

Unauthenticated

Interview with Elizabeth Lubell

March 2, 1992

Peekskill, New York.

- Q: We're speaking to Mrs. Elizabeth Lubell of Peekskill, New York. Mrs. Lubell, would you like to start by telling us a little bit about your childhood. Where were you born and the date of birth? What was your life like?
- A: I was born in 1920, December 9th. I lived in Budapest with my parents. We, had, I would say, middle class, I would say my father was a hard -working man. He was a traveling salesman. He went with his bicycle from store to store, from town to town. Sometimes he took me with us. I would say I had a happy childhood, careless, happy life. Schools were very good. I went to elementary school, then went to regular gymnasium and then I went to a handelschuler, how do you say this? Commerce school. Everything went well until Hitler came to power.
- Q: Could we jump back a little or -- is that all right?
- A: Okay, jump back. Jump back any time.
- Q: What were you like as a child? Did you have some interests or --?
- A: As a child?
- Q: Yes.
- A: Movie stars. I had interest as a little child. I was always theatrically interested. All the school plays in school,, I was always present and my parents were proudly sitting there listening to me. As I grew bigger and more serious on that line, I went into more theatrical aspects of school plays and stuff like that. It was very uneventful but it abruptly changed. So abruptly that I had a diary, for instance, which I, by coincidence, found it, because not so many documents are found from my life. As I was reading it, the diary today I was love in this boy, tomorrow with that boy, so I lived really, you know, like any teenager. All suddenly when Hitler came to power and started to come the news, I personally, immediately took it to my head. It always was -- the thought always was in my head what will be if something happens to my parents. I was very much attached to them and I was very much mamma's and papa's girl, papa's little girl.
- Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?
- A: I had my brother who lives in America right now. Almost _____. When Hitler came to power, it abruptly changed my whole lifestyle. When I was reading in my diaries, from the little girl you can see that there was no ibergan, how do you say that? It went from one year to another --
- Q: Continuity?
- A: --it immediately became serious. There was a childish little girl telling all kind of little stories

and all suddenly I heard this one on the radio. I heard that one on the radio, what will happened. Because in 1938, it started -- the whole problem. Then, of course, when my brother left for American, that changed a lot in our lives and our life.

Q: Why did he leave, did he know?

A: Because in 1938, it was the first political change in Austria, the Schussnik, you know, there was one --- what was it in Austria, what happened, how do you call that? The Anschluss, thank you. With the Anschluss, it was already everybody knew that things will happen. My brother had the foresight that he asked our relatives, my mother had a brother in America, in Kingston. He asked for the affidavit; he got married in Poland and they came to Hungary. As a matter of fact, I remember the last time when she, my sister-in-law called up -- called up her mother and said goodbye because they are leaving tomorrow for America. At that time, we didn't, in 1938 you know it was the same story what was with the Germans. They said it could never happen to us. It was something entirely new in our life. Who would think what could happen. But when that happened in 1938, my brother left. With that it started, the decline in every way -- how we felt. There was always even so that we still had our normal life. But as the weeks and months went by, more and more it came, the news from Germany. A little bit here, a little bit there. We more and more realizing that we are looking forward for a set time.

Q: Can we stay in the pre-war period for a minute? Can I ask you about your family, the Jewish aspect of your family? How were -- were they religious or assimilated?

A: We were conservative. We kept every holiday, every significant and insignificant holiday. We did keep a kosher home. We were very much Jewish oriented. I had mostly, I would say 90% Jewish friends. Not -- no gentile boyfriend. We kept the holidays, we went to shul. So I would say I had my confirmation in Budapest which I had very nice memories from. I would say we kept a nice Jewish home. We were not Orthodox but we were radicals already (?) What else do you want to know about that aspect? In that respect we care. I went to Hebrew, I mean it's not Hebrew school because that time in Hungary it was not like here. You had to take separate Jewish lessons if you went to school and that's what I did. We had our own group and we had our own hall where we went. We kept socially and in our artistic field, we kept up with the Jewish place. As the years went by 1938, 1939, more and more we had our own little Zionist groups, you know, and talked a lot about Palestine. Young people got together, but we didn't realize the real tragedy what was facing us that time.

Q: In that case, do you care ---? Where were you at this point then, you were in business? Studying in business school?

A: Yes. After I finished my business school, I got a job with a lawyer. The whole year's, all the way on --. As a matter of fact, all the way until the Germans came to Budapest, I was secretary with a lawyer.

Q: A gentile lawyer?

A: All gentiles, but the interesting part of it was that towards the end in Budapest we had -- before they made the ghetto, we had to wear the Jewish star. The lawyer where I worked was not in the Jewish section. When I went there, I took my star off so I could cross that part to go to work. That lawyer where I worked was a very, very well known lawyer, not only because he

had higher connections; but also he was on in the religious field with nuns and priests. He was a very religious man. One day as I was working there and somebody rang the bell and I opened the bell and I saw two so-called Hungarian Nazis who were worse sometimes than the Germans were. I thought well that's it. They will take me. But they came and they took my boss because he was in the religious. They did not like very religious people either. They took him to a concentration camp and I, the secretary, Jewish secretary whom they didn't know, stayed there. So that was a rather almost humorous aspect of that case. So I stayed there for a couple of months without him. When things got to be very dangerous, then I knew the safe number of that lawyer. That was right before things got very serious already. Then I opened up the safe and took out his -- the lawyer's daughter's papers, knowing if I have to run away, I will run away with this papers which I did. Which I used, but that happened later on.

