

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

SYLVIA EBNER

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Gloria M. Schwartz  
Date: February 14, 2001

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Gratz College  
Melrose Park, PA 19027

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SE - Sylvia Ebner [interviewee]  
GS - Gloria Schwartz [interviewer]  
Date: February 14, 2001

*Tape one, side one:*

GS: This is an interview with Sylvia Ebner for the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive and I am Gloria Schwartz. Sylvia, thank you for doing this interview today. [February 14, 2001]

SE: You are welcome.

GS: Would you please give us the place where you were born and the date and tell us a little bit about your family life.

SE: Okay. My name is Sylvia Ebner [born September 10, 1929] and I'm, my maid, mid, maiden name was Sylvia Klein and I come from Hungary and we lived in a little town in Hungary, the name is Bodrogkisfalud. It's a long name but a little town. Three, actually four, Jewish family lived in the town where I lived and I had a brother who was 15 ½ when they took us away. He was in the, in a big city where he went to Hebrew and Hungarian school. He lived there for already--but he come home for vacation and summer vacation--but he was in that school already for five years because my father wanted him to have a better education, Hebrew and Hungarian. He was taken away right from there with all the boys. It was a boy's school. I never hear, never heard from him after that.

GS: Do you know the name of the town?

SE: Yes, he was in a big city, Kosice. Kosice was in Czechoslovakia but later it became Hungary so they call it Kosice, it was a big city and we have some relatives there too so my mother figured it would be close to relatives and in a good school. My father begged him to come home March 19<sup>th</sup> when the Germans come in, they occupied Hungary, and my father begged him, "Come home, come home, be with us," and he said, "No, Daddy, I cannot go home. What would I do [in] that little village and I want to finish my education first." He didn't figure they would took us away, but my father want us to be together but he don't want to come home. He come home for Christmas vacation and *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, every vacation he come home during summer. He was with us for certain weeks then he went back to learn more Hebrew...

GS: Okay.

SE: ...in summertime.

GS: What type of education did you have?

SE: I have, they took me away at the ninth grade. I didn't have a chance to finish ninth grade.

GS: Ok, did you have any type of Jewish education?

SE: Yes, I was at the same city for a couple, for one year, only one year...

GS: Oh.

SE: ...in a Hebrew school because my mother and my father want me to have some more Hebrew knowledge, and that was a Hungarian Hebrew, that was a regular school, boys and girls school. I was there only one year and after that, that was 300--150 mile away from us and after that I wanted to go home to be with Mommy, Mommy, Mommy, I was mother girl. I don't want to go back no more. And I have friends where we went to, it wasn't a Catholic school, it was like a regular school, not a Catholic school, how you call it? Like here, not, not, how you call it?

GS: Like a public school?

SE: Public school, yeah, but there was a lot of Jewish kids. So when I went to the third grade we walked in two mile just because mother and father want us to be with Jewish kids together. First and second grade, I went to Catholic school because in my little village was only Catholic school and I couldn't walk the two mile, but the minute I was able to walk, my brother become third grade and I become, I'm sorry, I become third grade and my brother become fourth, then we walked in, two miles every day back and forth. We took our lunch with us, not like other children, other children lived in, not so far like us.

GS: Were there many Jews in your village?

SE: No, we just have four Jewish family.

GS: And what were the relations with the non-Jewish neighbors?

SE: Our neighbors was very nice comparing to the rest of the villages. Our neighbors know my parents, my old father, I mean the grandfather too and they respect them, and they were really nice to us but the next village, when we walked in, they were hard time to walk in because, "All right Jews, give me candy." My father have a store and they figured I can bring candy for them but how I bring the candy for them, what I get from my father every night, he worked with us, teach us, and if we know our lesson, he give us a piece of chocolate, a small piece, reward us. And my father didn't know it, I didn't eat it and my brother didn't eat it, because we cannot go into school, the kids they were bugging us, "Ok, Jews give us candy," and you have, there was only one road where we have to go through and that corner, they were always waiting for us for the candy and we give the candy for them, then we can go farther. But when you close it, I tell you further that story. I don't want to tell here what was the end of the story. Can you close it please? [tape shut off temporarily]

GS: Sylvia, you were going to tell an incident that happened walking to school and it involved the candy?

