

HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW OF

ALEX BAUER

CONDUCTED BY:

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PRODUCER: JOHN GRANT

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Deposition services nationwide

1 MS BANDAYAN: I am Sandra Bandayan. I am
2 here interviewing Alex Bauer for the Holocaust Oral
3 History Project.

4 Today is the 9th of January, 1996.

5 John Grant is our producer.

6 Would you please begin by introducing
7 yourself and tell us what was your name at birth, if it
8 is different than it is now, and where and when were you
9 born?

10 A. My name now is Alex S. Bauer. B-a-u-e-r is
11 the way it's spelled. The S middle initial stands for
12 Sandor. My original name was Sandor.

13 I was born in Hungary on May 25, 1922. In
14 Hungarian the first name is S-a-n-d-o-r. Pronounced
15 Sandor. Schandor is the way it's pronounced. Here I
16 have a middle name. Since I came to the United
17 States -- Usually you don't have a middle name back in
18 Hungary. But when I came here after the war I was under
19 the impression that in America everybody must have a
20 middle name. So I was trying to get one from somewhere
21 and decided I would take my Hungarian first name,
22 Sandor, translate it into English as Alexander, split it
23 into two: Alex, and second half Sandor is the middle
24 name. I spelled it Sander, Dor. I settle the X with an
25 S. That is the way I got my middle name Sandor.

1 As I mentioned I was born in 1922 in a small
2 town in Hungary near the Romanian border. By Hungarian
3 standard the name of the name is Komadi. It's in the
4 County -- in Hungary it is divided to areas that I think
5 is roughly equivalent to counties. The name of the
6 County was Bihar. Bihar. Actually the town Komadi is
7 pronounced Komadi in Hungarian. It's kind of a medium
8 size village by Hungarian standards. The population was
9 about ten thousand. It's not very small one but surely
10 not that big a town.

11 Among the ten thousand population perhaps
12 there were something like about 150 Jewish families.
13 Most of the Jewish people were in business. You know,
14 some small, some larger businesses they were operating
15 and my father was one of those.

16 We had a small dry goods store in that town
17 which my father and mother kept going. Things were
18 reasonably good in the twenties yet.

19 As I recall from my early childhood we were
20 sort of maybe middle class kind of family. We didn't
21 have a great deal of financial problem until the
22 recession came. Around in the thirties things got
23 worse.

24 Q. Did you own your own house then?

25 A. Yes. It was an old house. I have no idea

1 when it was built. My father owed some money on it. It
2 had a mortgage on it. I remember talking about payments
3 to the bank, which became more and more difficult as the
4 years went by.

5 The house was a simple one. Several rooms.
6 We had dirt floor. In those days the rural areas like
7 this was where I was living most of the floors were just
8 plain dirt.

9 We use to get, believe it or not, some kind
10 of mixture of horse manure and things and you coated it,
11 you gave it somewhat harder coat and it was easier to
12 sweep and this kind of thing.

13 We had electricity. Everybody in the town
14 had electricity. We didn't have plumbing. There was an
15 outhouse in the yard.

16 Drinking water, we had to get from the
17 artesian well. There were two of them. One on each end
18 of the town. We had to go with big canister kind of
19 thing and carry the water home. Doing these kind of
20 things is really one of the few things I remember from
21 my childhood and about my parents. I use to go with my
22 father, helping him carry the water. It was a
23 reasonably long walk. We had time to talk to each
24 other.

25 I remember some of the conversations we had.

1 Otherwise, we didn't talk a great deal with our parents.

2 For this reason I think I have much less
3 recollection about my mother. She was a very kind
4 woman. I am sure that I remember this correctly.
5 Pictures, I don't have of them unfortunately. The face
6 of my mother is kind of fading in my memory and I don't
7 know how to try to retain it.

8 I have a stronger picture of my father
9 because we use to spend more time together and even
10 occasionally I had to help out with the store on market
11 days.

12 We had to get merchandise and take it to the
13 market. I was more involved with my father as a small
14 child than my mother. So I have a better recollection.

15 Q. No one in your family has a photograph of
16 either of your parents?

17 A. Nobody. Several survivors, nobody has a
18 photograph of parents. I am sure the two sisters still
19 alive we don't have any. It's amazing.

20 Q. Since you brought it up do you remember some
21 of the conversations you had?

22 A. Yeah. I remember as a kid I was always
23 interested in technical thing. That was my major
24 interest.

25 I use to tell my father about inventions I

1 was thinking of. I remember guns were kind of important
2 things. I remember I told my father Yes, you can
3 sprinkle something there to shoot a gun, those were
4 inventions of the time. It was ridiculous. For a child
5 it was -- Some of these conversations I recall with my
6 father.

7 I told you a little about the house that we
8 lived in. Just sort of off the Main Street, the main
9 business street of the town. His little store, our
10 little store, was on the Main Street but not the
11 marketplace. That was a little further down. The
12 merchandise he carried there was mostly textile stuff,
13 material for women, for the farm woman, peasant. They
14 used linen or cotton kind of thing, printed stuff they
15 made dresses out of. That was white linen, various
16 kinds to make bedding stuff and this kind of thing. No
17 mens suit. We didn't carry that.

18 Also the store, this was the main type of
19 merchandise, we also had other things. My recollection
20 is we carried spices that were cookies, candies and
21 maybe other things that I don't remember anymore very
22 well. A little general store, but mostly textile
23 material.

24 We lived fairly simply, but reasonably
25 comfortable. My mother did the cooking. In the early

1 days the woman had help. I don't recall every day or
2 week or whatever. Later the situation got a little
3 worse economically and I think that wasn't very long in
4 to the thirties.

5 Q. Did she work in the store also?

6 A. Yes. My father sometimes had to travel to
7 Budapest to get new merchandise and my mother spent
8 quite a bit of time in the store. She was out there
9 with us in the market days when we set up a tent like
10 thing in the market place in the town and merchandise.
11 Most of the textile was laid out and we laid it out on
12 the burlap and laid it out on the tent and tried to sell
13 some, which we did.

14 My mother worked. She had to run home.
15 Friday was the market day. Around 11:00 o'clock she had
16 to run home to cook the main meal of the day, which is
17 around midday in Hungary in Europe. So she was busy.
18 She had to do the washing by hand, all kind of cleaning.

19 I will tell you a little bit about the rest
20 of the family now.

21 My father, whose name was Joseph Bauer. He
22 married a woman, the family Freikind. Freikind was my
23 mother's middle name.

24 Q. How do you spell that?

25 A. F-r-e-i-k-i-n-d. He married a girl, very

1 beautiful. I recall some of the pictures, old pictures.
2 She was a good looking woman. Lena. Helen was I think
3 her first name. They called her Lena was a nickname.
4 They had five children. Three boys and two girls.

5 Q. Do you know their names?

6 A. Yes. The oldest boy was Laszlo.
7 L-a-s-z-l-o. Nickname is Laci.

8 The next child was to the best of my
9 recollection another boy, Julius. Guyla. G-u-y-l-a is
10 the Hungarian version of Julius. And then came a girl
11 Olga. O-l-g-a. And then I believe came another boy
12 called Miklos. M-i-k-l-o-s. And then a girl Magda.
13 M-a-g-d-a. His wife died shortly after the birth of
14 Magda, the fifth child.

15 I don't know how long thereafter. Well, may
16 have been a couple years or so. Four, five perhaps. He
17 married his deceased wife's younger sister. The other
18 two children, including me and my younger sister, we are
19 from the second marriage.

20 Q. What was your mother's first name?

21 A. First name was Sarah. In Hungarian the long
22 version is S-a-r-o-l-t-a. Sarah Freikind is my mother's
23 name. She was, as I mentioned, the sister of the first
24 wife. So I was related with my half brothers, a little
25 bit more than half brothers. There was never at home

1 any difference between the brothers and sisters. So we
2 were seven.

3 Q. You had the same grandparents.

4 We had the same grandparents, that's right.

5 Q. What were your grandparents name, do you
6 remember.

7 A. The only thing I remember by the time I was
8 born in 1922, which was nine years after my older sister
9 was born. The last one of the first marriage.

10 My mother's mother was the only grandparent
11 that was alive and she lived with us in our home. She
12 lived with us. I recall very well as a little child.
13 She was old. She was very kind. Both myself and my
14 sister use to make fun of her. I feel so bad about it.
15 We didn't treat her with the respect that she definitely
16 deserved. We were too little to realize it.

17 She died in our house, I don't know exactly
18 when. I was very little. I may have been four, five
19 years old. Maybe my sister wasn't even born, who was
20 four years younger than I. I don't have full
21 recollection of that.

22 I do remember that grandma lived with us when
23 I was a very little child and then she passed away.

24 Q. Do you know the name of your father's
25 parents?

1 A. No. No. Unfortunately, I don't. I am
2 pretty sure my older sister does. She lives in Israel
3 now. She is still alive.

4 I didn't think of it. There is at home a
5 fairly distant cousin of ours who came to the United
6 States also after the war and lives in Los Angeles, went
7 into the real estate business. He died a few years ago.

8 He started to set up a family tree. He sent
9 me some copies or something of this that he was trying
10 to make. I believe, I don't think my mother's family's
11 name is on it. I don't think he knew that. He was
12 related to me on my father's side. He does have my
13 father's spelling. I forgot about that to bring with
14 me.

15 Q. What was your younger sister's name?

16 A. She is still alive. Her name is Clara.
17 C-l-a-r-a.

18 Q. Was there a big age difference between you
19 and say your eldest brother?

20 A. Yes. Laci, the distance is 20 years. So he
21 is 20 years older than I. He passed away in 1984 back
22 in Romania.

23 My childhood, you know, we lived at home but
24 eventually, not in the beginning, but my sisters went
25 away from home. They went to Budapest and they lived

1 there, struck off on their own.

2 My older brother Laci, the oldest, was always
3 living there with us. He was a clerk, a lawyer's clerk.
4 He always lived with us.

5 Then the second brother, the next younger
6 brother, Julius, he got away from my family.

7 You know I have to be truthful. My
8 recollection is my mother, there were some tension
9 between my mother and the older children, except Laci,
10 the oldest boy. He was always at home and he was highly
11 respected. He earned a decent salary and he was always
12 well dressed. Anyway, Laci was with us.

13 For whatever reason I don't know for sure,
14 Julius left home and all I recall is he married a
15 Protestant Pastor's daughter. All I recall is he came
16 back to visit once with his little boy. A little boy
17 about my age at that time. So he didn't live with us.

18 The two older girls, Olga and Magda, went to
19 Budapest. There was a third boy, Miklos. He had a
20 little problem. He had polio as a youngster. He had
21 some physical, and also maybe a little bit mental, some
22 kind of retarded to some degree.

23 As I recall, he never, when I was there, he
24 never had a job. He was doing odd works around town.
25 He lived sometimes at home, sometimes he disappeared and

1 wouldn't see him for weeks or something like that. He
2 was kind of the black sheep of he family.

3 But my younger sister, myself, Laci we always
4 lived at home with our parents. The girls came home
5 fairly often to visit us. So there wasn't much
6 friction, normal family life, I think. Those of us that
7 stayed at home were pretty close to each other.

8 Q. What about aunts and uncles around town?

9 A. My mother had a fairly extensive family. She
10 had a brother with his family living in town. Two
11 brothers. I don't recall any, she may have had sisters.
12 I don't know. Unfortunately when I was a kid I didn't
13 try to learn about these things. Who cared what the
14 family looked like. Now I am sorry that I didn't find
15 out and now it's kind of late. I am asking my older
16 sister what do you remember? She send me some notes
17 that's mostly what I knew, too.

18 I know that my mother had two brothers that
19 lived in town. Their children they died eventually I
20 think probably in the holocaust. I am not sure when.
21 They went to Israel and some I think are still alive. I
22 don't have any contact with them.

23 Q. Do you happen to know the names of any of
24 these people?

25 A. Their names were Freikind. Louis Freikind

1 and Bela Freikind was the other brother. Bela Freikind,
2 one end of town he had much larger store than my father
3 had. It was better run, a bigger store. Bela,
4 interestingly, married a woman who was a cousin of my
5 father. There was a kind of relation. Their son is in
6 Budapest. He is a cousin that's still alive there. He
7 became in the communist regime pretty high up, economics
8 professor in the University. He was highly decorated by
9 the communists. He played along with them after the
10 war. So there were two brothers.

11 There was kind of on the other side a family.
12 I try to recall. The husband, the wife was related to
13 us and all I recall her name was Serena. Aunt Serena
14 was a nice woman. They were very nice people,
15 reasonably well to do and we use to have New Year's eve
16 parties together with them. I have very faint
17 recollection of these people.

18 And then we had other relation I remember and
19 we were told on my father's side Yugoslavian side of the
20 border. There was well to do relatives.

21 We had some relatives on the Romanian side of
22 the border. Again, I believe this was from my father's
23 side. An engineer. He was managing (inaudible.) We
24 had relatives in the area. The relatives that we had
25 most contact with was my father's brother's family that

1 lived in Budapest. When I got there to go to school
2 there I had fairly close contact with that family. He
3 was my father's oldest brother. His name was Laza. A
4 Jewish name in Europe. He was a state employee. He
5 worked for the railroad. I remember he was retired and
6 he was very impressive looking gentleman. His white
7 goatee beard. He was dressed always impeccably. My
8 recollection is he was a picture of an important
9 personage. Also probably because of the job he had or
10 whatever reason -- although he was very Jewish. He
11 changed his name. You know, Hungarian. His name wasn't
12 Bauer. He changed it to Hungarian sounding name, like
13 many Jews did, change the Jewish sounding name to a
14 Hungarian version. His name was Boros. B-o-r-o-s. But
15 originally it was Bauer before he changed it.

16 This is probably the extent of my
17 recollection of the family. Very little on my mother's
18 side. The three families that lived in our town. On my
19 father's side mostly his brothers, Lasla Boros lived in
20 Budapest with his children and some vague ideas about
21 some other relatives, I don't know how distant. They
22 were living in other parts, even adjacent countries, not
23 even in Hungary.

