Tape three, side one:

JF: This is tape three, side one, of an interview with Mrs. Eva Bentley, on March 18, 1985.

EB: They lined us up eight abreast and they surrounded us on both sides. They draw their guns and they had their machine guns out and they told the neighboring tenants and occupants of the building to go inside. They had to go inside anyway. After 6:00 nobody could go out the street any more. And across the yellow star house was the Protestants' church and the living quarters of the Protestant minister and his family. The man didn't go inside. He leaned out of his window with his wife and with his children, looking at us, and they let him be there. Then the S.S. men started shooting. First they shot their lights out, totally, the streetlights. And then they started to shoot and saying things and, derogatory things about us. This lady, when we came home from the precinct, was standing beside my mother, between me and my mother, and when they started to shoot I asked her to change places with me. And I didn't realize one of the S.S. men had a gun drawn and had his machine gun pointed at me, from the back. And I didn't realize that. So he started to, when we changed places, he already shot. And he shot that lady. She had six bullets in her lungs, the whole lung and her heart came out from the back.

JF: Why...did you ask to change places with her?

EB: I said, "Now they are going to kill us. I'd like to stand beside my mother."

JF: Oh.

EB: And she said, "Of course."

JF: Mmm.

EB: And that was her downfall.

JF: And he didn't continue to shoot?

EB: Yes, he did. He continued to shoot, but Mother padded me the day before, and this day, too; when we went down to the air raid shelter I always had sardine cans and chocolate and everything on me because Mother said, "If anything happens, until we are dressed and they are coming for us, you have to have those foods because then I can feed you and Agi and we won't starve if they are taking us. Because they were always taking people to places. It was going on every minute. So we were aware of it. So I was such a skinny girl. And she padded me and nothing showed.

JF: I see.

EB: And I had all those sardine cans and canned foods and three pullovers and one culottes and under the culottes two panties.

JF: And the cans were stuffed inside your...

EB: I, and I had my winter coat on.

JF: Your shirt?

EB: So he continued shooting, and all those machine gun bullets came down on my breast and tore apart my coat, tore apart the cans of sardines, but didn't hit my heart. It went down.

JF: They were diverted? They, they...

EB: They were diverted by the can of foods, and the chocolates! Now what happened, he, the others started—it was a good game—so another one drawed a gun and he shot me in the kidney. I got four shots in my kidney. Because I was so padded it didn't harm my kidney, it went above my kidney. Two bullets came out, two stayed there. At that time I didn't know what was it. I...went down and I was shot up. I was dead for a couple of seconds. So I was on the street, lying on the street. Mother wanted to know what happened to me. And they were shooting. They were constantly shooting, until they ran out of bullets and they refilled their gun and machine guns. That was the time when they had a little recess. So that time Mother tried to bend down. And when I came to myself, because I was unconscious and perhaps, I don't know how long, I told Mother. Mother said, "What's happening to you?" I said, "I am all right, Mother, don't worry. I'll be all right. I'll be all right." And so Mother bent down and one of them had a bayonet. They had the bayonets also. And he drawed a bayonet and cut off my mother's coat. But by that time we were wearing winter coats. And Mother's winter coat, it was a fur-lined winter coat. So that saved her. And she had in her arm my sister, who was 22 months old, 20-some months old.

JF: So the bayonet went through the fur?

EB: Yeah...it just got stuck in the fur.

JF: It got stuck in the fur. And...

EB: So she wasn't harmed at all. And I was...

JF: Did this, did the man know that he had not harmed her?

EB: Look, it was dark.

JF: So he couldn't tell.

EB: He didn't know. It was such a confusion there, and so many people. And they were just shooting, and enjoying the killing.

JF: So he felt that he had injured her or whatever...

EB: He was in euphoria of that killing and killing.

JF: And he just went on to the next person.

EB: And he...just did his...he did, he shot, whomever. But what happened that time...the minister was seeing all of this and he was yelling, "That's good! You just kill those bastard Jews!" And he was enjoying it tremendously.

JF: The Hungarian minister.

EB: The Hungarian Protestant minister, and his family and his children. He said, "Now you see? That's the way to treat those bastard Jews! And when you grow up, you do it!"

JF: This is the minister from the church that you're...

EB: From the church.

JF: That you're describing.

EB: The Protestant church. Now, in the same town a man shows up. And it was a curfew. Nobody could be on the street except a doctor or...military personnel. And a man shows up in the fighting and...he says, "What's going on?" He opens his mouth. And the S.S. says, "Who are you?" He said, "I'm Doctor so-and-so." He said, "What are you doing here?" He tells the S.S. man, "You are shooting innocent children! And women, you are big military people. I am here to take care of it, take care of the wounded. Even in the war we give first aid to our enemies. And you are killing." "Don't touch, those are Jews." "Jews? Innocent, I don't see any Jews. I see innocent women and babies here. Now you get those down to the first aid shelter and I'm going to take care of them!" They didn't dare to do anything to that man. One man, against 22 armed men. He was another Hungarian Gentile.