Q: Do you want to tell me how?

A: Well, that -- first of all, I have to tell you that we were -- my father and mother were Polish origin. In 1941, when the Germans were not occupying Hungary yet, they came out -- they give the order to the Hungarians to deport all the non-Hungarian citizens. My father in spite of that, that he was as a Hungarian officer in the Hungarian army and he had the Iron Cross and all that things, when the order came out to deport -- you know there was a time in Hungary and when all the non-Hungarian were deported from Hungary and from Budapest. Unfortunately, we were among them and unfortunately we were among them the very first thing when that deportation started, when we didn't know yet what's going on. They came to our house and they said, pack your bag, we will take you to your own country. You will work there and you will survive after the war. That was in June, 1941. They came to our house and they said well pack your bag and go. How do you pack your bag when you live there a lifetime? So we cried and my mother cried and I cried and my fiancé was there. So the guy, he was new on the job and he had a certain human caring and sympathy to us said, you know what, I will take your father so I'm sure you stay here. You have one day to pack your bag and do whatever you want. That's what he did. In that one day, I had a choice and some people, some relatives told me, you are young, go and hide before they take you. But my father wrote a letter that the family has to stay together. Please come and whatever will be, we will survive it together. So we packed our bag and we went outside. We lived in a house, four floors. All the tenants were looking and saying goodbye to us. Some of them cheering, some of them jeering. That's how we were deported to Poland at that time. I say deported to Poland which is again easy to say but how we were and what happened and how we went there and how we walked or whatever happened. In between a lot of Hungarian, so-called Polish-Hungarian origin got killed in Kamieniec Podolski. That was a famous town where they -- you heard about Kamieniec Podolski.

Q: Oh, yes.

A: So then most of them who got killed there 40,000, they were all Hungarian origin. But knowing my parents knew Polish, they all hired a private buggy and we had relatives in Kolomyja. We stayed -- we hid back from the transport because we knew that the transport is going to Kamieniec Podolski. A lot of other people escaped too but we went with that buggy to Kolomyja and that's where we stayed in Kolomyja, that was that time, yes, more or less normal life because the ghetto was not easy. But of course, after a year being in the ghetto and losing people -- it was over 20,000 people in Kolomyja -- by the time I escaped as a smuggler, there was only a couple of hundred left. That's when it was that I said goodbye to my parents and of

course, I never saw them again. I started on the road going back to Hungary which was a bad road to talk about a lot.

Q: Do you ever talk to anyone about the ghetto though, before ---?

A: The ghetto, we lived, it was a whole year. Before the ghetto, we lived in Kolomyja yet. When the ghetto came, of course, like everybody else, we had to move in the ghetto. We also had the -- they said on the tape that three, four families lived in the ghetto. Well, where we went, it was rather five, six families living in the ghetto.

Q: In one room place?

A: In a one room place, right. Then, of course, some of them got killed during the time, so it got less and less. That's when I decided after a year being in Kolomyja and about half a year in the ghetto, it's time to go

Q: Was there anything while you were there that struck you and made a -- that stands out in your mind?

A: Every day struck me because I was a young person who was rather careful living and all suddenly you are tossed in this situation. We went to work in the morning because my father being a military person and the Germans also gave him a job as a supervisor. The other Jews didn't like him because he was a supervisor. They didn't like nobody who supervised over other Jews. So we worked there for a time. As a matter of fact, I worked in a kitchen preparing dinner for German officers. My job was -- with three other girls -- peeling potatoes. At that time, hunger was already a big aspect of ghetto life because you know that people just died of hunger. So what we did, we got permission for the peels to take home. We had the peels for whatever meals we made.

Q: You cooked them?