24 My father had a fairly large group of family
25 in a fairly large city maybe about 50 or 60 miles away

1 from our town called Debrecen. It's a fairly big city
2 in Hungary.

3 It's on the eastern parts of the country.
4 Again not very far from Romania. Spelled
5 D-e-b-r-e-c-e-n. It's a large city. My father had
6 affair number of relations there. I think his relation,
7 come to think of it, his father's sister, I believe.
8 His father's sister, lived and progeny children and
9 families and whole bunch of people and cousin I
10 mentioned before that lived in Los Angeles before he
11 died a couple years ago put together the family tree.
12 He was a grandchild or greatgrandchild of my father's
13 mother or sister or some sort.

14 We had various places groups of people that
15 were related to us somehow.

16 We went sometimes I remember as a kid we did
17 go on occasion, rarely it was a big trip, the 50 miles
18 or so to go to Debrecen. We did go once or twice at
19 least to visit this branch of he family there.

20 Q. By horse, by train?

21 A. By train. By train. By horse, we didn't
22 have a horse. We didn't have a carriage. My father had
23 to take merchandise to market he hired it.

24 In our home my mother -- We were fairly
25 simple people. My mother, besides taking care of the

1 house and cleaning and cooking and so on, she use to do
2 raising geese and ducks and things like that by force
3 feeding them. I don't know if you know that. They use
4 to do that in Europe. Use to say we had maybe a dozen
5 geese. My mother at that time had some help. Use to
6 soak some corn in water to get softer. In the early
7 morning get up and get the goose and force his mouth
8 open and stuff things in there.

9 When it got really fat it was slaughtered.
10 One of he main things was the liver. Use to have to
11 have huge goose liver. We either used it or sold it.
12 People were willing to buy it.

13 Geese, ducks and one of the things in those
14 days sometimes in the force feeding process of the
15 animals a kernel of corn goes the wrong way and gets in
16 the air thing of the animal, goes down to the bottom
17 where it narrows and suffocates him or can bleed.

18 As I recall, on one end of the town there was
19 a woman that knew how to take care of it. It was kind
20 of a cruel thing to do. The animal didn't die. We
21 managed to fix it. She goes down the neck of the goose
22 and finds it in the windpipe, pushes it, squeezes it up
23 and finds out where the kernal of corn got stuck and
24 goes underneath it and pushes it up to the top and you
25 hit the head of the goose or duck and it spits it out.

1 I hated to do this in the winter time, with a
2 basket, gasping goose and I had to run in the early
3 morning or almost night down to the woman's place. So I
4 watched her how she does it and I learned how to do it
5 myself. So I became an expert in getting the stuck
6 kernal out of the windpipe of geese or duck. Little
7 things.

8 Q. How did you get the goose to the woman so
9 fast?

10 A. Well, the goose could breathe. A kernal is
11 not a closed plug. It doesn't close it completely. So
12 gasping, a little air goes through there. But it
13 couldn't live very long with it. But it lived long
14 enough. For a few hours.

15 Q. So you became an expert?

16 A. I was an expert in getting the stuck kernal
17 out of the windpipe of the animals.

18 Q. Did people come to you then?

19 A. No. Not that I recall. Didn't have to. I
20 didn't have to march down to the end of the town winter
21 mornings to do this.

22 Q. So you had a little bit of a farm yard there?

23 A. Yes. We had a fair sized yard. There was a
24 well in the yard. The well, I don't know how deep it
25 was. The water wasn't drinkable. You could use it for

1 washing, for every other purpose except for cooking and
2 water.

3 Q. Do you know why it wasn't for drinking?

4 A. It was bitter. It didn't taste good. It's
5 not artesian well. The artesian well, the water comes
6 deeper, is filtered. This had lots of salt. Everybody
7 had a well like that, which wasn't usable for drinking.
8 But for every other purpose. It was cold. Roughly
9 guessing, you had a bucket that you roll up and get the
10 water and put it there.

11 We used it for other things. I thought the
12 best use for it in the summer time we bought a melon, we
13 put it down there in the water and kept it cold. That
14 was the best use for this.

15 Life in the little town was fairly peaceful.
16 There was always a agree of antisemitism but
17 unfortunately we learned to adjust to it.

18 Q. You told us about the people changing the
19 name. Was that due to antisemitism?

20 A. Yeah. There was people that actually
21 converted. I don't know how many. Several people, Jews
22 that decided they would convert to Christianity. In the
23 end it didn't help them. The holocaust came around.
24 Most of the other converted Jews were also taken to the
25 concentration camp.

1 Q. Does this reflect the pressure of the
2 antisemitism?

3 A. Yes. They wanted to improve their situation
4 by giving up the Jewish identity. And probably to some
5 degree it helped them. Antisemitism, as little kids we
6 knew about it and we felt it a little bit, but it didn't
7 bother us very much.

8 Q. For example, what would happen?

9 A. In numerous classes. For instance, in the
10 universities, the population, the Jewish population of
11 Hungary percentage was about six percent of the general
12 population, about six hundred thousand out of ten
13 million, which was the Hungary total population. Jews
14 were not allowed, universities were not allowed to
15 accept Jewish students in excess of six percent of the
16 population.

17 They had restrictions in certain professions.
18 The peasants in our town they knew we were Jewish
19 obviously. Some of them, the family my father rented
20 the little store from, that was in the yard, the
21 property of a fairly well to do farmer. They were very
22 friendly with each other.

23 Farmer's wife came down to my mother and
24 brought food on occasion. But there was antisemitism.

25 As a early child and later on mostly things

1 got worse. In the early 30's, with Hitler rising in
2 Germany, Social Nazi rise in Germany, made the Jews
3 situation in Hungary worse, because the Hungarians
4 tended to emulate the Germans. They were very friendly.
5 Germany was their mentor. There they tended to emulate
6 their policies.

7 But even before Hitler there were
8 antisemitism and no pogroms that I recall. Not that I
9 recall. I would have known about it. There were no
10 pogroms in Hungary in my life time.

11 There was some professional discrimination
12 and social discrimination. The Jewish population was
13 kind of somewhat separate group from the general
14 socially. Although there was lots of interaction.

15 Q. Was there kind of a ghetto in your town?

16 A. No. No. Jews lived scattered all around.

17 Q. Were they all orthodox?

18 A. Yes. In those days in Hungary and in Europe
19 there were most Jews were orthodox and there were the
20 (name), the name originated in Germany. In the larger
21 cities there were communities and synagogues and
22 congregations. They were more to conservative Judaism
23 is here. Not quite as secular as the reform movement
24 here.

25 But in small towns everybody was orthodox.

1 There was only one orthodox synagogue in town. When I
2 was very little I remember we use to go there on most,
3 maybe on sabbath morning with my father services.

4 My mother kept kosher. She had two sets of
5 dishes. My father wasn't quite as religious. He liked
6 some of the farmer's friends gave him. I think somebody
7 brought it into the house, bacon or some sausage kind of
8 thing and tried to hide it from my mother. She found it
9 and I think she made a big fuss about it.

10 Basically we were orthodox, but not a very
11 religious at the time. We spoke Hungarian at home.
12 Unfortunately we were never taught Yiddish.

13 Q. Did your parents speak Yiddish?

14 A. They did. They used it on occasion I think
15 when they didn't want -- They used it among themselves.
16 They never taught us. So we picked up a few words. We
17 heard a few words. It wasn't completely unfamiliar, but
18 we never learned to speak it.

19 The recession got hold of the town. Things
20 got economically worse.

21 Q. Were you going to a public school or private?

22 A. In Hungary I was going to a parochial school.
23 Each religion had their school. There was a public
24 school mostly I think for the Protestant kids. Grammar
25 school probably. Most of the kids in town went to that.

1 I think a couple of them in town. I am not
2 quite sure. There was a big one there.

3 Next to it was the Jewish day school. The
4 Jewish parochial school and all the Jewish kids went to
5 that school. As a matter of fact, some of the better
6 gentile families sent their kids because it was a better
7 school than the public school. So we had some gentile
8 kids in the school.

9 It was one room school house. A teacher,
10 which was kind of was loved by everybody, an excellent
11 teacher. Called Martin Budi, very good teacher. I was
12 lucky he was my teacher when I went to school.

13 Then you take fourth grade and go to
14 something like junior high school if you want to. Some
15 kids went to sixth grade and then you can stop there. I
16 think sixth grade was the minimum that was required of
17 everybody to go to school.

18 But you had an option. After the fourth
19 grade you could do to high school type thing. In town
20 there was a school something like a junior high school.
21 That was affordable for us.

22 There were eight year high schools called
23 gymnasium. They were in larger towns. You had to have
24 money to go to the city and room and board. We couldn't
25 afford it. I went to the local junior high school, four

1 year program.

2 We were 14 years old when you graduate from
3 there. Some of the gentile kids went. This was not a
4 Jewish school anymore, and maybe some of the farmer kids
5 could take another two year course in another school,
6 economy, agriculture. Some agriculture things learned
7 and they went on their father's farm and managed that.

8 I didn't want to go to that. We weren't
9 farmers and I didn't want to go to that school. I went
10 to a teacher seminar in Budapest. I wanted to become,
11 not a Jewish parochial school teacher, but that was the
12 next stepping stone. I wanted to study some more.

13 In the high school, in the year high school I
14 was lucky enough to have an excellent chemistry teacher.
15 I fell in love with chemistry. I remember he gave me
16 special assignment. He lent me books from his home
17 library and I made some presentations. Anyway, I liked
18 chemistry. I thought I am going to study chemistry.

19 The next logical step, an affordable step for
20 us, was the teacher seminar in Budapest, Jewish
21 seminary, the only one in the whole country.

22 Kids came from various parts of the country
23 there. We studied there to become Jewish school
24 teachers.

25 Q. Your family could afford that.

1 A. Yes. I got some scholarship and it was
2 fairly cheap. And then I started tutoring to earn a few
3 dollars that way.

4 My father's brother, that family Laza, lived
5 there. I spent sometime with them. Anyway, this was,
6 my sisters lived there, the two older sisters lived
7 there.

8 Q. Were they working then?

9 A. Yes. My older sister Olga was a seamstress.
10 She lived for awhile in the apartment of this older
11 brother, my father's brother. I think she must have
12 paid some rent. She had room there, with sewing
13 machines and kind of a model things there and she did
14 excellent, beautiful fashion dresses, women dresses. I
15 remember all the fashion magazines there and people came
16 and ordered the dress and she made it. I carried many
17 times and delivered the dresses.

18 She earned a reasonable living, I think.

19 My other sister Magda, I am not quite sure
20 what she did. I know she was a waitress at one time.
21 She worked I think in some office. She also earned a
22 living. I think she changed, didn't have a steady kind
23 of profession or like my older sister had.

24 Eventually I was 14 years old, my parents
25 thought that I should go to school, say go into a store

1 or work as a sales clerk in somebody's store. I didn't
2 like merchandising thing at all. I wasn't a
3 businessman.

4 So I was accepted. They had an entrance
5 examination. You have to go through it. I was accepted
6 and I moved to Budapest when I was 14 years old in 1936.

7 That was a big adventure for me. I use to
8 come home for the summer vacation, at least the first
9 year, and then I got some tutoring jobs for the summer
10 at various places preparing kids for Bar Mitzvah. There
11 was no Bat Mitzvah in those days.

12 Q. You had Bar Mitzvah, I assume, at home.

13 A. Oh, yes. At town there was the school
14 teacher. By that time my Bar Mitzvah came around, my
15 old teacher retired. A young man took over the school.
16 He became pretty friendly with my older brother. They
17 were kind of friends. He prepared me. I don't know
18 whether I paid him or not. Somehow he prepared me for a
19 Bar Mitzvah. I had a regular Bar Mitzvah. Nothing, we
20 didn't do any flashy business. You were called up to
21 the torrah and made a speech and you had to read the
22 half torrah and that was it. I don't remember we had
23 celebration at home, which we could have done. I don't
24 know whether that was accustom. I don't have a
25 recollection.

1 Q. You were in the early thirties and economy
2 was starting to go down?

3 A. Yes. My father started having problems. He
4 got some of the merchandise on credit from this
5 wholesaler and there was somebody that couldn't payback.
6 I remember, at one point -- I don't recall whether he
7 had to declare bankruptcy or not. I do remember that
8 the sign in the front of the store instead of Joseph
9 Bauer became Magda Bauer, my sister's name. Somehow the
10 store changed name. I surmised it had to do something
11 with financial problems.

12 Maybe he had to declare bankruptcy or
13 something of the sort. I don't know how things went in
14 those days. Things got tight.

15 Shortly after my father gave up the store and
16 he retired and he still lived in the same house. He was
17 supported by my oldest brother who lived at home. I
18 don't know what other support he had. I know that I
19 didn't need any money because I earned enough from the
20 tutoring that I could pay that little tuition and room
21 and board thing I had to pay in Budapest for my
22 schooling.

23 Q. How about your younger sister?

24 A. My younger sister she was at home. She was
25 four years younger than I am. She was at home.

1 I don't recall exactly how financially they
2 were. They had some money. They didn't sell the house
3 because they lived in it. Until 1941 I believe, or 40
4 they lived in the house. I don't recall exactly when
5 they gave up the store completely. I don't know that.
6 I wasn't home. I was already in Budapest. And came
7 home occasionally, not very much. I got away from home
8 base.

9 Q. Your eldest brother he hadn't married?

10 A. No, he never married. He never married.
11 Just found out a year ago, just a year ago from my
12 sister, he had some love affair with a woman and he had
13 actually a child, a young man, a physician in
14 Switzerland. We got in touch with him.

15 I don't know, something was in his life he
16 was made never to marry. He met this woman after the
17 war. I think he was 20 years younger than I. I think
18 he was born around 1902. 1946, he must have been over
19 40 years old.

