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CONTENTS Description of life in Budapest during the 2nd world war.

0:00:00 Jussi Rajna was born in Budapest on April 8, 1935. His original name was Jula (sp?) which is a very Hungarian name. He came from a small family, he being the second child his sister was 4 years old. It was typical of the times to have small families. If the first born was a boy then people stopped having children after that. If the first born was a girl they would try for a boy and stop there. If the first two children were girls people would still stop there. That was in the 30s and later on people were rather hesitant at having large families.

0:1:40 Mr. Rajna came from an upper middle class family. His mother had 3 sisters the two younger sisters and the two older sisters had different fathers. His mother's maiden name was Shneer (sp?) and the older sisters' maiden name was Klein (sp?). She was born and raised in a city on the Tisza River. His father's family had lived in Budapest for three generations. His grandmother's maiden name was Shmidel (sp). The Shmidel side of the family were tall people and his

grandmother was taller than his grandfather. He came from somewhere in the North near Czechoslovakia(Place?) On his father's side there were 4 boys and one girl. His father was the youngest of the 5 children and the only one to get married and have children of his own. One boy died fairly early in the 1920 the other 4 children did survive and all three boys served in the Austro-Hungarian army and participated in the first world war. Hugo and Raije (sp) and his father Laszlo having been first world war veterans, were given certain privileges during the semi Nazi era in the early 1920 and early 1930. The family was engaged in the restaurant and bakery business and were doing rather well.

0:4:29Mr Rajna remembers that they had to cut down on their business due to anti semitic legislation. There were restriction as to how many employees they could have and what sort of supplies they could get. Mr. Rajna remembers living in different parts of Budapest. The family wanting to live closer to the businesses they were running.

0:4:56Mr. Rajna did not live in a Jewish Ghetto. There were many jews in Budapest and he estimates that about 20% to 25% of the population was Jewish. In all of Hungary there were about 250.00 jews and that in some villages jews represented a large percentage of the population. The areas which were more Jewish in Budapest they later on, in 1944, became the Ghetto.

0:6:08Mr. Rajna's family were not very religious. In Hungary the Jews were divided among conservative and orthodox the orthodox being definitely in the minority. Even the cemetery. The orthodox cemetery being tiny compared with the regular one which was huge.

0:6:46Mr. Rajna was in that cemetery. His father passed on in 1982 at the age of 87. That was the last time Mr. Rajna was in Budapest. Visiting a cemetery gives the background of the jewish history in a place. The communists were anti semitic or mostly anti religious but they left the cemetery alone. The did not tear up the graves. The present jewish population in Hungary today is very small and comprises mainly of older people.

0:7:42Mr. Rajna attended Hebrew School. Before the second world war the Jews were doing well for different reasons. The non jewish population were either catholic or lutheran and between those factions the Jews were doing all right, they were left alone. The anti semitism started after the first world war. The country lost certain areas and many people, Hungarians, refugees from those areas came back and found competition with the jews, at universities and basically all over it popped up. He recalls that the apartment house in which he and his family were living was a four story building each floor consisting of five flats. Two large flats in the front of the building and three small ones in the back to the total of 20 flats. In that building there were about 12 jewish families. He attended public school and

during religious lessons the class was divided into 3 groups. Catholic, Lutheran and Jews. In his class the Jews were a sizable group. When anti semitism started he remembers being cursed at, however, for a long time it was not approved by the teachers. He later on found out that it was a lot easier to be jewish in Budapest than in the country side.

0:10:36Mr. Rajna first understood that something was happening was when they had to wear the Star of David. That was early in 1944. He was nine years old at the time. He noticed that a lot of the shops which were Jewish owned were closing down, because the owners were drafted into work troops or labor battalions and there were signs on the doors that they were temporarily closed. He was well protected. His father was drafted for labor battalion several times but was allowed to return home after a certain length of time. They were well connected and his father was with them when they had to move to the Yellow Star Houses. It was not a Ghetto.

