

This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Magdalena Farkas Berkovics conducted by Gail Schwartz on October 15, 2009 in Rockville, Maryland. This is tape number one, side A. Please tell me your whole name, your full name.

What? This whole--

Your name.

My name. I am Magdalena Berkovics. That is what I am using this.

And what is the name that you were born with?

I was Magdalena Farkas.

And where were you born?

I was born in Romania.

What city?

What city? Cluj-Napoca, or Kolozsvár in Hungarian.

OK. And when were you born, the date?

In 1919.

What day? And what day were you born in 1919?

What?

Date. Day.

Date? In the 5th of July.

OK. Let's talk a little bit about your family. Tell me about your parents. What were their names?

Yes. [? Mendel ?] Farkas was my father. And he had a Jewish name, [? Mendel. ?] The other one was Hungarian. Everything was Hungarian, because they lived in Hungary then, which has changed into Romania later when I was born. You understand.

People are mixing up these inheritances. I don't understand why I was Farkas, and then I was-- I was Curtis after the first husband. And then I was Berkovics after the second husband. They were times when people died.

Yes. And what was your mother's name?

My name?

Your mother's name.

Berta, the maiden name.

Do you know what her maiden name was?

Berta Landesman.

OK. And how long did the family live in Cluj? Many generations?

Yes. I don't know when they moved to Cluj precisely, because my father was from another community. But they lived-- when I was born, they were in Cluj-Napoca.

Do you know where your father came from?

My father? My father came from Hungary.

You don't know the city? Do you know the city?

No.

No? OK.

In those days, there was nothing written. Hungary.

And--

Their mother tongue-- excuse me-- was Hungarian. I have two mother tongues, Hungarian and Romanian, because I had Romanian schools.

And was your mother born in Cluj?

Yes.

Did you have any brothers or sisters?

I had a brother, a doctor, who died, who was killed in the war in '44, at the end of the war.

What was his name? His name.

His name is-- what shall I tell? In Romanian, Hungarian? He has different names. Farkas was the family name. And his Hungarian name was Tibor in Hungary, and in the Romanian, Tiberio.

So was it the two of you, the two children?

Only two. They had only two children, me and my brother.

Was he older or younger?

He was six years older than me.

Tell me about your family. Were they religious?

My father, yes. But my mother, not at all. She did not believe, or whatever, or something.

So when you were a child, did you observe any holidays?

Yes, we observed, because my mother did everything which was necessary for a holiday because of my father.

And did you belong-- did your family belong to a synagogue?

Yes, of course, to Beth Avrohom, which was in, you don't know the town. In the town was these three synagogues. In these, Beth Avrohom was the more conservative.

And did you observe Shabbat every week?

Yes. Yes.

And Passover? You had--

Everything. Everything. Also, my mother was not a believer. But she did everything, because my father required it.

Wanted it.

Yes.

Yeah. What kind of work did your father do?

He was, of course-- what can a Jew do? Tradesman.

What kind? What did he--

They had first a big house, which they inherited from my grandfather. And then I don't know whether the house was sold or not. I don't remember. But then he had started on his own making trades in different towns.

But what did he trade in? Do you know?

Article, all kinds of issues, articles-- clothing, and that kind.

I see. I see.

In those times, the Jews had this trade.

And your grandparents. Did you know your grandparents?

Yes, I knew they were very old, and then died in a few years. I don't know what they did. But well, how could he afford such a big house? I have no idea-- a one-storied, or two-storied here house with balcony in the center of the town.

Was the neighborhood a Jewish neighborhood? Did you have Jewish neighbors?

Yes. Yes. It was the family Leib, who was [INAUDIBLE] streets. They became very, very, very rich, the family Leib and [? Regar. ?] There were a few families there. It was the main street of the town.

The town was the second town in Romania. It was very famous then. It had a history, because the Hungarians and the Romanians fought for their belonging.