A: We cooked the peels, right. But in order to have something on the peels, we peeled the potatoes in the kitchen thick. Then we went home and we peeled the pieces.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: We made it so that the peels were thick but then the Germans came to it and they said that whoever will peel like that thick, will have a punishment. So we couldn't do that. From then on, we had to eat the peels and not peel the peels. The other one what I remember from the ghetto, when we went out to work. Through work, we got to know some other workers. This was German families who moved into Jewish houses. They renovated and redecorated a little; we worked on it, to keep it clean until their wife and children came. We saw the mementoes of a life, you know Jewish life, sometimes we came into a house where we saw the pots and pans yet as they carried them out. We just had to close our eyes and see what happened there. We had to clean up and make it ready for the German officers. I was working there once washing the floors with a pail, you know a big pail of water. Because you're asking me to tell you memories from the ghetto.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: So the German --. Until that time, you know, I knew that I was in danger and everything but I didn't have any personal contact with any physical punishment. Cleaning the floor and almost finished it, he came in and he took the pail and he kicked the pail and he said this is not clean enough, clean it again. So that was my first encounter with a German officer. As it happened to be, the German officer's wife came back. She acted rather humanely to the Jewish girls. It happened to be that, I don't know whether I should mention it, but everything -- but she had some tendencies for liking girls. The question was whether to use this situation to your advantage or not to use it to your advantage. But sometimes, it came to a point, you told me an incident before about bread. Sometimes you came to a point when the only thing on your mind was, you are twenty years old and somewhere along in the sky when you looked up, there is a life yet for people. Let's do whatever is possible but let's survive. It happens to be that that woman helped me a lot to get easier job, to get more food until her husband came to the picture. Then I lost my job. Then we had to go to a factory where he worked, some kind of, if I remember correctly, I think something with an ironwork or something. The first day when I went there, we were rather abused that time there. Then I decided that this is a good place maybe to run away or something or make connections and that's what I heard the first time, that there is somewhere a small _____ that it is possible to --. I stayed in that factory and I worked there. We went out to ghetto, back to the ghetto and the ghetto was always less and less and less. My parents were always less and less independent and more and more relied on me. The roles reversed between parents and children. Not children because it was only me. It was me who directed them what to do and how -- like for instance, when I had to go to work, this mother, the Germans looked up and mother got old very suddenly in the ghetto. It happened -- it coincided with her menopause too so that was really a hard thing because she acted sometimes very strange. I was very much afraid -- everything fell on her and she just couldn't digest the tragedy what fell on her. I sometimes was the one who had to lead her and say it will be good. I remember I pinched her cheeks sometimes so she would survive so maybe made a little bit her hair so that the Germans won't say you are too old to work. This was a couple of memories from the ghetto. Then, of course there was also memories. I met a young man who worked in a soup kitchen. You know when you are twenty years old, no matter what the situation you are thrust into, you always have a little bit romantic state in you. Because that keeps you alive. I met a young man who was very kind to me and he gave me always thick soups and things like that. I sometimes met him but he had somebody else, I had somebody else but it developed some kind of rapport between us. I remembered him long after that. That was, of course my present husband. But I didn't know at that time yet. But when it came to the time that the ghetto got from 20,000 to a couple of hundred, I said that's it. I discussed it with my mother the last day. The last night when I knew that I'm leaving in the morning --. You know we rather stayed away from kissing or touching or something because you changed. In order to survive you have to lose your -- certain feelings disappear from you. But that was the last night and mother just touched me so because she had her own thoughts and I had my own thoughts. The only thing what I remember that I just wanted to -- that nobody should touch me and nobody should kiss me. Just to push it away because one more touch and one more kiss, I'm not going to leave. That was the reason. I never explained it to her but I hope she understood it because one more touch and one more kiss, I'm not going to leave. That was the reason. I never explained it to her but I hope she understood it. Because when she wanted to touch me, I just like -- I pushed it away. I did it in order that I should be able to leave. The next -- before I left my father gave me that talisman which I carry with me. I never, never leave it. Wherever I go, that talisman goes with me. Somehow, I don't -- I'm not superstitious otherwise, but I truly believed that talisman saved me from a lot of situations. When the time

will be that I have to go, then I have to decide which of my children will have it. That was the ghetto and I went away. I went back to Budapest where that time even so that Hitler was far and advancing all over; it was still not the ghetto. Only a couple of months later ---.

Q: What year was this?

A: I was there a whole year in the ghetto. From 1941 to 1942. I have tell you one incident there because that is an -- I try not to go into little details but --.

Q: No, it's okay.

A: But this detail was so remarkable that I have to mention it. After about 25 or 26 days -- the 20th day they caught us. I think -- did I mention it or didn't I mention it?

Q: No.

A: We were -- oh, I told you that before. We were walking at night to reach Hungary from Poland. I mean it was a long road but I cannot go into every aspect of it. But in any case, we were walking at night and sleeping at daytime. That was just about the last day before we saw already, the Hungarian border when somebody probably who noticed us, told it to the German guards. They came up this -- we were ten of us who were escaping from the ghetto -- they came up, the German guards and they shot everybody on sight. I ran away that time and it was laying there a big tree eaten up from the moss. You know, hollow inside. There is a lot of fate was in my life what I have to strongly believe that there must be something, somebody, somewhere who prepared that tree for me there, where I went in that tree, in that hollow tree. Was laying and I was laying; I was in the tree. I just heard the shooting and the crying and saying no, no; until everything got quiet. I walked out from the tree and what I saw only dead people. I started to walk because I think that time; from that day on I was not quite right. I think I was singing or something. I said, I'm going back to mamma and how wonderful it is. I stumbled, by accident, over the smuggler who was also escaping, but not only that he was getting -- he was getting shot and escaping and I found him but everybody had a little knapsack, you know, little knapsack where we had things. He, in a big hurry, instead of taking his knapsack, took my knapsack, took my knapsack and I am the one who survived. So this little incident what I sometimes wonder how that worked out. So I found him but he was injured and he said he cannot do nothing. He gave me his pocketknife and in his tie, he was --. The trouble as they shot, they shot at my back and it went into his tie, near the genital areas. He gave me that little knife and he said that I have to take that bullet out which I did. He was there for the night and then he said, write me that letter that you are here so that I can get my money. I won't get too much in any case because from the ten of you, you are the only one survived. So that's what the paper what I showed you that I wrote him and that was from the woods. This was the Hungarian woods in Korosmezo.

