

I probably will remember many things I didn't tell you that--

OK any time.

You were about to go in and try to find your brother again.

Well, there were some very nice young men who came with me, and we took a trip to Stuttgart, where the American consulate was. I had a gold bracelet, and we thought that, if I sell that gold bracelet, we'll make some money so that we can pay the transportation. Well, they wanted to give me \$4 on the black market.

And the jewelry that I'd received from my uncle Joseph-- they hid all their jewelry, and their belongings, and my dowry, and everything else. And the only thing that I received, as far as gold was concerned-- or that belonged to them was my mother's wedding band and two gold bracelets. And I thought, I'll starve to death before I sell it for \$3. \$3 was a lot of money in those days.

So while we were there, I told my friends, you go to the railroad station, and I will try to get into the American embassy. And I stood across the street from the embassy and watched the two guards who were standing at the door. And for some reason, they left the door unattended, and I ran across the street. And I remembered the building had a staircase running up. And I ran as fast as I could all the way up to the staircase to the second floor.

There wasn't a soul in the building that I could see, so I thought, I'll just listen. And I listened, and I could hear a faint voice in one of the rooms. And I knocked, and I walked in. And there was this American officer sitting behind a table. And I showed my brother's picture to him that had the APO number on the back, and with very few German words that I could muster up, I told him that-- who I was, that I was in only in a displaced person camp, and I'm looking for my brother, who is an American soldier.

Well, the communication was very difficult, because I did not understand him. And then he said, wait just a second. So he came back with a man who spoke Hungarian, somebody whose parents came from Hungary, went to New York. And he spoke Hungarian. Well, so I was able to tell. He had: one of those portable telephones next to his desk, and he called up some headquarters and gave them the APO number and the information.

Well, he was informed that the group that my brother was with had returned to America. So then I hear this conversation just on his side. I didn't understand what he was saying, but I could hear that he was conversing, and it seems that somebody knew my brother personally. And the person who answered the telephone on the other end knew that-- my brother.

And they were able to tell this man that my brother, because he was looking for me, he did not go back with his battalion to the States, but he remained in Germany. And he was in Hamburg, Germany. And so this man called up Hamburg, Germany, and in two seconds, was talking to my brother. Well, of course, he put the telephone to my ear, and I couldn't talk to him because he did not speak English-- Hungarian. I did not speak English. We didn't see each other for 16 years. And the only thing we did was just cry. But this man made the arrangement for us to meet.

Do you remember what you tried to say to him? Did you speak in Hungarian and say--

I just cried.

And at his end, did he try to say anything?

I don't know what he said. He did say some things, but it was all in English. He did not speak English-- he did not speak Hungarian, and so there was no communication. The only thing I know is that I just cried.

Did he cry?

Yes, he did. But he was talking, but I just didn't understand. So I gave my-- the phone back to this man, and then-- because I knew that the only anything I could do was just cry. And then this man told me that I have to go to Hamburg, and when I arrived there, my brother will be waiting for me. Well, I arrived on the train, and I didn't see my brother.

Of course, I don't know why I thought I would recognize him. Of course, he was six years old when I last seen him. There was an office in the railroad station where the American-- there were some Americans stationed there, I suppose, directing the soldiers or whoever-- who arrived there. So I went there, and again, I remember it was the first time I have ever seen a young man with his feet on the desk.

And he was chewing gum. This was very typical American to me. And I told him that-- why I was there. Well, my brother was detained, but he was coming. And when he was coming to me, it was like seeing my father come toward me. He looked just like my father-- not so much in his face, but in his physique, and with a little bit bowlegs.

And of course, we couldn't communicate again. But he found somebody who spoke Hungarian, and brought him along. And then we just looked at each other. And he brought a lot of food where he lodged me, and it was just knowing that we found each other. But then I lost him again, because he died at the age of 24. I was already in this country. So he's gone too.

What year was this?

I came into this country Christmas of '47. I left Hungary in '46, came in here '47. I arrived Christmas day of '47. And then I think he came after. He came back a year later.

So he came in '48?

I think it was in 1948, somewhere there.

And then what happened?

Well, he was married. His wife was pregnant, and had tuberculosis. And my uncle was instrumental in putting her in Duarte in the TB sanitarium. And then, when she came out, she had to have bed rest. And when she came out from the hospital-- from the sanitarium to have her baby, I quit my job and I took care of the baby while she had to be bed rest.

And then they moved up to-- from Los Angeles, they moved to the East Bay here, Walnut Creek. And he had an accident, and he died. He was 24. And his wife was left with a little girl. So my niece lives in Los Angeles.

What's her name?

Her name is Carol.

What kind of accident?

Well, he shot himself. And I don't know why. They found him in San Francisco. [INAUDIBLE].

You came to this country Christmas day. How did you get here?

Well, it is a story to tell, because when I left Ulm to go to the airport in Frankfurt, my uncle from Los Angeles made the arrangements.

That's the other uncle Joseph?

This is the doctor who -- my mother's who adopted my brother. And he moved from Flushing and went to Los Angeles, and set up his practice there. After the war, when I came into the picture, he was already in Los Angeles. And he was instrumental, handling all the papers for me.

I went to the airport with a telegram in my hand that the ticket is waiting for me in Frankfurt. And in those days, you went to an office building where they had the passengers, and then they had the bus arrive-- take you to the airport. You were not able to go to the airport. Well, two of my friends from the displaced person camp came with me to Frankfurt. We had no money, so we stayed in the airport all night.

And the office where I was supposed to report was not far away from the airport. And we walked over there, and I went to the counter, showed them the cable, and they informed me that they don't know anything about it. So I was standing at the door with these two friends next to me, and I was-- we were talking about this in Hungarian, and desperate, and distraught, and hungry.

I cannot tell you the physical shape I was in. I don't know how I made that trip from Ulm to Frankfurt, because I was really emaciated by that time, but still young and able to do the things. You look back and you wonder how. And I saw a gentleman walk by us, but I really didn't pay much attention to it. And then suddenly. I became aware of him. He turned around and came back, and he said, excuse me, in Hungarian-- excuse me, in perfect Hungarian.

He said to us, I couldn't help overhearing your dilemma. Is there anything I can help you with? So we told him what happened. He said, you stay here. I saw him. He has a little goatee, he was a very nice, distinguished gentleman. And he walked up to the desk. He was there for a while, and he came back and he handed me a ticket. He purchased a ticket for me because he found out that everyone was accounted for, except for one seat was still available in the plane.

And he convinced him to let me have that seat. Well, it turned out that, after he purchased a ticket for me, they found an error that somebody found my ticket with money attached to it, and it was in-- for my name. But it was somehow not properly handled. And the reason my uncle wired some money-- because in those days, when you came into America, you had to pay a head tax. And he wanted to make sure that I indeed would have the \$8 head tax that I have to pay.

And I can remember it was more than \$8-- I think about \$20 or something. He was a rabbi. [INAUDIBLE]. His name was Rabbi Alex Rosenberg, and he was from Yonkers. The ticket was \$381 dollars. That was a lot of money to me. I had nothing. And he paid the money. And he said, look, I am staying in this hotel-- which was above the office. And you go up there and take a bath.