The one story, that it belonged always to them. The other story, that belonged always to them. But it was a great fight always. And even now, I have heard that they have a misunderstanding about who was the first.

What was the name of the street that you lived on?

That I lived? [PLACE NAME]. That was one of the main streets in the center of the town.

And what about, did you have aunts and uncles?

Yes, I have. I had a few. They all died. Nobody came back, only me. I am the only survivor.

But when you were a little girl, you saw your aunts and your uncles?

Yes. We lived in the middle of the family, because the house was big. And everybody lived in the same house.

Oh. Cousins? Did you have cousins?

Yes.

And they all lived in the house?

In the house.

Oh, OK.

They were not yet married, because they were young. I married first.

Yeah. What kind of school did you go to? Did you go to a--

I was in a German private school first. My mother wanted me to learn German. It was fashionable then, German, before Hitler came.

And then I went to the Romanian high school. Gymnasium, it was called. And I was here till I was 18 years old. Then I graduated a bachelor, or baccalaureate, which was-- which they inherited from the French and the Romanian. I don't know whether you understand me.

So I graduated this baccalaureate, which lasted eight years. I was 18 years old when I finished the school. And then, meanwhile, I was at the conservatory of music.

And what did you study in the conservatory?

I played the piano. I was always, all my life, a pianist.

And you had a piano at home?

Yes, I have at home. And finally, I taught a lot of-- I gained with this teaching. Yes. And then I was teaching at the conservatory of town, which was at the university grade. I was a university teacher.

And was your family Zionist? Did they talk about Palestine?

It was my brother who was a doctor-- very, very, very talented. And he was an excellent violinist and everything. He was shot by the Germans, because he couldn't run enough fast. They told to run, the Germans [INAUDIBLE]. That was his fate, my only brother.

That was, for me, such a loss. And I cannot tell you-- the greatest loss of my life, a very handsome boy. I should have taken the photos. I have photos, a lot of photos.

Did your family talk about Palestine at all?

No. They were not oriented. They were not Zionists, no-- enough bad, bad.

When you were a little girl and a teenager, did you experience any antisemitism?

Oh, yes. Can you tell me some of the things that happened?

Not very. The Romanian were not like the Hungarians. The Hungarians deported the Jews, the Hungarian Jews.

I'm talking about before the war.

Before, no. I was in the school. In the school, I did not feel. A little, yes. For instance, one day in the class, there was a competition between the girls. We were about 15 years old. Who looks like a Jewish girl or not? And they decided that I am the only one who doesn't look Jewish.

Yeah. And what about the teachers? Did the teachers--

The teachers were not bad, the Romanians, not too bad. One was, the music teacher. She never put me to play the piano and to show what I can. And it was not too bad at the school, not bad.

I felt the distance, the difference, between my colleagues and me. There was no-- how to say-- connection between us, not at all, no connection. We did not fight. It was not such a thing. But it was no connection, not at all.

So what else did-- you went to school. You played-- I'm talking about when you're young.

Yes. Yes.

And you played the piano.

Yes.

Did you do anything else? Did you have anything else? Did you like to read?

It was enough, because I had to practice the piano daily. I was preparing myself for a future job, for a future. And I became a teacher in music. I had two diplomas, music and piano. They were of university grade.

So did you like sports? Did you--

Yes, but not especially. Once for swimming. I couldn't swim well. I could skating well.

Ice skating? Ice skating?

Yes. My mother was a good skater. Just imagine.

Really?

Yes.

And what did your family do in the summertime?

In the summer, they were--

Or what did you do in the summertime?

I practiced the piano always. And I went to-- I had some boys who wooed me. And that is not important at all.

So now you're 18, and you've gotten your degree. You finished.

Yes, I have it.

And then what? So it's 1937.

Yes. At 1937, it was just about the war to break out. I gave private lessons. I had very many private students of all kind of grade, many, many private students. Then came the war.

And what is your first memory of the war?

Oh.

What was the first thing?

