

*The following is a rough transcript of the interview, which ran 01:54. Research notes backing up some of the names of places and people are appended.*

### **Family and life growing up:**

I was only 7 year old when lost father. In March 1928 he was building us a snowman in the garden and he just collapsed; he was taken to a clinic in the nearest city but never came back. Mother was bringing up two children, **Likaveedo**. (00:56) My father was a bank manager there; she got pension from the bank but not well off people.

Got a **Freilag** [housemaid or nanny?] (1:20) from **Vienna** was living with us; when I was 15 she was still living with us. We learned the language [German]. My brother couldn't speak Hungarian when he went to school; he learned only from **Freiland**.

We went to Jewish school, didn't went to kindergarten. I adored my teacher, was heartbroken when I left her. Went to secondary school. Good young life.

We have like this today, people who could go anywhere. When I was growing up, 16 years, it was limited but still the Jewish women had a club, tea afternoons, keeping the young one and women engaged and together, dances, theater...

In 1939 had my matriculation.

### **What Jewish activities were you involved in?**

Not really, not taking part of it. Only Orthodox because no other synagogue. Kisvarda (3:53) very Orthodox city, Hasidic, shtreimels, white stockings, we went to synagogue on the main holidays because grandmother, grandfather, they kept it. Were kosher at home. When war was coming not allowed to have kosher meat. Mother brought other meat because stepfather didn't allow her to buy from black market so bought from other butcher, had to make kosher with salt/water. Good enough for us.

Elementary school was Jewish school, religion one hour every week. Reading, history.

### **What sort of place did you live in?**

When I was small we lived by my grandmother, little house, in the **Bigadde** [not clear if she's saying big garden or if this is a place name]. Parents had just built, moved in to new house when father died. It was modern because new. Friendly with brother, always teasing him, fought a lot. I was the bad one. He told me, **Vera**, don't tease me. He grew up and I was the little sister.

Adored my mother's grandmother, she lived near **Mischgourz Miskolc? Magocs? Magotsch?**  
in a little town (6:55)

**Rag... was a freedom fighter, he lived in that town (time?)** We went every summer. Milled wheat in the town; you could have a very good life there. In this time wasn't the Jewish situation. Police, doctor, teacher in little village, they had always been together. Grandmother didn't come back, she went with Mother [at Auschwitz]; she was in our place then.

In 1939, 1940, wasn't in this village, this time discrimination. It was all right. Uncle president for synagogue.

15,000 in village where she lived; nearly half Jewish, was a Jewish community, they say it's **Kalitzia** [10:03] in Hungary because so many Jewish people there. Everyone was keeping Shabbas, shops closed, really a holiday.

Stepfather called **Samu bácsi** [10:52]. He was always with us and we loved him so we called him Samu bácsi.

### **Family in area how long?**

1944 took us away from same place, now house demolished. Imagine how much gold, everything they found in the walls and garden, because house was in ghetto, other side of street wasn't ghetto, was square.

In 1939 wanted to study further, brother 2.5 years younger, stepfather used connection for brother, Ivan, [13:08] who wanted to be a veterinarian [13:39] like Samu bácsi.

I would have loved to go to university; was a good scholar. Learned dressmaking really just for fun, to keep busy, do something.

Stepfather was very respected in town, was vet for the council [13:56]; even to last minute, even with yellow star on his coat, they took him out and they take his advice, not ashamed to go with him

Mother remarried when I was 16; nice family life. Didn't take my brother in university by the time he graduated. Needed connection to get into college and they weren't taking any Jews by then. He went to learn plumbing, some sort of trade. He was young when they took him away.

I don't remember good. I am closed up very much. I have nobody, nobody came back. I am the only one from the whole big family. Nobody to talk to about it.

Mother, brother, father's parents. Grandmother died the day before they were going to put her in ghetto.

I got married this time. Met my husband in March 1944. **Dr. Weissmiller** [18:15] Hungarian-Jewish board, not army but labor battalions. He was in Kisvarda [18:54], asked who is that girl? He said I was too young for him. April 19 got married, 20<sup>th</sup> of April, gendarmes came to put us in ghetto. The same day my grandmother died. They took all the furniture, everything, said other families were moving in. Were two families in one room, my grandmother was there.