You come down into the restaurant, and we'll have to feed you. So I went up, and that was the first bath I had in a long time. I can't remember how many months or years. And then, when we came down, he wanted me to eat, but I couldn't eat. I had some hard rolls or something, because I just couldn't eat, I remember.

Well, anyway, I said goodbye to my friends and I got in the bus with this gentleman. And he was my seat partner. He ordered my meals. He ordered everything, because I couldn't communicate with the stewardess. And then, when I arrived in New York--

You got on the plane with him?

Yes.

And then, when we arrived in New York, my uncle made the arrangement. He had a friend, a professor from Pepperdine College in Los Angeles, attend a meeting in New York. And they were also going to stay at the Plaza Hotel, where he made arrangements for me to stay. They came out to the airport and called my name over the loudspeaker, and they spoke Hungarian. And this gentleman delivered me to these Hungarians. They took me from rags to riches, to the Plaza Hotel.

What were you wearing when when you --

I don't know. I had a blouse that was made from a parachute. It was white. But I don't remember the skirt or anything else. And I remember somebody went to Paris, and they brought a coat for me. It was a winter coat.

Before you left Germany?

Before I left Germany--

So you had a coat.

I had a coat. Well, you know, there was a lot of black market going on in those days, and people really made a lot of money with that. And I substituted my meager food supply by cooking for people who were there without women. And we had our ration, and then I received extra butter, and flour, and so forth. And then I still had \$15 originally that went while I was in camp. And when I ended up leaving, of course, I had nothing, as far as money was concerned.

What was your first [INAUDIBLE] from a taxi?

No. I saw the Statue of Liberty from the plane, as the plane came in.

What did you think?

I thought I was dreaming. It's very difficult to comprehend reality at times. I think this man saved me, because he was able to communicate with me, and he put me at ease on the plane. I never flew before. He made the trans-ocean trip several times, and so he felt comfortable. He was an intelligent man, and kind.

He didn't know whether he was going to get the money back or not, and it was a lot of money in those days. But of course, he went and had my ticket in his hand. And he went to the ticket office, and he got his. Well, actually, no. I'm wrong. I'm wrong. I'm wrong. He got the money back in Frankfurt. That's what happened, because when they realized the mistake they made with my ticket, then he had my ticket-- and I remember what happened-- he paid dollars, American dollars for the ticket.

And when they paid him back, they gave him the military-- there was a military dollar. There wasn't the currency that was exchanged in this country. I think it was for soldiers who were overseas. I think it was called the military dollar. I almost forgot that. And he got back his money in military dollars. So when he got to New York, he had to go to a bank, I presume, to make the exchange. So he certainly had a lot of trouble by giving it to me. I had never seen him afterwards. I did write him and thank him. I don't know what happened to him.

What else went through your mind when you saw the Statue of Liberty? How would you feel? Were you crying?

I was crying. I was happy. I was scared.

I --

All the unknown-- everything was so overwhelming. I remember sitting in the Plaza Hotel and having breakfast, and seeing these people dressed beautifully, and eating, and conversing. And as much as I didn't understand it, I thought, how could these people possibly understand what went through in our lives? Or if they understand, how can they comprehend what every person had to go through, whether you were in a concentration camp or were hiding, or whatever-- or even if you were not Jewish, just the fact to go through the war? That was so devastating.

I remember looking at the makeups. I thought everybody was over-made. We didn't have soaps, let alone makeups. I remember when my brother met me in Hamburg and he wanted to find out what I would like. He gave me a Sears catalog that he was able to order through the PX. I wanted everything from that catalog. Just the pictures in color-- it was unbelievable that that many things were available to you.

I thought it was the most beautiful thing I've seen in a long time. And I wanted a hat. Don't ask me why. I think it must have been the epitome of luxury to have a hat. I never got it, but that's what I want.

When you got to the Plaza Hotel, did you have a room of your own?

I had a room of my own overlooking the Central Park. I was cold and I was scared. And I saved everything. I saved the sugar from the plane. I still have it. All the little mementos from the plane-- I still have it at home. I wanted to save everything. I wanted to cherish it, because I was afraid it's going to go away-- that I'm going to wake up, and this is just a dream.

And what would you wake up to?

Well, fear-- I don't know. I knew that I had to get over that. I remember these nice people who waited for me in New York. I asked them about where they live and how they lived, and they told me that they live in Los Angeles on Bronson Avenue, and that they left for New York, and they left their house unlocked.

That, at that time, to me, was as unbelievable as it would be today for me to believe that somebody would leave their home in South Los Angeles, and leave it open-- if you can understand the comparison. But I thought, this is America. Can you imagine? You can leave your home and leave it open. It's unbelievable. Freedom, and all the food, and the windows, and all the clothes-- it was overwhelming.

I really cried a lot when I went into my room, because I thought I left all these friends in Ulm until now. They don't even have enough to eat, and look at this. I have a bath. I can take a shower or a bathtub. I can have my breakfast. They want to know what I want, and my friends over there have nothing to eat. So again, I left them. It seems like I'm always-- somebody always leaves me or I'm leaving those whom I-- who are dear to me. It wasn't easy.

I stayed in New York. My uncle called me and asked me to stay as long as I want to, because he said, I don't know when you might get back to New York. You should see New York. Well, I must tell you that I did not want to see New York. I wanted to get to Los Angeles as fast as I could.

Why?

I think it was knowing that he was my uncle, and maybe somebody who belonged to me. I cannot tell you, but I know that I did not want to stay in New York. It was overwhelming. It really was. All the people, and as I said before, the food, and all the richness-- I couldn't handle it.

Do you remember the first meal you had in New York?

No, I don't.

Were you able to order for yourself? These people ordered for me, because they stayed in the Plaza, and they ordered breakfast. I know I drank coffee, because-- that's the only thing. I remember asking-- I wanted coffee with milk, and they brought me a glass of milk. Really, I should have said coffee and cream, but I said milk, so I got a cup of coffee and a glass of milk.

Then I soon learned how to do that. But I didn't speak English, as I said before, so they had to order everything. And they took me under their wings. And I remember walking down Fifth Avenue and-- yeah, it was just beginning to snow. And after the second day, they took me out to-- in those days, it was La Guardia Airport.

And they delivered me to the airplane, and they took them hours to return to New York, because they had that horrible snowstorm of many-- Christmas of '47-- that no plane left New York for Europe, or anywhere in this country, as a matter of fact, after. And they had difficulty getting home. And in those days, you had to go like a milk train. We went to Dallas, I think it was, and then made another stop.

I think we made three stops before we got to Los Angeles. And I will never forget Los Angeles. It was Christmas, and all the Christmas decorations were up. And it was a magnificent, clear day. And it made history, I'm sure, because it's no longer that way. And I remember looking out the window as the plane circled, and I saw it was like million stars.

The hills were covered with lights, and you could see the snow in the San Gabriel Mountains. It was a magnificent sight. It was fairy tale to me. I arrived. My uncle was there. The first thing-- he asked me if I speak English. And I said, no, I didn't. And he said, well, from now on, I'm going to talk to you English. And he did. And I cried more than I didn't, because I didn't understand him. But I learned fast. He enrolled me in English-- in an English school for foreign-born in public school, and had one of his ex-nurses come and pick me up at the hotel and take me to school every day.

