he was upset. The teacher apologized a few days later. He was a member of the Hungarian Nazi party, a warden, enthusiastic about the War in 1941 and, possibly, a Nationalist. George's father lost his job many times during the depression and found something to do to make a living as he was ingenious. George did not feel threatened economically. He was frightened by Hitler and the Prime Minister of Hungary as both their voices were threatening. George always felt closer to his mother than to his father. His father was cold, not cuddly, did not mention love and did not take him to places. George's parents disagreed on how to bring him up. His father wanted to make a man out of him. He thought that George was too soft and that his mother spoiled him. There was always a distant relationship between George and his father. He did not meet his father's physical demands. His uncle was a European

gymnastic champion. He was the Hungarian champion seven times and went to Olympics in LA and Stockholm. George could not compete with him. His father had been active when younger but not when he reached the 40s. George's father was a great skier and mountain climber and he could not follow in his footsteps.

25:00 His parents lived in Buda with the maternal grandparents when they married as could not afford to live on their own. Their finances improved in the 30s and they moved to a lower middle class neighborhood. In 1940 they moved to an upper middle class neighborhood in Pest which was considered the suburbs. George started school in September, 1940. He attended the Jewish Boys Orphanage which was co-ed and, also, for children with parents. There were 30 boys and girls. It was considered a good school and his parents felt he should be aware of his Jewishness. Children he met there became lifelong friends as he is still friendly with those who immigrated to the US. He recalls his teacher, Magda, a young woman who was nice. George's mother walked him to school every day. It was a half hour walk. George would wake up late and his mother did not want to wake him early so she held his hand and they ran through the city to school. His uncle Gustav lived in Vienna and after the Anschluss he was arrested and taken to Dachau. He was let out after one and one-half years and escaped over the border to Hungary and became an illegal alien. Cousins, aunts and uncles got together at George's paternal grandparents' home and Uncle Gustav told them stories of his life at the concentration camp.

30:00 He was a multi-millionaire but did not survive and no one inherited his houses. George's mother had relatives in Bratislava (?) who slipped across the Danube in 1942 and lived in Hungary as illegal refugees. From 1942 to 1944 they hid. Every night they slept somewhere else. About once a week they slept in George's house and his grandma was nervous as their papers were worthless. He was aware they were illegal. They told about the ghetto, that people hid in the forest and that some were taken away but they could not believe that this could happen to them. Their Uncle Louie who converted to Catholicism got false papers for them and for others which sent him to jail for six months. There were 10,000 illegal Jews and others in Hungary. Hungary permitted them to stay but not to work so they depended on their families and others for charity. In 1943 reality set in when his father was inducted again. In 1940 he had been taken to Carpathian (?). This time he was taken to Kluge (?), Transylvania which was part of the occupied territory of Hungary. He fixed roads and the family visited him as they had relatives living there.

35:00 His commander was humane. The men were able to organized groups. Those who were wealthy paid into a fund to get furloughs and helped the poorer workers. The commander did not permit the lower officers to hit Jews. His father was deactivated the summer of '43. They had a tradition of never going to the railway station to say good-bye but do it at home as it was a traumatic experience. He put his good shoes in his knapsack. It was

traumatic as they did not know if they would ever see each other again. A month later the family found out that the father was in Transylvania. **Tape 1, Side B.** In June 1942 50,000 Jewish men from 18 years old to 40 were inducted into the Hungarian slave labor and taken to the Ukraine. Three of his uncles were inducted; luckily, George's father was one year too old for induction. There were 300,000 Army personnel. There was an offense in the middle of the winter on the Darin (?) River with the Soviets. They wiped out 50,000 men in the Army and 200,000 Jews including Bondic Kornhauser and Henry Pick who died. Two other relatives survived: Lazlo Kornhauser and Lazlo Pick. Many friends did not return.

40:00 In late '42 they found out that the German government asked the Hungarian government to implement the final solution and they refused. The Jews were relieved and believed that the Hungarian government would not let them go. They were not informed as to what was happening to other European Jews. They listened to the BBC and knew about the War. His father had a map with red and white pins showing where the offensives were. A Hungarian-speaking Colonel who was a war correspondent on BBC reported this information but none about concentration camps, labor camps or what happened to the Jews. In 1943 a breakthrough occurred and all felt sad in Hungary that so many Jews were killed. His father would speak about the War operations with the next door Army officer. Hungary was a Nazi ally. The officer could denounce the father who tried to convince the officer that Germany was losing the War. When the Jewish brigade came home from Ukraine, they learned that the Orthodox Hasidim in the brigade had their beards shaved and forced to eat pork by Drexler, their commander. Drexler was frightened after the War for the statements that he made and that they could denounce him.

45:00 When his father was deactivated in 1943, they took a one week vacation in a luxury hotel. There was only one hotel opened to Jews. It was also open to Army officers. It was a beautiful summer and George enjoyed it. He took a walk in the woods with his mother and they saw a large gang of Villach (?) holding a rally and yelling and screaming. They wore a Nazi uniform and frightened them. It was an illegal group and the leader was in jail but they organized and met in the mountains. George knew they existed but this was the first contact he had of them. It was frightening as he understood what the uniform stood for. He saw propaganda leaflets and photographs all over the city. George was aware of the uniform with an armband with red and white stripes and a green arrow cross in the middle. They were yelling nationalistic and racial slogans, "Death to the Jews." At age 9, he knew that they were not friends. His mother was frightened and they left and did not speak of it. George hoped the War was turning and they would survive. From 1942 to 1943, George was still attending school. At the end of '43, beginning of '44, his mother thought that he was old enough to learn culture and music. He took lessons with the neighbor woman who was a violin teacher. It resulted in his love of

music. In '43 his mother decided to buy a season ticket to music and opera performances. The Jewish performers had been thrown out in '41. They went to performances at the small culture hall in Pesh called the Goldmark in memory of the composer.

50:00 The best musicians were thrown out so they organized a new company. It was vibrant and they had daily performances. The first opera he saw was Rossini's Moses and he saw Faust. They had tickets to every other Sunday's performance. They had tickets to "The Queen of Sheba" at the Goldmark for March 9th to celebrate his birthday on March 28th. The Germans entered early on March 9th so the performance was canceled. Tanks came in and the "Tigers" were the largest. They rumbled through their street which led to the center of town. The street was wide enough for tanks. In 1946 the Russian tanks came along their street. George was frightened as he did not know what would happen. The radio kept announcing units' orders and codes for Hungarian divisions informing them which city they should head for. There was confusion and disbelief that it was happening. The Germans arrived because the Russians had pushed themselves West and the Germans retreated. The Hungarian government was discussing peace with the British. In three days a new government was sworn in a new Prime Minister who had been Ambassador to Berlin.