It was a hard life; frightful days.

Before war, 1939, army like with cross came to Kisvarda, invited everybody to marketplace, making antisemitic speech. We didn't believe everything going on in the world; was very dangerous to listen to Radio Free Europe. We'd been closed up from the world, didn't know anything; trust everybody; ;didn't know where they were taking us, nothing. Very stupid.

We heard Hitler's speech on normal radio; think this can happen with anybody else but won't happen with you. We knew because Slovak girls came to Hungary and were hiding. We didn't believe them. Auschwitz, we didn't believe them, about going to flames. Generally, Hungarian Jews like I'd been knew what was going on in Austria, but this can't happen with us.

1939-1944. Life like usual, but not in 1944, when wore star and were limited in where they could go. Some people just went past us, didn't recognize us but my non-Jewish girlfriend, still friends today.

Black market was working, like it always does. Could go in shops, buy in shops, just in last year, when they don't want to see us, we don't want to see them either. Proud.

Grandmother came to our place like every winter; when I got engaged wasn't allowed to travel. **45 kilometers to town where husband lived.** Were already shifting Jews from country to ghetto; wasn't allowed Jewish wedding. Next door to our house was Samu bácsi's house, went from one street to another. My husband could come there for the army, the horses, so he would visit us.

1944 wedding. Had four poles and that was our chupa. One witness, Samu bácsi's friend, marriage counselor, parents, I saw carriages coming with people from country through window. Was a sad wedding. Wanted daughter to have a big wedding because I couldn't have one.

For engagement, father-in-law and one sister-in-law got permit to come to our place. My husband already 39, I was 22. Married me because it would help. He stayed alive and I stayed alive and last year we were 51 years married.

That was good about the whole thing, what was left over for me. Nothing else and nobody else.

**Ghetto in square between four streets (33:45): Czielegusa\*, very Jewish street, Hortenmicklosz\*, named after Hungarian governor [Miklos Horthy. Their address in deportation list given as 28 Horthy]**

All non-Jewish families were there, was synagogue, they was putting all the people in. Only short time there together. In April, middle of April, when we got in; I think June, six weeks, they took us away.

I was thinking only about my husband. My mind was blocked.

### **Who was living together?**

Grandmother, brother got room from terrace, small room, Samu bácsi, mother, us in this room; in other room, uncle, auntie, two sons, they got married in ghetto. Because it was a nice house, friends and daughter and children and grandchildren. I don't know how many people we were living in that house, about 30. House we grew up in, big garden, huge yard. The cat had to go out from there, because gendarme regulation that all cats and animals got to go. Oh they were so cruel these people. Had my honeymoon in that house where I grew up, spare room.

Gendarmes next day took wedding ring that was one day on my finger, and they were swearing. *[Sighs.]* Bad memories.

Gendarme, big feather, not army, not police, were local village people, very cruel to people. Can't remember that one of them did something good. Jewelry, silver, whatever you got, everybody was digging a hole and putting them in. Samu bácsi wouldn't let us do this. They punished us because they did this. Took them in and beat them up. They'd been anti-Semitic. Worse than the German people, the Hungarian people. All in the history they proved it; always wanted to be better than the Germans.

### **Food and cooking in ghetto?**

We'd been preparing ourselves that this was coming. Had big pantry, stocked, everyone bringing what they could. No shop there. Wasn't big cooking. Imre bringing lots of things because coming to us every day. Was stocked with food; they didn't take this away.

### **How was the ghetto organized?**

Jewish people were organizing, mostly. Community who did everything, police there, kindergarten for children, for sick people not hospital but doctor was there. Health workers visiting to see that people keeping clean.

It's hard because I am not so good in English, you see?

During night watch of Jewish people going around; very religious one went out, never came back; had connection because clever. Shochet *[cutting neck motion]*, heard later he was alive. Little children there. We got our food, we got our water. Had to go in bathroom one after the other to clean.

I was with the health nurse who went to houses and helped them to make clean, the sick ones. My stepfather, he went out, town's carriage taking him out, with yellow star, his colleagues, they needed his advice. But he didn't come back either.

