

I'm Sandra Bendayan. I'm here interviewing Endre Korosi. This is part two of this interview. Today is the 18th of July, 1995. And the interview is being done for the Holocaust Oral History Project. And John Grant is our producer.

To start with, I know you said you wanted to make a correction. So why don't you do that?

Yes. When I made the first interview, I think I made some mistake about my statement. One time, I told that the Germans occupied Hungary 19 of April, 1944. But when I read my mother dated postcards what I received in Russia, suddenly, I find out something must be wrong, because two, three, or four days later, the occupation, she cannot write it to me.

And when I went home, I asked my friend who was in Hungary, which was deported from Hungary, tell me, what is wrong here? And she told me, the German occupied Hungary March of 19, not April 19.

OK.

And I want to be as correct as I could be. At the end, not so much difference. But I want to be correct there.

Well, thank you. Thank you for the correction. So it was March 19, 1944.

March 19, 1944, not April--

OK.

--1944.

I wanted to ask you, when you were in the labor camps in Russia, you said that often you would try to find some shelter at night with the Russian peasants. And I was wondering if you could describe the kind of homes those Russian peasants had.

You know that the people was very poor. This was very poor. And I want to mention that when I was in Kyiv, a friend of mine-- because the labor camp workers in my camp came from different parts of the Hungary. And some came from the used to be Czechoslovakia, who speak Slavic language. And they understand and speak a little bit Russian.

And one of my friend, I was a very right opera. And one of my friend acquainted is opera singer. That time, said, maybe she was a Jew, but hiding. And she invited us, two of us. And we went to her home in Kyiv. But it was a table, one chairs, and beds.

But in the villages, when I was in Russia, mostly in White Russia, was no table, was no chair, was a bench which you cannot move it. And there were. And they sleep not in bed, but they have a big oven, you know, where they bake the bread. The oven was in place and they sleep over there. They are very poor.

But I want to tell you maybe my see not exactly correct, because when I came home to Hungary during the war, almost end of the war, our beautiful city, Budapest, was the same junk what I saw in Russia.

Maybe this is that the war made them so poor. Because the Germans took everything what they can. They came around to feed the soldiers and took everything there. The people was very poor.

Did their home--

But I don't know that the peacetime how they live.

Did their homes have a dirt floor or a wood floor?

No, dirt floor. Not in Kyiv, because it was a few-story building. But on the villages, had dirt floor. Dirt floors.

And how many rooms, more than one room?

Oh, usually, it's funny. But when I was in the White Russia was maybe two rooms-- one room where the people live, and the entrance room, where the animal lived. They have a cow or something. And that was that. And we have to go through that room to the living room.

Did those people, the villagers, give you food too?

The villagers?

Did they give you any food when you would stay with them?

No, no. In White Russia, the people was very good, very good. We have to beg it. And they give me a potato sometimes, a egg or something. And that way, we can survive. Because the first three or four months, when we went out to Russia, we almost get almost nothing from the military, because everybody escape, escape, and run, and run.

And I think I mentioned in the first interview, in that running, mostly, we get in the morning some food. And later, have no more place to stop. And evening, we tried to find some shelters again.

Well, where we left off before was your group was asked for 40 volunteers.

Yes.

OK. So could you begin there?

I was the first all the time when they asked volunteers. I don't know why, but I want to escape from the original group, because the guard, what I want to say, like a sheriff, a prison holder, they keep us like a prisoner. And it was terrible.

But we went somewhere else, a small group, only three or four these guys whom with us. And when they are together, 20 or 15, they have more fear, more power than just three or four.

When they were three or four, they may be afraid, because I don't know, because we were Jews or random. The partisan, all them, like us. The Russian partisan, this is a serial people who fight against a civilian, against the German.

So that they felt-- they thought the Jews would be sympathetic with their kind?

Yes, yes, yes. Among them was tremendous Jews who cannot escape that, became partisans. This was not a easy life, because have to live in the forest. And sometimes, days and days don't have any food or shelter. It was a hard job. But they maybe can survive.

So the 40 volunteers and only three or four guards, where did you go?

Yes, yes. We went down Ryki, where our job was reload wagons, train wagons, they came there for water, munition, and everything, and put it to the warehouses for the military. And we were there about, I don't remember, two months or six weeks, or eight weeks. I don't know.

And we went around end of February, I think so. Yes. We went, I think, the end of November to Ryki. And then sent at end of February-- you know, it was so long time. I don't exactly know the date. We went to Biala Podlaska.

I think it was sometimes in Russia-- in Poland, but Russian occupied Poland so many times, half of Poland. And it was, I think, the original Poland was on that. It was a beautiful place, a big forest.

And we went there, as our job was a munition yard. Was hundreds of hundreds of dancers and every kind of munition what we need for the military. And we have to take the munition from the train, and dump it over there, and keep it there.

And the military came to take something according what they ordered. And we were 40 of them. And you know, a smaller group became very good friend, everyone.

Anyway, we worked there, I'd say, couple few months there. And about a couple hundred yards from our munition dump was, on other side of the road, a German fuel station. They came over there to get gasoline or petrol for the tank for the automobile.

And we became very friendly with the premise, not the SS. It was a Wehrmacht. And I don't know this. And they had radio. And every day, we heard what's happened around the world, because they can. And they one time came, I know better than I told you before, it was March 19. They came us. And the German occupied Hungary.

By this time, did you understand German and speak German?

No. I learned in the school German. And a little bit forget, but now, it's completely forget when I pick up a little English. But when I escaped from Hungary, I was in Vienna for six or seven weeks. This came back. And nobody can sell me. But I don't say a German word from that time. I just learned what I learned in the school.

Anyway, they came. German occupied Hungary. Everybody was upset and angry, even the guard, as had three, four, or five guards who with us. And oh, this is the dirty thing. They know that we are close to the partisans.

And let's go to the partisans. Let's go to the partisan, escaping. But we didn't go because just was not an easy life and not safe, because sometimes, the whole partisan group was destroyed by the German, because they fight all the time. Anyway, we stayed there.

How were you being treated? How were your guards treating you in this group of 40? Were the guards treating you well?

No, nobody went away.

But did the guards treat you well? Did they give you enough food to eat? And they didn't beat?