The first thing was that I lost my whole family. And so I was very, very, very shocked.

Well, how did that happen? What--

They were deported to Germany.

How did that happen? How did the family find out where to go?

They did not know. Only when they were on the different cars. They were taken by cars, big cars, which transported them.

But did somebody come to their house to tell them?

Yes, they were together then.

So everybody went.

Everybody. Everybody. Me, too. Everybody was deported. And the house remained--

Empty?

--empty. And they took them, Christians, inside of that empty place, ours, with Christians.

And when was this? Do you know when? When did this happen, what year you were deported?

In 1944. The Hungarian Jews were deported in 1944.

Were you ever in a ghetto?

What house?

Were you ever in a ghetto?

Yes, of course. If you were deported, first you were taken to the-- you were in the ghetto in the town where you were born.

OK, let's talk about that. When did you go into the ghetto?

Into where?

The ghetto.

Into the ghetto in 1944. I was one year.

One year in the ghetto.

Yes.

And what was that like? You were living with your family?

Yes. In the ghetto, yes. But as soon as we were deported, we were separated.

OK, but let's first talk about life in the ghetto.

In the ghetto, we were not allowed to do things that we do, we did. We were very-- how to say?

Crowded? Was it--

Crowded. Not only crowded, but it was very hard for us to buy things for us, to-- it was a very restrained life.

Restricted? Restricted.

Restricted, yes.

So was it all the Jews of Cluj were put into this one ghetto?

Yes. Yes, but there were sections. There were some who were living in their old house. There were some who were living--

But you had to-- did you have to move out of your old house into the ghetto? Or was your house in the ghetto?

Not till we were deported.

So you stayed in your house.

Yes, until we were deported.

So your house was a part of the ghetto.

Yes.

I see. And so what did you do during the day?

During the day, I taught the piano to small children, and even to Christians.

Oh, really? They would come to your house?

The children, yes. And I went to their house.

Did you get paid? Did they pay?

Yes. Therefore, we could live, because the men were all in a forced labor camp. Meanwhile, the women--

They had taken the men away--

Yes.

--to do forced labor?

Yes. We were the only women in the town, Jewish women.

Oh, only women.

And the men were taken, and my husband, and everything. I haven't seen him for years.

Well, now your husband-- when did you get married?

Very early, very early, in 1940.

And when did you get married for the first time?

In 1939, exactly when the war broke out.

And tell me about your first husband.

My first husband was my-- wait a minute. He was somebody who I knew by teaching him and accompanying him, because he was not only a clerk. He was a clerk at a great factory.

But he was a singer. He had a beautiful voice. And he engaged me as an accompanist. And then I accompanied him. And so it has become a love story.

What was his name?

Curtis [PERSONAL NAME], Curtis. He was from Bistrița, from a German smaller town.

Was he Jewish?

Yes.

And tell me about your wedding.

He talked a few languages perfectly-- German, Hungarian, Romanian. And he was taken to the-- to this camp.

The labor--

Forced camp. And then, of course, he was died. He died.

Tell me about your first wedding. Was it in your house?

It was long ago. I had, of course, a wedding gown. And my family was present. I can tell nothing special, as the usual weddings. I was 20 years old.

You were 20? And was it in your house, or in--

Yes, in our house. It was a family house.

And you had a rabbi perform it?

Yes, of course. My father was religious.



Did you have a kosher home?

Yes.

You did. All right, so now you're in the ghetto. You're married, but your husband was taken away into a labor camp with the other men. And you're teaching music to others. And then what was the next step?

The next step? Finally, in '44, the Hungarian Jews were all deported. The 400,000 Jews were all gathered together in ghetto and were deported to-- they're told to Germany, but it wasn't Germany. It was Poland.

And how did you know what was happening? How?

I realized. I was 20 years old. I could realize what is happening with us. At the first, not. Then, when we stood more, and we were more, then we realized that we are in jail, in fact.

OK, but you got married in '39.