55:00 He was a German who did not speak good Hungarian. He was an ethnic German, a Schwab (?) who lived on the West side. The new government was extreme Nazi. Horthy was still head of the government and had been out of the country so he returned. The Germans came at that time because he was absent. Eichmann also came. George's mother's uncle, a prominent lawyer who still practiced law because he was a World War I hero and exempt from the laws regarding Jews was a good friend of the German Ambassador, Yajov (?). Paul Kornhauser's son lost and he was Germanized. He was a prominent Jew and active in the Jewish community and was warned to go into hiding but he did not. Eichmann summoned prominent Jewish leaders and sent them to internment camps. George's uncle wore his dress uniform and demanded an exemption but he and the other outstanding leaders were sent to Auschwitz and died. George had to wear the yellow star on his 10th birthday. It was not easy to accept as now everyone would know that he was different. It was a huge sign on his coat, easy to see what George was and he did not know who his enemies were. He was not unhappy that he was Jewish. He had studied Bible and Hebrew in elementary school and was conscious that he was Jewish.

60:00 He was proud to be Jewish but would have preferred not to be a Jew going to a slaughter house. That same day his father was inducted along with others 18 to 60 but his grandparents and his mother and George stayed behind. Newspapers informed them how big the star should be and what material and that it should be lemon yellow. He remembers cutting out the stars on their dining room table and counting how many they would need on outer and inner garments. It was worn over the heart on the left side. His father left and they did not hear from him for a month. There were rumors that Jews in

the countryside were put into ghettos. There were about 100 relatives in the countryside. His mother had a family friend who lived in Romania and in April 1944 she came to Budapest and said that things are calming in Romania. He wanted to take George to safety but his mother refused. They never heard from him again. There were always new rules and regulations announced on the radio. They had to submit radios, jewelry, bicycles, and telephones so they were cut off from the world. They did not know what was happening in the world. It was most difficult to submit their radio as it was a lifeline.

65:00 He talked to the children at school about children's matters. Two weeks after they got the Jewish star, school ended for Jewish children so he only completed 4th grade. He was told to come in October to register for high school, gymnasium, but that turned out to be impossible timing. They heard announcements about 20 to 30 times a day from loudspeakers and read of them in newspapers. The announcements and search for food kept them busy. During the first bombing in Budapest, George lived with his aunt whose husband had been inducted into labor camp in the Ukraine. Their small house was hit and his father went to see them. They were in the basement and all were fine except Aunt Elizabeth was hit in the face and was bleeding. His grandparents were fine and they all went home. In their building an Ethnic German doctor in the SS was visiting his sister and mother and George's parents asked him to give first aid to the aunt. The doctor yelled, "You dirty Jew, you think I will help you; you will die like your brother and your sister did very soon" and he slammed the door. George was shocked. He had known the mother and sister for years. It was tragic that he killed 20 Jews in experiments. His mother and sister survived and remained there. George wrote their names down. It was before his father was taken away.

70:00 Every day there were pages of new order that affected them would put them into a panic. Then they got orders to move to a special Jewish house. His father never thought of getting a baptismal certificate. His mother thought of it and his father said she could do it. George and his went to the convent to visit the white sisters who gave Jews lesson in Catholicism. They only took two lessons. George did not comprehend them nor did the lessons bother him. The Sisters were kind. Converting did not help the situation. His uncle converted as he believed in it in the 30s and attended church every Sunday but he was inducted as both parents were Jewish. The only thing different was that his uncle wore a white armband when he went to Auschwitz and was gassed. Though his father seldom attended synagogue, he refused to convert. The family moved at the end of June and could only take a few clothes and their bed.

75:00

George Pick

Tape 2 Side A

November 13, 1997

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- 00:00 George explains that on June 17, 1944 they were given a deadline of a few days to move out of their home. The family moved in with the grandma and her youngest sister who lived about two or three blocks away. They received the order in the newspaper which indicated what houses are available to move into. They had several relatives on Columbus Street which was a side street. They lived on Elizabeth Street. It took a few trips to move into two rooms. They were three people in one room. The grandma's sister and brother moved into the second room. A single woman was the 7th person and she lived in the maid's room. They took their beds so were wall-to-wall beds. They had to sit on a sofa bed to eat. They heard rumors that things were happening in the countryside. The house had a large yellow star so people knew that Jews lived there. One apartment was occupied by Mr. Vargas (?), the super, a Christian who was a decent fellow who helped save their lives. There were a few teenagers older than George. Every day they had to go down to the air raid shelter. George was always worried about the air raids since his aunt was hurt in April. On July 2, 1944 Mr. Vargas (?) took him upstairs to the street level to see how beautiful the hundreds of huge airplanes looked that covered the sky.
- 05:00. Then they went downstairs to the air raid shelter to sit quietly for 10 minutes. Then George heard a whistling crash and everyone screamed and his mother placed his head against her bosom and covered his ears. A few seconds later was another blast like an earthquake. They saw a brilliant light around the steel wall. They sat in total darkness for three hours. There were four more close hits and then they went back up. They lived in a 3-story apartment building. One hundred yards behind them was a 6-story Jewish apartment building with a yellow star. It was hit and only the firewall was left standing and everyone was dead. Across the street had been a private house and now was a huge crater with body parts. On the right were four tennis courts but now was a crater. The vacant lot on the left was also a crater. Four huge bombs hit nearby and George, even now, can still smell the death and smoking. Everything was black and the sky was purple. Some people thought that this was the end of the War and the British were coming and they'll be free. It was the first carpet bombing and 30% of Budapest was bombed. People said the bombing was because the Jews kept their lights on. They would be accused of spying and punished by death if they kept the lights on. It was the first time that George saw dead bodies. A Jewish pharmacist had poisoned himself and George saw him taken away on a stretcher with his yellow hands hanging down. The bodies were bloody.
- 10:00 George was severely frightened. Twice a day there was bombing by the Allies; those from the West in the morning and the Russians in the evening. His mother put a pillow over his head during the bombings. It took him 30 years for George to sleep without a pillow over his head. Even now he jumps if there is an unexpected loud noise. 3,000

Gendarmes came to deport the Jews. On July 1st, most of the Jews from the countryside were deported. Later they got news that their 150 relatives who were living there were dead. The Nazis wanted them to have a coup to get rid of Horthy. The Gendarmes arrived to get rid of the Jews and Horthy. There were a few Army officers ready to follow orders. One unit was willing to come to Budapest to counter the coup. By July 2nd, they took positions. By July 7th, the Gendarmes were leaving and Horthy declared the deportations would stop which saved their lives. Then a miracle happened as Eichmann left. He was frustrated by inaction and knew the front was not doing well. The Nazis knew that the Hungarian government was negotiating with the Western Allies and Russia. They replaced the government with a government of Army officers who were less extreme.