JF: But they listened to him.

EB: Of course! He was alone, and the minister was enjoying himself. And this man, who was only...

JF: Why do you think they listened to him?

EB: Because he said, "If you want to shoot, shoot. Here, I am a man. Shoot me."

JF: Mmm.

EB: And he gave first aid to me.

JF: This man.

EB: This man. Now after that I had to get to a hospital. Now Jews weren't allowed in hospitals. We had our, the Jewish hospital, like the Mount Sinai. It was taken over by the military. They took over an old Jewish school, a high school, and that was our shelter or hospital, outside of the ghetto. By that time they were building the ghetto and everybody's supposed to move from the ghetto to a week later, from the yellow star homes to the ghetto. They were cutting us down and down. And that hospital, so-called hospital, was working out from that school, outside of the ghetto's gate. So they took me there. And we didn't have any medicine. We didn't have bed, enough beds. We didn't have blankets. We didn't have anything. We didn't have food. And in that night, they brought in 180 serious wounds, gun wounds, because that was going on in different parts of the city, with the Arrow Cross and with the S.S. They were going around and doing that. That was the first night, when they started, and they were going around doing that for a long time, until the Russian took over...Budapest. So, they were treating people. The doctors didn't have too much to operate with. They didn't have themselves food. Most of the doctors weren't there because after the proclamation of Horthy everybody left the hospital and they thought they are free. And now the new regime is starting, the war is over. So, the next day or, it was a day-and-a-half later of the proclamation when this whole horror began. We didn't, the doctors couldn't come back, even if they started, what we later learned, they were caught and they were killed and massacred, too. So whoever could slowly come back some

way, they came back to help. But the others either were killed or they went into hiding. They couldn't get out. So, I was on the floor without blankets and without anything for a week. And my kidney got damaged, so I couldn't urinate. And when I started [to] urinate it was just blood coming out. And so I was operated and I stayed there. And then I saw the horror because everybody, whoever had been saved somehow, came in. And the stories were tremendous and...unbelievable. [tape off then on] The Russian Army was approaching Budapest. By November 6th they're supposed to be in Budapest, but they were stopped by Stalin and with other political reasons what we can read in the history books. So I'm not a historian. I am not going to record that. Because probably I will make mistakes there. But they were stopped. So they left plenty of time to the Arrow Cross people to go around and massacre the Jews of Budapest.

I'm just picking up the Jewish orphanage story. We had a Jewish orphanage with 200 orphans. And Christmas night—it was a very bitter, cold, snowy night—the Arrow Cross people went into the orphanage to celebrate Christ's birth, and took each and every children and every teacher out of that orphanage. The children were in their nighties, and barefooted. They marched them through Budapest in that snowy night, at midnight, to the Danube, to the bank of the Danube, and they shot each and every one, killing them into the Danube. They froze in there. By that time the Danube was not the Blue or Brown Danube, it was a Red Danube, because of Jewish blood. They said, "We cannot send you to Auschwitz. We cannot send you anywhere any more." That was Christmas. "So we'll take care of you as the way we can. We are going to kill you here and put you in the Danube."

JF: There was something that you wanted to add about the time after you were in the hospital, after your...bullet wounds.

EB: What happened, they came out with a new law and regulation that they posted, that every Jewish woman—because the men were already in the concentration camps—every Jewish woman of Budapest, under 44 years of age, or they have a children over two years old, they have to report for duty at the labor camps. And because they didn't have any railroad to take them to Auschwitz or...to the concentration camp, they marched those people to Dachau, and they exterminated them in Dachau.

JF: How did this affect your family?

EB: My mother was under age, but she was lucky, because the squadron leader, the Christian woman who was the squadron leader and responsible for the house, came in and they asked for her birth certificate. And Mother was so nervous she couldn't find it. And she said, "I'll vouch for her. She's over 44." And then she came in to the hospital when one day they opened the doors and they could go out for food for an hour. And she came to the hospital to visit me with my sister, and she fainted there. And we arranged it with the doctor because we didn't have enough room even for the sick and the ill, to keep my mother there. She fainted, and one of the women doctors, who was a very nice friend of a friend of mine there, one of the nurses, in the nurse's hat, and that doctor gave Mother a [unclear] shot to make her, similate a heart attack.

JF: These were Jewish or non-Jewish?

EB: Jewish.

JF: Jewish.

EB: Jewish. Jewish.

JF: O.K.

EB: But we didn't have room. We didn't have room to feed our own ear. [She probably means "mouth".]

JF: How...

EB: And we didn't have...