No, that time went and the real hungry was until end of May 1943 or the first part of June, when we went to Kyiv. When we went to Kyiv, from that time, we had food-- not plenty, but it was enough. But the first half of 1942 and 1943, the first half-year was terrible. We didn't get the food. But from 1943 June, when I went to the automobile repair company, they gave us enough food, yes.

OK.

And we don't have to fight for the food. Anyway, a few days or weeks later, they find out, the guard, the German, told us, nothing happened in Hungary. Just go like the Jews. Nothing else. The Hungarian people don't suffer. And they guards came to us, became the same as before. But they don't became surround, because they were four or five. But we can feel the difference.

And that time, I received sometimes on, later, end of April, 13th or maybe sometimes in the 1st of May, my mother's postcard. And you know, it was full with worry. It was full with worry, my family and everybody. They don't know what will be done next. But they were worried.

They wrote in this card my sister and brother-in-law. They lived in a village, where they farmer. And they brought already to NyÁregyhÁza into the ghetto who has the daughter who survived. And I read in her postcard.

And a couple weeks later, if I remember well, the someone of our group get some postcards from the family. And the address was Walzen. We don't know what Walzen is, where is it. But somehow, with the Germans or somebody figured it out, maybe in Switzerland.

Oh, we say, good place. We was happy. Oh, maybe not so dangerous. But most of the people died already. And almost every one of us wrote a letter to my family on this.

And later, we find out the dirty Germans want to find out somebody has a hidden family somewhere, maybe in Hungary or somewhere, and catch him. And that's why that reason they sent that-- they get the postcard, just read-- wrote your family. And they will get the answer. That was a dirty trick.

Yes.

And around middle of June, I think so, was other breakthrough in the line, the Russian breakthrough. It was close to us. And it was a panic among the Germans, I mean, the Hungarians. And sent us 100 horse-drawn carriages.

We take as many munitions as we can to escape with that. We go west. So we escaped from the Russian. And we went, I think, three days and night. We don't stop. And it was not a big deal, because we don't have to walk. But our eyes was all hurt with the sand and the sleepless.

And we can stop the first time in east part of Warsaw. Warsaw is two side of the Vistula. And the eastern side of Warsaw called Praga. And we stopped there. And we were there about two, or three days, or four days, I don't remember exactly.

And the Russian was there, just 10, 15 miles from us. And they stopped there. And all time, big speakers, mostly in evening and night, talk to the Polish people, rise up. Rise up. We are here. And fear the German. And we have munition, plenty. And they will go to that. And that Polish people was not-- they was alone. But we were against the Germans.

How were you able to give it to them? Didn't--

You know what, first of all, the guard was sleepy and don't care for it, because they were too tired anyway. And we can do what we want. And after about four days-- and I want to tell you that about four or five guys, they all the time came that Polish people escape. Come to us, come to us, come to us.

And about four or five people who I know, maybe more, they went to the Polish partisan, and about a month later, some of came back to us-- some died. And they said how trouble they had with that, because Germans hard to fight.

And we went from there about, I don't remember exactly, 60-70 miles from there. It was really Poland. Poland, [PLACE NAME] and Stanowice, two villages. One we went for-- I don't know where we went for the first time and the second time.

And we were there mostly in bakeries. A bakery made bread for the military. And we were there about 10 days. And the fight went on in Warsaw between Germans and the Polish people. And about then, truck-- with every truck, two or three Jews went, send me all back to Warsaw.

They have some there warehouses to empty the weapons and save some merchandise. And we went to Warsaw, but the outskirt of Warsaw, were the Polish-- the German military police, they don't let you go as far there. And came with us with a officer too.

And the drivers was a original soldiers, not the Hungarian soldier. But when we went to the outskirt of Warsaw, the officer and the drivers stepped down and made one or two came with us. And the Jewish driver who can drive the truck drive that truck. Let you drive, going. But the German soldiers don't let you go and bring them home, they went back too.

And around the end of September, probably June, the Russian Army stayed there, close to Warsaw, until '45 January. Don't go farther. And that's why so many Polish people died while they wait.

About two weeks or three weeks, a big fine. And we went Warsaw, just outskirts, we just smelled the dead bodies smell. They have no chance to buried it. And the Germans who can find the Polish, killed them, shoot them. And nobody collect them.

Anyway, around the end of September, oh, we are go home. And we went on the train. It was a long, long train. But only about 200 of us, because we were 40 people somewhere Ryki or Biala Podlaska.

But we left that place. We went back to the original, because they were not far to us. They made some other job. Anyway, the whole group was together. And with the big train, about four or five cattle train was occupied by us. Oh, we will go home. We tried to save bread, some food, what we can. If you find some Jews, the Jews, we'll throw it them.

So you were released now to go home from your labor? Your labor was over?

Not really, not that was over, but go for labor camp to Hungary.

I see.

Not, not was over, not over the labor camp, was leave the Poland and go to Hungary for labor camp. Because they pulled-- the Russian chased all the time, all the time. And that time, we didn't know that, just I know it later, that time in September, even that part of Hungary, where I was living, I was born, but I was occupied by the Russians.

We didn't know that one. They leave that part for the Germans and went around the Balkan and certain-- circled the Germans. And part of Hungary was occupied already end of September. But we didn't know that one.

Did you know about the concentration camps for Jews at that point?

We heard there was so many concentration camp. And we didn't know if we will find it. But we will get ready with food. If you find, we have plenty of food that time. And we give some. And we went. It doesn't take too long to go from Poland to-- we went there around 1 and 1/2 or two days.

And our train stopped. Vienna has an outskirts they called Wiener Neustadt. It's a smaller city. We went in. Our train just stopped in the open field. And all four cars was across with the camp. And oh, this is a Jewish camp.

And we saw it. The older people was nicely, when they go to the synagogue, nicely dressed, sat around married woman, around the fence. And the kids about eight, 10, 12 jumped the fence and come up for us. We could take them home.

And how is food? Oh, is no problem at all. And we had, where is your parents? And all the younger adult went to clean up around the trail rain, take the weed off, and clean it up, and that. This was just some occupation, not this time, but other time.