- 15:00 George never saw Eichmann but he saw Horthy when he was young. Horthy was a handsome older man who rode a white horse every August 20th, the national holiday for St. Stephen. Stephen was the first king of Hungary. His right hand was preserved and it became an icon of Hungary. They took it around in a procession in the late 30s. In 1930 a huge Catholic Congress was held in Budapest and the future pope (Pius XII) came. The pope was with Horthy and that was the second time George saw him. George did not consider Horthy a hero nor a villain. Horthy had a Jewish friend, Goldberger (?). It was rumored that Goldberger's (?) blond wife was Jewish. They had a son, older than George, who married a countess who was pro-Jewish. She worked for the anti-Nazi resistance. The people did not know they were saved at that point. Horthy changed the government and things were easier for the Jews. Before the Jews just had one or two hours to go out to shop and now they were given more hours. George played with toys and he sat next to his mother when she played cards with the relatives. Every day they played a game whereby there was the alphabet on a board and they put their hands on an upside down water glass. A ghost would come and push it to spell out answers to their questions.
- 20:00 They often asked whether there was going to be an air raid that evening. The adults tolerated having George around. He tried to be a fly on the wall. He was not happy or active. He mostly read. Jules Verne was his favorite author and George enjoyed, "20,000 Leagues under the Sea." He liked adventure stories. The summer went fast and his father's unit returned from the western part of Hungary where he built fortifications. The commander's fiancée was Jewish and lived in their building. The commander did not pay attention when one-half the prisoners left for the night and returned in the morning. His father often took a chance and came home after curfew and Mr. Vargas (?) let him in. George was happy to see his father a few times a week. The Russians were fighting but the Romanians were out of the War. The Jews felt the War would end soon as the Russians were nearby. October 15 was a tumultuous and important day. Horthy declared Hungary to be neutral; he threw in the towel; it was unreal. Everyone ran into the street

and tore off their yellow stars. Some people were yelling that they were premature and would not survive. In a couple of hours, the coup was over and the extreme Nazis, the Arrow cross took over. George heard this on Mr. Vargas' radio. Burgos, an extreme Nazi was coming to take over command of the troops. Horthy was arrested and Saleshy (?) became head of the government. On the 15th, all the Jewish women, age 18 to 40, were ordered to come to the soccer field. Elizabeth who was 29 with a baby and Yolie (?) who was 38 with a ten-year-old reported. George's mother was too old to go. There were 10,000 young women at the field and those with children were excused.

25:00 Yolie went home but Elizabeth was tired and remained and went on the death march. She got to Ravensbrück and died upon arrival. She gave her baby to Uncle Lazlo Pick who was not Jewish. His wife was thin and skinny and walked 800 miles to Ukraine and returned. They were to be deported in September but took a rucksack and hid in a closet three months with the baby (Susan) and survived. In November George's father came home for a 24-hour furlough and the next morning he had to take a train to Germany. His father did not want to do that so planned to go to stay at his grandfather's ruined building with a friend. He left on November 6th and they heard nothing. On November 22nd, an Army man came to see George's mother with a note that indicated they should follow the soldier immediately. His mother was reluctant to leave her mother but did so and went to the factory building on Chango (?) Street. The textile factory served as a camouflage for Jewish men in hiding. Hungarian army uniforms were made there. George's father was upset that they brought nothing so demanded they return home immediately and get their belongings. It was just a half hour before curfew.

30:00 George's mother was concerned about the family photographs. She placed them in a small bag (which George still has) along with a little food. The house was raided by two teenage Nazis with machine guns. One was 13 and the other was 16 or 17 years old. They rampaged everything and broke everything. They stomped on his mother's bag and left after curfew. His mother begged Mr. Vargas (?) to let them out and gave him some money. It was the end of November so by 6 PM it was quite dark. When they got to the factory, George's father was relieved to see them. His father had expected to hide with Garguz (?) but he got killed. He went to Gegich (?), a Christian, for help who gave him the factory address and a note to submit to its commanding officer. The Army commander was Jewish and his father's friend. He played the role of a polished Army commander and told them that 65 men who escaped deportation were there. Then they started bringing in families to the factory. For three months George's father's overcoat served as their blanket. The next day the Arrow cross took everything from their home to the brickyard. Mr. Vargas knew the grandmother's brother lived in a Swedish safe house run by Wallenberg. He ran to Bayle Spitzer and told him that the three sisters and a daughter were in the brick factory and he took them to a safe house.

- 35:00 The others were deported by foot and no one returned. All this was found out after the War. There were 130 people in the factory including children and young women. He found out that there were five or six Jews in Nazi uniforms who went to deportation trains and roads to fetch people back for interrogation. They obtained over 50 people this way, mostly young woman on their way to death. There were 22 children with some younger than himself. There was great camaraderie among them. He had lots of friends for the first time in a long time. The factory had machines they could explore. His friend, John Fortie (?), loved machines. There was a shed with a horse and its hay and a lorry. A young man in resistance told them there was a car under the hay used to rescue people. **Tape 2, Side B.** They got permission to go into the car. It was a Scooter (?) model of the 1930s and to start it there was a steel rod in front. They were told it was a machine gun rather than a starter. George and his friend believed this fib. On December 2nd there was a loud knock on the door and they heard running steps. The rooms on the 2nd floor were camouflaged as work rooms. There was insufficient room to sleep on the floor so they built 3-story high barracks and brought hay to use as their mattress.
- 40:00 There were 100 Army uniforms they used as blankets. George slept in a middle bunk with his parents. Below was a 2 or 3-year-old girl Arnchee (?) who made her grandpa mad. Nearby was Cotto Fada (?), 23 and married. She was friendly and patient. George would discuss his reading with her. His parents did not mind the friendship but she was interested in Bundy (?), a refugee who escaped from deportation. On November 30th Bundy (?) got a high fever and was delirious. The committee who ran the factory did not know what to do. Bundy (?) could die without medical help. They got a Christian doctor to come late at night. He gave Bundy (?) sulfa for his infection and he recovered. The next day was December 2nd and they heard running steps. They saw five men with machine guns who were yelling that they know there are dirty Jews hiding there. They were the Hungarian Gestapo. They put the men on one side of the room and the women and children on the other. One man jumped out of the window to another building and crashed into a glass enclosure into a hay stack.
- 45:00 The Gestapo ran after him and captured him. About 20 or 30 minutes later the detective came out and said, "Henceforth we are under their protection." They arrested Cornish (?), the leader and organizer of the group. They took him and \$10,000 cash as there were rich people in hiding in the factory and left. After the War, they found out the Gestapo tortured Cornish (?) for two days as they knew there were other places that he ran. There were three other places. A friend of Cornish's betrayed him. The Gestapo knew where three places were but not the fourth. It was a factory in Budapest with 350 Jewish slave laborers. They were armed and their mission was to save the utility companies of Budapest. They would be the last ones to stay to blow up gas and electric companies but their true mission was to save them. Every day they trained as soldiers and at night they forged papers in the basement. They were part of the Jewish resistance and Cornish (?)