Q: Could you spell that?

A: Korosmezo. Here I write it down. Kirsh -- this is a border town. Korosmezo. This is a border town. From there, when I am in Korosmezo, I am already in Hungary. So he said that, he covered me over with leaves and he said I don't feel good. So he left me with my knapsack what I had a little sweater on. It was cold in the woods already. He said -- he gave me an onion, by the way, which was very good. He went away and he said he will come for me. He

will whistle a certain way so I know because that was, even so it was in the woods, but people could still go there. He said when you hear that whistle, then tell that this is you. So he went away and he left me there four and a half -- four days and one night. I was in the woods by myself so I was really -- can you imagine that, a twenty- year old girl in the woods, you know, rain or not rain or anything. There was one incident that something moved, I probably moved and the peasant came there who was taking lambs to eat, to raise or whatever you call it. He heard and he comes straight -- he came straight where I am. I was just huddling there covered with certain leaves there and I heard the steps closer and closer. The only thing what he did, he peed and peed on me. I was just standing there and that was one of the incidents. Then people asked me what did you eat for four days? You have to eat for four days, which is not necessarily so. But I had that one onion and then blueberries grew that time in the --. When I felt safe enough in the night. I went around me and I ate some blueberries. But the fourth night, I dreamed about my fiancé in Hungary at that time. It was a beautiful wedding and everything. When I got up and I was in the situation, you know, whatever I was in there; I looked up, I said this is sh_____. I can't. There was a limit what I could endure. And I said, I just don't care anymore, nothing, when I heard the whistle. So little coincidences and he did come. I told him where were you? I couldn't talk so good to him because he didn't talk Hungarian and I didn't talk so good Polish. But he said, he was sick. I mean, I believe it, I'm not such a good surgeon. He came for me the fifth day and he took me to a place where I had to walk up on the top. Because I was -- even so I was in Hungary -- I think my husband explained it. When they catch you there, then they immediately send you back to Germany. So everybody was afraid to give -- to hide you. So I was up there in the -- in some kind of an attic waiting for further instruction to go deeper into Hungary. The deeper you got into Hungary, the safer you were that the Germans -- that they won't give you over to the Germans. This was in 1942. As I was walking down the steps because he told me to come down now we are ready, we have a car and we will go to the next town which is Mag_____. As I walked down, I saw a figure in the bottom of the steps and I didn't recognize quite and he probably didn't recognize me. But when I wrote that letter, you know, what I gave; my fiance, he himself came all the way to the border town, to bring the car and that was him standing downstairs. I don't go into the feelings and sentimental aspects with you. I leave that to your imagination.. But it was something to behold. His life was, of course, at that time in danger because if they would catch him, he would also be -- so he was a Hungarian citizen. But what I wanted to tell you, what I don't want to leave out. As we wanted to go to Mar_____ to get with the car and from Mar_____ again, you're already out. In Hungary you can go with the trains, cars, buses, whatever you want to. Until that time, you were in danger. It was a long row of car before the bridge. When you passed the bridge, you were already in -- on my destination. There was a long line of cars. At the beginning of the car, the chauffeur looked out, the one that was paid. He said, we are in trouble because they re checking the cars, my first instinct was to jump out because if they see me, the way I look from this life. I was full with lice by the way. My head was full with lice. I was dirty ,I was bleeding. I had wounds, I had all kind of things there from the woods. If they catch him, he will pay with his life for it. So I wanted to jump out from the car and if that's the way, it has to be .He was holding me back and all suddenly a soldier comes to our car. Mind you, there was a long line of cars there before us, crossing the bridge. He doesn't even look in the back. It was such a remarkable incident that I will never forget it. He doesn't look in the back. He just goes to the chauffeur and he says, you know, I lost my key. I can't even remember what he said -- license or my key or if he said something to the chauffeur -- would you please drive me to Korosmezo. The chauffeur said, of course. He came in and sat next to the chauffeur. As we walked by, you know the cars, and as we reached the point where the guy checked everybody's card, they just looked in and saw a Hungarian officer. They just saluted

and we went by. To this day, number one, I don't forget the incident. Number two, I don't believe in supernatural, I cannot quite believe it but there is a tiny little doubt in my mind whether this was not some kind of an angel set down. Because why would -- I mean it is a coincidence to be mentioned.

Q: Oh, yes, indeed. You had mentioned earlier when we were talking that you had some type of an encounter with Wallenberg?