Where were you living?

He put me into a hotel on Wilshire Boulevard. His office was the medical center, where all the medical offices were around Vermont and Wilshire. That was the center of-- now, as much as it is Beverly Hills, in those days, that was where most of the doctors were. He told me, when I leave my hotel in the morning-- this was during the night-- and after I leave the hotel-- that hotel is no longer on Wilshire Boulevard-- I turn right and I walk to the bus station.

And he gave me the money for the bus, and then I get off. He told me how many stops. Cross the street and go to the building on the corner. And I had the address, of course. And I had to make that trip by myself. I have never seen it by daylight. I really was very scared. I hardly slept at night. I got there. He had patients in his office.

And he called me in and he said, well, I'm sorry you have to sit in the waiting room, but I have all these patients. But while you're waiting, would you go over to the pharmacy and pick up some prescription for one of the patients? And I had to go over there and pick up the medicine. I was really scared. I didn't know if they were going to understand me or not, but somehow, with hands, and knees, and-- somehow I communicated, and they gave me the medicine, and I went back to the office.

That was a horrible morning. I was scared and lost. And of course, the fact that he did not have a wife and home-- he had a home, but he was at the office, where his patients were. I realized, of course, that I-- it was going to be a different type of a life than having a home nest somewhere. And then what he did is he found a home where working women lived, and so I lived there and learned English. And then that's how my beginning was in Los Angeles.

Was he a very warm person?

Not particularly-- no.

Did he give you a kiss when you arrived?

Oh, yes. And I must tell you that he took me to dinner, because I was starved. And he ordered my dinner, and he also ordered a salad for me. And I looked at that salad, and I didn't want to eat it, because-- and it was very strange to me the way it was served. It was a bowl of mixed greens salad that I was not acquainted with. And he wanted me to eat it. I wanted French fried potatoes, but I had to eat it-- at least taste it.

Had he ever been married?

Yes, he was married. At the time he adopted my brother, he was married. Yes.

Then what happened?

Well, I don't know how much after-- my brother was adopted and brought into their home, they got divorced. So he ended up with my brother. And his wife was-- they just lived in their separate corners.

Did you ever feel resentful that your brother-- that your uncle had been coming over to adopt you, and then-- to take you back to this country, and instead, he took--

No, no.

Did you feel disappointed?

No, because I'm not so sure if I knew that or whether I learned that later in life. See, my brother was with an aunt and my grandmother, and-- who, even as a child, I probably would have thought that they couldn't possibly rear a child. Their circumstances were always presented like he's staying with them until my uncle comes back from Hungary-- up from New York to Hungary. So I didn't have that feeling.

And I did see my sister before she passed away, which was a short time. And then I used to go quite often to see her little girl-- who was a baby at first, of course-- as she was growing up, because her father kept the child with the housekeeper so that we were able to keep in touch with the little girl.

This is Agnes?

This is Agnes, yes.

And what happened to Agnes?

Well, Agnes came back from a concentration camp in Austria and she married. And she's exactly 10 years younger than I am, so she's 60 years old. And she lost her husband a year ago to cancer, and she is now hopefully getting ready-- prepared to visit us and arrive in the middle of December-- if she gets her visa, that is. I don't know. But we are hoping that she will spend about three months here.

Incidentally, how many stops did the plane make from Frankfurt to New York?

Well, from Frankfurt, we went to Newfoundland, and then to Boston, and then to New York, because it was-- I don't know whether it was snowing or what. I must tell you an interesting kind of-- I don't know what happened to this rabbi when we got off the plane in Newfoundland, but they were not feeding people on the plane in those days.

When we arrived in Newfoundland, the buffet was set up. It was seeing all that food was overwhelming. I was so starved for so long, and I had some food. I don't remember what I actually ate-- not very much, because I really couldn't eat. But I remember that he told me that, when everybody's finished eating, they're going to call everybody's name before they let us back on the plane.

That's the only thing I was worried about. I remember having a hard roll, but what else I had I don't remember. I stood by the gate where I thought I was supposed to be, and I stood there until everybody else was eating. And then everybody was going by me, and I didn't hear my name called. And I don't know where he was that he wasn't there when I needed him, but finally, the man who was standing across said something to me.

And he kept on saying, Miss Biro. And of course, Miss Biro didn't mean anything to me. My name was "Bee-ro." I didn't speak English. Well, the poor man called my name several times to get back to the plane, and being that I was the last one there, that's how he started to talk to me. But then, of course, I don't know what he said. But anyway, I got back on the plane. I don't know where this gentleman was-- how we got separated. That I don't remember. But he was with me all the way on the flight, but somehow here we got separated. Or I just don't remember.

It sounds like it might have been a lonely life initially in Los Angeles, because there you were basically by yourself.

Well, it really was. But you see, what happened-- I learned English, and that consumed my life for a good three to six months. And my uncle used to take me with him after office hours every day. In those days, the doctors made house calls, and so I would go with him. And after he was finished with making his rounds and going to the hospital, then we would go out and have dinner.

And so we ate out practically every night. And so I was with him at that time. And then I was able to find-- he knew some people, and I was able to find a room with this young couple. And I got a job in Beverly Hills. I worked for [INAUDIBLE]-- used to be the most exclusive salon in let's see, was it on Rodeo Drive? It was on Rodeo Drive.

And I got a job there, and I used to take the trolley from the Talmadge area in Beverly Hills-- in Los Angeles to Beverly Hills. And I was determined to live on what I earn. I earned \$25 a week. Out of that, I had to pay my rent, and one can of soup would last me two days. But it was substituted with the fact that I was with my uncle a lot. And in the evenings, we would go out to the best restaurants. So I was really not deprived of food by that time. It was just I was determined not to ask for money unless I had to.

Why?

I'm sorry?

Why were you determined not to ask for money?

Well, I just wanted to be independent. I have never asked for money from anyone or depended on anyone. I just wanted to make my own way the best I knew. They gave a raise to somebody else, and I was working right under the person who was the cutter and doing all the work for these magnificent gowns.

And they told me that they were not going to give me a raise, because I was green. And I went down, and I sought the man who owned the place, and I said to him, I understand you started in Los Angeles with a pushcart. You bought the stars' used clothing and sold it, and now you have this magnificent salon where everybody's clothes and garment is handmade.

And I'm working here for \$25 a week. I deserve a raise, whether I am green or not. Well, I realized, after I told him off, I had to leave. So I found a position across the street called [INAUDIBLE], and I did the same kind of work there for quite a while. And then I went back to school and I took a designing course at the-- I forget now what the academy-- was called for people who were interested in trade. It was a trade school.

But really, my heart wasn't really in this profession as much as it provided a livelihood at that time. And I realized that there was not great future in that, unless I branch out on my own. And I didn't speak the language. But by the time I came to this conclusion, my English was getting better. I was able to communicate. I was able to understand people. And my uncle asked me if I would like to go and work for him.

He was a general practitioner, and the doctor with him was an internist. And I thought, well, I'll go back to school. I did go to City College, and I worked for him for quite a while. And then I left him and worked for an endocrinologist for four years. And I lived with my cousin for a while, who came over from France after the war.

Which cousin?