JF: How did you make arrangements for your mother to stay there?

EB: I had a bed, and I had a terrible wound. If anybody would walk before my bed I could scream from pain but I held myself back. My mother, my sister stayed in the same bed with me. And my poor mother for months didn't sleep, just sat up not to bother me.

JF: And your sister who was still what, under two years of age?

EB: Yes. She was almost two...by that time.

JF: How...was she in this very contained kind of situation? What did...she do?

EB: A child adapts. The...very interesting thing, she was running and she was everybody's pet there. But we had other little children who were shot on the street and they didn't know even their names. They were brought in with wounds. They were survivors, little babies, the last children. And everybody, every one of us who could muster a little food here and there, would give the children. And my sister was the pet of the ward. She was running around and they made her a little apron from an old surgical apron and she was the head doctor. And she was running and talking about that, when the...*Nyilas*, that was the Arrow Cross, Hungarian name, they came and they shot Evie, and they shot Evie, and then she was repeating the story and the story what she went through all the time, all the time.

JF: She witnessed your being shot...

EB: Yes, and all those horrors. And it stayed with her for a very, very long time. And she went...under psychiatric treatment when she was six because of that, because she remembered all those horror stories and it affected her.

JF: After the war...

EB: Sure.

JF: She went into treatment.

EB: Yeah.

JF: Did it help? Was...it able to...

EB: Yes, but she...

JF: The fact that she got help so young?

EB: She has fear complexes.

JF: Still.

EB: Still. She is a mother and she is a very accomplished woman, but she, her fear complexes are very deep-rooted and they are there. So, they took all those women, what I was telling you in the...

JF: Mmm hmm?

EB: Labor camp, that forced labor camp there. They called labor camp. This was concentration camp. And they let them work there and then they gassed them. Most of the people didn't come back. I don't think so any came back from the horrors. So if my mother wouldn't be that lucky, I wouldn't have a mother.

JF: Did you know what was going on in Hungary with the *Schutzpass* situation, with Wallenberg? Was this common knowledge?

EB: Oh yes, yes, yes. We had different kind of *Schutzpasses*, from different governments, and it rated differently. And you see, what Wallenberg did one man can do, and we would have at least ten, then probably the whole Hungarian Jews will be saved. You just have to be a man. You just have to be human under inhuman circumstances.

JF: Like the man who stood up to the men who were shooting you.

EB: Yes, that's right.

JF: And the...

EB: And that...

JF: And these guards responded to him, and stopped.

EB: And you know what? We didn't live in that house, and we weren't good or bad or anything to that manager and janitors there in that, the yellow star house. And you know what happened, there was the manager's niece, who was a...cook for somebody. It's not in that house, somewhere else, but she lived with the manager during that period of time. And she didn't even know me, just knew me when I was in that house and I said hello to her. And we weren't even too friendly. She went up to the...place where we lived, in the...yellow star house. And from the pantry she took out jams and food and brought it...to the hospital to me and to Mother, risking her life, because that time the Russian were shooting the Germans, and the Hungarians. And house-to-house fighting was going on. And among the bullets she was running several times, bringing food to us. And there were other people, another neighbor there, who came into the hospital, who didn't know us either, another Gentile neighbor from that house, who brought some juice to us, his own, what he saved. And nobody had too much food at that time, not Gentile or Jew in that city. And Mother had given for a ten days' old loaf of bread a thousand *pengö*, what was...

JF: How much is that?

EB: It would be equivalent with a thousand dollar, what you can buy before. I mean, if you want to have the real deficit of that time, it was no such a thing because it was a war-time currency. But before the war, five *pengö* was a dollar. So you can equate with that. But what you can buy, the buying part, or a, in salary this was equivalent with a thousand. And she put it in water and she fed us. But the goose flesh and the goose [unclear] enough, because when I was in the hospital and Mother was allowed, once when she find

out—for ten days she didn't know where I was—and when she find out, because they were locked in in that, in the yellow star house, they were lucky again because one man. After I was shot down the whole house was put up in...big trucks, and they were taken to a center where all people were sent to the concen-, from, where the older people were sent to the concentration camp. Now this lieutenant or captain, police captain, who was in charge of them, who took them, said, "You don't get out of the trucks. You stay there, and I'll take care of you. I'll take you back." And when the Arrow Cross people came and said, "Well, now you have to empty your trucks and go to the, to this point and leave the people," he...said, "Those are my charge. I am not responsible for you. I am responsible for my unit. I am taking them to my unit." And he turned the trucks around and took them back to their homes.

JF: And they didn't stop him.