A: Yes, that was -- that came later. Because when -- then I came back to Hungary. In Hungary as I said at that time was, I was from 1941 to 1942 in the ghetto. At that time Germany still didn't occupy Hungary. It wasn't ghetto yet. It was my aunt there and she asked me what it was like and what she didn't believe. I ate potato peels and stuff like that. But as we closed into the year, more and more Germans came to Hungary until finally on the main street of Hungary, the Germans marched in and that was the end. Hungary was occupied by Germany. You know Horthy, Horthy was the ---. So he went away with his white horse and stuff like that. He tried, as a matter of fact, to save the Jews but he was too weak to do anything in that respect. Then the Germans came in and then, of course, the Germans took over like they took over the other countries. Then came the ghetto. Knowing what the ghetto is because I had a little bit of experience before, so I said I am not going to go in the ghetto. As I said, I worked with a lawyer and I had this papers from this lawyer's daughter what I stole from the safe. I said I'm not and my aunt said, well come with us and everything. She said, by the way, that time she said, now I know what you told me, what went on in the ghetto. I can believe it now more. As the year went by, she believed me unfortunately more and more. She was a very lovely lady, very nice aunt what I had. They all went to ghetto and I went with the Catholic papers, you know where the Balaton is?

Q: Yes.

A: That's a lake, Balaton Lake. I was working with my friend, with a Hungarian friend of mine as a maid and a nurse. One week I was the maid and she was the nurse. One week I was the nurse and she was the maid. We worked there a month with my papers what I had and she had other papers. Catholic, we went to church and I learned to pray and all stuff with the children. One day a policeman comes to our house and checks our papers. He checked her paper, he checked my paper and said okay, we will check it out and we'll come for you in the morning.. I knew that they will check out my papers, this was an aristocrat what I worked. He had a von you know, that lawyer's. So I knew that they will know it at the staff that I am not the daughter from that aristocratic man. So I said to my friend, Monica, I said, you know what. They will know that we have papers, let's run away. We went out to the railroad in the night. I had four children there. Parents were somewhere else so I tucked them in and I hoped nothing ill happen to the children. We went through the window and we went to the railroad station. At the railroad station we met the same guy who came that day for us, for our papers. That was the end of our freedom. They caught both of us and that's how we went from camp to camp to camp to camp.. I was that time, that was in 1943, so two years ---.

Q: These were all Hungarian workers?

A: These were all Hungarian workers only that one _____ which was the Austrian border. I ran away from most of them, by the way, because I had the experience already. I cannot go every aspect of camp life, it would take too long but if you want something to know, I

can tell you that I had many, many incidents.

Q: Which one or two stands out?

A: The one with Wallenberg, the one what stands out. We were in -- that was I think, it was at Sarvar, you see my memory is failing me too. What Wallenberg did, he had a truck. He had a list of names. He went to this camps because from this camps, because like for instance at the Sarvar where we were, there was the camp where the war was full-written, goodbye, goodbye because from Sarvar they went to the German concentration camps. This was a collective camp -- where they collected people when they had enough. Because they didn't take just a hundred people, they didn't take. When there were more, then they took them away. So this was a camp where from on, there was only one way. So Wallenberg with his truck, and his men went to this camps with a list. At that time, they still acknowledged Wallenberg's authority. So he came to the camp and we were all standing there and the German guard -- not the German, the Hungarian guard came with him. He said, this list what I'm reading, all stand forward. Because this is under the Swiss protection. He had that list. I was in that Swiss house. That's how he knew me by name. I think I mentioned it to you that I was there. So he comes near me and I remember his face and everything. They called him the Angel of the Jews because he saved so many Jews. He stand before me and he says are you Margit so- and- so. I was a little, I guess I was stupid because I didn't want to say nothing because I went after the rules. I am not that. The girl next kicked me and said so why don't you say that this is you -- that you are Margit so- and -so. I said yes, yes, I am Margit so-and-so. He said well, why don't you step forward, he tells me, Wallenberg. What does it take so long to recognize your name? I stepped forward and he took us in the bus. They took us back to Budapest. That was one encounter what I had with Wallenberg in person. I went back to Budapest and now I didn't have again papers. The other things what I had from my father. You know, they wore this gold watches.

Q: Pocket watches.

A: It was a chain and --. I had that chain. I had that gold chain. I sewed it in -- not my girdle, I didn't wear a girdle -- but what holds the stockings, how do you call that?

Q: The_____. garter belt.

A: Garter belt. I sewed that up the garter belt around it and for that garter belt, I bought the papers what I still have home. This is the papers what I showed you. With that papers, I left in one of the Christian -- I never went to the ghetto. I went to the house. Budapest was very, very hard bombed. Of course, between the bombing and the Germans coming to the -- where we went in the basement, how do you call that?

Q: The bomb shelter?

A: The bomb shelters, we were. Between that and that. I sometimes walked on the streets. The bombs were falling, the dead people were around me but I felt safer there than in the bomb shelter because the more it bombed, the more and more Germans came -- they had nothing better to do. The more and more came to the shelter and took out people and took them out to the Danube. The Danube was floating with thousands of people. As a matter of fact, I will tell you, remind me if I forget it, because I have to tell you a very important incident after the war, after the _____, remind me from that. So, now what did I tell you before?

Q: The Danube was --.