Yes.

OK. And you were taken away in '44. So that's five years between 1939--

Yes. I was alone.

You were alone with your--

Alone with my mother and with my stepmother. How it's called? The mother--

Mother-in-law.

Mother-in-law, yes.

And you were in your house. And you were teaching music.

Yes.

And did you have enough food to eat?

What?

Did you have enough food to eat during those--

Yes, we had food, because we bought it in a black--

Market.

--market. It was very expensive. But as I gained money with the teaching, I could afford a decent food.

Did you get any letters, any mail from your husband or your brother or your--

Very, very seldom. Very seldom. That was a tragedy, this part. It was a tragedy.

And you spoke German.

Yes, very good.

And you had a radio. Did you have a radio?

Yes, which was taken away later.

And you could hear speeches by Hitler? Could you hear speeches?

Yes, of course. I heard his speeches.

And you can understand them, because you spoke German.

I had German school.

And do you remember what your thoughts--

Of course. First of all, against the Jews. That was his main program. Why? Who knows. Against the Jews, they say, because he was not allowed by the Jews to--

And he couldn't afford to become an artist. He wanted to be a painter. And that was his mania, that the Jews didn't let him to be an artist.

So you said that you had Christian children coming to you for lessons. So the Christians came into the ghetto.

Yes. They came. Not very many, but they came.

Did they bring you food? Did they--

No. No. No. It was not about this. I taught. In my way, I got some money for that. And we lived from my--

But you said you went to their house, too, sometimes. Did you?

Yes, I went.

So what was it like for you to go outside of the ghetto?

Yes. In the beginning, yes. Later on, it was forbidden to work away from home. But in the beginning-- because the Germans came in '39, and the Hungarian became their ally. So they did what the Germans dictated.

How was your mother during this time? Was she--

She was not an old woman, 54 or something.

And how did she--

Yes. She was very worried about, my mother, brother, because he was not at home. She was a very smart woman.

She knew everything from the beginning. She predicted. She told that we would be there, that we would be [? so ?], that we will be [? so ?]. She was a very smart woman.

And your father was not home. Was your father--

No, he was traveling, doing his job, because he--

So he was not taken away with the other men?

No, for awhile. And then later on, when the Hungarian Jews were--

Rounded up.

--maltreated, then of course they were told they were taken to ghetto. That was in '44, later than the other Jews, because when I met other Polish Jews in the ghetto, they reproached us. You were lucky. You were not four years or five years in the ghetto like us, because the Polish Jews were-- you know what happened to them. I read so many good books about this.

So when you were in the ghetto, before you were taken away, were there Jews from other countries that were brought in, or not?

No.

No. It was just Cluj, the Jews of Cluj.

Yes.

OK. So now you're told to report to-- what, go to the train station? What did they tell you? How did you know you were to leave your house?

What?

How did you know that you had to leave your house?

We did not know. For instance, I tell you an example. One day, we were gathered at the marketplace. And a middle-aged gentlemen who was a colonel-- you know what a colonel was, he was a high-grade officer-- made us a speech telling that, don't worry, gentlemen.

Don't worry at all, because you will be taken to a place where the old men will work for you. And the younger will-- I don't know what work will they do. And the children will play. That was what he told us. I shall never forget his figure. He might have been about 50 years.

Was he German?

Yes.

No. No. No. Wait a minute. He was Hungarian.

He was Hungarian.

Hungarian. Oh, the Hungarian played there all very well. It just was a-- I couldn't believe. My mother was close to me and told, a Hungarian officer will never lie. My mother believed the whole conception of the Hungarian regime system. Now?

Yeah.

This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Volunteer Collection interview with Magdalena Farkas Berkovics. This is tape number one, side B. And you were talking about when it was time to leave. You were at the market. And they told you you would be going away. Everybody would be leaving Cluj.

Cluj. We were in Cluj still in 1944. The Hungarian Jews were lucky, because they were taken late. The Polish Jews

were taken in '39. Just imagine what the difference. They always reproached us.

