

Klari Rodman

Tape 1, Side A

January 20, 1998

RG-50.106*0093.01.02

Abstract

Klari Rodman was born Klari Takacs on May 19, 1930 in Budapest, Hungary to a well-to-do family. She attended a German private school for the first four grades where they spoke German. She had a French tutor at home and studied German when she started Gymnasium. Klari preferred gymnastics and music to the academics. The family was not religious and considered themselves Hungarian. Though there were no Jewish children in her elementary school and just a few in her Gymnasium class, she felt there was little discrimination. When the Germans occupied Budapest, the Hungarians were terrible so her family left home in the middle of the night. Their cook went to her home in Transylvania, Romania and got papers for the Klari, her mother and her sister, Teresa but not for her father. First they lived in a dirty boarding house but their cook was able to get them clean clothes. Meanwhile her father hid with 3 old maids or in a phone booth. Then the three moved to nicer rooms in a hotel but often had to stay in the bunkers in the basement due to the bombing. They would take a walk so no one would think they were in hiding. They had little food but her father would exchange flour for beans. When the Germans came, the Jews had to live in the Ghetto where some including her friends, were raped and killed and later some were raped by drunken Russians. Klari tells how she was picked up by Russians who tried to rape her but the Americans saved her.

This second portion is from the time that Klari Rodman gets married to the time of this tape. She met Barney Weelock (?), an American soldier from South Dakota when he was stationed at the American Mission in Budapest. She was 19 years old when they married in a Catholic chapel and they left for the US. First he was stationed in Washington, DC but soon he was transferred to the Mojave Desert and then to Alaska. She was unhappy with the military life as her husband was away for a week at a time and they only had the commissary to visit. She gave birth to Susan and left with her for Washington, DC where she had Bobby. Soon she met a married physician, Dr. Rudmoy (?) and they both divorced their spouses and got married. Her new husband introduced her to Judaism by attending services and reading books on Jewish topics. She worked in cosmetics for over 20 years and now Klari enjoys volunteering for the Holocaust Museum and her six grandchildren. She has a new boyfriend but has no desire to marry for a third time. Sometimes she visits Budapest but soon she wants to return home to the US.

Summary

- 00:00 Klari Rodman was named Klari Takacs when she was born on May 19, 1930 in Budapest, Hungary. She was born into a wonderful, well-to-do family. Her father had an iron and steel factory. She had a governess who was not with her much. In Europe one usually has a governess until eight years old. Klari lived in a beautiful home. She attended a German private school. She considered her father to be the best thing in her life. He saved her life. His name was Steven Takacs. She thought he was wonderful and that there was no one like him. On Sundays he would take her to a museum, sometimes with her sister, Vera, who was four years older. Vera was very serious whereas Klari was full of life. Vera was closer to their mother. Klari was the father's favorite. Her mother was very strict and Klari was spoiled. Vera is social and plays bridge. Their mother never went to the museums but they ate dinner together. Klari attended a German private school for the first four grades where they spoke German. Her governess, Lily, was born in Germany (spoke German) and came from Vienna to Budapest when Klari started elementary school. 05:00 Few people spoke Hungarian. At dinner they would speak French as her mother wanted them to have culture. A French tutor came twice a week. In the 10th grade when Klari was in Gymnasium, she had a French tutor. She also studied German at the Gymnasium. Klari preferred gymnastics and music to the academics. Her sister was perfect. Klari got satisfactory grades in school and was liked by the teachers. She exercised daily, went ice skating, danced with boys and rode her bicycle. When the Germans came, they took away her bicycle. She was good at swimming which she did twice a week. She was not intellectual. She read but was not serious. The family was not religious. Her mother's family was more religious. Also, her grandparents were more religious. She went to Temple with her mother occasionally but her father did not go. They felt they were Hungarian. When her mother passed away from cancer, her father did not know how to read the Hebrew prayers with the Rabbi. Her father was born in Hungary to Jewish parents who considered themselves more Hungarian than Jewish. Klari had religious study with a Rabbi twice a week in school.
- 10:00 .Six students were Jewish. When the war started, the Rabbi said to read, "Thomas Mann" as it was better than the Bible as more up-to-date. The Rabbi was very intelligent and her sister liked him. She mostly spoke Hungarian to the Rabbi; they spoke little Hebrew. There were no other Jewish children in the private German elementary school. She felt no discomfort from that. The students did not realize that she was Jewish. She started Gymnasium in 1941 at age 11 when the War started. There were a few Jewish students there. One teacher was anti-Semitic but liked her. The Jewish girls were discriminated at gym when they had to jump up rods and they were placed in the back. She did well so the teacher liked her. Her sister would have their chauffeur stop before they got to school because she did not want the students to see her arrive with him but Klari did not mind it.
- 15:00 The anti-Semitic Clause affected Klari when she was older. They had a cook, Julia, for many years and she saved their lives. She came from Transylvania, Romania and went