20 Up to that point why he never married I have
21 no idea but he didn't. We had very loose contact with
22 him. As I recall they came to visit once. Apparently
23 my parents weren't too happy about his idea of marrying
24 a gentile woman. Could be.

25 Other boy he was kind of loose character.

1 The two girls, my older sister married in Budapest. She
2 married a very nice Jewish guy, Miklos. What was the
3 last name? I have a picture of that.

4 Q. We will come to that later.

5 A. My older sister got married in Budapest. I
6 don't know what happened. I know that my older sister
7 and her husband they were killed by the Nazi. They were
8 shot there. They were in one of the safe houses. A
9 Swedish safe house. There was a raid on it. Nazi
10 collected them, dragged out some Jews among them, and my
11 sister and her husband, marched to the banks of the
12 Danube River and machine gunned the group and threw the
13 bodies in the Danube. Both died that way.

14 Q. Did they have children?

15 A. No. They got married when I was in Budapest.
16 They probably got married in 38 or 39 or so. I don't
17 know for what reason they didn't have children. Neither
18 did my other sister to the best of my knowledge. Unless
19 they don't tell me about it. They didn't tell me about
20 my brothers illegitimate son.

21 Q. Do you know your two older brothers?

22 A. The two older brothers, one of them
23 disappeared somehow during the war. The must have died.
24 We don't know. The next brother had polio. He did
25 survive. I visited him when we were in Hungary in 1972

1 with my family the first time we went back to visit the
2 surviving members of the family. Miklos was alive. He
3 was in a state care kind of institution. He was old, he
4 was a little feeble. He was in an institution the state
5 managed. He was in good spirits. We brought him some
6 gifts. He was happy about it. And he died naturally
7 thereafter. I don't know by what. I was told Miklos
8 passed away.

9 From the family only five of us survived. My
10 older sister died with her husband.

11 The second oldest brother disappeared
12 somewhere, we don't know how. He never came back. We
13 never heard anything about him after the war. But five
14 of us of the seven siblings survived.

15 Of the five, three of us are still alive
16 today. Myself and the two sisters. The younger sister
17 and the one next above me in age. Magda lives in
18 Israel. Clara got stuck in Romania. I think it was in
19 40, probably 41 Hitler started to make peace between his
20 allies in the area. Hungary and Romanians were always
21 at each other's throats because of territorial thing.

22 They lost it to Romania after the First World
23 War. They lost territory to Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia.
24 And Hitler wanted to make peace. He gave back part of
25 the territories that Hungary lost after the First World

1 War. Part of it was Czechoslovakia at that time.
2 That's the area that Elie Wiesel comes from. That was
3 returned to Hungary.

4 Part of Transylvania was given, taken back
5 from Romanians and given to Hungary. We lived near that
6 area, that little small town.

7 The big city was just across the border,
8 (name of city) the capital city or seat of the county
9 before the war, before the First World War. My parents
10 moved there. During the war they left the town where I
11 was born and moved to that city. They were retired. My
12 brother moved, his employer moved there. The family was
13 translated there. They lived there.

14 By that time, 41, I finished teachers
15 seminary in Budapest and I wanted to study some more. I
16 got some scholarship to go to the University in Hungary.
17 The University of Szeged. Second largest city in
18 Hungary. It's the southern part. A big town, big
19 Jewish community. I got the scholarship because very
20 few Jewish kids could get into college in those days.

21 My school, the teacher seminary, I think they
22 were allowed every year to send two or three students to
23 the University.

24 Q. Was this still the six percent quota?

25 A. Yes. Yes. Things got worse. As the war

1 came along the anti-Jewish laws enacted in Hungary were
2 mirroring the Nuremburg Laws in Germany.

3 Q. Let's talk about that. How about the Jews,
4 Hungarians in general, when Hitler came to power in 33?

5 A. We lived with a great deal of anxiety. We
6 never thought our lives were in danger or there was a
7 serious problem. There was quite a few very prominent
8 Jews in Hungary, in the social life, intellectual life
9 and business life. Jews were pretty well integrated in
10 society, inspite of some antisemitism current there,
11 which kept them out. I don't think there was any Jews
12 to the best of my knowledge in Parliament, elected. I
13 may be wrong on that. I know there weren't too many, if
14 there was any. My recollection is there was none.

15 So there were certain kind of profession.
16 and Jews didn't own land. I am not sure whether at this
17 point this was already by law, but at some point before
18 I believe it was. For whatever reason Jews didn't own
19 land. I know of no landowner, I have no recollection.
20 Jewish people were in business, they had some stores,
21 they managed or they had some profession. They were
22 tailors, shoemakers or whatever.

23 Although there may have been some -- As a
24 matter of fact, I seem to recall that my father's father
25 -- maybe I should go a step back. The only thing I

1 heard my family originally came from Czechoslovakia.
2 That's where father's family came from. I have no idea
3 where my mother's family came from.

4 I had a vague notion they came from
5 Czechoslovakia, during the Austrian-Hungarian times and
6 in previous centuries. My father was born in 1875. At
7 that time it was the Austro-Hungarian Empire. People
8 could probably move from parts to the other.

9 For whatever reason I don't know, from
10 Czechoslovakia the ancestral father or grandfather
11 moved to Hungary. If I recall correctly, my
12 grandfather, this Ernest, this cousin, in Los Angeles, I
13 think there was a rabbi in the family among the
14 ancestors. I understand, if I recall correctly, my
15 father's father leased some land and he operated some
16 farm land on a lease basis.

17 So there may have been some Jews involved in
18 agriculture, but it wasn't a typical profession for Jews
19 to be in that business.

20 Q. The home you had, did you own the land the
21 home was on?

22 A. Yes. And I don't know when they bought it.
23 I know they owed money on it, because there was talk
24 about the bank is pressuring for payments, as I recall.
25 But we owned the land and we owned the house.

1 Q. You could own a small plot of land?

2 A. Oh, yes. I mean land, agriculture, farm as
3 far as I know. And I am not quite clear about it
4 whether it was legally impossible or just not or for
5 whatever reason that was the case. My recollection
6 sometime ago there was some restriction the Jews could
7 not own land. It wasn't a big problem in our area.
8 Jews weren't in that business. We never heard much more
9 about it.

10 At any rate, they were clerks or like my
11 father's brother worked for the railroad and this kind
12 of thing. His son, Miklos, in Budapest, he was a taxi
13 driver. He owned some taxis. He bought some taxis. I
14 don't know too many things to say. Let me say that
15 much.

16 Some of our family, a couple members of my
17 extended family got to America.

18 Q. Early on?

19 A. In the twenties. Way before. Maybe in the
20 tens. Probably after the First World War. The only
21 ones I know that got here had two daughters, brother of
22 my father in Budapest. Two of his daughters came to
23 America.

24 One married, Maria, or something like that,
25 had disappeared or it wasn't talked about it. I don't

1 know. Somehow she disappeared. The other daughter
2 Helen, was in contact with the rest of the family. She
3 was the only person that was from the family in America.

4 When I came here, I wasn't in touch with her
5 but when I came here a few years later I got in touch
6 with her and we visited. They lived in Atlantic City.
7 She married a non-Jewish person. I have her picture.
8 She came to visit us when we lived in Chicago. She had
9 a daughter. She was the only relation.

10 The rest of the family just sort of
11 disappeared by now. Some of them may be alive. I have
12 no contact with the rest of the family.

13 Q. You were saying when Hitler rose to power
14 Jews were afraid?

15 A. Very much afraid.

16 Q. The Hungarians were admiring the Germans.

17 A. Absolutely. The relation got almost
18 political between the Hungarian government and closer
19 and closer with the Germans, not particularly after the
20 war broke out.

21 Q. When was that, do you remember?

22 A. The war broke out on September 1st, 1939. I
23 remember it was a Friday. My parents were up at the
24 marketplace. Nobody was home. I was at home and turned
25 on the radio and -- We had a radio at that time.

1 The news said German armies marched across
2 the border into Poland. Naturally nobody knew it was
3 going to last that long and become a world war. The war
4 broke out.

5 Even before that I think there were two sets
6 of anti-Jewish legislation enacted in Hungary. Similar
7 to the Jewish Nuremburg Laws. I think the first
8 so-called Jewish Acts they called it. This was in 1938,
9 I believe was the first one. I think 1939 was the
10 second one. I am not a historian. I am not
11 guaranteeing the dates here, but roughly.

12 There were right wing governments were put
13 into power even before.

14 As I recall, from my childhood, just trying
15 to think back, there were no liberal or left wing
16 governments in Hungary, only right wing governments,
17 that always cooperated with the Germans.

18 Q. From 1933 on?

19 A. Right from 1933 on. Even before. I don't
20 recall who was the Prime Minister. Hungary, after the
21 First World War remained a Monarchy, without a Monarchy.
22 We didn't have a king. The king was deposed or died
23 during the First World War, but had a regent, regent was
24 ruling the country. Miklos Horthy was a pretty big guy
25 in Hungary. He was an admiral in the Austro-Hungarian

1 Navy. After the Axis powers lost the First World War
2 and Hungary was kind of dissected. Romanians occupied
3 part of it, Czechoslovakia, central part this remained
4 Hungarian was taken over by Communist government, headed
5 by a Jew. Bela Kul, in 1919. He took over the
6 government and established a communist government.
7 There was chaos in the country in the aftermath of the
8 last war.

9 This admiral came in at the head of his Army
10 on a white horse. We have pictures of it. I think six
11 months or eight months, he put it down a short period of
12 the communist government. He put it down. This was
13 part of the anti-semitic attitude in Hungary. They
14 hated communists. It became highly anti-communist,
15 which naturally played well with the Germans. Another
16 tie to this Nazi ideology, very strong anti-communist
17 feeling and antisemitism was merged into this because a
18 Jew was heading the Communist government and it was so
19 hated. But this was not the only reason for the
20 antisemitism in Hungary. It went way back; as we know,
21 the Catholic church had a great deal to do with it.
22 You asked me what happened, what was the Jewish attitude
23 in the thirties and so on.

24 Q. Right. Also Hungarian towards the Jews.

25 A. Oh, yes, definitely. Nazi ideologue became

1 more popular in Hungary. It was the new wave.
2 Gentiles, gentile elites went with it. They were right
3 wing kind, the whole government, the prime minister.
4 Regent appointed the prime Minister. There was one
5 party that was more liberal than the other. This was
6 the Small Holders Party. This was a party by name, a
7 party of the small farmers.

8 The lawyer in our town was a very prominent
9 member. He was a member of this party. My brother
10 worked for him. Eventually this lawyer became elected
11 to the House. He was a representative of his district
12 and he was a member of the Small Holders Party there.

13 He was a very nice kind gentleman. He wasn't
14 anti-semetic at all. My brother worked many years for
15 him. When he was gone my brother handled the whole
16 office of the work there.

17 As a sidelight, during the war Jewish men of
18 military age were drafted into this forced labor unit,
19 not into military units. They were drafted into the
20 slave labor units. And eventually went out to the
21 Russian front. Many died there. They were mistreated.
22 It was a terrible situation.

23 This lawyer who was an officer, I don't know
24 his rank. Colonel or something in the Army. He was on
25 the front. He met my brother. He was able to help my

1 brother there on the Russian front and that's the reason
2 why I think he survived there. He managed to come back
3 alive from there because his employer Dr. Julius Mark
4 was an officer. He was able to give him some help
5 there. So miracles.

6 Q. Did your parents think about emigrating in
7 the early thirties?

8 A. No. For average people in Hungary, any
9 foreign country was a different world. We heard about
10 the two girls that went to America. That was such a
11 remote dream. Romania was about 15 miles away from us.
12 We never got to Romania to go to the big city. It was
13 foreign country. Just very rich people, people who had
14 much broader horizon and had means to travel to foreign
15 country.

16 To the best of my recollection I never heard
17 at home any talk about possibility. Besides my parents
18 were old. My father was born -- In 1935 he was 60 years
19 old. That is pretty old in those days. My mother was I
20 believe about ten years younger than my father. My
21 mother.

22 We lived with a fair amount of fear. But
23 even in the early thirties, even after Hitler got to
24 power, it was kind of remote for us. Hitler wasn't in
25 Hungary. He was in Germany. We didn't feel immediately

1 threatened. But we all had a great deal of anxiety. We
2 saw things go in the wrong direction in Europe. German
3 is gaining more and more power. We were pretty much
4 upset at the various victories, diplomatic victories
5 Hitler achieved, forging the axis powers with Italy and
6 Japan and Chamberlain Munich affair in 1938 and fall of
7 Czechoslovakia. As time went by things became very
8 disturbing. We didn't like it. We were afraid. But we
9 didn't think it was going to come to us.

10 Q. Do you remember your parents or whatever
11 discussing what his policy was towards the Jews?

12 A. Not at all. When I lived at home I was a
13 little kid. They may have mentioned something about the
14 party. All I remember one day, it must have been 1933,
15 1932. My father took me to a barber to cut my hair. As
16 we got out of the barber's place on the corner my father
17 met somebody that know him and I was standing there with
18 him and he said did you hear the news that Roosevelt got
19 elected president.

20 Apparently that meant something to them.
21 Roosevelt was considered I think some supporter in some
22 fashion. I didn't understand what was Roosevelt, what
23 was president in America. I recall that it stuck in my
24 mind. I was wondering why is that important to them.
25 Why is it my father brought this to his attention or

1 asked him about it. It's part of me and I remember it.
2 I remember the man standing on the corner. Very few
3 scenes I recall from my early childhood.

4 Q. Was your family Zionist in any way?

5 A. No. People were Jewish, but somewhat
6 assimilated Jews. Not very religious. I would say high
7 holidays were strictly held. Sabbath, candles, and my
8 father made kiddush. There was candles. There was a
9 sabbath meal in the evening. It meant we were Jews.
10 Some were partially observing Jews. But I never heard
11 any Zionist thinking.

12 I was in this town, until I got to Budapest I
13 probably didn't know what Zionism means. We didn't hear
14 anything about it.