was in charge. Cornish did not tell about them when he was tortured for two days. When he did not show up, they escaped. Cornish was sentenced to death and taken to the Danube but escaped and hid and got sick but survived the War. Two places were raided and the Nazis gathered insufficient money from the Jews so were deported. One group went on foot to Germany and died and another group went to political headquarters and 70 were shot into the Danube.

50:00 George's group were the only ones to survive. Those six months to 11 years old and the mother of the six-month-old were taken on a lorry with a soldier to a protected building so they would be fed. There were 300 to 400 children there all crying and dirty with about six adults. The Red Cross had 30 buildings. The Swiss and the Swedes rented 32 buildings. His grandma and aunts were in the safe building. The Red Cross was protected by the Swiss. The adults were to get food for the children but the building was empty. George was placed with his friend in a room with 35 children and no food and slept on the floor. He met a friend and his sister from school. His friend, Mike Dermash (?) just arrived and thought of escaping as there was no food. A young girl saw him crying and he told her he was hungry and lonely for his mother. Her boy friend wore a Nazi uniform and said he would take him back but he was afraid that the boy would betray him. He decided to escape with his friend John Fortie (?). The building was locked from the inside. The next morning they asked a lady to take them out to buy food and they ran away from her. They did not want to return to their parents with the Nazis. They did not wear yellow stars.

55:00 They ducked around the Nazis and pretended to read newspapers. They took three streetcars and returned to George's mother. They found out that the Nazis raided the building and took everyone to the Danube. All were shot except for Michel (?) who escaped. A few days later two policemen said the detective sent them to inform them they are under suspicion by the Nazis who live in the area. They will be reported and should go to the Ghetto which was established at the end of November. People from the Yellow Star houses were taken there. By the middle of December, Budapest was almost completely surrounded by Russian troops so the Nazis decided to put all the Jews in a ghetto in the middle of the town. The ghetto was established on December 14th. Of 150 people, 65 arrived in the ghetto. His father decided that they had nowhere else to hide so moved there. The ghetto was in the area with a square that had a market and the Nazis gathered the Jews there and said they would be shot if they hid any jewelry on them. They were shown a dead body. They threw their jewelry into the sewer rather than give it to the Nazis. Twenty people including George and his mother were taken to the side of the square to a building that housed the remnant of the Old Age Jewish Home. The first two stories were filled with people. They got two rooms on the 3rd floor which were dirty and had no food. The next day his father found an old piece of bread with bugs and they toasted it and ate it.

- 60:00 His father looked at the ghetto situation area that was originally for 12,000 people but now had 40,000 and soon 70,000 at its peak so was very crowded. George did not feel like a child as such experiences age you. When he walked on the street with his mother, he saw people all broken down. He still had a parent-child relationship. His father would not break down so was his hero and was very brave. His father looked for a possibility to help. One idea was to join the Ghetto police. It was different from the police in the Lodz and Warsaw Ghettos. Their mission was defensive to persuade or fight off Nazis who come into the ghetto. All they had was a night stick, a Swiss beret and an armband that said in Hungarian, German and Russian, "Ghetto Police" and ID cards. His father found a hard hat in the basement that firefighters wore and he wore it which saved his life.
- 65:00 George's father joined the Ghetto police as they were given double rations and he wanted them for the family. He patrolled 14 hours a day. Many policemen died as the Nazis had machine guns. A few evenings later they heard a treacherous noise. A shell had been shot into the room next door and all the people died. George got hysterical. Cotto (?), George's mother and George moved to the basement which was a woodmaker's shop. They slept on the work benches. Two days later was Christmas. An all-out siege of Budapest began. The food supply was catastrophic. There were six old battle-hardened Jewish slave laborers from 1941 in their building. They were religious Hassid praying all day. Some would not risk their lives to get food a block away. His father volunteered but they needed more for the food supply and some people got hurt. Food was precarious. There was no water, gas or electricity. They had 8 foot high windows and cans of floor wax. They used George's shoe lace as a wick for light. His father seldom came home. His parents were in good shape. Sanitary conditions were horrible as they dug a latrine in the middle of the room. They used old bed sheets and a piece of wood to lean against. The stench was unbearable. Everyone had lice on their body. They raided the apartments upstairs and got doors to sleep on. He used his father's overcoat. There was little water to clean oneself every two or three weeks. The more educated people seemed to give up and the less educated tried to keep clean. The old people starved to death.
- 70:00 They would find them dead in the morning. Some men dragged the dead out of the building and put them on the pile of dead bodies in the square. It was hard to see people he knew the day before, dead the next morning. There was a lull in the fighting. George looked at the hill of bodies and thought they all would be dead like them on the hill. They were all weak by January. On the 4th of January a group of young ladies were brought in from Wallenberg's houses. Wallenberg could not protect anyone anymore as the houses were raided by the Nazis. It was the first time he heard the name, "Wallenberg" from these young ladies. George knew that Wallenberg, the Swedes, and the Swiss tried to save people. They all had schutzpass whether forged or real. They were given out by Jewish organizations for payment. They had a Swiss passport which

was free but useless. He never had a chance to show his passport. His parents did not try to get into the safe houses. His grandma and her sister were helped by Wallenberg to get into a safe house.

75:00 There were no telephones so no communication between people in different houses or with the outside world. Those from the Wallenberg Houses were better fed but very frightened. They squeezed in the young ladies from Wallenberg's houses but soon the elderly died and it was less of a squeeze. On December 10th a young soldier came and told them that the ghetto is mined and they won't survive. They would not permit the Jews to survive so would blow up the ghetto before the Russians arrive. George did not know if the soldier's story was false or not.