Oh, we were happy. And the kids went back. And we stayed there about 15, 20 minutes, I don't know. Well, maybe the train operator want to make a courtesy for us or whatever. We never figured out what happened. Anyway.

Did you know about the gas chambers or anything at that point?

No, nothing. No, nothing. We thought, everybody's here, our family, that way. But they said, a half a year, when we find out this is a camp. But the Germans showed the Red Cross, and the Swedes, and other neutral nations.

Did you ever find out the name of that camp?

That was Wiener Neustadt there.

Oh, that was its name.

I don't know. Maybe they have a special name. I don't know. But it was outskirts at Wiener Neustadt. It was in a field.

A show camp?

Yeah, yeah. Not in the city, just the territory of Wiener Neustadt. And after that stop, we went back to Hungary. Next day, we arrived a place I just mentioned, to city name was in Hungary.

But we came to bigger city. One name was Kecskemét, the other was Szeged. As this train stopped close to Szeged. And in the open field, and for a rush, come out, come out. And we unloaded the train for a couple of-- four or five cattle carriage.

And we went back to Szeged walk to Szeged. We didn't know what is the reason. But the next day, we went yet again the train and went to back to Kecskemét. They don't know before where we were work.

But when we went back to Kecskemét, we find out that time, when the train stopped there, it was about noontime, I don't know, that morning, just a small group of Russian soldiers with the 30 or 40 soldiers with the machine gun, and went to Kecskemét.

And all the military officers thought, here is the Russian offensive. But no. Just a few. But they explode all the warehouses, because they don't want that the Russians get it.

And in Hungary, was only one big airfield in Kecskemét, where they, at that time, we got the giant German airplane. They can carry two the front tanks, 300-400 soldiers. And that airfield was only in Hungary when they can land it and get out. And they don't have enough, as we heard, gasoline. And was no pilot. And blow up all 19 airplanes.

Anyway, when we went back to Kecskemét, we had plenty of job, because we have to selling the merchandise what we can usable, what not usable. And we were-- this was was not that hard job, but they gave me, we do something. And we were there.

It was the first days of October, I think so, or the last days of September. I don't remember that. And we were there about 8:00 to 5:00. And it was not a big deal. And noontime, they bring us the odd meal, because in Hungary, noontime was the big meal, not here in the evening.

And one day, after the meal, it's a beautiful day, long around that building. After the meal, we went back to work. You know, they don't have to chains us. We know what we have to do. And we went back.

Oh, gentlemen, told the guard. You worked hard. Don't go back to work. Just take a rest. And we don't know what happened. We have no radio, no nothing special there. And we enjoyed the afternoon.

And around 4 o'clock, the same guard came out, you dirty Jews. You are just lazy. You don't want to do-- go back to work. And went back to work until we can't see, because no electricity, because blow up the electricity too.

And when we get home, all the place, we heard that noontime was when Governor Horthy spoke to the radio and said, Hungarian people, the war is over for us. And just take it easy. And we won't fight longer. Yes.

So they prevented you from hearing that?

That's very nice. But 4 o'clock, the German arrested him right away. And was a big Nazi, they called Székelyi, they became the government, and spoke in the radio again, no, nothing over. We will fight the last man for the last man. And that was the change.

The war was over for four hours?

Just four hours, yes. Yes, just four hours, we had it, yes. Because the German right away arrested Horthy and name another guy. Anyway, we worked there I don't know how many days. But I think sometimes in maybe 20, 25 of October, or maybe 30, I don't remember, was a real Russian invasion. And we didn't know anything.

We usually get up maybe 6:30-7:00, get ready to eat the breakfast, and go to work at 8 o'clock. When we get up, everything so quiet. No noise, not the usual. And we find out that early in the morning, Russian invasion started.

And everybody-- the Germans, the Hungarian Army, everybody tried to escape. But you know, the Hungarian roads not so wide. And here, just one lane go that way there, and the opposite way. And we went there together, the whole bunch, with the guards on the road.

And it was very slow, because the civil population want to run away too. And you know, they bring that carriages, the kids. And anyway, the road was full and just very slowly can go. And I don't know when that one end here, two hours, not so big distance. I went the end of our group.

And I saw four airplane that flew over us. I told there was a guard at the end of the guard there, oh, I don't like the airplane. Oh, you Jew, you are afraid everything. But the airplane went around three, four miles, or I don't know. And he turned back. And two airplane from that side to help him started with the machine gun hit the road.

When they turned back, I saw that this is not a holiday. And I ran back to that field. I just ran back the field and lay down. And the airplane went close to my head, drop something, but I don't know what. They didn't see me.

And when I get up, I got so many cry on the road, no, I don't want to go back. But I would like to take with, go with them on the field. And I don't know what will happen. But if I have a chance, I don't want to go back. And two of my good friend was there too. We can't know that. But they came there.

And I told them, listen, I don't want to go back that group. I tried to go with parallel with that road on the field. And we'll see what will happen. And that the place was in a vineyard, so many around Kecskemé̃t in vineyard. And they said, well, light sand there.

And when we were walk, one time does somebody cry for us, wait, wait, and call us. This was for Germans. And listen, we must go there, because they can shoot down. We will see what will happen. And when we went there, and German, these four German was in a passenger car. But they sink on the light sand.

And they collect already I don't know how many teenagers-- five or six teenagers, tried everything. And they cannot get out. And we pushed it. And you know, when they start the motor, they went deeper and deeper, then deeper.

And one time, I told that soldier, listen, I had a car before the war. I know something about it. Let me my way to do it. Oh, they were happy we knew. And I put a shovel out there. And I dig another hole right there under that and put some weed under the tire.

And I know the trouble with the car in this light then not enough weight. And I put in there, the four German went into the car, and told, sit down in the car. And three of four teenagers sit on the end of the car, make more weight. And the rest of us went in the front of the car to push it and told the Germans, [NON-ENGLISH]-- backward in the car. Came just suddenly.

It worked.

And, oh, they were happy. Because all the time, the gun shells fly from over us. And they were very scared. Oh, you will come with me. No, I can not go with you. I have something to do for my company. They send it for us to do something. But we spent here a half an hour, ran out. If you would go as [INAUDIBLE]. No, we spent here so many time, we can't prove it that we-- and they gave us that-- yes.