Husband was able to move around. He wanted my brother to take with himself, maybe go in same regimental army my husband was, but we wanted to stick together. My husband was safe to come and go. When they take us away he was standing there, watching, Put in wagon, not one was saying a word. I don't think that could happen today with people. Like the animals, we let

them take us away. We couldn't do anything anyway, they got the rifle and we haven't got it. The old people, everything, how they were going, wagon, so many people. They died there. You had your toilet there. Not for human beings. Not even for animals. I always thought of my husband all the time; believed I would see him.

When we left Hungarian border, we didn't get water, didn't get anything.

In **Košice? [48:10]** they open the door, then we know that's where we are.

Usually I speak better English; I forget the words now. We arrived, we don't know where we are arriving. Left, right, see your parents, take them in a truck or car. I didn't say then goodbye. Maybe that's why I'm blocking everything out; blame myself. Thought we would meet them later. They told us then, the Slovakian girl and we didn't believe.

Only allowed to keep shoes. They shaved our hair. They marked us somehow. Maybe that was a crematorium, maybe they used it for showers, I don't know. They jammed us in this place, throwing us clothes, night dress. It was cold, very cold. Daylight, it was hot, very hot. C block big room in middle. Sleeping top of each other (gestures stack of bunks). Seven, like a spoon. No blanket. I was alone. No relative. Only a friend who was woman dentist. I didn't want to go with her, wanted to stay with people I know.

**I changed my name too. Once I was Rot once I was Weisz once I was Doolga.** When I have to say name like other one, it helps me or something. I didn't care too much about anything because I was alone. Much easier for me. Girls with mothers, that was awful because mother wants to do everything for daughter; daughter for mother. That was really awful.

Dawn, 4 o'clock, 5 o'clock, up, freezing. Then come the heat, falling down like flies. Mother crying for daughter. But for me, I have to think only for myself.

Taking people for work, I was before Mengele, too. Had infection in tummy. They were putting yellow stuff on people, I covered my tummy with my hand and went with three sisters and their auntie before Mengele and it was good. Selected me for work. Maybe condition.

Was wire fence with electricity. Saw mother and daughter just clinging to wire. Met political prisoners, too. They were throwing us things, a jumper or something. Took us a few times to Birkenau to get shower, we knew men were in Birkenau, we hope we will see somebody. But I never saw nobody. When we arrived **Cobercurny? (58:36)** disinfected with like fly spray. Wouldn't believe they are doing people like this. When went to work got new dress, new number. Did not get number tattooed because only short time at Auschwitz.

We arrived in new place, Stutthof (59:32), little houses with geraniums in window, like fairy-tale, looked so beautiful. Put all of us in a big room, sawdust, didn't know where we are, there a few days. Got a message from sister-in-law who was two days before me there. I didn't know her. They took her for work. Girls wanted me to stay there, but I said I don't want any privilege; I am a fatalist, I believe in fate, go where they're taking you.

They selected us, we were traveling again, we arrived at working place, few peasants passing told us it was called **Ollec (1:01:29)**. Put us in a tent, like circus, plywood, on ground pine trees—they took us to cut the pine trees—maybe some straw and blanket and that was winter. Big snow. One little oven in the middle, warm and heat water there sometimes, don't know how many washing themselves. Sleeping on ground. I could speak German, told me I would be the 50 Blockälteste (1:02:47) there. Not too much good I had from it. I was responsible for every bad things that the girls did. They hit me very much with the gun, wooden part of the gun. Got extra food. So I had good from it, too.

Was responsible for the girls to work. Wasn't SS was Wehrmacht, much nicer than SS, more human. Helped us a little bit, sandwich, stocking, knife. But still very cold out in the field where we were digging for cables, tanks, the ditch, deeper down the water was in it. Pregnant girl in my block was alive to the last minute, we left her there. Some were frozen there; the clothes get frozen, stiff, you're stiff and frozen people when we find them.

