

Judy Jacobs Interview

September 2, 1999

The questions start out with asking about conditions before the war and everything, and the first question is, what was your name at birth?

Well, Judy, Judith is the Anglicized version, my Hungarian name is Judith, without the T.

Okay.

And it's, in Hungarian the J pronounces as a Y so it was Judith and my last name, my maiden name was Gondos, G-O-N-D-O-S.

Where were you born?

In Budapest.

In Budapest, in what year?

In 1937.

Do you know about the circumstances of your birth? Were you born at home or in the hospital?

Yes, I was born in the hospital. Probably no different than anybody who was born in this country in 1937. I think that Hungary had its pockets of less than forward or up to date areas but Budapest was and is a very up to date city.

What were your parent's names?

My mother is not alive. She, her name was Anna Ilona and her maiden name was H-A-V-A-S , pronounced *Havash* in Hungarian and my father lives here in the area and his name is Bela Gondos, B-E-L-A.

And, were there other siblings?

No, only child.

An only child, okay. And were the roles of your parents in the household traditional?

Meaning the Ozzie and Harriet Nelson stereotype? No, no. My Dad is a radiologist, obviously now retired. He was a radiologist in Hungary as well. My mother was trained in art and design and at one point in her life she did interior design and at another time she designed area rugs, various things of that nature. And, because, well, she was a pretty liberated woman anyway and she was well educated, but because of the war situation my dad was off in forced labor camp at least on two occasions that I'm aware of. In the early 1940s she became the breadwinner and, no, the decision making was always joint. No, not in the Ozzie and Harriet sense.

And so she worked outside the home?

Almost all her life, yes.

Was that unusual in your community?

No, no it's very interesting. The upper middle class Jewish people in Budapest, now I'm emphasizing upper middle class, not really socio, socio rather than economic terms, this was a very highly educated group of people. And, uh, the women were equally well educated. And, this was typical – I'm the son my parents never had. I got a Ph.D. in middle age, but it was, it was a great disappointment that I didn't go to medical school which is what I had originally wanted to do. That was the expectation because, in my family, anyway, in my parent's circle of friends, women were not subjugated, even in the 30s or even in the 20s. I came from a much more liberated environment than my husband who was born in Detroit.

Do you think that was typical because you were in a big city and you were Jewish or was it...

I think probably both of those factors and the time. The Jews of Hungary, until the advent of antisemitism, it sort of filtered over from Nazi Germany and the Hungarians in their usual fashion had to outdo the Germans in, in their ability to perpetrate atrocities, but until that time, it wasn't. And then things changed.

What kind of neighborhood did you live in?

Well, it's interesting. We were back there in the early 90s, as a matter of fact a couple of times and it's still intact. In Budapest, a large apartment building, it was a rental, obviously there was very limited availability of housing during WWII, my parents kept saying that after the war they would buy a condo and Budapest is half Pest, half Buda separated by the Danube. And the Buda part is the greener part, the more desirable place and we were in Pest. It was a very lovely building, it is still a very lovely building. It's not a high rise, I think 5 or 6 stories with an atrium kind of a thing in the middle. We had a large, large apartment, it was very nice! We lived well. We lived every bit as well as we live here now. I mean, my parents, my parents lived better in Hungary than they ever lived in this country, although they lived just fine in this country, but we lived much better.

What was the inside of your home like?

Well, it was an apartment, the configurations were different, because among other things, help was very cheap, and middle class women just didn't do housework.

So you had servants?

We had people who did everything, right. My mother never learned to cook until she came to this country. She, you know, supervised the help but, I mean, she just didn't. There was better use made of space than we have here. You didn't have single purpose rooms. We had three very large rooms, which had large doors, which opened into one another. The end one was mine and it was kind of, you know, a daybed, armoire, shelves kind of room. Middle room was, they called it the salon, don't ask me why, it was a very formal room. And, you know, kind of overstuffed, stuffy furniture with carving and its piano and that kind of thing. And then the third room, which was the largest of all – oh, and my room also contained a dining table. And then the third room, which was my parent's room, it had daybeds, but it had... what you call them, armoires, it had a dining room table, it sounds, well, the point was they were all multi-functional rooms, then there was a huge L-shaped hallway and the entry hall which was probably as big as this room. For purposes of your tape recording it's about 15 and a half square, I just remember that. So it was at least this big if not bigger and there was furniture there as well and then there was an L-shaped hallway with a maid's room, bathroom. The bathroom and the lavatory were separated and there was only one and in this day and age that's sort of unheard of but that's how it was. There was a pantry and a huge kitchen.

So you had a live-in person?

Always, always! And then people would come in to do various other things. But this was not unusual. This is, it's a function of the cost of labor. We didn't have a washing machine but it was of no concern because somebody came and did the laundry. And each apartment building on the top floor would have a laundry room, you know, they have, this was not uncommon. But these were not washing machines, these were big laundry tubs and this low-priced labor would come in and do everything by hand. And, it would get dry and then she would bring it down and she would iron it. So it was just a different life style.

Now at some point did Hungary ban non-Jewish people from working in Jewish people's houses?

Yes. It did. That occurred, oh, I can't give you a precise date... The Jewish laws came in stages. Maybe in the early 1940s. I can't give you a precise date on that.

Did you ever feel any resentment from the people that you hired before the laws?

No, I was too young. I know that, again I can't give you a specific date, but when antsemitism became such that my parents would only hire Jewish live-ins, which meant that you couldn't always get a live-in anymore, for that matter anybody.

Did you go on vacations often?

My grandparents, my mother's parents, lived in a little town in southeast Hungary where we have also been in recent years, the name of the town is Bekes, it's not too far from the Romanian border and not really too far from Elie Wiesel country, Transylvania, but this is Hungary. And, because we were an urban family and my grandparents lived in a small town then, there was the possibility to get out to, I used to spend my summers with them, a good part of my summers with them. I don't believe I ever traveled and my parents would take little vacations within the country but remember that Germany invaded Austria in 1938 and then Hitler took Poland then in the following year and everybody, the handwriting was on the wall, so people were not traveling. I have no idea whether we would have or not, but, I mean, it just wasn't done, so no, other than going to... and my other grandmother lived in another community and episodically we went to visit her, but that's all that I remember.

How do you spell Bekes?

B-E-K-E-S. It's interesting, when we were there, we were there in 1990 and then again in 1992 we tried desperately to find my grandparent's home and we thought we had found it but unknown to us, the names of the streets had been changed. You know, they do this; first the communists come in and then everything is changed to Lenin and, and, you know the typical types of communist leadership types of names, then, the communists go out and they change it back again. But when we were there in 1992 they hadn't gotten around to changing them back. So anyway, we could not find.

Were there any Jews in the political structure of Budapest? Politicians?

Of Hungary? I, I can't answer that. To the best of my knowledge there were a few elected Jews in Parliament. But I, I, I can't give you a definitive answer on that.

Do you know what your family's political affiliations were?

Well, there were not parties like Democrat or Republican, I think. Again, I'm sorry, I have to plead ignorance as to the political parties.

Well you were young.

But I know that there was the Arrow Cross and various Fascist high parties, obviously they were not that. Whatever the diametric opposite of that they were.

Were they Zionists?

Oh, absolutely, my dad, absolutely.

Do you remember him going to meeting, meetings?

Well, this is an interesting story and I think this may be of some interest. No, not specifically. My dad comes from a little town in northeast Hungary, this is where he was

born, the name of the community is Erdobeny which is very, very close to a Hasidic enclave called Satoraljaujhely which is almost on the Czech border, to this day is a Hasidic enclave. He was there and his father was a schoolteacher and they moved elsewhere and, anyway, to make a very long story short, there was no high school in his community. So he was sent to another community, Satoraljaujhely, which was the nearest town with any size with a high school and he lived, you know, with strangers. This is high school begins at grade five, or it did at that time, so how old are you in grade five? That's a pretty young kid. Pre-b-, yeah, pre-*bar mitzvah*. This happened to be a Catholic high school, only one in town. He came from a very orthodox family. And antisemitism was very prevalent. He lived with [tape cuts out]. And anyway, a few people befriended him. Not too many. And one day he went home for lunch or dinner or whatever with a classmate who lived with two, I'm just going to say a politically incorrect term, I'll just say two unmarried sisters and one of them said to my father, "Bailey, you're such a nice boy, it's a pity that you're Jewish." Now just imagine a 12-year-old, who has nobody to tell this to, and he was devastated because he had grown up in a very orthodox environment. Entirely Jewish environment and so this was devastating and then in short orders, that concurrently, he was exposed to Zionist literature. And my dad was born in 1903 so this would have been in 1915 so the Zionist movement was a young movement at that time. If it was even a movement at that point. So, he was exposed to Zionist literature and it gave him what he needed. And he, essentially, from that point on was a Zionist and when he went to medical school he was very active in the Zionist group at the institution. But, when you say do I remember him going to meetings, not specifically. I do remember that his Zionist group held their own High Holiday services and I had some very vague recollections of attending these services, but it's not, it's not very specific. I do just remember doing this.