One of my mother's brother, Alex, went to France and lived-- and that's where he lived, and had two children-- a boy and a girl. Her daughter Catherine came over here with my uncle's help after the war, and we lived together. And she worked with me in my uncle's office for a while, and then she left also.

And then I was working in Beverly Hills for an endocrinologist when-- I looked up some people who were from the same displaced person camp where I was from, Ulm. They lived in Los Angeles, and they had a brother they brought out, who married an American girl. And this American girl met me, and we became friends.

Her name?

Her name was Emily Wladenberg. And Emily went to a Christmas party and knew my husband's sister. Of course, at that time, he wasn't my husband. And she was asking about the family, and Dorothy, my husband's sister, accounted for everyone, and it seems that my husband was the only one who was not married. And so Emily said, I have a friend who came over from Hungary. This is her name and telephone number-- so gave Dorothy my name, and Dorothy gave to Jonathan.

And she called me and told me that she did this, and I was very upset with her because I told her that I do not believe in



going on a blind date. And I asked her to cancel. Well, was too late, because I got the call. And so I met my husband that way. But I didn't see him. He called me up and asked me to go for dinner, and so that's how we met.

I lived in Westwood at that time, and he was a writer and producer with CBS in Los Angeles. And he had one of the first-- what we call talk shows with Zsa Zsa Gabor and Paul Coates who was with the Los Angeles Times. And he was delayed due to the fact that he had to take care of Miss Gabor after the show. And by the time he got there, I already had dinner. So I went with him, and he had dinner, and we were just talking.

And then he asked me out for New Year's Eve, and I saw him for New Year's Eve. And then I didn't see him for three years, and-- because he left CBS and moved up to the Bay Area. And then, one time he came down to visit his family, and I suppose he was looking through his little black book. But he found my name and gave me a call, and I was home and I answered it. And so that's how we got together, and we've been married for 38 years.

Did you hear from him while he [INAUDIBLE]?

No.

Did he ever explain?

No, no. But what had happened was my choice. When he took me to the New Year's Eve party, it was-- we were invited to a Hollywood writer's home. And the home originally was owned by Myrna Loy-- was a magnificent home in West Los Angeles, had a-- one of those staircases that you see in pictures. I did not have a dress to go to this New Year's Eve affair, but I had a friend who was in the displaced person camp with me, and she became a wardrobe mistress for CBS. So I called her up.

And her name?

Her name is-- please give me time-- Edith. Her aunt had a restaurant in Los Angeles, and that's how she arrived-- that's how she came to Los Angeles. And Edith had a silk taffeta dress, but she was taller than I am she said, I'll let you have my dress, but when you put out the hem, please don't press it, because once you put it-- pressing into silk taffeta will never come out.

So I put up the hem and wore the dress. Now, mind you, arriving in this beautiful home with all this lavish party-- and everybody was, of course, having a good time. And I did not drink and the host did not drink. And this was before the Truman election. He and I were sitting in the library talking about politics, but everybody else was having a good time.

So they came in and told us that they are going to the Santa Inez Inn for a nightcap, and-- just a few people, and I can't remember who they were. I know that the wife of-- his name was Bill Bowers. He was a writer. His wife went upstairs and came down with a full-length mink coat. Here was Cinderella with a borrowed dress.

And well, I don't have to tell you that I felt self-conscious, but fortunately, nobody knew it. We went to the Santa Inez Inn and they ordered hot buttered rums. I don't know if you ever had a hot buttered rum. I only looked at it, but it has rum or-- it's a very potent drink. And after a big party, I'm sure it is a good medicine for sleep.

So this man had a brand new convertible Cadillac, and I remember, by the time we got back to his home, my husband was fast asleep. So they decided that they're going to put him to sleep at their house, and that Bill Bowers is going to drive me home-- which was fine. I lived in West Los Angeles near the university. It wasn't that far away.

However, we both were hungry, because we didn't have dinner. It was all sorts of hors d'oeuvres but we were not drinking. So he asked me if I would go and have something to eat. I said, well, that would be great. We did, and he drove me home. And there was a little bit of a wrestling match that occurred there, and when my husband called me the next day to excuse himself for falling asleep, I told him I don't ever want to see him again.

Any gentleman who takes somebody to a party should see to taking her home. And of course, I should have been more

understanding, I suppose, after a New Year's Eve party. And I was safe. At least I was in the hands of somebody who didn't drink. But anyway, he asked me to see him so he has a chance to explain it. We did meet for brunch the following day, and I told him that I don't ever want to see him again. So that was one of the reasons I probably didn't see him, and then also because he moved up to the peninsula in Palo Alto. And so he left writing and he left CBS.

So what did he do in the Bay area?

He worked for the Bay Area Crusade, and was in San Mateo. And his home was in Palo Alto. So when we were married, we lived in Palo Alto the first six years of our life.

[INAUDIBLE] of your wedding?

My wedding?

What was the date of your wedding?

August 20, 1955--

Where did it take place?

We got married in Los Angeles, where his family was, in his brother's home. And it was basically a civil service, but we did get married with a rabbi.

And what did you wear to that?

I wore a rose-colored lace dress, and with just a little veil.

Did you make it yourself?

No. No, I bought it. Yeah.

And then we moved from Palo Alto to San Francisco to Los Angeles to Houston to Cleveland-- Sarasota, Florida; Tarrytown, New York; [INAUDIBLE], New-- Dumbarton, New Hampshire to Bronxville to Urbana, Ohio; Salina, Kansas; and back to Green Bay.

OK. Why?

Because my husband left the United Bay Area Crusade, and he worked with the universities on capital fundraising campaigns. And this took us from Cornell to University of Michigan to different universities and different areas where alumnus were. And we always knew how long we were going to be there. And it was a wonderful way to see this country. I traveled with him.

We had no children, and so I was able to have the luxury of traveling with him and seeing the areas, the communities, the cities, and learn about the country, and meet a lot of people whom we are still in touch with. This was my way of getting acquainted with my new country. He decided to retire. Then we moved back to Green Bay and lived there for a number of years, and then moved to Novato where he's retired, but I'm still working full-time.

And what do you do?

I work at the Marine General Hospital in Green Bay. And I work in the laboratory as a phlebotomist. I have a full-time job.

You went back to Hungary for the first time when?

We were in Cleveland. My husband was with the University of Michigan. It was 21 years after I left [? there. ?] And a group of people from the university were going to Europe, and we had the opportunity to join the group and fly with them to London. And then, from London, we took a plane and flew into Budapest.

And at that time, I still had some relatives, and saw them for the first time after I left. I had my cousin Elizabeth, who married, by the way. I don't know if I mentioned it earlier, but after the war, when we came back to Budapest, her-- she did not find her husband, the little boy's father.

He survived the war camp, but he was on his way to get some bread, and a shrapnel hit him, and hit him in his lung, and he expired. So the little boy-- his father was dead. And then the friendship with [Personal name] the composer, continued with Elizabeth, and they got married and became a very good marriage. And they stayed together until his death, and then she passed away later on. But at the time I returned to Budapest, she was still alive.

And during the war, she had pretended to be his wife?