76:00

George Pick

Tape 3 Side A

November 13, 1997

RG-50.106*0084.01.04

00:00 A young soldier had warned the Jews in the Budapest Ghetto that the Ghetto was going to be blown up. George found out later that the real plan was more sinister. The Nazis were planning to massacre the Jews on January 16th. 500 SS along with the Hungarian police and Hungarian Nazis were planning to line up the Jews and mow them down. Luckily, Wallenberg found out about the plan and on the 15th sent a note to the SS General that if it happened, the General would be hung. The General was middle-aged and afraid for his life and canceled the action, thus saving their lives. There was an eight-year-old girl named Alice living in the building who was fragile and weak and whose mother and grandmother were diabetic. Sometimes they were playmates. Alice came to them and begged for food for her mother who was in diabetic shock. George's family took a small quantity of sugar cubes when they left the Jewish Star Home which they saved for George so refused to give her any. George's father came home on the 17th and it was unusually quiet the next day as there was no sound of artillery or bombing. Someone climbed up to look out the slit window in the basement and saw strange Russian boots. They realized that they were liberated. They were not elated and did not say anything as they feared the Nazis would return.

05:00 For the next 48 years of her life, George's mother felt guilty as Alice's mother and grandmother died. The young people did not say anything about liberation. At noon George's parents decided to leave but they were too weak to carry the suitcase holding the sugar cubes and photographs so George carried it. George's father was 43 years old but

looked like 70. His father had lost three of his partners in the labor camp. George and his parents walked out of the ghetto though there were few walkways as half the buildings had fallen on the street. They heard shrapnel over their head as the siege of Budapest was still going on. It took them three hours to get home. In June 1944 they had been thrown out by the Nazis. On the two and one-half mile walk they saw dead bodies, dead horses and a Russian singing who was probably drunk. They looked at the Russian as if he was crazy but, perhaps, he was the only sane person. Shrapnel hit the buildings and walls fell down in front of them. They walked through the city park and were stopped by the Russians who demanded they break up the ice on the sidewalk. They were given an ice pick but when they saw that George's father could not lift it, they gave the family a loaf of bread. The square loaf was the first loaf of bread that they had seen in a month. They were released and stumbled on home. The first person they saw upon reaching home was the super, Mr. Dudak (?). He gave George's father papers so he could work and returned the green suitcase full of canned food that he had saved for them. The rest of the tenants looked at them as ghosts because of their bad conscience. One tenant, Mr. Brexler (?), a Nazi had boasted of cutting off the beards of Hasid's and giving them pork to eat. The tenants thought they would be denounced to the Russians but George and his parents were too tired and too sick to do anything.

10:00 George's maternal grandmother returned from the Ghetto. She was born in Slovakia so spoke Russian. The Russians had raped some women earlier. Since the grandma spoke Russian, they were friendly to her. On January 18th, the family slept in another basement in a different area of Budapest as the siege was still on. Buda was attacked by the Nazis but Pest was liberated. George's family tried to get food and his father got a rucksack and scrounged around for frozen potatoes as their suitcase of canned foods would only last a few weeks. George's parents and grandma weighed 90 pounds as there was little food. There were no utilities and they got water from the ice. George was the healthiest member of the family as he was given any available food. He was stronger than his parents and bounced back quickly. They tried to find another apartment. Buda was liberated at the end of February. Their old apartment was used by another family. Some apartments had been burned but theirs was in good shape. The law was such that if someone occupied an apartment for a certain amount of time, they became the owners. The Circus (?) family who lived next door went to the West and the older daughter died. The father was a soldier and was liberated and returned and disappeared. Most of the old neighbors remained.

15:00 Of 20 apartments, 15 were the original owners. The schools reopened in March and George was enrolled in the Jewish High School located in the Rabbinic Seminary as their original building was not returned. They thought that when schools reopened, life would restart. The streetcars did not start to run yet and they lived 3 and ½ miles away from the school. George's mother walked him every morning and waited for him and walked him

back. Therefore, the teachers all knew his mother. He attended the Boys Gymnasium. There was also a Girls Gymnasium. There were 72 students in his class. There were friendly faces from elementary school. The orphans did not return as the orphanage was raided and 10 orphans and their teachers were taken to the Danube and shot. It was an empty building with no equipment. From March to June 1945 the teachers trickled back. The streetcars started up and life began again. In early June they received a telegram from the US from the uncle who wanted to adopt him. They were found through the Red Cross and the uncle was happy that they survived. The uncle notified them he had a son in '44 and wanted them to write back and get immigration papers. George's father decided against it as thought Hungary was a good country with a Democracy and he was starting his business. Surviving Jews joined the Communists but his parents joined the Social Democrats. Some of the Jews were out for revenge and joined the police search for Nazis. There was a People's Court and many Nazis were imprisoned.

20:00 George's family found some of their furniture with neighbors. It took them a long time to feel liberated. On May 1, 1945 the Social Democrats held a huge demonstration of political struggle for power. Most of the Communist leaders were Jewish. The rich Jews saw they would not be retained. His parents were not rich and his father felt he would secure an engineer position. His super, Dudek (?), saved some of George's father's business materials and gave him half the finances to start up the business in the building. Mr. Dudek (?) did not do well but George's father was successful. He dealt with the same people as before the War. There was a period of inflation and good possibilities ended in 1947. The Joint in the US sent them food and clothing. The summer of '46 George went to a camp run by the Joint and the Zionists but it was not a Zionist camp. Some teachers were Social Zionists and some were Orthodox. There was animosity between the teachers and the students. The teachers would hit the Orthodox students on their head because they wore a hat. George could not understand why one Jew would hit another Jew for such a reason. There was fighting between the different types of Zionists. The orphans moved out of the Zionist camps and lived independently like adults. George was fortunate that he had parents but he was still a child and jealous that the orphans could do anything they wanted.

25:00 George had become a child again and was expected to behave accordingly. If he questioned authority, he was told that life went on and the newspaper and school recommended that one should not dwell on the Holocaust. George should be concerned about his homework and exams. He was told to join groups so joined the Boy Scouts but it was abandoned so he joined the Young Pioneers. At the Zionist camp, they spoke 4 languages – Hebrew, Latin, English and German. He was not good at languages. He told his Hebrew teacher that he was going to the Zionist camp but he ran away after a week so his father was upset with him. George was still a mother's boy at 12. Camp was hard as they were given little food except for split pea soup like in the Ghetto. Most of his

friends were not his age. The girls were 16 to 18 so were older than him. He tried to strike up a conversation with them. Next door lived Miriam, age 16, who was not Jewish and told him the facts of life. He would have an interesting conversation about literature with Marisa (?), age 18, who was studious. All the girls had boyfriends and he would imagine that he was their surrogate boyfriend.