Loosening up earth with implement with pick/shovel. Really hard work. Would go to field where peasants used to grow potatoes, cabbage, and girls would find and cook it. Onions they got from peasants. The guards hit me because was my responsibility [to prevent stealing of potatoes]. It was awful. Oh, many things. And in this place, big snow, very cold.

January, Gestapo said the Klashen? [Russians] (1:07:38) are coming and they run away, they was afraid, and I run away, too. They left all the girls there. Girls got dysentery because suddenly eating and that made them sick. Before they took us away, one girl's mother was there in the **grave** (? 1:01:32) and we could take her out. The auntie stayed there. We took mother with us. They said, bring me Vera, she will help me. I won't say I was good, but I was human.

Seven years ago, I was in Toronto for get-together, they were saying things I did for them, I can't remember what I did. I told them I didn't do for you anything, just being human. They mentioned the mother, who got free, she died in **Bydgoszcz?**(1:09:54).

The three girls, couldn't walk, with her sister, she couldn't sit down she would have frozen or they would shoot her. I didn't steal their food. Gave them what belonged to them. They said I'd been very good and very human to them.

Like many things I can't remember, I can't remember this one either that I did it.

### **Where did you go?**

Ran away with girl who was Blockälteste for 50B. I came back to my husband in same dress, same coat, I got from the Germans. Two of us through the snow fields, we went to a peasant house, big lamps [spotlights?] looking all around for people. They put us with animals together. Only servants stayed, owners had run away. We take off star from our coat, start to hide what are we, because Polish don't like very much the Jews. That was our information. In **Bydgoszcz?** when we arrived at farm, they said parachuting Germans there, and maybe better we go. We went further, stayed with other family, they put us in room, was so cold on the wall was ice, but doesn't matter, we had a room.

Then we arrived in **Bydgoszcz?**, there was a house, we didn't say we were Jewish, said we weren't born Jewish, our ancestors were Jewish. We were working for her really because she was moving back to her old house. We were helping her for shifting. We were full full full of lice, she was cleaning us. One night heard siren go, aeroplanes and heard Germans were back. We went down to cellar, crying there. Thank heaven, they didn't come back. We been a few days with the lady. Got paper there that we can travel [see end of transcript]. Then went with everything, with open wagons, Russian trucks. Russians put us in jail for one night, we don't know why. Through the **Carpathian, (? 1:15:14)** mostly walking, we met a father and son from **Uzhgorod?**. We were afraid for the Russians, too. Told to cover head with cap so not show how pretty we were. Been in Krakow, too, big camps there, I went to camp looking for my brother. Was using different names because I don't know what name he is using maybe. Met *very* old man from town where my husband is, he asks who are you, I say I am So-and-So, my husband is from there. He arrived back before me, about a month, and he sped to my husband and said your wife is alive and she's coming home. About four weeks, he heard from me nothing, but he knew that I am alive.

Coming to **Kosice?** [**Slovakia** ['koʃitse](#)] Went to Red Cross, man told me he used to be in the army in this town and I ask if he knows my husband and he says he had been home since October, and then I know too that my husband is alive.

From there I don't know what sort of transport, we came to Russian border, had to carry stones for bridge or something, I didn't stop in my home town, never went back, don't know what happened, only went to visit my father's grave. I was first woman coming back from camp; everyone asking what happened.

### **What happened after you came back?**

Came straightaway to **Nyíregyháza? (1:19:40)** where my husband lived. He was waiting for me. In **Košice**, we got some money. Had never been in **Nyíregyháza** before; didn't know where I am going. When I arrive at house, old housekeeper was living there and looking out the window, and I ask is Dr. **Weissemiller (1:20:38)** living here? In two minutes whole town knew I am at home; husband came running back; he had big mustache. Stranger to me really, because only knew him for 6 weeks. Only in my mind he was my husband. Girl I escape with always with me, but she left, never heard from her again. She said she had brother in America.

So my husband got the house — it was empty — he got the housekeeper, did all the cooking, and he got his shop. Started to build up his shop, got a partner who was with him before war, a very nice man. In '46 my daughter was born; first child who was born. First months I didn't get pregnant, I was so upset, had not had period in Auschwitz and was afraid they did something and I wouldn't have children.