there and got papers for the family including for her mother and her sister, Teresa, but not the father as his body showed that he was Jewish. When the Germans occupied Budapest, the Hungarians were terrible so they left home. They snuck out in the middle of the night and did not put on their stars. Her father found a room for them in the poor area of Budapest. It was hard for the three of them to live in one room. The cook would bring them clean clothes. There were three rooms in the boarding house: one for a street girl (a prostitute), and one for a university worker who was anti-Semitic. Her family did not look Jewish. The boarding house was dirty. They were hiding with Romanian papers. Occasionally the father came to visit and they said he was their uncle. There was constant bombing with the British in the morning, Russians in the afternoon and the Americans came with the biggest bombs in the evening. They were happy when the Americans came.

- 20:00 Her father knew the owner of a hotel. He father collected sacks of \$10 gold Napoleons which he gave the owner and they were permitted to move into a suite with a nice bathroom. They were bigger and nicer rooms but they had to leave periodically so people would not think they were hiding. The maids and Swiss and Swedish delegates who lived in the hotel would see them. Sometimes they had no water. Sometimes they had to go downstairs to the bunkers. Before the War, everyone prepared with bunkers that were underground and had strong iron doors. All went downstairs where it was safe during the raids. In their own home, they had bunkers as knew War was coming. There was so much bombing that they could not go up to the bathroom. She ate once a day so seldom went to the bathroom. They would go upstairs to use the toilet but it got bad. It was a cold winter and they only got out a little. Occasionally, they would wash themselves to feel clean. Her father tried to get them a nice large bottle of cologne in case there was no water to wash with.
- 25:00 Some people got hurt from the bombing or died. The chef got them horse meat and she would not eat it. The hotel owner had the best champagne so she had a little as it had sugar. Klari was the youngest in the hotel. The Swiss delegate gave her chocolate as she reminded him of his own children in Switzerland. It was 1944 and they were at the hotel for nine months until the Russians came. In the bunker they would talk a little when there was no bombing. Klari's sister had a friend with her. The owner knew they were Jewish. The family was not afraid that others would find out. Klari had a little suit for the cold weather. Sometimes they walked in the cold weather. Sometimes they ate lunch or dinner at the Hazan (?) Hotel near the Danube. Her mother was a little hysterical and cried as the situation was hard on her.
- 30:00 They played a card game called "Patience" in the bunkers and had a few books. Things got worse when the Russians came as they were always drunk. The Russians came around February. They had no calendar. The Germans exploded all the bridges and the cook on those cold days would cross over on the frozen Danube to bring them clean

clothes. She lived with the maid in their house. They had three servants before the War; the chauffeur had disappeared. The cook and the maid tried to take care of the house during the bombing. The three of them brought nightgowns, underwear and a sweater when they had snuck out to the boarding house. As they could not wash their clothes, the cook would bring them fresh underwear. Ann, the cook, was about 35 or 40 years old and had been with the family a long time. Klari's family celebrated Christmas with a beautiful tree and presents. They were Jewish but did not celebrate Chanukah. The father would invite people from the factory for dinner. It was hard to remember her new name, Julia, on the Romanian papers.