What were the schools like that you went to?

I went to a Jewish day school for as long as I went to school.

At what age did it start at?

The usual. I started as a first grader when I was six years old in September of 1943. Well, September 1943 was not the best of times. It was, you know, Dickens sense, not the worst of times, but it was not the best of time either. Nazis came in the March of 1944. 1943 was a time of very heavy bombing in Budapest so I started first grade in September and I think things were reasonably okay for a month or two, but by the end of the year, you know, I'm talking December, maybe even late November, the bombing was so frequent and so heavy that there were an awful lot of days when we just never got to school. And then I just don't really remember going to school much after the first of the year, it's a long time ago, I mean, it's very difficult to be specific. I remember going steadily at first, off and on later and going to pick up a report card sometime in early January or late December, I just have no recollection of going to school subsequent to that because of the bombing and then the Nazis came and that was sort of the end of first grade.

What did you do for fun when you were little?

Went to the air-raid shelter.

Well, okay.

Before we get into that let me digress just a little bit, okay? You asked about schools and I remember visiting in Bekes, you know, where my mother was from, a little town, the town now is about 30,000 population, I suspect it was half that or less when they were there, and again there were schools but not an awful lot and my mother had some relatives and the situation... There were no Jewish schools in Bekes, the situation with the schools was that Jewish kids could go to school but then some other government would be elected and they would decide they didn't want Jewish kids in the public schools so all the Jewish kids would be kicked out and then ten months later there would be another government and they'd let the kids back in. I remember visiting in early fall and my mother had a cousin who was really closer to my age than hers, and she came home crying one day, she said, "Jeez, I got kicked out of school again!", you know.

Again.

Again! She must have been, say I was 4, she must have been 12, 14, something like that. So this was typical. Well now, you asked what did we do for fun? Well, in the summers I went to be with my grandparents, and that was fun. It was outdoorsy and it was very nice. In the winter we ice-skated, that was sort of a family pastime. Parents both ice-skated and when I was probably no more than 3 if that, you know, they got me the ones with the, what do you call them, double blades, triple blades, and we used to do that and at lunch time my father and I would ice-skate together, I have fond memories of that. What else did, we would go to the park and play. Go to other kids' houses and play. Never went to the movies. Maybe they didn't even have children's movies. We didn't have television, obviously, which was a blessing.

Did you always have just Jewish friends?

I think so. I don't remember in Budapest having non-Jewish friends. There may have been some non-Jewish kids that I played with when I was at my grandparents. That was a fairly assimilated Jewish community. There was one set of grandparents who were very orthodox, my dad's. This set was very, very assimilated. Strong Jewish identification but very low observance.

Did they keep kosher?

Oh no, no.

Did your family keep kosher?

Well, at first when my parents were first married. You've probably heard this before but this was no joke in my family, there were three set of dishes. Third one being for *treif*. As

the war progressed you were lucky if you could get food. I mean, kosher food was... kosher meat was just unobtainable. You got what you could get.

Did your parents have any non-Jewish friends that were close?

That's an interesting question. Probably not. Not... I've never really thought about this but probably not. It was a segregated society. I think my father had professional acquaintances but I don't think they would classify as friends, I mean if they socialized it was very perfunctory. I think you see that here in the present in Kansas City and elsewhere too.

It has questions about your teenage years but...

They were in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

Oh, okay. What kinds of values or standards were most important to your parents?

To them or as they transmitted them to me, or both?

Both.

Values. Standards. You mean pre-war, post-war? They were changed people after the war. Very different I think than they were before.

Now before the war?

Well, all kinds... that's an interesting question. My father came from this very observant Jewish background. Had a pretty decent Jewish education. Not a scholarly level, but a pretty decent Jewish education. And this was important to him but I would not describe him as having been particularly observant. But I think the Jewish identity in general was very important to him and my mother, really, by association more than anything else. So I think the Jewish, the Jewish thing was very important. I think that the Zionist thing was very important to my father and it is to this day. And the Jewish communal concept, you know, that we are one people, value wise. Ah, just like anybody else his age, he was terribly interested in building his practice and practicing good medicine, and my mother was interested in what she was doing. They were interested in family. I don't remember anything like... I was too young, it's not fair. I really can't say. You know, the experience that we endured changes people. I don't think it changes your intrinsic value system but it changes so many things about an individual.

Do you know what religious life was like in the general city? Were most people observant or...?

In Budapest? I think there was a very broad spectrum, and increasingly broad as the war went on because there were so many refugees. For a long time, maybe long isn't a good term, but for some time Hungary was sort of a safe haven. That Hungary was the last to be taken by the Nazis. And so an awful lot of refugees from elsewhere, other countries, Jewish

refugees, found a safe haven in Hungary and brought with them whatever religious observance they had. I think Budapest had everything. Because my family, immediate family were not particularly observant at that stage of our lives, I don't remember knowing any ultra orthodox people except my grandmother, but she lived in a different community. So I, I, I can't answer that except I'm, I'm quite certain that there were close to 100,000 Jews in Budapest. It was a very large percentage. Don't hold me to that, but I think it was in that neighborhood. So obviously this is going to, it's enough of a number that you would be broadly represented.

What kind of synagogue did you belong to? Did your family belong to?

I don't think that synagogue membership in the Hungary of the 1940s was anything like we know it to be here. Here you decide where you want to go and the first thing is, they ask you how much do you earn, right. In Hungary there was, I don't know the terminology- but there was a tax that was levied by the government. There was no separation of church and state. There was some sort of a tax that was levied by the government and then redistributed to the Jewish community. So, I don't... in terms of percentages, numbers, I have no idea. But this did exist. And so, the Jewish communal institutions, at least synagogues and, and probably other things, I really don't know the specifics, were maintained under government auspices but with Jewish funds. It was mandatory. You were taxed just like an income tax, I don't know, but it was part of the tax system. So, synagogue membership was not like it is here. I remember only one time going to the synagogue except to this service that the Zionists had on the High Holiday and that was when my aunt and uncle got married. And, that's the only time I remember being in a synagogue. Now whether this is really so or not I don't know but this is all that I recall.

Did they have separate seating?

Oh yeah, yeah. At least in the one synagogue I went to. And to this day that synagogue has separate seating. That's, that is the, I think it's called the Great Synagogue of Budapest. It's been recently refurbished. It's still there and they still have separate seating.

There's a question on... Do you remember how you celebrated *Shabbat* on the holidays? You said you went to the Zionist...

I remember going with my parents. You know, this is really stretching me back a long time because when, in 1944 I was seven and nothing much happened in 1944. 1943 was pretty bad too, so this takes me back to 1942 and I was five years old and, so, I can't, I really have no recollections. I have absolutely no recollections.

It would be hard to remember back that far.

Well, I just don't remember.

You mentioned that your mom was interested in art. Do you remember if your family was interested in secular culture?

My, yes, yeah, my parents, you know, did the cultural things. My mother knew the contents of every art exhibit in Budapest as she did in Washington in her lifetime because she was very passionate about it. She was knowledgeable and she liked it. My dad and my mother, you know, went to the theater, went to the opera, I don't know if they went to the symphony or not. But they attended cultural events. That's really about all I can tell you.

Okay. Do you remember experiencing any antisemitism...

Personally?

... personally?

I don't think, not personally. It was an insulated life really. When I was younger I had either my parents took me to the park or whoever was working for us took me to the park. I went to a Jewish school. I had Jewish friends. No. I don't think so. I don't have any such recollection. It was there but I was insulated.

Then it's talking about occupation and marriage before the war but I don't think it applies to you.

No, not quite.

Do you remember being aware that there were Nazis and that they hated Jews?