0:12:43Matters never happened very abruptly. They were always creeping up slowly. One ordinance after another, one restriction after another. First came the Yellow Star and after having been wearing the yellow star for three or four months the selected certain houses which comprised of 100% jewish tenancy and forced a large number of people into them. So that if you had an apartment before, you got a room in the yellow star house. That opened up vacancies for non jewish people. By the end of October they started to force people from the Yellow Star Houses into the Ghetto area. The deportations started earlier in 1944 from the country side. But there was a big difference as to what happened in the country side and what happened in Budapest. His relatives on his mother side were taken away and he remembers that his father went to visit them in the Ghetto in the small little town near the village that they had been but the Hungarian authorities were gathering all the jews in the country side and turning them over later to the Germans. One of his aunts and her family were taken to Tereseinstadt but they survived and came back. The rest of the family were taken to different extermination camps and they got lost. On his mother side of the family only about three or four people survived out of 45.

0:15:43Everything in the Ghetto was run by the Hungarians.

0:18:46As a child Mr. Rajna realized what was happening in the world but he looked at his parents and they did not appear to be scared. They would discuss amongst themselves in German which Mr. Rajna didn't know. He knew there was a war. At the end of 1944 he could hear the Russian guns firing. The Russians were already inside the Hungarian borders. He would discuss with other children, first those from his old apartment house and then later on with those from the Yellow Star houses if it was indeed true the things they heard about the jews, were there other jews. He was not aware about the threatening danger. He tried to understand what was going on. He knew these were bad times, was told not to talk to

anybody and not to give any sort of information. There was no violence in 1944 until the order came to move into the Ghetto. While living in the yellow star houses there was a curfew from 7 in the morning till 5 in the afternoon. That was a hardship because people had either to give up their job or have reduced income and that was a hardship. By that time there was only one business left for the family and that was ceded to a manager, a non-jew, but his father went over there and he run the thing.

0:22:06As far as the four brothers are concerned, one died young in the 1920 the oldest one died in an operation . He developed an infection. Mr. Rajna's father and his brother Hugo were left. Hugo was an officer in the Austro-Hungarian army was called to the police station because of some business dealings. While there a policeman began to speak abusively to him. Hugo told him not to speak to him that way because he was an officer in the army. The policeman hit Hugo and Hugo hit him back. This resulted in Hugo being sent to Kishtarsha (sp?) which was a concentration camp for political prisoners and that was the first contingent that the Germans wanted to take out of the country, and Governor Horthy stopped that transport at the border and ordered them back to Kishtarsha. But at a later stage when the Germans actually occupied all of the country then the transferred all the prisoners to Auschwitz and that is where his uncle Hugo was murdered. Mr. Rajna was not present at the incident in the police station but was told about it.

0:25:27The family business, restaurant and bakery were not kosher. At home they didn't keep kosher but his grandmother, his mothers mother who survived Tereseinstadt would spend the winters with them and she kept kosher so that whenever she came they would buy new utensils. In the country side they kept kosher because it was a smaller village and everything was around. But at his mother's house there were always shabbat candles and chala, as well as the high holidays were kept, yom kippur and chanuka.

0:26:53Mr. Rajna and his family didn't move into the Ghetto. The bakery was in the basement of the restaurant and that was located in the building of the royal railroads and they had built there a secret room. That room was built in the 1920 most likely to protect against burglars. This is were they stayed during the day and at night they went to the cellar which was the bakery. They were staying there when the order came to move into the Ghetto. His parents didn't discuss much with him so that he would not get scared. His sister who was older and understood more was hysterical. He was more immune by ignorance. They were hiding there for quite a few months November and December and beginning of January. He lost count of the time. There was plenty of food and the Russians were surrounding Budapest and they were coming nearer. They were helped by the woman manager of the store and by a kind of a handyman who came to work for the family as a young man. These two know about the family's whereabouts and provided them with supplies. But one morning they left a newspaper there. The

headlines of the paper told of marshal law and that anyone who helps deserters, jews and enemies of Hungary will be shot. That was the last that they saw of these two people and since then the business was closed. The business stretched from one side of the building which was facing one large street all the way to the back which was facing a smaller street and that is where they hid. His parents listening to the radio, mainly the BBC. They were waiting for the advancement of the troops.