EB: No. You have seen those policemen who weren't stopped, who stood up. You have seen that one doctor. You have seen that police captain or lieutenant, I don't know the rank because Mother told me this story. So when my mother find out—they were locked in, the houses were locked, permanently locked; they couldn't go out even for food. So many people died of hunger there. So Mother had these saved goose things, the lard, and other things. And the first time when she heard I was in the hospital, that was my birthday, the sixth of November. And she came with a little food, poppy seed noodles, and she brought her saved goose things. And then I said, "Well, I will leave it here because it's safer. I don't know what's going to happen there but at least," we were thinking, I was thinking, "Mother, you stay in this hospital. Don't go back." But she had to go back because my sister wasn't with her. "The next time when you come you will stay. I will arrange it." So she brought the food in and that's the way we survived.

JF: You stayed in the hospital then, until the end?

EB: Until the end.

JF: And your mother was able to stay. They didn't check to see...

EB: They checked, and they wanted to kick her out. That is another man who comes into our life, again, who saved us. He was a Jew. He was a doctor. He is a doctor. He lives in Washington. He owns Jefferson Memorial Hospital. If you like to see his write-up in the *Fortune 400*, he's one of them. He deserves it. That man saved lives. He didn't have anything to eat. He wouldn't take the food away from his patients. We had a chapel upstairs. This was the Jewish school. We had a chapel upstairs. And he slept on the bare floor, on the chapel, a couple of hours at night. [unclear] had to get undressed and he operated day or night. He was that time I think 29 or 28 years old. They screamed, the patients, because we didn't have enough food. The toilet, *toilets*! The lot of toilets were overflowing. In front of the lava-, in the lavatory, people, wounded people, were on the floor, laying there, in the feces and you just, the horror. And what you have seen. And *we* had the *best*! Because the ghetto was overflowing. People were dying of hunger. My second father's mother died of hunger in the, in there. She went blind first.

JF: Then, your second father's...

EB: Mother.

JF: Mother died.

EB: Yeah, yeah, my step-grandmother. And her daughter survived her but committed suicide in the ghetto. The ghetto, it was a terrible place—no food, no, that...people upon people. The Arrow Cross come in every, every night and killed people in the...cellars and wherever they had. They had a shooting area near there, killing people.

JF: You had said that this doctor saved your mother.

EB: The way...he operated on me he saved my life.

JF: And he, you also said that he kept your mother in the hospital so that she could be saved.

EB: Because they were, the selection was going on. And they selected the people who didn't need it, medical attention. And even who needed medical attention but their life was not, their situation was not life-threatening. My situation was life-threatening at that point, because of the kidney shots and bleeding. And I had a drain passing my kidney. And I was quite in limbo if I survive or not. And...

JF: What did he do?

EB: And...they always had a selection committee, made out of other Jewish doctors in the hospital, and other people, because they needed the place. They put, in life-threatening situation in one bed three people. Because we didn't have a bed. Finally I had a bed. That was the biggest thing. The nurses arranged it for me because they liked me. And they wanted to save me. I don't know, God took care of me. And Mother was in that bed and my sister. So they said they can put two patients with me in that bed. So they made a selection and Mother's supposed to go the next morning to the ghetto, with my sister. And I said, "If Mother goes, I'll go." And they said, this committee said, "O.K., that's your decision. That's your life. If, we cannot keep them here; if you want to go with them, you go. If you die, you die. We cannot take care of you there. But that's your decision." If, so many people are dying, so one more or one less, everybody was critical at that point. We were, decided that we don't have a chance in a million to survive anyway, so only until then, they had to take care of their patients. So, this doctor, who was the most honest person ever, because you can meet people, whenever you are in every situation. Some doctors, they were good. They weren't bad. They took some food from the patients. If they had. Some people gave some jewelry to these certain doctors; they were taking it. We are human. Because we are Jewish, they are human. This man wouldn't take a blanket for himself. This man was, in that time, an angel. He wanted to save lives. That was his duty. And he would not tolerate himself to take anything from anybody. And I had friends among the nurses, and one of the little nurses said to me, "Eva, you go to Dr. Tabor." Because they named him the head, because he was so honest that they know his decision wouldn't be altered by anything, just by just. He was a just man that time. And if he makes a decision, nobody questioned it, because nobody can alter his way of thinking just to do the best. So

I said, "O.K." And that was the first time I stepped out of my bed, and I made my steps. I couldn't walk! And I had to make myself to go. And I walked up to the third floor, to the chapel. And I saw this man, dead tired, laying on the marble floor, the bare marble floor, in this, in it was in early January, in the cold of January, with nothing, and sleeping a dead man's sleep. He was, he was out. He was, operated on 120 people that day. And he couldn't stand it. And I leaned over him and he opened his eyes. And a smile came over and he said, "What is it?" I...had always been afraid of him, because he was very stern. And he didn't have time to talk to anybody. He was, I thought, "Oh, he is so mean and he hates me." I was scared. I was absolutely scared of him. And I said, "Dr. Tabor, they selected Mother in the selection committee. And Mother and Agi has to go tomorrow to the ghetto. And if they go I'll go with them. What is your decision?" He said, "You go back to bed. I won't let you and your mother and your sister go there."