- 35:00. When they were alone, they used their real names. Life was hard for their father who stayed with three old maids who took care of him and gave him meals. Sometimes he hid in a telephone booth which was hard as the weather was cold. **Tape 1, Side B.** One of the old maids, Lulu, was a French tutor. Klari's father did not remain in his own home. Klari prays to G-d now for children and talks to her father. Their money helped them get through their situation. The Germans and Hungarians did not permit her father to enter his factory in '45.
- 40:00 He had his business until the German occupation. Before the Germans came, she went to school but had to stop because of the bombing. No discrimination was shown her before the occupation. It was the Orthodox Jews, the Hassidics, in the Ghetto who experienced discrimination. Klari's daughter's husband is Hasidic which makes life terrible. The Orthodox and the Hasidim lived together in the Ghetto. After the Germans came, all the Jews had to go live in the Ghetto. Her best friend's father thought they would be safer in the Ghetto with other Jews but Klari's father warned him not to move there. Five or six Germans killed the family. Klari's friend's mother had to watch her daughter, Susan, being killed. She was tall and beautiful. One after the other they were raped.
- 45:00 Klari and Susan would go bicycling after school. Her father found out about Susan's family disaster and told Klari after the War. Klari went out with boys who were about four years older. They met in dancing school. She had one nice boyfriend who was intelligent and wanted to be an Orthodox Jew. All the boys with Jewish stars were picked up and taken to a prison. Klari's father snuck food to her boyfriend. A well-known attorney who collected impressionist paintings went to the Ghetto. Later, 10 boys, around 19 years old, who wanted to help Klari get something, were caught, taken to prison and hung. Her father was unable to get them out. She received a letter with information and was able to find her boyfriend's grave. Her father lost several brothers and a sister. They were all deported to Auschwitz and never returned. He never cried and loved his family. Some relatives live in Budapest or nearby and some two hours away. Those in Budapest were able to kill a German soldier. Her cousin, Marian, was lucky and is now President of the National Gallery of Budapest. She knew Chagall and had two husbands.

- 50:00 Klari's cousin's family was taken away while the cousin was with Klari. Klari's birthday was in February and she got a black spaniel named Talie (?) as a birthday present. She took him to the Ghetto. The Danube was very cold when the Russians came. They were forced to clean the streets to find wood to heat themselves and the spaniel ran away. Klari's father was in a foreign area in Buda and found the dog. The spaniel had gone through the ice of the Danube from Pest and jumped up to her father. They were living in a rooming house in Pest. Klari still owns a spaniel. The Russians were worse than the Germans. Klari was living in a bunker. The Russians were drunk with champagne and took peoples' coats and raped the women so she was hidden in the dark along with her sister, her mother and other women. Later the Russians tried to rape her. Her mother's sister lived elsewhere and had an apartment. When her Pediatrician husband was sent to Auschwitz, Klari stayed in his office.
- 55:00 One day the aunt was not nice as she had lots of food but gave them nothing so they returned home. Now the aunt lives in Canada. It was early '46 with much bombing and most bridges down but they found one bridge to cross over. Her father got them a room in a nice hotel, the Hotel Vadaszqur. They visited their home and it was bombed out and the furniture was ruined. They had a nice villa in a good area. A nice general moved into their dining room. He had been in Russia for a long time and had a daughter in Moscow. There was a young soldier with him. Her father told the young man not to touch his daughters. The soldier looked at candles as he did not know about electricity. They brought their horses into the house. Later they had to change everything as the house smelled of the horses. The soldiers were very primitive.
- 60:00 They did not use the family bathrooms but used one toilet. The general cooked hard boiled eggs in the family's pot. He had been in the Russian military for ten years. Their food improved. Her father obtained wood for the fireplace and a worker from his factory lent him money to repair their house. Her father would go to the factory to see how the work was progressing. The worker lived in the outskirts and told her father to bring a sack of flour and they will exchange it for food.
- 65:00 Her father exchanged it for beans and oil or lard. Klari's mother did not know how to cook with the flour so the food came out terrible. They obtained some nice material and took it to the dressmaker and Klari got her first red dress. They had blankets from America and made coats out of it. They received the blankets from the US Embassy. Her sister had a friend who studied in London and knew good English. She went to the US to work and sent them two green blankets. Klari felt so chic in her new dress that it made her happy. She walked along wearing her new dress and a jeep with Russians came and picked her up. She cried and they said they had to take her to the Russian officer. She was petrified and taken to the captain who she asked why she was brought there. He replied because she did not have syphilis. The Russians were all drunk. The three soldiers undressed and she had never seen anyone naked before.

