

## Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project

P.O. Box 25506, San Mateo, CA 94402

**Name of interviewee:** Farkas, Morris

**Date of interview:** 12/11/1990

**Summary:** Morris Farkas was born in a town called Halmu? in Romania (also Hungary) on December 28, 1912. His Jewish grandparents raised him while his father (Ludwig) worked as a salesman. Morris was part of a big family with 3 other brothers and 2 sisters, all of whom survived the Holocaust. Names of siblings: Sol, Joe, Alex, Lily and Rosie. Sol has also been interviewed

He first remembers Anti-Semitism when he was eight years old and other young boys would taunt him and throw rocks at him. He grew up playing soccer and when Hitler came to power he noticed more and more the growing hatred towards the Jews. His soccer friends and teammates would no longer play soccer with him. In his early twenties, Morris worked as a salesman. He was happy and ready to take on the world.

In 1942, the Hungarian army sent out 55,000 young men to be part of a forced labor camp. Morris was chosen. For over a year they marched along the Russian front. Groups of ten men at a time would be ordered to march ahead and set off land mines that were near. Morris survived the march along the Russian front. He had to withstand extreme cold temperatures and many people died from the cold. When he returned home, only 1,500 of the 55,000 young men survived.

After only a few months at home, Morris and his family were deported to a ghetto. He remembers the soldiers taking away everything they owned and he felt trapped and helpless. After a few months, in 1943, Morris and his family were transported to Auschwitz. His saddest memory took place when they got out of the boxcars and Morris was forever separated from his parents. He remembers looking back at his mom and catching a glimpse of her face. His mother and father were both killed in Auschwitz.

His soccer skills saved his life in Auschwitz. An SS soldier, the head of the camp, befriended Morris. He kept him from work one day and asked Morris what he was good at. Morris responded with, "I am an athlete". From that moment on, the soldier kept his eye on Morris. He even gave Morris a job working in the kitchen, which was the best possible job to have in the concentration camp. Morris ate better than many of the Jews. He remained healthy and strong. One of his most vivid memories is of the kitchen inspection. The SS soldiers were planning an inspection where they took five to six men to march in the fields and set off land mines. The SS soldier saved Morris.

After Auschwitz, Morris was sent to Ebensee (a sub camp of Mauthausen.) He was there until the Americans liberated the camps. After the liberation he met his wife and became a refugee. He worked in Vienna selling chocolate and other goods to wholesalers until they could get a visa. Once they moved to America, Morris played soccer in Milwaukee where his brother owned a soccer club. He and his family now reside in the San Francisco area. He worked as a shoe

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salesman and even opened shoe stores in the Bay Area. Amazingly, Morris and all of his siblings survived the Holocaust. His sisters remained at Auschwitz until liberation. Morris's brothers Alex and Joe served in the army during the war. Sol remained with Morris throughout the Holocaust.

He is married with one son and one daughter, has three grandchildren.