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Summary

Julianna Budai, born (Stark) Szigeti on November 7, 1941 in Budapest, Hungary. Both parents came from big families and lived very close to each other in the Lipótváros section of Budapest. Her paternal grandfather was a timber merchant, buying and selling timber all over the Habsburg Monarchy. Her father, the youngest of six siblings was born in Slovakia in 1911, but the family moved to Budapest soon after. Her father was raised by the oldest sister, because their mother had died young. In the 1930s, the family moved to Visegrádi St.

In the same street, the maternal grandfather, Hermann Kertész, had a bookbinding business. He came from a family of typographers in Karcag, where they owned a printing press. Hermann Kertész's youngest daughter was Julianna's mother who had three siblings.

Neither of the families was well off. Most of the siblings either owned small stores or worked in commercial enterprises as employees.

Only her maternal grandparents were religious, and her two uncles.

Julianna's parents married in 1938. Her father worked in a store selling German (Schmura) cameras and photo equipment. They lived in Pannonia St. They had a daughter who died in infancy. Julianna was born in 1941, her brother Jancsi in 1944, a sister in 1946, and two more brothers afterwards.

She only knows what happened to her family during the war from family members. Her parents did not speak much about it.

1942-1944, her father had regularly to report for forced labor. In 1944, her mother with her and her baby brother had to move to a Yellow Star house (Főnix House) and then to the ghetto (she could not distinguish between the two). One night in December 1944, a relative by marriage, a certain Lővy who walked around in SS uniform took them out of the building because he had heard that the Arrow Cross was planning to shoot the inhabitants into the Danube the next morning. (Lővy was a well-known shoemaker who remained free because he made shoes for SS wives and somehow acquired an SS uniform). He took them to the Hotel Majestic in Buda Bimbo St. 67 [in fact, the Hotel Majestic was across Buda, on the Széchenyi Mountain, on 4 Karthauzi St. where Eichmann established his office.] to an Arrow Cross Party house. He knew the caretaker, who hid them for money in the basement. He did not, however, provide food. Julianna's baby brother died of starvation. After liberation, her father, who had survived forced labor and gone back to liberated Pest, came for them. They buried her brother in the garden of the Hotel Majestic.

After the war, her father became a Communist, a true believer, who only lost his enthusiasm in 1956. The family moved to Gödöllő where her father worked in the Ganz factory as a Communist party functionary.

She moved back to Budapest and lived with one of her aunts. She pursued an education in economics and worked in finance. She married shortly after high school. She has two children and three grandchildren.

Her memories are buried: for 50 years, on passing and smelling basements, she would panic.

When the Margit bridge in Budapest was renovated around 2011, she went to see it, and all of a sudden, the ruins of the exploded bridge clearly appeared in front of her eyes, which she had seen when she was three years old.