

HVT-162

S., Ted 1926-1997

Ted S. Holocaust video testimony (HVT-162) interviewed by Gerry Singer and Sidney Shapiro, March 19, 1996.

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

Summary: Ted was born on March 5, 1926 in Sopron, Hungary. He and his sister were raised in a modern Jewish home. Ted's father was a decorated World War I veteran who owned a hardware store and his mother was a homemaker. Ted attended cheder for four years, then he went to a Hungarian public school for four years and eventually to a business college. Ted interacted with non-Jews as well as with Jews. He spoke German at home and Hungarian in school.

Ted gives a detailed account of the restriction of opportunities he suffered throughout his childhood because of the prevailing antisemitism in Hungary. He was barred from joining the Hungarian version of the Boy Scouts because he was Jewish. While Hungarian children played war games in a 'Hitlerjugend'-equivalent, Jewish boys had to dig trenches or clear snow. In the Hungarian schools, he was the only Jewish child in each of his classes because of the 'numerus clausus'. During these years, Ted witnessed how Jews were slowly deprived of their civil rights. Travelling was restricted, visas could not be obtained, Jews were forced out of their businesses and their possessions were confiscated.

After the German Army began its occupation of Hungary in March 1944, the family store was expropriated. All assets, radios, telephones, and jewelry were seized. Jewish families were moved into the Sopron ghetto. They were forced to wear the yellow star and obey a curfew. Men between the ages of 18 and 48 were taken to forced labour. Ted and his father were recruited into a labour brigade and worked as members of it from June until December 1944. Ted had to leave his sister and his mother in the ghetto. Ted and his father were sent to Koszeg, a gathering point for Hungarian work details. The men were sent west to build railways. Soon after their arrival in Koszeg, Ted learned that the Sopron ghetto had been liquidated and its inhabitants deported to an unknown destination. As the men built the railways, Ted saw trainloads of Jews passing by in cattle cars. Once, Ted and his father snuck away from their labour brigade. They hid in a barn and wanted to stay there until the Soviet Army (which was already nearby) could liberate them. Unfortunately, a German soldier discovered them and threatened Ted's father. Ted stabbed the soldier with a pitchfork. Ted and his father had to leave this hiding place and decided to return to the labour brigade. Shortly thereafter the labour camp was liquidated and the men were taken to Budapest.

During a heavy bombing, the men from Ted's work brigade were released into the ghetto. Ted was injured during that air raid, so he could no longer be taken to work outside the ghetto. The Hungarians told him he would be turned over to the Germans and sent to a concentration camp, but this never transpired because the Red Army laid siege to Budapest. Raoul Wallenberg came to the Budapest ghetto with an entourage and took Jews to the Swedish Embassy. Ted received Swedish citizenship from Wallenberg personally and was then walked back to the ghetto. In January 1945, the German Army retreated and the Soviets arrived. As they went through the ghetto, the Red Army detained able-bodied men as POWs. In February and March 1945, Ted's father was taken to a military airfield where he had to fill-in bomb craters.

In April 1945, Ted and his father returned to Sopron. Of the 2,500 Jews who lived in Sopron before the war, less than 120 had survived. Ted helped to establish a Jewish organization in Sopron. When people returned from the concentration camps, Ted learned

that his mother had been murdered in Auschwitz. His sister survived Auschwitz, but perished afterwards. In all, Ted lost 57 relatives.

While in Hungary, Ted was married and divorced. His father remarried and reopened the hardware store. After the communists took over, Ted was afraid of being drafted into the army so he fled to Vienna. His father and stepmother followed eight months later. Ted stayed in Austria for two years and worked for a lumber export company. Friends sponsored Ted and his parents, and they emigrated to Canada in 1951. Ted worked several jobs for a few years before opening his own business. Ted married a second time. When his wife passed away, he married again.