SE: Yes, my father would teach us every night instead of having a tutor. You cannot even get a tutor, so my father was teaching us every night, taking over the lesson and whenever we know our lesson or the timetable, he always give us a piece of candy or a piece of chocolate, that was the reward. But we didn't eat the candy or the chocolate because when we go in two miles and one of the corner, we must pass that road where we

have to go to school and the kids, the boys was standing and waiting for us. “Sylvie, Tibie [phonetic], give me your candy,” and if we didn’t give our candy, they would run after us with stone and they was stoning us, and we have to run our heart out to run faster then they can reach us with the stone. One morning--one night we didn’t know our lesson and we don’t have no candy to take because my father only reward us if we know our lesson, and he didn’t give us candy because we didn’t know our homework, and we looked at each other with my brother, what we gonna give now for the kids if they gonna come? “All right kids--all right Jews, not kids--all right Jews where’s the candy?” And you always give it to them but this time we don’t have the candy and we start to run. They take the stones, whatever stones was, they were running after us, they want to stone us. So one day we don’t have the candy and I said to my father and my brother, I said, “We cannot go to school.” “Why can’t you go to school? You’re not sick.” “Yes, we not sick but we don’t want to tell you every morning, we have to give the candy for those kids, otherwise we cannot pass by because they’re running after us, all right Jews, give me your candy, and I have--you don’t give us candy tonight, I can, we cannot go to school.” And my father said, “Ok, look, I tell you one thing. What you have to take care of yourself. I can’t be always with you. I can be never with you when you grow up. You have to learn how to take care of yourself. Here is a piece of stone.” He give us a piece of stone but my brother don’t want to take it and he says, “No way! No way!” he said to me, “Sylvia you gonna take it in your hand, hold it this way and when they ask, give me your candy, give them the candy, punch up his...” how you call this?

GS: Chin.

SE: “Chin, punch up his chin with this stone. They have to learn once and for all, Jews or not Jews, you are, they don’t gonna get your candy because they were not working for it. You learn for it. Tonight you don’t know your lesson, you have no candy and you’re going to go to school.” We were shaking in our boots, especially my brother, he was not a fighting type. I never fight myself either but maybe I can run faster like my brother did when they was throwing the stones, and I did it. We went that corner, we come to that corner, it was about a mile away from my house and when they asked the candy, I punched up his chin and was bleeding. I, myself get afraid because now they really gonna kill us. We were running like crazy to school, “Well, how we gonna go home? How we gonna go home because we have to take the same road to go home.” There was no telephone I should call my father. Europe there was no telephone, how can I tell my father? We went all around, around, around, you know on other road, maybe other two miles, not to pass by to this corner. When I went home, I said to my father, “I did it but I am sorry, it was bleeding.” So my father said, “Next time they will know not to hit you or hurt you. They have no right to hit you or hurt you.” But afternoon, I saw the Joe mother and Joe come into my house and he asked, “Mr. Klein, why did you hurt my son?” He called me in. My father called me in, and although I don’t want to do it, but my father said, “You must take care of yourself. I can’t be with you every step in your life. If you won’t hurt

him, you gonna learn your lesson, I'm gonna hurt you." So I had no choice, I just had to hurt him. And I explain it, why I was hurting Joe because he was running all the time after us, "Jews give me your candy," him and the rest of the boys and I have no candy that night because I didn't know my lesson and the mother of the, Joe mother, he was shocked, she was shocked, and she took Joe hand and he, she ask him, "Is it true?" "Yes, they didn't give me the chocolate. That's why we run after them all the time because I want the chocolate." The mother of this Joe take this child and I'm telling you with all her might, she spanked this, her son, Joe, as hard as she can, and she said to him, "Why you do that? Sylvia had the right to do it, and I don't you dare come to cry for me. She was right, and I don't want to hear it again and I'm sorry Mr. Klein, my son did that." And my father said, "I understand it's not your fault. You never teach him. I know you very well but the kids teach each other," and everything was ok after. Next time, they don't ask no more candy from us, we pass by, never again they ask candy from us. Because they were afraid they were gonna get it. Yes, what else?

GS: Did you have any friends in the class that were non-Jews?

SE: Oh yes. I have a lot of friends in the classroom who were very nice. I have a lot of friends in my town because all my friends from the Catholic school, first and second grade, they were all my friends and they were very nice. In the town itself, there were some of them who wasn't too nice. For instance, my father speaked German at that time, and there was across the street a neighbor who the mother was very nice and everybody was very nice except the son, who my father give him lesson because he went to high school already and always come to Mr. Klein to help him with the German and my father always helped him with his lesson. One Friday night we were just ready to close the store, because we were religious, and we closed the store [unclear] we pulled down the shade, there was shade from steel and this Joe came and he said, "Mr. Klein, what's that mean *kaput*?" And my hus, my father said, "You know Joe, what's that mean *kaput*, you know that word." "Yes, I know but, but we..." what you mean, "But?" "I just come from the next town," and we had a big river there across the street of the pasture and there was a Jewish kid who was coming from the Hebrew school, he couldn't go home to Tokaj, so he come down where we lived, that was eight mile in the pasture. And the Germans they went and they shoot him through the big river. They were playing who can shoot? Ten soldiers was shooting the *bocher* [boy], and they said, "It's *kaput*. That's why I tell you *kaput*," and my father said nothing because he can't tell, you should of shame of yourself to come and tell me this way. But that's the way he let us know the Germans shooting the Jews under that town. That's what that is and we went to school in that elementary school, regular elementary school and I was at the ninth grade. We went out for recess and the bell was ringing, one of the--principal actually, not the teacher, the principal said, "Jewish kids gonna make a line here and the Christian kids gonna make a line this way." The Christian kids went into the classroom all. We all the Jewish kids were standing in line from first grade till ninth grade. There was no teacher who would teach us. Not one of the teacher