A: Oh, yes. So January 18, we were liberated by the Russians and January 16, they still came, the Germans looking for Jews. One of them when they came in and I was there in the shelter. I couldn't walk any more on the street because it was just really 100 % because the bombs were falling like anything. There I made an acquaintance -- you see -- I must also tell you one other aspect what I don't like to go into that -- it maybe sometimes embarrassing. But I said after the ghetto, that I came back. I said I have to survive. Standing or laying but I will survive. Was no morality left in me. Even so I was brought up in a house where, if I wasn't home by eight o'clock my father was walking before the house, you know. There was one guy who said well, I think, I am almost sure that he knew I was Jewish. But he somehow got a liking to me and he said that if I'm nice, he will be nice. I said, I will be as nice as you want me to be. When the guy came to check the -- because they checked the papers, who is Jewish, who is not Jewish. There was another family there, a woman and her husband and a son. A nice, fat, beautiful looking Jewish boy. She was with papers and I was with papers. Somehow one Jew recognized the other one. Somehow be feeling or by look or by eyes. There was some kind of rapport that one Jew knew what the other Jew. But one aspect of this which is maybe nobody told you, or maybe they did; there was one aspect to it, when one Jew was caught, then they had the tendency unfortunately, if I was caught, then you should be caught too. I don't go into psychological reasoning but maybe there is a reasoning what there is an answer to it. When the German guy, when that Nazi came to check the papers, this other boy was standing beside me.
(End of Side A)

Oh, yes. In any case, as I said they came this Nazis, the Hungarian Nazis what they call this the Millerkaras, that was the Hungarian name. They were sometimes more brutal and more perverse than the Germans, if you can be more.

Q: Linkas_____?

A: Milaschok, No Linka was in Romania. This was the Milashoke. So when he came to this couple what I told you that mother and father and son, and take their papers. They did not accept their papers and they took them out. Of course, as I told you that time, it was such a big bombardment that they didn't have time to take them to the Danube so they shot them all too. Mother, father and son. I found that out later. I didn't know that they were shot right before the house. But that was not the end of the story. As they walked out, they looked at me. I knew that in that moment, in that -- how do you say that in English, there comes a moment of --?

Q: Moment of truth.

A: Moment of truth. In that moment of truth, I didn't know, will they tell me if they take me, she's Jewish too. Or they will say or they will not say that, but in order to save that moment of truth - -.. You see everybody had a blanket or a quilt or we called it different from a quilt --. In that moment when they took them out, I thought -- you see at that time I escaped from so many things already that I had a little bit of experience. I was far from that naïve already what I was before. I said to the guy who was standing beside me, I said, look, this people, these Jews. I used the word -- they had a very nice blanket and I don't have one, can I have it? It startled the guy who checked my papers. Before I even gave him my papers, the other guy said, you don't have to check her out. She will have the new blanket from the Jew and I will check her out. He didn't even have my papers in his hand. Because my papers was even so I had it with me and

they were not. I was a prostitute according to my papers, that kind of papers I had. I certainly acted sometimes accordingly. That's another story. In any case, they went away and they took them out and they shot them. Now I have to interject here now, a scene. This people whom they shot before the house, she had a brother. After the war, when we were still in that house, the brother came to pick up whatever they had. Then they said, I heard that there was somebody here, some shiksa here, who took away my dead brother's room. They shot before the house, the _____. I want to confront that woman. I was still, because at that time was still, you know not safe to go out but even so that the Russians took already over, the Germans sometimes came back and forth. So it was not safe yet to give yourself away. I never did it. Some people did it. They gave themselves away and then the Germans came back, that was the end of them. I never -- I still didn't because I knew that they come -- Budapest is two part, Buda and Pest -- in Buda was the Germans, in Pest was the Russians. They went back and forth. It took two, three weeks until finally the Russians took over. So he wanted to confront me that who is that who took her -- and to tell me certain things. When he came there and was confronted me, it was even so that time that the Russians were there already, I was still afraid. I said just don't make too much commotion. I did that to save my life, I'm Jewish too. We talked there sometimes and he said well, in that case, I understand it. That was the after effect of that case. In any case, we were there in that shelter all the way until January 18. In the night, one Russian but comes down. You see, I talk about the Russians so much because the Russians are the ones who liberated us. Not the Russians, I'm not here.

Q: This is 1945 already?

A: This is 1945, January 18. So my war lasted from 1941 to 1945. So I was 4 ½ years younger wherever. When the first Russians came in and mind you, I was still with Catholic papers there. When the first Russians came in somehow, you know, in any case that day's already with the bombardment, is catching these parents and everything. I am quite sure that I was mentally really not right and understandably so. I was really, really on the end of my line. I couldn't take too much more anymore. When I saw the first Russian, I just -- I said there is other people around. Wherever we were living in the shelter, that was in the basement, of course. Half of it was bombed and everything. I wanted to run to that Russian and kiss him from top to toe. I'm free, I'm free -- you know, the movies. They were holding me back. They said don't you know what the Russians are doing? They did a lot of raping, you know that. They didn't care whether they rape 18 year old or 88 years old, they didn't care. But the difference it was, that the first fighting group who fights for a city is always the elite of the military. They do not do any raping. They are not the ones who does it. The occupying troops are the ones who does it. When all kind when it was free, free robbery, free raping, free --. You could do anything. But the first elite group didn't do too much raping. But I wanted to go out and then the girl next to me, she said, what are you so happy about? To see the Russians, what you know, she started because she didn't really know who I am. She just knew how my name is just Komaria. He was holding me back and I didn't go. But the second day, because then they came more and more Russians in the basement looking for men, you know, who was hiding also. That young man who stood beside me and he said, he told, that was, you know up on the floor it was a department store. They had in the department store, they had honey left. Food was a big thing that time. He comes to me and he says before yet, the Russians came, you know what; there's big, big container of honey there. We will go up there and I will give you a lot of honey. Honey was gold at that time. That was already after that incident with the Germans so I said now I don't need him any more. He said, you know what, I will give you the honey, I saved your life but --- he knew already that the Russians are in the corner but when it comes to it, will