So when you went away, what did you take with you?

They told us we had to take only a certain size, told by them. I don't know-- 70 kilograms, or something. I don't remember quite. The most important things-- clothing.

For instance, I took with me two clothing, two gowns and clothes, winter clothes. It was so heavy. And we were in June, at the end of June. Just imagine. Everybody took what he can and she can.

Did you take food with you?

Yes, some food. I remember that I took with me a jar of very good-- how to say that? It's sweet, from fruit.

Jelly?

Jelly. Very, very good. Special. And after a while, it was so hot this season that I couldn't carry. And I told my mother, Mother, I cannot carry very well, and I put the jar down. Some others were happy to find it, probably.

And then you were all together-- what, at the train station?

We were together the day we started. You understand.

But did you leave from a railroad station?

Yes. It was a railway station with cars for [INAUDIBLE].

So you are all crowded into a car.

Yes, into a car, 70 people in one car. That was the beginning of the terror of the-- old people, so many died, meanwhile. And there was not enough food, because just what we carried with us. What shall I tell? This event was terrible, the beginning of the war thing.

And do you remember how long the trip took? Did it take several--

Yes. It's three or four days.

And did you have enough water? Did they give you water?

They gave when they opened the doors. And people started to cry, water, water, water. It was awful.

And then where did you go to first? Where did it stop?

It stopped-- I don't know which. In Poland, of course. In Poland, different countries, different towns, small towns and villages in Poland. Then the fourth day, if I remember well, it has stopped at the railway station of Auschwitz, which was a town.

Did you know anything about Auschwitz--

Never heard.

You never heard of it.

Nobody heard about it. Maybe some people from the Judenrat have heard. You have heard about the Judenrat?

Yes.

Was there a Judenrat in Cluj?

Yes, in Cluj partly. I think it was in another town, too. I don't know. Here was the main Judenrat in Cluj.

Did you know any of the people who were in the Judenrat? Were they friends?

I knew. I knew. It happened to me once in the ghetto that one of my so-called friends told something about the ghetto-- that we will be well, or I don't know what. And after then, I didn't find him any longer among us. He went with the-- with a Swiss group.

And that, I couldn't forget, never. I told him, why did you told me-- didn't you tell me the truth? He didn't tell. That was that. And they escaped with the Swiss group.

Did a lot of people escape, or just a few?

No, they were not too many. But when I came home and heard that, you can imagine what I felt.

And he was in the Judenrat, this man?

No. No. He was with his family and other relatives. I don't want to speak about that, because it's not--

So the train arrives in the town of Auschwitz.

Yes.

And what happened then? Did you get out of the--

We unloaded. Yes.

You unloaded.

Unloaded. And it was hot this day or something. I had carried with me jars of jellies. I put everything down on the floor. And we went as they told us, went. My mother was with me, and my mother-in-law.

Then, at a certain moment, we were told to stop. And then we met Mengele. He was a young doctor. I remember him, a dark doctor, dark face, not blonde at all. And he stopped us and told that we will be OK, don't worry, the usual story.

And then he started to separate people. The younger one and what he liked, that they can work, were placed to one side. The other ones, whom he found old, not enough good to work. And so then we were separated. I was separated from my father.

[PHONE RINGS]

It is my phone call.

So you were talking about you had gotten to Auschwitz. And you were told-- they separated the people.

Yes. They separated. We didn't know-- just we saw that the youngest were separated. Yes. And I had no idea what is happening, because I did not take leave from my mother. She was on my side. My father was with the men.

There were two big groups. So I did not know. I did not even tell, see you later, or something, nothing. We did not know

anything. So they separated us. And then we came out, [NON-ENGLISH].

You came out.

[NON-ENGLISH]. I don't know what kind of word is that, what language.

Where did you go? So were you by yourself? Or did you have a--

I was with the others. We were in--

No, but were you with any family?