Yes. But that was a make believe. How Elizabeth met Servansky was because her husband's sister-- Agnes was her name also-- came from a very wealthy family, and he-- I don't know whether she met him in the academy of music or whether she met him socially. I don't know the details. But the Gestapo arrested the family because they were wealthy. And they took everything away and took their mother--

The --

Agnes's mother-- no-- Agnes's mother and Agnes, and arrested them. And Servansky knowing her, tried to rescue her from the clutches of the Gestapo. And he was able to find her, and find her that she was indeed with the Gestapo, but was not able to save her. So both of them were deported.

And this is how Elizabeth met Servansky This was somehow the basis of their friendship. And then, after that, he was very active in the underground, and helped people to escape, and helped him to survive, and supported them with whatever he could. The friendship remained. So not only did he save Elizabeth and her little boy-- saved me and saved many other people.

As a matter of fact, I have a letter with me that I would like you to see-- came from one of his students, who is now, of course, in-- I don't know how old he is, but it must be along the years. And he found out that I was saved by Servansky and he was-- he put an ad in the paper and tried to get as many people to remember and write down the story, how they were saved by him.

And I brought a copy for you of that letter, because not only he, but his whole family was in danger. And they certainly did everything to help the people who needed help at that time under very difficult circumstances-- and dangerous circumstances.

When you went back to Hungary-- 21 years later, did you say?

Yes.

What it looked like?

Well, the city at that time was still mostly in ruins. All the signs of the war, where the buildings were still full of shots, and ruins, and-- or some places cleared out, but the shells were there. The facade was there. My family had ample food, but they were living in fear. We stayed in a hotel. We did not stay with the family.

We stayed at the [INAUDIBLE] Hotel Gellert Hotel. And I remember they came to visit us, and we had a celebration with champagne, and much crying, and trying to recount, and meeting new people in the family, because they got married and had children whom I haven't seen before. And I had other cousins who were still alive, and they all came to the hotel.

But then, when we got into the home of Elizabeth and Andrew Servansky we realized how dangerous the situation became, because politically, at that time, even though he was really praying for the Russians to come in, anyone who spoke their mind in any way against the regime that was at that time in place was in danger. And he did not agree with all the things that went on in Hungary politically at that time, so they were hoping that somehow they would have an opportunity to leave the country.

But of course, I was in no condition to financially to help them, so my uncle-- when I came back, I relayed the message to him, because they could not write all this down, because they were afraid of censorship which was going on at that time. And he did help them to come in with a visitor visa, and they did visit here. But then, after a while, they went back, because--

What year was this?

Oh, dear--

Was this before the Prague -- before 1968? You left Hungary what year?

I left Hungary in 1946.

So if you went back 21 years later--

It was in the--

1967--

Somewhere around there-- it was after the counterrevolution.

So maybe after 68?

Yeah. So they were able to get out and visit here?

Visit here-- and I can't remember-- we lived in Cleveland. I know that. And I'm sorry, but I don't remember the year.

Would they have wanted to stay here?

Well, possibly they did, but then, after they came here, they realized how difficult it would have been for them. He did not speak the language. She did. She spoke German, French, and English-- Elizabeth did. And they were completely dependent on my uncle, because they had no livelihood. They were here as visitors. And the only thing he knew was how to compose and how to teach music.

And not having the language to communicate with people, he couldn't have possibly-- have any students to teach. So they would have had to be completely dependent on my uncle, and I don't-- he was much more independent than to submit himself to some-- a life of that kind.

Her son was Andrew as well?

Her son was Juri or George-- the little boy who was with her who was from her first husband-- Juri in Hungarian. And I think, in English, it would be George.

She had a son, though?

Yes, that was the son.

George--

Yeah-- Elizabeth-- but that was from the first husband.

What happened to him?

Well, he grew up. He became a mathematician. And he got married and had two children-- and his marriage didn't work out, but remarried. And with his second wife, they went to London on a holiday and never returned. So he now lives in London with his second wife and his new child was several years old.

You have those cousins.

Yes, I do. So I have a niece--

Carol--

--Carol, who's here in Los Angeles-- in the Valley, actually. I have a cousin Cathy, who-- Catherine-- who is my mother's brother's daughter, who came to the States after the war, whom I lived with for a while in Los Angeles. Then I have my cousin Rosa, who with her family lives in San Jose. These are two people who escaped from Hungary after the counterrevolution.

In Hungary, my cousin Elizabeth passed away. And I had another cousin, who was a physician, who also passed away-- I think from old age, more than anything. She was in her 70s. She had a heart condition. And Rosa's sister passed away, and her mother passed away. So the people who did come back-- her sister's husband still is in Hungary, and lives in the same community where I used to live. That's where he was originally from. And so I think that's the family at the present.

Did you ever think what would have happened if you'd stayed on [INAUDIBLE]?

I did, but somehow I really couldn't quite picture as to what my future might have been. I realized soon after I came back to our home-- house, and I tried to start my uncle's business with the thought at that time, that in case he would return, and when life began in Hungary after the war, that he should not be left out. Everybody talked me into starting his business, because he had such great connections. He had such fine reputation with the people he was connected with that they felt I should pick up the thread there.

And I tried, and I realized that I was not a businesswoman-- at least not in that business, buying leather goods and all the material it takes to make a shoe. If somebody said to me, give it to me, I gave it to them. I couldn't figure out how to make a profit. By the time I got on the train and traveled all night on the top of the train, and got to Budapest, and it was just too difficult. And in those days, traveling by train, you got on the train-- which was really not a passenger train.

It was a-- these boxcar, where animals or products are shipped. And if the Russians wanted the locomotive, you disconnected, and you stood there for several days waiting for the next locomotive. It wasn't really very enticing. And I just realized that I am not a businesswoman, so I really did not continue with that. But it certainly, in the beginning, gave me an income that I was able to make enough to exist.

So it served its purpose. But in order to answer your question, I don't know what would have happened if I would have stayed there. I suppose, just like the rest of my family, I would have found my niche possibly going back to school, or maybe my family-- when my parents died, they sold the business. They sold the home and everything in it. They divided the money, and my sister received her share, and then my brother and I had our share invested in land that was rented out to people who lived in that vicinity.

And they worked the land and paid whatever the agreement was. This was the decision of the two uncles, one from New York and one from where I was-- Uncle Joe. I could have become a farmer maybe. I don't know. There was a house on it. I'm just really speculating. I don't know what would have been practical there. But maybe necessity would have been

to be on the land, where food would have been provided. I don't know.

What happened to that land?

Well, as a matter of fact, when the-- Hitler came in, of course, they confiscated the land along with the houses. Then the Russians came in, and with the land reform, again, it was-- if you did not work on the land, you lost it. And then, since the Iron Curtain was lifted and Hungary is supposedly a democracy, they passed a law that people who lost their home, houses, and land, or whatever belongings would be paid.

And they set the fee or whatever. I don't know the figure, how they said it, but I was notified that I-- my share would be reciprocated in some kind of vouchers that the government give, and that I would be 1/10 eligible for the two houses that my uncle owned-- one of them which became the post office in the community, where the ghetto was, and the other one was-- it was a private home.

And just recently, my niece Agnes was to receive that money and just pick it up. And I'm hoping that she will be able to use that money and pay for the ticket to come to visit us. But I haven't heard yet. I'm waiting her letter right now, where we are at this point in life, whether she was able to cash those papers in, because if I would be there, like she received her money, she's able to purchase a condominium with it or utilize those vouchers. It's traded as money.