70:00 One soldier told her to lie down and she thought that she was going to die. She could not do it and fought against them. The soldiers were so drunk that they fell asleep. One who was not in the military told her to leave with him before they woke up. She was so naïve and he was worse than the others. Someone had seen her being picked up and reported it to the Americans. Klari was not raped. She just kicked and screamed. Two Americans came and took her to the hospital and checked her for syphilis. She was in the hospital for three days and her mother died. Klari wrote a diary in Hungarian starting when her boyfriend was hung. She danced and rode a bicycle with him but they did not have sex with her boyfriend.

Klari Rodman

Tape 2, Side A

January 20, 1998

RG-50.106*0093.02.02

Abstract

This second portion is from the time that Klari Rodman gets married to the time of this tape. She met Barney Weelock (?), an American soldier from South Dakota when he was stationed at the American Mission in Budapest. She was 19 years old when they married in a Catholic chapel and they left for the US. First he was stationed in Washington, DC but soon he was transferred to the Mojave Desert and then to Alaska. She was unhappy with the military life as her husband was away for a week at a time and they only had the commissary to visit. She gave birth to Susan and left with her for Washington, DC where she had Bobby. Soon she met a married physician, Dr. Rudmoy (?) and they both divorced their spouses and got married. Her new husband introduced her to Judaism by attending services and reading books on Jewish topics. She worked in cosmetics for over 20 years and now Klari enjoys volunteering for the Holocaust Museum and her six grandchildren. She has a new boyfriend but has no desire to marry for a third time. Sometimes she visits Budapest but soon she wants to return home to the US.

Summary

00:00 Klari Rudmoy's (?) sister's friend worked at the American Mission where she met an American soldier who she introduced to Klari. He was nice and good looking and she liked him. Klari was 19 when she met him. He was from South Dakota. After six months, they got married. Her parents liked him. Klari felt that she needed a new life and she wanted to get out as had enough fear. Her father let her leave. Her sister did not want to leave. All Klari's friends, Susan, and her boyfriend were killed. Klari and her husband went to Washington, DC. She has one cousin in Canada who she dislikes and another cousin in Australia. The cousin and her mother had already left for Canada. Klari had completed high school and she did not desire to

enter University at the time. Occasionally she would relieve her father at his office. Her father was an engineer and held a good job in Budapest.

05:00 He traveled a lot to show people how to use iron and steel. Her mother was satisfied with her social life. Her father's siblings had all died. One of her mother's siblings went to Auschwitz and one died in the War. Three sisters went to the US. Two went to Canada and an unmarried sister remained in Hungary. Klari's family had moved into a nice villa again. Although life was organized, she still wanted to get out. She was closer to her friends who died than to her sister and felt that she must leave. The soldier was in intelligence and did well. They married in Budapest and later had a daughter. Her husband was Catholic which did not bother her. He was charming and her parents liked him. After they divorced, her mother came to Washington, DC to see him. He traveled a lot as a civilian. After Klari gave birth to Linda, they moved to the Mojave Desert. Life was terrible for her as her husband, Barney Weelock (?), was mostly traveling. His mother thought that Klari should convert and Barney thought it was a good idea. A priest had married them in a small chapel.