Oh sure. I'm sure. Well, even though, you know, when you grow up in very troubled times, unless you're a total fool, even a young child is going to absorb what's going on and sure, my grandfather in this little town of Bekes that I had mentioned was a business man. He had, my family, my mother's family had been Hungarians but during WWI the boundaries changed, they found themselves in Romania and being devout, not devout, that's not the term, being loyal Hungarians they had to flee to Hungary to the wonderful Hungarians and my grandfather lost one business in Romania and started up other things and he was your proverbial good business man. He did very well. And... I can't remember the exact date of the first Jewish office call, there was the first Jewish law and the second Jewish law and a third Jewish law and in stages Jews couldn't own this and couldn't own that and couldn't own anything else. And anyway, in fairly short order within probably a year and a half or two my grandfather lost his means of livelihood which meant his capital was tied up in his business so, you know, he went from being very, very comfortable to being very uncomfortable. I was very much aware of that.

So they didn't shield you from this?

There was no way. My parents are not of the shield your child school anyway. I'm sure there were things that I was not informed about, but no, I, I was very much aware of that. My uncle, my mother's brother who also lived in this same small town, went off to forced labor service probably about 1941, maybe 1940, and I was very much aware when he left and he never came back. And my father went off a couple times so you can't shield, yeah. So, no, I was not shielded at all.

Were the newspaper and radio of prime importance? Do you remember your parents being really concerned reading the paper, listening to the radio?

Well, what I do remember is, I don't remember specifically, except I remember my father holding newspapers and reading them. I know that there was very heavy censorship and people tried to listen on the radio to stations which they were not allowed to listen to, and of course everybody did, and if you didn't, your best friend did. And that was sort of the source of information. My parents were very well informed but I can't tell you anything more specific than that. I just remember censorship because it was a constant source of complaint. You found out what was going on but by more indirect ways.

Do you remember the first day of occupation?

The first...

I'm trying to remember, would that be in '44?

1944, March 19th, 1944. The first day of the German occupation. Well, let me tell you the little bit that I do remember. This was March 18th or 19th, and, a day or two before that, and something in the back of my mind I think it was a weekend, and certainly that's easy enough to find out but I'm not positive, somebody came to our door and, I was sent out of the room. So what I'm telling you now is what I was told later. I remember this guy coming to the door and then I was sent out of the room, but it came from my parents later, much later. Apparently he was a friend of a relative or a friend of a friend and he had some military connection. Whether he was an active military person or reserve or about to be called up, I don't know. But, within this area of his military connection he found out that the Germans would be coming a day or two off. And he came to tell my parents, somebody had told him to come and he came to tell us that. I remember this but I can't be more specific than that. I don't remember the specifics but the location of this apartment building where we lived was three streets sort of converged, and it wasn't really a, well you can't call it a square if there are three streets that converge, but there was a little open area in the middle. And sort of diagonally across the street from us was a German school. And we saw for some days, maybe even a week before the German invasion we saw a flurry of activity there. More so than before. I don't know what the connection was with Germany, but it was known as a German school and that's really all that I can tell you. So there was a flurry of activity and then as, we found out that the Germans were coming and then the Germans came and it was almost frenzy. Other than that I, I can't say anything. After that an awful lot of things happened. That's really about all I can tell you on that score.

Do you remember seeing the Nazis?

Oh sure! Well, there weren't that many Nazi troops in Hungary. The Hungarians were very willing accomplices. I read someplace, I, I can't quote you a number because I'm sure it's inaccurate, but basically Eichmann did his job with just a very few hundred Nazis that most, most of the people who carried out the deportations were the Hungarians. So there,

there was a definite uniformed German presence in Budapest, but it was not an overwhelming presence but yes, I do remember seeing them.

Did your parents keep you in the apartment?

Well, we didn't really, the, the Germans acted very quickly and oh, within probably two weeks everybody had been ordered to wear a yellow star and there were only certain times of the day that we could leave and of course you were mortified to leave your place anyway and all kinds of other things. Oh, no, no, no. Going out was really the last thing anybody wanted to do. You had to go buy food if you were lucky enough to find some. But, no, it's, the source of information about whatever was going on was at the Jewish Community Center. Which was probably not too much more than a mile, mile and a half from our house walking distance. And by the way, again, within a very short time we were not allowed to go on any type of transportation, go in the parks, go anywhere where there was any kind of communal gathering, no movies, no lectures, and we were confined time wise. And, but the Jewish Community Center was, was an okay place to go, it was heavily watched by the Gestapo, but it was okay to go there and so there used to be these daily argument between my parents, my mother would say, "No, don't go, don't go." My father would say, "I have to go, I don't know what the hell is going on." And he would, went out almost every day unless there was an air raid, he'd walk to the Jewish Community Center, get all kinds of information, and come back. He always came back.

Was he working at that point?

Well, that's another story. Again I can't give you a date. I think it must have been early April of 1944. He went to work one day, as he usually did, he did, there was a, a, I guess you'd call it a dispensary for indigent Jews and he worked there an hour a day, every day as a community service. He'd leave the house around 7:30, get there at 8:00 be there until 9:00 and then go to his office. And, by about 11:00 he was home or maybe even 10:30 and my mother said, "Well, what happened?" "Well, the Gestapo came to the office." And he had a, his office was in the hospital. It was a, by 1944 standards it was a very well equipped office, very well located, nice hospital. Gestapo decided this was just what they needed for their personnel and they gave him 30 minutes to get out of there and he could take anything he could carry in his pockets.

In his pockets?

In his pockets! And so, well, what do you put in your pockets? He had a stethoscope that he had gone to medical school with, you know the old fashioned kind. Not the kind with a tube but it looks like a little horn. I'll show it to you before you go, it's here. Anyway, he was able to get that in his pockets, and a few other similar, totally antiquated things that were some place in the storage room and he said, "May I take some medical records?" And let me digress a little bit here. Radiology in these days is sub-specialized. In the 1940s it was not, at least not in Hungary, and so he did both diagnostic and x-ray therapy and he had a number of tremendously ill cancer patients and he pleaded with these guys, "Can I take these records with me so these patients can go elsewhere" and they wouldn't let him.

And that was, I remember he came home so depressed, he was so upset that here were these patients whom he needed and who really could not be effectively treated without their records, you know dosage and so forth, and, so anyway this is in early April and then from then on, no he wasn't, so that was it. But since he had been in labor service several times in their interims, he was gone for almost a year at one point, 6-7 months at another point, so his practice is always start and stop, which is no way to make a living.

Do you, then, remember your parents talking about the Nazis?

Oh yeah, oh yeah. Yeah, usually I would get chased out of the room because the less you know the safer you are. But, oh, how could you not? Communication with the rest of the country was cut off. Because of what my father did for a living we had our phone a little longer than some people but ultimately we lost our phone and the mail was censored even within the country and you couldn't send a telegram so everybody was in the dark about the rest of the family and oh, much discussion. Yes.

You had mentioned the refugees moving into the city, who took care of them? Did the Jewish organizations?

Yes, but again, I'm sorry I can't quote...

[End of Tape 1 Side 1- Beginning of Tape 1 Side 2]

Were any colleagues of your parents expressing any sympathy for your situation?

You mean non-Jewish?

Yeah.

Well, you know, it's a very interesting thing. But for the most part they were all fair weather friends for the most part. We had some neighbors in the apartment building with whom my parents thought they were very friendly and, when the handwriting was pretty well on the wall, all of a sudden they stopped speaking to them. On the other hand, there was, they were on the same floor. There was a family on the floor below us and the man of the family just sort of came up unannounced one evening and said that they would be glad to hide me and treat me as their own child and so forth and so on. Obviously it was not accepted, that was unique. Now, in the small towns, specifically with my grandparents, when they reached the point that Jews couldn't own anything, they had a number of wonderful non-Jewish friends who offered to keep things for them. And, unfortunately my grandparents never came back from Auschwitz. But when other members of the family tried to reclaim these things, you know, they never heard of them or they didn't, "Oh my God, this stuff was ours all our lives," you know, "my great grandfather gave me all these gold coins," or whatever it may have been. So, no, no. So that's the only exception to this that I remember is the one fellow from the floor below who said that he would take care of me. Otherwise, I know many stories of just the opposite. So you do what you have to do.

And I think that many of these people, if they befriended Jews or helped Jews were at risk to themselves.

Did you, I would imagine that since then you've had discussions with your parents about the fair-weather friends...