But I remember, even that the time I went back for that first visit, there was some money in holding for me from the land that they paid for the people who worked it. And then, when the Russian land reform came in, they paid so much for the usage of the land. Well, when I picked up that money, which was in the national bank for me, I was not able to bring it out, but I was able to use it there. So I don't know whether this ruling has the same thing or whether she's able to cash it in or not, but I'm hoping that she would.

Your uncle Joseph was first married to Elizabeth, and his second wife-- what was her name?

The second wife was-- well, in Hungarian, would be S-A-R-I, Sari. And I don't know how to translate into English [INAUDIBLE]. No. I don't know what the English name would be.

Would you consider the upbringing you had, living with your uncle and aunt, them very strict?

I think it was very strict, but that the mean in those days. Anyone from a, quote, unquote, "good household" had that kind of an upbringing. You had to account for every minute-- that is, if you're not in school. When I say every minute, you were not allowed to go out in the evenings unescorted. If you went somewhere, it was with a chaperone.

If you needed to buy something for schools or anything else, you had to ask for money. But that's the way all households were set up-- all my friends in those days. I did visit my aunt, who I spoke about before a lot. I liked to be with her, and I liked with her-- I felt like she was my support system.

[INAUDIBLE].

No, this is my aunt who went to Auschwitz and came back with her two daughters.

[INAUDIBLE].

Yes.

And she's the one who died in her early 90s. But everybody was that-- was brought up that way. Your reputation was very highly guarded. I would say it was strict. I would say that I was well cared for. I don't think they were particularly demonstrative and affectionate people, but they were very kind and very gentle.

Were your mother and father demonstrative?

I cannot recall incidents to that effect. I would say that probably my father was more-- was the warmer person. If I look back-- and this may just be in my mind, and not necessarily the truth-- they had a very fine marriage, from what I heard, because I have no recollection of our life there.

What was your uncle Joseph's house like?

The one in Los Angeles?

No, the uncle Joseph [INAUDIBLE]

In Mindszent? It was a brand new home at the time I entered. And his wife was very highly educated, schooled. She was very attractive. As far as the physical description-- was very nicely furnished. It had all the comforts of those days. We had the bathroom with hot water, and that was, in those days, unheard of. Most people warmed the water and poured it into the bathtub, and it was a portable bathtub.

Or if the bathtub was stationary, you still warmed the water and took your baths, where in our house, we were able to light a fire on the bottom of the unit and it warmed up the water. But you were able to have -- then that was great luxury. And we had servants in the house. We had people who worked in the business, which was connected to the house.

And I had tutors in school, if I needed it. They really were financially very secure. I have very pleasant memories of being in that house. I don't think anyone was gushy or over-demonstrative, but they were caring and good people. And of course, it was such a tragedy that she would have-- she was, I think, 39 or somewhere in that vicinity. I think she was 39 when she passed away.

Was it a very religious family?

No. No. But again, they observed their high holidays, and Saturday-- and Friday nights. But I would consider them the reformed Jewish family. But I did have to go to synagogue, and study Hebrew, and to partake in the Jewish--

Did they celebrate Passover?

Yes. We celebrated all the Passover, Yom Kippur-- yes.

Can you remember -- did they have a Seder?

I don't remember. I don't remember.

Who did the cooking?

We had somebody who was hired for that purpose, and my aunt did the baking. There's a part of-- that somehow I bypassed when I recounted the decision to go to learn the trade. And I'm glad that I remembered now.

When the arrangement was made to live with this family who had the shoe factory and had their daughter about my age-- they had this lovely home in Szeged, where I was to live-- she had a piano teacher who was a teacher in one of the schools, and also taught music, and had a tutor. They were from the same family.

And I met that young man at one of their parties that they had in their home for the young-- for their daughter, and we fell in love. Well, it was a terrible problem, because he was Catholic and I was Jewish. But her whole family was very nice and kind, and her father was a violinist. And many times they invited me into their home, and I met the sisters-- two sisters he had, met the parents.

And I was invited to his home, where he lived with his parents, and to his sister's home, who was married. And at that time, we realized that, if we ever going to get married, something is going to have to happen. The sister was adamant about the fact that I had to become Catholic if this marriage was going to take place. So I went and studied Catholicism

for a whole year, and I was baptized.

And the marriage never took place, because the situation in Hungary got worse and worse. And of course, he got-- his family was terribly concerned about the fact that-- what would happen to him if he marries me? And anyone who is born Jewish and turns-- whether Lutheran or Catholic is not considered anything but Jewish. And so they talked him into leaving this relationship, which-- it was cut off very suddenly.

And the only thing I can say about this-- that it was responsible partly for saving my life, because I had a piece of paper stating that I was Catholic. And on that piece of paper, we were able to build all my false papers with my own name on. And so when this trial, waking up in the middle of tonight-- I had to change my mother's first-- family name. I didn't have to change my father's. I didn't have to change mine.

So everything was much easier for me to make the transition to go underground because of that piece of paper that stated that I was Catholic. And of course, now, if I ask for a birth certificate from Hungary, the way they used to-- I don't know what they do now-- they state at the time of your birth, you are Jewish, and then there is a special area on that birth certificate that gives you-- gives the date and the law, the number of the law that states that, at such and such a date, you were baptized, or confirmed, or whatever.

So my real birth certificate wouldn't have helped me at all. And at that time, there were a lot of Jewish people who paid dearly with money to get one of these papers, because at one time in the-- after the Germans came into Hungary, the rumor was that anyone who did indeed turn to another religion-- Catholic, or Lutheran, or whatever-- and if they had that sort of paper, they would not be deported. And there was a mass exodus in this direction. Well, of course, it turned out to be incorrect, but a lot of people paid a lot of money for it. And in my case, I had it.

You must have loved him very much.

Well, I think that it was a very good relationship. And the way I remember-- we were so young, but he was a very kind person, and affectionate, and compassionate. And we had a very good relationship. And I loved his family, and I know they loved me, because the way they welcomed me into their home could have not been any other way. But survivorship took the overhand.

And it was another loss for you.

Story of my life--

What was his name?

Joseph-- everybody in Hungary is.

What happened to him?

Well, the only thing I found out after the war-- that his family was so scared of the Russians that, when the Germans evacuated the area where they lived-- always, when the Germans evacuate, they were allowed-- the civilians were allowed to go behind them. And they were, in a sense, protecting them.

There were a lot of people who ended up in Austria and Germany. And a lot of the people came back, and a lot of the people were afraid to return, because they have done things that they should have not done during the war, or they were partaking in the German-- whatever atrocities they did. There were a lot of people who were very poor and felt that they are nobody, and suddenly the gun in their hand gave them power, and they did a lot of gruesome things.

Or for instance, when I understand the ghetto and our home was dismantled, the whole-- there was a whole segment of the community. There were like hordes of them. They just emptied their house, including the frames from our windows, the handles to the door that was brass, everything that was in the house. I did receive back some pictures that somebody picked up on the floor of the ghetto, that somebody saved and returned to me.



