

HVT-139

H., Sara 1932-

Sara H. Holocaust video testimony (HVT-139) interviewed by Alex Cherney and Barry Stahlmann, November 28, 1995.

3 copies: 1 SVHS first camera; 1 SVHS second camera; 1 VHS copy.

Summary: Sara was born on February 10, 1932 in Budapest, Hungary. She and her younger brother were raised in an orthodox Jewish home. Their mother kept a kosher home and their father went to synagogue regularly and prayed every morning. He was a baker and the family later owned and operated a fruit stand in Budapest. Sara recalls a happy childhood with many Jewish neighbours. She attended private Jewish school where she learned Hebrew and German. The family spoke Hungarian at home.

According to Sara, Jews in Hungary were unaware of the situation in other countries after the war started. However, in 1943 Sara's parents realized that their situation was becoming increasingly dangerous and they sent her to stay with her great-grandparents in Batachy, a small Hungarian village. She worked on the family farm and returned to Budapest during the High Holidays. While Sara was at home, the Jews in Batachy were deported to Auschwitz. In March 1944, Germany occupied Hungary and established new rules. Sara was excluded from school. Her father was placed in a Hungarian labour battalion, but he escaped. He lived underground with false papers for the duration of the war, emerging periodically to bring his family food. Later, he brought them protection papers from the Swedish Embassy. Sara's mother was exposed as a Jew by the superintendent of the building where she resided and was arrested and forced to march to Lichtenwörth, a camp in Austria. Sara's aunt took care of her and her brother. They wanted to move in to a safe house protected by the Swedish Embassy. However, when they were to move in, an armed fascist patrol arrived and ordered everyone out of the house. The patrol ignored the Swedish protection papers and marched the inhabitants to the Danube River. When Sara arrived at the Danube, she saw what seemed like thousands of Jews waiting there. Fortunately for Sara and her brother, their father found out they were taken away and had somehow obtained protection papers from the Spanish Embassy for them. He rescued them and brought them to a house protected by the Spanish Embassy. One day, Sara's father arrived at the house completely soaked. Apparently, he was marched to the Danube to be shot but jumped into the water and swam away before the Nazis could kill him.

In November 1944, Sara and her family hid in a shelter as the Red Army bombed the city. After the Russian soldiers arrived and liberated them, Sara and her brother left Budapest. Their father placed them with some non-Jewish friends in Madysolka while he searched for his wife. He found her in Austria. She was very weak and sick from typhus. Sara's father found her mother proper medical attention and organized aid for his children. Sara and her brother were sent to Debrecen with other displaced children.

After a short stay in Budapest, the family joined Betar and prepared to leave for Palestine. The family travelled to Zagreb by train. They stayed there for four weeks until they were given berths on a cargo ship sailing to Palestine. Before it reached Haifa, the ship was redirected. Sara and her family were transferred to a British refugee camp in Famagusta, Cyprus where they lived for ten months. Members of the Jewish underground came to the camp to teach the refugees Hebrew and give them combat training. Sara's parents worked in the camp kitchen. Sara became ill with rheumatic fever and was taken to Larnaka for medical treatment. She suffered permanent damage to a heart valve during the course of her

illness.

Finally the family was taken to Palestine. They were quarantined for one month before they settled in Haifa. Sara prepared to go back to school, but had to remain home after her mother became pregnant. Sara attended night school where she learned Hebrew and secretarial skills. In April 1948, her baby brother was born. In 1951, Sara married and three years later, she had a daughter.

The fact that Sara's husband was a British citizens facilitated their entry into Canada. In 1959, they arrived in Canada and settled in Toronto where her family had moved to three years earlier. Immediately, Sara found a job finishing coats in a factory. Her husband worked as an electrician, then as a teacher. Eventually, Sara became a secretary for a Hebrew school where she worked for twelve years. Sara's husband died in 1980. Shortly afterwards, both of her parents passed away. In 1984, Sara moved to Israel to be closer to her daughter and three grandchildren. She remained there for six years. During that time she met her present husband. They were married in Israel and now live in Montreal.