Did they know that you were Jewish?

Probably. We were in military outfit.

Ah, in uniform.

Because when we went in civilian clothing in Russia, you know, the hard work in that time, we have only that one, get ruin it. And they gave second-hand army clothes. But they don't have the time. And they want to escape.

What kind? Which army? Was it from the Hungarian Army?

No, German Army.

The German Army?

German The Hungarian Army don't-- they would shoot us. No, the German. Were German. So you were wearing German Army clothes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes, German. And we did. Because a Hungarian general, you saw a one-star German soldier, they was afraid.

Then they saw that the German writing. We can go with that one. We went all the time-- officially went all the time, every village, either the military police or was no military police, so gendarmerie. We want to find out our group. Where can we go?

At one time, told me, that way that we knew it. Where do you want to go? We want to go SÃ¡rospatak, because we originally went that with labor, SÃ¡rospatak. It was four months ago the Russians have it. You cannot go there.

Anyway, we went village to village. And one time, I remember, went to the gendarmerie to get some direction. I said, you know what I did? I have a letter from my wife, Budapest yesterday.

Do you know what the Jews did in Budapest? What? They say, shoot everybody. We told him, how do you believe it? How do you have where Jews have a gun? And they are afraid their shadow, not-- OK.

And he took us to the train station and sent us to VÃ¡c, another, bigger city, about 40-50 minutes, maybe not so much, from Budapest. And we went there. We find that people, some of the people who was working for us in Russia. So we were happy.

But they were only, as I remember, 22 or 25, not so many. And it was a wonderful officer, as about four or five guards. And our job was sometimes went to the worked around the city, dig some big holes against the tank, the Russian tank.

And one part of about four or five people all the time moved the company belongings to was a island, because VÃ¡c is on the bank of the Danube. And was a island in the Danube. And they went every day to get that with boats and something to put in the island.

When they last thing went, was moved over there, one of our guard said, I was a civilian worker. I worked in Budapest an exhibition place. An animal exhibition was there once a year. And I know it's a good hiding place.

And we supposed to go out of the Danube to the west of Danube to go to fight or I don't know what for the German. But we went there, because he half was official that go, half not official. And we went there. And it was a good hiding place. And we did nothing.

And when one guy was among us who's found that, rented a big land of 1,000 acre land from a Hungarian representative, who was a Nazi representative. But his son was a Hungarian Army officer. And he was the whole Budapest officer for the guns who operate against the airplane. I don't know how can I explain it, exactly.

I think it's called anti-aircraft gunneries.

Yes, against aircraft. He was the officer, the main officer. And he came every day to see us, because this guy was dead, whose father rented his land. But not because he liked that guy. But you know, end of the war, just the blind can even see that our war is ended. You know, every one of this need a Jew who will protect him if they're there, you know.

But you mean a Jew that would say, oh, he's a good person.

Because the Jews suffer so much that they will think when the regime will change, the Jews will at up. And they can say that just one, two good words and just help. Anyway, came again every day. If he cannot come, his wife came.

How long were you in that hiding place? About how long were you in that hiding place?

Oh, it's a-- how big was?

You went in the hiding place where the animal exhibition was?

Yes. It's a big, big place. It was a few building, was a-- he say, this was the trouble. It was a big land. And the Russian occupied the airport, the Budapest airport. It was around almost end of December. And the Germans want to come over here make a small plane can land here.

And this officer came us and told us, the regular Hungarian Army will come over here in two hours to take everything out, because need that land. I came here earlier if somebody want to escape, because this is the situation. Can escape.

So many people was original Budapest citizen. No, we know Budapest as a tourist, as when we went our business. We know a few street or office. We don't know Budapest, a big city. And somebody escaped.

But the rest of us, we waited. And that here came the regular army and took us to an army barrack. Oh, I don't know far from that. And we went to that barrack.

And the next day, it was nighttime. The next day, they find out we are Jews. And we don't-- we were not so many, because somebody who was in Budapest as an escape tried to find some other place we were that I don't know, maybe eight or 10 who went to the barrack.

And he sent me-- sent us with that army guard to a place he had Jewish synagogue, where they collect the Jews from Budapest, who can catch in Budapest the Jews. Bring to that synagogue. I was in there only one night.

And was a terrible man and bed, man and bed, man, there is no room, no place, no nothing. But in the morning, around 5 o'clock, OK, get up. And get the breakfast. We got the black coffee and the breakfast.

And when we get the breakfast and wait, and wait, and wait, and wait. Around 11 o'clock before noon, came the chief officer, who was officer over that Jewish camp, Jewish ghetto what I know it. I don't know I call it. It was a wonderful man. He was a sport man, as I think an international soccer just.

And told us, listen, fellow Jews, or that, I don't know. I think you are safe now, because during the night, the Russian closed the rest of the down in the road. Because we supposed to go to Germany.

But that night, the Russian Army closed the gap. And told us, I give the order the guards. Somebody wants to go, you can go anywhere what you want. But I notify you, the city full with Nazis. Be careful. Try to wait until the sunset.

The Jews who was from Budapest, it was lucky. I don't know lucky or not lucky. But anyway, they could a place to go somewhere. But we were not. What we can do? And we about four people, four friends went.

And one of my friend's brother went to law school in Budapest. But he cannot be a lawyer, because the last three years from 19-- 1938, the board of lawyer, the chamber of lawyers don't give the examination, don't accepted the lawyer. But he had not a law degree, but had studied law.

And he had a girlfriend, my friend know it. And he went there. And he went in the house and talked to that girl. Listen, I would like to hide you. But I can't, because all the time, every day, some Nazi kids came around and I can't. What can we do?

We went to the Jewish ghetto, Budapest Jewish ghetto. And I remember that the first day we went there was the New Year's Eve. And we went to the house. And I don't like it. You know, the Jewish girls and boys make so much noise, dance, and everything.

I told my friend, listen, just days or hours before everybody would come down, go down to the basement. And you know, in the basement, every tenant has a small place that they hold the coal, or firewood, or something. And I chose a small, so big placed. And then I made it comfortable, the place.

And the four us lived there and laid down there. And just two days later, the whole group come down, because the bomb come all the time. And was very dangerous. And it was a terrible how they afraid it there.