My uncle I know has given whatever jewelry the family had to people to keep. I had my whole dowry. They made it for me, and somebody had it. And when I returned, I received those two gold bracelets from somebody, and I received some yardage for some nightgowns, and that's all I got back. And then people would come to us after the war and say, I saw so-and-so in their home, and I know they have your furniture, or I know they have your friend's furniture, and they named the family whose furniture they recognized.

And then we had a committee after the war, and if we thought that that family still had it, we would approach them and see if we could get those items back. And that is how I furnished our house. That's some of the furniture we were able to obtain from people who robbed the ghetto.

[INAUDIBLE] the house where?

When I returned, because the house was empty-- and that is how I found the Persian rugs. Our whole house was covered with Persian rugs, and I found two of them that somebody gave back to us-- which, of course, was a lifesaver for me, because I was able to sell it before I left Hungary. And I had the money to pay the people who had tried to help me to escape. So material things sort of lost their values. It depends on what you were able to do with it afterwards, because there were so many lives that were lost. I lost my thought. Where were we?

[INAUDIBLE] refurbishing your uncle's home. We were just talking about life with your uncle Joseph [INAUDIBLE].

Yes. Well, I have happy thoughts about it, other than the tragedy of Elizabeth's death. And then the lady who I mentioned earlier-- who was our housemother in a sense, who came from Budapest, who was a wonderful young woman-- not as young as we were, but a woman who-- grown sophisticated woman, who somehow-- and I can't remember how-- got into some financial difficulty.

I think her husband died, and she had no means of support and wanted to be a nanny. And so my uncle brought her in, and we loved her very much. And when he remarried, that, to us, meant we had to give her up, because there was a new mother coming into the house. And we made her life pretty difficult, because nothing was good enough. And it wasn't the same as what we already had, because she wasn't the same. She had to do things in her own way. But children-- I'm sure we were very, very unhappy about it. And I'm sure we gave her a tough time without knowing it, because we wanted that lady to stay.

What was the lady's name?

At the moment, I can't remember. I can see her face, but I can't remember her name.

[INAUDIBLE]. You said your uncle and aunt had you learn how to cook and clean. So is that for survival's sake or [INAUDIBLE]?

Well, I think it was a matter of training-- that, if you don't have to do it, at least you know how it needs to be done. And it was just a matter of upbringing, part of upbringing, I think.

What kinds of things that you learn how to cook?

Everything, from making challah to making soup, scrambling eggs, how to kill a chicken-- everything that was done in the household. And then somebody came in and did our laundry. It was a lady who did this for a living, and she came in and did the laundry and did the ironing. And so you had to learn how those things are done-- how to set a proper table, then I had to help to clear the table.

You mentioned going to movies. Can you remember anything about what movies you would have seen?

OK.

Think we were talking about food-- I wonder if you remembered any particular food you liked in your uncle Joseph's home.

Well, I must have liked food very well, because I was not a problem child for eating. Well, usually, in our home, we started our dinners-- which was always at noon-- with soup, and the main course, and dessert. In the morning, you had coffee.

And I don't remember what we had as children, but it was coffee with a lot of milk. So it's not a strong coffee in the morning. And you might have had a hard rolls and some cheeses. And I don't remember cereals in Hungary. They have eggs and some meat products more than-- for breakfast with a hard roll.

And then, at noon, which was the main meal, the business was closed. It was like a siesta. Everybody-- the town became very quiet, because all the people ate their main meal at noon-- unless, of course, if they worked somewhere, I presume, and had to be away. And then, in the evening, it was a light meal-- cottage cheese or yogurt and rolls.

But the main meal was at noon. So it was soup-- either chicken soup, or vegetable soup, or bean soup-- the same sort of things, I presume, here-- and then meat, and vegetables, and potatoes. That's a important part of the main meal. And then dessert was baked goods that were made at home.

And the bread-- bread is a main staple in Hungary. And we purchased our bread. There was a local baker who made it. And the Hungarian breads in the part of the country I come from is really a piece of art. They can be this big when they raise, and when they-- it's about this big. And when they put it into the hot oven, they slit it off center, and as the bread bakes, it opens up into two round pieces. And the crust is delicious, and the inside is wonderful.

And I used to love to come home from school and have piece of bread with butter and apricot jam on it-- wonderful bread. And most people in that area of the community slaughtered their own pigs, and not so much the-- I don't think the beef, but mainly on pigs. But we did have a butcher shop, where it was very readily available.

And then the chicken's the same. You bought it twice a week. People from the surrounding farms would bring in their fresh butter, and sour cream, and cottage cheese, and eggs, and vegetables, and it was every housewife's duty to go out and do the shopping twice a week and get all the fresh items. And the refrigerators in those days were either cold cellars or we went to the ice house, where they kept the ice from the river, and then brought a piece of ice, and brought it home, put it in a tub or some kind of container, and kept your milk products there.

And we didn't have electric refrigerators. As a matter of fact, in our house, being that it was a new house-- when I say our house, it was my uncle's home that he built-- all the electric wires were in, but we did not have electricity. We had lamps that burned kerosene. And all those lamps had to be cleaned every day. So when you went from one room to another, you carried your light with you.

What was your uncle's reaction about you converting and being baptized?

Well, it was not met with great joy. As a matter of fact, I think it sort of strained our relationship because of that. They would not throw me out or punish me in any way, but I don't think that it was to his liking. But he didn't forbid it either. He felt that, if this is what I want to do, I have to take the consequences.

And you, how did you feel?

Well, at that time, I-- the only thing I felt was that my aim was our plan-- to eventually get married. And then, of course, soon I realized that that is not going to happen. By that time, it was too late.

You talked about cigarettes being important to you. When did you-- after your sister Anna [INAUDIBLE]--

Introduced me--

Introduced you-- contributed to your delinquency, when did you next have another puff?

I don't remember what circumstance brought me to smoking, or how old I was, or where I was. The only thing I know is that-- and it might have been the period when I was learning to sew, and felt very sophisticated being-- living away from home in a sense, and being exposed to theater, and more-- a city life, and not a-- the community I was brought up in was a small community that were about 10,000 people.

And the place where I learned to sew was a city, so life was completely different. I don't know. It just a conjecture. But I know that I was smoking during the war. And I would always have cigarettes, even when I had no food. It was like a pacifier. It gave us security. I was not the only one. And I don't know how we bought it, or how we got it.

Whether we gave up our food for a cigarette-- I always remember-- and when I was wounded and my arm was in a sling, I had a whole box of 100 cigarette-- boxes of cigarette in my--

In your sling.

--in my sleeve. If I was hungry, I lit a cigarette. Everybody smoked around me, and it was just a security blanket, I think.

And you managed to have them all through the war?

Well, not all the time, but most of the time-- though, we didn't have any when I was in the work camp, of course. And if somebody did find a cigarette or somebody threw away a cigarette that wasn't completely finished, and somebody started it, it would be handed down from one person to another so that you had the feeling of being included and-- just for one puff.

Did you have any idea what was going on in the death camps?

No. As a matter of fact, we received postcards from people who were already in concentration camps. The postcards were written like they were in a resort place. And I remember, after the war, when I came back, this rabbi I was talking about who was sent to Siberia when they arrested us.