10:00 None of his relatives attended. He came from a family of eight siblings, all farmers. He was smart. Later he started college though he was busy traveling. After they married, they left for DC but they had to take many flights to Israel, New Foundland and Boston before they reached DC. The next day, Barney had to report to the Pentagon. Klari knew that American women wore corsets so she took a taxi to Woody's and bought one. Then she walked around. She learned about corsets from the girls who worked at the American Mission. She knew that she would buy a corset as a first thing to become American. She was alone but then she took a cab to the Capitol. The corset was so tight that she took it off. Klari had picked up English easily. She had studied English at a French school. She hung around Americans and Hungarians who spoke English which helped. Then she went to Garfinkel's and it looked beautiful. She went to their Personnel Department and said that she wanted to work there. They placed her with Revlon cosmetics and she still works with cosmetics. She worked for Saks for 20 years and loved it. Klari was pregnant in 1952 and three years later wanted to get pregnant again.

15:00 When she was six months pregnant, she had double mumps and miscarried and got pregnant again. She was mostly alone as had few friends and no family here. She had one friend here she knew from Budapest and he was a pilot. Klari's husband loved her a lot. They went from the desert to Alaska. They lived with military people. There was one nice couple but soon they left. Their only activity was going to the commissary so she hated the life. When Linda was 2 and ½ years old, they transferred to Anchorage. She named her daughter "Linda" as she thought it was a pretty name. They had a nice little house. She had a friend from Pasadena who she saw on Sundays. Her friend had been with Mengele in a concentration camp. Klari hated Alaska even more than the desert as it was cold so decided to return to DC with Linda. Her husband would be away for a week at a time and she could not drive so life was lonely. Also, her daughter was often sick and the snow prevented activities.

20:00 They lived on the base and a couple from New York lived in their apartment house. The husband was a psychiatrist and they had a child. Klari lived on the first floor and her shade was open so when the psychiatrist came home he would always see her cleaning the kitchen. There was no daytime TV and no one to talk to. He told her to pretend she was at the Psychiatric Health Clinic. When the couple left, she left on first class and flew to DC where she stayed with an acquaintance. Klari told her husband that she was leaving because Linda was always sick and she could not stand the cold. She thought that life with her husband was not suitable for her. At the time, she was pregnant with Bobby which was an unplanned pregnancy. Barney sent her money and she got an apartment and furniture. Her husband worked with the general officer. Klari met nice people in her new home. She lived in an apartment building and met a Jewish dentist from Boston with a daughter she liked. When she was seven months pregnant, her husband came to DC. A Hungarian lady told Klari to see her Hungarian doctor. He was married and she liked him and did not think of getting a divorce at that time.

25:00 He told her to bring her children to see him instead of the pediatrician. His wife went to Nairobi. He was well-to-do and split his money with his wife and got divorced. Klari also got divorced and married the doctor, Dr. Rudmoy (?), in 1960. He was born in Hungary and was in many concentration camps during the Holocaust with Dr. Taube. Dr. Rudmoy (?) was more religious as he attended a religious gymnasium. He gave Klari a book about the exodus as she never read any Jewish books. They attended Friday night services at the Washington Hebrew Congregation. They went to Israel. She felt good to be with him. Hearing so much against Jews, so much anti-Semitism, made her become more Jewish. Her first husband's family made bad remarks about Jews. In her new marriage, they were not kosher but attended services on holidays. Once she washed her car instead of attending Yishev (mourning) services at Yom Kippur and her new friend got angry. His mother was religious. She met his father.

30:00 His mother died. When the Russians came to Budapest, they left his mother alone as she was fragile. Klari inherited a ruby from her and never took it off. It is platinum and gold with a little ruby and always wears it. After her mother-in-law died, her new husband went to the cemetery. His father came to America and Klari talks to him occasionally. Her parents and sister remained in Hungary but her mother visited her occasionally. Klari never thought to return to Hungary even when she was miserable in the desert and in Alaska. Once Klari's mother visited for three months. Klari likes America and New York. She learned to drive. Every Monday morning she wrote her parents and sometimes called them. Tape 2, Side B.