15 Let me go back for a moment to my earlier
16 childhood. This hundred fifty or so Jewish families,
17 there was not a great deal of cohesion. There weren't
18 synagogue affairs that Jewish went to, except going to
19 services on sabbath mornings or high holidays.

20 The only thing I recall there must have been
21 a sisterhood there of some kind because I know at least
22 in some years, maybe every year, the sisters who
23 arranged New Year's Eve party, Jewish friends, we went
24 there. This was when I was going to school. There was
25 some dancing. Parents liked to watch the kids dancing

1 on the floor. There was some community life.

2 The other side of this was when we got a new
3 synagogue. Our synagogue use to be a small kind of
4 house like thing somewhere in the town. We use to trek
5 down there to go to synagogue. It looked like a long,
6 long walk to get there.

7 I went back in 1972 and this was small and it
8 looked like a long way was a couple blocks was really
9 nothing. At that time it seemed like a long, long walk.

10 In Europe, I believe, in Hungary definitely,
11 I believe in most of Europe the religion or religious
12 activities are supported financially by the state.
13 Everybody pays, they collect taxes. I think they use to
14 call it culture tax in Hungary, besides the income tax.

15 The government collected this money and I
16 think they paid for the parochial school teachers salary
17 was paid from that. Probably in congregations, maybe
18 the rabbi or things like that. I think they must have
19 supported somehow the building of the synagogue.

20 One day, it was probably the late twenties,
21 and beautiful new synagogue was built. I am sure that
22 the state didn't build it that way. Some rich Jewish
23 families in town must have contributed to it.

24 There were a couple three, four that I recall
25 very rich families. The Blier family, who owned some

1 huge stores, major store in town was owned by them.
2 They sold everything, I think, including farm equipment.
3 They were very rich. Their son was my best friend. We
4 were about the same age.

5 As a kid I didn't have much toys, but Franz
6 had lots of it. I use to spend practically every day in
7 their home, beautiful homes. Not just me. I was his
8 closest friend. But there were other Jewish kids.
9 After Franz and he had a fraulein and they had servants
10 in the house and big fancy things and his mother,
11 Mrs. Blier, every afternoon when the kids were playing
12 in the house they served food to us at 3:00 o'clock in
13 the afternoon. It was very nice.

14 So I am sure the Bliers, his mother's family
15 was the other rich family in town, Wiess family. They
16 had what seemed to me to be a huge textile store where
17 they sold material for mens clothing. I think tailors
18 bought mens clothing material from the Weiss family.
19 They were very rich.

20 There were a couple more families. I am sure
21 this family contributed lots of money to the beautiful
22 synagogue, with all kind of stain glass windows. It
23 wasn't there when we went back. The synagogue wasn't
24 there. I don't know what happened to it. Come to think
25 of it I didn't see it. It was gone.

1 At any rate, there was a big synagogue and
2 the Jews got together once in a while. But not like
3 being a member of congregation where you meet people
4 more intensely.

5 Q. Was there much social life or didn't you have
6 time?

7 A. Well, my father and mother times, theatre
8 came to town they went to the theater. They must have
9 gone to some social events. I remember as a little
10 child some events where they came back, brought back
11 cakes for the kids. So we know they were somewhere
12 else.

13 I know they went to some theater things. In
14 town they use to sing operatas and my father and mother
15 use to love the operatas. Otherwise, family members got
16 together.

17 Family of my mother's side. I don't recall
18 much social life. We were little kids and maybe we
19 didn't see it, didn't notice it. I didn't notice much
20 social life. My parents weren't well to do. They
21 didn't participate in too many. I remember they did go
22 to the New Year's eve celebration.

23 The congregations, we didn't have a rabbi.
24 We had a Shohert was the leader of the congregation. He
25 was the cantor. He slaughtered the chickens, the geese

1 and whatnot.

2 He was the religious leader. I think they
3 called it intinerary.

4 Q. Itinerant.

5 A. Itinerant rabbi. Before all the high
6 holidays the Rabbi with a long red beard came to our
7 synagogue and made the (name). In Yiddish. Maybe part
8 of it was Hungarian. I wasn't much interested in it.

9 That was community life. There was no family
10 and a little bit around the congregation, but it wasn't
11 very extensive. In the town there were two hotels,
12 so-called hotels. One was the big hotel, one was the
13 small hotel. The small hotel was the better one. That
14 was managed by we were told a distant relative of yours.
15 Adolph. Uncle Adolph we called him. And his wife
16 Irene. And with the cooks, there was a dining room and
17 people were there eating.

18 On occasion the richer farmers came and drank
19 champagne. Later in the summer time my Uncle Adolph
20 wanted to lay down in the afternoon and rest, gave me a
21 job. I went and I was the cashier there. I was
22 probably 12 years old. Twelve, thirteen years old. I
23 handled the money and wrote down everything that was
24 sold and how much it was. In the end my tally and the
25 cash had to jive. I didn't get paid for it.

1 But Uncle Adolph in the same complex, the
2 same building, the hotel, rooms were there for guests,
3 he operated the movie house there. So I had free access
4 to the movies. I saw movies there. I think that was
5 the only payment I got from him. So I think I had
6 things that are not relevant.

7 Q. Keep going. What about the reactions of the
8 Hungarian to the Jews after Hitler came to power?

9 A. Well, the situation got worse. Even before
10 official laws were enacted, which barred Jews from
11 certain professions, and I don't know exactly what other
12 ramifications there were. But similar things to the
13 Nuremburg Laws, very similar or maybe a little milder.
14 I don't know the details. I never studied the details.
15 There were two sets of Jewish legislation enacted, I
16 believe in 1938 and in 1939.

17 Under the rise of National German Socialism
18 in Germany and Central Europe and Italy, Mussolini and
19 anti-Jewish fascism, Hungarian government that was
20 established the first time I think in mid thirties or so
21 about the Hungary Nazi party that was a small fringe
22 group. They called them self the Arrow Cross party.
23 Instead of a cross it was a swastica. They were very
24 vicious people. I think they were worse than Nazi
25 Gestapo.

1 Q. For instance, what would they do?

2 A. The last few months of the war, when things
3 became chaotic this party got into power. The regent,
4 the head of the party was named prime minister and they
5 were murdering Jews everywhere. This was 1944. By this
6 time the Jews were all deported to Auschwitz, from the
7 country side, except Budapest. Eichmann was assigned to
8 deport the Jews. He had some problems. The city was
9 large. I think something like 250 thousand or so Jews
10 living there. Most of the Jews lived in Budapest.

11 I don't know if you heard about Roahl
12 Wallenberg. By this time the Allies tried to save some
13 of the Hungarian Jews and many survived. There was a
14 ghetto there. Many of them were hiding. Nazi uniforms,
15 I know some of them had them for disguise. Many Jews
16 had them. The Nazis were in small towns where there
17 were no Jews. In Budapest they were roaming streets.
18 If you got hold of a Jew, life of a Jew wasn't worth
19 much anymore. They killed many of them.

20 In Hungary, Kody, Regent, he was reluctant to
21 allow the Jews to be deported. He was not a Jew lover.
22 He was probably afraid. In 44 it was kind of obvious
23 the war is going to be lost. By that time Hungary was
24 an active ally of Germany.

25 In 1941, the Hungarians didn't enter the war.

1 The Germans occupied Czechoslovakia, Hungary, the
2 Balkans by themselves. The Hungarians were reluctant to
3 join them on the battle front until 1941 when Germany
4 attacked Russia. To fight the communists the Hungarian
5 were willing to go with them. There was a large
6 contingency, three Hungarian thousand went to fight with
7 the Germans on the Russian front.

8 They took with them the forced labor Jews and
9 enlisted them. I understand, and it is probably true,
10 that the Regent was reluctant to let the Jews be
11 deported to Auschwitz. Probably he knew what was going
12 on there. Not like the rest of us, which I am going to
13 tell you later about.

14 He was trying to suppress the Jews, but he
15 didn't want to kill them and was reluctant to let the
16 Germans deport them. Eichmann I think had problem with
17 the government, couldn't speed it up enough his
18 transports to Auschwitz.

19 Then I understand at one point the Germans
20 captured the regent's son and they forced him by that
21 means to consent to certain things to which he would not
22 have consented under pressure.

23 Q. He had consented to the slave labor of the
24 Jews though?

25 A. Right. Oh, yes. Slave labor, that was

1 before. The slave labor of the Jews was instituted I
2 think in 1938 or 39 or something around there.

3 My brother was enlisting I believe before the
4 war. Perhaps not before the war. I am not sure when
5 that was started. Before the Hungarian went to the
6 Russian front which is where they fought. Jews in the
7 military probably late thirties. I think that was part
8 of the anti-Jewish laws. Jews of military age were
9 draft into slave units rather than military units.

10 Q. Do you know any other anti-Jewish laws?

11 A. I never took the trouble to study it.

12 Q. Did it affect your life in anyway in the
13 thirties?

14 A. No. It did not. By this time in 1941 I
15 graduated from the teacher seminary and in the fall I
16 went to the University to that school and I wasn't
17 personally affected by it, I felt. In the school they
18 knew I was Jewish. I didn't feel any direct
19 persecution.

20 My professors -- By that time mathematics,
21 the teachers seminar, I had a math teacher and lousy
22 chemistry teacher. I switched from chemistry to
23 mathematics. That's where I stayed to this day. I
24 don't know. Maybe I could tell you about that, unless
25 you want to ask me more questions.

1 Q. As we go along. Go ahead?

2 A. In 1941 and 40 we heard about, and Hitler
3 invaded and occupied Poland and part of Russia, Ukraine,
4 some refugees, Jewish refugees came from that part of
5 the country to seek refuge in Hungary. We felt pretty
6 badly about it. These people are fleeing. Why do they
7 flee. Maybe they live in ghettos so why do they flee.
8 We had no idea, I had no idea they had been killed.
9 Nobody told me about that.

10 When people came, Hungarian government
11 deported them. I know one guy who went to school at the
12 teachers seminary, his parents didn't have the right
13 citizenship and he was taken out of the school. Farish
14 was the first name. With his parents he was deported to
15 Palestine. That is what we were told. That's my
16 recollection.

17 I know we felt pretty bad about being
18 deported to Palestine. What a Godforsaken place that
19 is.

20 By that time we heard about swamps being
21 drained there, we heard a little. In Budapest I learned
22 about Zionism. Our main teacher was the leading Zionist
23 in Hungary. As a matter of fact, he is in the
24 Encyclopedia Judica he is mentioned. He use to edit the
25 Zionist newspaper. He gave me an assignment to cut out

1 news things from other papers and to paste them
2 together.

3 By that time we learned about Zionism and
4 heard about the issue that people are living under very
5 difficult condition there, the swamps need to be
6 drained. Anyway, we thought it was pretty much of a
7 hardship to be deported to Palestine.

8 Q. Is it true they were deported to Palestine?

9 THE WITNESS: To the best of my knowledge, at
10 least some of them. Some of them, not all, but we heard
11 some at least. I didn't check how many. Some people
12 had been deported. I know some people we heard were
13 deported to Palestine. I don't think this was the truth
14 really, but this is what we heard, what I knew about

15 Q. Were some deported to camps?

16 A. At that time to the best of my knowledge
17 there was no camps in Hungary and we never heard about
18 Auschwitz. We didn't know. Maybe some were deported
19 back to Germany. They were deported back to Poland and
20 maybe given, turned over to the Germans at the border.
21 That's probably what happened. At least some of them we
22 heard, at least the family it was felt they were going
23 to Palestine.

24 Q. Have you heard about any camps from the early
25 thirties like Dachau, Dachau is the only camp I knew

1 about. Somebody said concentration camp. People didn't
2 say it. Dachau was a concentration camp. Hitler set it
3 up after he got power. We heard or read in the paper or
4 heard some terrible things are going on there. Some
5 mental retarded people are being killed and communists
6 and political enemies of Hitler and homosexuals. We
7 knew about Dachau. But to this day I cannot understand
8 how it could have happened that we lived in Hungary
9 after the war started in 1941, 42, 43, 44, a couple
10 hundred miles south of a place called Auschiew where
11 people being gassed by the thousands every day and no
12 one heard of it. Somebody must have. I am sure
13 somebody must have known.

14 I thought really the Jewish leadership, which
15 was a pretty large. There were six hundred thousand
16 Jews in Hungary. Maybe at this time maybe seven hundred
17 thousand were refugees. They must have known what is
18 going on. If they did the knowledge never filtered to
19 the average person. We never knew things were possible
20 they might be deporting civilians. I was exempt from
21 military because I was a student.

22 Q. Were you of military age?

23 A. Oh, yes, I was 21, 22. I didn't have to
24 report. How come that you never heard of it,
25 concentration camps exist in the parts of Europe

1 occupied by the Germans.

2 Q. You didn't learn anything through the
3 refugees?

4 A. Never got in touch. I don't know the
5 refugees came from. They came from Russia, some on the
6 border, they were probably detained. I never saw a
7 refugee myself in Budapest. We just heard that some
8 refugees came across the border.

9 Q. No one brought the newspaper.

10 A. Because there was -- There was an
11 underground, there was no newspaper. Then Jewish
12 newspaper appeared weekly or whatever it is. Equality
13 was the name of the newspaper, the Jewish newspaper.

14 There was nothing said how they were treated.
15 If it comes to the average person you tell each other
16 what is happening. I never heard of concentration camps
17 in the German occupation. The only one I ever knew was
18 Dachau.

19 Q. Was the German community disturbed once the
20 slave labor battalions went out?

21 A. Yes. We heard about it but there was nothing
22 we could do about it. It was military duty. To us it
23 was very bad time but it was a military duty that
24 everyone is suppose to perform, particularly after 41
25 the war was on. Wartime military age men go to the

1 front. It wasn't something highly unusual.

2 It's true the fact the Jews were not in the
3 regular military units, that was very disturbing. We
4 took it as that's the way things are. Jews always have
5 problems. This is a much stronger version of it. But
6 an extension of the anti-semitic attitude. It's maybe a
7 little higher degree, but qualitative there was no
8 difference, quantitatively slightly, but we never
9 noticed tightening of the screws.