JF: Mmm.

EB: "You stay here. And your mother stays here and your little sister stays. I wouldn't put anybody in that bed but you. You offered that bed, and you are sharing with your, because of your mother and your sister, you are suffering for that. I wouldn't put another patient. We are not missing anything. And if they survive, you'll have to survive." I hadn't seen this man until 1969. You know what would happen to my mother? My homeroom teacher was in the hospital the same day, and her daughter, who was my classmate, who was [wore?] a nurse's hat, you know, just to save her life, and she couldn't stand the stink and-

Tape three, side two:

JF: This is tape three, side two of an interview with Mrs. Eva Bentley.

EB: My homeroom teacher, and her husband, who was a rabbi and a religious teacher, [unclear] and her daughter who was my classmate, [unclear] she was passing as a nurse's hat [unclear]. She was working there. And she brought her parents in. And they didn't [unclear] people were sitting there all night. And she just couldn't stand the stink and the, sickness and she said, "I'm getting out of it." And she got a *Schutzpass*, a Swiss *Schutzpass*, for Swedish, and she went to this home because they had the homes which were, came under the umbrella in different countries and different embassies. And she said, "I am going back, now back." She couldn't go back there. They took them to the ghetto, because they dismantled those [unclear], and everybody had to go to the ghetto. So she...went to the ghetto that morning. And everybody who was selected to go to the ghetto that morning, that was Mother's transport, if she would be in that selection, and I, because I would go with my mother, we would go to the ghetto. Now they designated a first-aid cellar for us, from the hospital, which was the first house in the ghetto. And that was almost the last night before the Russians liberated the ghetto. All those people were killed that night, the following night. In the morning we're supposed to, when we were supposed to go to the ghetto in the morning, [tape off then on]

JF: The Arrow Cross...

EB: The Arrow Cross came in that night and massacred everybody in that cellar—my homeroom teacher, her husband. And she asked her daughter to come with her, and she said, "No, Mommy, I can be helpful here, I don't leave the hospital." And she went in the next morning, because that time the Russians were approaching and we already freed, the ghetto was freed before the, our part. And she went in and she found her mother had slashed, and her father massacred, terrible. And that would be my fate, and my mother's and my sister's. That's why I'm saying that man saved my life. Not only when he operated on me, because he operated on me.

JF: Yes.

EB: Oh, also, but saved physically our lives.

JF: You said you met him in 1969.

EB: Yes. He was a student in the Jewish *Gymnasium* in a different time. He graduated in 1932 and, because his father, he was again, he didn't count as a Jew because we had the *Numerus Clausus* in...Hungary. And in medical school the Jews weren't admitted at all. *Numerus Clausus* in certain universities, but in medical school, no Jew was, after the First War, admitted. And he was admitted because his father was a war hero.

JF: Oh.

EB: He died in the First War. And him and his brother, his brother attended the engineering school. And he was a medical student. Beside that, he was a, the gymnastics champion of, the college gymnastics champion of Hungary. And he was coming from a

very religious background. And we had a reunion of the Jewish *Gymnasium*, the 50th reunion of the Jewish *Gymnasium*, in New York, in 1969. And he was one of the organizers. And there I have met him again.

JF: What a thrill to be able to see him again. You said that this happened shortly before the Russians entered the city.

EB: Mmm hmm.

JF: Were you still in the hospital when they came in?

EB: Yes.

JF: Can you tell me about that, about the liberation?

EB: It was a strange thing. The ghetto was liberated first because the ghetto was undermined and the German wanted to blow up the ghetto. So, the Jewish underground, which one we had some Zionists, you know the...we called them the *Siserat* [?] because most of them they were the Jewish Zionists. And they were working in the underground making the false papers and coming. And basically that were, the focal point of their [unclear] that was the hospital, because the hospital was outside of the ghetto.

JF: The focal point of the Jewish und-, of the Zionist underground...

EB: And the Jewish underground was the hospital.

JF: Yeah.

EB: Because everybody was then coming in and out and in the basement and they tried to make false papers and they...had, they changed uniforms. They went in, like my cousin, who looks like an Aryan Aryan—blond, blue-eyed—he was wearing an Arrow Cross uniform, and went into the ghetto and got his parents out of that.

JF: Did you know all this was going on while you were in the hospital?