would volunteer to teach us, so we were standing there till lunchtime and finally one of the teacher who was of Russian descent, we find out that time, we didn't know that he was a Russian descent. He said, "We gonna teach--I gonna teach you." And he taught the nine class from first grade, we went in all the Jewish kids in that one classroom, and this teacher was the only one who took us and teach us. The rest of the teachers, they don't want to teach us, they don't want to talk to us, nothing. When we went in to this classroom, all the kids, then we realized that we are Jews, really Jews. They hate us. If they don't want to teach us, that means they hate us. There was not one teacher, just this man and he explained it to us. He's a Russian descent and he knows what that means to be not a pure Hungarian because he was a Russian descent, and "I gonna teach you but what I gonna teach you remember but good. I expect you to learn," and he start to teach us. That was the--I still remember what he teach us, that was the first lesson. He said we human beings have brains. In Hungarian they call it a different way, we have *ész*, *ész* means brain. But animal has no *ész*, no brain. They just have *erston*, they have sense. They will remember for 15 minutes what you tell them and you have to repeat, and repeat, and repeat, that's the only time they gonna remember. That was the first time I heard that story. I never knew it, because we lived in the town and we always had ducks, but I was never thinking they have no *ase*, they have no brain, you know? That's the time--that was the first lesson that he taught. And then one day, before Easter, we cannot go no more, no more from one village to the next, and this village was where I went to school, the next village. So I cannot go no more school because Jews were not allowed to go from one village to the next village and they have to put on the yellow star. Then our--then we know who was our friend in my town, in my little town, they were spitting on us, dirty Jews, from my own friends some of them. My own friends when we put out the, when you have to put on the yellow star. Then we really find out who was my friend, who was my real schoolmate.

GS: Was that in April 1944?

SE: That's right. That was April 1944. The Germans come in March 19<sup>th</sup>. But the minute they come in, we cannot go no more from one village to the next. We were closed in to our home and then they took us to the ghetto.

GS: And where was the ghetto?

SE: Satoraljaujhely, ok?

GS: What...?

SE: That was about 50 miles from us, where we lived, but that was exactly one--next day after our Jewish Easter, next day.

GS: Passover?

SE: Passover, right after our Passover, but at Passover my uncle wasn't home. He was in labor camp and my two aunts, three aunts was there and a little girl was eight year old, her name is Katy and they want to hear the *seder*, but how they gonna hear the *seder*? My uncle was in the labor camp, one of my aunt's husbands was in the labor camp, the little girl father was in the labor camp, so we walked down about a mile where my aunt

lived and we had the *seder* at their house because we don't want all of them to walk to our place. It's very funny when all the Jews coming to one place. My father went first, then I went, my brother wasn't home, my brother was in that city, and then my mother further away from me, like we don't walk together, and then we went into the house, to my aunt house and we had the *seder*. We cried through all night. My father said this, all the *seder*, but we cried through all night because we were so much of afraid they gonna come in, the German gonna break down the door. And I was at that time 14 ½ year old and I never saw my father crying in my life, but that time I saw my father and my mother crying. I couldn't really pick it up so fast, how come my father cry? Is it really so bad? But I was shaking, because that time we cannot walk from one village to the other. I cannot go to school and I was afraid, I know that something gonna happen, and we finished up the *seder* and we walked home. It was still cold and I was freezing and shaking till we don't go into the house. It was nice. The moonlight night, it was such a beautiful moonlight night and I was so much of afraid that I couldn't wait till I go into the house, to my house, and finally we, I didn't ask my father or my mother, I don't want to ask my father or my mother why they were crying because I know why they were crying but I couldn't figure out how come this was so horrible if my father cry and my mother cry. Then come Saturday, it was between one Saturday, between--because *Pesach* is eight day. And came one Saturday and my mother stayed home. Me, my father and me, we went down to see and how my aunt and my three aunt, was three girl, three women and a little girl. So afternoon we went down with my father and when we come home, my mother was shaking and she don't know what to do. "What happened Mama?" I ask. The German came in and they pick up one of the beds from our bedroom. There was like here the two bed what goes together with a little thing, clinched together. They pick up one bed and take it away, and my mother was afraid they even gonna kill her because they went in, "Jews, give me your furniture." So my mother figured everything they gonna take. But they took one bed, only one bed for themselves. Somebody wanted to sleep in a bed and they took my mother, my mother bed, and we were, I was a child but I was so much of afraid, I was so shaken, they gonna come again and they gonna do something.