10 In retrospect you could see. At that time we
11 didn't.

12 Q. How about your relationship with non-Jewish
13 students or other Hungarians in Budapest?

14 A. The school where I went to in Budapest was a
15 Jewish school. Jewish teacher, seminary, together with
16 rabbinical. We were in the same building. There were
17 no gentile students there. No gentile.

18 The University in Sagit there were Jews. I
19 didn't notice anybody being treated differently. I
20 didn't notice on the part of the other students any
21 overt antisemitism, and nothing on the part of the
22 teacher.

23 Some of the professors at the University were
24 Jewish. One of the major math professors was converted.
25 His family was. I didn't notice any overt.

1 As a student, I could go there because of the
2 scholarship. I didn't have to pay tuition. I had to
3 rent a room, which I did. A few dollars.

4 The city by that time, our parents moved to
5 the large city across the border. The city or somebody
6 granted my brother or somebody got me a scholarship. I
7 don't know why, but they did. That money went to my
8 parents. They collected every month a few dollars and
9 had that to support themselves.

10 In the school, in the University I had to pay
11 for the rent, which was very little. I lived with this
12 friend of mine Nick Hoffman. It was an attic thing.
13 Fortunately I was short. We rented a place from a
14 Jewish family, Nick and I. We never paid much for it.
15 We couldn't afford it.

16 For the meals, we ate every day with a
17 different family. We were given the main meal of the
18 day. I went to a Jewish family. Monday I ate with
19 these people and Tuesday I ate with these. That's the
20 way I managed to go to school. We had lots of friends
21 and families were very nice.

22 But coming back to the point, no overt
23 antisemitism, no more than I saw before was noticeable
24 to me. Nobody ever told us that things are very bad.

25 We know the Germans are losing the war. So

1 we didn't feel our life is in any danger.

2 On March 19, 1944 the Germans suddenly
3 occupied Hungary. Our Allies --

4 Q. Do you remember that date?

5 A. Yes, I remember that day. I believe it was a
6 Sunday also. Suddenly German tanks -- I believe it was
7 a Sunday. I wouldn't swear on it, but I think it was.
8 German tanks arrived and surrounded the city.
9 Truckloads of German soldiers. The country was taken
10 over. We surmised, we were told that the Eastern Front
11 at that time was very close to Hungary. They were being
12 beaten back by the Russians. I think they were afraid,
13 Hungarians fought in the region, may try for a separate
14 peace, like the Romanians tried and they did. The
15 Germans were afraid the Hungarians were going to do this
16 kind of thing. They came and took over the government.
17 That's the time they captured Hodaly's son. Suddenly
18 everything changed drastically. We had to wear the
19 yellow star. The Jews couldn't go out on the street
20 only in daytime.

21 I couldn't go to the school. So March 44,
22 summer of 42 was my first year. 43 the second year.
23 44, this was my third year. I was almost finished with
24 three years of studying there and suddenly it stopped.
25 I couldn't go to school anymore.

1 I was ordered to go, to report for this
2 forced labor duty. No more exemption as a student. So
3 we went. If we had some idea what we are getting into I
4 don't know, but probably I would have tried at least to
5 do something. I can't understand, the only
6 concentration camp I knew of in 1944 was Dachau. I knew
7 of the existence of Dachau. But I didn't hear anything
8 of the name. Auschwitz wouldn't have meant anything,
9 Treblinka, or Magdeneck. We never heard of them, even
10 though they were a couple 300 miles away from us.

11 Q. Had you ever heard of the treatment of the
12 Jews on the forced labor in Russia?

13 A. Yes. We knew they were pretty badly treated.
14 By this time I think we heard that some forced labor
15 group were down I think on the Balkan in Yugoslavia,
16 lead mines they were working and they were marched back
17 and Hungarians killed many of them. We heard of
18 sporadic mistreatment.

19 Well, maybe we are wrong or whatever. But
20 there is a systemic effort in Europe to exterminate the
21 Jews was the furthest from our mind. If somebody told
22 me I would have said it's not possible. It's terrible.

23 I don't know what we would have done if we
24 had known. I am sure probably somebody told me let's
25 say in December, 1943 what is going on in Auschwitz I

1 would say it's not possible, it's a lie. Maybe if we
2 heard it from somewhere else. If you hear it from
3 different sources you begin to believe it. You think
4 well, maybe we better try to do something. Hide or
5 possibly by the time we knew, if I had known the Germans
6 intention was to exterminate Jews when they occupied
7 Hungary I probably would not have gone willingly to
8 report for this duty.

9 I knew we are in the Germans' hands already
10 and I knew what they are trying to do. But we didn't
11 know that.

12 Q. But you referred to and did you think now in
13 retrospect that the heads of the Jewish Community had
14 this information?

15 A. I can't imagine that they didn't. I can't
16 imagine why they didn't warn us. Unfortunately I blame
17 them for the demise of many of the Jewish people. We
18 should have gotten at least some warning or some
19 inclination what is happening in the rest of Europe,
20 just around us. We know by this time the Allies knew
21 about it, what was going on, and I just can't imagine
22 the Hungarians -- They contacts with the outside. They
23 were a big organization. I can't imagine they didn't
24 know. This is the one topic I would be willing to spend
25 sometime to read about to understand what happened.

1 Elie Wiesel, who is also in Hungary, he
2 wrote an article in one of the papers. We had a Russian
3 paper we get. About the 50th anniversary of the
4 deportation of the Hungarian Jews and he is bitterly
5 complaining about the same thing. He can't understand
6 how come we were not warned. It's a mystery to me. I
7 don't know what it would have been, but at least we
8 would know what we are getting into. This way we
9 didn't.

10 Q. Do you know if there was like a Jewish
11 community set up?

12 A. Yes. In our city -- Well, let me tell you
13 what happened. I don't know in Sagit. There was a
14 large Jewish community there. It was remote. Rich
15 people, rich Jewish community. It was mostly reform.
16 Only synagogue I know, a beautiful synagogue. Probably
17 the nicest in central or eastern Europe. A beautiful
18 synagogue. The people, some of them are very rich
19 people. I don't know, I don't recall the (name). This
20 must have been between middle of March and early June I
21 had to report. There was not much time. I don't know
22 exactly where were the Germans organizing.

23 I know in the first couple of weeks or so
24 some leading members of the community were arrested and
25 disappeared.

1 One of the family, he was a large wine
2 merchant, very well to do. His wife was a dentist. She
3 is the one that fixed my teeth once for nothing. I was
4 a poor Jewish student. She did that. With apricot pit.

5 Her husband disappeared. Some other people
6 disappeared. We are wondering what happened to them.

7 By that time we heard a so-called
8 concentration camp is set up somewhere in Hungary at a
9 place called Kitzchard. It's a small town. People said
10 these people have been taken to that concentration camp
11 and are there. Weeks later post cards came back to the
12 families. You heard about this story. It came back we
13 are okay, don't worry about us. Everything is okay with
14 us. The post cards came from town postmarked on Walzi.
15 People were trying to look on a map and find where it
16 was. This was before they had concentration camps in
17 Hungary. People were looking for where Walzi was.
18 Nobody could find a town called this in Germany, Poland.
19 There was rumors this was a small town in Switzerland.
20 This is where the people are kept. The cards arrived,
21 the people were long dead and they were taken to
22 Auschwitz.

23 Q. Where is Walzi?

24 A. I don't think a town exists like that. I
25 don't think so. This is the kind of thing I remember.

1 I don't know exactly what happened. This is my
2 recollection. The gist of it.

3 They used all kind of tricks to keep us in
4 the dark. We thought well, the war is on and we have a
5 duty to go to military duty. We were students exempted
6 and now we are not. It's bad, but we have to go. There
7 is no way out.

8 I reported to this military duty on June 6,
9 1944. I was ordered to report at the railroad station
10 of a town, a larger town not far from where I went to
11 school called (name). It's a long name. Mostly from
12 the same city, students from the University and some
13 other high school students. I don't know what the age
14 limit was. Probably 18 and up or something. I was 22
15 at this time.

16 We were pretty badly treated by the Hungarian
17 Army. Searched us. We were suppose to give every
18 valuable up, money. We had to carry our own clothing.
19 We had civilian clothing. We didn't get uniforms. We
20 had a sleeping bag.

21 Who made my sleeping bag. Somebody sewed it.
22 I think that lady, where we rented a room, with my
23 friend Nick Hoffman she made up a nice sleeping bag I
24 had. We had rumors June 6th when we report the Allies
25 landed in Normandy on the French coast. We thought the

1 war is going to be over very soon. We just hold out,
2 don't try to make big waves so they kill you or hurt
3 you. Wait a couple weeks and the war will be over.

4 Well, it was a wrong guess. It wasn't over
5 very quickly. We were taken, the unit I got into, was
6 taken to wooded area, on top of a hill. Hungarians had
7 big ammunition dump.

8 Our unit, maybe 150 of us, 150, 200 perhaps
9 or maybe less. Anyway, a sizable unit was taken and we
10 were working in that area.

11 In the woods the buildings were hidden. They
12 were trying to hide by the trees. That's where I spent
13 the summer and we still didn't think anything is
14 drastically wrong. We were cut off. I had no contact.
15 I can't recall exactly how, but after the Germans came
16 in mid-March I lost contact with my family.

17 Q. They moved.

18 A. And my sisters from Budapest. I simply
19 didn't know. We were cutoff. I don't know if I could
20 have written a letter to them or they could have sent me
21 a letter. There was no contact from that point on I had
22 no idea what was happening to my family.

23 Q. Do you think you were forbidden to have mail?

24 A. It is possible. I don't have a recollection
25 of it. For some reason I had no idea what was happening

1 to my family.

2 Anybody else I knew of that knew what was
3 going on, I don't think anybody knew. The guys I was
4 with, at least it wasn't talked about. We were sort of
5 kept as prisoners by that time, handled by the Hungarian
6 people, old guards. Some of them were pretty bad. Some
7 were reasonable.

8 Q. Did they abuse you?

9 A. Not very much. At this place, they abused us
10 in the first few days when we reported, they search you.
11 Some of us were beaten because they found Hungary money
12 sewed in the jacket. If they caught somebody doing
13 something like that they were badly beaten.

14 Q. You weren't suppose to do that?

15 A. We weren't suppose to. We were to turn in
16 every valuable, watches, when you reported to the duty.

17 Q. Were you beat up?

18 A. No. I didn't. They didn't find anything on
19 me.

20 Q. Why was it your parents left the home they
21 owned?

22 (Off the record change of tape)

23 We were going to talk about why your parents
24 moved from this home.

25 A. I believe the major reason was the lawyer for

1 whom my brother worked, who was probably the main
2 support for my parents moved to that city, the big city
3 with his law office.

4 My brother moved there with him and naturally
5 my parents did go. I believe at that time they sold the
6 house that we lived in and they must have gotten some
7 money out of it. Not very much, but some. Probably
8 that supported them in part in this new place. I know
9 they rented an apartment someplace. I am pretty sure my
10 brother supported them with it. They may have had some
11 money left over from the house. I don't know whether
12 the business left them any. They were retired by that
13 time.

14 They also received -- The city is the one
15 that gave me the scholarship, the student scholarship.
16 Since I didn't need that it was left for my parents to
17 support them. That's the reason, because my brother had
18 to move with his job.

19 Q. About when was that?

20 A. I don't know exactly, but I believe it was in
21 1940. It was shortly after that part of Transsylvania
22 was returned to Hungary by Hitler. Then the border was
23 erased, you are free to move into the city. I think
24 maybe about 20 miles or so. So it must have been around
25 40. I have no recollection. By that time I was away

1 from home. I was in school in Budapest in 40 and 41 and
2 then I went to Sagit. I was not frequent, infrequent
3 visitor in my parents' place.

4 Even summer times, most of the time, as I
5 recall, I was tutoring at other parts of Hungary and I
6 visited my parents for a relatively brief couple weeks
7 or so even during the summer vacation.

8 Q. Was there any communication by mail?

9 A. Yes. Yes. Telephone, no. It wasn't
10 ubiquitous like it is here. My parents didn't have a
11 telephone. Few people had telephones. Neither did my
12 relatives in Budapest. I couldn't have gotten a
13 telephone. By mail, I was a bad letter writer and I
14 remain that way. My mother use to complain about that
15 to me. My mother use to send when I was going to school
16 in Budapest use to send food packages. I don't know how
17 often. Two, three times a year or so. And she made,
18 you know, some baked goods and meat stuff.

19 In the dormitory, where we lived next to the
20 school building there was a big apartment building that
21 was bought by the Jewish community who supported the
22 school. There was a dormitory there.

23 All the students, because most of us are from
24 out of town. This was a national school. Very few were
25 from Budapest. We lived in the dormitory. My parents

1 and other kid's parents sent food packages to their son.

2 They; thought we wouldn't have good enough
3 food. In fact, the food was very good. There was a
4 kitchen there, the sister of the main professor, she was
5 managing the kitchen there and the food was excellent,
6 as I recall. The Cholan that was served on weekends was
7 just delicious. Probably wasn't the greatest food. At
8 that time it was good enough.

9 We had one meal there and breakfast in the
10 morning and one meal at midday. In the evening we had
11 to get our own food. We bought small piece of bread and
12 cheese and this kind of thing.

13 I went to where my sister lived and I had
14 evening meal there occasionally at least. My mother use
15 to send the packages. In the dormitory we didn't have
16 refrigerators. Each of us had a locker, you know for
17 the meager clothing we had. I would take the package,
18 the box it was sent in and kept it on the top shelf and
19 lock it. We would save it so it would last for a while.

20 Later meat got rotten, some green stuff, we
21 scrapped it off and ate the rest of it. A couple times
22 I came down with terrible food poisoning. Ever since I
23 have a little problem you know with food, particularly
24 with meat. If it's not fresh I can't eat it.

25 In those days that use to be pretty

1 fantastic. One guy got a package and give a little bit
2 to the other guys. We lived that way.