0:30:43Mr. Rajna was hiding in the family hiding place together with his parents, sister and aunt when they heard loud banging on the door one night. His parents opened the door to find out that the knockers were hungarian soldiers who were looking for shelter. They came back and helped themselves to food and other supplies and took Mr. Rajna, his mother, sister and aunt and father to the Arrow-Cross Police headquarters. That is when reality hit him. On the way to the police headquarters he saw people hanging from lamp posts and trees with signs saying, I am a jew, I am a communist, I am a deserter. The Arrow Cross were just like Nazis. When they arrived at the headquarters they were taken down to the cellar and kept in a corner. Mr. Rajna saw there a man who had been tortured. They were guarded by a man who came from the same village that Mrs. Rajna came from and he confessed that he didn't know what he got into when he joint the Arrow Cross. He told them about the tortured man. Mr. Rajna's father was asked to remove his wedding ring and had burst out crying while complying with the request. That scared Mr. Rajna very much since he never saw his father cry.

The father was taken to work in the kitchen. They were recognized by one of the Arrow Cross people who used to work as an auxiliary waiter in one of the family's places. He inquired why they were there and when told confessed that he was going to leave that night for the west and would like to help the family. Would they rather go to the Ghetto or stay in the Arrow Cross house. The parents thought it better to go to the Ghetto since they feared that when the Russians came to the Arrow Cross house they would just finish off everybody without questioning whether people were Jewish or not.

0:40:15The Ghetto was run by Jewish police and Jewish administration. They were given a kitchen to stay in. There was no stove no furniture not a thing. They spent one night there. Mr. Rajna's mother remembered that she had an uncle who lived in the Ghetto area. They moved in with the uncle, all five of them slept in one double bed. Every other day food would arrive in the form of some barely warm soup, water, with something floating in it. His mother and aunt had hidden chala from the bakery which they dolled out. They tried to keep warm. There was an air raid shelter but was overcrowded and the stench was so strong the parents decided to stay up in the apartment. Mr. Rajna remembers that when they moved from their "kitchen" to his uncle place they had to step over dead bodies which were laying in the streets. That was the area of the (not clear) synagogue in Budapest supposedly the largest in central Europe. In the garden there were

stacked up frozen bodies, like fire wood. There was no air activity because neither the Germans or the Russians had air force. There was shooting which one got used to. They stayed in the Ghetto for about three weeks before the Russians finally reached it. The Ghetto was not defended by the Germans. The Russians broke up the escape routes between the air raid shelters so that they could go underground from house to house and they marked the buildings which they cleared so that following troops would not shoot at each other. It took a few days till the news of the Russians arrival reached them and when it did Mr. Rajna's father ventured out and found out that the people who occupied their apartment were rather decent. They took all of the furniture which belonged to the family and put them in the smallest room in the apartment without opening them. They got back the little room plus another room, The people who occupied that apartment stayed on for a while. Mr. Rajna considers himself luckier than other and owes his life, as well as his family's to the man they met at the Arrow Cross house.

0:47:47 Mr. Rajna and his family stayed for about 10 to 12 weeks in their hiding place in the bakery during which time they didn't venture out during the day. They spent their time during the day in an upstairs room reading and at night they would go down to the cellar where his father could actually fire the oven and bake bread. They would light kerosene lamps. They also listened to the radio and they kept hoping that the British would come from the south, but it was the Russians who indeed pushed the Germans, Rumanians, Hungarians and Italian back. In the Arrow cross house Mr. Rajna stayed for two nights. He thinks that they were not taken to the river to be shot because either there was too much shooting or that they were waiting for their leader to decide what to do with them. At the time when his father surrendered his wedding ring all other jewelry and money were taken from them.

0:52:53He didn't know at that time about Raul Wallenberg. He did hear however about the houses and false passports. The matter was discussed at home . His parents thought that the Arrow Cross would not honor the passports.

0:55:20There was not much jubilation when they were freed by the Russians. Everybody was emaciated and hungry. Even after they moved back into their apartment the street fighting continued. His parents were well composed people and they were wondering what happened to uncle Hugo, or his mother's family. Mr. Rajna understood little of what happened because he was watching their (his parents) reaction and they were very strong people.

0:58:02When Berlin fell then there was true jubilation. The father got his business back. The place was quite devastated because of the various troops which stayed there. The father commenced to clean it up. The Russians helped set up civilian administration and helped to open up stores. Since the location of the business

was near the railroad station most of the customers were Russians at the beginning. The civilians were afraid to come in. There were lots of Jews among the Russian troops. There were different kinds of troops, low class as well as well behaved ones. The family got back in February and it was not until April that all the Fascists, mostly Germans, resistance collapsed. That was when Berlin was taken.