GS: What had happened to your father's store in the meanwhile? Was he able to still operate?

SE: In the meantime, we were operating, but we Jews, we were not allowed to sell flour, sugar, petroleum. None of the Jews' store, was able to sell all this stuff. In the meantime people go to shop, they don't want to shop this in my store, the rest of the things because they gonna go where they can buy the salt and everything, but my father was a, have to go back. He just come home, he just come home, he was a labor camp too. My father was in the labor camp and two weeks before Easter they let him come home.

GS: Do you know the name of the camp?

SE: No.

GS: Or where it was located?



SE: It was in Hungary, it was in Hungary at that time. And I was so happy when my father come home, and that's mean we have somebody with us, a man. My brother wasn't home, my mother and me was attending the store and we were struggling because, as I said, this business wasn't going at all. We have a garden, a big fruit garden, what my father put all the trees in--apples and all kinds of a trees. Actually we live on our own fruit and our whatever we can pick up from the garden, that's what we were living but that was already wintertime, so we saved--my mother saved some apple and some beans and potatoes. So we lived on that because the business wasn't going and we couldn't, we couldn't live just what we have at the house, because my father was in the labor camp. Two weeks before East, before *Pesach* he come home. Yeah, I was so happy, nothing could happen with me no more, my father is home. When my father was home, I felt so assured. When my father was in the labor camp, I was so much of afraid we close the door, even nobody was coming in at that time because Hungarian people, the neighbors, they don't go to steal from one another, you know? But the--we were always afraid that maybe some stranger is gonna come in, but when my father came home, I was so relieved my father is home and nothing could happen with me because he gonna take care of us. He was a very strong man, he was a very strong man, he teach us to stand our two foot. Don't walk like a *schlemiel*. When we went on that ice, I remember my father said, "Stop." I said, "Why should I stop?" "Walk, don't crawl, walk. Stand up on your two foot and keep your head up. Don't walk like a *schlemiel*." He always, he taught us to be strong, not to be afraid from nobody. Don't hurt nobody, but don't be afraid from nobody.

GS: Was he taken to the labor camp right after the Germans came in, in the...

SE: No.

GS: ...middle of March?

SE: No, years before already they, he went, he was a soldier before. He was a soldier before and then went, become to be, not a German wasn't there yet but a lot of SS, Hungarian SS was lot of *gendarme*, lot of--they don't let the Jews to go to be a soldier, they want, they put them to the labor camp and they were digging ditches and that's all what they were doing, working hard, they were not allowed to have the pistol or anything, just a shovel.

GS: So can you tell me when this was?

SE: That was in 1944, 1940--beginning, early 1942. 1942 they didn't give Jews the pistol, they just give the shovel...

GS: Okay.

SE: ...that's all and they only labor camp, working like horses, digging ditches, fixing airports, and everything.

GS: Okay.

SE: Yeah.

GS: Were you aware of what was happening in Europe?

SE: Actually, I wasn't aware. I was too young to understand, and I lived all my life in that little village, and I loved my friends, they friends love me who were close by. The rest of them later on, they show me, I am a Jew. Who was farther, lived farther up, they were throwing stone at us and spit on us, "Jews, dirty Jews, dirty Jews" and I figure to myself, "What that mean, dirty Jews? I am not dirty. I wash myself every morning, even so we have no bathroom. We just have a wash, a little room where we wash ourself in a, from a dish." But then I, I said to myself, "They don't mean dirty, they mean just because I'm a Jew." You know just because, but not my close friends. My close friends was very nice, they were very nice, but those who really don't know so close to me, you know, then they were, they know I am Jew and then when we have to wear the star, the Jewish star, you know, then they wake up.

GS: Were there any Jewish organizations for youth?

SE: No, there was no youth organization there, there was nothing, nothing. It was a little town and the next town, we have Hebrew school where only the boys went to school. My father taught me Hebrew, to read Hebrew.

GS: Ok, I'd like to get back to the ghetto. You said you were moved to the ghetto?

SE: Now wait a minute.

GS: Okay.

SE: This time it was right after Easter, after *Pesach*. The next day, since I was a little girl who helped my mother, we were washing the dishes and my mother told me, "Do a good job because a year is too long and my grandmother used to say: a year is too long and you don't know who gonna take it off [out] and I don't want them to say that was -you were not doing a good job." And I said to myself, when my mother said, who go, "God knows who gonna take it off." What my mother mean, "Who gonna take it off? Why we don't take that off?" I wasn't thinking they gonna take us away. I wasn't thinking of that, we won't stay there in the house. And all of the sudden came morning and I, we washed the dishes and we have to go on steps to bring it to... [tape one, side one ended]

*Tape one, side two:*

GS: This is side two of the interview with Sylvia Ebner.