No.

Just you. You were the only--

Me, and my cousin was with me, my first cousin. She wanted to be with me. And there was an aunt there. And they were, again, some-- they were members of the family, younger. Now there it is.

So you're 25 years old now.

Something like that.

Then, so where did you all go? What happened next?

Next? They took us, I told, to Auschwitz.

No. No. No. But you got to Auschwitz. And they separated you. And then the young women-- where did they take the young women? Where did you go?

All to different labor camps where we worked.

OK. But did you stay in Auschwitz? Did you get a uniform?

We stayed about-- how much? I don't remember well, one year or so.

OK. Where did you sleep in Auschwitz?

They were barracks. I don't know how to tell. A barracks is a big, out of wood, a big edifice.

Did you wear a uniform? Did they give you anything to wear?

In the beginning, not. We had such-- everything was taken in the baths, bathroom.

Oh. You first went to the baths?

Yes, of course, to baths. They bathed us and took away everything. I remember I thought, that is mine. And I got a--

A hit?

Yes, a slap.

Slap.

Did they take off your hair? Did they remove your hair?

Yes, of course. I forgot. I was completely-- how to-- barren.

Bald. Yeah.

Bald. Yes.

And did they put a number on you?

Me do not. I didn't get numbers. There were many who got.

Yes. Yes. And so did you get a uniform, something to wear?

Yes, we had-- first, not. First, they gave us what they had gotten from the baths, bathroom. They changed everything. I remember I had a dress, a short dress still. It was not mine.

And were you able to stay with your family, your cousins? Could you--

With the cousins? Yes, the younger, who were separated. One was--

With you.

Yes.

And so did you work in Auschwitz itself? Did you do anything?

In Auschwitz? I don't know. We did not work. We just were waiting for our future. It was very hard. I remember-- you know that I never spoke about this--

No, I didn't.

--to anybody. I didn't want. They called me several times, and I refused. I was very not only sick. But a few years ago, two or three years ago, I fell down. And since then, since, my [INAUDIBLE] is that I cannot [? work ?] or [INAUDIBLE] I am not well.

Yeah. So you didn't do any work, you said, in Auschwitz. What kind of food did they give you?

Oh, they were always the same usual food. It was a certain kind of soup, very thin, made out of vegetable. But I don't know what vegetable.

Potatoes?

No. I hadn't seen that potatoes. There was a strange kind of--

Turnips? Maybe turnips?

Yes, turnips. Yes. I have turnip.

Yeah. And so you stayed there. And what did you and your cousins think was happening? Did you know?

The new cousin, the relatives, one of them-- younger than me, six years younger-- wanted to come with me to associate or accompany me. The others, my aunt, was-- how much? Sorry, I don't know how much.

The other cousin was taken with the child away. So one part of the group was taken away who had children, and the others who didn't have children or were young enough to fulfill the Germans' requirement.

So you stayed in Auschwitz for how many months?

In Auschwitz, I don't remember precisely, because we were taken to different camps.

Camps. OK. Do you remember the names of any of the camps?

I remember, but now I don't know.

And what kind of--

Stutthof.

Stutthof.

That was the second death camp after Auschwitz, Stutthof. It was as famous as--

Yes.

You have about Stutthof?

Yes.

At Stutthof, I was I think half a year. But from here, that was a center which took us to different labor camps.

I see. And what did you do in Stutthof? Did you work in Stutthof?

No, in Stutthof, for a while, for a few months, we were waiting for our-- and then they took us to different camps--

Camps. Yeah.

--where we-- it was in Poland. Stutthof was in Poland, in ground. They were very famous labor camps. It is written something about it.

Yeah, and Steinort. Was that--

Steinort. Yeah, the first thing was Steinort.

Yeah. So did you ever do any work in these camps?

Yes, we did.

What kind of work?

They told us to dig.

Dig holes, to dig ditches?

To dig [INAUDIBLE]. How to say?