And was men, and men, and women, and children together that somebody have to go to the toilet at night. And they walk some human beings. It was suddenly we are like that place.

And the trouble was other trouble, which so many people died, because the shelling, the bombing, and every day, you know, the older teenagers, 17 or older, have to go to the army. But the younger one get the gun and to the Nazi, oh, I have a gun.

And then every day came that Nazi knew. We need 10 men to bury the dead. And they never came back. They buried the dead one and took them to the bank of Danube and shoot them in the water.

So the Nazis were shooting all these people they wanted?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. But we were lucky because the ghetto has their own police, Jewish police. And most of us in labor camp ordered. Most of we were-- they will never choose us. Never choose us. No, only when I told you, I think, before, a little luck worth more than millions of dollars and millions of diamonds. Anyway.

Who did they choose, then, if they didn't choose you for these?

Wait, what?

Who did they choose to go out and bury the dead then?

That Nazi kids came, we need 10 Jews, 15 Jews.

Yes.

And they didn't choose it, they did the police.

The police did.

Yes.

But who did the police send with the Nazis, then? Who did they pick to go with the Nazis?

I don't know they find. Somewhere, someone else.

Other Jews, though.

Other Jews. Other Jews, yeah. Because we were friends what we were in Russia for a long suffering, we didn't choose us. Well, they can choose someone else. And that's the luck. Anyway, one night, around 3 o'clock came four or five Russian soldier in the basement.

I told them, my friends, listen, don't show any happiness, anything, because they come with Russian provocateurs. You know what does it mean, Russian provocateurs? Some other Nazi in the Russian clothes came in and find out what is the situation. But the Russian came. And the first thing they wanted to take off

Watch.

The watch? Oh, that's OK. That's the real Russians.

The real Russians always want watches.

Really Russian. Anyway, in the morning, we went out. And one of my friend, from four of us who wrote that, just before the sunset before night went out to big gate. And the bomb just-- or I don't know, maybe shells or some shells, went down.

And some part of that one hurt him right here. And I took him down and tried to wash it out. And laid down. The next day, that happened at the Russian. And we were four friends. One was just a friend from that, the last couple of days, not from our group.

Anyway, three of us were the original group. And next day, I went to find some Jewish hospital and took these guys to the hospital. This is not a big hospital, I don't know, just you know was so many Jews in the ghetto. And was someplace where they can for the first aid or something.

Anyway, a lot did. Went down. And the other guy, they start to go to Hungary walk, because no train, no nothing. Because so many times happened the German pushed back the Russian. And they make so much, I don't want to take that chance.

But I can tell you again, the luck is worth so many things that no man can be smart enough, just the luck. We took the shortest way out from Budapest. That way was a city Mogyor³d.

And before we went to the city we were, we heard the other city already train-- train go to the east. And we went to the field to the other city. It was Godollo, very famous place. And we just, you know, lay there. We went one more mile to Mogyor³d, the Russian would keep us.

And the Russian has a smart saying-- [RUSSIAN]. Small work, small work, small work. [RUSSIAN]. And they take it forward and send it back to Russia. And we went to the other city, Godollo.

We passed that group. And we find the train there, really, and went on the train. But went about by train, I don't, 50 miles or somehow. And the train stop, and stop, and so.

But was meantime, we was hungry. We were freezing. And we left the train. We tried to walk again. Anyway, we slowly went home, walking home. Some time, we need to catch again the train for a 15, 20 miles or that, walk again. And we went home.

How were you getting food as you were walking along? You know, we tried to keep the train from the civilian people. But some civilian people was so, so bad, don't want to give. But some give us some food.

Well, how was it when you finally got back to your town?

How I find it?

Yeah. How was it for you when you finally got back to your town, you finally got home?

Well, you know, it was a terrible thing. We went, walked about 50 kilometers, around 35 miles from NyÁregyhÁza, a bigger city, called Debrecen. And that time, Debrecen was under Russian occupation from September already. And the Hungarian government was established in Debrecen.

And we find the train in Debrecen that went to NyÁregyhÁza. But the train arrived in NyÁregyhÁza sometime 10 o'clock evening. It was a big sign, nobody go to the street, because the Russian was not allowed to civilian people go to the street.

But I forget to tell you, when we went, tried to walk from Budapest, I had a-- both of us has a military uniform. And I throw it away, because I don't want that they catch me as a soldier. And I don't know, I stole or find it an overall. You know what is overall, what them workers--

A worker's overall.

--put on their regular.

Yeah.

And I put this on. And they cannot catch us as a soldier. It was cold. But I don't care that. And they went home that way. And I have to wait on the station until in the morning. And in the morning, with my friend, one of my friends, who live in Eastern Europe, he lived where we originally went for the labor camp, SarospatÁjk.

And I went home. I had two houses in NyÁregyhÁza But in with two streets. One lot-- one street was a big house. The other street was a smaller home, but the common yard. And when I moved my mother to NyÁregyhÁza, because I know they will take over the land, I want to move until I am here, I took the smaller room. Because the other house was a main street.

And I don't want a Jewish woman. I don't want to leave there. And both homes was rented. But in this house, I said the renter, I told them, we need that house and in May. And he moved out and moved away.

Anyway, and I went to the smaller house. It was nothing, just empty walls. And I went to big house. And it was nothing. It's a big, big door, heavy wood door. And I closed it. But every day was open. It sometimes was the Russian soldier occupied that house. And it was almost ruined every time. And I was afraid to that house. I stayed in the smaller house.

Did you find out anything about your family? You must have--

No, that time, I find nothing.

You didn't know, at that point, what happened to your mother?

No, nothing, nothing.

Your brother, your sister?

No, nothing, nothing, nothing that time, no. You know, somebody told me maybe-- well, I know that they was deported. I know it was deported. But what were they alive or not alive, didn't know anything.

You knew that because everyone was deported? Is that how you knew?

You knew your family was deported, because all the Jews were deported from that town?

Yes. Yeah, oh, yes. Oh, yes. Except Budapest, all the Jews was deported, except Budapest. But they started the deportation the eastern part of the Hungary. And went-- because they cannot deport all the time, every day left a train from one ghetto, about 3,500 people-- 3,500 or 400 people with the train. And because how they can in Auschwitz manage it? And we didn't know anything.