[TAPE INTERRUPTED – someone enters room and is introduced]

Yeah, I was, I was a stupid little kid, I thought it was pretty cool. A lot of these kids had, you know, fairly coarse materials but some place my mother found a piece of yellow silk so mine was silk and it was such a golden yellow, it was very pretty. I mean, I didn't get the impact. I was aware of what was going on but I just didn't get the impact. Of course, maybe nobody did. I don't know. I mean, I just didn't know. But I remember thinking gee, this is a pretty star. I liked it. I didn't mind wearing it at all but I didn't know any better.

This is, these are the questions that lead up right before the war. It's asking, were you deported to a concentration camp?

Yes, yes.

Okay, was that the first step in your movement away from your home, is deportation? And where were you deported to?

To Bergen Belsen.

Okay. And how did you receive, like, the deportation notice? Did it, was it personal to your family, or...?

That is, as they, they would say in Yiddish, "A whole *megillah*." Are you interested in a long story?

Sure.

We were on a train called the Kasztner Train.

Kasztner?

Kasztner, K-A-S-Z-T-N-E-R. This is well documented in the history books. Kasztner was a Hungarian, actually he came from Transylvania, but southeast Hungary, he was a leader, a Zionist leader, and he was also involved in rescue and relief work in Budapest. There was an organization called something like the Rescue and Relief Committee, or something like that. He was an officer of this. Where... There were historically a number of situations where there was a negotiation with the Nazis. There was something in Slovakia, I can't remember the name of the people, maybe I should say I can't pronounce the name of the people, but there were a number of episodes, so I don't know where he got the idea. But, he was a negotiator, he was a wheeler-dealer. And, this was known to Eichmann and he

was summoned by Eichmann and Eichmann said to him I'll make a deal with you. Eichmann wanted trucks and other things and he said if you can negotiate with the Allies I promise not to use them against the Allies. I mean, you know, like he could be trusted! And so it's really a very convoluted and complicated story but there was a guy named Joel Brand in Budapest who was dispatched to negotiate on behalf of Kasztner, on behalf of Eichmann. To negotiate with a Jewish agency in Istanbul who they hoped would somehow then talk to the Allies. And Joel Brand was, he had a German passport, they gave him a German passport, they gave him German visa, and he had to go to, by way of Aleppo, Syria, and he was there detained and then the representatives of the Jewish agency didn't want to talk to him, and what kind of credibility did he have? And he was imprisoned and so this never came off, it was a total failure. It's really a very long story but it failed. However, it opened the door! And, if anything, the Nazis were pragmatists. So, there was a deal. And essentially the deal was that Kasztner could gather up, oh, it started out to be 12, 1300, ultimately there were about 1800 on this train. That 1800 people, Jewish people to be chosen by the Jewish community, Kasztner, would get safe passage to Lisbon, Portugal, a neutral country, in return for money. And it was to be about 1000 bucks a head. And, Kasztner had freedom of movement, this is, this must have occurred in late April or early May of 1944. Aside from the heavy bombing, which almost precluded leaving home anyhow, the Nazis had such heavy restrictions and even if they didn't, the stories that we heard about them were such nobody ever wanted to go outside anyhow. But anyway, he had freedom of movement and he put together a list and, I guess through the Jewish agency and the Joint and whatever else organizations there were with money. There was promise of the money. If you had the money, obviously, you were obligated to pay, but by this time nobody had anything. We certainly didn't. I think there were some who probably did and probably had it illegally but I know my family at this point had nothing. And, so Kasztner put together a list and, because of the Zionist affiliation, at least that's what my father tells me, that was our ticket. And...

Really, it wasn't the fact that he was a doctor?

No, he didn't think so. There were an awful lot of doctors in this group. So, that's the, we, so there was an application process of some sort and I guess sometime in May or early June we learned that we were going and nobody told me. I mean, this I didn't know about. I was just told at some point in June that we're going, pack your toys or whatever you can carry. So there was some notification, I can't tell you just exactly what it was though. But it was a result of an application of some sort.

So, did you leave from your home or did you went to Bergen Belsen first and then left from there?

No, no, no. By the time we left Budapest it was on the 30th of June 1944. The city at that point had not been ghettoized. What they did was they took apartment buildings and designated them Jewish houses. Now the non-Jews didn't have to move out if they didn't want to but the Jews all had to move in. As it turned out most of the non-Jews did move out because they had the availability of much better quarters. Our house was declared a Jewish house so we didn't have to move and all kinds of people moved in with us. And so

that, we went from there to sort of a collection center some place. And then from there to the train station.

Okay, and then the train took you to...?

Bergen Belsen, yes. Sort of a circular route but that's another story.

The next questions deal with like liberation. I don't know if you want to stop today so you can do other things or....

It's totally up to you. I'm perfectly happy and willing to continue as long as you have the time. Whenever you wish. If we don't finish, again I'm certainly happy and willing to get back together.

Okay, that's fine.

What was your question?

It talks about the circumstances leading up to liberation.

Well, we were not liberated, we were ransomed out of there. We got to Bergen Belsen, oh I don't know, a week - ten days after we left Budapest, some time in early July in 1944 and when we left there in December of 1944 which is the before the end of the war and a small group of this 1800 had got to leave earlier, around October. It had to do with how quickly they came up with the money. Money was not that plentiful even for the Jewish organizations and I don't know how the first group was selected to leave but we were not in it. We left them at the Swiss border, money exchanged hands and then our train proceeded and just went on. We were not, we were not liberated. You will see movies and so forth in the camps, no, we were not.

And so you were with both parents at that point?

Yes, yes I was.

Any other family members?

Yes, my father's brother had been off in labor camp but his wife, my aunt by marriage and my cousin were with us.

Do you remember crossing into Switzerland?

Uh-huh, yeah, I do. It was Christmas Eve. I mean for a Jew this is not supposed to be meaningful, but we crossed into St. Gallen, Switzerland and I heard church bells. It was very moving! Because it was a sign of peace and tranquility and things that had not been part of our life, our lives, for a long time. So yeah, I do remember that and the Swiss Red Cross took care of us and the International Red Cross.

Where did you go once you were in Switzerland?

Well, Switzerland as you know, is, their economy is based on tourism but during WWII there was very minimal, if any and so there were a lot of vacant hotels. And, you know, I don't know who subsidized us financially, whether it was the Jewish organizations or the Swiss government, out of the goodness of their hearts. I really, I don't know this, but we were, as were many other groups of refugees, put into what were at that time vacant hotel properties. Obviously not the most opulent but very nice, they were really nice. We, well, we were in several places, and um, in several hotels. Most notably I remember being over Montreux, beautiful place. Certainly a departure from where we had been before. We were there for a number of months and then my dad decided that his skills were getting awfully rusty but foreigners just couldn't work in Switzerland. They still can't. And so he was able to go work in Zurich as a radiologist, sort of as a volunteer but there was no means of sustenance, once they left this hotel no one was going to subsidize them, and the only thing that a foreign person could do for pay was to do very menial work. And so my mother got a job cleaning vegetables in one of the hospitals in Zurich. And this was enough to pay for a furnished room and buy food and I got sent off to boarding school. And I know my parents didn't pay for this but I cannot tell you where the funding came from.

Where was the boarding school?

Well, the school moved while I was there. First it was near Fribourg and then it moved to, not, to the German area near Bern, actually it was somewhere near Interlaken in the mountains.

What grade did you go into? Was it inappropriate for your age or do you remember?

Well, at this point it was in the German speaking part of Switzerland but I spoke not a word of German when I got there. I never attended second grade, not much of first grade. It was a pretty free environment. You might call it Montessori style circa 1945 or 1946. I don't remember being in a grade. Somehow I functioned. I liked Germany and I was there for about year.

Did you consider yourself a refugee at that point?

Oh yeah.

Were there other refugees children there with you at the schools?

Yes, uh-huh. Many. Maybe all. Very heavily refugee kids.

Who were the teachers?

They were accredited Swiss people. This was a private school and I think the school had been in Germany and the guy who owned and ran it was a very anti-Nazi and fled Germany when the Nazis came. Not Jewish, but a decent man. And he set up shop in

Switzerland. Now how is a guy gonna get students in Switzerland if he's from Germany so somehow I think that all these refugee kids probably kept him going. That's really about all I can say. I hated it! It was horrible. I mean, I think it's a terrible thing to send a child that young away to school even under normal circumstances. I think it was a very bad mistake but I wasn't asked.

Were there any choices? Did your parents have choices?

Well, they didn't have to go to Zurich I suppose. I mean, you know, people do what they have to do.