30:00 George's social life started then. He joined the Young Pioneers and the Young Workers who were three to four years older and not Jewish. Once he fought with them and they said, "Dirty Jew" and chased him out. He realized two years after the War that they were the same as before so doubted that he should stay in Hungary. In 1947 they had elections and the Communists were fourth so the government was Democratic. There was a Boys Orphanage and a Girls Orphanage in Budapest. The Girls Orphanage was nearby and had a synagogue where he had his Bar Mitzvah in 1947. Rabbi Schwartz instructed him and they had a lunch to which they invited Communist children three years older, his literary friend, a few close friends and two orphan girls. The children ate in one room and the adults in another. For his gift, his parents gave him a Hungarian book about the Jewish Middle Ages by Cecil Roth but it was too hard for him at that time. He read it later and still owns it. A friend attacked him in school after the Bar Mitzvah and broke his shin bones so he missed two or three weeks of classes. He was in a cast for six weeks and his parents decided to send him to a real camp run by a Jewish wrestling champion. It was a sports camp and most of the children were Jewish. He was there for three weeks and liked it. He learned to bike, swim and dance. He got friendly with the owner's daughter, Judith who was 18 years old. She was engaged to a wrestler. They lost touch and he met her again five years later.

35:00 George enjoyed his schooling especially studying history. Paul Pach (?) was both his history and homeroom teacher. Later he became the Historian for Hungary. He was the Director of a statistical survey by the Joint. In August 1944 there were 400 Jews in Budapest. All the Budapest buildings were looked into and they found 68,000 names including George's family which were written in a book. Paul Pach (?) was his teacher for four years and he felt that he was a brilliant teacher. Mr. Pach (?) became a full professor at age 28 at the Economic University, later became Dean and then Director. He changed his viewpoint to Marxist and became the authority on their beliefs. In 1948 he taught one class in the Jewish High School. Three of his students became famous historians. One from the Academy of Science went to UCLA and, another, Rankee (?) became an authority on the Hungarian Holocaust. **Tape 3, Side B.** Rankee (?) was not a Communist which jeopardized his career. Pach (?) helped him as he was a great human being and helped others in their careers. George is thankful that Pach (?) taught him to love history and George wanted it as his profession but it is just his hobby. In 1948 Pach (?) and other teachers left. In Passover 1948 there were many Zionist camps. His class of 38 was down to 13 students. Many went to Israel and remained there.

- 40:00 George's class combined with another class. The 72 students were down to 30 when they combined. George became interested in acting and participated in 3-act plays. His father wanted to help the school as they lost labs so raised money by asking famous actors to perform for no payment. Famous singers, both Jewish and non-Jewish, performed and they made sufficient money for a physics and a biology lab in 1951. George's father was head of the PTA and his mother was also involved. George attended the school from 1948 to 1952 despite terrorists and the worsening situation. The school became a separate island with a dichotomy where they shared what was needed. The Communists and the Imperial camps spoke about the Voice of America comments. Teachers spoke on Marxism but did not believe in it. They taught Yiddish instead of Russian. The teachers knew that no one believed in Marxism. The tightening of the government and the loss of rights brought back memories. People who were deported before were deported again as Capitalist were deported to the countryside and had their homes taken away. After 1948 the Communists took power and realized it was too late so outwardly waited for the May and November celebrations and spoke about the BBC.
- 45:00 The students tried to study Jewish history, though it was illegal. They felt more Jewish. For the first three years after the War, instead of Saturday classes they went to Synagogue. George did not like it but became conscious of Judaism. The Communists took over and the Gymnasium's Synagogue was closed. It had a spark as the Jews could trust each other except for a few people. In 1950 a letter was drafted by a teacher and a student demanding the government nationalize the school. They tried to intimidate both the students and the teachers. They held a PTA meeting and everyone was upset. They commented that the letter writers were cowards and an embarrassment as they were Communists. From 200 students, the school was down to 45 registering for the next school term. The teacher who wrote the letter became a principal at another school. The Junior High 6th grade only had 13 students. They became more Jewish but could not discuss Jewish things though they sabotaged teaching of the Russian language. They realized that their island was ending and that is what happened when George graduated in 1952.
- 50:00 The students felt that no one would be accepted at a university graduating from a Jewish Gymnasium but 11 (including George) of 13 were accepted. It was done to show the world that there was religious freedom in Hungary. He was one of 1200 students in a huge theatre and a minority. This did not make a difference but who his parents were made a difference. His father was in the middle as he was an intellectual professional and worked for another person. George's colleagues were different. There were 150 Jews and they drifted to each other. There were sub-specialties in mechanical engineering such as ship building. George was in Naval Architecture where he was the only Jew of 30 students. The non-Jews' culture was different and they were not qualified so they struggled with the material. The students did not know elementary algebra and

they were studying calculus and got scholarships. George fell in love at age 18 just before graduation from high school. It was February 1952 and he was broken hearted that his feelings were not reciprocated. He felt sick and was hospitalized for mononucleosis for a month before graduation. Walking on the street in April he saw Judith again who he knew five years earlier at camp. She was graduating from college and later became a singer.

55:00 It was a romance between an 18 year old and a 22 year old so his parents were unhappy as thought he should concentrate on his studies. He finished school in May followed by six weeks of study and an oral exam. They were given the questions and needed to know the answers. Though he was mostly interested in Judith, he studied a little. Both their parents worked so their apartments were empty and it was his first real romance. Judith was a woman at 22 but did not know how to handle it and became pregnant. George argued with his father as he wanted to marry her but he was a minor and his father would not give permission so Judith had an abortion. His mother wrote a letter to Judith explaining that she understood the situation but that George was too young and starting school and she had a long time to get over it. Judith married someone else and had children. George attended school and a year later had another girl friend, Erica, who was his age.

60:00 It was a temptuous relationship with Erica from 1952 to 1956. His circle of friends went to the opera and the theatre to keep up the culture but Bolshevik Hungary did not. The Jews kept their humanity. Times were hard and George worked hard to pay for college tuition. For three summers he worked one month in industry and one month in the Army. The climate changed. His father got sick and died from a cerebral hemorrhage due to his chain smoking. It happened the end of March during George's final exam and, at 22, he could not handle it. His friend was an ordained Rabbi and told him to pull himself together. The family was not close knit as his parents had drifted apart and George had drifted apart from his father. He was still close to his mother but not to his cousin. His maternal grandmother had died. His paternal grandparents held Sunday gatherings but after George turned 18, he did not attend as he felt strange there. Erica had her sister and mother and thought of getting married so they got engaged in August and planned to marry in October '56. George completed his last exam on October 22 and the student body held a meeting which lasted until 3 AM the next morning. The students declared Hungary to be independent and that the Russians should leave.