How were your neighbors? How did your neighbors treat you back in your town?

You know, I had no neighbors. I had no neighbors. One of my neighbor was that photographer. But the second neighbor was at home. And he gave me-- they gave me a pillow and a bedding the first night.

And I want to tell you that when the Russian came close to the city, for Hungary, all the middle class and higher class people who can afford it financially escaped, went to the west. Went to the west. And these people went to the west.

And the train was established in NyÁregyhÁza, because NyÁregyhÁza was occupied in late September or October already. That the life started to get normalized. But was nothing but a few Jews who came.

But were so many Jews was labor camp the eastern part, which belongs to Romania. And they came with the Russian Army. And they stayed there. And they want to mention now-- maybe not so important-- but my farm was a town. Not a big city, a town, but that a pretty good size. That lived there about 2,000 Jews one time, and about 25,000-30,000 other population.

And with the Russian Army came that, the Jews, who were labor camp. And somehow, they stopped, because where my farm was was the biggest fight between the Russian and German. I don't know what that is the secret, what is made the military so important that place. But it was the big fight.

Anyway, was a close to a big forest. And that time, the town name was NagykÁllÁ³. And it was only 2 and 1/2 miles from my farm. This was the closest village, or city, or town from my farm.

And that labor camp work that came with the Russian. And what's that? And suddenly, German pushed back the Russian. And these six labor camp worker stay there. They don't know what happen. And the German back just only for two days. The population gave up. These six is Jews. Shoot him. I just want to tell you how is the Hungarian dirty people.

So they shot them?

They came back for two days or three days. Then the Russian push again.

So they shot those workers?

I just heard it from-- yeah, they shot them, yeah.

So they still hated the Jews all the time?

Yes. Anyway, I don't want to make this--

When was it that you first got back to your town? When was it that you got back to your town?

After the war?

Yeah. Do you know that date when you walked back to the town? I don't remember exactly, maybe end of January or the first days of February.

Of '45?

'45, yes. '45. Because 1918-- 1945, January 18, was the day when the Russian came to Budapest, where I was, the ghetto. January 18. I never forget it, because a holiday for me.

Did you ever think to go to the west at that point like the other people were doing?

Yeah. And I couldn't find anything out until the end of the war. End of war. And this middle-class people who escaped just came back after the war. And that's why I didn't get clothing and everything, just when he came back, this photographer came back, he gave me what my mother gave him.

But I think I mentioned to you that I wasn't in an overall, no other clothing. And I went to the city I was in in that. I went to the Joint, because find out what is the situation, and know something, with where are they. But they didn't know anything. And the Joint was established.

The Jewish community was functioning in that way?

No, just the Joint.

Just the Joint?

Just the Joint.

Yeah.

It was no Jewish [? commutation. ?] Just wait for the people who will come home from deportation or something. And the leader of that Joint was-- I give much many business for them before the war, because they had that kind of business I buy him animals.

And I went there. And I told them, listen, I have an overall. Give me something. Because for you, a capitalist, how do you think? Anyway, I went home.

They gave you no help at all?

No, no, no. There a few communist who came back, they operate everything that time. There was a big, big shock. Anyway, don't give. Don't give. I told him, listen, maybe I will find something later. But right now, I don't have it. No, not for you, not. But you must have it. Yeah, that's OK. I'll give them.

And a couple weeks later, I told you, mentioned before that when I went-- I was home about two weeks. And I went with that overall to the city. And a big, tall man stopped before me. Are you Mr. Korosi? Yes.

How do you look? Listen, I just came home from the war. I don't have nothing. Listen, I am the officer know the forestry office, because the engineer escaped with the other middle class people. And I am the head of that office.

We had some wood produced in your forest. Tomorrow, we will come me. And I give you back. And next time, next day, hear the horses with this carriage, went to the village where that belongs, and told the officer that time, the forest office want to give this back to this gentlemen, because when we get it, we get all the wood was produced, and we sold it. You are-- he should have it now.

Anyway, I went once in a while. And I can sold with any price. But they was sold, told, this bunch of wood, you can ask six pengo. And I sold it for some one kilogram fat, or some potato, or something.

And it was a good money until the end of war. But the end of war, the money worth nothing. One day, you can buy a dozen eggs, 10,000 forint. Afternoon was 15,000 forint. And the end of that one, we have it by the dawn billions and

billions.

And nobody had money. Because everybody should exchange-- somebody has some clothing and get some. From Budapest, came the people going there bring-- not Jewish, the Christian people-- who bring some clothing and for food or something.

So everything was by trading?

Was trading, yes.

Well, were you feeling relieved and happy that you had survived the war?

You know, I just want to tell you to words. If you want to tell me today, you will survive, you have to go through again what you had, no, I don't want. I want to die right now. I don't want to go through what I went if I will survive. I explain it to you?

Yes, I understand. You wouldn't go through that again.

I don't want to go through again. I rather I want to die.

But since you did go through it, and since you did survive, were you glad that you survived? I say, since you did go through that, and you did survive--

Yes.

--were you feeling glad and relieved that you had survived at the time?

You know, that time, yes, because my feeling was if my mother, or brother, or sister come home and I died, it was a terrible feeling for them, not for myself.

You still didn't know whether they were alive or not.

Anyway, a few weeks later, I find out that that county, the leader man, was a-- used to be lawyer, who was my brother had a six or eight-unit apartment. And he rented one apartment there from him. It was I don't know how many weeks later when I came home when I find out.

And I went to his office. I introduced myself and asked, Mr.-- suddenly, it don't come to my mind, his name-- Mr. Eros was his name. I introduced myself. I would like to know, what do you know my brother? Because they were close.

Ooh, I beg your sister-in-law, give me your daughter. I will save him until you come back. It was true or not, I don't know. But he told me. But that's OK. And he asked me, what do you want to do? I offer you a good job.

He told me, the Russian want so many things from the farmers, who had animals, wheat, and everything. I want to give you this job with another fellow and do this job. I told him, listen, already, I get back 100 acre land. The new government gave back.