The ground, dig in the ground?



Yes, to dig the ground with the necessary tools.

Shovel?

Yes. Yes. Yes. We did this.

Yeah. All day long?

When do we start? When did we start? At 2 o'clock at night, we started. And then we stopped work at 4:00 in the afternoon-- not 4:00, 5:00.

And how was your health? Your health at that time-- how were you feeling?

It was not very bad. But I had with always with my--

Stomach?

--stomach, always diarrhea, and always with my stomach. And starving, of course. We never had enough to eat. Then we found some potato in the ground. I did not-- we didn't have occasion to cook. Of course, we ate them as we got. That is another story.

You ate them raw.

Yes, of course.

Yeah. And you were just getting soup during the day? Is that what you were eating?

We got soup. For noon, it was a very thin, water-like soup with a few potatoes in it. You cannot imagine.

So what did you and the other people, the other women, talk about?

When will we get free? About freedom, always about freedom. And what they cooked at home. Cooking was the main subject-- not for me, because I wasn't cooking.

I didn't cook. My mother cooked all my-- what I remember about this. I was teaching, because I was the only one when we were still free who earned money.

Money. Yeah. So you talked about freedom

Yeah. Always about freedom, and what do we like the most to cook-- the older women who cooked, who had no jobs.

Did you talk about your music at all?

Oh, yes. About music, of course. I knew me and--

Did you sing at all?

Yes, I sang. I didn't have a voice.

No, but in the camp. I meant in the camp.

Yes, they sang.

The women sang in the camp?

Yes, they sang, because it was nothing to do, else to do.

What kind of songs?

Hungarian, because we were under Hungarians a few years.

Right. Do you remember any of the songs?

Yes.

Can you sing one for a little bit, any song, or even part of a song, a little melody?

[VOCALIZING] No, I have no voice. I was operated. I had a surgery. Since then, I have no voice.

What was the name of the song? Do you know?

I don't know. I don't remember.

OK. So then you were working in those different camps.

Yes. Yes. Yes, different camps.

And then it comes towards the end in-- what, early '45?

Yes.

Yeah. And where did you go? Where did you--

There were people, young people waiting for those who were returning. The railway stations were full with them. We were waiting.

They thought that they will find among them, among us, somebody. I had nobody to wait for me, not a soul to wait for me. The others had.

Did you go on any kind of a march? Did they take you on any kind of a march towards the end of the war to leave the camp? Did the Germans--

No.

The Germans did not take you on a march.

No. It was, for them, too late. They escaped. They ran away.

How did you know it was the end of--

It was one afternoon. It was about 5 or 4 O'clock. They realized that nobody is taking care of them. The guards disappeared suddenly. And then they started to shout, to scream, we are free, we are free. The guards are running away.

And then everybody went to see where we were. There was a church nearby. And many people went to the church. I thought-- I was with my cousin, with my younger cousin-- I don't go any time. I won't go again to find the Germans. I will go in an opposite side, not where the were.

And I went to the left side. Most of the people went to the right side. In the left side, there were no Germans that we

could hide. And we hid for a few days. And so we escaped.

That was my brain. I don't want to be again among them. That is a more tragic and a more-- I didn't tell it very good.

Well, so did you-- so where did you leave from? Stutthof? Is that where you left from? Where were you when the guards ran away? Was that Stutthof?

We went left--

No, was it--

--on the way.

In Stutthof? Or you were already walking?

Many of them walked to the right side. I thought, I don't want to go where many people were. I had a brain.

Very smart.

And I'm very smart. And I went to the left side.

And then where did you go after a few days?

I don't know. We learned it was a Polish country. We went. And we asked for shelter. And we got shelter for nights for a few days.

The last day, we went. It was a beautiful house where the burgermeister lived. The burgermeister you know? He lived there. And he, later on, come and told us to move in another part. So we escaped here.

And how many people were you with then?

Only a few--

A few.