65:00 The next day they decided to have a demonstration and got permission to go to Parliament Square and they went home and the shooting started. George returned a week later and participated in the skirmishes which included shooting. This did not help. On November 22nd the Russians came in with tanks which stopped the fighting after two weeks. The tanks went on the same route as the Germans tanks rode earlier. George realized that it was history repeating itself. Again, like in '44, they went down to the

basement. Downtown Budapest was once again demolished like in '45. He listened to "Free Europe" and "Voice of America" on the radio. George was in his basement listening to messages that people went to Austria but not Australia. He did not want to make another mistake. He told a friend and Erica to meet him the next morning at the Southern Railway Station. He rode his bicycle to the train. They planned to get to a border town but did not succeed. There was chaos as there was no central government and Russia occupied part of the country. The train had no schedule and some people left. The train was packed with 1,000 people.

70:00 Most wanted to cross the western border. They were told it was dangerous to keep maps so they did not have any. They wore overcoats and sewed jewelry in the pockets but did not know who to bribe. George was 22 and felt that he made decisions during the War to save his life so was not going to stay as people knew he participated in the fighting. It felt like the right time to leave as he completed his education. The train stopped in a small town about 25 miles from the border. The next morning they got into a cattle car which stopped and they walked two days to the border where there was fighting. George gave his friend and his fiancée their money back as found a man who could help them return and get Erica's parents to leave. They hid behind haystacks. Beyond that were the Russians and the Communist Hungarians. In front of that there was one-quarter mile of cleared land with watch towers behind them.

75:00 George knew there was a chance that he would be shot from the watch towers or step on a mine. They cursed in Hungarian and George ran with his fiancée and in two minutes was in no-man's land. Then he saw the Austrian flag and five minutes later an Austrian patrol stopped them. At the first town, Eisenstadt (?) all the border police defected and the Joint took them to a hotel in Linz (?). where Simon Wiesenthal was in charge. Hungarian non-Jews were placed in a camp. For three weeks the JOINT fed them and paid for their hotel. Recruiters came from Canada and the US and were interested in helping him when they found out he was an engineer and had an uncle in the US. On December 19th they flew into New York. It was a 30-hour flight through Iceland, Scotland and Labrador as there were no jet planes so he was exhausted. The night before they went to Salzburg and had to return to Linz (?) so they were many hours on the bus before the flight. The day before they visited Mauthausen as an inoculation against wanting to return.

George Pick

Tape 4 Side A

November 13, 1997

RG-50.106*0084.04.04

- 00:00 Once George left Hungary, he and his mother were in daily phone contact. The day before they left for the US, he, his fiancée and his friend visited Mauthausen to inoculate themselves against homesickness. It was on top of a hill with a beautiful view but unspeakable horrors occurred there. They got a sense of the events. He recalls the red houses. George heard stories from his surviving friends and relatives including his uncles who were interned there. This visit cured him of homesickness for 38 years. The next morning they took a bus to Salzburg and returned to Linz (?). They only had a week notice that they were leaving for the US. George had thought they would meet his mother in Salzburg but it did not work out as his mother did not trust the peasant enough to go with him. Since his mother was unable to meet him, George told her to remain in Budapest. They left December 19, 1956 and arrived in New York the next day. The following day he saw his uncle who had a strange viewpoint. He wanted them to leave the Jews and go with him but George would not part from his fiancée. Finally, the fiancée was permitted to go with him and they both traveled to Water, New Jersey which was a small town of Hungarians. Some had lived there since the '20s and '30s and others came after the War; most were Nazis. His uncle was a physician and had converted. He wanted to keep his Jewish origins a secret so he and George did not get along. George had said kaddish for his father every day but there was no synagogue in the town. His uncle got jobs for both George and his fiancée.
- 05:00 His fiancée worked as a chemist and he was a helper in a factory. His father's yahzeit (anniversary of his death) was in March so George went to the next town that had a synagogue to say kaddish. He met the uncle's friend who knew them and told the uncle that he was there. The uncle was furious and felt they should have attended a synagogue 100 miles away. The uncle wrote an angry letter to George's mother but left off the address so it was given to the Hungarian priest. The priest returned the letter to the uncle who almost killed George and told him that he would end up in the gallows. George obtained a scholarship to study English at Temple University in March 1957. Three and one-half months later he left for Philadelphia for a year and his fiancée remained with the uncle. George and his fiancée broke up and she moved to New York where she got married. George broke up with his uncle. In August '57 his mother got a visa for Israel but only got as far as Italy. George sent his uncle money which he sent to George's mother. George obtained a position as Jr. Engineer with Westinghouse for four months and received a scholarship to study engineering at Drexel until March 1958.
- 10:00 George's mother decided to come to the US but the uncle would not help her so George quit school and went to New York. Friends helped him get a job and he met a Russian princess who helped him get a job in DC. The princess was a cousin of the last Czar and liked George. She called O'Boyle, the Chancellor of Catholic University of America where George got an interview and was hired as an instructor and enrolled in graduate school. He remained seven years and taught mechanical engineering. He became an

assistant professor and received his MA in '62. He got married and they divorced nine months later. His mother arrived in '58 and he lived with her until '64. His mother only worked a little to get social security. His experience at Catholic University was not good and felt the university was backward in theology. They did not tolerate him as he was divorced. He worked part-time at Catholic University. Then he obtained a research job in a small firm. In '62 he got his citizenship and obtained a passport and went to Europe for two months. This was the first time that he returned since '56 and it was fabulous vacationing and discovering Western Europe. He sailed on the USS France. Later he met Toby Yaslav (?) who was Jewish and became his wife in '64. Coincidentally, she had been on the same ship when he went to Europe. In '66 George worked for the Navy. He still needed a thesis for his PhD and the university did not have a lab. Then he worked for the David Taylor Basin for 11 years in high energy gas dynamics and wrote his thesis. He finished his courses but lost his minor and did not take the orals. George wrote over 50 papers at the David Taylor Basin.

15:00 After six years of marriage he divorced his wife as she wanted children and he did not. They underwent three years of therapy and he did not change his mind. George thought that he would not be a competent father and was ambivalent about his own father although he liked him. They underwent another three years of therapy and divorced in New York. He went to Israel for the first time in '70 when they separated. It was the first time that he felt that he was home but did not want to live there although he had friends there. He visited Israel two more times. He traveled a lot during the 20 years that he was single. Every year he went abroad. In '77 he got a promotion to work in Virginia. George had two more jobs with the Navy. He was on a laser project and became Manager of a high tech multi-national project from 1988 to 1994 in the NATO office. This time he was in the majority as everyone had an accent. He developed a vertical missile. After the project ended, the group had little money so he retired. His mother got sick in the early '90s. They had lived apart and she moved back and he cared for her for 18 months. It was the happiest of her life as they were together. His mother had heart failure on her 90th birthday and she died in May 1991. George met Letitia (?), a Mexican. When his mother got sick his American friend did not help him with his mother but this Mexican friend helped. He felt kinship and love with her and they married in '92.