But I supposed to have 200. But 100 gave back who had the land. And 200 was a real farmer. And another 100 land, just a time when I will get back. My occupation is a farmer. I would like to be a farmer. OK. I made a terrible mistake. I made a terrible mistake.

Why?

I will tell you. This was the second time when I start my existing life. You understand? I don't know, maybe I don't express myself very well in English. That time, I start my second life. First time, when I start my life. And that was the

second time.

I went to go to the farm and work there. I had some money. I tried to buy something for the land. But I find out, it's impossible. And I find a man who had about 30, 40 acre land some other parts of the city. And so accidentally, I don't know how I met with him, listen, I have here 100 acre land now. But I suppose to have 200 acres.

You have a big son. Why don't we work together? I give you the land, you give the instruction, because you know, the instruction cost as much as the land-- the animal, the equipment, and everything, and half and half.

What the problem is? We were, I was half and half. And I thought, in a few years, I'm here, I have, I will save everything what I produce in the land. In a couple years, I have enough, I can for myself. And we worked together. These two years was a waste of my time.

Why?

Because I tell you why. Because 1946, the end of 1946, took away my land, nationwide is taking. Everything what was, what we produced from me and from that guy. And I had nothing. I worked for two years and what I had, I put in that land, from the woods, fire woods, and I lost everything.

They took away the land, the animals?

Everything.

Everything.

Everything. The animal that we had was with that fellow. But they took everything, they land, everything-- communized everything.

What about the houses you had, those two houses?

Where, in NyÁregyhÁza? I still had it. But came 1957, I think I am talk too much.

No, please. OK. So they took away everything in 1946.

Everything. I have to find some job. And I had a friend who was a family in NyÁregyhÁza whose grandfather, father, and him had a lumberyard. But if he find nothing, everything was empty. And he didn't come live in NyÁregyhÁza, because his wife originally came from close to a big city, Miskolc. They had a mill factory. I don't know. They make from the wheat flour.

A mill, yeah.

Flour.

A flour mill.

Yes. But he lived here. And he came every month. And we became good friend. And why don't you start at lumber land? And they sold a house. And I sold a house. And we started lumberyard. Nobody had a lumberyard for a big, big territory. And we had the lumberyard.

To sell the merchandise was nothing, because nobody have it and everybody want it. To get the merchandise, that was the big thing. And I mentioned to you before that why I became friends with the forest engineer. And through him, we get as much as we need. And we made good money.

So it was OK to have a capitalist business in the form of a lumberyard? That was OK? Wasn't that a capitalist business?

Yeah, but at that time, it was 1947.

It was OK.

1947, yes, yes.

When did you find out what happened to your family?

After the war, May.

1945?

1945. Start to come home the survivors. And that find it out. In that time, I find it out that my group who did not escape like myself, just a few of us escaped, and take a chance, took a chance. We didn't know what will happen. Nobody could be smart, just a little luck.

And we find out that time that that group went west to the Danube. And the officer who didn't want to go to Germany told that group, listen, we have to go to Germany. If you don't want, you have some other idea, I let you go out.

And one part of the group went out and tried to go east. The other, who was remained in the group, went to Germany, Austria, or then I don't know how far they could go. Somebody who went to Germany, some survived. Some died.

Somebody who went east, the Russian catch them and send back running the road, just a small road to Russia. And some came back, who didn't die, two or three years later that went with the soldiers, who catch them, the soldiers.

And some civilian, young people, about 200,000-300,000 people went to Russia. This destroyed Russia, build up Russia. They were right. But not was right the Jews send it, but they didn't make a difference Jew or not Jews. We need the manpower over there.

And when did you hear about your own family-- your mother, and your brother, and your sister?

At that time was when they came back, they heard, and they told to us some who was there. And they said, the older people who could not work went right away to the gas chamber. The kids under 13, 14 years old went to the gas chamber.

Somebody who they could work, about 15 to 35 or 40, who was physically strong went to work some place in Germany or somewhere there. And one of my friend, who was schoolmate of my brother, maybe it was later, when I met with him, told me that they were the western part of Hungary in labor camp. They called-- I don't [INAUDIBLE], but it will come to my mind.

Yeah, sure.

Come to my mind. And they-- they want to empty that city. And somebody who can walk, go to Germany. Somebody couldn't walk, stay there. And then my brother had a [INAUDIBLE] here that time and told, he told me, Louis come with me. I will take you. No, I'm sorry. I cannot go.

Anyway, I heard it 300 labor camp worker with my brother was shot dead in the military. It was who cannot walk with them. And his wife and his child, where did they go? The wife and child went to the group. The child-- his child was five years old. They took it from her and give it to her mother, the wife mother, who was older. They went to the gas chamber.

And the wife went to the camp. And told me somebody who was with her and came back to NyÁregyhÁza. And this lady was so upset, so sick, so-- I lost my daughter. I lost my husband. I don't want to leave.

And you know that the fence, that iron fence was electrified. Went to the fence, they told us, and the guard went to grab her and killed her. They beat him to death-- her to death.

My sister, I am not sure she survived a little bit or went right into the gas chamber. She was only 42 years old. And her husband was a strong man. He worked different camps in Germany.

And this has told me a man from Nagykőrös, I told you, because they close very much. He was a shoet in Nagykőrös. He was in that with him. They put them in an train in wintertime.

And the train went, and stopped, and went, and stopped. And three or four days, no food, no nothing. And more than half of them died there. Then my brother-in-law died there. And this man came back and told me, he died in my arm.

And their child? They had a child too, your sister and brother-in-law, your niece.

Yeah.

What was her name, their child, your sister's child?

My sister? Eva. And she lives in Israel. She came back.

She went to Auschwitz too?

She went Auschwitz, but she was 19 years old when they deported-- 18 years old and 19 years when came back, was strong. And he worked, yeah, all the time. And she came back very sick, sometime in July-- June or July, because I think they took some to build her up a little bit and came home sometimes.

And she lived with me. And I married off her in 1950-- 1946 for a wonderful man. I showed the picture. And they lived together about 43 years. And they lived in Israel.

So she was the only member of your immediate family that survived?

Yes. That was my family. But I want to tell you my story.

Yes.

My lumberyard was very good. And 1945-- 1950, excuse me, 1950, nationalized the lumber camp. Took everything what we had. But we had some money. They didn't know it. But we lost everything that was in the lumberyard.