EB: We had a somehow feeling, yes, because everybody was coming in and out and all those men, and they were trying to do. It was, you know, they really didn't do it openly because you never know. And because we had real Arrow Cross people, too, coming in and Gentile people too, but that was the focal point of the underground, the hospital. Everything was going on there. So, they liberated the ghetto first, and then they liberated us. But they were coming through the ghetto, because these people, the underground, led the Russians through the ghetto, to the...other part of the town. And we were at the gate of the ghetto. We were not in it, but we were in front of the ghetto, at the gate. It was unbelievable. The night before, we were talking with Mother and Mother said, "Sweetheart, what do you think? What's going to happen?" I said, "Mommy, at this point I don't think, so few people ever, ever survive. We are going to die." That was the point when I couldn't keep my mother's spirit up. And I couldn't be positive.

JF: Before that...

EB: We were all...

JF: Before that you had...

EB: Before that I always kept a spirit up and I always...

JF: That was your role.

EB: That was my role. And that time I said, "But Mommy, but at least we go together." And by that time I didn't know the Russians were already in the cellar. And we were already free! And that was just unbelievable. And whatever happened after, it's not that simple, but some other time.

JF: Your father was in a labor camp during this entire time?

EB: Yeah.

JF: Did you have any way of communicating with him? Did you know where he was?

EB: He was, for a while, yes. For a while we know because he was stationed in Budapest. He was the last one. He was, again, luck has so much to do with life. He, all his contemporaries were drafted much more before, earlier than he was. And they were killed off. He was one of the last ones when the German takeover, that, who was drafted and went in. Now he was stationed in Budapest, as I told you, at the airport. And then after that in another school they were stationed there. They were the clearing crew, of the, after the bombs. And when the Arrow, and that time it was a period when Horthy didn't know which way he is going, so those people were relatively safer than the others because everybody was in Budapest. So he was stationed in Budapest. So sometimes he could come to the yellow star house, when he had a leave. And we knew about him, even when I was shot down. After that he was coming to us to the hospital to visit. And then they, then when the Arrow Cross took over, they...evacuated all those people. That's where Wallenberg comes in, he went on those wagons, and freed those people, and took care of them. So he was taken to the western part of Hungary, the border of Austria and Hungary. And from there, in March, end of March, we were already free. Budapest was free. But that part of the country was not. He was evacuated and marched to Germany. And then he was taken to Mauthausen, to the concentration camp. And most of them who survived, died. And he had the typhoid fever after the liberation. He was liberated by the Americans, I think. And he went to Linz. And he had the typhoid fever. And he came home in the summer of 1945. He survived, and he came home. He was limping, and he was down to 90 pounds. And his usual weight was 180. He was not a small man. You have seen him, Josey. And...

JF: Where were you living at that point? At...

EB: At that point we went back to the yellow star house, because our home was occupied by those Gentiles, who demanded new homes for themselves. And until they got new homes they didn't want to leave their premises.

JF: You still legally had the right to your home.

EB: Yeah. Now, after that we did. So it took a while, and we got it back. You know, a little fighting, and they had to get a home and it has to be acceptable to them. And when they accepted it, then we had our home back. But already it was bombed out. We didn't have windows. We didn't have a toilet. We didn't, everything was bombed out because we had a bomb there. So we had to rebuild, and we start everything and it was very hard.

JF: Your possessions, as you mentioned, had been stored with someone.

EB: Some possessions.

JF: Some, some of your possessions had been stored.

EB: Because the possession Mother wanted to save, gave to the partner of a, a father, the Gentile partner, the strawman, before the stores. They had a vineyard west of Hungary, and they said they are going to save every belongings of ours, and it will be safely stored. We never got back *anything* from them. The furniture was taken down to this cellar and the people in that house who used this as an air-raid shelter never touched anything, whatever I left, what was the most interesting thing. That's why I know that I have family in America, because I had my school books in my room furniture, my whole room furniture was there. And I didn't remove my school books from my drawers. And I had, not the *Megillah*, you know the *Mishnah* and the *Megillah,* because we studied that at the Jewish *Gymnasium*. In that I had the papers which were my aunt's, who died, my father's younger sister, dictated my ancestorial and my family line.

JF: This is in...the Talmud, in the *Mishnah* and the *Gemora*...

EB: Yes, yes, the Talmud.

JF: The Talmud.

EB: Because we studied that. And I had it there. I put the papers there.

JF: And that gave you the clue.

EB: And that, there was an address because my aunt, at that time you couldn't even correspond with America because we were at war with America. So my aunt said, "Look, sweetheart, you have a family in America. Your father's two sisters live there. And you should know your family. And this is the address. And whenever you can write, when the war is over, you write to them and tell them that's who you are and they'll know about you." And there was my aunt's address. And my aunt and I had a cousin, who also wasn't considered a Jew under the law, because his father also died during the First War. He was a war hero. And...he didn't have to wear the yellow star. And the last day, as I was told, he went down on the street and somebody recognized him as a Jew. He was a Jew! He didn't ever said he wasn't, but he wasn't considered a Jew, so he didn't come under the jurisdiction. And this man went to the Arrow Cross, and they shot him. On the street they killed him. [pause]

JF: Were you able to live in your home until you left?

