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Summary

Kathy Blecher was born June 21, 1939 in Budapest, Hungary. Mother not Jewish from Romania, father Jewish. She was an only child. Father an architect. Once war began, family moved out of large flat in 1942 into a three-room flat. Father lost job per order of the Hungarian government. Mother took her in 1942 to Transylvania where her grandparents lived to look for a hiding place but returned to Budapest. Father sent to a labor camp in Transylvania. Mother got by with money she had saved. Father escaped from the labor camp during a stop at a train station and returned to Budapest. Mother's brother, not Jewish, asked by mother to hide her father. Kathy was told to forget that her father was around in order to protect him. When the ghetto was established in 1944, she and mother moved in. Father moved back with them after his former workmen altered the flat to create a hiding place behind the pantry. Father's brother also hid there. She was taught to misbehave to create a diversion when Hungarian soldiers came looking for her father. Father's sister lived in a non-Jewish suburb and survived. When Budapest was bombed, she and mother went to the cellar while father and uncle had to remain hidden upstairs. In August 1944, her mother was called out of the home by the Arrow Cross and was told that if anyone was helping Jews they would be forced to move. She saw her mother pushed around by these men. Even then, she knew that anyone helping Jews would be shot. A nearby candy shop owner hid Jews and was denounced by his wife and was shot. Mother obtained a document from Raoul Wallenberg declaring her a Catholic (she showed document). At end of war, Russians came to Budapest. Family still had to hide as Russians often drunk and abusive to women. Kathy went to Catholic school and then to a public school. Father was in the building business until Communists nationalized businesses in 1948 and became a teacher in a technical college which she attended as a non-student in 1953. She married a Jewish doctor in December 1960. He had lost his father and brother, but his mother and sister survived. Son, Peter, born in 1961. She worked for 10 years for the Hungarian Investment Board until husband and family went to Nigeria in 1967, the same year her father died. They spent four and a half years there and second son, Anthony, born there. They moved to Australia in 1971 and husband set up medical practice which continues. She has 3 grandsons. Son was had a Bar Mitzvah after she consulted with a rabbi and told her story and was declared "converted." She feels 100 percent Jewish and works at the Jewish Museum once a week. She does not feel traumatized by her youthful experience because she was so young at the time. She is proud of Israel but worries about antisemitism.

NOTE: The last 40 minutes of the tape shows her going over documents and photos of family.