What other kinds of education was available to you at ...

Oh, I see, I see what you mean. The choices, well, those who stayed in this communal living arrangement in the hotels, they, the kids did not go the Swiss schools from there, they, they utilized the teachers who were in the group and there were an awful lot of them. This was a very elite group educationally. And they brought in some teachers. The Swiss are very meticulous about doing things right and they, they supervised. So, I think they did okay. I, I can't say that with real conviction because I wasn't there but I, I think they did okay.

Now, how long were you at the school?

Maybe a year. And then after Zurich I don't know whether my mother got tired of peeling potatoes or my father got tired of working and not being paid or, I don't know what the specific circumstances were but there is a place in Geneva, it was called a home for intellectuals. It was a large, probably still there. I haven't been there since. It is or was a very large estate, I mean, totally palatial and, lots of bedrooms, communal, common areas, and it was, again I don't know who funded this, but it was a home for refugee intellectuals. And, my father was accepted to be there except there were no bedrooms so we rented one little furnished room someplace, which the three of us shared which was walking distance and then spent our days among all these high level intellectuals. I'm not sure what, just exactly what this was all about or what they intellectualized about. It was communal living in that the women, very sexist, the women cooked and cleaned and the men did lofty things like, you know, discuss the meaning of existence.

Which was a big change from the life in Budapest.

Yes, and we were there, oh, I don't know how many months we were there, but that was our last stop before we left. Strange environment. And, so, up until that point, that had to be the late summer and early fall of 1946, it had to be. I had never really gone to school. Real school. And, so they got me a, they got me two tutors, a tutor in English and a tutor in math. And, uh, my math tutor in a period of about two or three months taught me enough math that I was oh, probably in ninth grade before I learned anything new again and I learned enough English to function.

So had the, do you think the decision was being made to come to the United States?

Yes, I think by this time the decision had been made. I think that the issue really was by this time I think my parents knew that their families were gone and they just wanted no part of Hungary because there was nobody there for them and tremendous animosity, rightly so, the Hungarian people, so then what are their choices? And that was a problem, however they felt so lost in this troubled world, had an uncle who was at that time a family practitioner in Arlington, Virginia, suburban Washington, and at that point that was the only known relative. And my uncle put out upon my parents to come to this country. That was the basis for the decision.

Were you in good physical shape at that point?

Yeah, oh yeah. Well, when we left Bergen Belsen we were all skin and bones and weak and malnourished and many people had many other problems but by Switzerland we were okay. Yeah, we were all right.

How do you think the uncle in Virginia, did he send money to have you to come over? Do you know what the mechanism was?

No, I... Well, vaguely. He's a kind hearted, good man and if he did he did it gladly and if he didn't it's because he didn't have to. There were a few distant relatives in Europe here and there, and if memory serves, they helped out a little bit. And I, I just can't be specific, I just don't know. I do know that we landed, would you believe in Gulf Port, Mississippi, and my uncle wired money to us to take the train to Washington. That I remember specifically. Well, why did we land in Gulf Port, Mississippi? Cause, you know, visas are finite and we had gone to Genoa, Italy to try to book passage and in the meantime there was a dock strike, nothing was coming and nothing was going and finally we had to take the first thing that was available which was an empty freighter coming back or our visas would have expired. And, so that's how we ended up in Gulf Port, Mississippi.

Ok! Do you remember what your feelings were when you heard the war was over?

We were in Switzerland. We were out on a hike, I do remember because we were out on a hike in the mountains over Montreux and all of a sudden the funiculars that go up and down the mountain, each one that came back down, people were yelling and screaming and waving their arms. Yay, yay, yay, you know, that kind of thing. So, we asked, well, what are you so happy about? Well, the war's over. Well, it was, it was a relief but of course that's when all the bad information subsequently came, so it was a short-lived feeling of jubilation. But yeah, oh, at least temporarily it was great. But we were at that point, we were no longer living Spartans, so we had been there, that was what, May? I think so. Yeah, so we had been there about 5 months, 4 months.

How many years do you think it took for your family to comprehend the scale what had happened? Did it happen instantly or did it happen in stages?

Well, I think, you know, they, they knew that their families had been killed. There was, there was, that was black and white. I'm sure you've heard this before. We didn't talk

about the Holocaust. It was, it was so black, it was so bitter, it was so painful that for years it just never was talked about! It was only when the whole idea was opened up and, you know, whole concept of, the whole idea of Holocaust studies became accepted and popular and all the historians became so prolific on the subject that we even talked about it. I can't tell you. I, I know that there was tremendous depression for years over, I mean, we were fine, sure it wasn't necessarily easy the first few years that we were here but, I mean, it wasn't an overwhelming struggle. It was hard work but it was not overwhelming. But the knowledge of what had happened and of course some of it came in in bits and pieces and each piece of news, you know, occasionally an Auschwitz survivor would tell something or somebody who was in the military regiment to which my uncle's forced labor battalion was attached would tell us something. And of course each piece of news was just devastating, and, and this went on for years and then after a while was pretty well, that was going to be known was known. But I can't answer your question directly.

How old were you when you got to Virginia?

Nine.

You were nine years old.

It was November of 1946.

And, did both of your parents look for jobs right away?

Well, at first we stayed with my aunt and uncle for a number of months. My father knew that first of all his English wasn't very good. Maybe there was not, I don't remember, if he spoke English it was very minimally, as did my mother, even worse. And, he had really, because of all the things that had happened not done any radiology for a number of years so he knew he needed some kind of a refresher course. Now, interesting enough, credentialing wise, he didn't have to take a residency because he had done enough professionally and it was well documented. But anyway, to make a long story short, my dad knew the guy who was the Chief of Radiology at Georgetown and he went in there for a few months, obviously not for pay, just sort of to get his feet wet and ultimately took a fellowship in Boston for two years.

And did your mom work?

Yeah, my mother, while we were in Virginia my mother got a job sewing lampshades for a woman who had a lamp store on Du Pont Circle and she did that for, I don't know, however many months we were there and then we went to Boston at which time she was an experienced lampshade maker.

And you were enrolled in school?

Oh yeah. They sent me to school, we arrived in November of 1946 and well before Thanksgiving I was in school. Fourth Grade, where I belonged. I learned English very quickly, I didn't have a choice.

Now you had already had some English tutoring?

I had had about 2, 3 months in Geneva.

Okay. Did you feel like you were a stranger?

Sure.

In school?

Sure.

How did the kids treat you?

Nicely. Very nicely. I think I was a curiosity. This was in, this school was in Falls Church, Virginia. My aunt and uncle lived Arlington, adjacent community. And, this is 1946, I don't think that at this point there had been such a tremendous influx of refugees yet and maybe they never got to Falls Church, Virginia anyway. And, well, I was a curiosity. You know the kids were nice. The kids were very nice. I had no problem.

It probably was a different situation for you because you had been in a Jewish day school and here you were in a school where you were...

Yeah, a public school. Well, this was during a time when the state of Virginia permitted - in the Supreme Court, United States Supreme Court, had not ruled it unconstitutional, the teaching of religion. And, you know Christmas comes up soon after Thanksgiving and I remember there was a Bible teacher that used to come, and I didn't know that I could get myself excused, what did I know? I didn't even know that I was supposed to tell anybody. And I was just a little paranoid at this point and she'd bring pictures of Jesus and we'd have to sing Christmas carols and that was just part of the deal. It was, that was probably the strangest thing. But it didn't last that long.

And where were you living, in an apartment or with your uncle?

We stayed with my aunt and uncle from November til the end of the school year. My father left earlier to go to Boston and mom and I stayed on until school was over, yes.

And then how long did you live in Boston?

Two years. Brookline. Which is like making *Aliyah*, going to Brookline.

Okay, bit of a strong Jewish population?

Oh, very heavy. It is still. Very heavy Jewish population. I went to a public school but it could have been a Jewish day school.

What type of religious activities was your family involved in, like in Brookline, in Boston?

Well, we didn't have the money to pay synagogue dues but we did affiliate however it is you affiliate with a conservative congregation. It's still there, it's one of the bigger ones, I don't remember. I don't think we went to services very often. I think my mother had to work Saturdays and my father certainly had to work Saturdays. I don't remember. I do remember going to Hebrew school. Kehilath, it was Kehilath Israel. I remember going to Hebrew school like three times a week or whatever. That's about all I remember there. No strong Jewish affiliation.

Did they quit keeping kosher?