SE: Okay, so we were, I was washed it, I washed the dishes, dried it, and I went to the steps, step ladder, how high, it was high, high there, not like here, step ladder have to go up high, and I bring up the dishes, and I just came down, I was up the step ladder and I saw my Aunt Olga come in and fall in [fainted]. We have the *sukkah*. That was the summer kitchen; the *sukkah* was our summer kitchen.

GS: Okay.

SE: Okay? And the stepladder was standing in the *sukkah* when we go to the attic, and I saw she fall in. I said, "What happened?" You know, "What happened?" I get scared. She was 24 years, 26 year old. And my father went and take a dish and poured the cold water on her and finally she come to herself, she said, "Make some food right away because the next town, Jews, they were picked up and they just marched front of our house with the *gendarme*. The *gendarme* taking all the Jews from the next town and they gonna come for us any minute but if we have some food put up fast." But we cooked with the regular stove, not gas. We had, we have wood stove and my mother got so nervous, what to cook, what to do, we have some leftover, you know, at least put it and warm it up and eat it, and we have fruit garden and every time when the fruit fall down my mother cut it up to pieces and dried it. My mother cut up the fruit and dried it and that was for wintertime, you know? Mother went and put a dish full of apple, those dried fruit and cooked it and we have some leftover, but bake, they have, we have no time to bake, they said, my aunt said, "You have no time to bake because I saw they carried just, just as much what they can carry on their back." That was around 9:30, 10:00. 12:00 the *gendarme* come and, "Let's go Jews, let's go, let's go." What they mean, "Let's go," I said to myself. "Where will we go? Well what do you mean, let's go? Where you wanna take me?" But I was afraid to ask. The *gendarme* was not like here, the police. They were with, how you call that? Feather on the, on their hat, and they know us, they know us because they every time they come to check the store it is clean or not. This time they don't know us no more. They don't want to know us no more. But when they come to check the store, years before, years before '42 that time was Mr., Mr. Klein. This time, "Let's go Jews. Let's go." And I said, "Where will we go?" "Pick up what you can pick, fast. Put it on your back." We have no valise. In Europe there was no valise. We lived in a little town. How you gonna take that few thing? Takes fast, whatever you can carry, that's all you can take. First thing was the bedding, that was the first thing. You have to take bedding, because that's what my father said, "Let's pick up some bedding and let's pick up the food what we have." But my father said, "Even if we pick up the beans and the potatoes and the flour, where we gonna cook it?" So we didn't pick up any beans and any potatoes, just what we have ready and a couple of things what we can carry with us. My fath--my mother was carrying the bedding. In Europe we had different bedding, like here the heavy bedding with the goose

down, goose down cover, you know? It wasn't bedding like here. Like here you know those blankets, those light things, it was heavy, so my mother put it on her back and my father put it on his back, and I carry what I carry in my two hands, dishes. My father said, "Shall we take dishes," you know? "Yes, take some dishes." "Ok, if we can carry dishes, then we have to take some food, potatoes or something, so we carried whatever we could. We, they took us, put us up on a, there was already a horse and buggy front of our house, and they said, "Up on the horse and buggy, on the carriage," and we went up. "Where they gonna, where they gonna take us?" We figured you know and the st--the station was just about maybe 400 steps from us but no, they took us to the third town with the carriage because in the meantime we picked up all the Jews from my town and the next town, and then they took us in the third town and picked up all the Jews around, everywhere was carriages already, you know? And they put us up on the carriage--we went about two blocks from my house, from our house--two blocks, and I looked back. I have a beautiful little dog, I always love animals, I love dogs and cats even here I have, for 32 years I have cats and dogs all the time. And I look back and my little dog was running after us as fast as he can with his little foot. He was running after us, after the carriage, because I left her there. And I said to my mother, "Why don't you stop and pick up Morzsa?" Her name was Morzsa--Itty Bitty, that's why I have Pici here in my house, because her name was--Itty Bitty means Morzsa. That's why I have here Morzsa, and I put my dog name and [cleared throat] when we, when I looked back I saw my little dog running after us and I saw people are going into our yard. I said, I asked my mother, "Mother why are they going in to our yard?" We have a big yard, a long yard with fruit trees and everything. "Why are they going in?" I said. She said to me, "Honey, don't look back. Don't look back." My mother know it, why they went in. They come, they went in already to steal, the minute we were, the second corner of the house, it was a long street you know, and my mother know it, they went in to steal but she don't, she don't want to tell me. The last minute I never forget. She said to me, "Put this under..." we have those closets, those furniture, the one furnitures where we keep our closet, our bedding nicely, we iron it and everything was my mother put it, everything nicely to make it surely straight, and she said to me, "Sylvia fix this up because that doesn't look good." When we look back already they were going, running in and my mother know why they running in, and they took us to the, to my aunt's place from my house, they took us to my aunt's place, they picked up my aunt and my little cousin, then we went to the next town, there was one Jewish family. There was one Jewish family, they picked up that family and then we go to the third village where they picked up the [unclear] 10 or 12 carriage was already, where they picked up all the Jews and the people, you know? We have a carriage, we have, we were in one carriage, my aunt was in the other carriage, you know? And, in the meantime, while we were going on the carriage the mail lady came, and she was running after us, "Mrs. Klein, I have a letter from your son," and she give it, gived the letter from my mother because she know that my mother was always waiting for the letter. She was a nice lady, a nice lady, and she was the mail