you save mine? How can I save you?, I said. You know how you can save it. So he knew who I was. Because he wouldn't ask me that question then whether I can save your life or not. When the Russians came in, when they were already looking for Hungarian soldiers, or non-Jews, you know, he came to me and he said, help me to get out of here. I helped you, you help me. And I did help him to escape. Whether I did it right or wrong, but I did it and he did escape. I don't know what happened to him. Well, in any case, then the Russians came in and then of course, it started. I don't know whether you know about the aspects of how the Russians behaved. It was soup kitchens again and it was again standing in the line. It was all the ruins and I had nobody. I just walked on the streets, you know. Seeing people coming out of the ghetto. Everybody says, oh Yaneka, _____, _____, _____, and I went there and I had nobody. Because everybody died. I said well, I will look for my aunt. You know that aunt who didn't believe me? They were in the ghetto and they were the rich aunts in the family because they had a house in Hungary. That was like having a house in New York at that time. They had some six, seven rooms. That was an awful lot of room in Hungary. Here, you know people who works can have four rooms too, it's nothing. In any case, they did survive and I did go to them. It's nothing. In any case, they did survive and I did go to them. It was a big beautiful reunion. Of course they took away their house, they took away their apartment and they gave them the room where the maid used to live. There, where the maid used to live, there I was living for them, for a while until they got another room attached to it. They took back their old room, not the house, just a room, because the Russians of course wouldn't give them back the house. What was life, you will ask me after the bombardment? After the Russians came in? it was a tough life. It was first of all, the first days were -- the first week rather after the war. It was also interesting -- you know we lived on the fourth floor when we didn't go to the shelter. After the so-called fighting, I went up on the fourth floor and looked out the window because I was more or less like free then. Because after five years, you felt that Mommy I survived! I was rather careless that time. I went and I looked out the window because I wanted to see what is a war. You see this is not a war like here. They drop an atomic bomb and everybody's boom! Finished. There they are fighting corner to corner. I went up on the window and I looked down and I saw this one is Germans and this one is Russians, they're shooting. I look out of the window so they shot up. They almost shot my head off. So I got -- well because I didn't know better. So I went back to there until things subsided. At that time, houses were closed yet and Russians were standing all over. Slowly, slowly life got back to it. Everything, you couldn't buy nothing. As I said, I was secretary for a lawyer. I had to make something, money didn't mean anything. I had nothing anymore to sell. The only thing it is to work and get food for it. The lawyer where I worked, whom I worked before once, he took me back. Some people came to him, advise us and they gave him eggs and bread or pork fat or whatever they gave him, he gave me part of it as payment to the secretary. Until things didn't get back to more or less, I couldn't call it normal because it was far from normal. I met one day a friend of our father and mother who did survive. Her family didn't survive but her house, her room was bombed. She lived in a small room and her living room got a full hit from the bomb and it had a hole in the middle. So I lived in the little room but in that house. She was very attached to me because I was young and I walked -- you see the Budapest has many, many beautiful bridges which were all bombed, all the bridges. People went through the Danube back to Buda to get potatoes, flowers or--. Sometimes I brought it back so she was attached to me because she knew that being young, I will bring something else. By the way, that time, there was another incident what maybe I will tell you, certain main, main aspects of it. It was a couple of days after the -- after things settled down -- there was a so-called free, free looting. People went with big bags in this big department stores and whatever they found they put it in the bag and they took it home. It was free loot. The Russians stood there and told you so take