EB: We had a home, with my husband.

JF: You married...

EB: I married my husband and we had a home.

JF: You had...your own home.

EB: Yeah.

JF: And your parents stayed...

EB: No, I didn't live with my parents.

JF: They stayed in their house.

EB: Mmm hmm. I had a beautiful home.

JF: And when did you...decide to come to this country?

EB: 1956.

JF: What was it like under the Russian occupation? Can you tell me a little bit about that? [pause] Did you have any difficulty getting out in '56?

EB: Oh sure. We escaped. Once we were caught.

JF: You were caught once. How were you trying to escape?

EB: On foot.

JF: And you were stopped, at the border? Were you punished for trying to escape, or just sent home?

EB: Luck again.

JF: What happened?

EB: You have to [tape off then on]

JF: Perhaps that's something you can talk about at another time.

EB: Another time. Because I haven't finished this. I have so many stories, like my brother-in-law, who was three years old, we are still at the fascist era, so let's just stay with that.

JF: O.K. Do you want to tell...me about that?

EB: You see, there were little children whose mothers had to go to the forced labor camp or this concentration camp, as I told you, from their houses. My brother-in-law's mother went under this category. He was three years old that time. His father was already killed in the labor camp somewhere in Russia. We didn't know he was, that time we didn't know he was killed, but later on we found out he was already dead. So his mother had to go. He was three years old. And they put these children in the makeshift orphanages, all those children who [were] left in the homes. They gathered them together, the Jewish organization, [unclear] with the Red Cross, and...these underground, the Israeli underground, the Zionists, and they put them in different places, in houses. Now the Arrow Cross knew about them. After they took care of the Jewish orphanage they went to every houses where they had those little children shot. This was one of the homes, and I don't know how many hundreds of children there, and they...did shooting practices out of the children. They were on the third floor, and they were throwing them down in the yard, and shooting in the air, and shooting. And my little brother-in-law was among them, and they had so many dead children in a pile, and they throw him down, and then threw other children on top of him, he was protected by the others and he wasn't harmed. So after the shooting was over, and these people went away and it quieted down, he crawled out under the dead children and he started to roam the streets. And, again, the Red Cross and the Jewish underground and Zionists were rummaging the streets for the survivors. And they were helping. And they find him walking on the street. So they had the Red Cross homes. He was put in those, one of those homes. And after the war they couldn't identify them, because most of them they were so young. They...didn't know their names. They didn't

know their parents. They didn't know where they lived. They knew something, but some of them knew but the parents didn't come back. The children without parents, without homes. They were young, older, old, and they were little savages on the street. They were hiding in the ruins and they were feeding for themselves and ate rats and they were little gangs. Or they were in little, in homes, what the Joint put up for them. All by the Red Cross now. If they couldn't find a parent, then people who wanted to take care of the children, like foster...parents, they came in and asked for children. They could be Gentiles or Jews or whoever. So in this particular Red Cross home came a couple of farmers, and he said, "Well, we've always wanted a little boy." And they selected my brother-in-law. And they took him with them. And his mother came back from Dachau and she was looking for her son. And to research the papers it was very hard. Finally she found out, she went through hell for a whole year. It took her a year day and night, searching for her son. Finally she came to this farmer's place in the country. She traced him. And that time he was already four years old. And that was in a summer day, high noon. And in Hungary a high noon is a very hot time, and the farmers are usually having their main meal that time under a shade. And they were sitting under a shady tree and they're having their meal. And this woman was coming across the field, walking across the field. And this little boy stood up and starts screaming and running. He said, "Mother! Mother! My *real* mother is here! My *real* mother!"

JF: Oh.

EB: He recognized his mother.

JF: That's a miraculous story.

EB: And [whispering] we have two children, my sister and her two lovely children.

JF: This is...your sister's...

EB: Husband.

JF: Husband. Is there anything else you want to share with us today before we stop?

EB: I don't know.

JF: Mrs. Bentley, thank you so much.

EB: You are welcome. I hope [tape off them on] I wish I wouldn't have such a story to tell. [tape off then on]

JF: This is a continuation of the interview with Mrs. Eva Bentley, done on April 2nd, 1985. Could you tell us a little bit about how the Jewish community organization functioned during this time?

EB: We had the...address, the Jewish community address, and as you know from the history of it, it has a very bad reputation, because the Hungarian Jewish community, the people tried to...please Eichmann and the Germans and the authorities. And that, I don't know if firsthand that is true or not, but it has happened that they knew about Auschwitz. They knew about the deportation, and they didn't told the Jewish community, and that's

why most of the people were docile and went to their, their way to the gas chambers. And I still, an argument about it that Hoess should have been [unclear], but I cannot judge. I am not a judge. I've just been there.