Yes. Interestingly enough, my parents never kept kosher after that until, oh my mom died in 1985. It must have been in 1975, they decided they had too many friends and the rabbi who would never eat at their house so they decided they would get kosher again! 1975 my mother was 65 my father was 72, but until that point, and this was not a *Halachically kosher* home. But it was okay.

Was your family involved in any, like, Zionist organizations or anything?

In Brookline I don't think so. In Washington subsequently all kinds of things, yeah, but not in Brookline.

Were their closest friends other survivors or refugees or...

Well, that was sort of an evolution. Do you have time to continue or do you need to go?

We can go on if you...

No, I'm fine. Well, at first you find those with whom you can communicate and they had to be Hungarian speaking people and I'm sure this is true of other people who have come from elsewhere, somehow they smell one another out. Now in Boston I remember very specifically there were two Hungarian families who became very close friends. They were both Jewish. Neither were Holocaust survivors, they were both physicians, the men, and they became life long friends. I'm, I'm not really sure how the contact was made. Then we went back to Washington in 1949 and sort of the same thing happened. And then the, except at this point there were a lot of Holocaust survivors as well and a lot of physicians who were Holocaust survivors. They became a fairly tight knit group. A lot of Hungarian-Jewish doctors in Washington. And then over the years, as all of them became more assimilated to, not assimilated as being less Jewish, but assimilated into American culture, um, I think this applied to the others, it certainly applied to my parents, it's not that they were no longer friendly with these people but as they learned the language and were acclimated to the culture, they found many other people. My mother particularly was very

friendly. Very gregarious. Found other people with similar interests so, it was an evolution.

So you were in Boston for two years and then you moved back to Washington?

To the Washington area, right. Maryland.

And where were you living when you graduated from high school?

Chevy Chase, Maryland.

So you stayed there for graduation?

Yeah, uh-huh, yeah. Best of Chevy Chase High School.

Were you confirmed?

Yes, I was confirmed - I never had a *bat-mitzvah*. But in the congregation to which we belonged in Washington, girls did. Not now, but it's [unclear], but yes I was confirmed.

And, did you go directly to college after that?

Yeah, uh-huh.

Where did you go?

The University of Michigan undergraduate school.

And what did you major in?

Education, by default. It was just, at that point in my life I just wanted to finish and it was the easiest, the least restrictive.

How did you end up at the University of Michigan?

That's an interesting question. Oh, I knew I'd meet my husband there. I wanted to go away. I thought I wanted to pursue medicine but I wasn't positive. I wanted to go to a large school so that I would have some academic options. Was not accepted at Harvard. It was Radcliffe at the time, not Harvard. And U of M was less expensive - very good school but it was less expensive than comparable private institutions. So that, essentially that was it.

Did your parents have any input into your decision?

No, they really didn't know, neither did I. But they knew even less. No. No, they... That was fine.

Did they feel funny having you go so far away?

Oh, they tried to bribe me to stay. [briefly talking over each other and unclear.] I think, I'm not sure if my family had two cars when I went to college or not but I was promised my own convertible and other things and I said thanks but no thanks. That kind of thing. I came close. I would have gone to George Washington and I, I came very close but I did go away.

That might be a good place to stop then.

End of Tape 1 Side 2

When we stopped last time you were in college.

I was in college?

You were in college, at the University of Michigan.

That was 39 years ago. I graduated in 1960. Yes, that's where I went to undergraduate school.

And you said you majored in education?

Uh-huh.

Were you planning on teaching?

No. I started college as a pre-med, and the typical style of the 50s I met my husband the first Sunday I was up at Michigan and, he was a senior medical student, you know, robbing the cradle kind of thing and it just wasn't feasible, you know, at that, the culture was such that in the 50s that you did not pursue a career unless you really had to. So I was sort of a, vacillating pre-med for a while and then I realized the easiest route is education. That's what I did.

Now what did your parents think of that because your mom was professional?

Oh, they were disappointed, they were acutely disappointed. Anyway they were very, very disappointed because I'm the son they never had. They learned to live with it, they had no choice.

Did they feel like if you had still been back at home that you would have probably been a doctor but because you came to the United States...

That was never pursued, I remember in the 50s it was, medical school admissions were very, very tight, it was much harder to get into medical school than it is now. You know, it's a cycle and I think right now as my son Dan who went to KU Medical School always

said if, if you don't drool on your shoes you can get into KU Medical School. I'm not sure that's entirely true. It was very, very difficult and I can remember many Saturday nights, you know, my parents would sit around the dining room and living room with their friends and they would plot where should Judy apply to medical school. And somebody decided, well, Yeshiva University might be a good bet because it is a Jewish school and so forth and so on. But no, as for what might what have been, that was never discussed. I, I have no idea.

At this point did the topic of the Holocaust come up often, did you ever discuss it with your friends?

No. Absolutely not. When I came to this country in the fourth grade, 1946, nothing was said subsequently. Remember this was before the state of Israel was established, and many Jews were still paranoid about their Judaism in this country too, and there was a lot of fear among people that the economic pressures that would be put on the Jewish community might be very heavy. And so the outside world wasn't really interested. Even the Jewish world. Nobody asked. Obviously, after 6, 8 months I did not have an accent but my parents did and my dad still does. He's very articulate but he speaks with a very heavy accent. So it was obvious when people met my parents and of course, "Where are you from?" would always be the first question. But, people didn't want to hear. And kids at school didn't want to hear when I got to I think 9th grade or so I changed high schools because we moved and my whatever teacher she was, English teacher or whatever she was, realized by looking at my records that I was foreign born, she was fascinated and she asked me to talk to the class and I did. And I think it was well received, but I don't remember, but that was the only interest. And, my parents never talked about it and their friends didn't talk about it. I think people repressed it because the pain was so severe and the rest of the world had not yet quite awakened. And then, you know, the era of cultural pluralism arrived and all of a sudden it was just fine to be Jewish and then everybody started writing books about all kinds of ethnic stuff and ethnic studies and all of the sudden all of the literature proliferated, but that was many, many years later. So no, there was no discussion. Except the occasional reference, you know, "Gee this reminds me of your grandmother," or something like that.

So, what did you do after you graduated from college?

Well, I was married by the time I graduated from college, I actually, I had one child before I graduated from college and then I graduated from college and we were in the service. Dave was stationed at Fort Riley. We had one child. I went to K-State to graduate school. We went back to Ann Arbor where Dave finished his residency. I did some more graduate work and I had my son Dan and just found out that going to school and having two kids with a husband who is never around is just an impossibility so the whole thing was shelved. I was a very frustrated full-time homemaker. We had a year in Chicago, which was even worse. Dave did his fellowship and then we came to Kansas City, and I was still a full-time homemaker. I had two children, I despised being at home, not kids, that was great, but I just despised being home. It just was not for me. Then when Jonathan, my youngest, went to kindergarten I went back to school.

And where did you go back to school?

UMKC.

And what were you working on?

I got an MBA in finance and then I got a Ph.D. in higher educational administration-finance concentration, sort of institutional economics.

Uh-huh. Did you ever bring up the topic of the Holocaust with the kids or at what point did you bring up that topic?

Well. I have to think a little bit. I can't give you a specific year. But, you know, are you familiar with the *Yizkor* Service?

Yes.

Well you know there is an *El malei rachamim* for this one and for that one. And a prayer for this one and the other. And for many, many years, I'll backtrack, Rabbi Margolis and I have talked about this and he insists that ever since he came to Beth Shalom, the six million were always included and I was not here as early as he was. So I, I am taking his word for it. In the congregation to which my parents belonged in Chevy Chase, Maryland, conservative congregation, the six million victims were not mentioned for a long, long, time. And in this context, my father tried to have a meaningful, character building conversation with the rabbi, at which he's pretty good. Or used to be. So in this context the Holocaust came up several times and ultimately that was changed. I don't know if it was his doing too or not. And then during the *Seder*, because of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising also was at the time of the *Seder*, was that 1941 or 2... I'm sorry, I don't know, it totally escapes me. That happened on the night of the first *Seder*, many people include a prayer in memory of that. My father found one, this was many decades ago at this point, and included one in our *Seder*, and subsequently, we have done the same. And in that context the Holocaust came up. But, just was not part, it was not until the rest of the world became interested in the Holocaust that we talked about the Holocaust. Before my mother died, and that was in 1985, she was, she had breast cancer, she was terminally ill for three years, she was in absolute misery, but I, she and I talked a lot about the past. I just wanted to get information that I knew I could never get again. And then we talked about the Holocaust, but that may have been the first time. I mean in depth except in passing.