lady, she was carrying the mail and she said, "Mrs. Klein, here is a letter from your son," because she knows it my mother was always waiting the letter from her son. That was the last letter what my mother got from my brother. My mother and my father was with us so thank God my father was there because I figured no, no, nobody can hurt me because my father is there. Then they took us to that place, to that third village. I never knowed the neighbors, only one of them, who [unclear] one of the young lady who was later on my sister-in-law, who become my sister-in-law later on, when we both come from back, from the concentration camp. We were at together, they took us first to the ghetto. Where would they put us in the ghetto? I heard the ghetto, they were talking but I don't, I couldn't figure what is ghetto, you know? There, only on the road we heard that they going to take us to the ghetto. What is ghetto? Ghetto was that where was fenced in one of the neighborhood. The most Jewish, that was the most Jewish neighborhood in Satoraljaujhely that we had, that was a city. And they bring us in to one of the Jewish house and there was the kitchen not bigger than this kitchen like we are here, my Aunt Berszka, Carmill [phonetic], Olga, and her little girl, eight and the three of us was laying on the, there that's going to be our room, kitchen. That's where we were sleeping, on the, there was no linoleum there, there was wood floor. At least wasn't so cold like linoleum. At that time it was after Easter in Hungary, no more cold. It's not hot, but it's not so cold. Well where you going to go to the toilet? Toilet was on the, it was a big, big house and it was one toilet in the middle of the yard, in the middle of the yard was one toilet. That's where we all, the whole house, that was the whole house there, from the Jewish people. I never forget when somebody wanted to come in the kitchen at night from the rest of the rooms or for the, for you know this people, this had two rooms, two bedrooms, a corridor, even the corridor were people laying, because they pushed in as much Jews as much they can in one house and my mother said, "Stand up," middle of the night. What you mean, "Stand up?" Because they want to make warm something for the kids, so I have to stand up otherwise they would step on you, there was no room. There was no room there, so we have to stand up till they make it warm then we go back to, not a bed, on the floor. We were there for--my aunt wasn't there, my aunt and, no, no, not this aunt, my, this aunt was there. This three aunt was there, but later on they took my three aunt and my cousin and she find a better place in other Jewish house where the kids you know, they were trying, the Jewish people, they were trying to give more room for the kid, it was 8 year old, the kid was 8 year old. And my other aunt was, who daughter is here in Great Neck, Long Island. They were in the synagogue, on the floor, staying in the synagogue on the floor, that's where they were, living.

GS: How long were you in this little house?

SE: In this, in this house we were there for about four week, about four week we lived there like that, and what we eat, I don't know. Don't ask me what I eat because I can't remember back. How I eat, what I eat, I just can't think, washed out completely.

GS: Did people just stay in the house they were assigned to all day?

SE: No, we can go to the yard, to the yard because that was a big house there and we were in the yard, and we can go on the ghetto, we visit our aunt, me and my cousin, we visit our friend, our aunt where she lived. Also in the ghetto, that was a ghetto, it was the same street, you know? The same neighborhood, you cannot get out from the ghetto, it was impossible to get out from the ghetto.

GS: Were there any activities organized for the children or...?

SE: Nothing, nothing, nothing--nothing, nothing, absolutely one dress I have and one dress I took because you cannot carry so much. You cannot carry so much you know? And then about four weeks later, they picked us up from there. They make it smaller, the ghetto, they bring all the Jews in the synagogue, there was a big synagogue there and they bring all the Jews in the synagogue, closer and closer, closer to the synagogue, whoever was no room in the synagogue are laying on the ground, on the synagogue ground. And one afternoon, but how, what I eat there, I can't remember, would you believe it? I can't remember if that, only once I remember we ate, my mother made some *cholent* in the baker, we have to bring it to the bakery, and I went with her and a neighbor who there was a baker, and we picked them up and it was so delicious that *cholent* like I never in my life eat, every Saturday we have *cholent*, but this was you know, wasn't interesting.