JF: What was your understanding as to why they didn't tell?

EB: You know, hindsight is great. That time we didn't know that they know more what they were telling. They...didn't want to cause trouble or revolution and maybe they were naive—what I cannot believe—and they didn't know what was happening. But the history proves that most of them knew.

JF: Were they doing anything during the time of the German occupation that you felt was helpful...

EB: Oh yes.

JF: To the German people?

EB: Yes. Uh, they...

JF: I'm sorry, to the Jewish people.

EB: Yes, as much as they could they tried to give a little assistance and food and shelter and organize the people. But in the same time when they organize they organize the people to go to the labor camps and go to the concentration camps. So, the good things for us aside, because the bad thing is so magnified and so horrendous that we don't remember the good.

JF: You're talking about the cooperation with Eichmann.

EB: With Eichmann and with the Germans. Weisheimer, Eichmann, and with the government.

JF: How...

EB: But in the same time they served a purpose, because they were the head and they...tried their own way. But...they were serving the Germans. They were subservients. And maybe that's the generation and the believing in law and order. So it's easy for us to judge them. They were in, we don't know how any other organization would behave under a certain government. So they...tried what they thought was the best. And they thought probably if they saved some, they don't lose everybody. They didn't want to lose everybody and they tried to save some people and they...did their best, according to them. If they could do better, that's the history to judge. And I don't know.

JF: Were they involved in the *Gymnasium* that you were attending?

EB: Yes, now it belonged...

JF: Were they supporting it?

EB: Oh, at that time, yes, but after that it was closed. It belonged to the...Jewish community. It was a privately owned place and everybody was supported by...the Jewish community. We had very wealthy Jews, like the, the industrial barons, textile manufacturers, the biggest iron ore manufacturers–Weiss, Manfred–mine owners, and all of them, like in here, they supported the Jewish community.

JF: Do you think that these people...

EB: They supported the Jewish hospitals, the Jewish...the *Gymnasium*, the Jewish schools, the Jewish orphanage. It's all been privately owned, and not subsidized by the government.

JF: Do you think that these families that you're mentioning got any preferential treatment by the Jewish community in terms of the deportations?

EB: No. No. Mr. Goldberger, who was a, the biggest textile manufacturing in central Europe and is still one of the biggest textile manufacturing compound, owned by the government now, died in Dachau, one of the...baron Weisses died. Some they went to Switzerland, but really, they couldn't do anything. They went their way too.

JF: They couldn't do anything to save themselves.

EB: No. One of the...Baron Weiss, one of them, went to Switzerland. But I don't know it's before or...during, with money, had come to that point, with money they...tried to save some children. To, the S.S. needed the money as a reserve for raw goods and for ammunition. And they promised that two plane load of children will be exempted and go to Switzerland and some people. Now, they, first they deported those, for money, and they deported them to Bergen-Belsen. And from Bergen-Belsen there was a compound. And they took the children with the plane load to Switzerland. But the plane had the S.S. insignia on it. And it was the end of the war when it happened. And it was shot down by the Allies, and all the children died. So the next transport—I know this firsthand because my best friend was among those children, and she was in the second transport. And they were, she stayed in Bergen-Belsen because the second transport didn't took off. It was already too late for that. And the first transport, I had two friends in the first transport, two school mates of mine, who died.

JF: Was the S.S. plane the only one that was available to them for this transport?

EB: Yes! We didn't have any planes.

JF: That was what was there.

EB: Hungary itself didn't have any planes, not to mention the Jews! [chuckles] And that was the safest way out, because no Jews could leave the country. And the S.S. took them, like they deported them to Bergen-Belsen, and Bergen-Belsen, they had one barrack for those children. And the first transport left, I think so, with 60 children, and they were shot down. And some of the parents were on the plane, too. I had, my physics teacher was on that plane, and her husband was an industrialist.

JF: Do you know approximately when that occurred?

EB: I can ask my friend. She is in Toronto. She is the head librarian. She buys all the foreign books for the public library system of Ontario Province. And she is the one who knows more about that, because she survived in that barrack. In that barrack they had a little bit more food. Means more food? They got some cans, canned food, and they didn't have to go out to work, those young children. And she survived there. And she has seen another friend of ours, who came from, with the regular transport, and she was looking out of the barrack window. This friend of ours was scavenging at the, in the pile of garbage,

for food, with her little brother. And she saw her. She was already a skeleton. And she recognized her. And before she could yell out to her, the S.S. guard turned those dogs on her and in front of this friend of mine, whose name is Eva, Eva Shtiosnie, [phonetic] she saw that the dogs [pause] took this other friend, whose name was Clara, Clara Kemen, [phonetic] killed her and...