35:00. Her son, Bobby, travels all over the world and met Arafat. Bobby is a senior member in the ABC Shops. (Klari shows the interviewer a photo of Bobby with Arafat.) Klari indicates that Bobby and Arafat are both smiling. Two days ago Arafat was not permitted into the Holocaust Museum and Klari was furious. Bobby has been invited to the White House. His wife is intelligent and nice. Klari has six grandchildren: four from Linda (two are ages 14 and 15) and two from Bobby who lives nearby. She finds it fun to have grandchildren. Klari started with the Holocaust Museum before it opened. First she looked at the outside. Then she worked

in their Archives. She went as heard volunteers were needed for the Holocaust Museum. It felt good to be there. Dr. Taube called her to go to the Archives with his daughter. It was hard for her at the Archives as she did not know either the English or the Hungarian words and looked for a dictionary.

40:00 The gentleman working there did not help her and she did not know how the machines worked. After three or four months of volunteering, she found her friends' names in the database. She learned that everyone from Romania was killed. She came home from the Museum and wondered why she should torture herself. She decided to change her volunteer work and work with Visitors' Services instead. Klari works on Fridays and every half hour she does something different such as elevator duty or distributing tickets for the permanent collection. She likes the work as she likes to be with people. She did not want to help the groups of children as they were running and jumping. She told Larry that she cannot handle that. Now she would consider small groups. She takes groups of her friends, especially those from out-of-town. It makes her feel peaceful when she helps them. Two weeks ago she was recovering from the flu and went with a friend who is not Jewish and not anti-Semitic who told her not to volunteer. Klari finds that all the people are nice and she likes to talk to them.

45:00 Also, the volunteers at the desk are very nice. She looks forward to volunteering. Klari takes the metro to the Museum. Last Friday she prayed in the Hall of Remembrance and used the candles and had tears in her eyes. When she prays, she thinks of her family who she misses and hopes her children are good. She was not busy so she went and lit candles. Klari believes the Holocaust Museum should exist. Now she has many Jewish books. She read one about Poland. The sad stories made her cry so much that she went to the bookstore and asked for a sexy book. Every week she goes to the book store to buy a book and reads it. She reads everything about the Holocaust, Hitler and Hungary as her best friends were hung or killed. She likes the book, "Hurda Weizmann Klein" as it reminds her of her family. The parents and boyfriend left and the girl suffered two or three years and hardly ate. Her girl friend was arrested. She had to work so hard that her hands were bleeding. She was young so kept going. You have more strength when you are young.

50:00 She was cold. Maybe she got one piece of bread. In the summer, she was hot. The Americans came and liberated them. She got married and went to America. Klari reads about the Holocaust in books and newspapers. She does not have a Jewish newspaper. For many years, Klari did not speak about her experiences. Since she volunteers at the Holocaust Museum, she speaks about them. She has a Greek Orthodox friend who is not Anti-Semitic and sometimes his friends talked about the Jews. Now he goes to Klari's friends. Her children like him. He is on the 18th floor in her apartment house and she is on the 10th floor. She does not want to marry a third time. Klari made an interview tape on the telephone a year ago and gave Bobby a copy. It is in the museum's archives. The tape is a short story about her. Bobby read it and locked it up so no one can read it. She did not tell Linda much about it. The tape was the first time that Bobby heard about her life. She did not want to say anything when the children were young.

55:00 Linda's husband always called her "goy" (non-Jew) so she feels he is obnoxious and did not say anything to him. The husband is younger so was not in the Holocaust. His grandmother goes to the Museum. (Too low to hear) Klari sees her at the Giant and Safeway and Linda hates her. Klari feels that she became an American and loves it. She goes to Budapest every six months or year and loves it but after 10 days is anxious to come home. She has Jewish neighbors who went through the Holocaust.

56:00