1:01:18 Mr. Rajna had made friends with a young boy whom he met in the Star of David houses whom he saw after the war. After the war he went back to elementary school. He met another boy who lived in the protected houses whose parents were shot into the river and he himself was fished out and hidden by a kind gentile. When school resumed after the war so did the religious studies. Again they were divided into the three groups, Catholics, Protestants and Jews. Mr. Rajna recalls that some people had "converted" before or during the war in the hope of being spared. Whether or not that helped them he does not know but he does know that every week more and more students joined the Jewish religious studies group and about half of the class was Jewish.

1:05:03 The first Yom Kippur after the war was not celebrated people said that they had fasted long enough. In Mr. Rajna's family their old traditions continued, such as Shabbat candles, Rosh Hashana etc.

1:07:03 In 1956 they moved to Sweden. His mother died in 1948. In 1949 the communists gained more power in Hungary. There were lots of ethnic Jews, not religious Jews, in the communist administration. During January or February that year the family bakery as well as other small businesses were nationalized. During the late 40 and early 50 it was very Stalinism. After the death of Stalin in 1953 it took three years for some liberalization and in 1956 there took place the Hungarian uprising. Mr. Rajna's father worked during that time as a baker for a Jewish hospital in Budapest, which served kosher food to its patients. After the revolt was put down Mr. Rajna decided to leave the country and went to Austria. In Austria he was in a refugee camp together with another Jewish boy, a gentile girl and her fiancé. The four of them crossed the border together into Austria. That was their first stop. There was a British man and an American man who were looking for Jewish refugees. They had a huge bus. They figured that if there were Hungarian refugees surely there must be some Jewish refugees amongst them. There were Jews, but they were afraid to admit to that fact.

Mr. Rajna, his Jewish friend and two other young boys joined the bus, they were taken by the bus to Salzburg and en route were given a good dinner. In the hotel in Salzburg they were free to pursue different agencies to try to go to different countries. (Usually the Austrian authorities aiding refugees would put them outside metropolitan centers so that it was difficult for the refugees to find the agencies which were helping the refugees.) Being in Salzburg, Mr. Rajna managed to put his name

on several lists with different agencies. There was an American Consulate in Salzburg, every body wanted to go the US including Mr. Rajna, but the Americans were very slow in processing people. Long ques and long waits. Mr. Rajna had no patient for that and after 10 days he got a message in the hotel that a transport was leaving for Sweden that night. So he and his friends went to the railroad station and the last three trains were going to Sweden (It was the Vienna Copenhagen train). He arrived in Sweden in the winter and they were put up in a summer resort. It took 3 or 4 days before he was asked what was his name.

1:17:24Mr. Rajna's sister left Hungary a few weeks later.She ended up in Venezuela where she is still there. Mr. Rajna's father and aunt remained in Budapest. After 3 years Mr. Rajna's father went to visit his son in Sweden and it was 8 years before Mr. Rajna went back to Hungary.

1:18:00Mr. Rajna lived in Sweden for ten years and came to the US in1966. He went to school in Stockholm. He saw an ad in a newspaper of an American company advertising for engineers. He answered the ad and flew to Copenhagen for an interview. Also some of his friends who had the patience to stay in line in Austria had managed to come to the US and establish themselves in California (his engineering firm is in California) and he had kept in touch with them throughout and was glad to renew the relationships.

1:19:30At this point Mr. Rajna is showing some snapshots that were taken early spring or summer of 1944 at the Star of David houses. That was during the time when they were required to wear the star of david on their outer clothing.

1:21:20Mr. Rajna was not stopped by police in Hungary to check whether or not his star of david that he was required to wear was well fastened to his clothes. But then he was told not to stay out after curfew etc. He recalls that both before and after the liberation there were anti semitic remarks made and fights but it was not a sudden occurrence it developed slowly and became a way of life. The most shocking memory was the one when they were taken away from their hiding place into the Arrow Cross house and the scenes in the Ghetto with the frozen bodies in the streets. Mr. Rajna considers himself and his family very lucky.

1:24:32Mr. Rajna is showing a book he wishes to give to a library, the book describes how the Hungarian fascist system started long before Hitler. Hungarian jews went to Austria to study because there were numerous clauses in Hungary.

1:29:27Mr. Rajna was a bar mitzva. He celebrated his bar mitzvah after his mother's death.