GS: And the Germans did not provide any food?

SE: No prov--no food provided, nothing, nothing. I have long hair, with braided, that time was the style, braided hair for, for teenager and I have, I was blonde all over, blonde, blonde, blonde, very blonde. My father said in the ghetto, we have to cut it down, cut down your hair because I don't want the *buza*, *buza* [lice], they call it that tic, tic to go into your hair. There was, you cannot wash it, there was no place to wash it. For four weeks, we didn't wash ourself. There was no bathroom, there was no bath, where you can wash yourself, for four weeks, so my father cut it off. I have long hair to my waist, cut it off, that was my first shock because I was a teenager and I was so proud of my hair, and I take such a good care at home, my mother used to, even so I was a teenager, my mother used to wash my hair all the time, and she cut it down, cut it down, and she, they were afraid it's gonna, we gonna have the tic. Finally, they took us to that, to that synagogue. There was Jewish people with children, young and old, and crying at night, walking on top of each other because we were so piled up there. One day I have Aunt there. We met there in the ghetto. They live far away from us. I never know them before, because in Europe, I was 12 year old when I first sit on the train. I, we not like here, you have money and everything. We have no money for train ticket and this was my relatives, they bring them in, they lived in Hernad, wait a minute, Litka, Litka--Litka, they live in Litka, they bring them in from that town and I never know them before. That was my mother aunt, listen to this, there was four generations and Linka nèni [aunt], Rusja nenie, Elsa nèni and her daughter [Klara], four generation, four generation, they were bring in, bring in to the same ghetto from all the village around, around, around, from every facility, they bring into that

Satoraljauhely. They bring all the Jews there and they lived, packing us in to each other. And I met this cousin there, at the synagogue because by then they bring them into the synagogue, the beautiful little girl, Kláríka, beautiful. And Elsa nèni was a young woman, her husband was not there anymore and Linka nèni husband died and Elsa nèni husband died, but that little girl, we loved her so much and we were playing all the time with her. We were in that synagogue and all the sudden one afternoon, we were there for at least two weeks in the synagogue to piled up but I can't remember what I eat, even if you kill me, I am trying to think back, where my mother took the food or what I eat, I can't remember, like washed out completely. And one night we were sleeping next to each other naturally, we were already sleeping next to each other. Every family was trying to be close each other. My aunt, my mother and then the little girl, we were all on the floor, sleeping there and one day they took, I, we heard that they were asking for Ruza nèni, why? Instead my old aunt went, her daughter Elza, she said I am, we belong there, we belong to her, she went with the *gendarme*. She was a beautiful young woman, religious naturally, you know. And she went away with the *gendarme*, *gendarme* take her away, the little girl was screaming, "Mommy, Mommy, Mommy," the grandmother, the great-grandmother was there, we were there, we were all trying to play, to make her happy but she was crying for Mommy, Mommy. Around the middle of the night, she come in, black and blue, she was black and blue, I am telling you. She don't have a place on her arm, on her face, on her body, the *gendarme* they said they find out, from America somebody send them a package. I know who was, who send it because after I talk to them here. She send a package. How the hell they get it, I don't know, because at that time America were not connected with Hungary, that was already everything German. All they were find out this people use to send them from the post office, there is somebody from the *gendarme* and that's why they bring. You have relatives in America, and my aunt, my Aunt Elza, we call her Aunt because everybody was all Aunt we called it, and she said every time they were hollering, "This is for your aunt in America. This is for that Jew in America." and they hit him, they almost black and blue till he come home, she was black and blue, she was screaming, crying, she can't sit because it was right--and I see that my mother crying too, but again I still say, "How is that possible because we're Jews, that's why," but America, I always heard from America because my mother lived ten year in New York when she was a young girl. She lived in New York ten years, she and her sister. They have, we have relatives who still, one of them live here in Ardmore, one of the, one of the cousins, second cousin live in Ardmore, and this relatives was already in America, and this relatives was helping the other relatives, that's why they get--she was almost, almost killed because years ago she was sending them some package and they find out American Jews have the Hungarian Jews, ok? And this aunt she was a young girl, she was a young woman, the baby was only four year old. She was a young woman, she looked like an old woman, broken, broken, busted all the way down. It was a horrible, horrible time, it was a horrible time, and about two weeks we were in that, in that synagogue, all the Jews and all of the sudden one

afternoon said, "Everybody out," in Hungarian language because the *gendarme*, all the police was Hungarian. There was, we didn't see no SS at that time, just in my town, but in the ghetto I didn't see no SS there, only Hungarian SS Police, they took it over. They were the SS, they were the, they kill us and do anything and everything. In the synagogue I saw one, they took a child, she was a baby, she was, the mother was breastfeeding and the *gendarme* took her and throw her to the wall and the child went to pieces, and the mother was screaming, she was, you know she was alive, how should I say, she fainted, she fainted. Nobody can say nothing in the ghetto, one day they came in and all the young girls got out and mother get out, all the women should go out to the, to the, to the yard and they come, not nurses who use to be the midwife, they check them if they put in diamond over there, you know? They were girls, my two young, two aunts was the young girls you know? And they came in don't ask what they did. Don't ask. And that's what I was a child but I hear what we were inside, and all the Jewish young people have to go and those people went and they looked at it, and if they hide, if they hide some diamond or some--how you call it?