What was life like under the communists after the war? How was life for you?

Terrible.

Terrible? Right from the beginning?

Terrible, yes. Slowly, slowly worse, and worse, and worse, and worse.

In what way was it terrible? They took away your land first. And then what?

First was not for everybody was terrible. Somebody who had a land, a bigger size of land, more than 40 or 50 acre, or had a house more than six room-- that was my trouble too, because I have very big house with a stove.

And nationalize too. I have to pay rent for my room, for the government. And somebody had nothing, isn't that so bad, because they can work. And they didn't pay very well, but they won't bother too much.

But when I lost my lumberyard, I have to go find some other occupation. And I had so many friends who maybe was some communist and head of some company, but we a good friend, and who gave me to many jobs. And he gave me. But it was not enough.

What kind of jobs?

I would accept any kind of job. One of my friends would give me a lumberyard manager, in other village. I would take it. The other one would give me some other job. But it was not enough. But was a special organization who have to give the permit that man can get that job.

And because I was a farmer, I never get that job. They told me, you just can work in the coal mine, nowhere else. And that why I mentioned to you that was a mechanical mind. That why I want to go to a university became a mechanical engineer.

And I went to Budapest. I couldn't go to Budapest, because in Budapest, everybody who has a rented house or something and was a capitalist, they will take over the home, and send it to somewhere in the country in a farm, worked on the farm.

And I cannot move Budapest, because I cannot get permission to move to Budapest, because that background. But I got a permit for temporary permit, went to school. I went to a special school, night school, of learn more about that occupation, that trade.

You mean mechanical?

Mechanical, yes. And when I came back about four or five months, I had a friend in NyÁregyhÁza whose father and father-in-law had a machine shop. But they give it to the government. That way, they can work there and manage that. But that belongs to the government. And they gave me the job. And I worked in that job. That was my fourth start of life, living. And I worked there until 1956.

Now, why was it that since you were a farmer, you could only go to a coal mine? Why was that?

Because you are a capitalist, you cannot work for any easy job, just laborer.

I see.

And no other laborer. We need the new workers for the coal mine. You can go. They will give you a job in the coal mine.

Was your niece still living with you then too? Eva-- was she living with you?

No, I--

She married.

She lived with me 1946 when I married out for that man.

And then where did she live? Did she still live in Hungary?

No.

No, no, at that time.

She lived in Hungary with her husband 1947. In 1947, her husband has a lawyer degree-- not became a lawyer, because

that he has a lawyer degree. And the city where they lived was not a big city, a mine city.

And you know, in the mining industry, there's a lot of communists. And they told them, Steve, come with me. Start the mining city all over. And they worked there. And 1957, because he had the education, told them, listen, we want you to the top of that job, you know, this administration job.

He told them, listen, I am too young. And I don't think so I can do it. But if you accept it, I would like to go abroad, learn it a little bit much. And he went to France. That was the last time when they left Hungary.

He planned to never come back?

Never come back. And he lived in Paris, because he has some relatives in Paris who move there, I know, in 1920. Anyway, they worked in France 1948. When Israel was established, the first month, they went to Israel.

And they showed me the place where they lived in Israel. They don't want to show me the first place. They showed me the second place. Was a big hen house. And every family was divided with a canvas, a piece of place.

And being there, they start that. And they work hard, build the road, and work physical job, and everything. And they became a really Jew, really Israeli. Maybe I want to tell you something who is a Jew, if you--

Sure.

--let me.

Go ahead.

When my father died, I want to say Kaddish every day. But I have to go that Jewish community, which I didn't belong. It was Nagykanizsa, because our farm belongs to another village. But this was the closest one. And I went over there.

And they had a rabbi, who was my father family rabbi. We don't meet so much rabbi. But where the family-- not all family, the all brother's family, when they had a wedding, as a-- bury her when somebody died, this rabbi came to the family.

And this came when my father died, was. And I didn't know him very much. He know me at all, because we didn't go there to synagogue, just you know, as a small boy, when my sister got married, there was-- he married my sister and my other cousin.

And anyway, I went over to that Jewish community. But this rabbi knows that I have tremendous job, because I have two farms. And I have to travel between. And told him, listen, I would like to say every day at least one Kaddish for my father. I was not religious, but his honor. And I love him of my father, I want to say every day.

He told me, listen, any time to you, to come to my home, I have a school. I will say something and then say a Kaddish. It was a very liberal. And you know, in Hungary, the Orthodox Jews wear the beard. And most don't speak Hungarian, even he knows. He speak a beautiful Hungarian literature language.

And when I went there, it was a school. They davened. And I stopped there. And he sent me a student, and bocher, go to sit his side. I went there. And then say a Kaddish. And sometimes, we all talk to each other.

One time, when we know each other better, he told me, you know, we start Kaddish. I love more and I praise more the Jews without beard than a beard without Jew. You know this is meaning.

Wonderful.

And my niece and his husband was the kind of Jew.

Yes.

And excuse me that I told that--

No, that's a very good story. It's a very good story. I'm thinking, how were the Jews treated after the war by the communists? Was there any antisemitism under the communists?

Listen, the first two, three years was not so antisemitism, because they afraid from the Jews, because they was too cruel to the Jews. But when find out the Russian doesn't like the Jews, even the Germans, they became antisemite.

And the first few years, you know who was the leader of the Communist Party, especially in the villages and smaller place? Who was the Nazi leaders, because one or two person can talk to the people. And this people talk to the Nazis. And the communist think that people talk for us.

So the Nazis became the communists?

Nazi just changed their color, just changed their color. The green changed to red. And this, when they find out the Russians do the same thing, don't like the Jews as the Germans don't like, that they became Nazis.

So you're saying that after the war, for a while, the Jews were treated OK. But then the communists started to become more antisemitic also?

Yes, yes, yes, yes. And you know, what's going on in Russia, that going on in Russia. Stalin second wife was a Jew, a Jewish lady. And he hated-- if this war was not upstart 1940, '41, all the Russian Jews would go to the Birobidzhan. Was a small place. He established this place. All the Russian Jews would go there and make a Jewish community there. But start the war. They cannot do it.

Is the tape up? OK.