3 You asked me about communication. We
4 communicated occasionally by mail and main communication
5 was when we received a package from home. That was the
6 best thing.

7 Q. Do you know how life was like after 1940?
8 Did it make any difference to them in that town?

9 A. I don't think it made much difference to them
10 for Jewish life, life in relation with the rest of it.
11 Probably there were, like in every town, some element
12 that were inclined anti-semitic.

13 They got more vocal. I believe, and I never
14 heard my parents say otherwise, the people that they
15 kept in touch with, non-Jewish people, the guy that had
16 the store for them, neighbors. We had several
17 neighbors, kids that I use to go to high school, junior
18 high were gentile kids that lived nearby, had good
19 relations with them. I don't think that changed much.
20 Not to my knowledge at least.

21 Economically things got worse because of the
22 recession in the thirties. My parents situation got
23 worse and worse. But I didn't feel that much. By that
24 time I was away. I know that my parents had more and
25 more difficulty. They eventually had to sell. I don't

1 know how they got rid of the store. They must have sold
2 it to somebody or at least the remaining merchandise in
3 it. So I think that is what they lived on in their
4 so-called retirement.

5 Q. What would your father do now that he didn't
6 have work?

7 A. He wasn't a youngster. He was getting close
8 to -- Well, he was 70 years old in 1945 when he was
9 killed. He was 60 years old in 1935. So he was over 60
10 in this period of time and he didn't have much hair
11 left, I remember that. People aged then much more
12 readily. He was retired. He didn't do anything. I
13 wasn't home, but my understanding was he lived a life of
14 a retired person.

15 He was reasonably well, health wise. He had
16 arthritis that was painful even when we were little
17 kids. He was complaining about backaches. One old
18 favorite thing was he laid down on his stomach and we
19 kids had to jump up and down on his back to massage his
20 back.

21 He was complaining, I recall, about hard
22 arteries. He had that. To my knowledge he never had a
23 heart attack. I don't think he had Alzheimers, because
24 he was -- from what I could see. My mother was in
25 reasonably good health. They were getting old.

1 When I visited them when they moved and once
2 in a while I visited, not very often, but I went there
3 two or three times I recall. They were just not doing
4 anything. I don't know whether he did anything, whether
5 he had anything to occupy himself.

6 In our house he had a little garden. In the
7 front there was some flowers and they sold vegetables.
8 I don't think in the rented apartment he had even that.
9 But he may have. I don't recall. To the best of my
10 knowledge he didn't want anything that I know of.

11 Q. Your mother was busy keeping house.

12 A. Yeah. At least that some. But I don't have
13 any knowledge that they did any kind of work type that
14 would have earned any money. I am not aware of it. I
15 wasn't aware of it. I wasn't very inquisitive about it
16 either, you know.

17 Somehow I had my own life and I was worried
18 more about that than really finding out some details.
19 They seemed to me to me to be okay. There was no
20 complaining. They didn't tell me we are having this and
21 this problem, financial. I thought they lived
22 reasonably peacefully, if not lavishly. I don't think
23 they starved.

24 They had an apartment that was a roof over
25 their head. To the best of my knowledge no major

1 sickness.

2 My mother use to have problems. My mother
3 had asthma and she had gallbladder problems. I remember
4 as a kid sometimes my mother use to get this terrible
5 pain attacks, gallbladder attacks. I was the one that
6 had to run in the middle of the night over to a doctors.
7 Wake up, doctors. I don't know his name. And there is
8 a problem with my mother. He had a car. He was one of
9 the few people that had an automobile in town. He came
10 and I think gave her an injection or whatever he did and
11 eased the pain.

12 My mother had this. But it was a chronic
13 thing. Not something that every minute bothered you. I
14 think she was able to -- She couldn't eat certain
15 things.

16 My father, as far as I know, -- Oh, my father
17 had hernia. I don't think he was ever operated on. I
18 remember somewhere here, because I remember I saw the
19 implement. It was called a truss or something. They
20 put that, it pushes on the thing and keeps your
21 intestines inside. He had that.

22 I don't think he ever got very bad, because I
23 don't recall much complaint about it or anything of the
24 sort. So they were reasonably healthy. They lived a
25 quiet, very simple life of retired not well to do

1 people.

2 Q. Your brother, your oldest brother, when was
3 he sent off to the slave labor?

4 A. He was inducted in this labor. I tried to
5 think of when he first got in there. It must have been
6 maybe 41, because he lived -- He was already living
7 there in the early days of the war, right after that
8 part of the offensive when he was returned to Hungary.
9 I am not sure whether Laci went into the military. I
10 don't now how he escaped after that.

11 Q. He was quite a bit older.

12 A. Quite a bit older. I don't know, you know,
13 whether that may have been the reason he didn't go in 39
14 or earlier. Maybe he was too old. Well, when I was 22.
15 In 1942 he was 42. I think I am 20 years younger. I
16 was under that impression. So he may have been in 38,
17 39 or so he may have been over the normal limit of when
18 they drafted people. But I think as things went worse
19 they pushed it and they took people much older.

20 I think Laci, and I don't know whether his
21 boss the lawyer managed to keep him out for a while. At
22 that time he was a representative. He was in Congress,
23 Hungarian Parliament. Whether he could do something
24 like that for him or for whatever reason he got in
25 somewhere in 41, 42 or something my guess is.

1 Q. Did you or anyone in your family hear from
2 him at all after he was sent off?

3 A. Yes. I wasn't home so I had little contact.
4 I knew that he was in. I am sure my family, my sisters
5 knew. I am sure the communicated somehow to my parents
6 and to my sisters and they heard it from my parents or
7 somehow. I don't think too many letters. But somehow
8 his condition, his situation, some news came back from
9 him. I didn't know very much.

10 My sisters told me Laci I is somewhere on the
11 front, things are pretty bad, pretty cold and what not.
12 I think he had a little luck with his boss being in the
13 Army. I don't know what part. I am sure it wasn't all
14 the time, but at some point he got in touch with him. I
15 don't know the details unfortunately.

16 Q. Do you know when he was able to leave and
17 come back?

18 A. Somewhere, yes, I think that was where the
19 lawyer was mostly instrumental toward the end of the
20 war. He managed to get him back alive somehow. There
21 was chaos and I think some way it was possible to get
22 lost somehow. I was told after the war Dr. Meyer helped
23 him get back from the front and get lost. He was in
24 Budapest and managed to hide there or somehow survive
25 the last two, three months of the war there, just the

1 last two, three months.

2 By that time my sisters also -- Clara, the
3 younger sister, somehow got to Budapest. I don't know
4 exactly when. Originally she was at home with my
5 parents.

6 Probably after -- it must have been before.
7 Why wasn't she deported? My parents were deported. She
8 must have been in Budapest around this time. I have to
9 check with her and find out. I don't know the details.

10 All I know is she writes in this letter that
11 we were deported also for a few months. In Budapest
12 they were captured and they were deported. Magda got to
13 Bergen-Belzen, concentration camp for a few months and
14 Bergen-Belsen was liberated and she survived and went
15 home.

16 My younger sister got to Buchenwald. In the
17 last few months of the war, from Budapest they were
18 deported. Probably they were in the ghetto. I don't
19 know the details. But she got to Buchenwald they were
20 telling me years later or some years ago, and things
21 were -- My sister was found dead one day. The people
22 went with the cart to collect the corpses, picked her
23 up, threw her on top of the pile of the corpses and took
24 her to the mass grave there. Somebody noticed she moved
25 before she was buried. They put her down and she

1 survived.

2 That's the way both of them survived. I hear
3 lately, I was told my parents were deported I believe on
4 June 4th from the city where they lived in the ghetto.
5 All the Jews were deported to Auschwitz.

6 Q. In 44?

7 A. In 1944, right. I think June 4th was the
8 date Magda gave me. They were deported and I was many
9 years under the impression they both died in the gas
10 chamber.

11 Just recently, not too many months ago, my
12 sister wrote, I think when I asked her to tell some of
13 the family, she said her father died in the train on the
14 way to Auschwitz. He probably had a heart attack and he
15 died in the train.

16 I can imagine how my mother, who was very --
17 She was going along to Auschwitz and was killed
18 immediately, I think.

19 Q. She was gassed?

20 A. Oh, yes. She was old and they gassed all the
21 old people. I am pretty sure she wasn't selected by
22 Mengele to go to work. At least I am assuming that's
23 what happened. This is the story of my family.

24 Q. Do you know how your parents managed once
25 your elder brother had to leave until the time they were

1 deported?

2 A. I don't know the details. I know my father
3 use to go to the Jewish community in the city and
4 collect my scholarship, my stipend or whatever it was.
5 It wasn't a great deal, but it was helping him.

6 Probably Laci, my brother, either made some
7 arrangement I don't know about, but I think his boss,
8 the lawyer, must have -- He knew our family and knew
9 what our situation was. He may have made some
10 arrangement to allow them to survive, pay the rent. I
11 don't think they had money left. I don't know what they
12 got.

13 The house was mortgaged to the best of my
14 knowledge and they probably had to sell it under such
15 hurried condition.

16 I know the people that lived beyond the
17 backyard, gentile family, was fairly good friends of us.
18 We were a friendly relation. The guy was a woodworker.
19 He had a wood shop and made wheels for carriages and
20 whatnot. They bought the house. They took it.

21 Back in 72 the house was razed and wasn't
22 there any more and they did something with it. I don't
23 think they got much money for that. I don't think they
24 got much money out of the store when they liquidated it.
25 They may have gotten something. I have unfortunately no

1 knowledge what they lived on. But they managed to live
2 somehow.

3 And probably, -- When did Laci get into the
4 concentration camp? Did I have some guidelines on that?
5 In the summer, the fall of 41 I believe Laci was home at
6 that time. It must have been either 42, 43 kind of
7 thing when my older brother got into the slave labor
8 thing, I guess.

9 And in the summer of 44 my parents were
10 deported.

11 Somehow they survived that one year or year
12 and-a-half without my brother being physically there.
13 They may have made some arrangement and I don't know the
14 details of it.

15 Q. So your brother Laci by being in forced labor
16 avoided going to the concentration camp.

17 A. That's right. He managed to, when they came
18 back, you know, when the front was pushed back, and
19 chaos, his boss managed to get him, without being killed
20 or getting into concentration. Somehow he got to
21 Budapest where it was possible for a Jew for awhile to
22 hide or survive without being deported.

23 Many were deported from the ghetto, but many
24 survived. I think it was about seventy-thousand or a
25 Hungarian thousand Jews survived in Budapest out of the

1 250 or three hundred thousand that lived there. Many Of
2 them were saved by Wallenberg and by that time I think
3 Swiss Counsel also set up safe houses, which were not
4 very safe, but at least you had a chance, if you were
5 lucky, to avoid being killed or being deported.

6 Q. Neither of your sisters were able to take
7 advantage of any of those things it sounds like.

8 A. Well, my recollection is that Magda was
9 telling me our older sister I believe was dragged out
10 with her husband, one of the Swedish safe houses and it
11 was a raid. Hungarian Nazi, arrow cross came in and
12 dragged some people out. This is my recollection.

13 I think they were -- Magda and Clara, they
14 were deported. They were captured somehow and I
15 remember she was telling me there was a factory on the
16 outskirts of Budapest that was used for housing captured
17 Jews on their way to being deported or concentration
18 camp, kind of a collection point. It was a brick
19 factory. Both of them were in that brick factory.

20 They were captured somewhere and taken to
21 that place and from that they were deported to German
22 concentration camp. I don't know, unfortunately, the
23 details of that. All I know is the both of them managed
24 to survive somehow.

25 Q. Were they together, do you know?

1 A. No. I think they were captured separately.
2 They went to the camp, I know. There was chaotic
3 situations here. I was at that time already on the way
4 to the slave labor unit where I was already in it.

5 We were located in the wooded area, the
6 ammunition dump where we worked. I would say probably
7 maybe 40 miles southeast of Budapest. Sagit I think is
8 a hundred miles south of Budapest was the city I went to
9 school and they took us halfway to Budapest and that's
10 where we were working.

11 It was daily, by that time it was summer of
12 1944. Budapest was bombed very heavily. You could set
13 your watch if you had one. At noon time I think British
14 planes came from some eastern or southern base, flew
15 over us, went to bomb Budapest.

16 In the evening I think American planes bombed
17 from the other direction. But lots of bombing. Lots of
18 confusion because the front got closer and closer.

19 The Germans, I remember there was a big -- We
20 heard after the war there was a big tank battle, very
21 large tank battle between the Germans and the Russians
22 and the city was close to where we lived. There was a
23 big battle there.

24 Let me tell you quickly something of what I
25 did at this time. We were working in this ammunition

1 dump. Our assignment was the colonel was kind of a Nazi
2 guy, German. His name was a German. He was a German
3 ethnic, Hungarian officer. He got us to work there.
4 There were soldiers working loading ammunition back and
5 forth and shipping them to the front on horse drawn
6 carriages and some trucks.

7 They got us -- We were to build sand dunes or
8 dams between the various buildings where the ammunition
9 was housed. They were afraid if they bombed the
10 buildings and they blow up one of the munition
11 buildings, warehouses, it blows up the next one and the
12 whole thing will go up.

13 They decided we would put in between the
14 buildings huge barriers made of sand. These were big.
15 It had to be I think on the top I think 12 feet tall and
16 on the top they were six feet wide and had forty-five
17 degree slope. So huge amounts of sand. We did this all
18 summer. There were many buildings. There was kind of
19 lagoon on the area and everything was sand. We had to
20 dig the sand out from the water, little trolley cars,
21 railroad tracks were laid down. We had to fill them
22 down and push the sand to the area where the big barrier
23 was built and dump it. The colonel when we arrived for
24 inspection, said who is an engineer here? Needs an
25 engineer. In the military you don't volunteer. He said

1 we have to have an engineer. Somebody pushed me out.
2 Sandor, he is a mathetician, he is close. He is an
3 engineer. I became the engineer.