it, take it. If you went out empty handed, they send you back to take something. So I'm living there in that house where above it was a department store. In this department store, I thought I will go looting too. Why not, the other people go, but I didn't. I didn't prepare myself with the proper thing. I didn't have a bag, I didn't have a knife, I didn't have the scissors so I was not quite made for this looting business. There was big giant men there carting materials and everything. I was just there. If they make me, I was some 85 or 90 pounds, if they gave me a push, I would just fall down. They said if you want to live, you better go away. I want to loot so I went down where the food was. There in the food, people went also and took the silverware and whatever it is. Finally, one guy lifted me up and put me on a bag of flour. He said you stay here if you want to be alive. Because they were strong people and I was just a -- the wind could blow me away that time. I was still there, people took everything and I stood there with -- on the bag of flour until everything was looted out. I stood there with the bag of flour. Of course,, I couldn't take the bag of flour and that was full with pickles and jams and everything. On me, but I still was sitting on a bag of flour. What did I do? I had one and only dress and I took the flour and I put it in my -- here like this, in there. I went all the way walked that way to my landlady and I said, here we have flour, we make bread from it. Which we took out the glass and we did make bread from it. But after a while, it was got to -- I lived that time, I went away from my aunt and I lived in a friend's of mine, the same friend who was together with me in the camp. I went to that house and I lived. You know there was, they call it, belated reaction. When you know you survived, when you know well, five years went away, you survived alone but you survived. Then after that when you know that it comes, that psychological for what? And for whom? And for why? That was on fourth floor where I lived that time. It was in December. I was just alone, just --. I said, I --I came to the point that I needed help which I personally didn't get -- psychological help. So I opened the window and I went to the windowsill. I thought, well, many people did that by the way, I was not the only one. I said well, let's finish it up. My landlady, who was a very nice lady, she came into the room and she says Elizabeth, you must be crazy. You are opening the window and the whole heat what I put up here, it goes away. I mean I don't heat here that you open here the windows. I am standing on the window ledge jumping. I got very mad and I went then. I got so mad that I went to her and I start to hit her. I hit her and I hit her and she kneeled down beside me and she said, oh, Elizabeth don't do that, don't do that. She did that and she said that just to bring me back from the ledge. Was a nice lady. After that, I said well, okay, let's start living. I went to the soup kitchen and I asked for a job in the soup kitchen. In there, there are so many incidents, so many incidents happened there during the war, after the war, during the bombing, in the ghetto. It is interesting but as I told it to Henry, you cannot go into every aspect.

Q: Well, okay, you can tell any ones you want, that you would like to --.

A: But that is what is really standing out, I told you. One day when I went home to my landlady, I met --. You see, I was working with the lawyer. In that law office, I met a young Jewish man who also survived the war and who met me in that soup kitchen. He went not for soups because he was at that time in the black market business. He started to me -- at that time people only made money because there was no business, nothing, it was only black market He started the black market business very successfully. He always had an eye on me but I was not too interested. But after the war, when he gave me a proposition, he said you know what, I mean what is that, you work in the soup kitchen. I have money, you will come and live with me and we will see what we will do. I probably would have become what papers I had before. I said okay and I went to my landlady and I had, as I said, one dress which I washed was full with flours. I said to her, I have a date with that man and he was standing down with the car. I lived

on the second floor at that time. I told it to my landlady, he's waiting and my landlady said okay because she wanted something from him too. I opened the window and I said I coming down five minutes. Ad I said, I had one dress and I went down to go on a road what could end like Madame X or who knows what. I don't know what would have become. But as I walked down the steps going to the guy who's waiting for me in the house before the car, a Russian soldier comes up the steps. I see a Russian soldier, I run because I had incidents with a Russian soldier which I didn't tell you, which I wrote if you are interested.

Q: Oh, yeah.

A: A jar of pickles where the -- you know the Russians did their -- plenty. So when I saw a Russian, I run. This was my experience. The Russian guy tells me, well Elizabeth, don't you recognize me? I didn't recognize him because he wore the party's uniform, the red star, that was Russian. So then I looked at him and then I saw. I went back with him to my landlady. My landlady opened the door and said are you crazy bringing a Russian here? I said, he's not a Russian, he's not a Russian, he's Jewish. I know him from the ghetto. Then she said, but he's waiting downstairs with the car and I said -- but you know it's interesting and I don't want to be sentimental about it and we are old enough not to be. But five years I fought for my life. In a minute, he came into my life. I said well, that's it for me. Now take over -- and he did. That was how we met. Now what do you ask me now? What do you want to know more?

Q: I think that should possibly do it. I think I've --.

A: And then of course we waited and we went to Vienna. From Vienna, we went to the consulate. The consulate said the quota is closed. Then all suddenly my brother kept sending me affidavits and everything. Meanwhile I got pregnant too. We thought we settle down in Vienna like many other Jews. But then one day there comes -- he writes me a letter, the Polish quota is open. Let's go to America.

Q: You mentioned something about a trip to Israel. That was just to visit?

A: The trip to Israel was before when we knew already that we come to America and we had brothers that time in Israel, so we went to Israel. As a matter of fact, Barbara, our daughter, the first move what she made was in Israel. That was the trip before we go. One thing, I want to tell you more. As a -- in the tape -- because that was also a nice incident. On what we came is the Mauretania. When you are nearing the Statue of Liberty, the captain, especially at that time --. By the way, we were one of the last who didn't go to Ellis Island. Before us they still went to Ellis Island. When we came, it was not Ellis Island anymore. So there was two incidents what I want to tell you. So then we were on the boat and we were nearing the Statue of Liberty and the captain of the boat was reading there, you know, Give me your tired, your poor, and we were standing, Henry and I and he had his story to tell and I had my story. I was pregnant and we went to America and we were holding hands and we were looking at the Statue of Liberty. And I said, well, we made it. That's the end of the story.