Do you remember becoming a citizen? This is kind of, you know...

Well, yes. Yes. I was, I can't remember if it was five or seven years, I guess it had to be seven....

I think it's five.

Seven? Maybe five.

I think it's five.

I'm sorry, I'm embarrassed that I don't remember. But either way, so if it's five years, we came in 1946, say they applied for whatever the papers were in 1947, so it was 1952. That's right. That sounds right. Again, I don't know what the laws are today or what they were subsequently, but when we became citizens, kids under, I think it's under 21, but perhaps it was 18, automatically became citizens when their parents became citizens. And you automatically were put on your, if your parents were married to each other, you were automatically put on the naturalization papers of one or the other parent, I think the mother. And so that just happened and then, and a couple of years later it dawned on me that I'd like my own paper. That it would just make life a lot simpler and I had to file an application and go down and get it and have a picture and all of that. But this was after the fact. I remember with my parents we had spent a couple of years in an apartment in Prince George's County, Maryland, which is to Washington what Wyandotte County is to Kansas City, and then subsequently we moved in the early 50s to the house to where my father lived until he sold it a couple years ago. And when they went to, they had to fill out forms when they applied for citizenship. And they had to have people provide affidavits for their character. And, these were written and notarized and all this, and well they go to be sworn in, and as they are there my dad had to take a half a day off from whatever from his practice and my mother from what ever she was doing and the county seat was a long ways away, so this was a real deal. So they are out there and either the judge or the clerk said hey, there's a gap here where you don't have somebody vouching for you and if you can't get somebody to vouch for you for, I don't know what time periods, it's not really on it, we can't grant you citizenship. So they thought long and hard and remembered a friend who had known them for this time period, called her and said grab a cab, we'll pay for it, just get yourself out here. Poor woman had two little kids. So she throws her clothes on, she puts the kids in the cab, she goes out to Upper Marlboro, which was the county seat. And so anyway, they became citizens and they came back to tell me that it was so nice because the judge gave them a little speech about how wonderful it was for this country that they got another doctor. So, this is my memory of it. I was not there. I was in school.

What did your parents think of the 60s or what did you think of the 60s? I mean, having come here under duress and...

Which aspect of the 60s?

The unrest, the riots, the people burning the flag?

I don't think I thought about it very much. I, now that you mention it I'm sure I read the papers and saw the news and talked about it. But obviously it made no lasting impression on me. I mean, I understand its impact on our lives and society, but I just don't remember having much of the reaction. I don't know, it may be that I was too engulfed in diapers and bottles and carpools and whatever. I just have no recollection. I don't recall ever discussing it with my parents either. And my parents were very current on what was going on in the world. I just don't remember.

Did you ever feel different in your social group in the United States from maybe, from the people who were born here?

Yeah. Well. When you're a teenager, what is the single most important thing? You have to be like everybody else. I mean your peer group is the single most important thing in your life. And, the same way, you want a mother and a father, I mean, if, if, if you have to show off your parents and hopefully you can hide them in a closet, right? But, if you had to show them off you want, you want your parents to be just like Tom, Dick, and Harry's parents. And my parents were not. You know, in retrospect, they really were many cuts above the parents of most of my friends. This is not to demean my friends, but they weren't, they're very strong, purposeful people. But at the time all I knew was that all of my friends had stay-at-home moms who listened to those soaps or whatever they call them on radio, had their aprons on and baked cookies and ironed, whatever. And my mother didn't do that. And the fathers all went to baseball games and many of them were good old boys. So, in that respect I felt different and I never became acculturated. It was only after I had my children that I realized the things that I learned, or maybe I still haven't learned them, the things that I did not learn as a young child. For example, we laugh about this all the time. I have four kids and I never knew, my oldest is a daughter as I told you, and then we had three sons, I never knew that a mother is supposed to sit in the bleachers and watch every damned sports event that her kid participates in. I mean, you have to do this whether you like it or not! I did not know that. It was only, I think, maybe toward the end of my second of three son's high school career that I figured that one out. And there were other things too. I just, I didn't understand about being an involved parent and trotting up to school all the time for this or for that. But you really asked about when I was a kid. I was different. I just didn't know what American kids did and because my home was so different, first of all I had two working parents, and nobody ever said to me, now, this is what you have to do. But I, I had sort of learned that you pitch in. There were three of us and we all had to pull our weight and this is part of growing up too quickly I think, too, during the Holocaust. But, so you know, I had to go home and I had to do this and I had to do that and what my parents said was a bond. There was no particular enforcement – it's just the way it was. When I was in high school, that was 1952 to 1955. 1952 we had been here about five years, five and a half years, I still didn't, I was totally not aware of what high school is really about. I just thought that school just meant going to class. You know, I went to school, I went to my algebra class and I went to my French class and this and that and then I went home. And I did not understand extracurricular activities. And, interestingly enough, I was - academically, I was great. I was near the top of my class but I didn't do a darn thing extracurricular wise. And a teacher told me toward the very end of my high school career that that's why I didn't make National Honors Society. I certainly had the grades and everybody liked me but I just didn't do anything. Nobody told me I was supposed to. It was very peripheral. I had a few close friends and I went to Hebrew school and I was in LTF and I was in USY. I was a nice little Jewish girl. But there were, I just, there were things I just didn't understand.

How do you think that being in the Holocaust affected your child rearing?

My child rearing? Interesting question. I hadn't thought about that. I think I'm paranoid. And I don't mean that I'm psychotic, although there are those who might tell you that I am. To take away a different generation. But, I worry about everything. Except when Dave worries about everything. He worries about something and then I don't have to. But I tend to worry about everything. And this idea that I really didn't have full confidence in the future because from my experience you didn't know if there was a future. And I tended to be, I have four kids and two, the older two, were raised very differently from the other two. I tended to be very authoritarian and I think that's partly my parents' influence, perhaps not Holocaust as much as their style. With one child you probably don't have to be as authoritarian than if you had many more. But I think mostly this total distrust and lack of faith. And then, the idea that you've got to be self-sufficient, you just don't ask for help. I mean, I think I see this as, as an outgrowth, maybe it isn't, but I haven't been psychoanalyzed. Maybe I should be, I don't know.

Were your children named after people who died in the Holocaust?

Yes. Diane's Hebrew, not just the Hebrew names, not the secular names. Diane is Rachel Malka, my two grandmothers. Rachel was my father's, Malka was my mother's. Dan's, Dan is named after Dave's father who died long ago. Tom is Moshe Yaakov, my two grandfathers. Moshe and Yaakov. And Jonathan is Aharon Pinchas who was my mother's brother and they were all Holocaust victims. My grandparents all died at Auschwitz. My mother's brother died in forced labor camp someplace on the eastern front but we don't know where.

Did you bring up the topic with the children of the Holocaust or did they learn about it at Hebrew school and then start asking questions?

I think that, well maybe you can refresh my memory. What is your first exposure to the Holocaust?

I remember vividly at Beth Shalom one year they showed us pictures of the concentration camps and we, I must have been eight years old, and they showed us wheelbarrows with bodies falling off.

About year was that?

If I was eight, I was born in... '64 or '65?

Okay. That fits because I couldn't quite pinpoint the year. The kids came back from Hebrew school and three went to the academy that I think Diane, who went to Beth Shalom, then Community High, may have gotten more than the kids got at the Academy. I think the Academy was, now I may be unfair, but that's my recollection is that Beth Shalom did this, or Community High, one or the other, before the Academy. But wait, that's not fair either because my kids did not stay at the Academy through twelfth grade. So, they tried to fit into the other system, which is another story all together. So, no, well, whatever, whatever the source of the information, they came home with it and they asked

questions, yes. And it was when they began to learn about the Holocaust that we started to talk about it, but not very much. I must not have been very receptive to their questions because I don't recall any very heavy prolonged discussions. So, and occasionally there would be something in the news or whatever. So we talked about it. By this time it was not swept under the rug as it had been earlier. But, it was not, I think... my father likes to talk, he was a teacher, he was an academic radiologist... that didn't come out right. But he's a good speaker, or he used to be when he was younger and he enjoys doing it. He's one of these impeccably prepared speakers when he does speak. And, on his eightieth birthday my mother had a party for him, large affair. She was really dying but she wanted to do this, and he gave a little speech and mentioned the Holocaust. And then she died and he, again, at her unveiling, not too many months later, again gave a short talk and again alluded to the Holocaust. And then, once he retired from radiology he became a student of Jewish, I'm really not digressing, I'm coming back to your question, and he would do an annual lecture on topics of his choosing which he would present at his congregation Ohr Kodesh in Chevy Chase, Maryland, and the second or third lecture, which might have been 1987 or '88, someplace in there, was on the Kasztner Train. Which as I mentioned to you, that's what we were on. And, it sparked tremendous interest among the congregants and the Washington Jewish Weekly, it's called Washington Jewish Week or something like that, and the kids were not there but they saw copies of this and this is what sort of opened the flood gates, and not long after that the, now which project was the first Holocaust interview project, I think it was the Yale Project?