--among my group. There were other groups who escaped in another--

Direction.

--way.

And then where did you go? So you--

We remained in the house of the burgermeister for awhile. Then came the authorities and told that can't be to live in the house of such a authority. And they moved us in another place.

A big, big kitchen it was. And we were glad that we had with what to leave. There were potatoes in the ground, and what they left.

And then what happened?

We were here. And the Polish brought us what they could. And that's another story.

And then where did you go after that?

There were people who were volunteers to take us home.

So you wanted to go back to Cluj?

Yes, I always. Where should I go, and to whom?

So how did you get back to Cluj?

With the help of these people, of the volunteers, who were all the young men.

Were they Jewish young men?

Jewish, only Jewish, who wanted to be volunteers to help these people to come back.

OK. Do you know what group they were from? Were they from an organization?

Yes, they had an organization from Satu Mare. There was a guy called [PERSONAL NAME]. I remember him, a very handsome guy, who took with him groups. And that was Szigeti [? Pauli, ?] who was my friend. In their house, I was born. And there were a few volunteers.

So they took you back to Cluj?

Yes.

So now you're in Cluj. And what do you do there? What do you find? What do you do?

I found my house, my big storied house. I found full of Christians. What shall I tell you?

And did you--

They knew that I come back. They were waiting there. They knew.

What did they say to you?

Nothing. They did not dare to say anything.

What did you say to them?

Nothing. I cannot reproach things which-- you know. And then I met my husband, who was my cousin, who took everything over, who started to arrange things with the authorities and everything.

So you knew that your first husband was not alive anymore.

No. No. He was shot.

You knew that.

I did not know. Only when I came home after a year or so, because his friends hid the fact. And when I married after a year or two, they reproached me.

Because?

Because I married so soon.

Oh, OK.

It was not so soon.

Right.

Two years after. But I met somebody whom I knew very well. I didn't want to lose the occasion. It was somebody-- it was my cousin.

Your cousin.

My second cousin. My mothers were cousins, first cousins. It was a love story, and a very interesting story.

So you got married. And what year?

Later, yes. In '46, we married.

OK. And then what--

Then was born my son in '46.

Yeah. And so you stayed in Cluj?

Yes.

And what kind of work did he do?

Oh, my husband worked, had a very good work. He was a specialist in sweets.

In candy, you mean, in sweets?

They have all kinds of candies, yes.

And did you ever talk about going to Palestine or to--

No. No. We were very tired, very, very worn out.

Yes. And where had your cousin, your husband been, during the war?

Where did he work?

During the war, was he taken away?

He was in labor camps.

He was in labor camp.

Yes, all the time, in the Ukraine.

Oh, OK. And his name?

His name?

Yes. Berkovics, Zoltan.

Zoltan.

Zoltan. It's a Hungarian name. The mothers gave Hungarian names. My brother was Tibor. And I was Magda or [? Magdush. ?]

So you stayed in Cluj.

Yes.

And you raised your son.

Yes.

Did many Jews come back to Cluj? Did many of the Jewish people come back--

Yes--

--to Cluj?

--because there were volunteers who took us.

Yeah. And then did you work at all while you were in Romania?

Not immediately. I couldn't. I have not job. I have first to finish some regulations. And then I had graduations.

I have two diplomas-- professor in music, and professor in teaching the piano. Then I got first to the-- I was named lector universitar. That means-- it was a grade.

Degree. It was a degree. So you stayed in Romania until when?

Always.

Always. And did you ever want to leave? I mean, it was Comm--

Me, not.

You wanted to leave?

Because I had a very good job, which I always expected to have. I was a teacher at the university, a good job.

Yeah. And did you talk about the war at all?

Always.

You did?

Always.

And did people ask you about the war?

Yes.

They did.

Not the Christians. They were not very curious.

Oh, really?

No. No. No. We talked about it with ourselves.

So it was just the other Romanian-- just the Jews in Cluj who--

Yes.

--talked about the war.