4 My job was besides working also, but I had to
5 make sure that the sand barriers are the right size. I
6 had to make huge wooden triangles to make sure they are
7 forty-five degree angle on the side and where the top is
8 suppose to be.

9 He wanted to make this natural lake or
10 lagoon, he wanted to make a huge swimming pool. He was
11 telling me what he needs at this end of the pool, the
12 bottom has to be this deep and this ankle, five degree
13 angle. It has to go to that depth and gave a cross
14 section. I had to figure out to make the guys get the
15 sand out that it gets the right shape.

16 Use to make maps. I had little better thing
17 because I was suppose to be the engineer on this. I got
18 two, three guys to help me work with this with the
19 wooden thing that we pounded down into the water with
20 marks on it and figure how deep it is.

21 By that time do we have to take more sand out
22 here? So that's the kind of thing I did. Also worked.
23 That didn't occupy me all the time and I had to also do
24 the work.

25 Q. How many hours a day or week would you work?

1 A. Well, they got us up, we had to get up I
2 don't remember exactly. Probably at dawn in the summer
3 time. Rollcall, we had. The food was pretty good. We
4 got the same food the Hungarian soldiers that was
5 working and that was fantastic.

6 Q. You weren't hungry?

7 A. No hunger. No, we didn't starve there. They
8 fed us reasonably well. I don't know, until dusk.
9 Probably was ten. I don't think they strictly adhered
10 to eight hour workday there. But they didn't work us at
11 night or drove us that heavily. I would say probably a
12 ten hour workday or something.

13 Q. Was this every single day or did you have a
14 day off?

15 A. Sunday we didn't work. Sunday we didn't
16 work. We got reasonable food. I remember the colonel
17 was pretty strict. He insisted we do the work while
18 everybody is working there and he was afraid of
19 sabotage.

20 One day I remember a group of us, three or
21 four people, pushing that little cart out of the water
22 filled with sand, push it to where it was needed, and
23 the cart turned over. It was very bad luck because the
24 colonel just came to see how things are going. He saw
25 the cart being turned over. He yelled this is sabotage.

1 This guy deliberately dumped the sand out. The poor
2 guy, he was younger than I was, he was singled out by
3 the colonel he is responsible and he is going to make an
4 example out of him.

5 That afternoon I think we had to lineup after
6 work kind of thing and he gave us some kind of a speech
7 about sabotage and they took this poor young fellow and
8 they tied his hands behind him, threw a rope over the
9 end of a branch and pushed him off. He didn't die. He
10 was there for awhile. I don't remember half hour or so
11 and told us this is going to happen to everyone of you
12 caught at sabotage.

13 Otherwise, there weren't that many. I
14 remember once. I wasn't use to do shoveling all day
15 long. I remember one time I got some infection somehow.
16 My hand blew up like this and just full of pus and
17 infection. A soldier took me to town to see a doctor
18 about it. He looked at it, it was puffed up both sides,
19 and the says okay we have to what is called lance it.

20 The soldier was a big guy, got me in a chair
21 and he held me down. The doctor stuck a thing into my
22 hand and pus was squirting up. I still have the scar
23 where he did that.

24 Q. Can I see it?

25 A. Yes. It's very little scar.

1 Q. I thought maybe we could see it on the
2 camera.

3 A. No.

4 Q. No pain killers?

5 A. No pain killers. After he squeezed out
6 whatever pus was in it he took along string of gauze and
7 stuffed it in there.

8 I had to go back in a couple days and he took
9 it out and put a new one in.

10 Q. Did you keep working in that condition?

11 A. No. I had to go, when he said, until the
12 infection went away I didn't have to work. A few days.
13 Maybe a week. I didn't have to work.

14 Q. What were the living conditions like?

15 A. I remember the food was okay. We lived in
16 some kind of warehouse. We slept in our sleeping bags.
17 I don't think we had any bunk bed arrangement. I think
18 it was a huge hall. Some kind of empty warehouse where
19 we were sleeping.

20 One or two rooms. I think we were something
21 like 150 of us, some kids I use to go to school with,
22 and some kids from that vicinity. Some older men.

23 By older men I mean something like 30 or 40
24 years old perhaps. I don't think anybody was older than
25 that. A couple kids younger than us. Between 18 and 40

1 I think was the age limit. It was reasonably good.

2 I can't really say we were very badly treated
3 and mishandled. It's okay. The war is getting an end.
4 That didn't happen. The front got too close.

5 They ordered us out and they marched us out
6 of the camp and we heard gun fire not too distant, not
7 too great distance from the camp. We marched for awhile
8 and something came because they brought us back.

9 A week or two later, I don't know exactly,
10 early in October, 1944 there was another order to leave
11 the camp. This time it was final.

12 We saw on the road many people with their
13 carts and belongings fleeing the front. Civilian women,
14 children, old men. They were fleeing from a head of the
15 front. They marched us past them, with them. We
16 crossed the Danube. I don't remember exactly what town.
17 Somewhere we crossed the Danube going west.

18 On the other side of the Danube, I know it
19 was October 15th we were standing there, our group, and
20 we were told by the guards the war is over. You are
21 free to go home.

22 We will set the papers up, sign the papers,
23 discharge papers and in the afternoon you are free to go
24 home. An hour or two hours later. They were very
25 friendly. They called us mister suddenly. Very

1 friendly, the guys.

2 An hour or two later, very short time later,
3 suddenly everything changed. That's when there was a
4 putsch there. That government got into power that
5 morning, I think it was October 15, 1944. Solishe was
6 the name leader and became the prime minister and
7 everything went back to the old system. They were kind
8 of rough with us. The march continued. I think we were
9 on this march probably maybe a couple weeks or so.

10 Q. This party, Arrow Cross?

11 A. Yes. They were Hungarian. They were very
12 small minority in the early thirties or mid thirties.
13 They became bigger and more powerful as it went on. I
14 think even they were still a minority even then. The
15 Germans forced the regent to turn power over to this
16 party.

17 Q. It was a Nazi government.

18 A. Yeah, it's a Nazi government. They are the
19 same as Nazi government in Germany. Except these guys
20 were more vicious than the Germans. Hungarian many of
21 them were anti-semitic.

22 I remember on the march they led us toward
23 the Austrian border. Later we found at this time
24 many groups like ours, slave labor groups, were marched
25 on the same road to be turned over to the Germans. They

1 kept us a part so that you don't see other groups. Then
2 you possibly would have rebelled or something. But we
3 didn't know what was going on.

4 We are marching and didn't see any other
5 groups marching. We saw civilians fleeing.

6 On the Hungarian side of the Danube I don't
7 recall seeing fleeing civilians either. We marched
8 through little towns. They stopped us in the evening in
9 some school buildings or somewhere we slept overnight,
10 or some barns or some kind of house. I don't remember
11 exactly where.

12 The next day we marched again with our
13 luggage. It was a pretty forced march.

14 Q. Were there many dead along the way?

15 A. Yes. Less and less. As things went on the
16 organization got poorer and poorer. We had less and
17 less to eat. Even in the beginning we didn't get the
18 normal food that we use to get in the camp. It got less
19 and less.

20 We still had some people had some hidden
21 valuable, tried to buy food from the peasants in the
22 villages, you know, the citizens.

23 They charged, I don't know a hundred dollars
24 for a loaf of bread or a drink. They gave you a jar of
25 cherries or jam. It was pretty difficult by that time.

1 Q. Did you feel like the local peasants were
2 supportive of you?

3 A. They were not. They began the speeches, you
4 know. We asked the guards where are you taking us?
5 Where are you taking us? We are being taken to a family
6 camp near Vienna where our families are already there
7 and we are going to be united with our families and wait
8 out the end of the war there.

9 During the whole summer we were convinced our
10 families are deported. If you try to escape you will be
11 shot on sight. If you don't, you go and you will be
12 with your family. We know something isn't right here.
13 But couldn't figure out what it was and should we try to
14 escape? We could have escaped. Supervision was kind of
15 lax at night. They weren't watching us. We could have
16 walked out of the place and disappeared in the woods or
17 somewhere. We didn't know. The debate was -- No, we
18 better go and be with our families.

19 Q. Did any one try to escape along the way?

20 A. I know two guys. I was sleeping there. Two
21 guys disappeared one night. There was roll call it was
22 found and big fuss was made out of it but nothing else.
23 I don't know what happened, whether they survived or
24 not.

25 Q. Nobody punished the rest of you because of

1 this?

2 A. No. By this time things were kind of lax and
3 chaotic.

4 Q. Did you have any news about what was going on
5 in the rest of Europe or how the war was going?

6 A. No. We knew the war was, you know, the front
7 was following us. I don't think it got across that part
8 of the country. There was still fighting on the other
9 side of the Danube, the eastern part. We were in the
10 western front. There was no war or front immediately.
11 We know we are being evacuated because the war is being
12 lost. We knew this is close to the end.

13 Q. This is October, you say?

14 A. This is October.

15 Q. It's cold now.

16 A. Very cold. That's right, very cold. We
17 finally arrive at the border. I think we stayed there
18 for a day or two, as I recall. I recall some kind of
19 school area where we were. We saw other groups like
20 ours.

21 One day we were lined up and marched to the
22 actual border. This is the border town and we were
23 turned over to Germans.

24 Then we knew the moment they took hold of us
25 that something isn't kosher here.

1 Q. How did you know?

2 A. They were teenagers, looked to us like kids
3 with rifles and they were beating us. They were running
4 us from the border to the railroad station two miles
5 away or three miles away. You had to run and they were
6 beating. This was a different treatment. We weren't
7 beaten by the Hungarians but here we were. We were not
8 allowed to speak.

9 Somehow the whole attitude of the guards
10 changed very drastically. We knew something was wrong.

11 We got to the railroad station. We had a tin
12 can and gave us a ladle of soup and small piece of
13 bread, and packed us into box cars.

14 Q. Did you speak or understand German at that
15 time?

16 A. Very little. In high school German is the
17 foreign language they taught in Hungarian, but how much
18 do you learn in a school? But a few words. Some words
19 we knew what it meant.

20 Q. So you understood the orders being given?

21 A. Yes. The orders were understood. They were
22 translated to us. But speeches we didn't understand.
23 They made some speeches sometimes in the camp the
24 commandant.

25 They packed us in the train and it was very

1 crowded. We had our sleeping bags and luggage, back
2 packs with us with clothing. Some people had some food
3 and managed. I didn't have much clothing.

4 On the march one of the fellows, well to do
5 fellows, had extra clothing. He gave away some of it.

6 I got from him a good pair of shoes there,
7 good pair of letter shoes, boot kind of things and
8 jacket. It was too large for me. Sheepskin lined
9 jacket, a warm jacket. This guy his name is Steve
10 Abely. He was a violinist. He was a student. He was
11 violinist in the old days. He survived, came to the
12 United States. He was a member of the Cleveland
13 Symphony for years. A couple times I was in touch in
14 the early days. I don't know whether he is still alive.
15 Probably retired if he is. He was a fantastic, very
16 good violinist. He gave me two items of clothing. I
17 think that's why I survived. Without that I would not
18 be here today.

19 Q. You would have frozen?

20 A. In the German concentration camp. The lack
21 of shoes particularly. We were thirst in the train and
22 figured the ride will take maybe an hour, hour
23 and-a-half because Vienna is close to the border.

24 Q. Did you know where you were going?

25 A. We were going to the family camp in Vienna.

1 Q. You still believed this?

2 A. Yeah. We didn't know any other thing. The
3 train was going all afternoon, all night and we were
4 thirsty. Sometime the train stopped during the night at
5 someplaces. We couldn't lookout. It was probably some
6 stations, you know. Maybe between the cracks somebody
7 could have.

8 Q. It was a boxcar?

9 A. A boxcar, right. You could hear on the whole
10 train, there was several thousand prisoners. They were
11 banging on the walls, asking for water. Wasser, Wasser.
12 No response. The train kept going on again. Stopped
13 and went. The next day, at noon time. We were
14 extremely thirst.

15 Q. Did you have any bathroom facilities?

16 A. No.

17 Q. You had to go?

18 A. You couldn't sit down. You were crammed in
19 like herrings.

20 The train makes another stop and they open up
21 the boxcar and order everybody out. We get out we see
22 that we are at a place called Dachau. You can't imagine
23 how frightened we were. We never heard about Auschwitz,
24 but we knew about Dachau. That was the most frightfull
25 place on earth as far as we knew, and to find ourselves

1 this, suddenly nobody was thirsty. They had to drag us
2 mostly physically out of the boxcars. Prisoners were
3 there from the camp. We saw people with the stripes.

4 Q. They had dogs, too?

5 A. No, I don't recall dogs. Not at Dachau I
6 don't recall any dogs. They may have been there, but
7 they didn't make a big impression so I don't remember
8 it.

9 Q. Do you know if everybody in the box car
10 survived the trip?

11 A. I beg your pardon.

12 Q. Did everybody in the boxcar survive the trip?

13 A. I don't recall anybody dying in the box car,
14 but there may have been in some other box car they
15 didn't. We were kind of young people. We came from --
16 pretty normal. We were chubby. I wasn't about to die
17 then. I was just thirsty and that was it.

18 Q. Do you know if you were prisoners from the
19 slave labor with other family in your trip?

20 A. My understanding was, and it seemed to me
21 also true that these were all Hungarian slave labor
22 groups that were turned over to the Germans at this time
23 to work, not to be exterminated. They were to work in
24 German concentration camp. We got into this work type
25 of camp.

1 Dachau, at this time to the best of my
2 knowledge was kind of a distribution center. I don't
3 think crematory or gas chambers were there at this time.
4 I have no knowledge about it. But the groups of
5 thousands of prisoners were coming in day after day.
6 They distributed them to various work type satellite
7 camps in the Dachau main camp and neighboring cities.