I was told that there were a few privileged people in-- where they gathered all the ghettos, where the transports started out from in our area of the country-- that they must have known that these wagons, these transports are going into the concentration camps, because there were certain members of the community who were not directed to the same transport as others were. And whether it was true or not, I have no way of knowing.

But this is what people were saying, that there were some privileged people who were quite aware of the fact that some of the people are going to concentration camps, because the people I know were told that they are going to work camps. They're going to work. My family always said, no matter where we go, we are not afraid to work. But you see, they didn't know that they were not going to work.

When did you find out about the camps?

I really did not know about it until the war was over, when I learned about it-- when the first straggling people were coming back from concentration camps. And I don't know who told me, and I don't know how I found out, but that was the first inkling I had that people were killed.

When you would be awakened while you were hiding, people would wake you up to ask your name and so forth in preparation, in case you were picked up by the Germans. What would transpire?

Well, only this man who was training me-- he would shake me and say, what is your name?

And you would say--

Well, then, of course, I would have to say my name, and fortunately, I was able to say Biro Eva. In Hungary, you say the family name first and then your name second. So it's reverse as to what it is here.

And then what would he say?

When were you born? Then I would give my date of birth. Who is your mother? And I can't remember what name-- how he changed my mother's name, but my mother's name is German sounding, so that had to go-- and gave her some very Christian name. And then my father remained the same, because that was also Hungarian sounding. Where I came from, it was easy to say, because the Russians were already there. So it was a very easy lesson to learn on that score.

We were also asking you about movies that you had seen.

In my community, before we were deported-- mostly children's film, but I remember seeing a film with Al Jolson. That is the only film I remember. And the film was rented and brought out to our community and a community house, where they had stage plays, I presume, because it had a stage. They ran the film, and most of the children would be there, but there-- I remember seeing Al Jolson with his black face and singing.

Did you ever hear Hitler speak on the radio?

Yes, I did. That was after the Germans came into--

Not before?

No.

And where were you when you heard him? And what did you think?

Well, it was very frightening. Of course, I did not understand what he said. I only understood that he was always screaming. His tone was always loud, and it was-- well, the best I can describe is that he-- just knew that he represented death. The fear of him was-- thinking back, was like the end of the life that might be. But how it would come we didn't know, because Hungary was one of the last countries that he exercised his brutality in.

And I think most people in Hungary believed that, by the time he would be near Hungary, that the English would just ruin him. But you see, it never happened. Even people who kept up with the English radio-- I remember rumors, where people would say, well, on such and such a day, the Germans are going to have to put down their guns, because they are losing. They are losing in Siberia.

These rumors were, I think, to keep us going, thinking back. They were always to the fact that this is the end of Germany, the way it was going. Well, of course, none of those days became true, that Hitler was going to have to give up, because every time we saw the English come in bombers on Sunday-- 1 o'clock was their time to come and bomb the city-- we were never resentful, because that, to us, meant possibly the end of the war or the end of Germany. But it never really happened. We never got the English into Hungary. We got the Russians.

They always bombed on Sunday at 1:00.

At 1 o'clock-- you could count on the air raids, Sunday at 1 o'clock. I don't know why. They bombed other times too, but that was one of their favorite times. I don't know why.

Did the Germans anticipate [INAUDIBLE]?

I don't know. Well, in those days, I don't know how much anti-bomb equipment they really had set up. I don't know. But I remember that Sunday was a favorite day for raids-- the nights also. It came nights and day, and it was sporadic. It was not a set schedule, but somehow Sunday was a favorite time. And I must tell you that, under difficult situations, humor

must be the salvation. We had more jokes going around in Hungary.

And I don't remember any of them, but they were coming all the time. To me, it's parallel to, when we were in the trenches, hungry, and wet, and tired, and exhausted, that we were cooking these fantastic dishes, that the jokes were to give us something to hold on to. The punch line was always something that would mean end of the war, or end of Hitler, or something connected with hope for the future, or making fun out of people who were in-- and there were some sarcastic ones too, but there were a lot of jokes going out. I think it sort of kept people alive.

Did you ever feel that Hitler was going to win?

Oh, yes, we did, because we realized that Hungary was not saved, and that, after my family was in the ghetto and taken away, and then all the rules and regulations that we had to comply with in Budapest, it was really hard to believe the good news that somebody might have tried to make us believe-- that, when the Germans had to retreat and the news would get to Hungary, and we were still under occupation, it was very difficult to accept the fact that maybe it would be so eventually.

This is the last question would be these imaginary meals that you cooked. Do you remember anything?

Well, we would make dinners with desserts, and people would say, well, I make it this way, and then somebody would say how their method would be and what their favorite meal was. But I cannot recollect any specific recipe that they would-- most Hungarians cook-- you take a pinch of this, and a handful of this. It's not by cups, like we do it now, that we read the recipe.

They have wonderful recipes written down, but the way I learned to cook, you take-- you just guess. You take so much rice per person and so much for the pot, or-- so it wasn't measured out like we do it now-- like I do it now. I follow a recipe by-- with measuring cups.

Can you read what kind of food you would be thinking about if you were-- not the recipe, but the food?

I see. Well, I imagine we might have wished for a good chicken paprikash or fried chicken, which was part of our every day. Our soups had wonderful dumplings-- liver dumplings. And some homemade pasta, very thinly cut-- and I imagine the desserts might have been very fancy, but I cannot recollect any by name.

But they had what they called it dobos torte which is a layer cake with chocolate cream in between and a sugar glaze and a top. That was very well-liked and served a lot. And then strudel, of course, was really very much part of our meals. And there was a butter crust, and then you put grated apples in between with cinnamon and sugar. Then you put another crust on it.

And then, after you bake it, you cut it into either squares or some shapes, and put it on a plate and serve it and-- the whole plate full. And then you help yourself. These were more common, everyday home meals. Part of our everyday life was ducks as well, and geese. And every part of it seemed to be utilized somehow.

When these birds would reach a certain age, they would be limited to motion-- to a certain area, so they couldn't run around. They were forced feed-- forced fed, I should say. And the method that was applied in those days-- they soaked corn, and then the people who would be responsible doing it would put the birds under their knee, by sitting on the ground, open their beak, and put the corn down.

And these birds would become very large. And they would have a large piece of-- a lot of meat and a lot of fat. And this fat was used-- that they rendered from these birds-- used for making the pastries a lot of times, not just butter. And then the-- parts of it made into soup and parts of it roasted by baked. And the livers were quite large, the liver pates. We had meals just made out of potatoes and the liver that was roasted, and-- I suppose you call the skin, where the fat is. And it was rendered real crisp.

And it's a very rich food. The liver becomes as big as-- after force feeding them, it becomes several meals for a family.

It's really large, and very rich, and very high in cholesterol.

thank you so much for sharing everything with us. Is there anything more you'd like say?

The only thing I can say is that it opens up a lot of painful thoughts and memories. I'm sure I forgot a lot of things, and I'm absolutely amazed how I forgot people's name and events that I should really recall. People who are dear to me-- their names escape me.

But you remember them as people.

Yes. And I suppose talking about it had its therapeutic effect, hopefully, by getting some of these things out to the open, and also made me realize how much I buried, and how deep.

Want to do now is --