People was coming to me like a visit to a saint, a pilgrimage, looking for family, ask who I saw. I was celebrated. I was in quite good condition aside from lice eating me up, scratching thing between fingers. And then we started our life, and then it started again, from the Communists, then they took everything again. And we thought, there's no place to live here. Thought we should start new life again. Wanted to go to Israel at first, but my husband in his 50s already, hard for him. My daughter was 12 year old; we got passport, they changed Israel to Australia, and we started our life here.

Had visa arranged here, me and my girlfriend, her brother-in-law here and I got a friend here who I did matriculation together and I wrote to him. Girlfriend got entry visa, we didn't. They came three months before us. Girlfriend arranged everything. Her husband was Varga, too. He was Wiesner before. Hungarian was Varga; we were Weiss, make it Varga, too, said they were brothers. Three months after them we got visa, too.

Lived together for two years, put same amount of money in purse. Girlfriend was a cutter, when I came out here she arranged that I would be a machinist. Foreman asked about me, can't she do the cutting, someone had just left. In Hungarian she told me what to do and they took me. Today I wouldn't have the guts to do it. There 1½ year, I learned and soon was working on piecework, learned the trade for quite a good money really. Then they sacked me from there; my husband didn't get easily his job because he 50 year old. They took him to the Phillips?, and he retired after a few years.

Daughter got married, her husband Hungarian origin, too. They have two children, and now I have family, too. No longer lonely in the world.

In very short, that is my story. Don't know what you want to know, because I don't remember really.

Polish permit to pass through Poland. Red Cross paper (1:33:56) from Czechoslovakia, helping to travel

### **In Auschwitz, you said you changed your name?**

Was Roth, then I said Weisz. They didn't check it. I got a postcard from my husband while I was there in Auschwitz.

Some people remember every detail. I am rushing through it, jump from one part to another, I don't know why, I block it out for myself. I don't know why I do it. Or because I never talk about it. Even for my hometown I forget the people, the street. In 50 years I have nobody to talk about it. When you talk about it, it comes back to you.

I remember part of it. SS said not our fault we were there; he was in a good mood. Maybe he thought it good for him, that he human. When I went with girl, saw they were taking German prisoners, how helpless they are, marching hungry and cold like we used to, and there were murdered Poland people in the street, and we just stepped over them and went on our way, once we were liberated.



### **Last time you saw your brother?**

When we went out from the wagon. I heard from one who was with him that he was sick. I started to wait. And then I heard he was in good condition, was with horses. Then I heard they took them in forest and shoot all of them. The ones who were sick they left behind and they survived.

### **You decided to give testimony because of your daughter.**

She asked me to write it in Hungarian and I will translate it. She wanted for grandchildren, future generation, because they wouldn't dream about it, that sort of things are happening.

### **How has your past affected you as a person?**

I understand much better the ethnic people. We shouldn't see in other people the difference; that's the trouble where everything begins. Shouldn't discriminate for their skin, their color.

### **Why do you think you survived?**

Because I was alone. I didn't think about anybody, I didn't care about anybody. Only my life, I didn't care about it really. I was helping the girls, have to work because very cold, have to move around or else I'd be frozen. Did double shifts not because I was good but for myself. Not thinking about yesterday or tomorrow, just now. My mother took my grandmother or for sure she would have been with me.

### **Affect on daughter?**

She's missing family, grandparents, cousins.

### **Who was she named after?**

In Jewish name, after my mother. (1:50:13) My mother wanted to call me Sofia.

### **When did you finally realize your parents, brother weren't coming back?**

My stepfather I heard was alive, so I was waiting for him and my brother. Aunties and cousins didn't come back.

Mother was oldest; everybody said she was beautiful. I had one second cousin in America, he told me my mother was beautiful. Middle sister Elizabeth, younger Theresa. Both of them had two girls.

My father had one brother. And he's gone.

### **Any message you would like to finish the tape with?**

That I did it for love because it hurts me to think about it, to talk about it, I just really wanted to please them. I came back to have them and I hope it's never happening again. I hope today generation much brighter than we been and more open and talking about things. I did it really just for love.