8 We were inducted into the camp, which was
9 painful thing. We were told not to eat the snow. There
10 was snow on the ground. I think it was the beginning of
11 November or something. It was pretty cold. We were
12 warned. We were very thirsty. Don't touch the snow
13 because you get sick from it. We ate the snow anyway.
14 We didn't care, we were so thirsty. We were handled by
15 prisoners, not by Germans.

16 We were told to stand here. Eventually we
17 were herded into a big hall, we were ordered to undress.

18 There was a huge pile of clothing in the
19 middle of the huge hall, tall building. We had to throw
20 our clothing. They allowed us to keep our shoes. They
21 didn't have those wooden sandals that was the standard
22 footwear they gave to prisoners. So they told us to
23 keep our shoes and our papers and any valuable, anything
24 you had you had to give them. The prisoner was standing
25 there with a razor, a couple were standing with a razor

1 they shaved, or scissored or shaved all the hair off
2 your body everywhere.

3 By the time they got through you were
4 bleeding pretty much in all places. You were shoved to
5 the next station, another prisoner was there with a
6 bucket and mop and some disinfectant fluid. Whatever it
7 was, it was burning like heck on raw skin.

8 And you went to another room where you had to
9 turn your paper over. Another big hall where prisoners
10 were sitting behind a huge table and you had to walk up
11 to one of them, turnover the paper and he put something
12 in a book. He wrote, he registered you and you were
13 given a piece of cloth with a number on it. They sewed
14 this thing to our prisoner's garb. That was your
15 number.

16 Also I don't know, red triangle, yellow and I
17 don't remember. Some class of prisoners. I think it
18 said, one guy I talked to, the red mark, I don't recall
19 whether it was red or yellow or whatever, but it was
20 some marking on our clothing.

21 Q. Did you have yellow triangle for being
22 Jewish?

23 A. I think so. I think the red was political
24 prisoner. I think yellow was from being Jewish.

25 Q. The jacket, did you give up the warm coat?

1 A. No. As we go out, we go to another room and
2 were thrown prisoners garb and there was no jacket given
3 to us. We were told on the way out, we came through the
4 same hall, we were told to go to the pile of clothing
5 and pick a jacket. Everybody was told to pick a jacket.

6 As I walk in I see that same coat and I
7 grabbed it. I walk out of this place with a good pair
8 of shoes and that warm jacket.

9 I think that was the luckiest thing that
10 happened to me at that time.

11 Pretty soon we were -- We didn't stay there
12 very long in the distribution center. We stayed there
13 that night. They took us to some barracks. Block, the
14 elder of the block, older prisoners gave us a speech.
15 You have to obey everything and if you don't do this
16 there is punishment.

17 We got something to eat, some soup maybe and
18 piece of bread. We were by that time, we surmised that
19 food is going to be very little in this place. It would
20 be a good idea maybe to save some, a piece of bread, and
21 not eat it in the evening. I don't think I was the only
22 one. Many of us probably thought the same thing. And
23 put it under the straw thing there in the evening that
24 we were sleeping on.

25 The next morning they wake us up and order

1 everybody out of the block, the barracks. There was
2 fountain, some water and we try to wash. We did. We
3 come back. I don't think we didn't have pajamas. We
4 were sleeping in the clothing we had. We looked for the
5 food. Nobody could find the bread we saved from last
6 night. Later we found the older prisoners, they knew
7 the ones tried to save some food so they go through the
8 whole straw thing and collect all the food that was left
9 there.

10 So we learned the first night you have to be
11 kind of careful here. You can't trust each other. But
12 we didn't stay there very long.

13 Q. This is a good place to stop. Could you tell
14 me about the picture?

15 A. This picture is part of the school group
16 picture. I don't know the person sitting in the
17 background, who it is, unless I look at the whole
18 picture.

19 On the right is me, myself. Probably around
20 six years old. The young girl sitting next to me I seem
21 to recognize her. I remember her name is Lowy. Her
22 name is Dutti. And myself. I don't recall. I think
23 it's a group picture and not part of some theater
24 performance.

25 Q. I remember you said you had a nickname. What

1 is your nickname?

2 A. My nickname is Sanyi. Hungarian my first
3 name is Sandor. It's spelled S-a-n-d-o-r. The nickname
4 of Sanyi, Sanyi. My sisters call me that. That was my
5 nickname.

6 Although my friends usually, we also have
7 other nicknames for each other of our own invention. We
8 called each other something. Since my name is Bauer,
9 somehow they got the nickname Booki. I was known as
10 Booki among our friends usually.

11 Q. And this picture?

12 A. This picture again part of another small
13 group picture. Four of us are standing next to some
14 kind of wire fence. There's a couple girls and couple
15 guys or maybe one girl and three guys. This is from our
16 teenage time. It is the late thirties or mid thirties.

17 By this time I was a student in Budapest and
18 teacher seminary. That was the cap, the uniform all the
19 students wore.

20 I don't know the exact date, but I would
21 guess it was maybe 1937 or 38 when this picture was
22 taken.

23 All the other people in the group are
24 teenagers there, various other schools. I was the only
25 one from our town that went at this time to this school.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. There was all kind of mischief in this place.

3 Q. Who are these people?

4 A. This is a group picture from the porch of the
5 dormitory building where we lived as students in the
6 teacher seminary in Budapest from 1936 to 1941.
7 Graduation was a five year course. You go there for
8 five years.

9 This may have been, I am guessing, probably
10 may have been taken in 1940 I would say. I don't
11 remember the full name of everybody there.

12 On the left leaning against the rail is Laci
13 Berenberger. In the back is Nick Hoffman, my friend
14 with whom up to his death in the concentration camp we
15 were together.

16 From this school through college we use to
17 room together. I am the smallest one there. That's me,
18 the second from left in the first row.

19 The third next to me is fellow called Sandor
20 Levi. He was a very bright student. He came from an
21 orthodox family and was very good with Hebrew kind of
22 things.

23 In the back is a fellow called Rosenthal. I
24 don't recall what -- I don't remember his first name
25 anymore. I remember his last name. He was Rosenthal.

1 I don't remember the name of the last guy. I remember
2 the face. Somehow his name escaped me.

3 This is from our high school, teenage years.
4 We were pretty happy there, away from home, lots of
5 freedom and smoked a lot. Learned to smoke
6 unfortunately in this place. Took me a long time to
7 give it up.

8 This is a group picture from my grammar
9 school, Jewish grammar school, parochial school in
10 Hungary. Komadi. This is my younger sister's class.
11 My younger sister is the little chubby girl on the very
12 left side of the picture, from the front, the third row
13 on the left. She is four years younger than I am. She
14 is. I don't know what the picture says.

15 Q. Can you point?

16 THE WITNESS: Let me see. That girl. I
17 recall some of the faces. The little guy up on top,
18 this one, he was the youngest son of the religious
19 leader of the group. I don't remember some of the
20 faces. Some of them look familiar. I don't remember
21 the names. It wasn't my class. This is about four
22 years younger than I am.

23 Q. How old do you think she might have been
24 there?

25 A. Clara, I think, I don't know. This was

1 probably the mid thirties. Clara is probably maybe
2 second grade or something. She might be about seven
3 years old. She was born in 26. Maybe 33, 34 in there.
4 I don't know whether there is a date marked on the back
5 of the pictures. I don't remember. Just to see what
6 the Jewish group looked like in those days in Hungary.

7 Two teachers. I don't remember the names.
8 That was the teacher that replaced the man, the one that
9 replaced my teacher who retired a few years before that.

10 I can go ahead with it? Apparently a group
11 picture of my younger sister, who is again on the left.
12 I may point. This is her. I think this is a year or
13 two later than the previous picture was taken. They are
14 holding flowers. There may have been some kind of
15 performance associated with this at school.

16 I remember the two girls I believe on the
17 right, on the opposite side, I think they are sisters.

18 If I am not mistaken they had a third sister
19 who was more closer to my age. I think that is the
20 sister that later managed to get to Israel. She gave my
21 older sister the picture. I think their sister that
22 kept that picture and gave it to my sister.

23 This is a picture of my oldest sister and her
24 husband. I would guess this may have been from around
25 1938, 39. She was an extremely kind woman. Miklos is

1 her husband's name. They were very nice to me,
2 particularly my older sister was always trying to
3 protect me. I am glad I got at least this picture so I
4 remember what she looked like.

5 Q. What was his last name?

6 A. What was Miklos' last name? I am sorry
7 somehow at this point, the name escapes me.

8 Q. Would this be maybe the apartment in
9 Budapest?

10 A. It probably is the apartment they lived in.
11 It's not a very clear picture. I don't have very good
12 recollection. I didn't live there. I visited with
13 them. This must be their apartment I would guess.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. You don't see very much of it.

16 My youngest after the war. I think it's mid
17 50s. 56, I believe it said. It is taken in Romania. I
18 am not familiar with the city. In the city there is
19 lots of snow, I see. Somewhere in Transsylvania, near
20 the city where they lived at this time. I can't tell
21 much about it and I don't remember. I didn't make a
22 note of it when she sent it to me.

23 That is my younger sister after the war.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. That's my older sister, surviving older

1 sister who lives today. This is a somewhat touched up
2 picture of her. I had another picture they sent from
3 Romania. They touch it up so badly. This is touched up
4 to look natural. She was a very good looking woman,
5 well dressed by Romanian standards. She is reasonably
6 well dressed. This was taken in 1956. She gives an
7 actual date.

8 Q. About how old do you think she was?

9 A. Magda is I believe nine years older than I
10 am. So in 1956 I was 34 years old and she was about 43
11 years old at that time.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. This picture was taken, you can see the house
14 behind them, the apartment building where my younger
15 sister lived then with her husband.

16 On the left is her husband. This one, his
17 name is Miklos Obdelean. This is my sister Clara. This
18 is her little new born son Garbi. Who may have been a
19 couple years old there or three. This is my sister
20 Magda. That is my, one of my surviving brother. The
21 oldest of the seven siblings, Laci, or Laszlo. He looks
22 kind of sad there. He was a bachelor all his life. He
23 came to visit us once and spent a month here with us.

24 In 1982 I believe or so before his death.

25 You can see it's primitive circumstances. I

1 don't remember now what Miklos was doing, what his
2 profession was. I know that my younger sister Clara at
3 that time had to supplement their income, whatever they
4 got. She was mounting photographs for people. She
5 framed and mounted photographs and she made some money
6 on that basis.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. This picture was taken in 1947. I was a
9 student at that time in Munich. I am not sure where
10 this is taken. We use to go out on picnics, on trips
11 with the kids from the various area in Bavaria. Very
12 beautiful country there. Nothing in particular about
13 this picture that I can recall. At this time way I
14 looked after the war in 1947. Returned to normal pretty
15 much.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. This is a picture of my cousin that lives,
18 survived in Budapest, became a pretty well established
19 person there during the communist's regime and even
20 today he still lives there. These are his two
21 grandchildren.

22 His father and my mother were brothers and
23 sisters. He went to the same school. The way I got to
24 the teachers, his name is Teborg Freikind, Tibbi for
25 short. He went to the teachers college. He is four

1 years older than I am. And gave us the idea to follow
2 and go do the same thing.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. This is a picture of my sister's son Gabbi,
5 that little baby. He grew up. I think he is in his
6 late thirties today. I am not sure when this picture
7 was taken. I think maybe 74 or something or maybe
8 later. Anyway he is a violinist. At this point he
9 formed a little quartet. I don't know what they were
10 playing. This is his quartet.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Before we talk about this picture, the
13 previous picture, I was mistaken, the date wasn't 74.
14 It was taken in 1980, four guys playing the quartet.
15 This is my nephew. I can't recall the actual proper
16 word for the relation.

17 Coming to this picture, this was my older
18 sister and her husband after she got to Israel. This
19 was taken in 1974 it says on the back. Her husband is a
20 Romanian guy, terrific sense of humor. He made a good
21 living at a house painter in Israel.

22 My sister naturally loved him and was pretty
23 sad when he passed away. I think sometime in maybe 84
24 or something like that, around that time the died.

25 Q. Do you remember his last name?

1 A. Yes. Schwartzberger. My sister still goes
2 under Magda Schwartzberger in Israel. I don't know they
3 married the other guy, they lived together. They
4 traveled together, a couple years after her husband
5 died. She is a widow. I think they live in the same
6 apartment.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. This is a picture again of my older sister
9 who lives in Israel with her husband or companion at
10 least, whose name I know only his first name. Joseph.
11 Josi for short. I believe he is also Romanian
12 background. Old friend of my sister and her husband.
13 After her husband died I think they became more
14 friendly. They travel together, I know. I am not sure
15 whether they are married or not. May not be.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. This is pretty bad picture of my sister in
18 Romania. She is sick, diabetes is bothering her.
19 Mostly I think things related to diabetes was bothering
20 her. She is complaining she can't walk very well.

21 I think this is a worse picture than she
22 normally looks like. Roughly she is in this kind of
23 condition nowadays. This was taken in 1986. 93, I am
24 sorry. 1993. Just a couple years old. I think I have
25 some better pictures of her recently.

1 Q. Looks like it's her apartment?

2 A. That's her apartment. She has a nice little
3 apartment. She is considering trying to buy it if she
4 can because otherwise she wants to leave it to her son.

5 That is all I can say about Clara. She
6 writes to me once in a while. We received a letter from
7 her three days ago. She is more or less okay, except
8 problems that come with age and diabetes.

9 Q. This is another picture.

10 A. Well, this is a picture that was taken
11 probably not more than about three months after the
12 liberation from the concentration camp after I got out
13 and was discharged from the hospital.

14 At the time of liberation I had typhus. I
15 couldn't walk. They found me unconscious somewhere in
16 the snow after the liberation. I got in the hospital
17 and I survived it. About three months after I got into
18 a displaced person camp and this is the identity paper
19 that identified me as a member of the displaced person
20 camp and survival of the Dachau concentration camp.

21 This thing here is not a decoration. It
22 looks like something, a ribbon that holds the picture in
23 place.

24 Not much else to say about it. I am just
25 about fully recovered from the typhus by this time.

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That's about it.

(Interview number 1 is concluded)