GS: Jewels.

SE: Jewels, jewelry and they were crying, my two poor young aunt, she was crying. My mother was crying, and she said, "We are finished," and I can't understand why is she saying we are finished, you know, I was too young to really pick it up, it's really we are in such a bad shape and they, two weeks later from the synagogue they make us like standing in line five by five, front of us was that four generation, second, second was from the first, I mean first them and then my cousin who was here, who is still here in Great Neck, Long Island, her sister, her two brother, young brother and mother, it was five, five, there were five in a line. We have to stand five in a line. Men separate, right away, children and women, here. So we were the children and women, my father, my brother wasn't home. My father was already in the other line, other group. And my cousin father and the young brother 18 year old was with him, never come back. The father come back, but the young brother never come back. My father was running over from the line and I have a kerchief but in a fancy way to made it because I felt I'm a teenager already and I put it this way and he took it off, and he said to me, "Put it in your pocket. You should go with mother, you should look like a child." If he would only knew where I would go, if I would go with my mother, if he would only know. My mother was killed right away but when they were separating us, we were standing a line first this five, four generation then my close cousin and aunt then we. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, no, no, no, no, no, no, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. My cousin was here and this four generation was with us but because the baby was in her hands, so that's why mother and I was the fifth. So my aunt, my aunt, my close aunt and this cousin of mother, and the four generation because she was carrying the baby she don't count for fifth, so my mother and I was the fifth, three going up one with the baby and I still remember, I still feel in my arm was debate, Mengele was debate, where shall he put me because I was a tall girl, I was very, very skinny, but I was a tall girl and he was



debating: he should throw me to work or throw me right away to the conc--to the, to the gas chamber. I didn't know it, where, why? I just notice myself I was almost falling on my two cousins foot, back of my two cousins and right away. I was already, you know, there were two of them and me was three and then two other girl who we know, we made the five [unclear], you know?

GS: When you said, you can feel it in your arm--he had his hand on you?

SE: He had, he has his hand on my arm and he was the debating, should I throw her to work or should I put her right away to the camp, and I still feel I was, I was, you know, making like this...

GS: Swaying.

SE: Swaying because I don't know what he gonna and he make a big swing and he throw me to work. Throw me to the work, to the side where the young girls went to work, young people went to work, women.

GS Now could we stop for a minute...

SE: Yes.

GS: ...and tell me...

SE: Yeah.

GS: ...how did you get from the ghetto to Auschwitz?

SE: Okay, but I forget this part, I forget, I like to forget. When we were in that synagogue they said, "Everybody out on the yard, stand in line, five and five, stand in line, take your packages with you, take your packages with you," like it was important, you know? "Take all the packages, what you have, with you." We were walking and all of a sudden we stand in line--a long line, maybe 1,000 people--and they said, "March!" in Hungarian and you should have seen, you should have hear, Gloria, everybody all of the sudden "*Shema Yisroel*."<sup>1</sup> Where we are going, we're are we marching? "March!" We go this way, you know? And we were walking and walking and walking. Finally, we were at the station, it was far away from the station with the packages, everything, my poor mother, she wasn't healthy, she has her inside was out. When I was born, I came too fast, and she had a hard time, you know, even so she had an operation but still wasn't well, and carrying that big heavy [unclear]. We went, then we went to the station and everybody they were pushing, throwing, hitting the backside, the people who was at the end were hitting in to the, in to the, into the cattle, cattle car. They throw us in 86 people in one cattle car, 86 people. We hardly have room to sit. I'm not talking about laying down, hardly have room, the packages and all 86 people, little, old, young, everybody, man, woman, everybody in that, I mean as much as go in, 86 people. Naturally you have to make, in an hour you have to make, especially you kid, you are a kid, where are you going to make, what would you do? There was one *kübel* [pail] in the middle, and right away if somebody have to go, excuse me, we womens have to take off, men cannot make either because

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<sup>1</sup>Deuteronomy 6:4. First words of most important Hebrew prayer affirming the unity of God. Recited twice daily and before death.

everywhere was people so they have to make, you have to make... [tape one, side two ended]