20:00 Letitia (?) works in the Mexican Embassy and they are still happy. Now George works at the Holocaust Museum as a volunteer. Through friends who provided some funds for the museum, he learned about the Museum before it was built. George saw an ad in the Washington Jewish Week in '92 for a meeting on L Street. He thought he could help in the library by translating Hungarian to English. He did that for a month and took a course to work in the Visitors section. George felt that as a survivor he felt responsible to be associated with the Holocaust Museum. In the mid-80s he became aware that people started speaking of the Holocaust. It was a taboo subject for many years. From 1956 to

1986 there were few books on the Holocaust. At first George felt that he was not a survivor but later he found out that he was a child survivor. Then he became more interested in the Holocaust and started to speak to groups. From '92 to '93 he was a volunteer and wanted to educate the public. The Museum was a vehicle for him and he wanted to start working. He completed the Learning Center Specialist course and the course for Student and Teacher Guides. In '95 he became associated with speakers groups and in '96 he spoke to the Army, Synagogues and Churches and Schools.

- 25:00 Some talks were different as he mostly talked about his own life. He spoke to Lee High School in Silver Spring about the relevancy of the Holocaust to today's world. He feels desperate to preserve the Holocaust's memory so he writes and publishes. In '93 he published a collection of stories with other Hungarians. Now he is writing a longer autobiography on his life. His work in the Museum induced him to learn. He thought that 10 to 15 years of reading about the Holocaust gave him a lot of knowledge but now he has read a couple of hundred books and took museum courses so he learned more. He has attended about 50 one or two day conferences. They made him conscious of many things. Most people seem disinterested that groups were discriminated against or killed. The message is that one must be involved to prevent mass genocides. He believes that survivors bring new insights so orientates groups. He indicates that he is a survivor and everyone looks at him as this is the only link to the Holocaust they have. George brings survivors to the Museum and encourages others to visit.
- 30:00 Older Hungarian survivors give a considerable amount of money to the Museum and those who are not wealthy give their time. He tried to influence his friends to volunteer but few have chosen to do so. Often those who suffered in camps are not willing to speak out or face the horrors they went through. He encourages those who are capable to talk and give testimony. There is a close knit relationship between the Museum survivors who speak among themselves. The group meets every two months. Martin Goldman encourages their interaction. George is concerned of the direction that the Museum takes. George believes that Jewish aspects should be emphasized though it is a government institution. The Museum's main mission should be preserved; that is, to explain the Holocaust. He sees the emphasis is on becoming less Jewish. The exhibit on the Nazi Olympics was costly and he did not feel it had a direct relationship to the Holocaust as it was a Nazi event. The Kovno Ghetto exhibit has a more direct relationship. Regarding the exhibit, "The Faces of Bosnia," George sympathized with their genocide but it served to get away from the Holocaust, the Museum's main mission.
- 35:00 The Museum should mention the Jews' contribution to European art and science before Hitler became in power. They had 1,000 years of contribution. There were more than six million deaths. George made a list of 20 or 30 ideas in a memo he sent in January '97 to the Holocaust Museum management. **Tape 4, Side B.** About 95% of the volunteers are Jewish, both survivors and non-survivors. People should be encouraged to volunteer

whether they are Jewish or not. Jews feel it is a mission. George is concerned that many staff are leaving. Perhaps it is due to the bureaucracy which kills initiative. Formerly the Museum had both young and senior historians with a reputation such as Berenbaum and Milton but now the research institute does not attract famous historians.

- 40:00 It was a first class institution and it is hard to maintain its status now. The management should nurture the institution and hire world class historians to replace those who left. Grants can bring some back but other institutions compete for the same people so they may go elsewhere. The Kovno Exhibit was good but it might be difficult to portray life in other ghettos. Life in Western Europe was different. There should be an exhibit on Hungarian Jews as their story is different from the Poles and Lithuanians. The French and Western European Jews are underrepresented. It was a memorable experience when he spoke to the teachers at their training conferences. Marcus Sarbil (?) left as he was upset with the Education Department about recognizing the contributions of survivors. George participated in the Balfour Conference and the teachers asked him to show them and comment on the Permanent Collection. He received letters from the teachers indicating the survivors' contributions were most meaningful.
- 45:00 George identified with everything but felt the portrait of Raoul Wallenberg was significant as he saved his life and that of his family so he made a difference. There was a large picture of the Hungarian Jews on the ramparts with two boys who remind him of his own boys. Their uniform was the same that he wore when he was six. He gave his photo of himself in the uniform to the Museum to show that Jews wore that uniform, too. George felt that he could have been one of them. They died and he survived. It is very stressful for him to go through the exhibit but he owes it to the dead, to himself and to the people he is educating. He does not remember resisting remembrances but when the Communists took over, the Holocaust became a taboo subject. His memories were buried for decades without losing vividness. His life has not been defined by the Holocaust but recently he has been focusing on it. The Holocaust did not determine what he did with his life. Many survivors ended up in helping professions or became lawyers or doctors. He was among the few to become involved in science as that was his calling. Now George wants to learn about the Holocaust but not just as a survivor but use his survivor status to speak and teach.
- 50:00 His wartime experience changed him. He is not cowed by intimidation. He recognized that crucial decisions must be made and heroes are not born but made. Heroes were often plain folk. He had a brush with death many times. When asked if he feels American, Hungarian or Jewish, he responds according to reality. To a Hungarian, he says, "German", to an American, he says, "American" and to a Jew, he says, "Jewish." Nevertheless the Hungarians consider him Jewish and the Americans consider him Hungarian. He is 40 years an American, 63 years Jewish and 43 years Hungarian. He loves American literature but also loves other things. He loves components of all three

and none of the components such as photography. His philosophy of life transcends compartmentalization. He likes to return to the Museum and is concerned with its future, especially teacher's education. The vast majority of teachers will be Christian who are teaching and learning about the Holocaust. At the Balfour Conference, the struggle of non-Jewish teachers teaching anti-Semitism aspects of the Holocaust to non-Jewish students came up.

55:00 They were told they have a moral obligation to teach it according to the Museum's philosophy. A Baptist teacher indicated that she cannot teach that the New Testament is wrong. There was great concern to teach anti-Semitism in an acceptable way to the teachers. If the anti-Semitism aspects are not taught, a great part of the Holocaust will be lost. The Holocaust took place as there were centuries of anti-Semitism. The teachers are influenced by their priests and do not know how to resolve this.

57:00