I don't know.

I think so. I was interviewed for that too. I think it was the project that, that was the Yale Project and again the year escapes me, but it was before 1990, latter 80s, he was interviewed for that and we had a copy of the tape. This was a totally a Holocaust interview, and the kids saw that and from then on it was very much open. So that's maybe twelve years.

So that's pretty recent.

Yes. Oh, very much! Very much. Kids are very much interested at this point and rightly so.

Are there any images of the train or the events leading up to it that haunt you?

Haunt me? There were many things I remember but nothing haunts me. I mean, do I have a fixation, is that your question? No, nothing haunts me. But I have a lot of memories. Many of them pretty bad. Some not so bad. Some extremely bad. But no, nothing haunts me. There are just many things that I remember.

There are some questions about how the war affected your attitude and practice of religion and they have some questions about believing in God or did you stop believing in God or do you believe in God?

You know it's interesting, I spoke, I'm on the speakers bureau and some years ago, about three years ago, two years in a row, I spoke to Milton Katz's English class at the Kansas City Art Institute and one of the students asked me that and totally threw me for a loop. That's just not, well... It's a very difficult question. You know, I was young enough and resilient enough that I was not, I mean, obviously it has affected many aspects of my life, but I was not as severely impacted as many. I mean, you know, I'm here. I got the education I wanted. My parents did not suffer economically once they came here. I have my parents. So, it did not impact me as severely as some people. For example, I have a cousin in Arlington, Virginia whose wife, my cousin by marriage, was born in Czechoslovakia right after the war, but during the war her mother had a baby, whose name, incidentally, was Judy, and she was deported. And, I don't know which camp she was in but the Nazis shot her baby in her arms. Now, that's a severe impact! So, you know, Milton Katz, the guy at the Kansas City Art Institute said something about well, maybe God was just crying. I think, was it Elie Wiesel that said, "Well, God is dead." I think. I don't know, I had a lot of trouble with this at one point. I think everybody goes through a period in their lives when they become introspective and you ask yourself, how can you believe in a God that allows this to happen? On the other hand, look at all the good things that have happened. So, yes, I think I believe in God. And, it's taken me a while. It was a process of evolution, particularly because my parents really were not observant so I was not exposed to heavy-duty synagogue and that kind of thing. My father's reasonably observant now but all the years I was growing up he was not. So it wasn't in the home, and, as the whole idea of Holocaust became to the forefront of our consciousness, I began to question. I think I believe in God. I'm not a theologically oriented individual. But I would say probably so. Yes.

Do you still belong to Beth Shalom?

Oh yeah. I have for 36 years.

Are you active in the synagogue?

No. I'm not an organization person. Oh, I always serve on some committee or other because I feel that if I don't then I'm too far removed. I've been on the ritual committee for about four years. I've been on the school committee when I had kids in school. I've been on scholarship committee, been on the budget committee, that was very distasteful. And, so I do, but I don't think that would qualify me as being active. I have no interest or desire in being an, an organizationally oriented person. It's just not my style.

Are there any traditions from your home, before you came to the United State, that are different than American customs regarding the holidays?

Well, I don't know. When we were, I'm not sure they're all that different because after all, Hungary is Eastern Europe, particularly eastern Hungary. Budapest in many ways is not so eastern, and so that wouldn't be too different from everybody who comes from, the majority of the Jews in Kansas City are probably Eastern European Jews I think. So, I don't know that they're different. Oh, on Friday nights we always sing *Shalom Aleichem*

but I think other people do that too. My father always used to bless me but I think that's done in other families too. We never sing *Birkat Hamazon* after meals. Never! We just didn't do it. I don't think so. I think food wise a lot of the Jewish dishes are much more sugary than we had been accustomed to, *kugel* and stuffed cabbage and that sort of thing. But no, so, anyway, to answer your question, no. Well, except that we have mixed seating at Beth Shalom and, there was, I seem to remember that was separate seating.

To what would you attribute your ability to adjust to a normal life after the war?

To what would I attribute my ability to adjust well? First of all, the environment because we came to a country where things were relatively, I mean sure there are aberrations, there are problems, but relatively it's a stable, free country. So, that's one, I mean the environment. Number two, I think there was some heredity there too. I mean I was just fortunate because I had two strong, stable parents and I think that had a lot to do with it. And don't miss understand me, we all have our neuroses, but, they were stable, strong people and I, I think an awful lot of the credit goes to them. So, I would say those two things and obviously maybe I'm not such a nut either so that I was able to fit in. So, but that's heredity too.

Now we kind of touched on this earlier when we were talking a little bit about the citizenship, but what does being an American mean to you?

There's no evolution. Next thing that's going to happen is that Kansas is going to decide that the world is flat and for medical care they'll go back to blood letting. What does it mean to live in this country? Obviously it means freedom to be what you want and do what you want, become what you want. Generally speaking, be tolerated, accepted if not loved. It's a free country! And living in a free country, I think, is just about the greatest gift you can have. I mean, as Jews you would have the same thing in Israel. But aside from that, I'm not sure that there is anyplace else in the world where you would have this amount of freedom with opportunity. I mean, that sounds very idealistic and obviously it has its limitations, but by and large I would say that that's, that's it.

What do you think of when you see skinheads on TV or read about them?

Well, let me tell you first what my father thinks. I see him everyday so I know every thought that goes through his head. He's always afraid. When David Duke got a few votes in Louisiana, he was mortified. When the current bombings, not current, but the bombings in California occurred, again he was mortified. It's coming, it's coming, it's coming! I don't think that at this time and in this place it's coming. It scares the devil out of me that people like this are around and that they do what they do. Just recently the Wiesenthal Center, and just like everybody else, tries very hard to raise money, and my father got a mailing from them just yesterday, this is one we haven't gotten, and they're, they alluded to that nut in California who went around shooting people that they are setting up a program to teach tolerance to educate people to be tolerant, more humane. I hope this kind of thing is successful. So, no, I'm not worried that at this time and place the Nazis are coming all over again. I don't know what will happen 30, 50 years from now, even 20 years from now,

but it saddens me to think that this kind of thing can happen. And obviously it brings back memories of another time and place but I think when the heterogeneity of our society, as pluralistic as it is, I don't think that what my father thinks is really what is going to happen. Does that answer your question?

Yes. That's the end of the questions that they suggested. Is there anything else that you can think of that might be an interest topic or an interesting question to address?

I don't think so. They have one or possibly two tapes of mine there. The Yale Project, which was the first one and then the Spielberg Project and so I think anything that I haven't included here is probably there. We talked a great deal about our previous lives and my family's background but I don't think that that's of any particular interest to you now or is it? Probably not.

I think we talked a lot about that the last time we talked, also.

Yeah, well we went back a couple more generations in those tapes. I think all of us have a *mashgiach* and a *shochet* in our backgrounds. I think that's three generations back.

Have you made efforts to write down your family history for your children?

No I haven't and I probably should. It's something I've thought about. No, I haven't done it. I've been collecting data all over the place and I have notes and we've been back to Hungary. I don't, did I tell you about that? That's a trip in the literal and figurative sense of the word. We did all of Hungary or most of it. We saw the destroyed synagogues and the unkempt cemeteries and so forth and so on. Much of my history, of course, is within those things. But no, I have not written my history down. I've thought about doing that, but...

Have you thought about writing a book?

Well I don't write very well. I wrote a doctoral dissertation and it's very well written for what it is. It's clear, it's concise, it's comprehensible, the grammar is impeccable, there are no spelling or punctuation errors, but in terms of, I don't... I guess I could do it. But I'm not a particularly skilled writer. So, no I haven't. I suppose it's something I should do. But, no, no I have not.

Okay. I think that's...

End of Tape 2, Side 1