## **RESEARCH NOTES AND SOURCES:**

### **On Kisvarda**

<https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Kisvarda/>

“Following the Nazi invasion of Hungary, in the spring of 1944, the Jews of Kisvarda and the surrounding villages were confined to a ghetto in the area around the synagogue. After a few weeks, they were deported to Auschwitz and various labour camps, where the majority of them perished. The German soldiers were few in number, and the actual incarceration of the Jews was mainly undertaken on their behalf by the cooperative Hungarian gendarmerie. Arguably, the Hungarian collaborators did not know what fate awaited the Jews at the other end of the line. However, putting innocent old men, women, and children, fellow citizens for many generations, into crowded boxcars should by itself be considered quite an atrocity, even without knowing what would happen to them at Auschwitz.

“A few hundred survivors returned to Kisvarda after the war, but many of these left in 1956 during the anti-communist revolution, especially the younger ones.”

### **Hasidic community:**

<https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Kisvarda/kis001.html#chap3>

“Among Kisvarda's Jews there was also a large, active Hassidic community. On Saturdays and holidays one could see them in great numbers walking the streets of the ‘Klaus’ in their caftans and shtreimels.”

### **Timeline/street names for Kisvarda ghetto (same source):**

“The ghettoization of the Jews in Kisvarda commenced on April 8, 1944, with the transportation of the first group from the countryside. The ghetto was situated in the most Jewish district of Kisvarda. It began on the left side of Horthy Road, continued with the left side of Bessenyei Road, and included both sides of Deak Ferenc Street and Petofi Street. The roadways were closed with barriers.

“The families transported from the surrounding villages were put into two lumberyards and the courtyard of the synagogue. As long as their supplies lasted, they cooked for themselves, but their situation worsened when they ran out of supplies.

“The Jews of Kisvarda proper who lived outside the ghetto were moved into it between April 15 to April 30, 1944. No writer has a rich enough imagination to describe the endless humiliations and beatings inflicted on the Jews by the Magyar gendarmerie. Men, women and little children were taken from their homes and squeezed into a terribly overcrowded ghetto. A total of 7000 Jews were squeezed into a small neighbourhood, a few families in every room. Every night, the gendarmes dragged away individuals who were suspected of having hidden their wealth. They would return cruelly beaten, covered in blood, unable to stand on their feet.

“The gates of the ghetto were first opened on May 29 and once more on May 31. Each time, a group of 3500 was taken to the trains and started on their way to an unknown destiny. Their painful road led to the hell of Auschwitz, from where only a few managed to return.”

### **On Vera’s name for her stepfather: Samu bácsi**

\* **bácsi** (plural [bácsik](#))

1. 1. [uncle](#) (a form of address for an older man, especially by children or in case of great age difference) Józsi **bácsi** — **uncle** Joe

**Usage notes** Usually not a relative, used after the given or family name.  
from Wiktionary <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/bácsi>

Samu (Samuel) is pronounced Shawmu

Verification for name, occupation of stepfather:

“Caren Lubofsky of Melbourne, Australia has submitted the names of Ivan Roth and Samuel Burger and his wife (nee Roth?). I should have noticed myself that Samuel Burger's (Burger Samu) name was missing. He was my maternal grandfather's first cousin, and the town veterinarian. He married in middle age shortly before the war, and had no children.”

<https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Kisvarda/martyrs.htm>

### **Roza Roth nee Barany**

[http://yvng.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=en&s\\_lastName=barany&s\\_firstName=rozi&s\\_place=kisvarda&s\\_dateOfBirth=&s\\_inTransport=](http://yvng.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=en&s_lastName=barany&s_firstName=rozi&s_place=kisvarda&s_dateOfBirth=&s_inTransport=)

### **On Stutthof**

It’s not clear from her interview whether that is where they were taken, or if she is comparing the work place to Stutthof. However, there is a record of a Vera Weisz from Kisvarda at Stutthof in the Yad Vashem central database of Shoah victims’ names. Other research indicates Hungarian Jews were sent there from Auschwitz, see

[https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/source\\_view.php?SourceId=31250](https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/source_view.php?SourceId=31250)